

Image and Reality in *Media Worlds*

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The Media Era

The impact of communications media on American life is an undeniable fact. Incontestably and overwhelmingly established, it has become the principal cliché of the “media age.” Since the 1970’s, students in “communications research” have dutifully recorded, documented, and reiterated a litany of observations concerning the influence of media on American society in a steady stream of “media studies.” The principal problem posed for social science by this research is the question of how the impact of media on American institutions can be understood and explained. The resolution of this question is the main objective of *Media Worlds in the Postjournalism Era*, a new and ambitious book by David L. Altheide and Robert P. Snow, two leading analysts of the role of media in contemporary American life.¹

Media Worlds eschews certain lines of inquiry laboriously pursued by media studies as too tiresome and obvious to repeat. It does not undertake yet another demonstration of what has been known since the pioneering work of Robert Park and Helene Hughes: that media qualify as a distinctive form of the construction of social reality.² Nor does it repeat the familiar argument that the import of media messages frequently reflects the ideology of the sender, or that there is often a close connection between the content of a message and the economic status of its sponsors, with the result that messages that purport to record facts are not uncommonly distorted by ideological as well as commercial interests. In fact, *Media Worlds* dismisses all current research that focuses primarily on the content of media—including semiotically inspired attempts to decode the “real” or “true” meaning of media messages—as inconsequential or misguided.

The thesis of *Media Worlds* is much more audacious than the claims of conventional media studies. Its purpose is to establish that the impact

of media is the product of an immanent media logic. This logic generates a framework of assumptions that define the basis on which media artifacts are conceived and the strategies by means of which they are produced. Due to the unique power of media, this logic is reproduced in every sphere of American society and culture. Because media logic has become the logic of all American institutions, "American society is ordered largely through the sense-making strategies developed in mass media, particularly television" (p. 241). Thus the impact of media is the basic and paramount fact of American life. Immanent, impervious, and ubiquitous, media logic "just is." As a result, "we are in a media era." The product of the formation of American life by the media "is us, and this is how we live" (p. 251).

The demonstration of this position rests on two premises: the doctrine that there is a distinctive logic responsible for the character of contemporary electronic media and its products—the media logic thesis—and the doctrine that this logic has penetrated and transformed every domain of American life—the media culture thesis. What is the import of these doctrines, and how should they be understood?

MEDIA LOGIC

In view of the weight the idea of media logic must bear in *Media Worlds*, it is unfortunate that the book never manages to pull together a coherent analysis of this concept. Media logic is characterized as a form of communication and also as a process through which media transmit information. It is not clear how something could constitute both a form—the structure within which changes occur—and a process—the changes that take place within a form that remains stable, at least within the limits of the changes it makes possible. *Media Worlds* is silent on this troublesome and fundamental issue. Although media logic is described as a way of seeing and interpreting social affairs, it is primarily explicated by means of the concept of a media format.

Media formats include the rules that specify how material transmitted in a medium is organized. These rules cover the style in which material is presented, the focus or emphasis of the presentation, and what *Media Worlds* calls "the grammar of media communication," a potentially illuminating metaphor that is never elucidated. Media formats themselves are described as "grammatical devices" that order action and events, establish accent and pace, and construct symbols in order to represent phenomena and convey emotion. Examples of media formats are news, entertainment, sports, and talk shows. At one point, *Media Worlds* insists that formats should not be confused with genres, which are called

categories for organizing content (p. 245). However, it is difficult to determine how seriously this admonition should be taken, since formats are also described as ways of organizing material (p. ix). At another point, formats and genre are conflated as “genre/formats,” cases of which are said to be film noir, situation comedies, top-40 radio shows, and romance novels (p. 19).

Although *Media Worlds* frequently speaks as if there were a single global logic that governs all contemporary media, it refers repeatedly to media logics. Does this mean that even though every medium is governed by some logic, there is no universal logic that covers all media? In some contexts, media logic is said to define the content of media. In other passages, it is said only to influence the products of media communication. At still other points, it is said to influence the process of producing content or information, without necessarily determining the content or product itself (p. 54). Is media logic a *mathesis universalis* of mass communication or a more modest, limited, and unsystematic collection of rules of thumb that are pragmatically employed in a trial-and-error fashion in specific media? In light of these questions, it is not unreasonable to wonder exactly what force should be ascribed to media logic.

MEDIA CULTURE

Regardless of the answers to these questions—and the reader who expects to find them in *Media Worlds* will be disappointed—media logic is held to be of overwhelming, indeed, unique significance for understanding contemporary American life. This is due to the impact of “total media” on social life, which has transformed all social institutions into “media institutions.” As a result, “our worlds are totally media” (p. ix). Thought, action, and passion no longer transpire independent of the “forms of discourse” situated in media. Experience and the ways we think about it, action and its artifacts, as well as social practices and processes and the institutions in which they are embedded are all “mass mediated”: defined and circumscribed by the conceptual apparatus of media logic. Because the content of contemporary culture is framed and organized on the basis of media logic, “*social reality is constituted, recognized, and celebrated with media*” (p. 10, emphasis in original).

The power of media in American society is not an effect of plans, plots, or conspiracies produced in the offices of television networks and advertising agencies or in the boardrooms of their corporate sponsors and clients. The hegemony of contemporary media has not been orchestrated from the top down. On the contrary, media logic has penetrated every so-

cial world and dominated every sphere of culture due to a quasi-Hegelian *List der Vernunft*: the cunning of the inherent rationality of modern mass communications, as a result of which “we” have adopted a media logic. The massive changes in American life in the age of media are a consequence of the fact that Americans employ media logic in making sense of their lives. The logic of television has become the logic of mundane practical reasoning, the principles employed by the American people to identify options, make decisions, and assess the consequences of what they have wrought. “Since people perceive, interpret, and act on the basis of the existing media logic, that logic has become a way of life” (p. 252). Although *Media Worlds* does not deny the significance of traditional social forms such as work, play, art, the family, education, and religion, they have all been surpassed in importance and transformed by modern mass media, “the dominant social form in American society today” (p. 241).³

The media culture thesis articulates a distinctive vision of contemporary American society. The logic of action and strategies of problem solving, the rhetoric of emotional expression and techniques of emotion management, intellectual standards and criteria of truth, determinants of performance and measures of success and failure, the quality and tenor of interpersonal relations, and ultimate values and moral principles and perceptions in every area of life are all derived from media formats. It follows that media and culture are not merely technologically joined, but are also “meaningfully united” (p. 2). Thus the meaning of urban police work is exhibited in “Miami Vice.” The meaning of black family life is represented in “The Jeffersons” and “Cosby.” The lives of older American women approximate the script of “Golden Girls.” The meaning of media work is displayed in “Murphy Brown.” The practice of law is “LA Law.”

What can be said in support of the two key premises of *Media Worlds*? What is the evidence for the thesis that there is an immanent logic that establishes the framework in which all mass media are produced, and the even more extravagant thesis that this logic dominates every sphere of life in American society? Consider first the grounds for the latter claim.

MEDIA ARE US?

Has the development of a media logic led to the emergence of a “media consciousness”? Has television as a social form become the “general consciousness” of American culture, “pervasive across the institutional spectrum and ubiquitous in everyday life” (p. 249)? Has a “media culture” been produced by virtue of the dominance of media logic—a “cultural content that emerges from acting through specific media formats” (p.

241)? Does the creation of media culture by the universalization of media logic mean that “in contemporary society, every major institution has become part of media culture” (p. 10)?

The media culture thesis rests on two sorts of arguments. The principal strategy of argument is to present evidence documenting the influence of television on phenomena such as presidential elections, mass evangelism, and professional sports. From this evidence, it is inferred that the cultural or social spheres in which these phenomena are located have also been transformed by television. Therefore, what holds true for the influence of television on presidential contests, televangelism, and professional sports also holds for politics, religion, and sports *tutti quanti*. A second and more inchoate collection of arguments is constructed from premises about media influence drawn from heterogeneous sources and based on a variety of considerations.

Most of the evidence developed in *Media Worlds* to support the media culture thesis concerns the impact of media on American politics. According to this argument, “media logic essentially has redefined political action and rhetoric” (p. 83). “Political behavior today,” we are told, “is intertwined with media formats to such an extent that politics is *media politics*” (p. 82, emphasis in original). If the American presidency is conducted and presidential power is exercised primarily through the medium of television, then these remarks obviously hold true for this office. *Media Worlds* argues with considerable plausibility that many events during the Carter administration and especially during the Reagan years would not have taken place had television not existed. Appearances by President Reagan were regularly staged for television by the White House. Consider, for example, Reagan’s trip to the Normandy beaches to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of D-Day, his visit to the German military cemetery near Bitburg to mollify the West German government, and his appearance at Bergen-Belsen to pacify American Jews and World War II veterans. These events perhaps would not have occurred at all, and certainly would not have occurred the way they did, without the mediation of television news.

Suppose we take seriously the view that television network news is the most powerful medium in American politics.⁴ On this view, political figures are indistinguishable from television actors, political consultants are essentially television producers, a political campaign or a Congressional hearing is a television series, and the entire political process is a melodrama in which the interplay of ambition, greed, the lust for power and money, corruption, treachery, and, most recently, sex is presented for the instruction or titillation of the viewer.

Even if this were the case, it could not be explained by reference to an innate media logic that has been transposed from the communications

industry onto politics, with the result that the political spectacle itself becomes indistinguishable from a television show. Politics as conceived in *Media Worlds* does not differ from any melodrama. The melodramatic character of American experience was not produced by television. Its ultimate basis is not in television formats, but in the changing dynamics of American society and culture as they have developed since the mid-nineteenth century: the process of rapid industrialization and the demographic changes it produced, the rapidity of social change and the scope of economic and social mobility, the weakening of traditional familial and local ties, and the formation of an ethos of unlimited possibilities—unlimited opportunities of personal economic success and social advancement as well as equally unlimited risks of economic ruin and dangers of social downfall. The experience of these changes and their effects on American culture and character are represented in the kinds of stories Americans—including politicians and journalists—tell about themselves and others. The logic of these stories was articulated in the nineteenth-century melodramatic novel more than a century before this genre was adapted for television. The conception of American politics presented in *Media Worlds* is not derived from a distinctive media logic. On the contrary, it is grounded in melodramatic fiction.⁵

However, American politics is not reducible to electronic media politics. There is a political apparatus that never appears on television and a political process that goes on behind the scenes and beyond the gaze of the camera. In the main, it is a bureaucratized politics of specialized staff work: agency and inter-agency meetings and hearings of committees and subcommittees; the exercise of Congressional oversight, administrative regulation, and judicial review; research, decisions, and assessments concerning all manner of issues, real and fabricated; and the subterranean struggle for power, assets, and position that determines which people and policies will prevail. This is a political life that exists independent of the scripts and scenarios of media specialists. It transpires as if television had never existed.

Media Worlds makes no case for the reconceptualization of political conduct that does not take place in the glare of television lights and does not depend upon television for its performance. Has judicial procedure been fundamentally altered by television? Has the Supreme Court or any lesser court arrived at new modes of adjudicating cases as a result of the development of a “media consciousness” by judges? Does Congress transact its business in a new way because C-SPAN televises certain Congressional sessions and House and Senate hearings? For example, are committee assignments made according to criteria dictated by the media? Are decisions

about budgets, taxation, social welfare, foreign policy, and military affairs “recast to fit the demands of major media” (p. 107)?

All branches of government regularly produce artifacts of such arcane complexity that they are neither interesting nor even intelligible to the public at large. Consequently, they remain unilluminated and uninfluenced by the allegedly all-seeing, all-transforming eye of television. For example, economic issues of great public moment, even if they are not hopelessly confusing to the nonspecialist, tend to be ignored by the media until they finally surface in the public hearings of government agencies. Consider, for example, the liberal federal agricultural loan programs of the late 1970’s that encouraged small farmers to assume substantial indebtedness to banks and contributed to the demise of the small American farm. Or consider the more recent de-regulation of banking and financial services by the Reagan administration and its destabilization of the savings and loan industry. Neither phenomenon was created or substantially influenced by media; nor was it even much noticed by media until the resulting damage was evident. Even government deliberations on matters such as the oil depletion allowance and federal subsidies for tobacco growers take place independent of media formats. Finally, the success of much political activity on all levels depends upon secrecy, or at least protection from publicity. It can hardly be said that diplomatic maneuvers, military strategy, the machinations of power brokers, and the practice of lobbying have been recast to fit the demands of media.

Media Worlds also defends the media culture thesis by means of a collection of unsupported claims the falsity of which would seem obvious. The most frequently repeated of these claims is the proposition that media have altered journalism so radically that “journalism is dead.”⁶ The destruction of journalism is ascribed to two factors. First, journalistic technique and practice have been transformed by media formats, and traditional reportage has been replaced by the manufactured information for television news. As a result, the craft of journalism has been degraded. Second, due to the penetration of all spheres of culture by media, the independent objects and issues of journalism have disappeared. Because the matters reported on by post-journalists of the media age are themselves products of media, the distinction between a report and its object collapses. Post-journalism reports on nothing but itself. In consequence, six-column newspapers have become “quaint” and “boring” artifacts of an anachronistic communications culture and are increasingly “relegated to the media archives” (p. 245).

This last allegation may surprise readers of the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Wall Street Journal*, six-column newspapers all and generally regarded as the most influential in the United States. The death-

of-journalism thesis has nothing to say about how media have killed standard journalistic formats such as the editorial, the news report, the syndicated column, and the in-depth news analysis, all of which seem to be alive and well. Nor does it indicate how traditional journalistic skills such as news analysis, interviewing, and editorial writing have been destroyed. Indeed, its commitment to the death-of-journalism thesis does not prevent *Media Worlds* from commenting on the practice of “careful journalists” such as Lou Cannon (p. 177), who is very much alive and writing for the *Washington Post*. Finally, the argument based on the reflexivity of television news—postjournalistic news “essentially is reporting only on itself” and “does not represent anything other than itself” (pp. 51-52)—is circular. The claim that the independent objects of journalism have been destroyed by the power of media cannot be used as an argument to support the media culture thesis. On the contrary, it presupposes this thesis.

Media Worlds also claims that radio has become so ubiquitous in contemporary life that we “panic” if we find ourselves without one (p. 19). In the absence of a radio, we are told, “a myriad of activities” such as washing the car, cleaning the house, studying, reading, or driving would be awkward at best, perhaps even “impossible” (p. 21). *Media Worlds* does not consider the question of how these claims, whose prima facie implausibility borders on the preposterous, might be supported. *Media Worlds* even suggests that the allegedly clear, crisp, articulate, and polished diction of radio announcers has become a model for judging the success of all speech acts, especially in the political arena. As a means of verifying this claim, one might reconsider the verbal performances of the previous president on occasions when he was deprived of his notecards, the tortured syntax of the current president, or the standards of diction practiced in Senate subcommittee hearings.

It would be foolish to deny the impact of media on contemporary American society. However, the analysis of radio and television in *Media Worlds* provides no support for the much more ambitious media culture thesis. In the final analysis, the media culture thesis rests on the assumption that media are essentially the products of an intrinsic media logic. What can be said by way of an assessment of this position?

MEDIA LOGIC OR COMMERCIAL LOGIC?

In the effort to clarify the concept of media logic, *Media Worlds* states four propositions that are said to articulate its general features. First, because modern communications media depend upon a technology, media are oriented to a “rational means-end type of communication.” Second,

the instrumental rationality of media necessitates a “rapid dissemination of vital information at relatively low cost” (p. 12). Third, the media audience expects this information to be accurate, current, and entertaining. Because of this expectation, media producers attempt to deliver programming that is entertaining and has at least the appearance of accuracy and topicality. Fourth, the instrumental rationality of media also entails that the information produced by media is dependable. Dependability of media information means that audiences “want information that is relevant to their desires” (p. 12).

Each of these claims is mistaken. The first proposition is objectionable on a number of grounds. It conflates a medium with the technology required for its production. A language is not the technology used to disseminate it. The medium of print cannot be identified with a particular technology for printing. Music as a communication medium cannot be identified with any of the various technologies for reproducing musical performances, such as radio, the phonographic record, or the compact disk. In addition, a technology can be understood and assessed not only from the standpoint of instrumental rationality—whether it employs the most effective means to achieve a given end—but also from the standpoint of substantive rationality—the question of whether its operation realizes one set of values rather than another. We can choose systems of transportation not only on the basis of the purely instrumental criterion of which systems move the most people with the least amount of expense and effort in the least amount of time, but also on the basis of non-instrumental values. For example, we can consider which system is most beneficial or least injurious to the health of the public, least damaging to the environment, or most satisfactory from the perspective of political criteria such as distributive justice and democratic values. The same claims hold for media technology. Further, if our commitment to a given substantive value—such as a conception of public enlightenment or public virtue—is powerful enough, we may choose a media technology that maximizes the realization of our favored value even though alternative technologies may be superior on purely instrumental grounds. Finally, even if a media technology is assessed on instrumental grounds, it does not follow that the medium itself must be evaluated on the same grounds. We may choose a certain printing technology because it is the most effective means of producing printed matter. However, we may choose print media—for example, books over newspapers or magazines—for intellectual, political, or ethical reasons that have nothing to do with instrumental rationality.

The second proposition conflates effectiveness with speed and low cost of production. Even if we evaluate a medium on the basis of instrumental criteria, it does not follow that we are primarily interested in

how quickly or cheaply information is distributed. Instrumental rationality assesses alternative means for producing a given end on the basis of their differential efficiency or effectiveness. A judgment of effectiveness depends upon what one wants to effect. Cost measured by the amount of money spent per unit of information produced in a given period of time is not the only possible measure of effectiveness. Alternative measures include the size of the audience reached, the total amount of information communicated, the level of comprehension of information by the audience, and the extent to which the audience acts on the information it receives. Each of these determinants of effectiveness may conflict with the criteria of cost and speed of production. Finally, there may be conditions under which we would decide to employ one of these alternative criteria rather than the obviously commercial criterion of efficiency as it is understood in *Media Worlds*.

The third proposition conflates the form and the content of media, the principal dichotomy on which *Media Worlds* is based. Media logic is said to define the formal structural requirements of media. It establishes the framework within which the content of media programming is produced. The accuracy, topicality, and entertainment value of programming are not among the logical or formal conditions for the possibility of media. On the contrary, they are properties of the content of programming. A format such as network news cannot be said to be intrinsically accurate, current, or amusing. The question of whether it realizes these values depends upon the substance of particular broadcasts, not upon the format itself. Thus it is a mistake to include these considerations among the general defining characteristics of media logic.

The fourth proposition must be rejected for at least three reasons. As noted above, the antecedent of the proposition is false: Media are not necessarily committed to instrumental rationality. Second, the foregoing argument concerning topicality, accuracy, and entertainment applies with the same force to the dependability of the information generated by media—which, it seems, could be distinguished from accuracy only on the basis of a strained and uselessly pedantic criterion. Dependability or reliability of information is not a feature of media formats. It is determined by the content of media programming. Therefore, dependability of information does not lie within the province of media logic. Finally, the analysis of dependability offered in *Media Worlds* is incoherent. Information does not qualify as dependable because it conforms to what the audience wants. It is dependable only if it is accurate, reliable, and valid, all of which considerations may be irrelevant to audience desires.

Thus the analysis of media logic presented in *Media Worlds* is defective. In addition, the properties of media formats are not, as the concept

of media logic requires, immanent or intrinsic features of media. They are not formal properties that are essential to the constitution of media. On the contrary, they are contingent features of various media that can be explained by diverse factors: the influence of cultural values on media criteria and standards, the historical links between contemporary media formats and earlier print media formats and literary genres, and especially the fact that media are not suspended in a rarified sociological space discontinuous with economic life. Above all else, media are commercial enterprises. The communications industry is just that: a business, subject to market changes, forces of economic selection, and principles of management and marketing that affect any large corporation. This means that media are forced to measure up to the conditions for survival in economic life. Because media are businesses that must sell a product and operate within the limits imposed by the competitive exigencies of the market, the structure and practices of contemporary media are overwhelmingly determined by commercial values.

Media Worlds claims that contemporary radio broadcasting is defined by a “grammar” or “temporal syntax” that adheres to the everyday routines of listeners and follows the pattern of their daily activities.⁷ Thus at 6:30 a.m., a radio announcer talks softly to his slumbering audience of wage earners, at 7:00 he urges them to get ready for work, and by 7:30 he is playing “traffic music” (p. 20). However, this format is not determined by the immanent requirements of the logic of radio—if indeed such a logic can be identified. It is due to the structure of labor time and the fact that this particular format is marketed to working people of a certain socio-economic status and cultural competence. If early morning radio is largely devoted to a mix of chat, news, weather, and brief musical selections, this is not a consequence of the formal requirements of any particular media format. It is a function of the logic of commerce and the shape of the working day.

The same point holds for the various formats of radio music programming discussed in *Media Worlds*. They are not decided by the “grammar of radio,” but by the dictates of marketing research. Neither of the two major “classical” music stations in Manhattan currently broadcasts during the working day operas, longer symphonies, or vocal music such as opera arias or *Lieder* in the tradition from Beethoven through Mahler and Richard Strauss. This programming decision is governed by marketing surveys. Operas and symphonies are much too long to permit the interruptions necessary to distribute commercial breaks evenly throughout a program, and the interest in *Lieder* has apparently declined to the point that *Die Winterreise* and *Frauenliebe und Leben* can no longer be sold to a “classical” audience.

Media Worlds claims that the stability of network scheduling makes it possible for viewers to order their lives by means of television, at least during the prime time hours when most viewers are not at work. As a result of this alleged fixity in scheduling, the segmentation of evening television programming becomes the “organizational logic” of the American evening at home (p. 29). However, networks regularly cancel programs because they fail commercially, frequently with no advance notice to the viewer. Networks also reschedule programs that do not attract a large enough market, sandwiching them between two more successful shows or pairing them off against comparably weak programs on competing networks. In addition, they reposition their stronger programs either in an effort to gain an even larger share of the market or to eliminate programs of other networks. These maneuvers are dictated by marketing strategies. Marketing decisions are a function of predictions concerning the behavior of consumers. Since the judgments of television executives as determined by marketing strategies are arbitrary and unpredictable from the standpoint of the viewer, it is difficult to see how an “organizational logic” governing the nocturnal life of the American household could be derived from such decisions.

The link between media programming and commercial interests is also supported by evidence presented in *Media Worlds* itself. As a result, *Media Worlds* contradicts its own major thesis of an immanent media logic. *Media Worlds* admits that the concept of a “target audience” in television programming is not a commercially neutral artifact. On the contrary, it is a construct produced by media executives and consultants. This concept is not derived from a media logic. It is a consequence of a business decision. The target audience is understood as a mass audience of heterogeneous viewers, the most substantial cohort of which includes women between the ages of 18 and 49. This definition is intended to generate the largest possible advertising revenue from producers in a mass retail economy in which women in this age group are believed to make most purchasing decisions.

Media Worlds also stresses that media workers themselves generally do not operate according to a media logic. Their decisions are geared to a commercial logic that dictates the importance of “playing to the numbers.” This means that “*programmers regard entertainment programs as commercials for the commercials*, since the number of people watching the ads is what really counts” (p. 59, emphasis in original). *Media Worlds* also notes that television news workers conceive television news as entertainment. This is said to be a consequence of the commercial orientation of news broadcasting. News reports attempt to realize an ideal of breathless and virtually instantaneous brevity. Visuals, which are employed for their entertainment value, are more important than the detailed presentation of information.

News analysis is abandoned as imposing unrealistic demands on the capacities of the viewer. All these measures are taken to achieve the chief objective of marketing: "to capture the largest share of the audience" (p. 60). According to *Media Worlds*, advertisements and commercials have become the most important media formats. The purpose of these formats is to sell products. Regardless of whether a commercial is for bathroom cleansers, pet food, medical research, or political candidates, its aim is to "create an image that strikes a 'responsive chord' in the viewer" (p. 101). If advertisements and commercials are the principal media formats, it should be clear that it is marketing, and not an immanent media logic, that drives television programming.

TELEVISION AND THE PRESIDENCY: MARKETING STRATEGIES AND POLITICAL NEWS MANAGEMENT

It will be useful to document the foregoing critique of the media logic thesis in more detail by demonstrating its bearing on a particular case to which *Media Worlds* devotes considerable attention: television coverage of the contemporary American presidency. A recent study of the history of the Washington press corps describes the nineteenth century presidency as such an insignificant source of news that no newspaper found it worthwhile to place correspondents there. As late as 1932, one Washington journalist called the White House "devoid of allurements to all except chess players and gentlemen in need of sleep."⁸ Even in 1945, a mere fifteen reporters were present to receive President Truman's announcement of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. Today, some 1800 reporters are assigned to the White House press room, on hand to record the president's every utterance, innuendo, and mood. As late as the 1960's, it was possible for the president to bed women in Don Giovanni-like fashion from Boston to Hollywood without public detection or even suspicion. Today, literally every step the president takes and every move he makes outside the White House are recorded on videotape by one of the three major television networks, and presidential pastimes, entertainments, personal idiosyncracies, cardiovascular problems, and bowel movements are reported in detail for the public enlightenment or delectation.

In the repertoire of television network news, the single most important item of coverage is the American presidency. One recent study found that twenty percent of a typical "CBS Evening News" broadcast is devoted to the president and his policies.⁹ All three major networks devote more money and personnel to the coverage of the president than to any other news item. Presidential news conferences, press briefings by the president,

and briefings by the White House press secretary are all dutifully broadcast by television. The president is interviewed one-on-one by prestigious correspondents and “anchors.” Networks arrange “private” tours of the White House living quarters, often conducted by the First Lady herself, offering the viewer an enticing and voyeuristic glimpse into the personal world of the presidency. Television cameras follow the president into the Oval Office, the Rose Garden, and even to his favored vacation retreats to record every presidential activity, no matter how inconsequential. During the Reagan years, television provided the public with vignettes of Ronald Reagan chopping wood, lifting weights, and horse riding at his mountain ranch near Santa Barbara. Today President Bush is pictured at his home in Kennebunkport on the coast of Maine, jogging, golfing, fishing, or relaxing in his high-powered speedboat.

However, the formats of presidential news coverage are not a consequence of an internal media logic. They are largely a result of marketing strategies. Producers, editors, writers, correspondents, and anchors are representatives of an industry and employees of corporations. Media newsmakers are engaged in the production and marketing of commodities—including, as *Media Worlds* emphasizes, media-generated information about newsmakers themselves and the process of news making. This composite product is sold to affiliates who buy news programs from the networks and to corporate advertisers who purchase commercial time during these programs. The purchasing decisions of both depend upon the size of the audience the network is able to attract. The well-publicized attention that news organizations devote to ratings is an expression of their marketing orientation. Low ratings translate into a drop in advertising revenues and a loss of affiliates, both of which mean lower profits for the network. As no less an authority than Dan Rather has observed: “More profits. That’s what business is about. News is a business. It always has been. Journalists understand and accept that.”¹⁰

In light of these commercial constraints, it is necessary for news organizations to discover what sells. Television news has concluded that the presidency sells. Viewers are more interested in personalities than in processes, in celebrities and the ephemera of their lives than in the dynamics of policy formation, in real-life personal dramas than in abstract issues or the interplay of impersonal forces and interests. Because of the distinctive character of the office of the presidency—a position that combines, not always comfortably or successfully, the dual functions of head of government and symbolic leader of the nation—the president is the most prominent, important, and newsworthy personality in the world. This holds true regardless of the actual personal characteristics of the occupant of the office, whose human qualities may be pedestrian, mediocre, and utterly

devoid of interest. Thus on a routine news day, the dramas and details of presidential life, official or private, real or fabricated, are among the most significant news stories.

Coverage of the president makes it possible for networks to sell to their affiliates programming that does not compete with local and regional news broadcasts. In addition, when the president is in Washington, presidential news stories save the networks money. Correspondents, technicians, and equipment are already budgeted and in place. Transmissions from the White House are much cheaper for networks to produce than coaxial or satellite transmissions from other areas, which may require advanced reservation of cable or satellite time. The networks enjoy 24-hour communication with the White House pressroom. Moreover, videotape of the president that records his every public move is available for broadcast, regardless of whether it is used. Thus the formats of presidential news coverage increase ratings, revenues, and profits at the same time that they control the costs of the news business.

The commercial organization of television news also explains some of the modalities in the coverage of the president and those who would be president. Competition among networks for ratings encourages the development of more entertaining—and thus more sensational and exciting—formats: scandals of private life and public trust, conspiracies of secretive, power-hungry men ultimately uncovered by fearless public servants of flawless honor and integrity, or by correspondents themselves, who can subsequently market themselves as heroic guardians of the public interest. Competition thus results in the composition of stories held to be much more attractive to viewers than the coverage of routine governmental affairs that are less amenable to melodramatic presentation. Competition also promotes confrontational news coverage. Correspondents are encouraged to cultivate controversial, exclusive, and closely guarded sources. Legal charges raised against an undaunted correspondent who refuses to reveal these sources boost ratings and increase the market value of the correspondent, especially if the charges are followed by a conviction and a jail sentence. Correspondents are expected to ferret out conflicts, or perhaps fabricate conflict where none exists, in order to generate the excitement that attracts viewers. As a result, the commercially driven competition among networks, news bureaus, and correspondents places a premium on the coverage of controversy, antagonism, and hostility, the clash over policies that is reflected in the clash of careers and personalities.

Finally, the commercialization of television news has produced a star system of celebrity correspondents who enjoy considerable prestige and income in comparison with the political figures on whom they report. As a result some White House correspondents are self-indulgent in their exhibi-

tion of hauteur, arrogance, and plain bad manners to an extent that early generations of correspondents would have found unimaginable. The confrontational style of reportage linked with the development of celebrity correspondents have produced an extremely successful news format: the press conference as a form of verbal combat between the president or presidential candidate and the celebrity correspondent. This format generates the struggle, excitement, and uncertainty characteristic of a contest between strong wills and powerful egos. In such contexts, the president or would-be-president subjects himself to a potential degradation ceremony in which he courts embarrassment, failure, and even disaster.

These developments in the formats of presidential news coverage are not consequences of a media logic. They are results of the corporate organization of the television news industry, market constraints on networks, and the commercialization of news and its production. Within the general framework of these formats, modes of programming as well as the conditions under which information about the president is gathered, framed, or fabricated and presidential news is produced are frequently dictated by political news management strategies that emanate from the White House itself. In other words, television news formats are determined not only by the marketing logic of the communications industry, but also by the political logic of White House media strategists. During the Reagan presidency, the political manipulation of television news formats achieved a new level of sophistication. The Reagan White House controlled these formats with three devices: restriction of access to the president; manipulation of the press by means of impression management techniques; and manufacture of presidential news for network consumption.

By controlling the president's schedule, the White House was able to determine how often and under what circumstances the press would have contact with the president. Reagan scheduled fewer press conferences than any other recent president. During his first eight months in office, Reagan held only three new conferences. During his entire first term, he held less than thirty, compared with the fifty-nine held by Jimmy Carter. A new rule introduced during the first Reagan administration required reporters to raise their hands in order to be recognized for a question. Shouting questions at the president to gain his attention was held to be an affront to the dignity of the office. This rule made it possible for Reagan to refuse to acknowledge questions from journalists the White House regarded as politically unacceptable or excessively adversarial. As a result, it was possible to punish unacceptably independent, aggressive, or recalcitrant correspondents by denying them access to the president. In certain presidential settings, questions from correspondents were prohibited altogether. For example, when the president made himself available to the press to be

photographed with foreign leaders in the Oval Office (“photo opportunities”), no questions were permitted. This was called “the Deaver rule,” after its presumed author and principal enforcer Michael Deaver, the president’s deputy chief of staff during the first Reagan administration, who claimed to find it “insulting to bring in a head of state to the Oval Office and have him surrounded by a hundred shouting reporters.”¹¹ The presidential Secret Service escort was also used selectively to establish as much distance as possible between the president and the press. This made it necessary for correspondents to compete in shouting questions to a president whose hearing problems were well known. As a result, Reagan was able to respond to the confusion of bellowing voices with innocuous one-line answers, or with the familiar Reagan expression of bewilderment that promised no answer at all.

The most successful technique for keeping the press at bay involved withholding access by appearing to provide it. One such strategy used as an essential prop the seemingly ubiquitous presidential helicopter. Whirring noisily on the White House lawn, it rendered virtually unintelligible all speech below the pitch of a scream. Restless correspondents, tethered by the Secret Service, unable to approach the president, and helplessly watching him walk to or from the helicopter, were reduced to silence or forced to shout their questions over the roar of the propeller engine. Under these circumstances, the president could create an appearance of responsiveness without saying anything. The result was the impromptu pseudo-press briefing, a format Reagan mastered to perfection and performed flawlessly before screaming correspondents and their viewers on hundreds of occasions. Bruce Buchanan has called this signature feature of the Reagan White House the “cupped ear interview.”

As the president moved from the White House to a waiting helicopter on the lawn, he would pause briefly to answer questions shouted by reporters cordoned off some distance away. With the din of the propeller whirring deliberately in the background, he would cup his ear as if straining to hear the question. He was then free to answer forthrightly, answer a question other than the one posed, or strike an amiable, “sorry, I can’t hear” posture and stride off with a smile.¹²

As Buchanan notes, reporters, concluding that they had been outdone by the White House yet again, “could only gnash their teeth” in silence.¹³

The White House also employed various impression management strategies to influence presidential news formats. In response to claims that Reagan was attempting to isolate himself from the press or was being protected from informal contact with correspondents by his aides, the White House periodically invited groups of favored correspondents for drinks and an informal question-and-answer session with the president. This strategy was based on the assumption that reporters would not be com-

fortable prodding the president with tough and potentially embarrassing questions at the same time they were drinking his whiskey. The atmosphere of a friendly cocktail gathering not only forestalled uninhibited questioning; it also encouraged reporters to link their acceptance of Reagan's hospitality with an obligation to reciprocate. In exchange for drinks and high level Washington chat at the center of power, the press was expected to demonstrate restraint and decorum. The administration propaganda apparatus also took advantage of what it perceived as the sloth of television correspondents and their habit of drawing stories for the evening news from the morning papers, especially the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. Accordingly, the White House leaked to favored correspondents at these papers the stories it wanted broadcast, with the expectation that they would appear on the evening news the next day.

By controlling the production of information, misinformation, and disinformation about the president and timing their release to favor the changing needs of the presidency, the White House was able to influence what passed at any given time for knowledge about the president and his policies. Most important in this regard was the redesign of the presidential news conference, which was moved from the afternoon to prime time. Evening news conferences would attract more viewers. They would also reduce the danger that brief slips of the Reagan tongue or mind would be the featured item on the evening news. Thus evening news conferences would minimize the damage created by Reagan's pronounced disposition to make glaringly false statements in settings where he was either insufficiently rehearsed or could not be carefully monitored. The weight Reagan's handlers ascribed to this latter consideration is not surprising in view of his ability to claim, in public addresses, that 80% of the airborne pollution in the United States is actually caused by trees and that he was a member of the American army units that liberated concentration camps in Germany at the end of World War II.¹⁴

Prime time news conferences gave administration media personnel ample time to construct their own pre-emptive interpretations of what Reagan really meant, versions of the news conference that would place it in a context most favorable, or least damaging, to the president. The White House communications staff was deployed to hold back channel conversations with correspondents in order to influence their reports by providing suggestions concerning how stories should be framed, what materials should be presented and highlighted, and which items should be glossed over or dropped altogether. The communications staff routinely called the major networks some 90 minutes before their final deadlines and after they had made their programming decisions for the evening news in order to find

out what stories about the president would be featured and how their selection or interpretation might be altered to the president's best advantage.¹⁵

In planning news conferences, careful attention was devoted to political atmospherics. At one extreme, Reagan was coached to exploit his infectious sense of humor and what his advisors characterized as his innate personal charm. This tactic involved the use of Reagan as his own front man in order to put correspondents off guard, relax the White House press corps, diminish the adversarial relationship between the president and the press, and win the sympathy of both the press and the television audience. Especially at the beginning of news conferences, this tactic was employed to produce a fraudulent conviviality. By bantering with reporters and calling by their first names correspondents he had never personally met, Reagan created the impression that he was on amiable terms with the press.¹⁶ At another extreme, the ritual features of the presidential news conference were stressed. In order to reconceptualize meetings between the president and the press from a routine political event to a formal state ceremony, Reagan's advisors took advantage of the considerable assets of the White House as a movie set. Press conferences were moved to the East Room, with its red carpets and glittering chandeliers.¹⁷ The ritualization of the news conference created a formalized distance between the president and the press. It also emphasized the dignity of the president as the titular leader of the nation, who occupied an office above politics and beyond criticism. As a result, the political functions of the presidential news conference as a democratic institution and a mechanism for holding the president accountable to the people were obscured. The president was not made responsible to the people. He was ceremonially displayed to the people in a setting that symbolically expressed the majesty of his office and the politically transcendent position of its occupant. As a result, the risk of damage to the president posed by the uncertainties of a live encounter with the press was considerably diminished.

Thus on the one hand, the give and take, spontaneity, and extemporaneous dialogue of an unrehearsed confrontation with the press were reconceptualized as pseudo-conviviality and counterfeit informality. On the other hand, a routine political obligation was reinterpreted as a formal state event and a carefully staged presidential performance.

Television coverage of the president was also influenced by supplying the networks with prefabricated themes, sometimes one each week, or even one every day. Reagan aides would decide upon a "theme of the week" and a "line of the day": an orchestrated set of responses that would be emphasized and repeated in conversations White House staff and administration officials held with the media.¹⁸ By employing this technique, the White House could achieve a more systematic control of news produc-

tion than would otherwise have been possible. Managing the news by fabricating themes directed the interest of correspondents away from issues detrimental to the president and fixed the attention of the press on matters in which the White House had an interest. These endeavors were complemented by the efforts of “spin patrols” —later “spin doctors”—White House aides whose job was to maintain contact with correspondents and producers in order to persuade them to interpret or spin their stories in the direction favored by the administration.

The manufacture of presidential news stories also deflected criticism and diminished the likelihood of negative coverage by producing “happy news” for the networks. Such maneuvers depended upon the use of a perpetually smiling and affable president as a prop, the planning of “surprise” birthday parties that were conveniently arranged to occur during press briefings, and the scheduling of spontaneous trivia—for example, the president eating a hamburger at McDonald’s—coverage of which would supersede more serious and substantive consideration of administration policies.¹⁹

Entertaining, technically brilliant, and sometimes emotionally gripping pictures were the key to the White House attempt to manufacture news. Conformity of these pictures to administration policies was not a major consideration. In January, 1983, during a recession in which it was generally held that Reagan’s economic policies favored the wealthy and penalized wage earners, Michael Deaver arranged for Reagan to visit a working class bar in Boston, where he would be filmed drinking beer with local workers. According to Deaver, supply-side economic policies notwithstanding:

You can do a lot of things cutting programs, but a picture of an Irish President in an Irish pub at two o’clock in the afternoon raising his glass with a bunch of blue-collar workers and an Irish priest—that will last you for a long, long time.²⁰

The most effective fabricated news stories emanating from the White House were stirring presidential “moments” in which Reagan’s well-honed expertise in impression and emotion management was employed to produce a specific emotional impact on the audience. The White House held that on these occasions, Reagan articulated the collective sentiments of the American people, who would identify the president as the ultimate incarnation of American values. For example, in November, 1983, Reagan was filmed on the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea. Wearing a flak jacket and gazing through a pair of military field glasses, Reagan played the Leader of the Free World staring across the DMZ and staring down the communists. In preparing for the DMZ visit, as for Reagan’s foreign trips generally, the White House staff did considerable advance work, exploring the sites that would produce the best pictures for television,

locating the angles of the sun that would show the president to best advantage, and even drawing toe marks on the ground indicating where the presidential feet should be placed to achieve the ideal profile. As Reagan chief of staff Donald Regan observed:

Every moment of every public appearance was scheduled, every word was scripted, every place where Reagan was expected to stand was chalked with toe marks. The President was always being prepared for a performance, and this had the inevitable effect of preserving him from confrontation and the genuine interplay of opinion, question, and argument that form the basis of decision.²¹

The creation of a presidential moment was the purpose of Reagan's speech on the death of the *Challenger* astronauts ("We will never forget them, nor the last time we saw them—this morning, as they prepared for their journey and waved good-bye, and 'slipped the surly bonds of earth' to 'touch the face of God'.") It was also the objective of his visit at Pointe du Hoc on the Atlantic cliffs of Normandy to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of D-Day ("These are the boys of Pointe du Hoc."). At Normandy, Reagan seemed to speak not merely for America, but for the entire North Atlantic liberal democratic capitalist civilization. In the words of one true believer, the Reagan speech writer Peggy Noonan, who was responsible for both the *Challenger* and the D-Day addresses, "Reagan embodied; he became the nation holding you, he was the nation hugging you back, and there was nothing phoney about it, nothing careless."²²

The most spectacularly successful presidential moment was undoubtedly the July 4, 1986 "Liberty Weekend" media extravaganza at the Statue of Liberty, where White House promoters and public relations officials convinced the major networks to cover the President surrounded by a naval armada in New York harbor. By officiating over a national public ritual celebrating American national pride, hyper-patriotism, and military invincibility, Reagan identified himself with the symbols of national identity. In this way, the White House produced for the networks powerful and emotionally charged pictures. Although these pictures might be patently inconsistent with actual administration policies or utterly devoid of policy content and substantively vacuous, they responded to the need of the networks to attract and entertain the largest possible audiences.

In sum, news management in the Reagan White house was a carefully planned strategy that integrated a variety of marketing and public relations techniques: the use of marketing analyses and opinion polls to select simple themes that would appeal to a national television audience; the production of technically sophisticated pictures and well crafted speeches to articulate these themes; the repetition and reinforcement of these messages wherever and whenever possible; and the manipulation of networks, Washington

news bureaus, and presidential correspondents to present the White House conception of the president and his policies to the public. News management during the Reagan years transformed television coverage of the presidency, at least for the immediate future. Although the spirit of the Reagan White House may have departed to its true home in Beverly Hills, the apparatus of media control remains in force, from Willie Horton and George Bush's confrontation with Dan Rather to the theatricalization of the Persian Gulf war as the most successful television mini-series of the year.

As the above discussion documents, the formats of presidential news coverage are not a function of a mysterious media logic that operates above or behind historical events and social processes. On the contrary, the primary determinants of these formats are the commercial values of television networks and the market orientation of media workers linked with the political interests of the White House and the propaganda functions of its communications apparatus.

THE METAPHYSICS OF MEDIA

A recent article on the popular television series "Murphy Brown" indicates how decisions on the format of this program are made.²³ Murphy is the star anchor of a fictional investigative news program. She is 42, unmarried, and, as of the beginning of the 1991 fall season, unexpectedly pregnant. When Murphy announces her pregnancy to her boss, he decides to take her off the air, explaining that his responsibilities to a multi-million dollar corporate enterprise require that he minimize risks. *Media Worlds* holds that social reality is determined by television formats. "Murphy Brown" reverses this relationship: The life of Murphy Brown is reconstructed from the real lives of contemporary network newswomen. More generally, the format of "Murphy Brown" is based on the social lives of well-paid and highly visible professional employees of large corporations. Murphy's predicament follows several well publicized pregnancies among real celebrity newswomen. Her conflict with her fictional boss recalls the widely reported contretemps between Don Hewitt, executive producer of "60 Minutes," and correspondent Meredith Vieira at the time she was expecting her second child. The format of "Murphy Brown" is not derived from an internal media logic, but from the recent biographies of contemporary newswomen and the tensions—obviously not peculiar to employees of the media—in their private lives, their careers, and the corporate interests in which both are enmeshed.

In the ontology of *Media Worlds*, contemporary American institutions are explained by reference to the media, which as the terminal *causa sui* requires no explanation. Like the unmoved mover of Aristotelian metaphysics and the God of scholastic theology—the “being a greater than which none can be conceived”—the alleged logic of the communications industry is posited as the ultimate axiom from which contemporary American society and culture can be deduced. *Media Worlds* is not a historical analysis of the development of contemporary electronic media. Nor is it a sociological analysis of their place in American life. It is a metaphysics of media. In *Media Worlds*, the putative logic of contemporary communications media becomes the logic of life. Concepts constitute reality, and logic is transposed into an ontology. In consequence, *Media Worlds* may be characterized as a thoroughly Hegelian product of American social science—for reasons that are surely unwitting and unintended—located squarely in the tradition of Herbert Marcuse’s *One-Dimensional Man*. If the above account is sound, there is no media logic from which American society can be ontologically derived in a colossal metaphysical deduction. There are rather complex, contingent, and shifting relations between the media and other American social institutions and cultural spheres. This account does not deny the impact of media on contemporary life, an influence that *Media Worlds* explores in useful detail. However, it entails that the explanation of this impact does not lie in a reduction of all social and cultural phenomena to epiphenomena of autonomous communications media and their internal logic.

REFERENCE NOTES

1. David L. Altheide and Robert P. Snow, *Media Worlds in the Postjournalism Era* (New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 1991). All page numbers in parentheses refer to this book. Working individually and in tandem, Altheide and Snow have produced a substantial body of work in media studies. See, for example, David L. Altheide, *Creating Reality: How TV News Distorts Events* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1976), *Media Power* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1985); David L. Altheide and Robert P. Snow, *Media Logic* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1979); and Robert P. Snow, *Media Culture* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1983).
2. See Robert E. Park, “News as a Form of Knowledge,” *American Journal of Sociology* 45 (1940):669-686 and Helen M. Hughes, *News and the Human Interest Story* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940).
3. There is some indication that *Media Worlds* conceives the intellectual capacities of its readers in much the same way television producers understand the mentality of their audience: as characterized by a short attention span, limited powers of concentration, and an indolent and torpid consciousness. *Media Worlds* repeats four times the claim that mass media are the most powerful forces in the contemporary world, substituting reiteration for precision and redundancy for analysis. See pp. 3, 5, 8, 241.
4. The issue of the impact of television news on American politics is much more complex than *Media Worlds* suggests. See, for example, Bruce Buchanan, *The Citizen’s Presidency*

- (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1987); S. Iyengar, Mark D. Peters, and Donald Kinder, "Experimental Demonstrations of the 'Not So Minimal' Consequences of Television News Progress," *American Political Science Review* 76 (1982):848-858; Thomas E. Patterson and Robert D. McClure, *The Unseeing Eye: The Myth of Television Power in National Elections* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1976); and John B. Robinson and Mark R. Levy, *The Main Source: Learning from T.V. News* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1986).
5. As Reuven Frank, former president of NBC News, has noted: "Every news story should, without any sacrifice of probity or responsibility, display the attributes of fiction, of drama. It should have structure and conflict, problem and denouement, rising action and falling action, a beginning, a middle, and an end." Quoted in Edward Epstein, "The Selection of Reality," *New Yorker*, March 3, 1973, p. 41. On the logic and rhetoric of the melodrama, see John Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).
 6. This claim appears no less than seven times in *Media Worlds* and even appears twice on one page. See pp. X, 51, 76, 78, 241, 249. In addition to this needless and apparently fortuitous reiteration, the text of *Media Worlds* is marred by other defects. There is a remarkable number of grammatical and syntactical errors, in one case five on a single page (p. 62), in another two in a single sentence (p. 80n. 1). Ted Koppel becomes Ted Kopple on p. 42. Sen. Joseph Biden's name is spelled both correctly and incorrectly on p. 109. There are short references in the text for which no bibliographic information is given in the References (see pp. 164, 196). Vice-President Quayle's well-known penchant for golf becomes a preoccupation with gold, an error that occurs twice (p. 194). An entry in the Name Index under Laurel Richardson refers the reader to p. 264, where Richardson's name does not appear.
 7. Notice that this claim is inconsistent with the media culture thesis, which entails that the relationship should be reversed: The listener's program of daily activities should be dictated by the "temporal syntax" of radio.
 8. Donald A. Ritchie, *Press Gallery: Congress and the Washington Correspondents* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 2-3.
 9. Frederic T. Smoller, *The Six O'Clock Presidency: A Theory of Presidential Press Relations in the Age of Television* (New York: Praeger, 1990), p. 3.
 10. Dan Rather, "From Murrow to Mediocrity?" *New York Times*, March 10, 1985, p. 25.
 11. Mark Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1988), p. 143.
 12. *The Citizen's Presidency*, p. 123.
 13. *The Citizen's Presidency*, p. 123.
 14. In fact, Ronald Reagan's participation in the war was limited to the propaganda front in Hollywood. On Reagan in World War II, see Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), pp. 485-490; Haynes Johnson, *Sleepwalking Through History: America in the Reagan Years* (New York: Norton, 1991), pp. 45-46; and Gary Wills, *Reagan's America: Innocents at Home* (New York: Doubleday, 1987), pp. 162-170.
 15. See *On Bended Knee*, pp. 29-31.
 16. See *The Six O'Clock Presidency*, p. 103.
 17. See Dick Kirschten, "Communications Reshuffling Intended to Help Reagan Do What He Does Best," *National Journal*, January 28, 1984, pp. 154-157 and Steven R. Weisman, "The President and the Press: The Art of Controlled Access," *New York Times Magazine*, October 14, 1984, p. 34.
 18. See *On Bended Knee*, p. 36.
 19. See *The Six O'Clock Presidency*, p. 104.
 20. *On Bended Knee*, p. 26. The White House also arranged for television coverage of Reagan opening the International Games for the Disabled at the same time he had succeeded in persuading Congress to cut programs for the handicapped (p. 253). Michael Deaver's ghost-written account of his years at the White House, an otherwise execrable book, provides unintentionally illuminating anecdotes on the fabrication of presidential news.

See Michael K. Deaver (with Mickey Herskowitz) *Behind the Scenes* (New York: William Morrow, 1987).

21. Donald T. Regan, *For the Record* (New York: Harcourt, 1988), p. 248.
22. Peggy Noonan, *What I Saw at the Revolution: A Political Life in the Reagan Era* (New York: Random House, 1990), p. 262.
23. Neal Koch, "Everyone Has Advice for Murphy, Especially Real-Life TV Journalists," *New York Times*, September 29, 1991, section 2, pp. 33-34.