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# U.S. vs. Us: Sound and Subjectivity in American Political Thrillers of the 1970s

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# Sound and Subjectivity in American Political Thrillers of the 1970s

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by

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Dedicated to Judy Hoback Miller,
Bookkeeper for the Committee to Reelect the President,
Unsung hero of the Watergate investigation.

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## Introduction

*"Another point I should like to make very briefly: Like every Member of the House and Senate assembled here tonight, I was elected to the office that I hold. And like every Member of the House and Senate, when I was elected to that office, I knew that I was elected for the purpose of doing a job and doing it as well as I possibly can. And I want you to know that I have no intention whatever of ever walking away from the job that the people elected me to do for the people of the United States."*

President Richard Nixon, State of the Union Address, January 30th, 1974

On June 17th, 1972, five burglars broke into the Democratic National Convention's headquarters at the Watergate Offices in Washington D.C. The goal of this break in was to obtain photographs of campaign documents and to place listening devices in phones. The break in was wholly unsuccessful, as it was witnessed and reported as it occurred, resulting in the arrest of the five men involved. What followed was a two-year investigation—carried out most famously by Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward of the Washington Post—into the incident itself, but moreover into the cover-up that followed. This cover-up was helmed by G. Gordon Liddy, John Mitchell, H. R. Haldeman, and other members of the Committee to Re-Elect the President, or CRP. Alongside these key players, President Richard Nixon was implicated in allowing for the tapping to occur as well as pushing for the cover-up. This came just a year after the New York Times began publishing excerpts from the leaked Pentagon Papers, which revealed that the U.S. was losing the Vietnam War—a conflict heavily supported by Nixon.[1] These two scandals occurring back-to-back created a sense of national unease. It became public opinion that if the president was spying on high-ranking government officials, then what was stopping him from doing the same to normal citizens?

[1] Neil Sheehan, "Vietnam Archive: Pentagon Study Traces 3 Decades of Growing U. S. Involvement," *The New York Times*, June 13, 1971. 1, https://www.nytimes.com/1971/06/13/archives/vietnam-archive-pentagon-study-traces-3-decades-of-growing-u-s.html.

The 1960s became known as a decade of social movement and crisis. The assassinations of key figures such as President John F. Kennedy, his brother Senator Robert F. Kennedy, and civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., alongside widespread national concern and protest against American involvement in the Vietnam War. By the 1970s a generalized spirit of distrust had seeped into the hearts and minds of many American citizens. The birth and rise of conservatism in the Sun Belt marked increased Republican distrust in government, while the Civil Rights Movement, feminist and gay rights movements, and environmental activism slowly but surely radicalized the Democratic party against the D.C. establishment.[2] In this way, the Watergate break in and cover up did not exist as an independent scandal in the American political landscape. Rather, it seemed a symptom of an increasingly anxious American spirit, and particularly a response to the increased mediatization of the social and political landscape.

Watergate remains one of the most discussed and scrutinized scandals in the history of the United States. It also serves as the backdrop on which this argument is meant to be projected. Because of the effect it had on politics as well as general culture, there have been innumerable pieces of media made surrounding its events. More importantly, however, the cultural effect is reflected in responses through various forms of media, from popular music to revived literature, and as is the case here, through film. This moment in American cinema is characterized by New Hollywood, featuring directors such as Robert Altman, Mike Nichols and Roman Polanski. This New Hollywood generation was concerned with introducing a sort of American filmmaking somewhere in between the classical Hollywood system and contemporary European art cinema, with focus on style and movement away from linear narrative.[3] This new form of cinema found

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[2] Michael Stewart Foley, *Front Porch Politics: The Forgotten Heyday of American Activism in the 1970s and 1980s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2013.) 4-11.
[3] Peter Biskind, *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls: How the Sex-Drugs-and-Rock 'N Roll Generation Saved Hollywood* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998,) 13-23.

its roots in the 60s, but truly found footing in the 1970s. The combined force of this mediatized political landscape and the New Hollywood system gave way to a revitalization of a film genre with its roots in Hitchcock, namely the political thriller. The backdrop of the Vietnam War, the various political assassinations of the 60s, and Watergate placed American filmmakers in a position of response. And respond they did.

This response looks different from film to film, but the overall spirit is the same, namely a spirit of paranoia. The idea that anybody could be watching or listening to anyone else at any given moment carried weight the likes of which had yet to be seen, and as such surveillance and paranoia related to politics serve as threads weaving most films from this decade together. And while the visual side of surveillance is key, especially considering the visual medium of film, there is much to be said regarding the approach to sound present in this genre at this time. Looking at countless examples from what I am calling the "long 70s" (1968-1982,) an argument was formed based around six specific films, and the way that they break down the American paranoid experience by way of sound. Through an intersection of shifts in modes of listening and the distinction between aural and visual evidence, these films present protagonists and experiences that fail on the level of semantics, and reflect said failure on to the viewer. The lines between subjectivity and objectivity are blurred when paranoia is developed, and through this inability to establish intimacy and decipher true understanding, there is an unquestionable and crucial link between protagonist and audience.

This link is marked by way of archetype, with each protagonist from each film representing a typical hero—and particularly one who functions as a conduit for and spokesman of national paranoia. This concept of a spokesman is adapted directly from Richard Hofstadter's 1964 essay "The Paranoid Style in American Politics." This essay breaks down what he calls the

paranoid style in which "the feeling of persecution is central, and it is indeed systematized in grandiose theories of conspiracy."[4] (4) This concept is crucial to the argument of this paper, as it is conceived and focused around individual response and perception as related to the relationship between sound and politics. Each hero of each film experiences a sense of persecution related to involvement in a larger conspiracy, in most cases on a political level.

Chapter One looks at Francis Ford Coppola's *The Conversation* (1974) and Brian De Palma's *Blow Out* (1981) and the archetype of the prober. Using a pattern of sound recognition adapted from Michel Chion's "The Three Listening Modes," issues of gender and intimacy related to sound surveillance professions are broached.[5] In Chapter Two, the focus is on the press, by way of Alan Pakula's *All the President's Men* (1975) and *The Parallax View* (1974.) Here the focus is on the level of the politics themselves, as well as broadening the question of aural perception as it relates to semiotic theory.[6] Finally, Chapter Three considers *Three Days of the Condor* (Sydney Pollack, 1975) and *Marathon Man* (John Schlesinger, 1976) as portraits of the pawn, by way of the Hofstadter text. All of these archetypes find standing by way of three levels of analysis, namely through perception, politics and psychology. The question of perception is bolstered by "The Three Listening Modes" in order to develop a specific structure of listening within the respective films of Chapter One. Similarly, the political question is reinforced by consideration of Saussure's theory of semiotic analysis, and the interpretation of sound into signal. Hofstadter is then revived for Chapter Three, in order for the psychology of each protagonist to be explored by way of the American paranoid style.

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[4] Richard Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," in *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and other essays*, ed. Richard Hofstadter (New York: Vintage Books, 1967). 4.
[5] Michel Chion, "The Three Listening Modes," in *The Sound Studies Reader,* ed. Jonathan Sterne (New York: Routledge, 2012.) 48-53
[6] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics,* trans. Wade Baskin (New York, The Philosophical Library Inc., 1959), 16.

The question of the American experience is highly specific, and is important to acknowledge the global sense of political jingoism and suffering as a result of the Cold War and other external conflicts. However, the key here is the sense of persecution specific to the American way of life. The idea of the American dream requires a baseline individual separation from higher forms of government—distrust is built in. It is this distrust that so solidly informs the soundscapes of 70s American cinema, and through which technology forms a role as a weapon. With the visual, everything is out in the open. Seeing is believing and understanding, and it is that much harder to hide things that can be seen. Sound is difficult in this way; it cannot be seen, that which it is sourced from can be, but the sound itself is invisible. In this way, there is something more intimate about sound but particularly about listening. To hear is to have power, and to be heard is to be powerless.

## Chapter One: The Prober

Firstly, here is what I am calling *the prober*. This is a character whose role in their narrative is related directly to listening and investigation based on that which is heard. They each engage with recorded sound within a cycle of listening, starting in a place of misunderstanding, working to achieve understanding, and ultimately failing to do so. One such example of this character is the protagonist of Francis Ford Coppola's 1974 film *The Conversation*, surveillance expert Harry Caul. In *The Conversation,* Harry creates a recording of a conversation between a man and a woman, then worries the recording might be used to hurt them. His guilt regarding the tape builds as he slowly becomes the one being watched and listened to, eventually suffering a breakdown due to his relationship with the tape's content. Another such version of this prober character is Jack Terry, the main character of Brian De Palma's *Blow Out,* a 1981 semi-remake of Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blow Up* (1966). Harry and Jack both have careers that include working with sound, though Harry works as a professional wiretapper as opposed to Jack, a foley artist who accidentally records what is thought to be a tire blowout that results in a car crashing into a river. He is able to save a young woman, named Sally, from the car, but the driver is killed. It is later revealed that this driver was Governor McRyan, a would-be presidential candidate, and, using the recording he made and photographs taken of the event, Jack figures out that it was no accidental blow out, and that the tire was intentionally shot out.

In both *The Conversation* and *Blow Out*, Coppola and De Palma respectively comment on the national auditory paranoia of this period in U.S. history by developing their protagonists as surrogates for the viewer. Everything that Harry and Jack hear, we hear in time with them. In this way, the films condition us to feel the same fear that they feel and experience their paranoia.

This conditioning reflects external focus, stretching from the late 60s through to the early 80s, on surveillance as a malevolent force in daily life. Such a focus was the result of multiple Nixon-era scandals—as well as some scandals with the Kennedys—related to wiretapping and cover-up that characterized the political and cultural climate of the U.S. during this period. While *The Conversation* does not actively address these fears, *Blow Out* leans into them and even with one film embracing the political implications of its plot and one rejecting them, both succeed in reflecting the paranoia of the time through their heroes. There is an undeniable link between the viewer and protagonist—one which is developed by the role of sound both within and outside of each respective film's diegesis.

**"HE'D KILL US IF HE HAD THE CHANCE."**

The most immediate trait recognizable in Harry Caul is that he is an incredibly private character—most likely because he knows the best ways to invade privacy. He does not have any friends, speaks almost exclusively on payphones, and works in a secluded warehouse. This inaccessibility aids in the development of his character as a representative for the viewer and allows for this first observation of audience reflection. At the beginning of the film, he is seemingly impenetrable, which nurtures a feeling of safety for the audience. We are he, as far as it seems, and as such, we have the same distance and protection from danger that he has created for himself. As the film continues and he becomes more and more involved in the drama of the conversation, the audience does as well: the sense of security established early on is uprooted by the growth of Harry's involvement. The film ends with Harry in a state of mental disarray, and the audience is left with a final image of the destructive nature of paranoia. The audience is a victim of both Harry's own anxiety and fear, as well as the legitimate invasion of privacy

established by his being tapped. The events of the film are a collective experience for Harry as well as the viewer, and said experience is clearly established through the use of sound as a technical and narrative device.

This intense link between viewer and protagonist is one best supported by Michel Chion's seminal essay, "The Three Listening Modes." In this piece Chion breaks down what he believes to be the three ways human beings engage with sounds—causal, semantic, and reduced. Simply, causal listening is listening with the purpose of gaining information about a sound's cause or source. Semantic listening is listening with the purpose of understanding sound and deducing external information from said sound. Semantic listening is used in all language and—fittingly—conversation. Reduced listening is listening simply to the quality of a sound or series of sounds, rather than attempting to gain any information from said sound. These terms can describe the wide variety of listening experiences we engage in, from an individual's daily experiences to the diegesis of a film.[7]

In *The Conversation*, much of Harry's internal conflict arises from the shift in which mode of listening he is engaging with related to the tape in question. The "initial problem posed to Harry in the text is [a] technical one" as he works with three recordings of the conversation taken from different distances and directions in order to create the clearest single tape.[8] Thus, he begins the film in a state of reduced listening. The content of the tape is a non-issue; it is the actual sound clarity and quality that concerns him. Eventually, he is able to mix the tapes in a way that allows him to hear a previously garbled line, "He'd kill us if he had the chance."[9] This

[7] Michel Chion, "The Three Listening Modes," 48.
[8] Dennis Turner, "The Subject of *The Conversation*" *Cinema Journal* 24, no. 4 (Summer, 1985): 4. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1224893.
[9] *The Conversation*, directed by Francis Ford Coppola (The Director's Company, 1974), 0:38:56, DVD.

quote introduces "[t]he second more enduring enigma…one of interpretation."[10] Up until now, he has been aware of other elements of the conversation, but none held stakes like this. Discussions of Christmas gifts and the homeless take a backseat to this key mention of murder. At this point, Harry becomes involved. He has heard this sentence, and he cannot unhear it—he is now not only knowledgeable of the potential danger posed to these strangers, but he is also somewhat responsible for their fates, as his creation and delivery of this tape could place the couple in even greater danger. This switch in Harry's mode of listening is reflected in the audience due to the way in which the scene is presented. Everything Harry hears, we hear at the same time, including the key line. Up until that line, we are just as clueless as Harry is to the gravity of the tape. In this way, Harry's concern and curiosity extend to the audience—what he hears and how he responds is reflected onto the viewer, a fact emphasized by the link established by Chion's theory of listening.

This link is developed further throughout the film, specifically in looking at the twist in the film's final ten minutes. At this point, Harry has overheard the violent interaction between the Director and the participants of the conversation and has attempted to approach the Director about said interaction. However, he realizes that Ann and Mark are both still alive, and the Director has supposedly died in a car crash. He begins to put the pieces together that the two of them actually killed the Director, and thus Harry has presumed innocence for the wrong characters. This twist is revealed through a montage in which Harry imagines the actual events with the sound of his tape recording of the conversation playing in the background.[11] However, the editing of this montage features different audio of the conversation, a choice made late in the mixing process by sound designer Walter Murch. A previously discarded take that featured a

[10] Turner, "The Subject of *The Conversation,*" 5.
[11] *The Conversation,* 1:43:40-1:45:46.

"wrong" reading of the pivotal "he'd kill us if he had the chance" line was placed in the montage. "On the third take, Fred said, instead of 'he'd *kill* us if he had the chance,' he said, 'he'd kill *us* if he had the chance.' So, the emphasis was different, and I remember noting in my notebook, 'The third take is the wrong reading of the line.'"[12] By using this other reading of the line, the meaning of the quote changes. The intention behind this line becomes clear: Mark is saying "he'd kill *us* if he had the chance; therefore, we have to kill him."[13] This editing choice works specifically to strengthen the link between Harry and the viewer. We have heard the same reading as Harry throughout the entire film, and as this is suddenly altered, our perceptions are as well. A question of fidelity is then raised here, as the manipulation of that which is heard rejects any sense of fidelity within the scope of the film's diegesis. If the editor can simply change which take is used and change what the meaning of a line is, then how can the viewer believe anything that is heard?

This question can be considered using a modified application of Richard Altman's ideas of representation as opposed to reproduction. Altman's theory posits that sound is a difficult aspect of reality to establish in film, as the reproduction of sound often fails to actually signify said sound, and what is required instead is a representation of said sound. This concept can be seen in many facets of film sound, one such instance being foley, a type of *representative* sound.[14] Foley artists use various objects and techniques to produce sound when the actual reproduction of such sound fails on a fidelity level. A classic example of this is the creation of weather sounds—the actual reproduction of the sound of rain falling will most

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[12] Murch, Walter. "'He'd kill us if he had the chance'" interview by Christopher Sykes, 2016, video, 0:58, https://www.webofstories.com/play/walter.murch/64.
[13] Murch, "'He'd kill us if he had the chance.'" 1:55.
[14] Richard Altman, "Four and a Half Film Fallacies," in *The Sound Studies Reader,* ed. Jonathan Sterne (New York: Routledge, 2012), 40.

likely sound less accurate than a representation of the same sound, often produced using rice. In applying this theory here, Altman's ultimate point is bent in order to apply it to the narrative of *The Conversation*. Altman continues on to argue that this distinction between reproduction and representation highlights the ways that sound functions to distinguish film as its own art form, but also one which causes much ontological difficulty. Rather than unpacking that argument, the application of Altman here is quite simple, simply aiding to situate the role of different recordings. Consider that Harry's initial recording of the conversation, and the one that the audience hears early on in the film, is the *reproduction*, whereas the second take featuring the altered emphasis is the *representation*.

In his moment of panic and revelation regarding the reality of the crime, Harry hears something different than that which he heard earlier in the film. He is faced with the conceptual distinction between reproduction and representation in a wholly practical way. The reproduced sound—which he has had access to and listened back to countless times—is, in fact, not what was meant. The reproduction falsely informs the representation. The assumption from the reproduction of the conversation—i.e., the first recording—is that Ann and Mark are in danger, supposedly going to be killed by the faceless "he" of the statement. At the moment where the different line reading is subbed in, the emphasis is on "us" rather than "he," and the truth is exposed. That which we hear becomes a representation. By Murch making the choice to include this other reading of the line with the altered emphasis, the lines between reproduction and representation are blurred. Just as the mode of listening in which Harry is engaged changes, the role of the recording changes. Beginning as reproduction, when it gains semantic meaning, it becomes a reproduced representation. As more is revealed, however, its reproductive quality is broken down, and by the end of the film, it is solely a representation.

Ultimately, this change adds another layer to the issue of perception within the film. The sense memory for the viewer is the initial recording, with the emphasis of speech placed on the word 'kill.' While it is easy for a viewer to distrust a character, it is difficult for them to distrust that which they have seen or heard for themselves, yet at this moment, we distrust our senses. We know what we have heard and what it should mean, but the insertion of the second reading with the shifted emphasis completely uproots this. What we have, in fact, heard is replayed for us, but it is ever so slightly different. This turns the viewer's perception into an issue of personal trust and, ultimately, of subjective sensorial experience. Is this a different version? Did we miss the emphasis the first time? What did we hear, and what are we hearing now? These questions then expand out to become issues of manipulation themselves. Everything we have understood and felt concerned about until this point is turned on its head, and we, alongside Harry, are pushed into a further state of paranoia.

While Harry's character is the main conduit for the representation of paranoia within the film, there is a direct reference made by the character Bernie Moran, which gives a specific political context to the film. After the convention, when there is a small party in Harry's office, Bernie says to him,

> Twelve years ago, I recorded every telephone call made by the presidential nominee of a major political party, I don't want to say which party, but everywhere he went, that's where I was. Coast to coast I was listening Harry. I'm not saying I, uh, I elected the president of the United States, but, uh, you can draw your own conclusions, Harry. I mean he lost.[15]

Following the release of this film, Coppola stated that he was in no way making a purposeful statement about the Nixon administration or any specific surveillance scandal, but in that case, this is a coincidence that carries massive implications. The direct reference to

[15] *The Conversation,* 1:02:30.

wiretapping a presidential candidate speaks to the prominence of sound surveillance as a topic and, moreover, a concern of the time. There was such an interest in wiretapping that this *could* happen, which speaks volumes to the cultural moment and to the way Coppola works to establish paranoia. One of the main purposes of Moran's character is to show that anybody can be bugged, even people in a supposed aural position of power. This is established when he secretly "bugs" Harry at the convention and then reveals it to him later, much to Harry's chagrin. Even the "master" is taken advantage of, proving the universality of this technology.[16] While not a direct reflection of Coppola's intentions, Moran plays a vital role in contextualizing Harry's fears in relation to the fears of the audience. The subjects watching the film recognize themselves in Harry and thus recognize his failures as their own. In this specific moment, the invasion of his privacy is an invasion of theirs. It is a reminder that any individual can be listened to without their knowing. This reminder, alongside Moran's discussion of bugging presidential candidates, adds a layer to the surrogacy of the audience; they are no longer just the listener, but also the listened to.

The very last sequence of *The Conversation* works, as most of the film, to develop Harry's personal paranoia, focusing the broad messaging of the previously discussed scene back in on Harry's individual experience. After witnessing and fully understanding the reality of the conversation, Harry receives a call in his apartment. It is established early on that his personal phone is a secret, so the call startles him—as well as the viewer—before he even engages with the phone. Once he answers he hears a voice state "We know that you know, Mr. Caul. For your own sake don't get involved any further. We'll be listening to you." followed by playback of the saxophone piece he was playing seconds earlier.[17] Harry proceeds to tear his

[16] *The Conversation,* 1:09:35.
[17] Ibid., 1:47:12-1:47:33.

apartment to shreds, presumably in order to uncover the bug recording him, but he is unsuccessful. As the film's conclusion, this scene serves to deconstruct Harry's role in the context of the film as well as the context of his own reality. The bugger has been bugged—his privacy has been infringed in a way that he recognizes and fears. His loss of privacy correlates to a loss of composure and, in a way, his sanity. The master is beaten at his own game, proving to the audience that this sort of surveillance can happen to another. There is a clear sense of the ubiquity of sound recording. There is a technocratic assertion of dominance inherent in bugging another person, and in this way, there is a stripping of one's dignity and autonomy.

In these final moments, Chion's modes of listening become relevant yet again. The film ends with Harry playing his saxophone in his decimated apartment. Throughout the film, Harry uses music as a coping mechanism, a way to unwind that does not require human interaction, through which he can maintain his privacy. This end scene is no different. Nothing semantic is gleaned from the jazz he plays, and in this way, he spends his final moments onscreen in a state of reduced listening. The guilt and paranoia that his semantic listening has caused forces him to focus "on the traits of the sound itself, independent of its cause and meaning."[18] Independently, the music acts as an emotional comfort for Harry, but within the film as a whole, it completes the circle of Harry's—as well as the audience's—course of listening. He begins the film concerned with the reduced sound of the conversation recording, becomes aware of its causal qualities, becomes aware of the semantic quality, experiences a shock in the semantic reveal, and finally breaks down and, as a last resort, is faced with the reduced listening that comes from playing and hearing jazz. Chion not only outlines the type of listening present across the board but also the ways that information is obtained by aural means. In the case of Harry, this extends to the ways

[18] Chion, "The Three Listening Modes," 50.

that information is complicated and misunderstood, and specifically the ways that this semantic misunderstanding connects to failures of intimacy and generalized national anxiety.

**"IT'S A GOOD SCREAM."**

When considering Chion, *Blow Out* follows the same cycle of listening that is presented in *The Conversation*. The hero here, Jack, begins the film engaging in a combination of causal and reduced listening. He is recording various noises to be used as sound effects in films, and as such, he is focused on the sources of said sounds—causal listening—as well as the actual quality of the sounds—reduced listening. His initial hearing of the titular blowout similarly carries exclusively causal implications. At that moment, he hears the bang and contextualizes that its source is the blowout. However, when he re-listens to the recording he made of the accident, he hears a separation between the sound of the bang.[19] Once he realizes that there are two noises, there is a soft shift to semantic listening—he is no longer just listening for quality or source information but in order to gain some level of understanding.

Jack and the viewer hear the same sounds in succession: a couple talking on the bridge, a frog croaking, and then an unidentified clicking and whirring sound, which had not been heard previously. Finally, there is the sound of an owl hoot, and then the accident—there is a bang, tire screech, and then the car hits the water. It all seems entirely straightforward to our ears; we have heard it already and understand the circumstance—the sound recording simply confirms said understanding. That is until Jack begins repeatedly listening back to the recorded sound of the blowout. As it plays again and again, it becomes clearer and clearer that there are actually two bangs occurring extremely close together, one directly after the other. The sound that we have

[19] *Blow Out*, directed by Brian De Palma (Filmways Pictures, 1981), 0:25:05, DVD.

already encountered is manipulated in front of our eyes—or ears, really. Jack himself does not change anything about how he is playing back the sound, and as such, it should be the same thing over and over again. However, the way the clip is edited, the sound slows down with each replay, and the separation between the bangs becomes more and more evident to the audience.

As we hear this, we also watch Jack hear it. We are trying to uncover something about the accident at the same time as him. On the final playback of the blowout, we are granted an associated image from what Jack is imagining. We see his face listening to the sound, layered over an imagined image of the tire of the car and a bush. The first bang is shown as a gunshot coming from the bush, while the second bang is the actual tire blowout.[20] Jack uses almost nothing but recorded sound and his own memory to imagine the truth of the situation and picture someone shooting the tire out. The semantic meaning is immediately changed, for Jack and the viewer, based on the way that the audio is manipulated in order to line up with the visuals. Jack is able to use only the recorded sound to establish that the blowout is not the whole story, and thanks to the representative sound—to bring it back to Altman—the viewer is included in this understanding. What is key here is that Jack is *imagining* the image of the shot from the bushes. He has no visual evidence of anyone shooting out the tire; in fact, he is assuming the visual based on the aural evidence. "…De Palma not only confirms Jack as a point-of-view character for the sequence but establishes all subsequent interpretation of it as subjective reconstruction on Jack's part."[21] The visualization makes sense of the sound—yet immediately in the transition to semantic listening, there is a lack of fact, a failure of understanding, and the viewer, as well as Jack, is left to assume as much about the visual as is possible.

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[20] *Blow Out*, 0:25:36.
[21] Ronald S. Librach, "Sex, Lies, and Audiotape: Politics and Heuristics in 'Dressed to Kill' and 'Blow Out'," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (1998): 170.

What is complicated here is that the visual evidence is, in fact, confirmed. Later on in the film, after Jack and Sally have met for dinner and Burke has murdered the first victim of his killing spree, it is revealed that the reason Sally was in the car was because she is working with a photographer named Manny Karp. The two of them run a business where they are paid to have Sally seduce married men into delicate situations, which Manny would secretly photograph so as to ruin reputations or relationships. Sally being in the car with McRyan was no accident—he was a mark, and Karp has photographs of the whole event. After discovering this, Jack breaks into Manny's offices, steals said photographs, and pastes together to form a makeshift animation lined up with his own audio recording.[22] At this moment, the assumption is solidified as truth, and the visual is inherently linked with the aural. There is recognition of the cause of the sound, and thus, another mode of listening is broached. The specific semantic connection is still missing, but there is at least an understanding and recognition that this was no accident—thus, contact is made with the semantic, though it is still somewhat blurry. Even with this visual evidence, there is still only a hypothesis of intent.

When contextualizing both of these films, the Nixon Administration is to *The Conversation* what the Kennedys are to *Blow Out*. The focus on sound technology and the use of sound technology in exposing political conspiracy reflects some clear intention on the part of De Palma to pay homage to the auditory scandal that was Watergate. However, there are many other obvious references to events, including the Kennedys, specifically regarding the circumstances of the McRyan incident and the filming of the incident by Manny Karp. Firstly, there is a very clear homage being paid to the Chappaquiddick incident involving Senator Edward Kennedy and Mary Jo Kopechne. In the early morning of July 19, 1969, Kennedy made a wrong turn while

[22] *Blow Out,* 0:33:02-0:35:08.

driving himself and Kopechne to a ferry from a party on Martha's Vineyard. Kennedy lost control of the car, and it skidded off a bridge into Poucha Pond.[23] He was able to swim to safety but was unable to save Kopechne after allegedly attempting multiple times. This event was a national scandal of epic proportions—particularly in a decade that had already seen the assassinations of both JFK and RFK—and the attention and controversy surrounding the accident ultimately prevented Kennedy from running for office. Chappaquiddick bears an unquestionable and striking resemblance to the incident in *Blow Out*, to the point that it cannot, and should not, be written off as a coincidence.

The major difference comes from the fact that McRyan—the Kennedy substitute—is the one who dies, while Sally—the Mary Jo substitute—is saved. This choice, to make Sally the survivor of this accident, is crucial both within and outside of the film's narrative. She is the character who knows the true circumstance of her own association with McRyan and, as such, exists to communicate information to Jack and, ultimately, to help his investigation. Similarly, she also exists to build up and motivate Jack. By being involved in the accident, she provides him with an emotional link to the whole situation—both the danger she has escaped and the danger she is still in work to remind Jack of the severity of the accident and the severity of the cover-up. However, her survival, perhaps more importantly, allows a voice to be granted to the voiceless—namely to Mary Jo Kopechne. For De Palma, the value of a single innocent life is placed higher than that of a massive political figure, speaking to the general focus on a citizen's experience in a dire political environment, as opposed to the focus being placed on those creating such an environment. This representation is, of course, made irrelevant by the film's conclusion, but it is a key point that must be acknowledged.

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[23] "Kennedy Involved in Fatality," Reading Eagle, July 20th, 1969. https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=LJAjAAAAIBAJ&pg=6473%2C2003148. 1 (accessed April 2024)

Secondly is the production and release of the Zapruder film. The Zapruder film was a picture sequence taken by Abraham Zapruder of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Zapruder was positioned on a pedestal as the president's motorcade was traveling down Dealy Plaza in Dallas, TX, on November 22, 1963. He was recording the President and his wife, Jackie Kennedy, and incidentally happened to capture the moment that Kennedy was shot and killed. The film became a sensation following Kennedy's death, most notably being displayed as a series of black and white images in Life Magazine.[24] This film is directly referenced in *Blow Out,* when Karp is discussing the value of the photos he has taken of the McRyan accident, stating, "This is the biggest thing since the Zapruder film."[25] The self-awareness in the references made by De Palma speaks to his understanding of the role that these historical moments play in the grand scheme of things. They provide real-world context for the events of the film and specifically emphasize the way that such events can create mass scandal and media attention. The visual implications of direct references to Zapruder alongside the role of sound and recording technology are clear—the U.S. in which this film takes place is the same U.S. that the viewer knows and lives in. The circumstances of this McRyan accident are almost identical to its real-world counterpart, bringing into question the truth about Chappaquiddick. That is not to say that there is some larger conspiracy that the film is encouraging the viewer to engage with, but rather that there *could* be, a fact developed and emphasized by this historical context and connection. As much as we reflect Jack by way of listening, we also come to represent a manifestation of the innocent American experience—we see and hear the reality of the situation and are both wholly involved and completely separate from it.

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[24] "The Assassination of President Kennedy," *Life Magazine* 55, no. 22. (November 29, 1963): 24-27, https://books.google.com/books?id=U1IEAAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&hl=en#v=onepage&q&f=false. (accessed April 2024.)

[25] *Blow Out,* 1:14:36.

The final moments of *Blow Out* bring us back to Chion, completing Jack's cycle of listening. In the film's climax, Sally is chased by Burke to the top of a building while the Liberty Day fireworks show goes off. Jack arrives and kills Burke but is unable to save Sally, as she has already been strangled by the time Jack arrives. By killing Sally, De Palma is making a statement against the expectation that Jack would arrive just in time to save her. Though he is the hero of the film, he is flawed, unable to step beyond his obsession with the truth. All of the work that he and Sally have done in order to uncover the truth comes to mean nothing, as Jack is now alone—faced with two dead bodies and no evidence of the assassination. This sense of obsession and futility is emphasized by the use of sound, and specifically of sound technology, during the scene of her death. Sally is wearing a wire that Jack is tuned into for the entirety of her death. As he runs around trying to find her, he—and the viewer—can hear every time she calls out for him or screams.[26] The main reason he is using the wire in the first place is as a means of keeping track of her, but this does not work: the technology gives Jack nothing except a front-row seat to the sound of her murder. As the film develops, Jack's preoccupation with semantic reality increases even alongside his concern for Sally, and ultimately, his desire to expose the truth of the recording takes over.

> If Jack, moreover, is the film's ostensible point-of-view character, the audience, too, has suffered a rupture between the 'reality' proposed by the climax of the narrative and its conventional (that is, heuristically comfortable but naive) expectations about the nature of resolution in the genre film. Like Marion Crane, Sally Bedina is killed rather than rescued, and although her death is dealt at a much later stage in the storytelling game, it comes at a point after which the audience already has a significant emotional stake in her fate.[27]

Finally, in the final moments of the film the extent of Jack's failure of semantic listening is realized. Jack is unable to expose the truth, and is unable to save Sally. She is made to serve as

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[26] *Blow Out*, 1:39:04-1:41:37.
[27] Librach, "Sex, Lies, and Audiotape," 175.

a demonstration of the capabilities of audio recording technology up until the moment of her death. We have no visual connection to her at the moment of her death, but we can hear the whole event—it is broadcast into our ears but not in front of our eyes. Here, there is another recording in the scope of the narrative that carries severe semantic implications. The audio of Sally's death is heard in real time as Burke kills her, and after the fact, as Jack sits on a bench listening back to the recording. Specifically, the sound of her final scream is played, and heard, repeatedly—and in a swift and brutal visual cut, we watch as Jack uses Sally's scream as the anonymous female scream in Coed Frenzy, the horror film for which he is recording foley for at the time of the initial accident.[28] At this point he has failed to expose the conspiracy, and the aural semantics of the blowout recording become meaningless.

As the ability to engage with the semantics of the first recording is lost, the viewer is forced to abandon the semantics of this second recording. We must engage with the scream through reduced listening, attempting to let go of both the causal and semantic knowledge that has been gained thus far. However, even though Jack's actions require a letting go of the truth behind the tape, it is difficult to read this final act of listening as reduced. Jack is merely pretending that the scream means nothing and, in turn, is asking the audience to pretend the same. He makes the choice to use the scream, trying to move past the reality of the murder and simply make use of the sound he has collected. Yet, he is unable to listen to it himself—as it plays, he covers his ears. At this moment, the audience knows just as much as Jack, and in this way, we can also hardly stand to listen to it. Here, we return to Chion with his concept of the "screaming point."

[28] *Blow Out,* 1:43:44-1:44:06.

This idea is contained within an essay of the same name by Chion, published alongside "The Three Listening Modes" in his 1947 book, *The Voice in Cinema.* In this essay, Chion argues that the application and function of a woman's scream are crucial in the cinematic analysis of sound, particularly in reference to Sally's scream in *Blow Out*. More important to Chion than the scream itself is where it is placed in the scope of the narrative—it "above all must fall at an appointed spot, explode at a precise moment, at the crossroads of converging plot lines, at the end of an often convoluted trajectory but calculated to give this point a maximum impact."[29] In this case, Sally's scream is a perfect example of this point. Her scream concludes the film in many ways, completing the film from the opening, as well as completing Jack's cycle of listening, as has been developed before. For Chion, "[t]he screaming point is where speech is suddenly extinct, a black hole, the exit of being."[30] In the end, Sally becomes nothing more than her scream.

As Jack fails to grapple with the scream on a semantic level, he thus fails at achieving true intimacy with her person or his own emotional experience. He actively listened to her final moments alive, held her dead body, and yet still fails to engage with the truth of the recording. Jack's understanding is sucked into the black hole—he maintains an understanding of reality about the blowout, but when faced with the manifestation of the danger, which has informed his paranoia throughout the film, he is unable to cope. No matter how he tries to ignore it, Jack has immortalized Sally and thus cannot approach the scream in any legitimately reduced way, even as he tries to do so. He has lost the woman he seems to care about and is only able to express his pain by exploiting her final breaths. This failure of Jack's then becomes a failure of the audience. De Palma is illustrating that listening itself is futile when there are powers that

[29] Michel Chion, "The Screaming Point" in *The Voice in Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 77.
[30] Ibid., 79.

can simply alter that which is heard. The cover-up is inevitable, and any attempts to expose it will be monitored and—in this case, literally—killed.

As mentioned earlier, Coppola famously denied that he was considering any specific political event when he was making *The Conversation*—a wholly truthful assertion. The script for *The Conversation* was completed in the mid-60s before the Watergate break-in, the citizen takedown of COINTELPRO, or the leak of the Pentagon papers.[31] Moran's comments about tapping a presidential candidate were simply a plot point that Coppola invented. This genuine lack of direct inspiration seems to work against many assumed connections between Watergate and *The Conversation*—however, that the idea of tapping a presidential candidate was even something that Coppola chose to include in the film speaks to the overarching political climate of the time. This was something that could happen and probably had or would—so it only makes sense for the surveillance experts within the film to have experience in that area.

Alternatively, De Palma was actively commenting on several historical and political issues of surveillance and cover-up. As noted earlier, within the narrative of *Blow Out* there are references to the Kennedy assassination, the Chappaquiddick incident, and Watergate. De Palma understood the environment in which this film was coming out and made clear cultural references in order to develop a sense of reality connected to the film's incident and cover-up. However, these contrasting approaches to representations of the politics of the time are still able to produce similar effects. Coppola's lack of intention speaks to the commonality of experiences such as this. Without purposefully referencing anything, he is accidentally referencing an extremely specific contemporary event, speaking to the sense of inevitability related to political surveillance and conspiracy. On the other side of the coin, De Palma is purposefully

[31] Francis Ford Coppola. Audio Commentary. *The Conversation*, Lionsgate, 2011. 0:00:08-0:02:25.

referencing several events, which speaks to the same inevitability and ubiquity as Coppola. In either case, the way that the audience is meant to grapple with the conspiracies in each film is clearly based on a sense of the paranoia felt everywhere in this national moment. Both filmmakers' intentions are mirrored, but their impact is the same.

While *The Conversation* is one of the earliest entries in this group of communication-based conspiracy films, there is nothing inherently political about the titular conversation; the man and woman in question, Mark and Ann, are simply having an affair. The recording was commissioned by Ann's husband, Mark's boss, and it is a purely personal matter. However, the arc that Harry travels on is related to the discovery of the plot, and the tape itself speaks to the same sense of political paranoia that this period becomes known for. Moreover, there is something inherently political about an American film tackling issues of privacy and audio spying in 1974. Conversely, in *Blow Out,* the relationships established between Jack and Sally, the tape and the photographs, and ultimately between Jack and the viewer bring out the same palpable sense of paranoia that is found in *The Conversation*. The uncovering of conspiracy occurs simultaneously for the audience and the protagonist, and through his understanding of sound and use of sound technology, we become wrapped up in his desire to uncover the truth and the danger he faces on the way. We are driven to agree with everything he is conceptualizing as his subjective experience becomes that of the viewer. We witness his assumptions and assume the same things.

These failures of intimacy, developments of paranoia, and connections to historical instances set the stage for much of what is to come, but in order to move on, it is crucial to move backward, namely back to the base levels of understanding here, i.e., the Three Modes. Both Harry and Jack begin their respective films engaging in causal and reduced

listening before the gaining of an indispensable piece of information shifts their listening to become semantic. And finally, in failing to reveal the truth of each conspiracy, they are both forced back into positions of reduced listening. Whether this conclusive state of reduced listening is successful is difficult to read. It is safe to assume, however, that because each man ends their film failing to listen in an intimate way, there is a general failure in experience and, moreover, a failure by way of perception.

## Chapter Two: The Press

Here, we look at what I am calling *the press.* This refers to a character or characters whose role in the narrative is crucially journalistic. Similar to the prober, there is a key element of investigation which characterizes their relationship to the plots of the films they operate in—however, said investigation is less intensely based in listening itself, and is more concerned simply with uncovering truth. The semantic argument which characterizes the prober shifts with the press, to one concerned with semiotic interpretation—as they are faced with signifiers and signifieds, starting in a place of misunderstanding and working to achieve understanding.

The press in question here are the protagonists in Alan J. Pakula's *All the President's Men* (1976) and *The Parallax View* (1974.) Both *The Parallax View* and *All the President's Men* have the unique similarity that they were both directed by Alan J. Pakula, and are the latter two members of his "Paranoia Trilogy"—1971's *Klute* being the first member.[32] In this way, both these films are oft-discussed and considered classics of the American political thriller genre. They are both also severely influenced by real world events of American politics, and lean into said events to create portraits of both non-fiction and fictional conspiracy. With these conspiracies, Pakula uses sound and particularly sound technology to emphasize fears of the era, and to develop an undeniable link between the viewer and protagonist—one which is developed by the role of sound both within and outside of each respective film's diegesis.

[32] Rob Nixon, "Alan J. Pakula's 70s Paranoia Trilogy," Turner Classic Movies, September 26, 2022, https://www.tcm.com/articles/Programming-Article/021669/alan-j-pakulas-70s-paranoia-trilogy/. 1.

**“BE CAREFUL HOW YOU WRITE IT.”**

Starting with *All the President’s Men* creates a basis for understanding the remainder of the films discussed, as it lays an important foundation for real world application of this analysis, as it follows a true story. Based around the Watergate break in, *President’s Men* follows Washington Post journalists Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein through their investigation into the scandal. They were able to successfully trace the break-in all the way to the office of President Nixon by following various money trails and using pieces of information from named and unnamed contacts within government offices and Republican organizations. It is a dialogue heavy film, and much of the dialogue that is not between Woodward and Bernstein themselves occurs over the phone. In this way, many characters are distilled down to and wholly represented by their voices, and specifically to their voices through this technological medium. Additionally, much of the crucial information within the story is relayed to Woodward and Bernstein over the phone. This fact not only emphasizes the importance of the voice, and of hearing evidence as opposed to seeing it, but also the importance of the telephonic medium itself. This importance is reflected in the various phone conversations which do occur, as well as the conversations which *must* occur in person, for fear of the way the medium can be tapped and manipulated. When considering paranoia of this time period, particularly in the realm of political paranoia, it is impossible to ignore the impact and importance of technology and the growing concern and contact with things like voice recorders and playback machines, wiretaps and spatial bugging software. All of these, and many other advancements of the 60s made listening a highly politicized act, based in furtiveness.

To give a bit of extended context by way of *President’s Men*’s use of technology, the history of wiretaps becomes relevant. Wiretapping was a technique of surveillance beginning as

early as the 1890s, but it was not until *Olmstead v. United States* that the use of tapping for evidence in criminal investigations became an issue of the courts. Once the Supreme Court upheld the conviction in that case, though much of the evidence was obtained from a non-warrant wiretap, wiretapping was essentially deemed constitutional for use by police or other law enforcement.[33] This ruling was upturned—notably—in 1967's *Katz v. United States*. Charles Katz was charged with operating illegal gambling operations, and "[i]n order to collect evidence against Katz, federal agents placed a warrantless wiretap on the public phone booth that he used to conduct these operations."[34] Though aware of the doctrine put in place by *Olmstead v. United States,* Katz claimed that tapping into his private telephone conversations without a warrant specifically violated his Fourth Amendment rights against unlawful search and seizure. The courts agreed, and warrantless wiretapping was deemed an illegal act. The technology as a whole was not outlawed, however, and rather the advent of larger forms of communication across distance—as well as across government agencies, i.e., the creation and installation of ARPANET—placed more weight on the value of information, and made it simpler and more necessary to obtain this information by clandestine means.[35] This history is relevant for many reasons, but particularly because of the emphasis placed within *President's Men* on telephonic communication, and specifically on the dangers of this communication.

In addition to the growth and history of various technologies, it is essential to not only recognize but also discuss the source material for the script and much of the direction. *President's Men* is not the only film in this argument that is based on pre-existing material—Chapter Three also focuses on two films adapted from novels—but it is the only film that is

[33] Olmstead v. U.S., 277 U.S. 438, 145 (U.S. 1928) 1-4.
[34] Katz v. U.S., 389 US 347 (9th Cir. 1967) 6.
[35] "ARPANET," Encyclopedia Britannica, April 26, 2024, https://britannica.com/topic/ARPANET. 1-2.

based on real world events. *President's Men*, as mentioned earlier, tracks the journalism investigation that exposed the Nixon Administration's and the Committee to Reelect the President's (CRP) involvement in the Watergate scandal. At the forefront of these investigations were Woodward and Bernstein. Both the political context of this scandal, as well as the context of the new technological era are crucial in approaching the content of the film.

As explained above, conversation over the phone controls much of the important dialogue within *President's Men,* providing not only important information related to the case, but also crucial atmosphere related to the role of sound. One such phone call occurs about 25 minutes into the film, after Bernstein has spoken to a former secretary in the office of Howard Hunt. Finding out that Hunt was especially interested in Chappaquiddick, he calls the White House Library and asks the librarian he reaches if she remembers Hunt checking out any books on the subject. She answers in the affirmative, saying she remembers him checking out "a whole lot of material." She asks Bernstein to hold on while she looks for the checkout card. Twelve seconds pass, with Bernstein waiting on the phone.[36] Those twelve seconds—generously estimated to five by Bernstein—are seconds in which there is silence on the other end of the line. It is unclear whether Bernstein has been put on hold or if the phone has simply been put down, but there is no sound coming through the phone. The pressure of the moment exists in this silence. This confirmation of Hunt's interest in books about Kennedy could be an important piece of the Watergate puzzle at this point, and the weight of this small piece of information is entirely palpable, simply in twelve seconds of silence. It is as if the proof lies in this silence, in the work that is being done to uncover the truth. However, the truth is not uncovered in this moment. When the librarian comes back on the phone, she says she was mistaken—there is no

[36] *All the President's Men,* directed by Alan J. Pakula (Wildwood Enterprises, 1975), 0:25:01-0:36:06, DVD.

evidence that Hunt checked any books out, and she denies even knowing him. It is clear from the speed at which she changes her story as well as the tone and pattern of her speech that something is wrong. She is suddenly annoyed, confused and stuttering her way through the claim that she was wrong about Hunt existing in their system.[37] Suddenly the silence represents something else. Rather than containing the tension and excitement of possible evidence being uncovered, it becomes imbued with danger. What was found? Who interfered? What happened to change this woman's mind? The speech and silence work hand in hand to emphasize these questions. The pause to search for information turns to a pause steeped in fear of the same information, and as such, the information itself loses meaning. After Bernstein explains this event to Woodward, who questions the discovery of evidence, they have this conversation:

> First of all, 'I think I've got a bunch of books from Hunt.' Five seconds later, she says that 'I don't even know a Mr. Hunt.'
> That's not enough proof I mean if there was just a piece of paper that said that Hunt was taking out books on Kennedy and Chappaquiddick. Like a library slip or something.
> Hunt also took out books from the Library of Congress, but what's more important is that someone *got to her* in that space of five seconds.[38]

The idea that somebody "got to" the librarian essentially contains the entire crux of this argument. The silence which occurred on the phone was enough time for somebody to get to her and change that which she would say. This sort of interference is something which is only possible through the use of sound here, and specifically through the way the conversation occurs, i.e., over the phone. We can see Bernstein on the phone; we watch as he waits for the librarian to respond, smoking a cigarette and typing a few words on his typewriter. But we cannot see the librarian—we cannot see what she is doing or who she speaks to in the silence, and we are left to fill in the blanks the reality. In this way, the viewer becomes wholly linked to Bernstein. We hear

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[37] *President's Men*, 0:25:30.
[38] Ibid., 0:27:27-0:27:53.

what he hears—and do not hear what he does not. It is as if the viewer is part of the conversation and thus is part of the denial. There is a clear and obvious cover up right before Bernstein's—and our—ears.

Because of the silence, this early on in the film there is a development of the failures of interpretation described in Chapter One. On a certain level, is impossible to interpret the silence. It is clear that, as Bernstein says, somebody got to the librarian in that time and told her to change her story. However, it is impossible for him or the viewer to know exactly what happened. We are only able to interpret the silence, and the changed story, to a certain extent without more information—without more sound. The tension and drama are contained within the silence, but so is the confusion and implied danger of the story. The question then becomes one of intention and presence: was the librarian truly gotten to? Or did she realize on her own accord that the information was not suitable to be given out without the promise of potential danger? Was she concerned about telling Bernstein the truth? Or concerned about who else could possibly be listening? There is not, and cannot, be a full reading of the silence, which sets up the basis for understanding in the rest of the film, and particularly the rest of the film's telephone conversations.

Thinking about silence, there are several other moments within *President's Men* where that lack of sound or lack of dialogue serves as to develop paranoid feelings, more even than the actual sound itself. After receiving several confirmations as to the identities of government officials involved in the CRP paying off of the Watergate burglars, Woodward and Bernstein finish an article naming several of these men—including John Mitchell, Jeb Magruder and H.R. Haldeman. However, Washington Post editors Ben Bradlee and Howard Simons refuse to run the story. They are worried that Woodward and Bernstein are missing an extra source, and that the

legitimacy of the story—and by extension, the legitimacy of the Post—will be called into question. In order to ensure the story goes to press, Woodward asks Bernstein to try and get in touch with an unnamed contact he has in the Department of Justice who will provide one more confirmation that Haldeman was the final controller of the CRP fund that financed the burglary. Once on the phone, the contact refuses to confirm, telling Bernstein "I won't say anything about Haldeman, not ever." When faced with this refusal, Bernstein says he will take the pressure of admission off of the contact—he is going to count to ten and if there is any reason that they should hold on publishing the story, the man on the other end should hang up before Bernstein is finished counting. He slowly makes his way from one to ten, and in the silence after ten the voice on the phone says "You got it straight now? Everything okay?"[39] It is in this moment that the weight of words is clearest. The evidence is in the silence, in the lack of confirmation, in the lack of sound.

That lack is the smoking gun, the proof needed to legitimize the story. The importance of sound is clear here, with the semantic mode of listening characterizing sound as well as the silence. Yet again, this sort of communication occurs over the phone rather than in person, as a way of placing emphasis on the technological medium necessary to this sort of information transference. And again, there is a crucial point to eb made about the ubiquity of tapping. There is no telling who could be listening to the conversation, and rather than allowing his voice to confirm Bernstein's question, the contact lets Bernstein do the talking, removing the potential culpability of his admittance from the situation. The pressure and tension of the moment, and of the validity of the story, is built up in Bernstein's counting to ten.

[39]*President's Men*, 1:58:56-2:00:07.

This scene is extremely similar to, and also a complete inverse, of the earlier discussed phone conversation between Bernstein and the White House librarian. Whereas in that scene, the failure of interpretation came from the silence on the phone, in this moment that is where interpretation functions. Where speech is impossible, silence takes over, and the only way to communicate is within this silence. Though it is not complete silence—there is still the sound of Bernstein counting—the other element of this scene is the fact that Bernstein asked him to stay silent and hang up if the story was no good. As such, it is unclear if the silence on the other end of the phone is simply the contact waiting, or if he has planned to hang up at any point. It is only when his voice is heard at the end of Bernstein's counting that there is a sense of relief. This sound at the end of the period of silence then ultimately serves as the actual confirmation. Silence does not exist without sound, nor does it hold any semantic meaning unless there is a withholding of necessary sound. The building up of this tension mimics the feeling of paranoia, as the concern related to his response grows and grows before dissipating into relief. Somehow, here, it is *success* in interpretation which is found in the silence.

Finally, this consideration of silence extends past its role as a conduit of information, and instead turns into an absolute necessity. After meeting with Deep Throat for the last time, Woodward goes to Bernstein's apartment. Immediately he walks to a stereo and turns on Vivaldi's Trumpet Concerto in C, at an extremely high volume. Within 5 seconds of being in the same space as Bernstein and without saying a single word, Woodward has informed both him and the audience that there is not only the possibility but probability that someone is listening to them. The weight of the word is at its heaviest, as the two protagonists who have been chasing this story for the entire film have finally caught up with it, and must face the consequences of this action. After turning on the music Woodward sits at a typewriter and types the following:

Deep Throat says our lives may be in danger []

SURVEILLANCE BUGGING

Bernstein then pushes him aside and types

I talked to Sloan. Heard what we wanted to hear. He said he would have named Haldeman to Grand Jury – was ready to blame Haldeman but nobody asked him about Haldeman![40]

In a wholly narrative capacity, the film reaches a climax here. There is confirmation about Haldeman's role in the break in, confirmation about bugging, and confirmation that Woodward and Bernstein's lives are in danger. Beyond this though, the formal emphasis placed on sound throughout the film comes to a clear and crucial head. Woodward and Bernstein's investigating has finally caught up with them, and this is markedly made clear by use of sound. Here, there is the same issue of interpretation from earlier in the film, but it is reversed entirely. Now, rather than it being the individual on the other end of conversation with Woodward and Bernstein, they are the ones who must exist in silence. The White House librarian is silent while finding information, and is "gotten to" in that silence. The justice contact is silent in order to provide information without being "gotten." Here Woodward and Bernstein *must* be silent, in order to share information, and avoid being "gotten to" themselves. They are no longer the characters with questions, they are the characters with answers.

By extension, the viewer is now this character as well. The information communicated by the typewriter is readable by the viewer, and as such the viewer is in on that which has been discovered. Thus, we are pushed into the same position of danger as W&B in this moment. They cannot communicate aurally with one another or with the audience and so the link between

[40]*President's Men*, 2:10:00-2:10:53.

protagonists and viewer is strongest. Their paranoia becomes our paranoia—their lives, our life. This link is only one that exists because of the way that sound, and in this moment silence, functions in relation to the truth.

**"THERE IS NO EVIDENCE OF A CONSPIRACY."**

The second installment in Pakula's "paranoia trilogy" is 1974's *The Parallax View*. Coming out the same year as *The Conversation*, as well as the same year that Nixon resigned from office, the political climate both within and out of Hollywood was becoming more and more tense. Unlike many of the films within this argument, however, *Parallax* is more focused on and concerned with the way one reporter faces persecution in his own investigation into the assassination of a presidential candidate. In this way, it seems to echo a Kennedy-era sense of political intrigue, but through the lens of a post-Johnson, post-Nixon America. It is focused on narrative and characterization, and as such occasionally is too caught up in its own plot to speak to underlying fears—that being said, it is still a developed portrait of collective paranoia, and the way that said paranoia is communicated to a viewer through both image and sound—in this case particularly through music.

In order to successfully broach much of *Parallax* in relation to paranoia, it is crucial to introduce and build up a working definition of semiotic analysis. Breaking semiotics down can be somewhat daunting, but in this context, it is simply important to understand the relationship between what Saussure calls the signifier (the sign) and the signified (its signification). In *Course on General Linguistics,* he writes:

> A linguistic sign is not a link between a thing and a name, but between a concept and a sound pattern. The sound pattern is not actually a sound; for a sound is something physical. A sound pattern is the hearer's psychological impression of a sound, as given to him by the evidence of his senses. This sound pattern may be called a 'material' element

> only in that it is the representation of our sensory impressions…This other element is generally of a more abstract kind: the concept.[41]

In his own defining of the subjects, he makes sure to point out the importance of language, and particularly the *sound* of language as that on which this theory rests. The sound pattern here corresponds to the signifier, while the concept matches with the signified. The synthesis of the two is where a sign is formed. Even with this emphasis on sound pattern, however, semiotics is an inherently visual form of analysis. To make comparisons between signifiers and signs one must be witnessing an image, or must be able to conjure a specific image in their mind.[42] The understanding of image as sign is best understood when understanding noise as signal. By an image serving as a sign, it is serving as something which is meant to be interpreted, based on a corresponding verbal signifier. Noise which must be interpreted in some way—whose function is inscribed with meaning—is also called signal. It is as if the sound which necessitated semantic listening in chapter one was signal, hence the need for interpretation. Here, is the connection between image-based semiotic analysis and sound-based signal analysis made clearest. This theory is crucial to understanding much of what is put on screen in a very general sense, but it is explicitly thematized within *Parallax*.

On this note of image and sound, the question of subjectivity initially raised within *Parallax* is less rooted in the aural, and more so in the visual. About halfway through the film, Jack has traced the suspicious killings and coverups from the first half of the film to the titular Parallax Corporation. He ventures into the Parallax Headquarters, and proceeds participates in an aptitude test they have for potential employees. The viewer watches as Jack is placed in the test position, before the perspective is altered so that we are the ones engaging in said test.[43] There is

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[41] Saussure, *General Linguistics,* 67.
[42] Ibid., 65.
[43] *The Parallax View,* directed by Alan J. Pakula (Doubleday Productions, 1974), 0:55:09, DVD.

a direct association between that which Jack is seeing and what we are seeing. We are he in this moment, subject to the same testing that he is, and becoming further informed about the way that Parallax operates in this moment. At first, it seems almost as if this montage of imagery is meant as a sort of brainwashing, similar to the Pavlovian conditioning seen in films such as *A Clockwork Orange.* This is a classic image—a single character subjected to a barrage of imagery meant to shape their ideology. That is not the case here. Firstly, Jack has filled out a form and is engaging with this test wholly out of his own curiosity. Secondly, and more importantly, brainwashing does not seem to be the goal of Parallax, nor the goal of this presentation. It seems, rather, it is meant as a way of selecting impressionable participants who could be successfully pressured into killing for Parallax. It is less about manipulating, and rather tapping into preexisting feelings within these individuals.

The cycle of images is intercut with various frames of a black background with one word in white text. This word changes throughout the montage, but every time is one of nine words, namely "LOVE" "MOTHER" "FATHER" "HOME" "COUNTRY" "GOD" "ENEMY" "HAPPINESS" and "ME." These words are repeated on 42 different frames in a varying order. Overwhelmingly, the word which occurs most often is the final one listed above, "ME." This word is placed before images of children and mothers, men and women having sex, soldiers, hanging bodies, and Marvel Comics superhero Thor.[44] The only sound throughout this scene is the diegetic music accompanying the presentation – a departure for a film that primarily relies on non-diegetic music to create its mood. This music begins calmly, with gentle guitar, bass, orchestral instruments, and soft humming as images of family, nature, houses and churches pass by. When the presentation shifts to images associated with happiness, namely money, a steak, a

[44] Ibid., 0:55:14-0:59:55.

bottle of Scotch, a woman's naked body and a Rolls Royce, the music becomes slightly more pompous, featuring a horn section playing a melody with a sense of patriotism and grandeur. This melody continues, with a driving snare drum beginning as the images become of the flag, warfare, and people living in poverty. From here to the end of the presentation the elements of the music described simply begin to layer on top of one another and build into an intense almost cacophonous piece of music. The images are overwhelming, and the sound is similarly so.

Assuming the purpose of this montage to be that which is described above, i.e., inform test participants of the role they can play at Parallax, by way of appealing to various elements of the subconscious, the heightened occurrence of the word "ME" makes considerable sense. The association between image and text in this moment appeals to subconscious ideas one might have regarding their own place in relationship to those close to them—"MOTHER" "FATHER" "HOME" "LOVE"—as well as those far removed from them—"ENEMY" "GOD"—and their greater situation in life—"HAPPINESS" and "COUNTRY." This section particularly is where the connection to semiotic analysis becomes clearest. There is a somewhat obvious attempt to resignify these key terms at this point. The words are shown alongside familiar imagery, and then this imagery is altered, often in favor of more disturbing associations. The same words are shown repeatedly, but there are a total of 112 different images shown in relation to said words. Many of the images are repeated, most of the times in new successive arrangements, and also following the projection of different words. For example, an image of the White House is used in sections of the presentation heralded by the words "COUNTRY" "HOME" "FATHER" "ENEMY" and "ME." [45]

[45] *The Parallax View*, 0:58:44.

In this way, there is purposeful semiotic trickery occurring on the part of Pakula. The meaning of each word, and moreover the sign that is developed, shifts based on the editing of the sequence. The White House is both father, and enemy, and supposedly me. The implications of the various images are confused in this scene. The purpose of this related is to acknowledge and identify the changes in media consumption at the time, and specifically how said changes bolster images of paranoia in the media of the time, i.e., in *The Parallax View* as a whole. There is an inability to keep up with how the images flash by, and their relationship with the content of the signifier. This emphasizes the confusion of this moment, and speaks to a sort of failure of proper interpretation, similar to the failure of interpretation present in both *The Conversation* and *Blow Out.* Here, however, the relationships between these images seems to be more about the way that media in general is able to resignify certain words or images to fit certain forms of messaging—even deeply important terms such as family and God can be twisted to mean something entirely unfamiliar, just by way of media alteration.

*Parallax* is a very structured film, focused greatly on character and narrative. As such, this experimental aside about halfway through seems disconnected from the remainder of the piece. This digression, however, is ultimately crucial to the argument. There is a sense of semantic failure in deciphering this section of the film, on both the part of Jack and the part of the viewer, yet also a clear idea of what the intention is. Even as the viewer engages with the scene and understands the manipulation that the Parallax Corp. is aiming for, there is still a general understanding of the function of the test. The sound and image work in tandem to present an idea of what the Parallax Corp. is seeking to accomplish, and because of both the assumed inability to relate to the presentation and the understanding of its purpose, the full semantic implication of the scene is lost.

Due to the focus placed on the plot, *Parallax View* generally aims for visual and aural clarity. The dialogue is determined by the plot, and features nothing extra. In addition to this montage, however, there are several others moments when the film explicitly draws the viewer's attention to sound, and namely sound recording and mediating technology. After successfully grounding the plane with the bomb that Parallax planted, Jack returns to the Parallax Corp. and follows one of its employees to a convention center. From this point until the end of the film, the sound is entirely diegetic. The music which plays is being performed by the band on hand, and all other sound comes from the speech of characters both on and off screen. Half of this scene takes place on the floor of the hall, while the other half takes place in the rafters, several Parallax employees stand, and where Jack hides. The scene begins with music, as Senator George Hammond, the replacement presidential nominee following Carroll's murder, arrives at the rehearsal for his rally. The audience knows that Jack is here because he followed a Parallax employee, and as such it is safe to assume a similar assassination is about to occur.[46]

Following his arrival, Hammond mimes delivery of the speech he intends to give later that evening, the music then starts up again, and the scene shifts to focus on what is occurring in the rafters. The camera tracks the same unnamed Parallax employee followed by Jack as he walks along the rafters. There is then a cut to show Jack, presumably following the man from Parallax. It cuts back to the same initial wide shot of the first man, then cuts to a shot of a rifle on the floor of the rafter, before returning to focus on the ground level. Hammond is shown getting into the golf cart he arrived in and beginning to drive away. The next series of shots can be broken up into three sections, namely, the moments preceding the shooting in the rafters, the

[46] *The Parallax View*, 1:23:51.

moments preceding the shooting on the ground and the moments following the shooting.[47] Let us break down the first and third of these sections.

Firstly, the moments in the rafters preceding the shooting. There is no observable sound in the rafters which is coming from the in this moment. The sound is coming from the music being played by the band below. The secretive nature of both Jack and the Parallax employee is emphasized by the masking of their movements by this overwhelming music. There is much watching and following on Jack's part, as he attempts to stay hidden but also track the movements of the Parallax employee. Then, there are the moments after the shooting. The audience hears three shots in these moments—though it is noticeably unclear whether three shots are fired or if it is the sound of the same single shot repeated when shown the different perspectives. Operating under the assumption that there are three shots fired, only one shot hits Hammond successfully, as we see one single bullet wound in his chest during the closeup of him being shot. Following that is a basic shot showing the reactions and movement of the other people in the room with Hammond. It is the next shot that is immensely crucial. It is a brief shot of the tape recorder playing Hammond's speech, continuing to run even as he has been shot.[48] The people are important in this moment, but so is the technology. Hammond's voice has been wholly removed from his person with his death, and with this shot it is imbued into a technological form, devoid of any sense of personage. He has been killed but his voice continues on, a fact and occurrence impossible without the technology shown. The choice to show the recorder as opposed to simply having his voice continue to speak, highlights a sense of the technological moment and paranoia related to it. It is as if Hammond still lives, in the way that his words do. Moreover, his ideas and beliefs live on in this speech—that which he would offer

[47] *The Parallax View*, 1:32:54.
[48] Ibid., 1:32:58.

as president now only exists as something to be heard, not touched or seen. This separation of his voice from his body, mimics the separation between word and image from the Parallax presentation featured earlier in the film. The way the speech must be approached without Hammond's body to deliver it creates a similar issue of interpretation of that in the presentation scene. His words are complicated by being associated instead with the image of the recorder. The assumption is clear and direct—he spoke the speech, it was recorded, and is being played back. The choice to remind the viewer of this moments after he has been shot, highlights the fears and anxieties of this kind of technology in a clear and effective way. The plan to assassinate him has failed, but his voice lives on.

Following the assassination of Hammond, and the murder of Jack, the film cuts to a shot of the same board of figures that opens the films. It is seven men seated behind an official desk, the same men from the opening credits of the film, which occur after the Carrol assassination. The men then deliver a speech relating the facts surrounding the Hammond assassination. The speeches at the top and bottom of the film are essentially identical, adhering to the following structured, script-esque format:

1. Introduction, noting that this is an announcement about and inquiry
2. Emphasis on the fact that it is an announcement not a press conference, and as such no questions will be fielded.
3. Mention that there is a full report related to this investigation in progress that will be made available.
4. A breakdown of the results of the investigation, i.e., who is responsible and why they committed the assassination in question.
5. Rejection of the existence of a conspiracy
6. Condemnation of assumptions made by press and so called "conspiracy peddlers."
7. A reminder that the evidence will be made available in a later report, and thanks.[49]

When the first announcement is made following the assassination of Carroll, there is a sense of the formality behind the statement, and as audience members we do not know any better than to

[49] *The Parallax View*, 0:05:17, 1:38:13

trust the statement they are making. However, the conclusion of the film completely upends this trust. The statement at the end is almost identical to that made at the beginning, and with the knowledge of Jack innocence the depth of the corruption is made clear.

It is crucial to note the delivery of this as a speech, and particularly the way the actual sound in the scene operates. The camera begins in a wide shot quite a distance from the table at which the committee sits. The sound is direct here, and in this way the sound starts off quiet and distant. As the announcement is delivered the camera moves in, getting closer and closer to the head of the committee as he speaks. The volume of his speech increases as this motion happens, as would be the case were the viewer actually in the room. The same effect occurs in the final announcement, except in the reverse, the speech getting quieter as the camera moves away. In the beginning, the movement is towards the committee, towards the noise and in this way is towards the signal and towards the truth. Alternatively, the exact opposite is true of the ending. As the camera moves away from the committee, so does the viewer, and as such the signal and relative truth become more and more distant. The shot concludes with the table as far as it began at the top of the film, floating in a void.[50] It seems grotesque, and our intake of the words is shaped by the image, and the way that the space is dictated by this image. Jack has been killed, and his name has been ascribed to the assassination of Hammond. Specifically, in regards to the assassination the committee has this to say:

> An overwhelming body of evidence has revealed that Frady was obsessed with the Carroll assassination. And in his confused and distorted mind, seems to have imagined that Hammond was responsible for the senator's death. He was equally convinced that Hammond was somehow plotting to kill him, and it is for those reasons that Frady assassinated him.[51]

[50] *The Parallax View*, 1:39:40.
[51] Ibid., 1:38:40-1:39:30.

His death comes to dictate his life: his work is conceived merely as obsession comes to mean nothing. That which the viewer knows to be true comes to dissolve into meaninglessness, emphasizing the film's sense of futility. Particularly, with this information being communicated by the committee, it is a clear image of the powers that be controlling the narrative, in a wholly literal sense. Their narration takes all that Jack was working to expose and dismisses it as obsession and instability. In this way, they dismiss the viewer as well. That which we have seen and heard alongside Jack means nothing, and there is a sense that we are being denied information and freedom in the same ways that Jack is. We are inextricably linked to him and his investigation, and must grapple with what it means to be *told* that what we know is true is not.

The title of this chapter is "The Press" and it is clear that comes from the career identity of all three protagonists featured in these films. So why the press? What is the impact from this type of character? Without venturing to claim that there is one acceptable answer here, this paper calls upon the conclusion of *All the President's Men* to aid in responding. The final scene of the film is a continuous shot within the Washington Post offices. There is a TV in the foreground playing the second term inauguration of Nixon, specifically swearing in. In the background are Woodward and Bernstein, seated at their desks, typing. There are then several shots of automated headlines being typed by a typewriter. They read, in succession:

> January 11, 1973
> Hunt pleads guilty to three counts of conspiracy, burglary.
> August 17, 1973
> McGruder pleads guilty to helping plan Watergate.
> November 5, 1973
> Segretti sentenced to six months.
> February 26, 1974
> Kalmbach pleads guilty to illegal White House fundraising.
> April 6, 1974
> Chapin guilty of lying to Grand Jury.
> April 12, 1974
> Porter gets 30 days in jail for lying to FBI.

May 17, 1974
Former Attorney General Kleindienst enters guilty plea.
June 4, 1974
Colson pleads guilty to felony, admits justice obstruction.
March 13, 1975
Stans admits guilt to charges involving illegal fundraising.
January 2, 1975
Mitchell, Haldeman, Ehrlichman guilty on all counts in massive Watergate scandal.
August 6, 1974
Tape shows Nixon approved coverup — President says he won't resign.
August 9, 1974
Nixon resigns.
Gerald Ford to become 38th President at noon today.[52]

All of these are the dates and headlines of actual articles published by the Washington Post. Most, if not all, of the investigation done which uncovered the conspiracy of Watergate was carried out by various members of the press, particularly within the staff at the Washington Post. The intention and effect of journalism in this capacity is to uncover the truth—the main goal of the protagonists in *The Parallax View* and *All the President's Men,* whether they succeed or fail. These characters seek information in whatever dangerous ways it must be obtained, speaking into machines and listening through them—risking any infringement of privacy inherent in these technological means. The way that they interpret sound and rebuild hidden narratives through this interpretation characterizes the ability for the American individual to achieve productivity in paranoia, and extend this achievement through to the viewer.

[52] *All the President's Men,* 2:15:13-2:16:26.

# Chapter Three: The Pawn

Finally, this third coupling introduces the final archetype: *the pawn*. Here the pawn serves to denote a character who exists at the mercy and will of higher, controlling forces. This character can also be thought of as an everyman, a sort of innocent who suffers almost from a case of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. What is crucial to understand however, is that while he is being manipulated and abused by a higher power, he still exists within a greater political structure. In the case of Joe Turner, the protagonist in Sydney Pollack's *Three Days of the Condor* (1975,) an employee of the CIA is faced with the murder of the entire research division of which he is part, and must flee from those looking to kill him as well. Turner represents an individual operating under the direction of the government, who is forced to exist and advocate for himself in a persecution narrative. Similarly, the other focus of this chapter *Marathon Man* (1976, John Schlesinger) features a student protagonist, Babe Levy, who is thrown into a plot of Nazi intrigue because of familial connections. Both of these characters are relatable in their seeming innocence, and the persecution they face. This persecution structure is enhanced when considering Richard Hofstadter's image of the paranoid spokesman within *The Paranoid Style in American Politics,* as well as the acoustic landscape of each film, both diegetic and non-diegetic.

## "I READ BOOKS."

Within *Three Days*, the characterization of Turner as a pawn seems initially complicated, as he does knowingly work for the CIA. He is directly linked to a government organization, and particularly to *the* organization most closely connected to surveillance. Moreover, he is a researcher and most if not all his work has to do with retrieving and reworking information

through visual and aural means. However, this role is exactly what does make him a pawn. After taking Kathy hostage and fighting with her about his purpose, he tells her exactly what he does, stating: "I work for the CIA. I am not a spy. I just read books."[53] Turner knows that Kathy understands the weight of his being a CIA employee. He knows this will probably inform her cooperation and the way she approaches him. However, he is also feeling as scared as she is, and seems to be trying to calm her down with this admission. This description of his job allows the audience to think back to the massacre at the start of the film. He is acknowledging that he works for the CIA, but not that he is a spy, and mostly wants to impress that he is harmless and afraid. He is a pawn on the chessboard of the CIA, and can be used and moved however the player wish, though he has little control over his own fate or the fate of his colleagues.

Here, it is helpful to return to Hofstadter's theory of paranoia, particularly early on in his essay when he discusses the spokesman versus the paranoic.

> But there is a vital difference between the paranoid spokesman in politics and the clinical paranoic: although they both tend to be overheated, oversuspicious, overaggressive, grandiose and apocalyptic in expression, the clinical paranoic sees the hostile and conspiratorial world in which he feels himself to be living as directed specifically *against him*; whereas the spokesman of the paranoid style finds it directed against a nation, a culture, a way of life whose fate affects not himself alone but millions of others.[54]

The argument here is that Turner is, himself, a representation of this spokesman of the paranoid style. He is the sole survivor of a targeted attack, on a group of people employed by the government, who are presumably innocents in the face of a larger attack on the CIA as a whole. However, in this case Hofstadter is speaking metaphorically, about an individual who simply exists in their day to day while feeling as though they are being targeted, tracked, or persecuted for simply existing. In this case, there is a real threat and Turner is a real target—however, he

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[53] *Three Days of the Condor,* directed by Sydney Pollack (Dino De Laurentiis Corporation, 1975), 0:42:25, DVD.
[54] Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style", 4.

still comes to serve as this extended representative of the whole nation, both civilian and government. As an innocent, he shares similarities with most citizens, and those trying to find and kill him represent a grander enemy, who could possibly target any individual who simply knows too much.

This characterization of Turner as the spokesman of the paranoid style is fully developed at the end of the film, when it becomes clear that the hit on the office was organized by Atwood, the Deputy CIA Director in the Middle East. Specifically, the hit was carried out because of research carried out by Turner.[55] The idea of knowing too much reaches new levels, as it is not such that the entire CIA is under attack, as previously suggested. Rather, it was an attack by CIA heads on those who work for and under them. Thus, the spokesman definition is complicated and fully realized. Turner no longer serves as a representative of the government being targeted by an unknown enemy, rather he is truly what Hofstadter represents. He is an individual who serves as a conduit of paranoia for everyday citizens fearful of government surveillance. The CIA is the enemy, for Turner, for the U.S. of the film, and ultimately for the viewer.

The question then is how does this application of Hofstadter relate to the sound within the film? This question is answered in analysis of several key scenes in *3 Days,* but also when thinking about the crux of Hofstadter's argument. He is distinctly focused on the idea of conspiracy, and specifically the way that a key aspect of the paranoid spokesman's experience is the believe that everything which surrounds him is a conspiracy.[56] The paranoid spokesman is constantly a target, it is the image of the hunter which shifts based on circumstance and particular historical context. This comes through in section V of Part I of "Paranoid Style…" where Hofstadter discusses the ways different historical figures and movements have born the

[55] *Three Days of the Condor,* 1:43:47.
[56] Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style," 6.

image of "enemy" according to this paranoid spokesman, and particularly the way that this image comes to be mimicked by the PS. "This enemy seems to be on many counts a projection of the self: both the ideal and the unacceptable aspects of the self are attributed to him. A fundamental paradox of the paranoid style is the imitation of the enemy."[57] He then goes on to discuss McCarthy, Welch, Robison, communism and fascism. All of these people and beliefs bear a clear and important villainy in the eyes of the American, even as they contradict one another ideologically. In the same way, the paranoid spokesman must resemble the enemy in order to act out against it. The conspiracy can only be fought with that which it is made of—a fact which Turner and moreover the film's use of sound exemplifies. As is the case with all of these films, sound is used predominantly in order to develop and strengthen a mirrored link between viewer and protagonist. We hear that which Turner hears, same as Harry Caul or Jack Frady. In those situations, the viewer serves as an extension of the hero's ears, but also of their investigatory abilities and rather the semantic interpretation of the audio they are subject to. In the case of Turner—and Babe as we will see—there is a different level of misunderstanding which is missing from the aural experience of the other chapters' heroes. The aural experience in this case is purely paranoid—there is an investigatory quality to both men trying to decipher sound, but rather than them doing so for the sake of an outside source, they are doing so for their own sake. Caul, Terry, Woodward, Bernstein and Frady are concerned with a greater conspiracy, yet still function mostly as removed investigators, whereas Turner and Babe are concerned with a greater conspiracy which they are directly connected to. Each of these men serve as their own sort of paranoid spokesman, but generally the pawn is this concept exemplified.

[57] Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style," 32.

Perhaps the most crucial moment of the film occurs about 15 minutes in, and sets off the rest of the film with a literal bang. After arriving late and speaking to his girlfriend, his other coworkers, and his boss, Turner is tasked to go retrieve lunch for the office. Soon after he leaves, three men enter the office and proceed to shoot and kill all 6 present employees in the office—the receptionist, security guard, boss, and three researchers. These characters have not been known for long, but their deaths are still treated as and felt as deeply tragic. The massacre is incredibly quick—not even two minutes after the killers enter the office, everyone inside is dead.[58] Up until this point in the film there has been mostly consistent scoring and dialogue. During this scene, however, there is no music, and there is very little dialogue. Rather, there is diegetic background noise, namely the sound of an automated translator generating lines of text. This machine is very loud, to the point that it masks the sounds of gunfire for several of the characters. The visual image of violence and murder alongside this consistent, grating, mechanical sound emphasizes the upset within the scene.

The murders themselves and the editing of the scene both move with a sense of urgency, as well as working to further emphasize the technology of the space. The receptionist Mrs. Russell and security guard Jennings are killed first, and immediately after their deaths, Joubert reaches into the lectern next to Russell's desk and rips out an assortment of wires. It is unclear what these wires are, and what the actual function of the lectern is, but there is some sense of the severity of the technology, and the extended responsibility of the technological operations of the office. The film then cuts away to show Turner, just leaving the restaurant. The shot then cuts back, showing Janice again working with the droning translator. Martin is killed next, and is shown collapsed next to his desk, his hand positioned on top of his typewriter—as if he was

[58] *Three Days of the Condor,* 0:13:46-0:15:30.

killed in the act of writing. Harold is next, shot through the bathroom door. After his death there is a cut back to Janice as she collects plates of tape and stores them away.[59] The sound of the translator has almost definitely masked the gunfire elsewhere in the office, and as she is faced with Joubert and his various henchmen he asks her to move away from the window. She watches the mailman approach her with a gun and states "I won't scream," to which Joubert replies "I know." And she is killed. The request for her to move away from the window highlights the locational relationship between the space of the film and the function of the sound. Within the film. While the noise of the translator can mask the noise of the shots within the office, there is no way to prevent the sound of breaking glass and gunshots from drawing attention outside of the office. There is an understanding by the characters of how they must utilize the sound that is inescapable in this act.

Moreover, the sound of the translator serves to inform the audience of the type of work being carried out by the office—namely the supposed innocence in the acts of translating, gathering banal information—as Turner says, "I read books." At this point in the film the actual role of these characters within the greater political scope is mostly unknown, all that is understood is that they are researchers and translators. In this way, by having the massacre occur to the sound of the translator machine, the film is making a statement about the weight of information in this cultural moment. It is as though the sound of the machine is explaining the purpose of the massacre. Nobody asks to be spared, or asks why this is happening to them. Instead, the assailants are simply asked to wait—a request which is ignored. There seems to be an understanding amongst the victims that this sort of attack is unsurprising, a feeling which is

[59] Ibid., 0:14:43.

bolstered by the sound of the translator. Even through gunfire, it continues, developing a sense that the work being carried out here is something which would justify the massacre.

The lack of music and continuation of the translator sound works also to establish an indispensable link between the soundscape experience of the audience and the diegesis of the film. That which is heard in the scene is exactly what an individual in the reality of the film would hear. The sound is not overly edited, and as has been mentioned there is no background score. This aural landscape works to increase the subjective experience of the viewer. It is as though the viewer is there, in the same danger as the victims. Similarly, a link has already been established between the viewer and Turner, so his absence from the scene and our presence at the scene makes us feel as targeted as he. We are aware of what is happening before he is, yet are suffering in the same sort of state of confusion as him. Moreover, because the viewer witnesses the massacre happen, we have a clearer sense of the brutality inherent in this violence. We know that Joubert and the other assassins did not hesitate, and that they seem to have no sense of mercy or remorse. Our own paranoia as viewers links directly to Turner's paranoia as a target—a fact which is built up simply by the sound design of the massacre.

Upon returning and finding his coworkers all killed, Turner flees the scene and heads to a phone booth. On the subject of technology, the phone booth or pay phone is a key extension of the telephonic medium of which most of these films makes calculated use. Pay phones prove so important because of the anonymity that is guaranteed by their use. In each film there is a moment in which a phone booth must be utilized, so as to avoid either identification by way of tracing, or of listening in by way of a tap. Burke uses a pay phone to anonymously report his crimes in *Blow Out*, and Woodward uses a pay phone to arrange meetings with Deep Throat in *All the President's Men.* For Turner, the pay phone first comes up in the moment briefly

mentioned above. After returning to his office and finding his 6 dead coworkers, he heads straight for a payphone. He dials a number and a man we have not been introduced to answers in some sort of a switchboard room. He identifies himself as the Major and asks for Turner's identification, which he at first does not remember, but upon harsh repetition of the Major's request he gives as Condor. Immediately the gravity of the situation increases, as code names are treated not only as the norm but as a necessity for communication. He is then asked what the level of damage on the hit at the office is, to which is replies it was total.[60]

The entire time this conversation is occurring the Major speaks with completely calmness and clarity. He seems mostly unconcerned with the threat, getting agitated only when asking the following question "Are you on a company line?"[61] The mere possibility that Turner would be making this call on an unsecure line not only warrants a confirmation against the fact, but also strikes a chord on the level of paranoid surveillance. To discuss such a matter on a company line as he calls it would be incredibly foolish following the events that have taken place, which both the Major and Turner know, hence Turner's decision to go to a phone booth. The guaranteed anonymity mentioned above seems to be protecting not just Turner, but the entire CIA in this moment. It is as though the researchers in that one office represent a much larger group of American citizens faced with an unknown and unapproachable danger—one which is always listening. Thus, Turner's use of a pay phone emphasizes the individual need for preservation in the face of this grand threat.

> Insofar as he does not usually see himself singled out as the individual victim of a personal conspiracy, he is somewhat more rational and much more disinterested. His sense that his political passions are unselfish and patriotic, in fact, goes far to in intensify his feeling of righteousness and his moral indignation.[62]

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[60] *Three Days of the Condor,* 0:20:19-0:22:19.
[61] Ibid., 0:20:56.
[62] Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style," 5.

This answer that he is in a phone booth is, however, met with scrutiny from the Major who claims that Turner is "in violation of secure communication procedures." Even having taken the steps to access and use a pay phone, he is still not doing the right thing. The proper communication procedure is not explained, and rather the key element here is that Turner is in violation of it, even having taken the precaution of going to a phone booth. The threat of surveillance is skirted, but not properly, raising the question of what the proper procedure would in fact look like. The emphasis on procedure and secrecy in this moment connects to the overarching emphasis placed on the weight of information. The information from within the company carries its own significance, but even in the aftermath of a major loss of life, the fear is that something could be found out. This weight of information is indicative of the larger political context of this film, and of this argument. At this moment, there is no visual connection between these two characters, it is wholly aural, through a technological medium. The paranoia is encapsulated in the lack of specificity and tension of coded speech.

Notably *Condor* is the only film in this argument which depicts the actual act of tapping a phone line. After figuring out that the key taken from Joubert is for a hotel room, Turner goes to said hotel. He is then shown in a telephone operation room, surrounded by countless telephone lines. He connects a receiver to one of the lines, and dials that number. There is a cut to Joubert in a room, and his phone rings. He answers and on the other end, Turner says "I'm doing a survey. Do you believe the Condor's really an endangered species?" Before Joubert has the opportunity to speak, Turner hangs up, and the tap is planted. Turner then turns on a tape recorder, and records as Joubert dials another phone number and has a conversation with a mystery figure, who later turns out to be Atwood.[63] There is a clear and almost instructional

[63] *Three Days of the Condor,* 1:29:58-1:32:49.

moment here. At several points earlier on in the film the threat of a wiretap has been made clear, but in this moment this threat comes together in a myriad of ways. The technology itself is given space and tapping shifts from an amorphous sort of threat to a real physical process. Moreover, it is a real physical process being carried out by Turner—or rather, the hero. Tapping in many ways feels like the key source of the anxiety and paranoia thread in all of the films in this argument, and namely the idea that the "Enemy" for lack of a better term is listening in. In this moment, however, Turner is the one doing the tapping. The technology is being used to help the hero not hurt them. This is a moment of total control—the fear of being listened to is turned around and he becomes the listener. This reverse of control presents a success in interpretation, one of the first and only. Turner knows exactly what to do in order to glean the proper information, the technology that must be used to do so, and the way in which he should go about it—namely, in the same secretive way that Joubert and the corrupted internal CIA administration have been operating throughout the film. The technology is crucial on several level as well. Not only is Turner utilizing a wiretap, but he is also recording that which he is hearing through the phone line. The memorialization of the private conversation, as well as the phone dial tones, creates the sense of paranoia that we have come to know in this type of film. But, in this case, the getter is gotten.

Then, there is a sort of reversal here of the hero and enemy. This reversal comes through even clearer in *Marathon Man,* but the same concept finds a sort of foundation here with Turner, and specifically with Hofstadter. As is touched upon above, Hofstadter is highly concerned with the role of the paranoid spokesman as a sort of American hero, and one who acts against a generalized enemy. Turner as spokesman and Joubert as enemy allows for the viewer to experience most of the suspense and paranoia of the film through Turner. At this point, though,

the paranoia is felt through Joubert. He is the one being tapped; his privacy is being infringed upon. Up until this point this infringement is associated directly with the actions of the enemy—so for Turner to be the one responsible confuses the intuition of relation that the viewer spends the whole film grappling with. This taps back into Hofstadter in a crucial way at this moment. Though much of *Paranoid Style* is focused around paranoia as falsehood—i.e., fear and paranoia about potential persecution of the paranoid spokesman based in nonreality—Hofstadter also recognizes the ways that paranoia can exist based in reality. "What distinguishes the paranoid style is not, then, the absence of verifiable facts…but rather the curious leap in imagination that is always made at some critical point in the recital of events."[64] The style does not exclusively exist in fantasy, but can also be found in exaggerated response to real world events. In this case, it is less that Turner's actions are exaggerated so much as they are somewhat improper related to his role as the persecuted hero. He realizes that there seems to be nobody he can trust, and for the sake of self-preservation takes on the task of finding Joubert and uncovering the truth. Doing so by way of wiretap allows the audience to sympathize with Joubert by way of sound, while still understanding and supporting Turner's need to do so—complicating the subjective reckoning within the scope of the film through technological means.

**"IS IT SAFE?"**

An alternate image of the pawn is found in Babe Levy, the protagonist of John Schlesinger's *Marathon Man* (1976) Adapted from a novel by William Goldman, *Marathon Man* takes the feelings of internal political paranoia and persecution and expands upon them in a global sense. Rather than representing the villain by way of the CIA or some other government

[64] Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style," 37.

organization, the villain in this film is a single individual named Christian Szell. A former Nazi war criminal attempting to locate and cash in on Holocaust diamonds stored by his late brother, Szell comes to represent the ideology and brutalism of fascism as a whole. In this way, the application of Hofstadter's argument is both complicated and reinforced, as will be explored.

Persecution is a major element realized in *Marathon Man,* in both a literal and symbolic sense. It is literal, as Babe is in fact being tracked and terrorized by Szell because of that which he is assumed to know. The symbolic aspect comes from maybe the most significant aspect of Babe's character, namely his running. The first shots of the film are of Babe running, immediately the audience is made to understand that he is a runner. Not only that, but in the scene following the car accident, we are shown his competitive spirit, racing with another student for no reason other than pride. In these scenes of him running, there is ominous background music but moreover there are the sounds of his feet hitting the ground and of him, breathless, making his way.[65] This sort of design continues throughout the film. The scenes of Babe running are almost always accompanied by nondiegetic score and the sound of his own breathing. The score here is composed by Michael Small, frequent collaborator of Alan Pakula, and the composer of the score for *The Parallax View*. I mention this in order to acknowledge the style of music within *Marathon Man* and atmosphere for which Small normally composes. The music is not what is important here, however. There is an emphasis placed on the physical when considering the sound of Babe running.

He serves as that representative in the same way that Turner does. Both of these characters are individuals who are themselves being tracked and, as Hofstadter puts it, persecuted for their own role in differing circumstances of political intrigue. In this way they

[65] *Marathon Man*, directed (Robert Evans-Sidney Beckerman Productions, 1976), 0:8:26-0:10:30, DVD.

match the definition of the clinical paranoic. They are individuals facing individual strife and danger, working against a clearly defined enemy. However, they also both works to represent that paranoid spokesman who Hofstadter defines as separate from the CP. They are individuals, yes, but they serve to represent the viewer and inadvertently represent the audience as a whole unit. Yet, while Turner represents the American individual against the American system, Babe represents the American individual against the foreign individual, within the greater context of an unwelcoming American system. This shift in the definition of Babe as paranoid spokesman comes through in scenes of flashback to his suspected communist father, his experiences with kidnapping and torture, and finally in a full reversal of the concept of hero and villain connected to the forced relatability of Szell himself. All of these points are bolstered by *Marathon Man's* soundscape, particularly in the way Small's score functions alongside the film's diegesis.

Babe is a graduate student, actively working on his doctoral thesis—focused on tyranny within the American political system. We are introduced to his character first, before being introduced to his brother Doc. Though it is at first unclear what Doc specifically does for a living, it is clear that it is not what Babe thinks it is. Babe operates under the assumption that his brother works a nondescript high-ranking job in oil business, when in reality the audience sees he is some sort of a spy, working both for the U.S. government and working with Szell. It is unclear where his exact loyalties lie, as he is killed by Szell about halfway through the film.[66]

Following his being stabbed by Szell, Doc is able to make his way to Babe's apartment just before dying on Babe's floor. After being questioned by the police, Babe is approached and spoken to by Janeway, who reveals the truth about Doc's profession. "The truth is they're all paranoid shmucks. Now when the gap gets too large between what the FBI can handle

[66] *Marathon Man*, 0:58:10.

effectively and what the CIA doesn't want to deal with, that's where we come in."[67] Janeway and Doc exist outside of both the FBI and CIA, in a wholly clandestine group called "the Division." This reveal is more shocking for Babe rather than the viewer, as we have already seen Doc's various interactions with LeClerc, Nicole, and Szell, all of which point to some sort of secret intelligence organization. Babe is shocked by this news, however, and when Janeway leaves, he gets in the bath. During this scene, there are several shots which serve as visual flashbacks as Babe remembers his childhood, and specifically his father—a note which I will return to. These are silent flashbacks—the only sound during the scene is nondiegetic score, and the sounds of Babe breathing and moving in the bathwater.[68]

However, the flashback is interrupted by a sound—specifically, by a creak. Babe snaps to attention, looking panicked out the bathroom door. There is then the faint sound of whispering, another creak, and a light is turned off outside of the bathroom. From here, various shadows can be seen as lights continue to be turned off by the unseen figures in the apartment. However, it is crucial that the initial notification of their presence happens by way of sound. Here, we see the inherent fear built into the aural versus the visual. Being able to hear someone and not see them speaks to a sense of hidden meaning or hidden identity, such is seen in analysis of the acoumeter. In this case, there is already much happening to induce feelings of paranoia in both Babe and the viewer—and then this sound begins. The paranoia is intensified, as it becomes clear that Babe is not imagining this, and there are in fact men in his apartment. He gets out of the bath, and turns the lights in the bathroom off, before turning them back on as he rushes to put clothes on. He closes the door, but the men on the other side begin prying at the hinges so as to break it down.

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[67] *Marathon Man*, 1:05:09.
[68] Ibid., 1:07:17-1:08:54.

Babe the opens the window in the bathroom and begins screaming for help.[69] These screams represent a full realization of the usefulness of sound in this moment. Noise is not only that which has informed Babe that he is in danger, but he then uses it in order to help himself. The screaming does not work as the men—Szell's henchmen Karl and Erhard, the same men who mugged Babe and Elsa earlier—break into the bathroom and hold Babe's head under the bathwater. What is most crucial, however, is that sound is used to both interpret danger and seek help. He hears the intruders before he sees them, and makes use of his own voice to combat the noise which informs the danger of the situation.

As touched on briefly above, while in the bath Babe is reminiscing about his childhood with his father. It has been revealed in conversation with his professor and visual flashback earlier in the film that Babe's father killed himself as a result of investigation against him during the McCarthy era. The film never confirms whether this investigation discovered any truth, or if he was truly a communist. Rather, the aspect which is key is the persecution he faced as a result of this charge. Every flashback throughout the film is silent, with occasional score being layered on top of the images of Babe's childhood. These flashbacks are distinct because of this silence, but also because of their way of visual style. They are all filtered with a desaturated, semi-sepia toned filter. Early on in the film the flashbacks include clips of Babe playing on a swing at his childhood home, his father being hounded by reporters and Babe finding his father dead by suicide. In the set of flashbacks in the bathtub scene, he remembers spending time with Doc as children. There is then a cut to the previously shown shot of Doc arriving at Babe's apartment after being shot.[70] Where in the first flashback Babe visualizes his father and his father's death, here it is Doc and Doc's death. The shot of present day Doc is notably shown with the same filter

[69] *Marathon Man*, 1:10:23.
[70] Ibid., 1:07:34-1:07:50

of the other flashbacks—Babe already seems to understand the cruciality of this moment. By equating his father and brother, he conflates the opposing political crises which caused their respective deaths, and further develops the paranoid style.

The removal of sound from these memories seems to serve several purposes. Firstly, it characterizes these memories as those which are free from the negative surveillance and persecution of the present reality of the film. There is no chance of misremembering conversation or information because there is no remembering of sound. Secondly, within the actual context of the narrative, these flashbacks provide motivation for Babe's character as well as allowing the sharpness of his present experience. When he is in the bath thinking back, the image of his childhood is shown from first person perspective. It is as though the viewer is reliving these memories alongside him. However, we can still hear the sounds of him in the bath, and ultimately, we still hear the creaking floor which signals the presence of the intruders. The information gained from flashback is wholly emotional and wholly visual, emphasizing an attention to the soundscape and the importance of noise within the scope of the film's actual experienced reality.

Following his abduction by Karl and Erhard, Babe wakes up in a nondescript room, tied to a chair. The lights are turned on and three men enter, Karl, Erhard and Szell himself. Babe says nothing as Szell washes his hands and takes out a set of tools. Szell then speaks, asking "Is it safe?" Babe does not respond, and Szell repeats himself. Babe asks what he means, to which Szell just repeats himself again. Babe continues to ask what Szell is talking about, insists he has no idea what Szell is referring to, asks what "it" is, and finally says it is safe, before changing his mind and saying it is not safe. Szell's question here is in reference to the diamonds his brother had stored in a safety deposit box. Szell wants to know if it is safe for him to go retrieve said

diamonds, information which Doc knew. He presumes that Doc told Babe before dying, and as such Babe must know what he is referring to. However, Babe does not know, and moreover at this point the audience does not exactly know either. The most crucial aspect of this scene is what follows Babe's inability to answer Szell. The tools which Szell had retrieved earlier in the scene were dentist equipment, and he proceeds to torture Babe by not only stabbing at a cavity in one of his teeth, but by drilling into a perfectly healthy tooth.[71] It is a remarkably uncomfortable scene to sit through, but specifically because of the way that information is treated in the moment. The logic follows that we are Babe, we are that individual thrown into a dangerous situation with which we have little knowledge and only marginal connection to. And once this connection is established, the weight of the information is heaviest. Babe does not know if it is safe or not, and neither does the viewer. Rather, the threat of danger and violence is realized because of this lack of information, and lack of understanding. And then there is the issue of sound.

As mentioned earlier, the score of this film was composed by Michael Small. Notably, most scenes feature some sort of background music, most of the times in the form of this score. However, there is no score during this scene. This lack of music serves multiple purposes. Firstly, every single sound within the diegesis is heard. All of Szell's movements, Babe's struggling and screaming, even the ambient sound of lights being turned on and off—all of the various noises in the room stick out as they are the only thing to be heard. Secondly, without any music to dissolve tension, the weight of Szell's question is felt more deeply. The lack of music notes that this scene is meant to feel different, which forces the viewer to focus on the other noise occurring, the most crucial of which is the repeated question "Is it safe?" Szell is asking

[71] *Marathon Man*, 1:14:30.

Babe, using his voice to try and glean information, but without revealing too much about that which he needs to know. This information must be given through communication—except Szell is actively muting Babe every time he works in his mouth. The ability to communicate, and specifically the ability for the enemy in this case to decipher noise into information, is hindered by the very actions of the enemy. It is convoluted, but it is as though Schlesinger wants the viewer to feel Babe's pain as well as identify Szell's desire to gain this information. The mirror of the audience here reflects both Babe and Szell, the same way that said audience is reflected in each character. The repetition of a spoken phrase speaks to the need to distinguish code or signal from noise—Szell is asking a very specific question, but using extremely broad language to do so. He wants to know if Babe knows, but is unable to justify flat out asking about the diamonds. Rather, he employs a sort of code for deciphering information—using speech to gain information by way of speech, while impacting Babe's ability to speak. The weight of the word is most intense here, emphasized by the diegetic sounds of torture and interrogation.

Small reenters the conversation near the end of the film as well, specifically in the way that his music is used for the sake of subjectivity. When looking at the film as a whole, the political schematization of the characters—by way of Hofstadter—is obvious. Where Babe is the spokesman of the paranoid style, Szell is the simply named "enemy." A manifestation of that which not only the individual should fear, but that which the country as a whole should fear—he comes to symbolize fascism as a whole. This distinction of role is emphasized by the narrative arc of the film, following Babe from his involvement to complete submersion in Nazi intrigue. The audience travels Babe on this path, moving with him physically and emotionally, experiencing the same confusion and fear as him, particularly fear of Szell himself. However, this focus completely shifted, with only about 20 minutes remaining in the film. After the

ambush at Szell's country house, Elsa has been killed by Janeway, and Janeway has been killed by Babe. After seeing this violence happen, the film shifts to focusing on Szell, as he stops at various jewelry stores in the city attempting to figure the value of the diamonds he has yet to retrieve. The audience is suddenly following Szell—he is our extension into the diegesis.[72]

We move with him through space, and we witness him interacting with various shopkeepers and jewelers. It is unclear what is happening to Babe in these moments, but it also feels unimportant. Szell no longer seems the enemy, rather he is who the viewer must identify with. This fact is fully realized when Szell is stopped in one of the stores by a man with a thick accent. This man claims to recognize Szell, to which Szell responds enthusiastically, introducing himself with a fake name and many details of a fake life. As he shakes the man's hand, the shot focuses in on the man's hands—specifically on a string of numbers tattooed on his wrist. This tattoo is universally recognizable as a serial tattoo given to Jewish concentration camp prisoners during the Holocaust. The tension of the scene increases a hundredfold. The somewhat innocent claim of recognition suddenly carries a serious gravity, as it is clear that the man does in fact recognize Szell for who he is. As the shot informs the audience of this reality, Szell is also realizing this fact. We are made to realize the truth at the same time as him, and inadvertently the viewer is now reflected in the enemy. From here, Szell quickly makes his exit from the shop and begins walking away quickly. Then the music comes in.

The music begins calmly, with a low drone as Szell stops to compose himself. As he continues walking, there is a quick and sharp piano part which enters. Two low notes are played together, repeatedly, with about five seconds between each set. The effect of this extremely simple score is tremendous. The tension which was just built up in the scene at the jewelry store

[72]*Marathon Man*, 1:44:50.

continues to build, because of this music. There is no visual indication that Szell has been officially found out, nor that he is still in any danger of being caught; there simply does not need to be, the music is doing all the work. As it continues, dissonant horn sounds take the place of the percussive piano. Each instrumental element fulfills the same purpose—to increase the feeling of anxiety, and by extension the feeling of paranoia.[73] As the scene continues, there is a woman across the street from Szell who recognizes him as who he truly is, calling out for someone to stop him, and calling him the "weißer engel"—his nickname from inside the concentration camp.[74] In this moment, Szell is caught—and to the viewer this feels like a *bad thing.* The entire film is centered around Babe, the hero, and Szell, the enemy, but these definitions are completely confused in this moment, predominantly because of the quality and placement of the music. As mentioned above, this scene succeeds in forcing the audience to see themselves reflected not in Babe but in Szell. The tension and paranoia established by the music informs the tension and paranoia in the experience of the viewer. We are worried for Szell, we relate to him, simply because of the way that the soundscape of the film is manufactured. The score here could have easily been styled differently—it could have sounded different, come in at a different time, and reacted differently to the visual cues of the scene. What is key is that it does none of those things. Schlesinger wants the viewer to grapple with this moral confusion, recognizing the universality of paranoid experience through aural means.

Hofstadter's analysis can only take this argument so far, however, particularly in considering one crucial aspect of his image of the so called "paranoid spokesman." Much if not all of the paranoia which this spokesman suffers under is fantasy—imagined persecution on political and social levels. In the case of both *3 Days* and *Marathon Man*, this is reality. These

[73] *Marathon Man*, 1:48:22-1:49:00.
[74] Ibid., 1:49:12.

characters are in fact being targeted and placed in danger for varying political reasons, and thus their paranoia is justified. They are right to be scared, as they are in fact under attack. Even with this key difference, the framework laid out by Hofstadter still serves to define the ways these characters operate, and moreover the way their respective psyches work to respond to the situations in which they are placed. This framework is then solidified by the soundscapes of both films. The pressure for information and danger inherent in knowing is developed through technological and corporal senses, as the weight of the word and the interpretive nature of noise controls the way paranoia extends through the hero and to the viewer.

## Conclusion

Movement into the 21st century has changed the way that the paranoid style manifests, and has particularly changed the way that individual American paranoia functions relative to listening. The criminalization of warrantless wiretapping which resulted from *Katz v. United States,* was retroactively overturned by the passage of the PATRIOT Act by President George W. Bush. The PATRIOT Act was passed in response to the September 11th, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, and was made to aid various U.S. government organizations in the investigation and apprehension of terrorists on both a domestic and international level.[75] However, the Act more crucially rolled back many civil liberties and protections awarded to American citizens within the Constitution, particularly on the level of personal surveillance. One such aspect that generated immense backlash—including the only vote against the passage of the act, by Senator Russ Feingold—was the legalization and standardization of delayed-notice warrants in criminal investigations. A delayed notice warrant is exactly what it sounds like—it is a warrant that allows those in possession to delay notification of the individual whose property is being searched. This meant the decriminalization of breaking and entering, as well as wiretapping and illicit audio recording, on the part of law enforcement, from local police to the FBI.[76]

When tracing the lineage of this surveillance state, the 1960s and 1970s stick out as two decades in which the media landscape changed alongside the political landscape, allowing for a major growth in paranoid attitudes related to individual experience and the larger political

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[75] Department of Justice, *The USA PATRIOT Act: Preserving Life and Liberty (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism)*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, 2001. 1-4

[76] U.S. Congress, House, *Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism* (USA PATRIOT ACT) Act of 2001, HR 3162, 107th Cong., 1st sess., introduced in House October 23, 2001. Section 213, 203.

machines controlling the country. Distrust of government coupled with economic crisis pushed the attitudes of many Americans towards the right. This interest with localized self-preservation accompanied the postwar rise of the suburb and the inception of American conservatism.[77] Thus, the end of the 70s necessitated a return to American values, patriotism, and a leader who was looking out for all Americans, not looking at them—namely, former actor and veteran Ronald Reagan. Reagan's presidency brought the U.S. into the 80s, and from there to the present day there has been an unyielding American drive to the forefront of technological advancement.

To understand the origins of this motivation in favor of technology, it is necessary to look back to the films of Coppola, De Palma, Pakula, Pollack, Schlesinger, Karel Kachňya, Stanley Kubrick, Michael Crichton, and so many other directors, working both in the United States, and internationally. Reflection of the surveillance state has always occurred in film, stretching back to the works of Alfred Hitchcock and John Frankenheimer, but with the growth in ability to transfer information came a growth in the attention paid to the ways that said surveillance effects and dictates paranoia within the individual. This paranoia, as demonstrated, is inherently linked to the aural experience of these films. The politics of the time prescribe the psychology of the individual, which then prescribes difficulty related to levels of perception. This relationship is contained and expressed through every protagonist, but moreover is reflected from said protagonist onto the individual viewer and greater audience.

The complication of listening inherent here connects directly towards the inability to obtain and expose truth by way of each film's hero. There is always a failure of decryption, a failure of comprehension, and a failure to grapple with suppression of the individual. These failures of listening speak to the failures of the current aural landscape in more ways that can

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[77] Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 3-19.

even be understood, making itself known by way of AI-generated audio and the normalization of personal information leakage. To call back to a term used earlier in this paper, being unable to know if that which one hears is real or made by a computer represents an extension and modernization of the same fears present throughout the “long 70s.” In the period immediately following the outlawing of illegal wiretaps, came countless scandals of intelligence. The fears expanded upon in each film of this argument were based directly on the American experience, providing legitimacy for the paranoid experience of each protagonist, and the paranoid experience for the audience. And still a failure of interpretation characterizes the aural landscape of the U.S., the inescapable home of political and cultural aural infringement. It has remained an issue of us vs. the U.S.

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