

UCLA

UCLA Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

See It Again: The Work of History in the 1990s American Cable Television News Genre

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5mn6h8r1>

Author

Sharma, Sudeep

Publication Date

2015

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

See It Again: The Work of History in the 1990s American Cable Television News Genre

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of
Philosophy in Film and Television

by

Sudeep Sharma

2015

© Copyright by

Sudeep Sharma

2015

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

See It Again: The Work of History and the 1990s American Cable Television News Genre

by

Sudeep Sharma

Doctor of Philosophy in Cinema and Media Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor John T. Caldwell, Chair

American cable television news has emerged as one of the most important and contested media genres in the United States over the past three and a half decades. In this dissertation, I examine cable television news in the 1990s, a transformative period of industrial and cultural change, and consider how the continuous, 24-hour coverage of the genre represented, constructed and problematized “history”. By packaging history as a programming form that I term “historicizing news programs (HNPs)” at the beginning of the decade, 24-hour cable television news created a framework that brought cohesion to its continual coverage and brought together viewers, producers, events and time into a coherent whole. By the end of the decade, political and technological pressures lead to fundamental changes in the workings of the cable television news genre and its use of history. My dissertation is one of the first to consider 1990s television news from a critical humanities/media studies perspective and will help open new avenues for scholars to think about genre and its relationship to history.

First, I explain how my study of television news is in the tradition of media studies and its views of historiography in contrast to journalism studies, communication studies and other scholarship that focus on television as primarily a technology of instantaneity and presence. Using textual, discourse, and institutional analysis of written and visual texts and other artifacts, I then provide four in-depth case studies for how depictions of history worked industrially and culturally during the 1990s. The first looks at the rise of HNPs following the 1991 Gulf War on CNN. The second shows the spread of HNPs to sports cable television news and how they provided a point of contrast with the liveness that defined the genre. The last two case studies show the shift in how history was performed by cable television news, with the third explaining the politicization of history due to the political conflict of the Culture Wars and the fourth the outsourcing of history into the “cloud” due to the disruptive force of new media technologies.

Keywords:

CABLE TELEVISION NEWS; TELEVISION NEWS; CABLE PROGRAMMING; EDWARD MURROW; CBS; CNN; ESPN; C-SPAN; AMERICAN HISTORY; TED TURNER; GULF WAR; 24-HOUR NEWS CYCLE; ESPN; SPORTS TELEVISION; CULTURE WARS; FOX NEWS; MSNBC; COLD WAR; WORLD AT WAR; NEW MEDIA; CLINTON IMPEACHMENT; Y2K; 9/11; THE DAILY SHOW; COMEDY CENTRAL; JON STEWART; DOCUMENTARY; 1990s; HISTORIOGRAPHY; TELEVISION HISTORY

The dissertation of Sudeep Sharma is approved.

Allyson Field

Purnima Mankekar

Douglas Kellner

John T. Caldwell, Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2015

Dedicated to Teshome Gabriel

Teacher, Scholar, Friend

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....1
REMEDIAL HISTORIOGRAPHY, TELEVISION NEWS SUPRAGENRE AND THE MURROW MYTH

WHY CABLE TELEVISION NEWS, WHY THE 1990S, WHY THIS PROJECT
REMEDIAL HISTORIOGRAPHY
BLINDSPOTS IN JOURNALISM STUDIES AND COMMUNICATION
MEDIA STUDIES HISTORIOGRAPHIES

Text

Form

Nation

DEFINING TERMS

Television news as supragenre / Cable television news as genre

Subgenre

Genre and history: Murrow Myth as ur-text

THE MURROW MYTH

THE EMERGENCE: MURROW DURING THE BLITZ

MCCARTHY AND MURROW: PERSON TO PERSON

PROTO HISTORICIZING NEWS PROGRAM: FORD 50TH ANNIVERSARY SHOW

MURROW IN THE 21ST CENTURY: 1958 RTNDA SPEECH AND *GOOD NIGHT AND GOOD LUCK*

CHAPTER ONE.....44
“A LOOK BACK”: CNN AND THE RISE OF THE HISTORICIZING NEWS PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

EARLY CABLE TELEVISION AND BLUE SKY

POST BLUE SKY: THE FIRST, TOP DOWN BEGINNING OF CABLE TELEVISION

TED TURNER AND THE FOUNDING OF CNN: THE SECOND, GROUND UP BIRTH OF CABLE TELEVISION

PADDY SCANNELL ON EVERYDAY HISTORICALITY AND CNN

HISTORICIZING NEWS PROGRAMS AND BIG HISTORY

CNN COVERAGE OF DESERT SHIELD / DESERT STORM

HISTORICIZING NEWS PROGRAMS – A LOOK BACK

CONCLUSION

CHAPTER TWO.....87
“AT LONG LAST, HAVE YOU NO DYNASTY?”: ESPN AND THE HISTORICIZING NEWS PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND: SPORTS NEWS

WHY ESPN FOR THIS STUDY: CATASTROPHE AND LIVENESS

FORMATION OF ESPN
 ESPN’S FIRST BROADCAST
 SPORTSCENTER TENTH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL
 ESPN BOOM IN THE 1990’S
 HISTORICIZING NEWS PROGRAMS IN SPORTS: ESPY’S AND JIMMY VALVANO
 HISTORICIZING NEWS PROGRAMS IN SPORTS: SPORTSCENTURY
 SportsCenter of the Decade
 Top 50 Athletes of the 20th Century and Rankings
 CONCLUSION

**CHAPTER THREE – “THE RIGHT SIDE WON”: CNN’S COLD WAR AND THE
 POLITICIZATION OF THE HISTORICIZING NEWS
 PROGRAM.....131**

INTRODUCTION
 THE LATE HISTORICIZING NEWS PROGRAM
 CULTURE WARS
 RIGHTWING CRITIQUE OF MAINSTREAM MEDIA
 FOX NEWS
 TED TURNER AND CNN
 THE WORLD AT WAR
 CNN’S COLD WAR
 Red Spring and Postscript
 CONSERVATIVE CRITIQUE OF CNN’S COLD WAR
 WHY COLD WAR
 CONCLUSION

**CHAPTER FOUR.....169
 “SERIOUS NEWS DOESN’T HAVE TO BE BORING”: NEW MEDIA, THE “END OF
 HISTORY” AND SUMMER 2001 CABLE TELEVISION NEWS**

INTRODUCTION
 HISTORICIZING NEWS PROGRAMS IN THE CLOUD
 THE END OF HISTORY
 C-SPAN AS PROTO-INTERNET TELEVISION NEWS
 SHATTERED GLASS
 LATE 1990’S SELF-AWARE HISTORIC PROGRAMMING – THE CLINTON
 IMPEACHMENT
 Y2K BUG
 2000 ELECTION CONFLICT
 SUMMER 2001
 Tabloid: Chandra Levy disappearance
 Stunt programming: “Summer of the Shark”
 Politics: Stem Cell Research
 CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION.....213

BRIEF SUMMATION
DEATH OF IRONY AND THE SERIOUSNESS OF FAKE NEWS
THE MURROW MOMENT: STEWART THE TRUTH TELLER ON CROSSFIRE
WITHER HISTORY IN TELEVISION HISTORY

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND NOTES.....224

LIST OF FIGURES

| | |
|---|-----|
| Figure 1 Processing Historicity in 24-Hour Cable Television News | 66 |
| Figure 2 Images of CNN's 1991 Gulf War Coverage..... | 73 |
| Figure 3 Cronkite in foreground and background on CBS for 1991 Coverage..... | 74 |
| Figure 4 Scene from first ESPN broadcast in 1979..... | 100 |
| Figure 5 Historicizing News Programs on ESPN..... | 102 |
| Figure 6 Image from "ESPN, Founding Partner" page of the V Foundation website..... | 116 |
| Figure 7 Stills from ESPN's <i>SportsCenter of the Decade: 1900-1949</i> | 122 |
| Figure 8 Danny Glover in the archival space in a still from <i>SportsCenter of the Decade: 1950s</i> | 123 |
| Figure 9 Late Historicizing News Program Process..... | 132 |
| Figure 10 Still of title at opening of <i>The World At War</i> | 149 |
| Figure 11 Lech Walesa in still from <i>Cold War: Postscript</i> following the "Red Spring" episode | 156 |
| Figure 12 Example Illustrations of Cloud Computing | 171 |
| Figure 13 Lack of Cohesiveness in Historicizing News Programs at the End of the 1990s | 176 |
| Figure 14 Screen shot of email read on CSPAN's Washington Journal..... | 186 |
| Figure 15 Stewart on Crossfire in 2004..... | 218 |
| Figure 16 Google search for "Jon Stewart" and "Edward R. Murrow"..... | 221 |

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I love reading the acknowledgments in any book or manuscript. It is a reminder that what you are reading was the work of a human being with friends, mentors, families and a community supporting them. First, I would like to thank my dissertation chair John T. Caldwell. John is not only a brilliant, path-making scholar, but also an enthusiastic and kindhearted person. Through the many years this project took, John always remained supportive and generous with his time and attention. When it came time to hone my draft into a cohesive whole he was incisive and demanding in getting the best possible result from what I had produced. I consider myself lucky to call John a mentor and thank him.

I also want to thank the other members of my committee, Purnima Mankekar, Allyson Field, and Douglas Kellner. Purnima has always been supportive, but I am most grateful for her insightful and clear minded advice about life, both inside and outside the academy. Allyson, like Purnima, came onboard my committee at a late date but I am grateful for her time, critical eye and encouraging words when she did so. Doug's course on Critical Pedagogy really influenced my teaching and research approach and I am thankful for his helpful guidance in the world of contemporary politics and television news.

I want to thank Vivian Sobchack, one of the most prolific and thoughtful scholars ever in the field of Cinema and Media studies, for her advice and being on my original committee before withdrawing in order to focus on her work in the emeritus phase of her career. I would also like to acknowledge two professors who passed away during my time at UCLA. Peter Wollen was one of the major reasons I choose to go to UCLA and his Experimental Film class is something I refer to often to this day. Teshome Gabriel, who was also on my committee before his untimely death in 2010, is someone I will never forget. He was a teacher of uncommon wisdom and grace

who had a profound influence on me and a generation of students. The least I can do is dedicate my dissertation to his memory.

Though seemingly ubiquitous at the time, finding actual broadcasts of 1990s cable television news today is fairly difficult. I wish to thank the UCLA Film and Television Archive and the National And Public Affairs (NAPA) collection for making so much historic material, especially local and cable television news broadcasts, available to view for scholars. I particularly want to thank Mark Quigley for his time and energies in locating tapes and his valuable advice on other material to view that I might have overlooked if not for him. I also want to thank the Paley Center for Media and Martin Gostanian for allowing me to view archival material, especially ESPN broadcasts from the 1980s and 1990s.

Following my advancement to candidacy I relied on teaching and other work in order to support myself during the time of research and writing my dissertation. Through the valuable interaction with students and my many gifted colleagues, I came to appreciate these jobs beyond the financial benefits. I want to thank the many people who gave me a chance to earn a living and gave me a rare and unique chance to develop professionally. Thank you to Sonia Maasik in the Department of English Composition and William Kelly in the Department of Communication Studies at UCLA for the lecture and teaching fellowship positions. Thank you also to Sharon Sharp at CSU-Dominquez Hills, Maria Munoz and Nancy Grass Hemmert at Santa Monica College for the multiple adjunct jobs in their respective Departments of Communication. Thank you to Christina Marouda from Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles. Finally, I wish to thank Alesia Weston, David Courier, Caroline Libresco and Trevor Groth from Sundance for all their support and confidence through the years.

My time at UCLA was maybe most greatly influenced by the friendships forged with my fellow graduate students and then later with others in the larger world of cinema and media studies. The result of our many talks (and their generous listening to my ramblings/rants) can be seen throughout this dissertation. I want to thank Rob Cavanagh for reading many multiple versions of this study, and specifically for reading the final draft, and his thoughtful and penetrating comments. Thank you Eric Vanstrom, Laurel Westrup and Heidi Zwicker for your friendship, debates and advice on all things. I want to thank Steven Charbonneau for being a friend and mentor all the way since my first year in the MA at UCLA. I want to also thank Colin Gunkel, Ross Melnick, Michael Clarke and Farzad Nikbakht for the talks, laughs and help. I consider myself lucky to call you all friends today and in the future.

Finally, I want to thank my family. Thank you to my mother and father-in-laws Mary Lake-Thompson and Richard Thompson. Thank you to my extended family members in India and the United States that are too numerous to mention, but specifically to my mama (uncle) Kuldeep Sharma who has been a trusted role model and source of encouragement my whole life. Thank you to my father Rajendar K. Sharma for his support throughout all phases of my education. Thank you to my mother Usha Sharma for all unending love and sacrifices. Thank you to my stepfather John Gorski and brother-in-law David Curry for their love and support. Thank you to my brother Mandeep Sharma and sister Komal Sharma for sharing our childhood and futures together. Last, but never least, thank you to Lucy Sharma, for the unimaginable joy you have give my life, and Abby Thompson, my best friend and my bride, for believing in me more than I did myself. I love you both more than I can every say.

VITA/BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Sudeep Sharma is a film and television scholar and a film festival programmer. He has taught courses in film, media industries, communication and composition at universities throughout Southern California including UCLA, CSU-Fullerton, CSU-Dominguez Hills and Santa Monica College. Since 2012 he has been an Associate Programmer for feature documentaries for the Sundance Film Festival. He has been a screener and then Programming Associate for the Sundance Film Festival since 2006 and has also served as a reader for the Sundance Institute's Feature Film Program and Documentary Film Program. He has worked for the Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles, the oldest Indian film festival in the United States, since 2006 and is currently a Senior Programmer. Sudeep has also worked for organizations such as the Palm Springs International ShortFest, the Oscars telecast, the UCLA Film & Television Archive, Mumbai Mantra, the Young Writers Workshop at the University of Virginia and the Los Angeles Greek Film Festival.

Sudeep received his BA in English Literature from the George Washington University in 2001 where he graduated Summa Cum Laude and was elected Phi Beta Kappa. He also minored in Political Science and Creative Writing. He won the Academy of American Poets College Prize at George Washington University for his poetry in 2001. He received an MA in Cinema and Media Studies from UCLA in 2003 where his areas of concentration were National Cinemas, Television and New Media. He has presented multiple times at the Society of Cinema and Media Studies (including twice as a panel chair), the Cultural Studies Association annual conference, and Flow. He has also presented at the Media Histories Conference and the Film & History Conference. He has written for *In Media Res* and has a forthcoming essay on documentary in an edited collection on Netflix.

INTRODUCTION – REMEDIAL HISTORIOGRAPHY, TELEVISION NEWS SUPRAGENRE, THE MURROW MYTH

WHY CABLE TELEVISION NEWS, WHY THE 1990S, WHY THIS PROJECT

Cultural and political battle lines formed as cable television news emerged as a ubiquitous and contested programming format and genre in the last quarter of a century. Though much (and often rightly) criticized, cable television news has provided a consistent and significant venue for information, political debate and ideology, and even entertainment for American life. Even today with the availability and relative cheapness of Internet sources, a 2013 PewResearch Center study found not only are most Americans still getting their news from television, but that “it is national cable news that commands the most attention from its viewers.”¹ Despite differences in technology, audience and time, 24-hour cable television news can trace a lineage to the very beginnings of television news in the 1950s. While news on cable began in the 1970s and 1980s, its ascendant period—the time in which what is popularly considered “cable television news” grabbed hold of the public—was the 1990s. During this time, cable saturated the American market and growth of industry stalwarts CNN and other 24-hour news channels like ESPN, Fox News, MSNBC and many others permeated US homes.

I was initially drawn to this topic because of the obvious contemporary importance of cable television news and because its formative years as a programming format coincided with my formative intellectual years. I remember as a middle school student watching the beginnings of the Gulf War on broadcast television (we did not have cable) and the constant reference to the CNN reporters still in Baghdad and appearing via phone line stood in stark contrast to Tom Brokaw, Peter Jennings and Dan Rather in ostentatious newsroom soundstages. I also remember

ten years later, on the eve of my traveling from my home in New Jersey to Los Angeles for graduate school, watching the 9/11 attacks unfold while lying in bed, flipping through some hundred channels in the hopes of some new bit of information.

I mention this to highlight the role and force of history as a construction in news, in particular television news, and how it connects to our daily lives. The coverage of both the Gulf War and 9/11 made the past a major component of the reporting. However, I eventually learned that what I had taken as a straightforward presentation of past events in television news was, in fact, an act of *historicization*, that is a writing of history, or more specifically, the taking of disparate events and turning them into a “historic” narrative, invested with meaning and causal relationships. As I researched television history and then television news as part of my graduate research, I came to see that history and historicization, contrary to common sense views about the medium and the genre, had always been a critical and problematic part of television news. Even more surprising, I came to see that at the moment of the rise of the 24-hour news cycle in the 1990s, when television was supposedly synonymous with the radical present (with no reflection or looking back), cable television news actually relied heavily on history to provide meaning and to author its daily reporting in the present.

The importance of cable television news in the United States, its astronomical rise in the 1990s, and the unusually active performance of history during that critical period were the three elements that lead me down the path to this study. My dissertation will show how history was reenacted, deployed, reformed and monetized in 1990s American cable television news as a way to unify audiences around a constructed common and shared past, and how that usage of history reached its limits at the end of the decade. My research will show how cable television news in the early 1990s worked in sharp contrast to the trends of nichification and splinterization that is

commonly used to explain the cable industry at the time, before being subsumed by those forces by the end of the decade. I am considering the 1990s as specifically the period between the first Gulf War in 1991 (a key post-Cold War event) and the attacks of September 11, 2001. The period was one where the *onscreen* conceptualization of the past changed in the United States and became more performative and self-referential. Viewers and practitioners were responding to new geopolitical realities, but also fundamental changes to the industrial, cultural and technological make up of what accounted for television news. The way to best understand these grand changes is to examine how history was created, represented and performed by the 24-hour cable television news networks.²

One of the key vehicles for representing history of the news network was by what I am terming the subgenre of “historicizing news program” (or HNP). Usually labeled specials, these programs explicitly framed past events (often through earlier, immediate coverage of those events) and constructed continuing story lines, all under the banner of the originating cable network. These programs, which write a history of the past while embedded within the contemporary, breaking news reporting of the network, filled certain industrial, political, and cultural needs of the moment. Most importantly it helped brand the network as an institution that performed history, and not just the daily news, for viewers. The vision of history cable news provided appeared clear, continuous, popularly shared, natural, known, and *outside* the contemporary reporting of the network.³ The “historicizing news program” brought order to the rush of events of the 24-hour news cycle and were critical stepping stones that helped rationalize the non-stop flow of events.

Methodologically, I will use case studies at several of the most significant moments of change in 1990s American cable television news in order to demonstrate how the use of history

by the networks worked culturally and industrially though the period. In Chapter One, I will examine the rise of CNN, the development of the 24-hour news cycle and the use of the HNP in the processing, re-presenting, and performing the 1991 Persian Gulf War. The CNN's HNP of the Gulf War narrated the conflict in terms of what I call "big history," a clear and obviously known historic narrative. Chapter Two will show the prevalence of the HNP in 24-hour news programming by looking at how it operated on ESPN. The all sports news network whose programming included both reporting and live events also employed HNP and historic narratives similar to CNN at the beginning of the 1990s. Chapter Three will demonstrate the burden that the HNP faced in presenting the past in an "objective" and "non-political" manner as the decade continued. With the Culture Wars (the extreme polarization around socio-cultural issues between the left and the right in the US in the 1990s) of the period and the rise of conservative attacks on mainstream, so-called "liberal media," historicizing was increasingly seen as a political act. Finally in Chapter Four I will consider how new media technology threatened cable television's audience and ability to create a universally accessible past, on par with earlier ideas of national "consensus" and "big history", leading to depictions by television of new media as untrustworthy and ahistorical. At the end of the period under study, the outsourcing of historicizing by cable television news in the "cloud" precipitated a shift in focus on what constituted news by the networks. In the conclusion I will discuss how satirical news shows in the 2000s demonstrate both the end of cable television news's particular relationship to historicization and the continuing stability of the television news supragenre.

In the case studies and each chapter I will analyze various texts including programming strategies and practices, industrial artifacts, and the reactions of outside critics and viewers. In reading these texts and critically analyzing them, my goal is to move beyond the search for bias

between liberal and conservative coverage or a political economic analysis based on ownership, law and economics in understanding the cable television news genre. Using more discourse and industrial minded analysis I will build a discursive history of the presentation of history in 1990s American cable television news and show how texts and style worked to give the genre historic depth while still being of the contemporary moment of broadcast.

Before the case studies and analyses described above, I intend in this Introduction to clarify my intervention and where I see this project in terms of the scholarly conceptualizations of television and history, understanding of genre in regards to television news and history, and the history of television news itself. First I explain how I see this project in the light of the field of media studies and its multilayered approach to historiography in contrast to what I term the “remedial historiography” of writers like Marshall McLuhan. The way McLuhan and others have discussed television as a technology divorced from a specific history and one in which its immediacy and newness dominates all other considerations of the form has both become a common, popular understanding of television and elides some deeper historic realities of the technology. By contrast, I will consider the multi-perspective approach of historiography provided by humanities-based media studies that seeks to contextualize media programs in terms of the history of technology, history of television, nation and social construction.

The next section of the introduction will discuss and refine my use of terminology, specifically what I call the “supragenre” of television news. Genre analysis has generally avoided discussing news because of its complicated status as a “live” form with an ostensible lack of constructed narrative. Yet, at the same time, television news has functioned in practice as a consistent genre with a deep meta-connection to the history of television. News is by definition what is new (it is an often repeated point that the word news itself could be described as the

plural of “new”). Yet, what is considered new and, more significantly, worthy of presentation due to the nature of its newness, is dependent on a basic grasp of history. My study is one of the first to directly consider how the genre of cable television news (a subset of what I call the supragenre of television news) constructed that history for viewers and its practitioners during a specific period of industrial and cultural change. I will also outline what I see as being the basic relationship between “genre” and “history” and why that relationship is so critical for this study.

Finally in this Introduction, I will consider the myth and legacy of Edward R. Murrow as a one of the bedrock figures – the “ur-text” as it were, of the genre – in American television news. I will use my analysis of Murrow to underscore some of the weaknesses and shortcomings of various previous attempts to categorize and understand his influence on American television news in an unidirectional manner. Instead, I will demonstrate how Murrow’s emergence as a mythological, ur-text continues to order television news to this day, and introduce how the HNP works to maintain meaning in the supragenre. In examining Murrow, I will be using the very same textual, discourse and industrial analysis I will be presenting throughout this study.

REMEDIAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

The “common sense” view of television as being mostly divorced from history and occurring entirely in the “now” was a view I had encountered entering graduate school and has been widely propagated in academic circles. As an English literature major, I was first introduced to television studies through Marshall McLuhan and the general idea that television represented a medium of immediacy and intimacy. McLuhan’s writings and views have been spread by his axioms like the “global village” and the “medium is the message” and have shaped how academia, elites and the wider popular culture understand television. McLuhan reductively

argued that television, as a machine that extended the scope of the human eye, would, by its mere presence, transform societies.⁴ Rather than being just a means of selling consumer products like dog food or refrigerators, McLuhan's writings elevated television into an epoch-defining technology that allowed intellectuals and other elites to have a readymade handle on what television "means."

McLuhan theorized television as a technology engaged by users in the state of a radical present, unburdened by the past or a specific ideology beyond presence and the primacy of vision. Uninterested in the specifics of the technology of television or its emergence as a commercial product, McLuhan discussed television as a device that would bring about a new developmental age of human consciousness. Like speech, written language and print before it, the electronic era of television and would precipitate huge changes in how society and individuals saw the world around them. The immediacy and newness of television, allowing one to see anywhere around the world in a split second, would require new cognitive skills that placed value on intuition and pattern recognition. "Older" skills based on literacy like logical analysis based on linear thinking would no longer be as valued. This view of "media ecology," of human beings being shaped in deep and meaningful ways by the technologies that make up their environment, is a model used to this day in seeing all new media technologies, most recently the internet.⁵

The popularity of McLuhan's writings, particularly its faddish pop-culture quality, were highlighted by his appearance in Woody Allen's *Annie Hall* to belittle a loud mouth professor in line to see *The Sorrow and the Pity*.⁶ Though not always clearly understood or even still read widely, McLuhan's writings had a profound influence on media studies, specifically how his focus on simultaneity and immediacy as the bedrocks of television encouraged a distrust of the

image in general. Under McLuhan's analysis, the specific content of television was a distraction from the reality of its existence, or as he put it, the content was the distracting "meat" from the "watchdog of the eye." What is actually on television, its look, its style and its history of production is secondary to the power of the media technology itself to change society by its widespread use. The image, in this formulation, is open to blatant manipulation, is artificial and not an appropriate subject of study. Reinforced by and armed with this view, social scientists and other disciplines looked at television as a process that creates effects to be studied in observable fashion. With respect to news, scholarly discourse is often centered within either journalism studies, which are predominately about professionalism and the continued financial wellbeing of the industry; or communication studies, which often looks at effects of television (with important exceptions I will discuss below). In a strange way, McLuhan has provided an underlying theoretical framework to discuss television, and for my purpose here television news, without really engaging with the complexities of images or the specific histories of the technology itself.

I argue that the work of scholars in the McLuhan tradition engages in "remedial historiography." What I mean by this is that they consider television and its effect on society in profound and historic terms, yet on closer inspection, their history is broad and non-specific. I am using the term "remedial historiography" to draw attention to two main defining features of this worldview. One is the overly simplistic understanding of historiography (the writing of history) as being mostly determined by technology. The other is the focus on intermediality, the movement of meaning across various forms of media, but with very little historic awareness of any given specific media form. For example, consider how McLuhan's media ecology gives the impression of being very historically minded in that it accounts for the entire scope of human history.⁷ However, when you look at his actual writing, McLuhan spends more time talking

about the invention of the printing press and literacy than television. Television is taken monolithically as an object that not only erases history, but itself has no history. “Remedial historiography” scholars engage in a form of media history that is regressive and, though sounding very far-reaching and in-depth, very basic and shallow. In his often assigned essay “The Medium is the Message,” McLuhan makes reference to Shakespeare, Skinner, Jung, and the Roman Empire, but he does not mention a single program or anything indicating an awareness of the historic development of television as an industry.⁸ Among “remedial historiographers”, the specific history of the technology or the shows on it (the “meat”) is not as important as its reality and what it does to society. Such a view becomes increasingly difficult to make when the entire argument is focused reductively on the technology itself. It is an approach to media history that presupposes the invention of a given media that remediates human consciousness as the most significant force in time, yet has nothing to say and scarcely understands how that media arrived in existence.

While supposedly all about human history then, “remedial historiography” looks at media outside of historic time and simply occurring in the “now.” Many authors, including Neil Postman and Jean Baudrillard, have adopted McLuhan’s form of “remedial historiography” without attribution. For example, Baudrillard’s statement that the “Gulf War didn’t happen” is an extension of remedial historiography in the sense it suggests the images we see on the screen are not only not real but not occurring in historic time.⁹ Obviously Baudrillard is critiquing our media system that allows us such distance from events to see them as not really occurring as we watch them, but that critique itself is based on a whole way of viewing television and its use in the West that on a fundamental level denies the technology’s historic reality. Writing influenced by McLuhan, from the full range of the ideological spectrum, has fostered the dangerous

impression that television is untied to any understanding of history or historicization. On the right, this can be seen in portraying primetime entertainment television's depictions of the family or sexuality themselves leading directly to a denigration of "family values" or alone causing an increase in promiscuity. However, on the left this is seen in how the popularity of networks like Fox News are dismissed as "tricking" viewers into believe its reports are true as if that is the only thing viewers are looking for when watching television news. Both views echo McLuhan in they suggest television viewing is only occurring at this moment and not within a complex matrix of history, society and culture.

Within "remedial historiography", then, cable television news is not a genre with a specific history that has changed over time, or stylistic and formal influences that can be traced, or economic underpinnings that can affect content, as much as it is, just, television. The only discernible difference that can be seen between cable television news and the television news of McLuhan's era is it is "more", in that cable television news is "more" now, "more" transportive, has "more content" and is "more" dependent on the technology rather than specific messages. The image on Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death* of the family on the couch with television sets replaced for heads could still be used today (and would probably be more emblematic of the argument as each family member has their own screen to connect to).¹⁰ The criticism of "remedial historiography" is timeless and can be applied with slight variation from 1969 to 2014. What "remedial historiography" cannot tell us is how television news, forgetting cable news, developed as an industry or a way of signifying meaning. More oddly, considering the primacy of the image in television, it cannot speak to the development of television as a text over time. History, of both the specific texts, genres, forms and even technology – at least according to the

remedialists – does not need to be deeply engaged with because it fails to directly explain what the technology does to the individual mind.

In contrast to the “remedial historiography” of McLuhan and others, I came to learn another view of television that emerged through my graduate study. The other view of television sees it not primarily as simultaneity and immediacy but instead argues for it as a social and cultural technology soaked through with history. John Caldwell counters those theories that see the image and television as somehow less “concrete and accessible” than “history and reality”.¹¹ He argues that such a view is bizarre because the “*image is both real and historical*.”¹² Instead of being untethered to any past, Caldwell reminds us that “historification is very much a central preoccupation of the televisual apparatus.”¹³ He goes on to tie his approach to industrial conditions and institutional practices, saying, critical to this study, that

the possibilities for historification now seem tantalizingly limitless, for most major stations have amassed large amounts of archival material from years of new production. Proprietary access to this raw material provides endless possibilities for historical reworking and hybridization.¹⁴

With endless content from the past, the past could be used and restructured into consistent programming.

One of the major founders of modern television studies, Lynn Spigel, also has shown the depth and wide ranging scope of history in understanding the television medium. Her book *Make Room for TV* viewed television not simply as hardware, but as a social technology. By digging through women’s magazines, advertising practices and accounts of television production in the 1950s, Spigel demonstrated the deep historical work done that created the commonsensical view today that television is a domestic, consumption based medium. She showed television is not just a creation out of the ether, but a technology with a real history that has been critical for what the technology itself is. As Spigel says, “Technologies such as automobiles, radios, and computers

do not simply cause social change; instead their uses are shaped by social practices and cultural expectations.”¹⁵

I am contrasting “remedial historiography” with these other approaches that analyze television not as an epoch or monolith but as a historical medium in order to introduce the core beliefs underlying the approach to my topic. This dissertation seeks to answer the central question: how was history constructed in the midst of continuous and contemporary reporting in the genre of 24-hour cable television news. This research question pivots around issues of discourse and historiography as much as the format of television news and the rise of the 24-hour cable television news network infrastructure in the 1990s. What is distinctive about my study is that I will be approaching these questions about “news” utilizing a critical media studies perspective that integrates textual, discursive, and institutional analysis. I believe this hybrid framework will not only provide new insights, but will better contextualize and complement other disciplinary approaches to television news, namely Journalism Studies and Communications Studies.

BLINDSPOTS IN JOURNALISM STUDIES AND COMMUNICATION

“Remedial historiography” has been extremely influential in how certain disciplines, particularly communication studies and journalism studies, have conceived of television news as an object of study. What is termed “journalism studies” is only decades old as a new field. Historically journalism studies was and is considered as important in learning the trade of journalism. Usually housed within communication programs, journalism classes at many college and universities are taught by former or current journalists for the purpose of giving students exposure to people working in the field. The scholarly study of journalism has fallen to

communication and other social sciences (discussed below), with the exception being study of it by practitioners being more geared to prescribing of how one should practice journalism or elegies and correctives of how it was practiced in the past.¹⁶ These trends have entrenched McLuhan's remedial historiography in the field.

Considering one can be a journalist without any specific academic credentialing (unlike doctors or lawyers), most of what is taught in schools of Journalism are contemporary professional practices and terminology. History and what could be called theory of journalism is often defined by pragmatic need and overly observational methodological style. What journalism programs focus on as their object of study are practices within the institutions of journalism, not necessarily journalism's technology or consuming audiences.¹⁷ For example, one of the models of this kind of study is Herbert J. Gans's landmark *Deciding What's News*. A sociologist, Gans spent nearly a decade in the newsrooms of the CBS, NBC, Newsweek and Time to understand how they made the decisions they made.¹⁸ Studying the journalists, editors and publishers are the main focus of Journalism Studies. Even more contemporary critiques of journalism from people like Neil Postman, Jay Rosen and Robert McChesney examine what drives the workers within the journalism industry. What many of these studies ultimately lack are aesthetic, textual analysis or deeper histories of the technology beyond the basic framework presupposed by "remedial historiography."

Communication studies has also engaged television news as a major field of study and site of research. The overriding focus on these approaches have been on the effects of media, the professionalization of the producers, the ideologies shared by the programming or the industrial/technological developments of the genre. As a social science, Communication Studies employs methodologies and research designs that aim for objective and quantifiable data, even

setting up experiments in order to prove a given hypothesis (such as agenda setting).¹⁹ There are significant exceptions to these kinds of studies, the most obvious being the critical/interpretivist tradition of communication studies. With work in the critical/interpretive branches of communication studies, texts are read as creating truth and meanings instead merely reporting on it. James Carey distinguishes between these two schools of communication studies in his book *Communication as Culture*, arguing that one approach sees communication as transmission and the other that sees it as a ritual. In contrast to a form of communication studies focused on just power and transmission, Carey called for a discipline that also sought to understand how the world is made knowable and recreated on a moment to moment, generation to generation. According to Carey, the ritual view of reading a newspaper was “less as sending or gaining information and more as attending a mass.”²⁰ Similar to religious ceremonies preformed with others, the ritual of reading the paper was more about affirming a world view with others rather than the receiving specific information. The tradition of communication studies that has followed has read texts as doing just that, *collectively* creating the world and including others in that creation in ritualistic practices that reconnect humans to the history of the species.

Beyond even the more critical/interpretivist approach of communication studies, I believe that what has been widely termed media studies has a unique and still unexploited set of tools that could build on and contribute to our common understanding of the subject of cable television news.²¹ In writing about theories, Douglas Kellner suggests that they are, “among other things, ways of seeing, optics; they are perspectives which illuminate specific phenomena and that also have certain blindspots and limitations which restrict their focus.”²² Communication studies’ limitation is typical of to the limitations of social sciences in general in that it works to establish truth in an empirical, statistical or objective manner. Texts, like any

message from a sender to a receiver, can be interpreted or misinterpreted in one way. While the critical/interpretivist approach embraces a concept of multiple intersubjective realities, again, the focus is not on texts but the experiences of being in communication with them. As Carey writes in terms of the ritual, the words themselves repeated in ceremonial functions are not as significant as their repetition through time. A powerful formulation of how to understand human relationships and communication, communication studies still poses a blindspot for the text itself.

The strength of the critical media studies theoretical approach is its flexibility and multifaceted understanding of the textual object. Media studies is known for its interdisciplinary character. Within the general umbrella we do find theories that can be “one-sided” as Kellner argues, specifically theories that see media as pure manipulation and domination from the 1960s/70s and on the other side theories that place the power of the audience supreme in making meanings and resisting.²³ I agree with Kellner that “media culture cannot be simply dismissed as a banal instrument of the dominant ideology but must be differentially interpreted and contextualized within the matrix of the competing social discourse and forces which constitute it.”²⁴ In order to understand media culture then, we have to use more flexible tools/theories in approach its texts. The responsibility to have a multi-faceted approach is made even more critical due to the complex texts and technologies we are dealing with. Following Kellner’s *Media Cultures*, I draw on a combination of Frankfurt school, British cultural studies and postmodernist/poststructuralist approaches in examining my archival evidence. These theories come up at various points throughout the dissertation, but again, following Kellner’s critique of over-reliance on one metatheory, I am committed throughout this study to interrogating media culture by looking at “how the cultural industries produce specific artifacts that reproduce the

social discourses which are embedded in the key conflicts and struggles of the day.” With this approach, the key question for this study becomes: how we remember in the midst of constant reporting.²⁵

In order to explain how media studies approaches television differently than communication studies and journalism studies, I will briefly sketch out my framework for televisual historiography by considering the writings of Vivan Sobchack, Hayden White, Purnima Mankekar, James Schwoch, Mimi White, Susan Reilly and John Caldwell. In contrast to “remedial historiography,” and at times in direct conflict with them, these scholars present another, much more historically grounded way of understanding television and its texts. Though never grouped together in the way I am doing so, I believe these writings show a common approach to the complex connection between television and history that focuses on texts, technology, institutions, style and form.

MEDIA STUDIES HISTORIOGRAPHIES

Text

Television has a complex and complicated relationship to the concept of “history”. In their book *Media Knowledge*, Schwoch, White, and Reilly write, history, as a “crucial category of learning—something we must know and understand as the foundation of social and cultural identity” is generated by television as “a field of discourse...that is fragmentary, multiple and contradictory.”²⁶ Live news programming, by nature of being on television with a core function of creating social meaning by showing the now, is self-evidently historic, demonstrates that history and liveness “authenticate the social truths and cultural value of television as a whole.”²⁷ Contrary to Remedial Historians, history and liveness are *not* in contradiction but occur

simultaneously on television, as seen in the fact reruns, old films, compilations and historical fictions exist at the same time as first run, original, new programming. The fact that history is so comingled with the present on television is often attributed to the general postmodern pastiche of media culture. However, Schwoch, White, and Reilly make the interesting point that:

...history seems to haunt the medium; it is both nowhere and everywhere within the discourses that comprise television as a social and cultural apparatus....History and tradition anchor this discourse of contemporaneity, endowing television and its electromagnetic impulses with substance and weight, offering connections to the social and cultural milieu in which it participates.²⁸

I believe this suggests how the historical subjectivity created by television is one of constant tension between an annihilation of the past into an all consuming present and a past that is fixed and set forever by outside forces.

In concluding their chapter on history and television, Schwoch, White, and Reilly draw a beautiful image of how history is constantly surrounding us. Echoing Michel de Certeau and Walter Benjamin in a description of walking through a city, they describe how movement through the space around us evokes histories, public and private. Schwoch, White and Reilly argue that, “this ease of accessibility is one of the joys of history. However, the infatuation of television may someday threaten to take away that joy and exercise a monopoly power over it without society’s realization of its loss.”²⁹ Television’s ability to turn history into one narrative (such as in the inevitability of Barack Obama’s 2008 election victory or the absolute domination of Michael Jordan’s NBA career) is very real yet there simultaneously exists a countervailing power against that impulse (here, the genuine surprise and doubt of Obama’s rise or the legitimate challenges and early set backs of Jordan’s career).

Hayden White argues that historicization is a form of narrativization. Or more specifically, the most powerful historical writings are those that mimic the writing of narrative

fiction and can best be understood as not just purely scientific works but forms of storytelling. Considering this view, the HNPs of cable television news I will be discussing throughout this study are the narratives given to a mass audience. They are moments of television's "monopoly power," however it is important to remember that these reports are happening within the flow of the television news day. While, the HNPs act as markers in the day for the viewer, much like the encounter with monuments and important sites act as the an encounter with history for the walker, the viewer (like like de Certeau's walker) can continue moving through the landscape of television, unconnected and moved by their passions. Though planned and organized in the programming of a given day, the way HNPs (like CNN's *Gulf War: A Look Back* series or ESPN's *SportsCentury* series) are experienced by viewers is similar to how history is experienced by the city walker. The narrative exists, but there remains an openness to its meaning. That openness is something television as an industry works to control and direct back towards its own texts. Walking through de Certeau's space is therefore analogous to the viewer's experiential journey through television's historiographic flow.

This is just one way that a media history historiographic approach will be used in this study. I will be engaging with texts (in particular the HNP), but also the history of how those texts have been deployed. In writing about the historic epic miniseries *War and Remembrance*, John Caldwell describes the enormous amount of story information given the viewer as a form of "data –processing terms" that "fulfills an inputting function."³⁰ Unlike other "meganarrative" forms of television, like the weekly series or soap opera, special, unique programming like the big-budget miniseries do not have the "luxury" to wait for viewers to understand how to interpret the text and have to aggressively do it for them. I approach the HNP in the same way. Though a key part of the entire format of cable television news, HNPs very different from the traditional

programming on the network. The HNP is a form of stylized overproduction of actuality that has to prep the viewer as to how to read it, and that form of “over-produced” reading is different from the “normal” news programming on the network.

Form

Vivian Sobchack writes about a form of historical montage in news in her essay “Happy New Year and Auld Lang Syne”: On Televisual Montage and Historical Consciousness.” Sobchack describes and analyzes the montage packages of images from the past year events that play at the end of the last local newscasts of year. Her focus on these montages is due to how they raise questions about the “narrative construction of the historic real,” visual abstraction and intellectual montage.³¹ In moments that the news programs play the montage clips of the events of the past year, Sobchack finds that there is no overarching grand narrative or organizing historiographic principle. The images are abstracted and what the New Year montages actually do is perform a “ceremonial function in relation to the conundrum of meaning of historical time and human presence.”³² The montages act as a Janus face, looking forward and back, or the Ouroboros, the snake eating itself.

Though she says they are similar, Sobchack differentiates these montage packages from what she calls “year in review” shows (and what I term HNPs) because although they are “produced as discrete and lengthier news presentations...[they] differ greatly in their much higher degree of narrative coherence, expository and explanatory commentary, and strategies of closure.”³³ Historicizing news programs are a much more complicated and significant genre of cable television news, yet much of what Sobchack writes about New Years Eve montages is applicable. For my purposes, I am most intrigued by how she describes the montages as having

an “iconographic logic” that is grounded in our complex mediated culture. She argues that the montages have become the dominant mode of popular historical consciousness in contemporary America’s overtaxualized and ever-accelerating mediascape. Indeed, the New Year’s Eve montage can be regarded as merely the most blatant and sacral articulation of a historical and historicizing logic of images that underlies not only the whole of television but also the whole of contemporary culture. That is, we could say that the disjointed narrative of fragments that is the New Year’s Eve montage functions as an allegory of both the medium through which it appears and the logic of the culture which it is a part.³⁴ Again, though she is talking about the montages, I believe we can extend this analysis to the HNPs. Specifically, these generic programs are an allegory for both the larger genre of 24-hour cable television news and the logic that gives the larger genre meaning. As the marquee events in the network program schedule, HNPs work as programmatic iconography which balances and provides a model for understanding the overall programming of a given cable network.

Nation

When we discuss historiography in terms of media, we have to also consider how texts are not just writing the past, but they are often writing the past from the view of a particular national identity. While not run by the state or under any form of government mandate like over-the-air broadcast television, American cable television news by its very nature articulated a form of American identity and consciousness. Part of this came from its connection to the history of American television news and its operating myths, as will be explained further through my discussion of the Murrow Mythology. However, more broadly American cable television news was an extension of television’s ability to contribute to and expand on national identity through

the power of story in the most intimate domestic spaces of its collective viewers. Scholars such as David Morley, Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall have discussed the ways in which television, particularly television news but also entertainment programming, has created narratives of shared experiences on a national level. I wish to focus on Purnima Mankekar's writing on this issue and how it has helped me conceptualize the study that follows.

Purnima Mankekar's *Screening Culture, Viewing Politics: An Ethnography of Television, Womanhood, and Nation in Postcolonial India* examines how the viewing of Indian state-sponsored television by families (and particularly women) profoundly shaped commonly held views of a women's place in the family, community and nation, as well as other beliefs regarding caste, class, politics and religion. Based in part on field research involving visits to and interviews with families in the "emerging" middle class in lower class Delhi neighborhoods, Mankekar shows how state-sponsored programming, often entertainment series, worked to give certain messages about the nation and the viewer's role within it. While obviously different from my study in terms of methodology and the specific nation, Mankekar's formulations, especially in how television programs constructed a particular story of the nation with a very specific view of its history, are very similar to how I see American cable television news in the 1990s, especially in regards to HNPs.

Mankekar discusses how Doordarshan, India's state run broadcasting network, acted as a "hegemonic state apparatus," mediating and promoting certain views of the nation, its history and the role of its citizens.³⁵ Programming, like the first broadcasts of the two-hour news show "National Programme" "was to forge a modern, national culture through the televisual dissemination of discourses of development and national integration."³⁶ In describing how viewers were affected by the watching the programming, Mankekar makes the critical point that

“[a]udiences of mass media do not exist a priori. They are actively constructed through careful programming decisions and marketing strategies, as well as transnational flows of information, capital, commodities, and in some cases, the agenda of the nation-state.”³⁷ Though not at the same level as a state run broadcasting network and its programming, I see American cable television news in the 1990s as also promoting particular narratives in order to create a “national” audience ready for its non-stop, 24-hour programming. Especially in the face of the historical position of the broadcast networks, cable television news had to provide a large, shared context that made viewers a subject within a timeframe that made sense and had meaning. Historicizing news programs of the sort researched for this study, functioned to elevate the daily programming of the cable news channels into something that connected to the deeper historic time of the nation. While not as directly tied to the narratives of the nation-state as Doordarshan, American cable television news channels in the 1990s use of HNPs also constructed a certain type of history of the nation and, as will be demonstrated throughout, constructed an audience that could immediately identify that given national history.

DEFINING TERMS

Television news as supragenre / Cable television news as genre

It is important at this point for me to define and delimit some of the terms I will be using in this study, especially what I specifically call television news, cable television news, and HNPs. From the beginning of this study I had considered the broader category of television news not just a genre (that is, a recurring form that follows certain narrative, style and audience expectations with other works that can be included in the same category), but a *supragenre*. Television news as a supragenre is best defined in the most general terms as reporting on or

representing actual events. By defining ‘television news’ as a supragenre, I see it as including within it other genres that are related but transcending them all in their specific details.

In my approach, commercial broadcast news, public broadcasting and cable television news are all distinct genres. Defining 24-hour cable television news as a genre seemed appropriate because it relies on specific conventions, iconography and even narrative tropes. Terms like form, program type, industrial practice and mode have also been used to describe 24 hour cable television, and while cases can be made for each framework, genre more accurately captures both its unique textual status AND the conventions that both viewers and scholars employ in talking about and consuming those texts. The other terms mentioned are either too broad (‘program type’, ‘form’) that they would include any kind of television news or incorrectly describe the specific genre of cable television news (‘industrial practices’ more describe the work of producers, where ‘mode’ a kind of address to the viewer that is also found in many other programming forms, including fictional).

In calling 24-hour cable television news a genre, I am also using Jason Mittell’s definition of genre being based on discursive connections more than alternative definitions of genres based out of literary and film theory.³⁸ As Mittell argues, television is unique from literature and film and, therefore, genre on television cannot be explained purely by looking at the text. Also, calling 24-hour cable television news a genre better captures how viewers, industry, critics and others understand their production and consumption of the programming. Though there is no one narrative in cable television news, there is a predictable and expected experience of watching cable television news that is not unlike other generic media. For example, though viewers of cable television news might turn on the network in the middle of the program, there is an expectation in the viewer and among programmers that given a certain

amount of time the viewer will be informed on not just the top news, but a range of stories from critical international events to more lighthearted celebrity fare. The expectation of what one will experience when watching cable television news then is not a whole lot different from the expectations of someone watching a police procedural and the viewer's confidence the given crime of the episode will be solved in some way.

What has undoubtedly changed in the cable television news as a genre however is the means in which those expectations are delivered. Going back to the previous example, the expectation or implicit contract that a viewer will be informed on a range of topics might come from the ordering of stories in a particular show, however in our contemporary moment that guarantee is provided by the ever constant news ticker at the bottom of the screen. The news ticker has been traced back to the coverage of 9/11 and Fox News, and has been a feature that has been adopted by other cable news networks. The ticker serves a generic function signifying the completeness of information in cable television news, and it is a tool that has a specific historic background. I think this is an example of why it is important to see 24-cable television as a genre and what I see this study contributing to media studies generally. The 1990s were a critical period for cable television news, where tropes and modes that defined the genre were created and popularized.

Subgenre

The overarching genre of 24-cable television encompasses subgenres. Included in these are the news program (*SportsCenter*, *World Today*, *Newsnight*), the interview show (*Larry King Live*, *O'Reilly Factor*), the opinion show (*Crossfire*, *Sports Reporters*) and others. What this study will focus on, however, is the subgenre of what I term HNPs: programs that explicitly

represent the past but are packaged as part of the “present” news programming of the network. A critical component of the overall cable television genre, I will demonstrate how the subgenre of HNPs interacted with the overall coverage of the cable network. I am using the term subgenre because while very much part of the overall genre, it has its own characteristics and viewer expectations that allow it to be placed apart and together with other texts, as I will discuss throughout.

I also argue that 1990s 24-hour cable television news is a unique genre from cable television news in much the same way that cable television news is a distinct genre from broadcast network news. Genres do change over time and are not a priori or inherent to the text. I agree with Mittell’s definition of genre’s as cultural categories where the focus is not on text but a “process of categorization....[that] operates across the cultural realms of the media industries, audiences, policy, critics and historical contexts.”³⁹ In this dissertation I too argue that to understand what exactly was the 1990s cable television news genre, we have to look at a multitude of factors beyond the text. Yet, at the same time, texts are at the center of this study, specifically the subgenre in cable television news of the HNP. How than can I justify a reading of texts in a definition of genre and subgenre where I argue we need to look beyond the text? Again borrowing from Mittell, we need to understand that *genre is a textual category and not a textual feature*, meaning genres are created out of discourse and intertextuality and not inherent to the text itself.⁴⁰ I see the subgenre of the HNP being part of the intertextuality that defines the entire genre of cable television news, especially when we consider genres as discursive practices.

Using this kind of categorization allows for a new way to think about television news apart from the approaches of journalism studies, which mostly treats it as a profession, and communication studies, which mostly sees it as means to send messages and create worldviews.

Unlike previous conceptualizations that saw television news and its related materials as mere industrial practices or activities, or as programming formats, my formulation is unique in how it allows us to use the tools of media studies and approach cable television news as a generic text.

Genre and history: Murrow Myth as ur-text

Another benefit of calling HNPs a subgenre, cable television news a genre and television news a supragenre is it undercuts the pretensions that “real” history is just politics or a list of facts. As Hayden White has theorized, history is a constructed, dramatic narrative more than it is a supposedly dispassionate listing of events. What is considered history is not naturally occurring but a human construct. One of the ways it is constructed is through the genre of television news, which creates a sense of reality and inevitability. However, as I just explained above, genre is also a construct, one built out of narrative, audience expectations and intertextual elements. History, or more specifically historicization, makes the cable television news genre seem more solid and objective. The relationship between “genre” and “history” then is co-dependent, both hold the other up as more solid and real than they are. Along with the constructed reality of “genre” and “history,” the other important part of both terms for this study is the fact we are referring to visual texts, meaning we can not only refer to narratives when discussing either. We have to engage with the visual, and the fact that visuals, either as iconography in genre or as excess in terms of historic narrative, take on lives of their own that cannot just be controlled by plot, character or event.⁴¹

I want to demonstrate what I mean by the relationship between genre and history that animates this study by looking at an ur-text for television news in the figure of the Edward R. Murrow. He stands out as an organizing principle across the several different approaches to

television news (communication, journalism and social science) I have discussed above. Murrow is critical for this project for two main reasons. First, as an example of the specific kind of media studies analysis that I believe has been missing in terms of television news and that I will be conducting throughout. I will present Murrow through a reading of various texts (visual and written) and a historiographic understanding that attempts to connect industry, audience, technology and events into a whole. Second, how Murrow is remembered goes to the heart of how we talk about television news as having a history *at all*. The question is not what is the history of Murrow and how does it fit into the history of television news. Instead, we must ask how the historicizing of Murrow has worked to create a historical sense of continuity for what we call the history of television news generally.

The Murrow myth is the ur-text of a pure disciplinary practice that never actually existed, but is now the institutionalized aspiration for television news. Ur-text comes from both musicology and Biblical study and is used to refer an origin text that is assumed to be the source material that is untouched or tainted by other iterations.⁴² Where as genre is collective and anonymous, the Murrow myth as an ur-text desperately tries to establish authoritative authorship under the guise of an individual. The draw of a ur-text, of having some clarifying force giving meaning to the reporting and dailiness of television news, explains the rise of the HNP in the 1990s and what I describe as Big History (an objective and widely known and shared history) in the next chapter. In order to understand what I mean by a ur-text, we have to examine the Murrow Myth as I do for the remainder of the Introduction. After a consideration of the Murrow myth that reads him a media studies perspective, I will look at three highlights of his career: the broadcast from the Blitz, his confrontation with McCarthy and other work as a television personality in the 1950s, and his famous 1958 RTNDA Speech. Finally I will discuss how

Murrow is historicized in the film *Good Night and Good Luck* and how that historicization is a critical part of the television news supragenre.

THE MURROW MYTH

The “myth” of Murrow has been told and retold in numerous ways, from conversations in newsrooms around the US to popular and academic writings, and even to mainstream Hollywood cinema. The function of the Murrow myth is both to rationalize the history of television news journalism *and* to define television journalism as a distinct discourse. The question is not what is the history of Murrow and how does it fit into the history of television news journalism; we must ask how has the historicizing of Murrow worked to create a what can be termed a ur-text of television news

Murrow as mythology is not a denial of reality or a lie. As Roland Barthes as explained, “myth has a double function: it points out and it notifies, it makes us understand something and it imposes it on us”.⁴³ Murrow as a sign carries meaning in the language of broadcasting. As a myth, Murrow also imposes a rationale on the language of broadcasting. To clarify, Murrow carries a certain meaning, which we might call the morality of commercial broadcast, but as a mythological sign he also justifies the entire belief that commercial broadcast carries purpose and can *have* morality. Barthes wrote all myth “transforms history into nature.”⁴⁴ With Murrow the history of commercial broadcast becomes natural. The details of his individual history, just like the details of the institution of broadcast can be abandoned by practitioners and viewers. The myth allows Murrow and television to exist and be experienced (even enjoyed) as an object.

The Murrow Myth becomes a balm that eases the inherent tensions created in commercial television news, Murrow (as a story) makes the tensions into workable economic processes. It

creates a model for the supragenre that all future television news follows. For example, the Murrow Industry asks us to celebrate television news for considering the health risk of cigarettes while ignoring the hand it played in marketing those same cigarettes. Murrow and his staff show courage by taking on an industry that supported its bottom line, but they could not critically or self-reflexively consider their position as models for those very same products.

This is very different then from simply retelling the story of Murrow as the origin or beginning. To borrow from Michel Foucault's formulations, by looking at Murrow we are not searching for "origins" but for "emergence."⁴⁵ Murrow has frequently been referred to as the father of broadcast journalism and a kind of patron saint for American values of civic participation and freedom of speech. The history seen in these hagiographic approaches to Murrow are very much of utility. It is of the history derided by Foucault through Nietzsche as representing "a suprahistorical perspective: a history whose function is to compose the finally reduced diversity of time into a totality fully closed upon itself...a history whose perspective on all that precedes it implies the end of time, a completed development."⁴⁶ This perspective on Murrow is so well known it has entered popular culture as established fact. We see it in films like *Good Night and Good Luck* and the iconic imagery of a reporter as a chain smoking, suit wearing, world-weary man who speaks in a slightly Midwestern flat accent. The history of Murrow as a closed narrative with a definitive end is clearly demonstrated by Keith Olbermann's use of the same Murrow closing phrase, "good night, and good luck," in order to draw obvious parallels between his criticisms of the Bush administration to Murrow's public battles with Senator McCarthy. We see it again in the HBO's series *The Newsroom* and its main character news anchor Will McAvoy (played by Jeff Daniels).

While Murrow as an origin is well traveled ground, Murrow as an example of emergence, of (as Foucault describes) “the moment of arising..the principle and the singular law of an apparation...the entry of forces; it is their eruption, leap from the wings to center stage, each in its youthful strength” has been less examined.⁴⁷ Such a view of Murrow’s myth allows us to push beyond the limiting history of broadcast journalism, especially in regards to television, and acknowledge the obvious discontinuities within that history. As we will see, many of these clear discontinuities within the Murrow myth have been processed through the suprahistorical perspective. For example, Murrow was a champion for quality, commercial-free journalism, yet hosted a fluff interview show. This means television journalists must balance the needs and wants of an audience, like a parent deciding the menu for dinner. In other cases, those discontinuities have simply been ignored, which is also telling in terms of the industrial purpose of the Murrow myth.

One of the few scholarly examples of the kind of analysis of the Murrow myth that I am proposing can be seen in Gary Edgerton’s essay “The Murrow Legend as Metaphor: The Creation, Appropriation, and Usefulness of Edward R Murrow’s Life Story.” Edgerton looks at how the Murrow myth has been constructed, argues for the meaning of that myth through its heroic model, and, most significantly for my purposes, elucidates how the ritualistic retelling of the myth has served specific purposes for the generations that have followed Murrow. The practice of retelling the Murrow story, Edgerton says, is “a kind of ritual which binds those together who partake in the storytelling process from the spheres of industry, the electronic news profession, academe, and the admiring audience from American mass society.”⁴⁸ Edgerton argues the legend of Murrow, or more specifically its retelling, acts as a goal (standing for morally admirable practices of citizenship) and a warning (the limits of those stances within a

corporate, capitalistic structure). In this he astutely recognizes “the very fact that Murrow’s life story is grounded on the irreconcilable conflict between the impulses of profit seeking and the public interest is the reason why it has been so evocative for so long.”⁴⁹

While Edgerton’s essay is a fascinating examination of the usefulness of Murrow’s story, even in his own examination he ignores many of the central struggles within the conflict Murrow supposedly represents. He mentions none of Murrow’s less esteemed work as host of *Person to Person*, a series that had a similar run to the much more respected *See it Now*, where Murrow would interview celebrities in their homes. Many of the biographies of Murrow and remembrances of him either also skip over his *Person to Person* work or suggest Murrow was embarrassed by it and felt he had to do it in order to be allowed to do the more “important” journalism of his other jobs in a financial or professional sense.⁵⁰ This omission highlights the fissures within fissures in Murrow’s history itself *and* how any project of discussing that myth often attempts again to cover those fissures into a logical whole. As a communication scholar and member of the Society of Cinema and Media Studies, Edgerton analyzes the Murrow myth as a text with conflicting meaning, but also (and mainly) as a prescriptive discourse with positives and negatives. It provides a “model to be emulated from an industry’s most respected moments” as well as a “denial”: “an excuse in the present for having made profit a higher priority than social responsibility in our current system of electronic news...the Murrow discourse also masks a deep-seated guilt within the aura of a hero who embodies our own socially constructed code of media ethics.”⁵¹

While Edgerton’s reading of how the Murrow myth works seems correct, too much of our collective understanding of broadcast journalism from the specific standpoint of media scholarship is limited by the working of myth. Instead of looking for origins, which connotes a

clear trajectory with a beginning and an end, we need to see the Murrow myth as the emergence of what is called television news. Edgerton points out the “oral legends and traditions” of a small group of CBS News journalist have been “usurped by the more complex and conflicting agencies of an industry and a profession.”⁵² The usurpation is not a one-time occurrence but is a continuous and continuing project of the supragenre of television news in constructing a ur-text.

THE EMERGENCE: MURROW DURING THE BLITZ

Any consideration of Murrow as myth and the role it plays in constructing a ur-text of television news must return to his legacy’s primal scene, his reporting from London during the Blitz. When Murrow started his job as head of European operations for CBS in 1937 he was still in his twenties and international radio broadcasts was still a relatively new medium. By the US entrance into the war, Murrow’s nightly news roundups from Europe and his evocative reports from London during the Blitz were not only well listened to but credited with priming the public for war.⁵³

Murrow’s reports from the opening of the war, a period where the US had a carefully constructed official policy of neutrality, have the tone of a simple spectator and frequently rely on phrasings that clearly marked his reports as one American’s observations. Murrow was keenly aware of the intimacy and power of radio as a communicative tool.⁵⁴ Some of the reports, with their lyricism and construction of cinematic imagery, can only be described as works of art. What they clearly were not, however, was objective. Murrow’s “dark poetry” was designed to bring America into the war out of a sense of moral obligation to our allies and civilization at large. While a position admirable in retrospect, it is worthy noting that it not only conflicted with the isolationist positions of people like Charles Lindbergh and US Ambassador to England

Joseph Kennedy, such advocacy flew in the face of contemporary standards of objectivity in journalism (or what is referred to today as “advocacy journalism”) and his own network CBS. Paul White, CBS Director of Public Affairs and Murrow’s boss, said “the one thing that we have insisted upon above all else is as complete an objectivity as can be mastered...Dire forebodings, leaving the radio audience hanging up in the air and filled with suspense and terror of our creation, are not good broadcasting.”⁵⁵ News, even on the more immediate and intimate medium of radio, was, ideally, to maintain a level of detachment. Though reporting from an urban war zone as Murrow did, journalists still were required, at least by corporate policy, to be as objective and neutral as possible.

Yet, Murrow is celebrated not in spite, but *because* he was not purely objective. The willingness to “call it as you see it” is what made his later broadcast of *Harvest of Shame* so memorable and continues to be the defining feature of a successful television news journalist. In his book on Murrow from the Blitz, Seib, after beginning by considering if Murrow was truly objective, excuses his lack of objectivity because he was “journalist who sees evil has a responsibility to alert the world to it” and journalists themselves are the “sentinels of conscience.”⁵⁶ In this primal scene of news broadcasting, Murrow was not just providing facts, he was acting as the conscience of the moral universe. He was not merely providing information, but constructing a worldview demanding a certain moral stance from his audience. He was not just reporting news, he was making art. These contradictions in the myth of Murrow and the beginning of broadcast journalism (and later television news) are the foundation for what we think of when we talk about broadcast journalism. This is the function of the Murrow myth, one of contradiction and conflict that is equally a (fractured) whole. We can see the myth working time and time again in its retelling and how the conflicts come to be collapsed in the singular

personage of Murrow, and then in turn are utilized as a ur-text for what television news is. Murrow's emergence as the moral standard for the profession, in both radio and television, was able to not only contain, but to integrate, the fundamental conflict between television journalism as a social service (akin to teacher, preacher, or political leader) and a commercial endeavor. These conflicts were integrated into the history of one man, allowing for the ur-text of television news to simply point to Murrow as the answer to *all* questions about the profession.⁵⁷

MCCARTHY AND MURROW: PERSON TO PERSON

Another key part of Murrow's myth and one of his enduring contributions to the ur-text of television news was his confrontation with Senator Joseph McCarthy. The Murrow/McCarthy feud is most often summed up by reference to Murrow's tailpiece of the March 9, 1954 *See it Now* broadcast. After thirty minutes of mostly excerpts from McCarthy speeches broken up with Murrow's discussion of the full facts behind McCarthy's half-truths, the show ended with the following a poetic, evocative and now often quoted editorial that now stands as the high-water point for McCarthyism in the public imagination.⁵⁸ Murrow's championing for American values against the paranoia of McCarthy and ending his reign of terror is deemed one of the most enduring accomplishments of US television news. The evocative language, the repetitious use of Shakespeare, the echoing of foundational American texts, and the knowing world weary understatement ("what's left of it") make the speech very reminiscent of Murrow's broadcasts on radio during the Blitz. What also keeps the speech in the family of Murrow rhetoric is its very direct appeal to history. Like his speech to the Radio and Television News Director Association several years later, Murrow talks of our historic legacy as compelling our future actions. When he says "we are not descendent from fearful men" he evokes history, here the history of

American political values, as more biological than ideological. The stories of our past, our myths, are as significant as our actual blood relations.

Still, Murrow was not the first journalist or public official to attack McCarthy and his tactics. Persico's biography recounts that several print and radio journalists, like Walter Lippmann, Elmer Davis, and Eric Sevareid had confronted McCarthy.⁵⁹ Radio though, according to Persico, was already "slipping into its eventual state as the medium that was overhead rather than listened to. It lacked force."⁶⁰ Television historian Thomas Doherty also points out how in the March 9, 1954 *See It Now* broadcast Murrow supports his arguments with a stack of newspaper editorials against the Senator, indicating Murrow was not alone in his denunciation.⁶¹

What was original in what Murrow did was attack McCarthy *on* television. Prefiguring McCarthyism's true end in the nationally televised Army hearings later in 1954, Murrow and his staff used what they had learned in the short time they had been working on television to mount their full throated attack. In describing *See It Now* as a "prototype for the television news magazine." Doherty describes Murrow and co-creator Fred Friendly's work as better attuned to "the art of television journalism, wherein image and montage underscored, undercut, or overpowered the words printed on the screen or spoken by a narrator."⁶² Though Murrow's tailpiece in his "Report on McCarthy" was damning, it was not the spoken piece but the televisual presence of both Murrow and McCarthy, and its specific presentation, that served to mortally wound the Senator's career.

In a sense, like DW Griffith and cross editing, Murrow didn't invent the idea that McCarthy (or any politician) was a demagogue. He merely was the man who popularized the idea and, by extension, established television an essential medium for public discourse. Barnouw

says following the Murrow/McCarthy clashes that “few people now dared to be without a television set, and few major advertisers dared to be unrepresented on the home screen.”⁶³ While some like television historian Steven Stark have pushed back on this “canonization” of Murrow, others like the journalist and historian David Halberstam have celebrated Murrow as the rare man “as good as his myth.”⁶⁴ Though there is something to Stark’s view of Murrow as “overrated,” the mythology of Murrow versus McCarthy is not. The five *See it Now* broadcasts from 1952-1954 that either directly or indirectly addressed McCarthyism are still seen as the public reckoning of Red baiting and the blacklists, and, as a result, epochal moment in television history.⁶⁵

We can say then that part of the ur-text of television news is to be unique but also predictable. To make those in power uncomfortable, but, perhaps in contradiction, to entertain as you do so. However, the ur-text of Murrow did not only come from these overtly historic confrontations but from the “other” Murrow of shows like his interview program *Person to Person* and appearances on programs like *The Ford 50th Anniversary Show*. Though other Murrow historicizations overlook or dismiss his work in these kinds of programs as secondary to his confrontation with McCarthy, looking at the actual visual texts shows us how the “two” Murrows were integrated into one ur-text for television news that has remained to this day.

PROTO HISTORICIZING NEWS PROGRAM: FORD 50TH ANNIVERSARY SHOW

On June 13, 1953, both CBS and NBC broadcasted television spectacular called the *Ford 50th Anniversary Show*.⁶⁶ Produced by Leland Hayward, the show was fairly typical of the entertainment compilation shows of the era, with musical performances, comedy bits, dance numbers, and film clips.⁶⁷ A celebration to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Ford Motor

Company, Hayward introduces the program by explaining, “Ford asked me to make a show about you,” the home audience. From a contemporary viewpoint it is hard to say what the show is about exactly other than saying Ford, as benevolent buyer of time on television, put on a show that told the history of not itself, but America (limited to the period of Ford’s existence). Murrow’s presence in the program shows how popular and well known the Murrow myth was at even this early point for television and, most significantly for this study, is one of the first examples of his presences acting as a ur-text for television news.

After introducing himself and the show, Hayward turns to the other guests that will act as guides to the program, each representing different aspects of America. The very first guest is Edward R. Murrow, who will “speak for the American mind.” Puppets Kukla and Olie speak for the American imagination, Mary Martin for the American heart, and Oscar Hammerstein II for the American spirit. Murrow’s parts in the two hour special are often in sharp contrast with the light musical entertainment of the rest of the show. After the opening and Hammerstein’s introduction of a skit from the play *Life with Father*, Murrow speaks over newsreel footage of President Taft and the Wright Brothers. Often Murrow is only talking over “serious” newsreel footage and, though he does set up some comedy skits, the change in tone is jarring.

As the representative for the “the American mind,” Murrow in reality presumes to speak for history. In between bits that both poke fun of changing styles (like in women’s fashion or bathing suits) and celebrate older forms of entertainment (vaudeville, opera, and silent film), Murrow is the voice of hard news: wars, the Great Depression, Ford mass production and eventually, nuclear technology. Though presented in one show, the program creates two histories. The first, mostly presented by Oscar Hammerstein II (“the American spirit), is a cultural history of changes in entertainment and performance style. For example, Hammerstein

goes through the history of American cinema, with both actual clips and shots of their film can containers from the Museum of Modern Art. The history Murrow presents was described by the *Variety* review of the program as of the “grimmer side.”⁶⁸ At one point during Murrow’s narration of the Great Depression accompanied by newsreel footage he reads a litany of statistics about the economic situation. Murrow’s history in the program is of actuality. Intercut throughout the performances and skits, Murrow seems to be the part of the program that grounds it in reality. As a result, he provides a setting of earnestness and importance in which the more self-consciously frivolous entertainment (puppets and weak-man skits) can take place.

Murrow’s performance in the *Ford 50th Anniversary Show* ties into what I see as four components merged together by the telling of history on television news. The *Ford 50th Anniversary Show* is a proto-example of the HNP I will begin discussing in Chapter One, especially in the melding of the four components, viewers, producers, current events and time, into a logical whole. We have the depiction of viewers (the people listening), producers (the creator of the programs), current events (Murrow and the larger package of the show), and time (the past of the Great Depression), all presented as one cohesive narrative that brings meaning to the entire program. The history of broadcasting, here being the schedule broadcast time of a popular, but dated, program, is embedded within the history of both changes in cultural tastes and actual geopolitical events. It could be argued the *Ford 50th Anniversary Show* postulates history as edifying in and of itself. The lack of a single unifying theme and its dizzying array of subjects like the Ford corporation, performance, changes in gender relations, film, war, American development, and so on, suggests the only overarching idea is history itself.

We see the centrality of history again in the end of the show. After a rendition of “No Business Like Show Business” from Ethel Merman and a good bye from the puppets wondering

if it should be changed to “there is no business like television,” Hammerstein asks Murrow if he thinks we will hear music like that in the future. Like in his later 1958 speech, Murrow worries there will not be any singers or listeners left and points to the video projection of an exploding mushroom cloud on the screen behind them.⁶⁹ Their dialogue on the existence of atomic weapons and America’s position of world leadership carries with it a heavy historical sense. Hammerstein and Murrow, as the meeting of the American spirit and mind, speak of American leadership as both an inheritance and a test. Asked for his opinion, Murrow speaks of the current period as a challenge to “invent peace.” The history presented for the last two hours has built up to this dialogue in front of the image of a nuclear bomb. This is the definition of a utilized history, where the past is made into a clear and known narrative. Here the narrative Murrow presents at the end is one where our values as Americans will save not only the nation, but the whole world from an end of history. The lesson of the history, for Murrow, is that we will not solve our problems “with dollars or bombs.” To this end he even introduces one of his phrases that will be well known in a just a few months, saying “if we confuse dissent with disloyalty” America will no longer hold its position as example for the world, earned through the historical work of the past fifty years. A television program’s work to show history is shown here to be more than mere entertainment, but critical to the survival of nation and the human race.

MURROW IN THE 21ST CENTURY: 1958 RTNDA SPEECH AND *GOOD NIGHT AND GOOD LUCK*

Murrow’s stature was forever solidified in two of the last major performances of his career. The first was his reporting and narration of the CBS News Special Report *Harvest of Shame* and its expose of the horrific working conditions of migrant farmworkers in the United

States. Though much of the reporting was completed by the time Murrow came on board, Murrow in a way acted as the “closer,” with his legendary status give the report an added level of meaning that would not be available to any other reporter. The other major defining event was his well-known keynote address in October 1958 at an annual gathering of the Radio and Television News Director Association (RTNDA) where he decried the quality of prime time television and called on the television industry to play a public service role. The speech and its stinging critique is so synonymous with Murrow that the narrative of *Good Night and Good Luck* is framed by it. I argue the reason it plays so prominently in the film is because it is a clear expression of a ur-text for television news. I will end this Introduction with a consideration of how the speech and its representation in *Good Night and Good Luck* shows us how intricately tied history and historicization are to the supragenre of television news.

Murrow’s 1958 speech is significant because we will see this same theoretical outlook in discussions of the supragenre of television news many times since. Throughout Murrow’s rhetoric consistently looks to history as the source of judgment, pride and a possible weapon against the enemies gathering out there in the night. It is an example of “remedial historiography” in that he sees television as purely defined by its social use, not its own technological existence or specific history. He is only concerned that the technology is “used” correctly.⁷⁰ The speech is a cornerstone of the myth of Murrow. His call for a type of intellectually satisfying and morally responsible television news is radically at odds with the social history of the medium and its thoroughly commercial origins. However, his credo in this speech, mainly that good business and good television can be synonymous, is held up as the *raison d’etre* of the supragenre of television news to this day.⁷¹ Murrow’s reading of history and his historic legacy provided the synthesis for the commercial and professional conflicts that have

always been present in television news. The warnings and goals Murrow laid out in the speech still resonate for television news professionals, regardless of one's specific knowledge of the who and when of its delivery. The speech remains a clarion call, a historic benchmark, for the television news industry in terms of its core values and hopes for its work.

It is no accident that this speech begins and ends the 2005 film *Good Night and Good Luck*. At the end of the film, Murrow and Friendly leave CBS President William Paley's office where they have just been told that, despite the success of *See it Now* in "defeating" McCarthy, the show will be effectively cancelled for next season.⁷² The two, despondent, happen to walk by a television airing President Eisenhower extolling the ability to face your accuser publically as one of the great American values. Liberties with events and personalities are expected in any historical film, however this particular choice suggests a larger lesson for the story of *Good Night and Good Luck* and how we remember Murrow in the context of the history of television news. The specific speech from Eisenhower actually happened nearly two years before the events of the film and the circumstances around its broadcast open Barnouw's *Image Empire*.⁷³ The program, "Evening with the President" was one of the first live extravaganzas, both entertainment and educational, produced for television and aired on several networks simultaneously. Barnouw talks about the program as both an example of the variety productions popular on television at the time and, more importantly for our purposes here, the power of television as a political tool. Though Eisenhower never directly mentions McCarthy, the implication was clear to all watching. It was a public, if indirect rebuke of the Senator and his tactics. And it occurred years before the Murrow confrontations.⁷⁴

By showing the Eisenhower speech on a television within the CBS offices, the implication is the event is live and *follows* Murrow's initial confrontation with McCarthy. The

image of Eisenhower speaking is not cut to but instead emerges within the diegesis of the film. It is literarily part of the *mise-en-scène*. The film then cuts from Eisenhower back to Murrow's speech at the RTNDA speech that acts as the framing device for the film. The link created by the end connects a chastised, diminished Murrow to the words of President Eisenhower to Murrow himself giving a final epitaph or warning about the future of television. More than an artistic, aesthetic choice, these representations are valuable to understanding how the Murrow myth operates today in our contemporary mediascape. The Murrow myth provides a throughline in the supragenre of television news that connects the multiple times and places of lesser genres. Murrow belongs to a past, but one that is understandable and legible. It is a world where political leaders respond to media, and the media figure drives the conversation. Most importantly, it is a vision of television news as a history reporting *and* history making medium.

The Eisenhower clip shown in the film itself is founded in myth. In an unplanned improv moment that broke away from his planned statement, Eisenhower explains the values of America, the source of its greatness. In a striking statement, Eisenhower says it comes from the stories of the West, where figures like Wyatt Earp doled out justice, but only after "looking a man in the eye."⁷⁵ The source of our due process for Eisenhower is not only limited to our laws and courts, but our stories. The myth of the West, its legend, is printed here by Eisenhower as a truth that will guide our contemporary actions. Although he did not mention McCarthy, the meaning was plain. The story of the righteous gunfighter facing down the morally depraved in the streets of the town is a generic tale that can be refigured again and again. Murrow's position and legacy for television news is much the same. The use of the Eisenhower speech, though not fully explicated in *Good Night and Good Luck*, reiterates the functioning of myth today.

As we move in to the rest of this study and a direct engagement with the 1990s and how history was used by the cable television form, the Murrow myth is an important reminder of how history has always been present in the supragenre of television news. Even if not objectively true, the history reproduced by television news is a powerful tool to define the purpose and value of news. With Murrow, we can see how that historicization works as a source ur-text for future genres of television news. It is such a critical tool that historicization came to be embedded in cable television news at the very moment it became as much a household name like Murrow. Instead of the Blitz and the BBC, or McCarthy and CBS, that moment was the 1991 Gulf War and CNN.

CHAPTER ONE – “A LOOK BACK”: CNN AND THE RISE OF THE HISTORICIZING NEWS PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will show how and why CNN, a network and brand synonymous with 24-hour cable television news at the beginning of the 1990s, developed a programming tendency that relied on historic awareness to order its overall coverage. While television news has always foregrounded history (as seen in the Murrow myth and its continuing importance), 1990s cable television news as a specific genre seemed uniquely driven to construct a broad historical understanding to help viewers navigate its daily programming. This historical awareness, specifically carried forth by what I call “historicizing news programs” (HNPs), provided a matrix (joining industry, viewers, time and events) for understanding the continual, contemporary coverage of the network against the events of the past for both viewers and producers of the news. In order to give meaning and relevance to the daily reporting of the network, CNN needed to continually remake and restate history within the flow of its programming.

The chapter will start with a brief history of cable television generally and CNN specifically, with a focus on Ted Turner, his role in founding the network, and the original conception of 24-hour television news. The expansion of time for the reporting of news required a reformulation of viewers connection to time in broadcasting. Using Paddy Scannell’s writings on broadcasting, I will discuss the 24-hour cable television news form required the new form of “everyday historicity” be brought to the foreground in the new genre. Next, I will discuss how HNPs, network specials that follow a documentary-like aesthetic on past events, did this by placing historicizing and contemporary reporting right along side each other in the flow of the

network's programming. With textual analysis of some of the first HNPs following the network's brand building coverage of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, I will show how these historic reports fit within CNN's daily programming. Through an industrial analysis of the rise of cable television news, a cultural studies analysis of the temporal issues brought by 24-hour cable television news, and a thorough reading of HNP texts, this chapter will show how History, as an abstract concept, became a instructive subgenre format for cable television news and an integral part of its style and overall look.

EARLY CABLE TELEVISION AND BLUE SKY

Though it was the phrase "vast wasteland" from then FCC Chairman Netwon Minow's description of commercial broadcast television that hung on the medium for some 50 years, most of his famous speech was not an attack on television but a plea for it to fulfill its public interest responsibility to the nation. The duty of the commercial broadcasters to serve the public interest was well founded in the Communication Act of 1934 and further codified in the FCC's 1946 Public Service Responsibility for Broadcast Licensees or Blue Book report. Minow told the audience at the National Broadcasters Association in 1961 that what they "broadcast through the people's air affects the people's taste, their knowledge, their opinions, their understanding of themselves and of their world -- and their future" before closing by echoing President John F. Kennedy's inauguration speech "Ask not what broadcasting can do for you; ask what you can do for broadcasting. And ask what broadcasting can do for America."¹ These lofty goals for broadcast television were never completely fulfilled by the three commercial broadcast networks. Though public service was a guiding principle for policy makers and broadcasters, the financial workings of the industry that relied on revenue mostly generated by ad sales for the largest

audiences made it most advantageous for broadcasters to aim most of its programming at the “lowest common denominator.”²

The view broadcast television should be “better,” meaning carry more socially responsible programming such as community, public service productions that served local audiences instead of mass audiences, spurred regulatory changes such as the financial syndication (Fin-Syn rules), Prime Time Access rules and public service requirements for stations to keep their broadcasting license. As these rules were implemented over decades (well into the Nixon administration), popular industrial belief saw the very government directed structure of broadcasting as leading to the uniformity in programming.³ Cable television, a technological solution, began to gain credence as a way out of the shortcomings of broadcasting, a way out of stuck patterns of production and distribution that could give audiences new, more useful and needed content.

The rhetoric that promoted cable television in the late 1960s/70s from public and private voices as a method to achieve more socially responsive programming was called “Blue Sky”. Despite the big technological changes of the late 1970s, most evidently with the introduction of communication satellites, Megan Mullen refers to the “Blue Sky” period from 1968-1975 as critical to what cable television would ultimately become due to the fact the rhetoric of the time lead to the structural conditions for the technology.⁴ The technology of cable promised greater local access to small communities too remote or small not served by broadcasting stations. More than the technology though, Blue Sky rhetoric contributed to high expectations for television, including “local news channels, programming produced by community members, niche-interest programming, political debates, interactive services, and myriad other program times that were seldom, if ever, available from broadcast networks and their affiliates.”⁵

The sense of urgency and hope represented by Blue Sky is best seen in the Sloan Commission's report "On The Cable: The Television of Abundance" that suggested, among other things, that viewer demand and multichannel technology would invariably lead to better programming, even if "bad" programming like *I Love Lucy* reruns was used in the early stages to make ends meet for the cable networks.⁶ Along with the Sloan Commission, Mullen shows other groups like the Rand Corporation, the Ford Foundation and organizations representing writers and educators engaged in hyping the possibilities for cable technology to achieve the yet unachieved goals of television. Despite their different agendas, these multiple groups all coalesced in a strong belief that the technology would transcend ideological conflicts.⁷

While there existed consensus on the need for cable to "do something" different from broadcast, in the end no central or specific policy emerged from Blue Sky policy discussions.⁸ Mullen argues the failure of cable to provide the specialized, local fare promised by Blue Sky was because it quickly came to rely on the established models of broadcasting in order to draw audiences. The networks hold on the nation's imagination and the culture of network viewing was so strong, cable television could not bring in an audience that wanted the programming the Sloan Commission assumed the technology would. Mullen writes, "the networks offered American audiences a common and reliable source of information about what affected the nation as a whole. They provided, as they always have, a sense of unity and common cultural agenda."⁹ The centrality of networks in creating a sense of unity and common identity was a major hurdle of CNN's news broadcasting and 24-hour programming cycle. The imperative of a shared historical background created by HNPs within the daily programming of a cable news channel becomes more obvious as we consider cable programming in the 1970s/80s and the founding of CNN.

POST BLUE SKY: THE FIRST, TOP DOWN BEGINNING OF CABLE TELEVISION

The best way to understand cable history is to see as having two “beginnings”. The first came from the “top down” through the rules and regulations of government and quasi-government organizations. Thomas Streeter reminds us in his examination of the history of television regulations that television is more than a particular technology or a series of text but a practice, something that must be understood as a “set of social activities.”¹⁰ In his view, “television’s structure and organization are as much a matter of symbolic process as its content. Television does not just provide symbols for the social construction of reality, it is itself socially constructed.”¹¹ In the same vein, cable programming is more than a list of particular shows or a result of technological or economic structures; it is a (heavily capitalized) social construction. Streeter says to simply read the text of television as literary objects divorces it from the complex social life that surrounds it.¹² Along with that complexity are entrenched and critical financial relationships that fund commercial television in the US. In that spirit, in order to understand the cable television news of the 1990s, we have to see the larger contexts in which that specific kind of programming emerged. The rhetoric of Blue Sky was an attempt to create in cable a new form of social practice. However, the hope of Blue Sky was eventually consumed by the stronger, more established practices of broadcast, network television. By the late 1970s, the cable industry was fairly established in the form it would be for several decades, even without the satellite technology or even actual channels that would come to define it, due to the set up of lasting “policies, programming precedents, and industrial structures” that came from the Blue Sky period.¹³

Ironically, what cable television eventually settled into after the hopes and changes brought in 1968-75 was something very similar to broadcast television. In *The Rise of Cable Programming in the United States*, Mullen examines the development of cable programming from its earliest form based on rural community, relay stations to the mid 1990s multichannel mediascape. Instead of seeing the Blue Sky period and what followed as historic failure of imagination for the US cable industry, Mullen argues the true nature of cable programming has been consistent from its beginnings. Throughout her study, Mullen argues that what has driven cable programming is a reliance on material from broadcast television (like reruns and old movies) repurposed in order to appear “different” and “new” in comparison to network television. What Mullen describes echoes the deep history of syndication in television, but with the twist of the genre itself being “syndicated” on cable. Despite cable’s initial formulation as an antidote to network television, cable television more as an extension of the industrial formation of broadcasting despite the difference in delivery technology. According to Mullen, cable’s connection to broadcasting can specifically be seen in “a demand for programming that is innovative while nonetheless adhering to long-established standards” of television, such as genres, times lengths and narratives.¹⁴

While the FCC’s 1972 provisions for cable programming requiring local programming were eventually revoked, the Commission kept in place regulations that allowed local cable operators to carry “more marketable broadcast singles to subsidize the local programming.”¹⁵ Blue Skies led into the Nixon administration’s “Open Skies” policy that allowed for open entry to the cable industry for any company with the technological and financial means (instead of a more limited basis originally imagined by the FCC). The loosening of restrictions is often presented as the government allowing for a free market of competition through deregulation. In

fact, Thomas Streeter argues that cable television in the early 1970s “was reregulated more than it was deregulated.”¹⁶ Streeter points out the large growth of cable occurred when it was no longer seen as a threat to the broadcast industry, but as an important “industry component.”¹⁷ Both Mullen, in terms of programming, and Streeter, in terms of legal discourses surrounding broadcast television historically, argue that the rise of cable in the early 1970s was structured by the same frameworks guiding television since its inception.¹⁸ Despite the promises of a new kind of television, cable television had been “reregulated” into an extension of the broadcast television. However, for it to survive in competition with broadcast networks, cable had to construct some kind of difference from the model they were essentially copying. As a social construction, cable had to balance between being what viewers understood and accepted (broadcast), yet different in order to justify the investment of time from viewers.

As we will see with the arrival of Ted Turner and CNN, the key tactic cable used to differentiate itself from broadcast was in the realm of time and continuous continuity in dedication to one kind of programming format. Considering the unfulfilled hope of Blue Sky along with what Mullen and Streeter discuss as the repeating of familiar genres and institutional structures, CNN is a strong example of the central tension in cable at the time. CNN presented itself, and in many ways was, the future of television news, breaking ground in terms of scope and scale of continuous coverage unburdened by any other entertainment responsibilities besides covering the “news.” At the same time, CNN had to follow the same kind of generic programming structures of television news audiences were familiar with and could understand. The one element that marked CNN different from the networks was its nonstop, 24-hour coverage. To extend Mullen’s analysis, I would argue that CNN’s contribution to the history of the supragenre of television news can best be understood as a syndication of broadcast television

news genre into the 24 hour news genre. For the remainder of this chapter I will explore this tension between the familiar and the new in the 24-hour news cycle and how, following the network's breakthrough in covering the 1991 Gulf War, CNN's HNPs presented a solution to the unique problem of continuous news coverage.

TED TURNER AND THE FOUNDING OF CNN: THE SECOND, GROUND UP BIRTH OF CABLE TELEVISION

“If Edward R. Murrow represented the first ‘new frontier’ in television, then CNN will be the last” – Bernard Shaw¹⁹

Mullen makes the interesting observation that “hardly any of the basic cable networks started in the late 1970s failed--either in the short term or in the long term,” while the same could not be said for cable networks started in the 1980s and 90s.²⁰ In retrospect, this can be explained by the fact that early channels, like CNN, ESPN, HBO, and the Weather Channel, fulfilled some basic, traditional television function for cable. However, the actual experience of those networks starting at the time did not have the sense of inevitability. Instead they were highly risky ventures taken by outsiders to the television industry. Following the “top down” development from rules and regulations, this period was the second “beginning” for cable television from the “ground up”, wide spread syndication of genres, which is best demonstrated by Ted Turner and CNN.

Ted Turner's “outsider” status was originally based on being an independent (non-network affiliated) broadcast television station owner.²¹ What came to mark him as very different from his television broadcasting peers though was how enthusiastically he embraced cable television as a distribution technology. In the mid 1970s, Turner owned a low rated independent Atlanta station and a UHF station in Charlotte, North Carolina. By sharing programming

between the stations, such as Atlanta Braves baseball and old films he bought rebroadcast rights to, Turner was able to lower costs. What drastically changed his business model was cable television. Even with technology that was still limited by terrestrial transmission, Turner was able to place his television “Superstation” on regional cable providers throughout the Southwest. Most critically, due to FCC regulations that required cable providers (and not the cable station) to pay for broadcast royalties, Turner did not have to pay more money for content for which he already owned the broadcast rights.²²

Other broadcasters attacked Turner for dealing with cable, a technology treated as an existential threat by most of the industry. The launch of domestic communication satellites, specifically RCA’s STATCOM I in 1975, promised to completely change the television industry landscape. For the cost of a transponder in the satellite and a station to upload the footage to satellite, each costing about \$1 million dollars, Turner’s Superstation could be offered to subscribers of any cable provider in the country. In response to concerns no one would want to watch second rate programming from an Atlanta fourth place station, Turner invested heavily in sports. At this time, sports, outside coverage for a local team, was a very limited part of daily television coverage. Worried the stations broadcast rights for Atlanta Braves baseball would go up once the station was broadcasting nationally, Turner bought the Braves as well as a controlling interest in the Atlanta Hawks basketball and Atlanta Flames hockey teams. With sports and a great number of Hollywood films, the Superstation quickly became a staple of cable packages throughout the US. At 10 cents a subscriber and ad sales that offered marketers national exposures at rates 30% than the networks, Turner was making a great deal of money fairly quickly.²³

Turner's Superstation was a challenge to fairly stable institutions like Hollywood (by creating greater value out of broadcast rights for films previously unforeseen), professional sports leagues, and most directly, the networks. Around the same time as the Superstation was growing from increases in subscribers and ad revenue, Turner launched a new project that went right at the heart of network television's traditional strength: news. While there is some dispute over who originated the idea for a 24 hour news channel, Turner or the network's first president Reese Schonfeld, Turner's position as the chief financier and operator for what would be eventually called the Cable News Network made him the most significant figure in CNN's birth and growth. Even though 24-hour radio news stations had been well established by the mid 1970s, a television version had never been attempted. Part of the reason was the networks' cartel like control of the technology to produce television news. For example, sending images over dedicated phone lines required working with AT&T, the only provider of the technology. As heavy, guaranteed customers, AT&T gave the networks exclusive and extensive discounts over "occasional" users. The result was a hypothetical fourth network news channel could never emerge because the economics were too prohibitive.²⁴

More than the ad sales though, providing news was one of the key sources of prestige for the networks, part of their underlying public service mandate as over the air broadcasters. Turner's interest in news was counter to how he ran his television stations before launching CNN. Channel 17, the precursor to the Superstation, often put on Star Trek episodes against local news as counterprogramming.²⁵ The only thing approaching a news program on the Superstation was a late night mock newscast that often involved a German Shepherd co-anchor.²⁶ However, Turner knew the importance of news as he explained to Reese Schonfeld when he wooed Schonfeld on board as CNN's first president. Turner told Schonfeld, "There are only four things

that television does, Reese. There's movies—and HBO has that. There's sports—and now ESPN's got that, unfortunately. There's the regular series kinda stuff—and the networks do that. All that's left is news!"²⁷ Considering news as one of only four basic functions for television, a channel dedicated to just that seemed like a simple proposition, regardless if it was over the air or cable.

Despite Turner's insight, he actually knew very little about television news. When discussing possible talent with Schonfeld he had to ask "Who's Dan Rather?" when his name came up.²⁸ Turner wanted to model their coverage on a hybrid of magazines and news radio. His vision was "a half hour of news, like *Time* magazine. Then a half hour of sports, like *Sports Illustrated*. Then another half hour of features, like *People* magazine. And a half hour of business news like *Fortune*. We're gonna repeat it every two hours, twenty-four hours a day."²⁹ Schonfeld agreed with the outlines, but pushed an ability to go live whenever possible. Schonfeld and many of the people he hired to start up CNN were television news professionals, but their formative experiences and training was working outside, or specifically against, network television. Along with their brash "mouth of the South" owner, CNN's leadership shared a vision for the cable channel as fundamentally different from the major broadcast networks.

The focus on "liveness" meant the possibility of covering stories that went nowhere or did not advance much beyond the initially update. Schonfeld embraced that as part of their brand of being the network that would always stick with a story no matter the demands of the schedule. In a meeting with Turner and the *New York Times* editorial board, Schonfeld described that what they "want to sell in terms of live coverage....is a *role in the process* for our viewers."³⁰ The focus on process would frame CNN's overall programming. The network would avoid slick and overproduced packages, in part for financial reasons but mainly to distinguish themselves from

network television. Also, the main set built in Atlanta was designed to be open literally in the newsroom. Based on a “theater in the round” concept, CNN would bring viewers visually into the world of news creation.³¹

From the very beginning then, following Mullen’s characterization of cable programming during this time, CNN was imagined as similar to network television in order to avoid alienating viewers yet different enough to not be seen as the same thing. In terms of similarities, the very genre of the news is a staple for television. Beyond the “liveness” of television as a medium, the network as set up by Schonfeld had many other elements that were similar to network television: anchors, commentators, bureaus, pool reports, video editors, and so on. Even the open newsroom look of early CNN broadcasts were similar to the look of other news broadcasts like NBC.

Like Edward R. Murrow, CNN employees clearly put themselves in the same historic trajectory of television news, but in a new iteration. In joining the network, Bernard Shaw drew a line from the beginning of television news to the contemporary moment by saying while Murrow was the first frontier, CNN would be the last.³² Ted Turner was also often depicted in the mold of visionary like Bill Paley, founder of CBS. In describing his meeting with Turner before deciding to be the first major talent name to join CNN, Daniel Schorr saw Turner as a modern day Paley who also understood three critical elements in television: “knowledge of programming, skills as an entrepreneur and an awareness of the state of communications at the time.”³³ Robert Wright, president and CEO of NBC, credited Turner’s success to seeing “the obvious before most people do.”³⁴ Turner and CNN had not invented television news and, in fact, relied on many of the established conventions of medium in order to attract viewers.

What was different about CNN from the networks was most obviously its non-stop, 24 hour coverage of news. Though the model already existed with all news radio stations, CNN was

doing something much more costly and complicated than radio. Radio programs had a long history of repeating coverage, however television never had an example of similar non-stop coverage. While a technological and labor challenge, the question of time was also an abstract intellectual issue. If the news period was not determined by a daily cycle or some other schedule period, like the printing of the newspaper or the top of the hour news update, what would be the organization for the events presented? This issue was captured by Turner's response to a question on the networks lack of focus:

You think it lacks focus--what is focus, anyway? If you're live all the time, how can you have focus? Focus means that you know where you're going! You can't focus in on somethin' unless you know what it is you're focusing on! Focus is something a newspaper has, because there's a day to think about it. Or with a magazine, there's a month. Whoever said that was a yo-yo!³⁵

The "focus" of CNN was nothing short of the entirety of time and space and the ability of the network to deliver it to viewers. More than the day's news, CNN was looking to deliver the News, from around the world through its many bureaus, constantly and continuously. CNN ads from the mid 1980s echo this point. One ad consisted of pictures of different people's faces (anchored around images of Mt. Rushmore) with the theme song extoling viewers to see the network's "window on the world day and night" and to "experience life on CNN."³⁶ Another ad consisted of an image of a newsroom and voice over reading the names of internationally known cities. Network news obviously had the same global perspective in their coverage, which was seen in things like CBS's world map backdrop during its evening news program with Walter Cronkite. What made CNN different was the ability to cover the stories from the world every moment of everyday and not just in a 30-minute show.

Though CNN lost an average of \$2 million a month in its first year, the channel quickly turned around and became widely profitable.³⁷ Turner not only beat back competitors from

entering cable television news, including a joint venture by Westinghouse/ABC, he launched a second channel, CNN2, which eventually became Headline News. After CNN's launch, the fear of too little news to fill the 24 hours of programming quickly morphed into a realization that there was too *much* news.³⁸ More than excellent reporting, anchor, and production values, CNN's ability, and burden, to never turn away was the defining characteristic of the channel and what allowed it to differentiate its reporting from the traditional networks. It also introduced a new relationship between events, viewers, society and time. In the next two sections I will expand on how specifically CNN's 24-hour programming made the historicity of the world on a daily basis not the subtext of television news but the text itself, and how HNPs worked to ease this jarring transition in historicity.

PADDY SCANNELL ON EVERYDAY HISTORICALITY AND CNN

When talking about news broadcasting it is helpful to consider Paddy Scannell insightful *Radio, Television and Modern Life* where he argues for a particular focus on broadcasting that is different from an evaluation of or opinions on the shows themselves.³⁹ Scannell points out that reading the text of broadcasting is one level of interpretation, but there is another, deeper level that looks at the organizations of the shows in their totality that give "rise to the possibilities of those opinions."⁴⁰ Scannell writes that the organization of programs presents an overall coherence that "has a deeply settled, ordered, orderly, known and familiar character" that is read by viewers instantaneously because of that coherence.⁴¹ Scannell's view of the overall organization of broadcast is similar to Horace Newcomb and Paul M. Hirsch's writing on television as a "viewing strip" and Nick Browne's "supertext" which together sees television on the whole as a cultural form and not just a series of texts.⁴² The level of interpretation as a

cultural form all these authors suggest is critical for my discussion of CNN and 24-hour television news. Scannell however is unique in his connection of the totality of broadcast (particularly broadcast news) and what he calls “communicative intentionality” of broadcasting itself with “history” as experienced by the audience in a daily fashion.⁴³

For early broadcasting on BBC radio and television, Scannell found institutions had to discover what exactly “broadcasting” was by working through various formations. Some of those production techniques, like the mode of direct address to an always absent viewer/listener have formed the backbone of broadcasting to such an extent that it seems “normal” and “everyday”. Scannell argues that the mode of address on television news is the “expressive idiom” of “everyday mundane conversation or talk.”⁴⁴ The ordinariness of the news broadcast communication is what allows for viewers to understand what is being said, however that ordinariness obscures the complex institution-to-subject communication that is occurring. For example, in describing the “hidden history” of the direct address to the camera in television news by an anchor facilitated by a teleprompter, and not the shifty, untrustworthy glances down to notes, Scannell writes

It was and is a consciously sought for, technically achieved and humanly accomplished device that contributes to the task of producing news-telling as a real-world interactive occasion between the institutions of broadcasting and each and every viewer, thereby securing the effect, for each and everyone of them, of ‘I am being told’. It is one tiny instance of how the meaningfulness of programmes is organized by those who make them as there-to-be-found by those for whom they are made.⁴⁵

The absent audience is imagined by the text itself, to the degree that the programming is constructed in a way to be “discovered” by viewers. Television news mimics real world interactions but in a heavily constructed and mediated way. When Scannell says broadcasting had to be “discovered” by the first news broadcasters, we can say the same thing when describing the process of constructing the 24-hour television news form. It too had to be

discovered, by practices like Schonfeld described as wanting to bring viewers into the “process” of news construction on CNN. Though absent from the studio space (and not even existing before the launch of CNN), the network worked on bringing viewers into the institutional practices and products that they would themselves consume, but in a manner that overtly drew attention to it.

Due to the advancement in satellite, broadcast and video technology, the same logic that Scannell outlined with early radio and television broadcasting was being used in 24 hour news broadcasting. Scannell argues in his theory of communicative intentionality that viewers have a “shared competence” that allows them, in spite of different cultures or ethnicities, to read the intentionality in a broadcast.⁴⁶ CNN was following along in continuing that shared competence with television news instead of asking viewers to accept a new reality of reading their programming. Though cable television was a “new” technology and CNN was modeled on other mediums (24-hour radio news), it is striking that it, in many ways, followed the model of network television news.

The similarity is more striking when compared to another early cable news network, UPI Newstime. Advertised along with other cable offerings in a promotional tape for cable operators, UPI Newstime presented its programming as television “all news radio” built on a programming philosophy of the “instant update.”⁴⁷ The channel consisted entirely of text on the screen of wire updates and the occasional newspaper styled image (in the promo all the images were of recently elected Ronald Reagan). Voiceover explained that the channel would repeat the news every ten minutes, giving viewers a full news diet in a short amount of time. The voiceover also gave very technical details about its broadcast technology. UPI Newstime saw its channel as something akin to what it offered to its institutional clients (like newspapers and television news

departments), but now was making it available for the general public through their cable operator.

Meanwhile, the CNN promo was much more vibrant and visionary in terms of what the channel promised. The CNN promo looked like a traditional commercial marketing the programming to viewers as much as to cable operators. The first image in the promo is a map of the world and a voice over that opens with “24-hour news.” The style of the promo, cutting between images of equipment, news anchors, and the kind of stories that would be covered, suggest the network would be as immersive and energetic. The focus was on the inherent interest of the news, or as the promo says “from wars, to earthquakes, to the human factor.”⁴⁸ Though both networks were promising the same content, the radical difference in execution highlights CNN’s strategy of copying the aesthetics of traditional broadcast television news.

The significant difference for CNN from broadcast television news however was instead of hiding the construction of news for the viewer to discover, they brought the viewer directly into the process of its construction. Instead of viewers discovering their position in regards to the news broadcast, they were overtly told they are in the middle of its production. A significant way to understand this shift in position for the viewer is the channel’s overall view of the broadcasting day. Scannell argued that what marks broadcasting temporality is its *dailiness*. From this, and borrowing from Heidegger, he suggests that in “modern societies radio and television are part of both the background and foreground of our everyday dealings with each other in the common world. They are so by virtue of the ways in which they disclose the everyday historicity of the world every day.”⁴⁹ Everyday historicity in this context means an awareness of the past that exists at every daily moment. CNN was taking the logic of broadcasting to its limit by making the dailiness of the broadcast its organizing principle, higher

than any given show, anchor or story. I argue that the “everyday historicity of the world every day” disclosed by more traditional broadcasting as a subtext for the overall programming became *the text* on CNN. Instead of morning newspapers and network television evening reports suggesting a historicity, in the background, to daily life for absent viewers (the ubiquitous flow of those mediums), CNN was directly presenting a historicity, in the foreground, on a daily basis for viewers involved in its process of news production (experienced every day, again).

By the time CNN started, broadcast network news was already well-established genre. CNN and its dailiness represented the rise of a new genre: the 24-hour cable television news network. With the development of the genre’s “stars” in specific pundits, anchors and reporters, consistent themes, repeating motifs, subgenres, and the submersion of news divisions into parent conglomerates, US broadcast television news became another dependable, generic element of the entertainment industry. The radical break for CNN as a new genre was that television news could be a *constant and continuous* programming genre. As Mullen argued with early cable television programming, CNN’s coverage was similar to network news enough that viewers watched because they knew what they were watching. What was new for the viewer was the absence of an endpoint, which required a new level of engagement for the at home viewer. The difference is similar to that between episodic series and continuing serials, which has been written about in regards to soap operas and 1980s primetime dramas by Jane Feuer.⁵⁰ The change of historicity from the background into the foreground with CNN and the cable television news genre generally is a similar kind of genre shift within the supragenre of television news.

Though CNN and 24 hour cable news had many successes during the 1980s, the most significant shift in the national awareness of CNN was the network’s coverage of the 1991 Gulf War. Termed by many as the first “live war,” CNN’s programming and personal suddenly

saturated the public's consciousness at a new, never before experienced scale.⁵¹ Considering Scannell's observation that public life is mostly "constituted in and by the activities of broadcasting," the historic nature of CNN's coverage during the Gulf War had many ramifications. In the aftermath of the Gulf War and the larger audience awareness of the network, CNN programming needed a means to bring the "everyday historicity of the world" presented every day by the network even more obviously from the background and into the foreground.

The HNPs did that work for CNN. While these programs existed before the Gulf War, after the conflict they took on a new sense of urgency. The programs, by explicitly writing a history, built on the "historic" broadcasting of the Gulf War by turning it into historicity, a broad and generalized awareness of the past, that came to exist on the network on a daily basis. The HNPs fulfilled an industrial need for the cable network by recycling content, however they also played a more critical role in integrating history into the dailiness of the network. Scannell described broadcasting as "enchanted and enchanting, meaningful and full of meaning," and argued that radio and television "expressed over and over again a sense of wonder at the as marvelous things, miracles of modern science. Their magic has not vanished. It has simply been absorbed, matter-of-factly, into the fabric of ordinary daily life."⁵² The "miracle" of Ted Turner's vision and its execution had now been part of daily life, and the HNP helped make it so. For the remainder of the chapter I will further describe and define what I mean by HNPs connection to "big history" and show how such programs about the Gulf War made CNN's "magical" and wondrous global coverage part of the fabric of the everyday, ordinary life.

HISTORICIZING NEWS PROGRAMS AND BIG HISTORY

As the common saying “the newspaper is the first draft of history” suggests, history as an abstract ideal has always been a part of news reporting. With the rise of continuous, non-stop news coverage on cable, the everyday historicity in the reporting of current events changed from an abstract condition to something made literal in image and sound. The genre of cable television news was different from the genre of Murrow and network news. While network news, as seen with Murrow, had a deep awareness of history, cable television news performed history as a foundational part of the daily news cycle. In order to continue being meaningful and make sense as a continuous flow of content for viewers, the growth of the 24-hour news form and its endless stream of moving images and voice used staged history as a touchstone that ordered its overall reporting. We can see that in the fact that although the content was often repeated throughout one day, CNN in 1991 (like CNN today) had individual shows with different hosts called *Daywatch*, *Day Break*, and *World Day*. More than individual shows programmed at regular times, the continuous focus and reporting on current events necessitated a way to step back and answer the “so what” question (what is the larger point of these stories?) without pushing the viewer outside the enclosed world *of* that reporting.

The bulk of this work has performed by the HNP. As I have discussed in the Introduction, I view these kinds of programs as belonging to a subgenre of the larger genre of 24-hour cable television news. Usually labeled specials, these programs explicitly framed past events (often recycling earlier, immediate coverage of those events) and constructed continuing story lines, all under the banner of the originating cable network. These programs, which write a history of the past while embedded within the contemporary, breaking news reporting of the network, filled certain industrial, political, and cultural needs of the moment. Reusing footage served industrial

needs of repurposing, but I believe it also allowed the network to be branded as an institution that performed history, and not just the daily news, for viewers. However, the key need filled was creating a vision of history as clear, continuous, popularly shared, natural, known, and *outside* contemporary reporting of the network. I argue American 24-hour cable television news needs a particular external history, “big history,” to give the non-stop flow of immediate reporting any sense of meaning or direction. At the same time, and somewhat counterintuitively, the outside “big history” is created within and by the network’s programming.

I refer to these programs by the title of “HNPs” to distinguish them from what might be commonly seen as “documentaries”. While Michael Curtin’s writings on television documentary are extremely important, these programs belong to an even further specialized subset of television documentaries.⁵³ First, these programs are explicitly *writing* a history of the past, one that often directly implicates the cable news network, the practice of journalism, and the creation of history itself (both in the specific case and theoretically). The histories offered by these programs are self-conscious construction (with references to other programming and ad breaks), but still make rhetorical flourishes to the objectivity of history and attempt to stand apart from the responsibilities of news coverage. In contradiction, the second distinguishing element of these programs is they have become a reliable part of the programming on cable *news* networks. Included in the broadcasting flow of the news network, they are often presented as a *meta-work/histrionics* of the stations’ previous unconnected and disjointed work, synthesizing fragments into a historical whole. Though a subgenre of cable television news, they also exist in a space beyond the dailiness of the network and gives its other programs (like the daily talk show subgenre for example) a form that could never be achieved by the programs themselves. These programs stand out from all other programming because they are rare moments of reflection on

the meaning of past events absent from usual reporting, they represent a unique form of address to the viewer, and they often indirectly reveal the underlying ideological, economic, and cultural underpinnings of the networks “breaking news” coverage. They are key to creating the “big history” that brings logic to the totality of the 24-hour news form.

The HNPs perform the big history that brings logic to the many elements that go into the 24-hour news cycle of the network. By being part of the daily programming of the network, the HNPs act as a touchstone to the rush of images that occur on any given day. The history is performed by the shows because history does not exist in an objective reality, yet is frequently presented as a meaningful narrative in the programs. What I mean by saying performed is the characters and events are ordered to produce a manufactured, emotional response. These performances of history construct dramatic narratives in which the contemporary information conveyed in the majority of the programming on the 24-hour cable news network can live.

In the following diagram I attempt to visualize what I mean by components of the 24-hour news cycle and how the HNP brings them together. First are viewers, which are fairly heterogeneous group even if considering the audience might be predominantly American. There are differences in terms of cultural, racial and ethnic origins as well as age differences which guarantee an unequal understanding of the past and its meaning. Producers share the same heterogeneous demographic elements as viewers, but also have another level of difference in terms of stakeholder categorization. The term producers is purposely broad including the producers of the news, as well as the advertisers who fund it, the cable operators that carry the broadcasts, the executives that oversee productions, and so on. While viewers and producers are people, the other two components of 24-hour news are conceptual categories. The first are current events, meaning the actual occurrences that make up the substance of what is being

reported. We can think of this as the “who, what, when, where, and why” of current stories along with their political meanings. Finally, we have the concept of time itself. By time I mean more than the literal time of day, but the dimension of time and how it intersects with viewers, producers, and events.

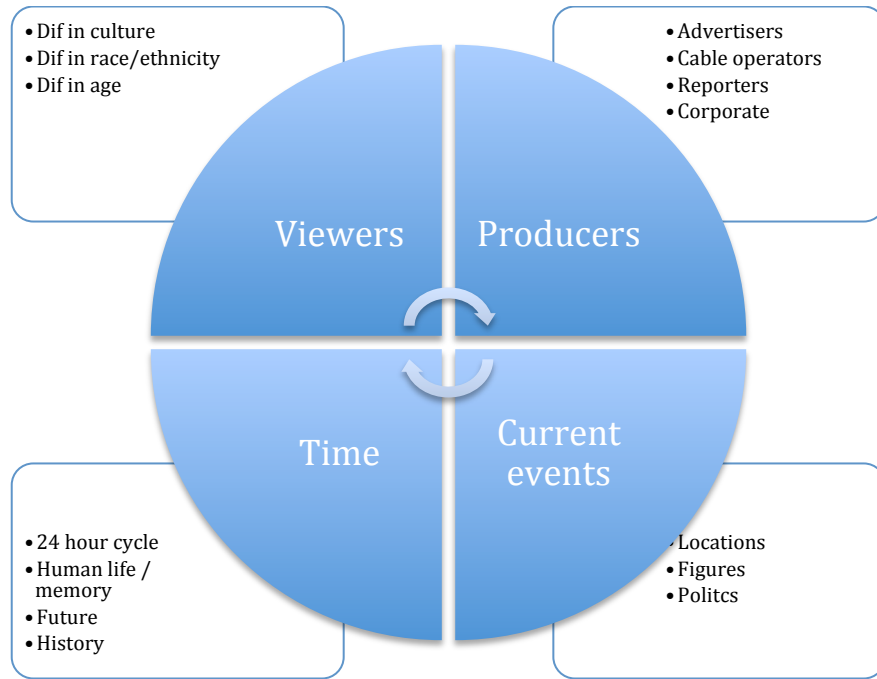


Figure 1 Processing Historicity in 24-Hour Cable Television News

All these components are processed together in the HNP. The disparate parts are put together into a whole. These shows perform what George Gerbner has termed a “symbolic function,” here specifically creating the perception that all of the parts mentioned above are connected in a whole by the 24-hour news cycle. Gerbner has argued that, “Television is a primary cultivator of common images and patterns of information among large and heterogeneous publics that have little else in common. These images and patterns form a major part of our symbolic environment. They help socialize members of society to the prevailing institutional and moral order.”⁵⁴ I

believe the critical suggestion here by the HNPs is that the 24-hour news cycle is logical and legible. The HNPs act as the stage, on which the performance of the daily news reporting is acted out.

The beginning of this process can be seen in CNN shows such as the thirty minute weekly “Week in Review” program during the 1980s or the annual sixty minute specials like the “Year in Review” in 1985. While not specifically HNPs because of the programs’ attempts to present news as current or new (as indicated by the referring to segments as so and so “reporting”), the shows did rely on recycling previously used footage and an overall perspective that favored a natural holistic approach. For example, in the 1985 Year in Review special emphasis was given to the breaking story of the PLO shooting at a Rome airport just days before.⁵⁵ However that breaking story leads a whole section on terrorism attacks, followed by one on air crashes, natural disasters, significant diplomatic events, and other major stories that were covered on CNN. The show opened with a map of the world with a monthly calendar imposed on it. Though the show is not a HNP as I am defining the term, it is a strong example of the order such programs tried to bring for viewers, producers, events and time. For the rest of this chapter, I will discuss CNN’s coverage of the Gulf War and show how the resulting HNPs worked to bring order to the channel’s overall programming.

CNN COVERAGE OF DESERT SHIELD / DESERT STORM

The foreign policy agenda of the first Bush administration and the United States was dominated by the slow motion collapse of the USSR. With the coming end of the Cold War, USSR/Russia influence in the Middle East was waning, leading to a reassessment of relationships and policies by the major powers of the region. Increased US influence in the

Middle East was the backdrop for a critical meeting between Saddam Hussein and April Glaspie, the US Ambassador to Iraq, in July 1990. With Iraq later claiming they received tacit approval to do so, Iraqi troops crossed the Kuwaiti border and quickly occupied the country on August 2, 1990. Within several months, the US led a coalition of several nations and hundreds of thousands of troops amassed in Saudi Arabia against Iraqi forces in order to liberate Kuwait.

The US action against Iraq in 1991 must be seen through the lens of the end of Cold War. President George H.W. Bush in both his memoir “A World Transformed” and his major “New World Order” speech presented the American government’s actions as part of the nation’s larger duty to protect freedom around the globe.⁵⁶ More than defending US ally Saudi Arabia, containing the threat to world oil production, and curbing the rise of a dominant Iraq in the larger region (though these were also given as reasons), US actions were framed in the language of defense, protection and enforcement of global norms. The police action frame was very deliberate by US government officials and was seen frequently cited as the primary, if not only, reason for the entire operation. The presence of Western troops in Arab nations, the coordination of political maneuvering in foreign capitals and the debate within the United States was all built on the analogy of a police action against a criminal perpetrator.⁵⁷

The police act framing of the Desert Shield and Desert Storm had two major implications in terms of media coverage domestically. First, it provided an older, more successful and positive narrative for military action by drawing a direct comparison to WWII and actions against the Nazis and Japanese Imperial forces. The rhetoric of liberation and freeing another people from obvious tyranny provided a way to avoid the connections with Vietnam. As with the invasions of Granada and Panama, American militarism was presented as a reluctant act, a duty born of the nation’s role as a superpower. Within this frame of liberating an occupied nation, American

troops were not only presented in the moment as reluctant warriors focused on freeing an oppressed nation, American military forces and the media that covered them could draw from a well of powerful images and narratives from the past that shaped the entire tenor of the coverage. Saddam Hussein was both more than a current day dictator but a historic partner of Hitler, just as Kuwait was more than a small nation overrun by a more powerful army, but also a country like France of WWII and a nation whose liberation will demonstrate the strength and benevolence of the US to the entire world.

The second, somewhat related, implication was the police action frame allowed for a schedule of media events. As Elihu Katz argues, the stage like approach to bringing in troops, building collations, and gathering evidence to prove the evil of the enemy and the demonstrate the necessity of action required a series of packaged, ready to air events.⁵⁸ For example, the deployment of troops led to the kind of teary family goodbye footage that symbolized the fear, pride, commitment and other complex emotions only images can convey. The Congressional votes, the UN resolutions, the press conferences by military and political leaders all presented the war as orderly and inevitable. Even the start of the war was scheduled and its coverage was planned complete with props and production graphics. The heavily mediated nature of these preparations and production graphics contributed to a sense that the war was a television show, an idea that Baudrillard famously expressed in his series of articles in *Liberation*: “The Gulf War will not take place”, “The Gulf War is not really taking place” and “The Gulf War did not take place.”⁵⁹ Baudrillard argued the conflict was not a war as a struggle between two roughly equal forces over a political objective, but instead a simulation managed by a dominate power that never directly saw the enemy.

As I discussed in the Introduction, I see Baudrillard's argument as based on a suspect reading of the events through the model of what I have called "remedial historiography". In focusing mostly on the mediated images of the conflict through television, he is emphasizing the images over, to borrow phrasing from Hayden White, the emplotment of the overall narrative. Even though CNN was reporting on current events, I think it is important to note how the chronicle/events were at the beginning being turned into a story, which inevitably leads to that story being turned into a history. What was new in this process from event, to story, to history was the speed in which it was done in the genre of 24 hour cable television news, more quickly than ever before in the supragenre of television news. So while it is important, I want to suggest focusing on purely the staged nature of the events misses the deeper significance on the narrative and emplotment of the conflict.

Although the managed nature of the war was evident to many and the framing of conflict as a police state created ready-made narratives, the contemporary reporting of the US lead coalition's attack nevertheless had an air of both immediacy ("you are hear now") and history (being the first major American engagement since the Vietnam War). Covering the war was a planned event for all three networks and CNN. From its build up and commencement (after the passing of the deadline for Iraqi's removal at midnight on January 17, 1991), the war was treated like a reliable part of television's programming schedule. The midnight deadline and the resulting air attack, for example, happened to coincide with prime viewing time on the US East coast. Along with reporters fanned out in key (US/Coalition) sites and hired experts on the American military and governmental strategy, the networks' coverage was primarily built around each network's respective anchor in the news department's New York City headquarters, where each took on the role of chief information source for the viewers.

It is important to understand how CNN's coverage was fundamentally different from the main three networks. CNN relied on anchors and personalities, yet it differed from the style of network television with the overriding primacy of the single anchor in New York as the funnel point of information and focal point for the audience. Peter Jennings, Tom Brokaw and Dan Rather acted at various times as head educators of the reason or lead emoters, driving the emotional response audiences "should" have. Despite presenting a personal connection to viewers, the experience of watching broadcast news was highly impersonal. The entire apparatus of the broadcast networks presented them as figureheads in charge of giant state ships of news. The best example of this was the giant map of the region ABC built and had Peter Jennings stand on to give his reporting of what information they had at that hour.⁶⁰ The map was intended to educate viewers on the location of important sites, however instead highlighted the operating (and contrived) metaphor of Jennings's control over the vast region.

CNN's reporting shared some similarities with the three US networks. They too had reporters at sites like the White House and the Pentagon as well as relied on pool photography at other key locations. They also predominantly provided a US/Coalition view of the conflict due to the fact that its information was given by official American sources. The lack of any sustained anti war or pro negotiation presence on all of American television news was a subject of discussion at the time. FAIR's study on the issue found an objective lack of contrary voices to the pro-intervention perspective pushed by the American administration. FAIR found that of the 878 on-air sources seen on the three networks nightly news programs during the first two weeks of the war, only one was a representative of a peace organization.⁶¹ Overall, FAIR found American television news was essentially mouth pieces for the official government line, either conflating US troops with "us" or heavily relying on US military and ex-military to provide

analysis for the events.⁶² CNN's coverage was similar in terms of politics with the rest of the mainstream media, specifically the three television network, and presented a very American centric view of the conflict.

CNN's coverage was different from the three major networks in two major ways. One was its unique ability to broadcast from Baghdad. CNN gained this ability through a mixture of gaining permission from Iraqi officials by spending months before the US attack building relationship with government officials, the technology to make their own phone calls directly to the United States and cut tape in country to send to Jordan for broadcast, and the willingness of personnel in Iraq and executives in Atlanta to stay and stand against enormous US government pressure for them to pull out.⁶³ CNN's night vision images from the Palestine Hotel of anti-air missile batteries shooting into the night became an iconic representation of the war in part because it was the only images from inside Iraq that American audiences were allowed to see. The first night of the attack however, the dominate CNN visual was a still image of a map of Iraq with the picture of Barnard Shaw, Peter Arnett or John Holleman in a small square superimposed in the right corner.⁶⁴ While visually flat and disconnected from the traditional stand ups and press conferences that the other networks carried (including CNN), for the first few hours the CNN phone line from Baghdad consists of the only direct source of information from Iraq to American viewers. The access was so rare that NBC's Tom Brokaw did a live interview with Shaw and the rest of the reporting staff on the first night of Coalition bombing. When asked how exactly CNN was able to still be on the air, with Brokaw speculating they were tied into Iraq's communication infrastructure, Shaw paused and explained he would rather not answer that question.⁶⁵

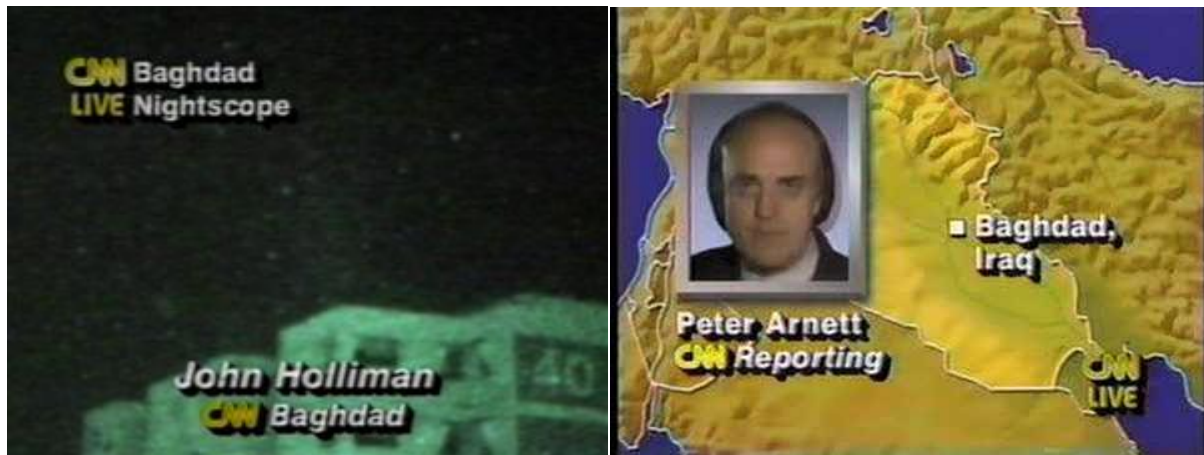


Figure 2 Images of CNN's 1991 Gulf War Coverage⁶⁶

The direct and continuous nature of the reporting leads to the second major difference of CNN's coverage. CNN was different from the networks because it was live and always on. The other networks were live as well on the first night of the bombing of Iraq, however they followed more of the traditional model of anchor/captain of the news vessel leading viewers through events with the help of satellite reporter's work. For example, on CBS, Dan Rather was joined by Walter Cronkite and Charles Kuralt in the studio. On the first night of the bombing, the three men mostly speculated on the importance of the events with each other (frequently returning to Vietnam and the difference life experiences of Americans between those two conflicts). When Cronkite spoke, one of the monitors in a bank of screens behind him showed the same footage viewers were watching of him speaking. Cronkite was doubly part of the televisual image, a doubling that echoed the self-referential nature of his statements that focused on not judging the patriotism of anti-Gulf War protests based solely on his experiences during the Vietnam War. Unlike the first 90 minutes of coverage from the other two networks, CBS broke several times to give network affiliates a chance to return to their own programming or present their own local news take on the events (as was the case in Los Angeles's CBS affiliate).⁶⁷



Figure 3 Cronkite in foreground and background on CBS for 1991 Coverage⁶⁸

CBS's breaking news reporting was intimately tied to both its specific history and the operations of the network/affiliate model. CNN's reporting, on the other hand, was framed in the larger context of a cable news network that was only covering the war. They did not "break in" from entertainment programming to cover what was happening. CNN also did not have to include its broadcasting partners or even feel the need to nod towards its history either with specific personnel or an overall style that built everything around the anchor. The first 90 minutes of coverage on January 16, 1991 from each of the three networks included President Bush's Oval office remarks, a press conference with Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Colin Powell, and, most importantly, a central newsperson in front of an open newsroom anchoring the coverage. Brokaw, Jennings and Rather each connected viewers and reporters in the "field" (mostly offices or US military bases) through the force of their particular personalities and attempts at emotional connection.

CNN's coverage lacked the grace and smoothness of the networks. Instead, CNN gave viewers a feeling of being involved with the producers in the production of the show.⁶⁹ On the first night of the bombing, the anchor back in Atlanta was often throwing the coverage to various

locations, some of which were not ready or had technical problems. The roughness of the transitions highlighted the way the programming had no shooting or prewritten script but was instead organized by a “bigger” script giving order to the events. The broadcast was being created in front of viewers, in part led by their desires. For example, the anchor returned to Baghdad by saying others wanted to go back there, meaning of course the shows’ producers but also implicated the audience themselves. Shaw acted as the emotional connection for viewers, however he was not on the screen in the same way and instead appeared as a disembodied voice. Being in Baghdad he was more of a reporter than an anchor in the traditional way of the network stars.

The Gulf War was a turning point for CNN. Their coverage solidified its position as a serious and major contender for the American and global television news audience. Yet that did not come overnight and, paradoxically, was not due to any specific insight, investigative story, or even personality. It was built on being there with a generic style no other network had, specifically 24-hour coverage, exclusive permissions and new technology. The success of the Gulf War coverage made the first ten years of the network into a training period for what would be its prominent position in American television news. After the war, no less of a figure than Tom Brokaw acknowledged its position as a major news source and Ted Turner was named Time Magazine’s man of the year.

CNN’s Gulf War reporting was not universally celebrated. While agreeing that the “unquestioned winner of the war [was] the Cable News Network,” Katz suggested CNN’s coverage represented “the beginning of the end of journalism as we know it.”⁷⁰ Though a planned event with a clear operating frame that harked back to WWII with the West freeing the global oppressed, Katz argued that the audience ended up learning very little about the conflict,

such as information about Iraqi casualties or why Iraq withdrew when it did. Katz says the media did not act like warmongers and instead engaged in careful examination of the US administration's case for war. However, during the conflict coverage, television news, and particularly CNN, failed to actually show any human suffering from the war zone. Instead it followed the model in the build up of focusing on media events, the kind of "public serialization of events [that] mobilized huge audiences for a live television war" but not for actual news coverage.⁷¹

HISTORICIZING NEWS PROGRAMS – A LOOK BACK

The end of the Gulf War was a bittersweet moment for CNN. The Gulf War solidified CNN's arrival and in some cases dominance in television news, but it also marked what would be an inevitable downturn in audience numbers.⁷² The next year and the end of continuous live coverage from "behind enemy lines" introduced a unique problem for CNN. Industrially, the issue facing the network was how to maintain the same level of interest in its programming now that it no longer had exclusive access to a market for a massive event like a war. Maintaining such a high level of attention would not be possible in the changed situation. Returning to the everyday, dailiness of news broadcasting would also make it difficult to build on the specific coverage of the Gulf War CNN provided. What could be accomplished, though, was the re-presenting of CNN, and of cable television news more broadly, as an intricate part of an informed media diet. Instead of focusing on a specific issue (like the Middle East or US politics), CNN positioned itself as THE preeminent source for serious news coverage. While this had always been CNN's brand, the Gulf War and the network's notoriety in covering it presented a very specific mechanism in which to build that brand: news coverage of historic importance.

It was at this time we see the rise of the HNP on CNN. These included everything from small “this day in history” clips (that almost totally focused on CNN’s coverage of the Gulf War) to full blown miniseries. As I described above, programs self-consciously about history worked to tie together the various elements the 24-hour news format touched on (viewers, producers, events and time) into a legible whole. By placing CNN’s coverage as the basis of historic awareness, the day to day reporting could indirectly build on the history of the everyday provided by CNN. The HNPs provided the “big history” against which the viewer could see the daily events of CNN news as having context and meaning.

Almost immediately following the end of hostilities in early 1991, CNN started “looking back.” An obvious reason to do so was to repurpose the enormous amount of footage the network had from the conflict that would still be very familiar to viewers. In the first year following the war, important milestones were marked with short “day in history” stories within CNN’s normal reporting. For example, on August 1, 1991, a day which most focused on live coverage of President George Bush’s trip to Moscow and meetings with USSR leaders, CNN ran a story “Before Desert Shield” marking the one year anniversary of the Iraq invasion of the Kuwait. The anchor threw it to the correspondent, Mark Left, by saying he will “report on what happened one year ago.”⁷³ Left then gave an account of the first day of Iraq’s invasion over footage that appears to be from CNN itself. While “This Day in History” is a standard feature in most daily newspapers, these reports on CNN are not about general history, but specific, very recent events that directly relate to the brand of the network. Including these “reports” within the larger flow of the programming day, the story creates a connection between viewers, CNN, past events and historic time. In Left’s report he both talks about the past and the current day, specifically the state of various reconstructions efforts in Baghdad. The end of the report focuses

on the unsanitary living condition in the capital's slums that had yet to be cleaned up. While mournful, it is interesting to note the story on the whole is not about life today in Baghdad as much as life after the event in the past. The difference between the two is that the report frames the story as being the passage of one year from the Iraqi invasion to the current moment instead of merely being a story about the experience of Iraqi civilians today. The inciting action for the story is the start of the conflict, but also strangely, that event is not treated as a political, contemporary decision made by leaders still in power.

The "Before Desert Shield" report was part of a series of stories looking back at the Gulf War.⁷⁴ The use of this short report in the "One Year Later" series during the week of July 28, 1991 took on extra significance as it helped promote a multi-part miniseries on CNN looking back at the Gulf War. The four part series was part of its "CNN Special Reports" brand entitled *War in the Gulf: A Look Back*. Every night during the week of July 28-August 2 episodes in the series with titles like "Desert Shield," "The Air War," and "Victory" were aired in primetime, hosted by CNN Senior Anchor, and the star of CNN's coverage from Baghdad during the war, Bernard Shaw.⁷⁵ While domestically there were several developing stories (Kennedy/Smith rape trial, the unraveling of the Jeffery Dahmer murder revelations, and Paul Reubens/Pee-wee Herman's obscenity charge), the big international story for that week was the US and Soviet summit in Moscow covering increased economic aid and trade with the USSR and moves by the two superpowers to force what eventually became the Madrid Mideast Peace conference. With President Bush's various stops at Kiev and in Moscow all covered live, a team of CNN anchors, again including Bernard Shaw, were in the USSR presenting the summit story with a directly stated "end of an era" tone. In fact, it would be the last summit meeting between the nations due to the August 1991 coup that lead officially to the breakup of the USSR a few short days later.

Although these contemporary events are outside the realm of *The War in the Gulf: A Look Back* series itself, on the network they happened simultaneously, even to the point of interrupting the series with breaking news live from Moscow. The news from the USSR used to interrupt the series though was not as significant in itself as much as to remind viewers that CNN is still covering live events around the world as they happen. The frequent program updates from anchors like Frank Sesno, jumping between live events and the HNP series, highlights the overwhelmingly *constructed* experience of mixing the past and the present on CNN.

The four part series of 30-minute episodes followed the various stages of the Gulf War conflict. The first episode, “Desert Shield,” focuses on the events before the start of hostilities between Coalition forces and Iraq, including diplomatic efforts and the military build up in Saudi Arabia. The following episodes, “Air War,” “Ground War,” and “Victory” all followed a similar pattern. I’ll talk about the shows in more detail, specifically the “Air War” and “Ground War” episodes, but I want to highlight some points about the series as a whole. Though professionally produced in terms of editing and image quality, the series had an overwrought style that presented every event as the most critical to ever happen. In some ways the *Look Back* series is an example of the kind of original programming on cable Mullen describes: different, but enough like the network broadcast as to provide a familiar alternative for viewers. The major difference from what Mullen describes here however is all the images seen in the specials were from CNN itself, though not clearly labeled as such. The series worked as a propaganda vehicle for the *network*. The form might have been familiar to viewers to a documentary series on network television, but it was built entirely on CNN’s own footage, meaning the reliable programming at the core of the series was original cable programming, not something that had first been on network or elsewhere.

Despite the fact the events described in the *Look Back* series happened merely months ago, it mimics documentary techniques to present itself as a thoughtful and thorough consideration of the past. Along with an objective look at the past, the episode also recreates the tension of time through a recurring visual motif of a running clock of dates and, at some moments, hours of the conflict accompanied by a scroll giving the corresponding events and images with those times. During these sequences a ticking clock (a trope borrowed from CBS's *60 Minutes*) and dramatic music is heard. The timeline sequences presents the events as objectively known and visually seen. Another way the form of the series served to present a serious consideration of the past is through Bernard Shaw stand up introductions and his voice over throughout. He frequently is found in a considered pose, looking at still images that seem to float on the walls around him, and in the voice over guides a viewer from numerous locations and events.

The tone of the series is strongly pro-American and extremely American centric, with little focus on others except for what they mean to American troops, journalist and citizens. As discussed in the Introduction, these programs are in often providing a way to view the nation and instructing viewers on how they should feel about it. The HNP becomes a venue for this kind of overt nationalism because the events they describe are in the past, not in the contemporary moment which would required a different register of presentation. Instead of a detached, journalistically neutral approach, the *Look Back* series has a clear point of view emphasized by its stylistic choice. One example, along with the dramatic music and editing choices that meld together deployed troops' families in the US, CNN reporting in the field and American official statements, is the overwrought Shaw narration. Nearly every line from Shaw is stretched to capture as much of the drama as possible. At one point Shaw describes how pizza boxes *and*

body bags are being delivered to the Pentagon in anticipation for the attack. He refers to his travel to Baghdad on the eve of the US attack as waiting for “the terrible drama to unfold.” The *Look Back* series is a step away from objective reporting towards dramatic documentary with clear heroes and villains, plot points, and acts. With its direct appeal to nationalism and over emotional narrative, the series foregrounds the everyday historicity of the cable television news genre by giving past events specific and directed meaning.

The documentary style also served a specific purpose for CNN producers. It made CNN reporters and camera crews not only part of story, but the story itself. For example, the start of the air attack is told not from the point of view of pilots or the people bombed, or official government pronouncements on either side, but from the live *reporting* of the event on CNN. Shaw, with little self-reflection, takes two roles in the *Look Back* series: reporter on the ground in the clips and historian reflecting on events in voice over. Shaw’s double position says more about the series and the network than it does about him. While possibly an example of propaganda or CNN self-promotion, the series completes the ritualistic daily practice of consuming news from television. As an example of a HNP, we can see how the show is joining together various elements into a cohesive whole. Shaw himself has two roles, however he is experienced by the viewer as one person speaking. In similar fashion, I would argue that CNN is presenting itself as not only as source for news but also as a source for history for viewers, yet not as distinct operations but as one singular work. To that end then, the HNP is not about the history of the larger world, but the history of the *network itself*.

The history the series presents is a very specific kind of history, one turned inward toward the nation and then even further to the network’s own coverage. In the series Bernard Shaw narrates (interestingly in the present tense) the events of the Gulf War. Although the events

discussed happened only a few months prior, they already belong to the annals of history. The narration treats past events as naturally occurring, like weather patterns or geological formations, unaffected by political maneuvering or public opinion. The American military/political structure, as well as the Iraqi, are depicted as unchanging forces of nature. Shaw's focus is not on how things occur as much as they did occur, for example the much used phrase in the series of "the Desert Shield became a Desert Storm." By naturalizing events as natural growths, the narration also works to make them seem obvious. CNN's presence is foregrounded in every step of the emplotment from report, to narrative, and finally to history. The meaning of the history being presented on the series is not difficult to discern or figure out; it is clear and obvious to any one who knows the facts. The police action frame explaining American activities becomes not a particular perspective but the only perspective available to the viewers. The natural and obvious understanding of the Gulf War as the fight against good and evil goes beyond the events under discussion to the frame to understand all of American history.

We can see this more clearly by looking at two episodes in the series. The second episode, "Air War" retells the initial bombing of Iraqi targets in Iraq and Kuwait. The episode begins with Shaw describing the "Black Hole" where US military planners pick military targets. Building tension with clips of Shaw describing the sense of anticipation in Baghdad and images of people of different faiths praying, we see Shaw, now in present time, walking towards the camera explaining how he and other CNN reporters were "waiting in Baghdad for the terrible drama to unfold."⁷⁶ We then cut not to the night vision image of anti-aircraft over Baghdad, but to the other equally iconic image of Shaw's still image over a map of Iraq describing the bombing he saw out the hotel window. We then cut to clips of CNN's breaking news coverage of the start of the bombing, which mainly focused on Press Secretary Marlon Fitzwater and

President Bush's address from the Oval Office. Before commercial, we see, or more correctly hear, clips of Shaw and Holliman's reporting of the sounds of the bombs in Baghdad through a microphone pointed out at the street below the hotel.

This opening to the episode, presents the history of the beginning of the air war against Iraq as an obviously American history; throughout the series there is almost no focus on the Iraqis or even the other Coalition Allies as equal actors in the events. The first mention of any human suffering from the war in the episode is in the section focusing on Israel's response to Iraq's scud missile attacks. This fast paced, quickly edited sequence is how the beginning of the war is presented through the CNN *newsroom*. The mediation between events and the image demonstrates the core of Baudrillard's thesis in the "Gulf War did not take place" as we experience it as simulated spectacle, but it goes even further. In this program created from a re-edit of already existing footage, CNN and its correspondents are presented not as reporters giving the daily, current events as much as actors in History. CNN and its correspondents are part of the big history of television news, more central to the story of what happened than the people attacking and being attacked.

The next episode, "Ground War," more explicitly shows the history writing nature of CNN's coverage. In the episode, the period immediately before the invasion by Coalition soldiers is broken down hour by hour with the same clock motif described above. We cut to Shaw in the studio staring at a close up still picture of General Norman Schwarzkopf. Shaw turns to the camera and asks, "Who can define war?" He runs through possible answers from the commanders to the soldiers before saying, "in the trenches, the foot soldier will tell you [war] is about survival."⁷⁷ The definition of war and its practice throughout history is a reoccurring theme in the episode. In order to better explain the strategy for the Gulf War and Schwarzkopf's overall

strategy, Shaw describes the Battle of Agincourt complete with rough graphics and some reenactment footage of medieval soldiers. Shaw further expands the analogy by comparing an address by Schwarkopf to the troops on the eve of the invasion to Henry V's visit to troops before his battle. The clumsy historical connection is solidified by the episode's constant use of the "Hundred Hour War" to describe the ground invasion in the Gulf War. The reoccurring meta historic nods towards war as part of the human condition in contrast to, say the specific political reasons for this specific war, is example of how the HNP works in contrast to more contemporary news coverage.

The historical connection was not only made by the text of the *Look Back* series alone, it is also made by the commercials surrounding the episode. The "Ground War" episode ran with an ad from Budweiser and parent company Anheuser-Busch celebrating the sacrifices of veterans. The only images we see are of statues of soldiers, both anonymous and well known like the Iwo Jima memorial. Voice over for the ads discusses the dedication and sacrifice of American soldiers for their country, but is described in overly vague terms as to not be associate with any one conflict, or even battle. The ad's sponsorship is not clear till the very end, where the announcer explains that for veterans and all they have done, "this Bud is for you".⁷⁸

The flow of the episode, from a running tic-tock breakdown of the moments preceding the ground invasion, to pondering eternal truths about war, to connecting Henry V with Norman Schwarzkopf, and finally to a Budweiser ad celebrating American veterans throughout history, provides viewers a specific kind of history. It is a history where events follow each other in a logical succession, be they from 1415 to 1991 or August 1991 to August 1992. The past is also shown as holding obvious truths for us to discover. According to the series though, the past remains in the past and does not directly inform our present. Considering the years of sanctions,

UN mandated no fly zones, occasional military confrontations, the 1997 US Congressional resolution calling for regime change and the eventual 2003 US led invasion of Iraq, the *Look Back* series has surprising little to say about possible ramifications of the Gulf War. The History it provides viewers is one that is knowable, but detached from the present, even when the history on display is something that just happened a few months ago.

The historicization practiced by the *Look Back* series and the HNPs on CNN generally results in a History that is known but cut off from today. The only real connection between the past and the current moment is the news network itself. CNN, and more specifically its reporting style (including anchors, look, graphics) is the link between the past presented in *Look Back* and the present of the USSR/USA summit and Kennedy rape trial. HNPs, by connecting viewers, producers, time and events in a cohesive whole, enabled CNN's programming to not only cover today's events but also the events of the past. While the programs served industrial purposes like repurposing footage, I argue the more significant work they did was justify the historicity of the CNN's reporting. CNN could present itself as critical to any informed viewer's watching not only because of past events, but because of the historical importance of the 24 hour news form generally. By watching CNN, viewers will be informed about what is happening today AND will know how to approach the past by virtue of being exposed to a steady diet of everyday historicity of the world, every day.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have shown how theoretical conceptions of early cable television influenced cable programming generally and CNN specifically to be like network television but different enough to draw in viewers. After examining the founding of CNN and the 24-hour

news genre, I discussed the role of HNPs to join together viewers, producers, events and time into a cohesive whole by moving the historicity of everyday life from the background to the foreground of television news. Finally I discussed the defining event for 1990s CNN, the Gulf War, and how the resulting HNPs ordered programming on the network. HNPs grounded the ongoing reporting of the channel in history, both the network's and the nation's. Borrowing from Paddy Scannell on broadcasting, these programs made clear the "everyday historicity of the world every day" built by 24-hour cable television news. These programs connected viewers, production, events and the abstract notion of time into knowable wholes. The HNPs followed documentary style, but more significantly were presented as special reports part of the overall reporting of the network. As we will see in the next chapter, cable television presented a similar understanding of history in the genres of sports. By looking at ESPN's respective treatments of history, we will have a deeper understanding of the work of history in cable television.

CHAPTER TWO – “AT LONG LAST, HAVE YOU NO DYNASTY?”: ESPN AND THE HISTORICIZING NEWS PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will show how sports programming, a television news genre under the larger supragenre, historicized its own coverage through metacommentary as its popularity on cable television grew in the 1990s. In the previous chapter I demonstrated that CNN and the 24-hour news cycle needed to present a particular form of history to viewers in order for its continuous coverage to have meaning which was most clearly demonstrated by the HNP subgenre. Sports cable programming followed a similar model where its constant coverage of athletic events necessitated a specific historic understanding of past sporting events (which is often expressed with an obsession over statistics or “stats”) and, more broadly, a means in which to contextualize those supposedly unchanging past events. I argue ESPN’s versions of the HNP often did this work, along with the performance of history through the recitation of awards, memorialization, and historic myth making. I will explain why ESPN and the model of sports proves a unique way of understanding the historiographical problem of cable television news. After some background in sports news, I will discuss sports news television in terms of “liveness” and “catastrophe” as theorized by Mary Ann Doane and critiqued by John T. Caldwell and show how I believe HNPs were necessary to break up the everyday, hypnotic, live sport televisual experience. Next I will provide a brief history of ESPN, the first all sports cable television network, focusing on its mix of news and live events. I will also discuss two important programs from ESPN’s first decade, the network’s first broadcast and its tenth anniversary special, focusing on the latter’s introduction of a particular relation to history. Next, we will

consider the “boom” time for the network, the 1990s, which necessitated a more refined understanding of the past. With the expansion of the ESPN profile, I will show how history and a historic awareness became more critical, as demonstrated by the use of the ESPY awards and the Jimmy V foundation. Finally, I will examine the *SportsCentury* series at the end of the 1990s and how the programming, following the example of quasi-documentary specials on other 24 hour news networks, worked as a sports centric HNP, particularly with its focus on race and constructing objective rankings of events and athletes.

BACKGROUND: SPORTS NEWS

As discussed in Chapter One and the introduction, television news in the US is most directly modeled on radio news and was often referred in its early years as being radio news with pictures. Along with radio, printed sources like newspapers and magazines were also used as models, however the continuous flow of television made radio the most obvious inspiration for programming decisions. Within the flow of television and radio news, segmentation of topics followed something similar to the newspaper/magazine model with focus on other events outside the major stories of the day. For example, newspaper sections such as local, sports, weather, comics, crosswords, home and living, would be seen in a similar way on radio and, later, television. In fact, when Turner envisioned CNN, he saw the 2-hour broadcast loop as consisting of four 30-minute segments on constant repeat: news, sports, entertainment features and business.¹

News has always been more than just public policy, acts of violence, crime and punishment or other particularly obvious important events. It has always included local notices, sports, the weather forecast and other mundane happenings. I am purposely using the

terminology of “important” vs. “mundane” to highlight the distinction between what is seen retrospectively as critical news and what are experiences in the day to day as critical. To be more blunt, most people do not consume news concerned about the developments at the Paris Peace Negotiations as much as if it will rain today. Radio news covered the divergent topics and so did network television news, but to a point. The national networks would cover the major news, or possibly the first section topics of a newspaper, while local affiliates covered the topics like sports and weather that had more connection to local viewers.

Sports, a subject that could have a national perspective, were part of separate divisions in traditional network television. The sports divisions reported on games, players and executives like any other beat. More commonly television networks worked in partnership with the various sports leagues in the production of events. Considering the leagues acted in a way akin to independent television producers, selling exclusive broadcast rights to the network so they could sell advertising space on the product, network sports divisions were loath to bring the same kind of journalistic zeal used to cover “hard news.” Unlike sports print reporters who prized independence, television network sports reporting was often limited to boosterism with the occasionally critical analysis of player performance in a game. Sports news network coverage then belonged separate from the news divisions.

The division between sports and news also existed in temporal sense. While every network had nightly news broadcast, and some local news stations had their own news programming before and after primetime, sports usually existed on weekends for most of the network era. It was a commonly held belief in the television industry that a few hours of sports programming a week is all the audience could bear. While sports, and the liveness of action, was

a key pull for television, its true economic and cultural worth was not realized till the start of cable television and ESPN.

The conflation of news reporting on sports and sports programming was a hallmark of network television. Though real and often live, sports are just thought of as entertainment. At the same time, while not purposeful or meaningful like other more serious news, reporting on sports can be described as news reporting. For example, though “unscripted,” sports do follow scripted patterns much like other events such as Presidential elections or even more unpredictable occurrences like the 1991 Gulf War as outlined in the previous chapter. Sports inclusion in newspapers, radio and television news itself speaks to the underlying duality of the entire field of activity. We can see it expressed in the acronym for ESPN: Entertainment and Sports Programming Network. The broad name for the network was meant to capture as much of the broad definition of sports contained.

WHY ESPN FOR THIS STUDY: CATASTROPHE AND LIVENESS

Though ESPN did carry live sports programming, starting with college athletics and seemingly uninteresting events like the NFL Draft and the first round of the Masters before moving to the MLB, NBA and NFL games, what made the network a lynchpin of basic cable offering was its nightly news and highlight program *SportsCenter*. The viewership from live sporting events and the higher ad rates those numbers demand made ESPN financially successful at an astronomical scale, but its daily practice of reporting on sporting events and showing highlights was what help establish its audience. In fact, by the mid-90s the ESPN brand was not mainly live sports programming but the *SportsCenter* show, and specifically the talent on screen. Reporting on sports, a minor part of broadcast network television’s overall news diet, is what

drew viewers to ESPN and the personalities is what kept them. However, ESPN management preferred sports and the reporting content, not personality, be the channel's identity. For our purposes though it is important to note that, from the very beginning, *SportsCenter* was a meta-analytic program, which reported not just on events but also organized them into a logical whole. *SportsCenter* provided a model for viewers on how to emotionally connect to sports events of the day. In many ways it is the same daily building of "everyday historicality" described by Paddy Scannell.

Despite the importance of live sports to ESPN, its nightly news and highlight program *SportsCenter* anchored the network. Over the thirty plus years since *SportsCenter* debuted the program has become synonymous with sports news. At the time of its beginning however, the format of an all sports show had to be created from the ground up, both in terms of the physical production and the style of the show.² The sets and the entire ESPN broadcast studio was built from nothing and involved many people who had limited knowledge of how a television broadcasts was physically produced. In terms of style, the show borrowed heavily from traditional television news shows. The main idea would be to deliver viewers highlights from different events, another rarity for the sports viewer. Getting access to the clips involved negotiating deals with the various leagues' broadcast partners. As with CNN, the technological hurdles were significant but no more than what we can call the mindshare hurdles of dealing with other television partners. The need for 24-hour news was as questionable as the need for a 24-hour sports network. As ESPN grew from its humble beginnings, I argue that the network turned to history, specifically a packaged and widely understood history, as a way to bring attention away from the personalities reading the news and to the news/events themselves. The reason for

doing so was driven in part by industrial concerns, but I argue it can also be understood in terms of the need to break from the never-ending liveness of sports news television.

In order to conceptualize the use of history to give meaning to the general news reporting of ESPN, I want to consider the different definitions of the television event as described by Mary Ann Doane. In her seminal article on the television event, Doane argues there are three modes: information, crisis and catastrophe. Information is the “steady stream of daily newsworthy events” and while it is always changing, it is always there keeping viewers connected.³ With information, “time is flow: steady and continuous.”⁴ *SportsCenter* is the epitome of this model of information, a continuous, non-stop presentation of newsworthy events: which teams won, the movement of players to other teams, injuries and so on. On the other hand, crisis is a “condensation of temporality,” with catastrophe being the most severe form of crisis. With crisis and catastrophe, time collapses into that of the “instantaneous, the moment, the punctual” where things happen “all at once.”⁵ Doane goes on to argue that catastrophe, especially with its connection to death, represents a kind of “return of the repress” for television.⁶ Television, particularly in the mode of information, “is the preeminent machine of decontextualization” according to Doane. The information of television, as seen in shows like *SportsCenter*, is not a representation but only exist to inform and, borrowing from Walter Benjamin, must be “shot through with explanation.”⁷ In that formation, catastrophe, especially of the massive scale of the late 20th century and its representations of the failures of technology, is “crucial to television precisely because it functions as a denial of this process and corroborates television’s access to the momentary, the discontinuous, the real.”⁸

“Liveness,” however, has its limits and often obscures the work of television to specific moments or reduces it to one simplistic concept. As I discussed in the Introduction, “liveness” is

often a crutch for remedial historiography used in place of deep consideration of the technology, industry and specific history of television and its texts. John T. Caldwell in *Televisuality* called liveness one of the enduring mythologies of television, one that has existed from the very beginning of the medium.⁹ He argues focus on catastrophe theory, especially when linked to death and disaster, marks television as “again defined...by its temporality and not its image.”¹⁰ He goes on to say, “Yet, if catastrophic liveness *is* marginal and disruptive, then it is also an exception that proves the rule; it is an exception that indicates the dominance on a day-to-day basis of more conventional image and sound pleasures. If traumatic liveness induces extreme anxiety in the viewer then *hypostatized time and massive regularity* comfort the viewer by providing a rich but contained televisual spectacle, an endless play of image and sound.”¹¹

While there have been tragedies of death and spectacles of terror with sports, it lacks anything truly catastrophic in the same vein of the kind of events, like the Challenger explosion and the JFK assassination, that can be called “traumatic liveness” of the kind Doane and Caldwell are describing.¹² What I want to suggest is that the day-to-day, non-stop flow of sports (or *hypostatized time and massive regularity*) news television on ESPN did necessitate some kind of vehicle that represented time as a singularity and, more importantly, broke the meaninglessness and “endless play” of image and sound of the everyday televisual experience. I argue the HNP performed this function on ESPN. The HNP performed a similar function on CNN, however that network had a more direct access to catastrophe (though its unpredictability made it a poor programming operating idea). On ESPN there was no access to the crisis and catastrophe minus extremely rare events.

The subgenre of HNP for sports coverage then served two purposes in larger genre of the 24-hour news channel. The first it allowed for an escape from the banality of sports coverage in

to something akin to “crisis.” Like historic writing needs dramatic plot points of action or change, the HNP for sports individualized the live flow of the traditional coverage. The escape of HNP relates then its second purpose: it allowed the continuous time of ESPN’s coverage to stop and have another register of meaning. HNPs on ESPN were a window into the catastrophic, where the nonstop flow of television could be halted and time can escape pure commodification.

In order to demonstrate in this chapter how the HNP was used as moments of “catastrophe” in Doane and Caldwell’s formulation in sports cable programming, it is important to explain the beginnings of ESPN. I will briefly discuss the beginning of ESPN and how it fit in the growing cable television universe. I will then discuss the growth the channel to the 1990s and how the development of the brand and the network required a more developed sense of the past and its meaning. Finally I will look at HNPs and how they ordered the rest of ESPN’s coverage, both of live events and reporting.

FORMATION OF ESPN

The beginnings of ESPN and CNN (as discussed in the previous chapter) are very similar, starting with the focus on nonstop flow. Sports as a continuous and uninterrupted stream unlike the broken and very limited coverage from television networks. ESPN, like CNN, was started by outsiders to the network television industry. The founder of ESPN, Bill Rasmussen was inspired by the same satellite technology that allowed TBS to reach so many homes. A sports nut, Rasmussen believed others would want constant sports coverage of anything.¹³ When the network launched, the first original programming it could get was sports that were not aired on television, including regional college basketball and wildlife events like fishing and hunting competitions. ESPN, like CNN, would follow the model of what Megan Mullen has argued so

many earlier cable television networks followed: programming much like broadcast television, just slightly different.¹⁴

Though ESPN and CNN shared a similar destiny as the cornerstones of basic cable television packages, their beginnings were remarkably different. While Ted Turner was widely seen as an “outsider,” he was already a television station owner with a strong understanding of the broadcast and nascent cable industry. ESPN founder Rasmussen was a recently fired Director of Communications for the New England Whalers with experience in marketing and ad sales. Inspired by an idea of creating an all sports channel in his home state of Connecticut, Rasmussen, his son Scott, and two others began working on the concept. Within 14 months, ESPN had its first broadcast on September 7, 1979.

While a great story of American entrepreneurship, ESPN’s launching also seems to be the result of a remarkable moment in the cable industry, specially the launch of RCA’s Satcom 1. As Bill Rasmussen explains in his memoir *Sports Junkies Rejoice! The Birth of ESPN* he had little more than a basic understanding of cable technology, but understood the possibility of commercial satellites to provide content to a nationwide audience. According to Rasmussen the value of the transponders in Satcom 1 was amazingly undervalued by RCA themselves. In a key meeting with an RCA sales executive, Rasmussen and his son had to double check that RCA was providing complete control of a transponder for 24 hours a day for less money than renting it for a few hours a day.¹⁵ In retrospect, more startling than the low cost of \$30000 a month to rent a transponder for 24 hours was how much they paid RCA for the rights to the transponder: zero.¹⁶ Rasmussen explains that in just two year, the rights they received for nothing was sold to a company for \$5 million, and resold again by the same company a year later for \$10.4 million. The moment ESPN was trying to get into cable was during the very short period where the true

value of the satellite space was still not realized. In fact, CNN and Turner's first few years were marked over battling with RCA for more transponder space on their new satellites. By securing those rights so quickly, and for so cheap, ESPN was at a clear business advantage.¹⁷

Following getting rights to a transponder on SATCOM 1, ESPN in short order closed a series of deals that would establish the network and shape its future to the present day.¹⁸ In desperate need of financing, Rasmussen got backing from Getty Oil. Like other oil conglomerates at the time with more entertainment/Hollywood properties, Getty saw cable television as a promising market to invest. Stuart Evey, the Getty VP who dealt directly with ESPN and someone who had been involved in many of unsavory personal details of the Getty family's dealings, saw ESPN as a way to build an area of control for himself within the Getty organization.¹⁹ The deal gave Getty a near stranglehold over the network with the exclusive option to later buy a controlling share. Following Getty's influx of cash, the NCAA signed on what Rasmussen described as their "first venture into satellite technology and cable television."²⁰ The deal allowed for broadcast of several NCAA sports like basketball, football, baseball and other sports that had never been seen on television before. ESPN also signed a major deal with Anheuser-Busch. The contract for \$1.3 million signed in May 1979 represented "the largest single advertising contract ever signed in the cable industry;" an especially remarkable fact considering the network would not air till September.²¹ With these deals secured and under pressure from Evey to hire more television professionals, ESPN hired Chet Simmon, then president of NBC Sports, to be the new President of ESPN four months before launch.

The transponder, financial backing, advertising support and professional industry leadership all occurred in a very short time frame for a company with no history of production for sports events that had often never been on television. On one hand, ESPN was a brand new

television operation launched by people with no meaningful television experience with no past offering a product, 24 hour sports coverage, never before seen. However, on the other hand, ESPN was acting like a very traditional television network, from securing the technical ability to broadcast in as many homes as possible to building advertising relationships for a completely ad supported network (the single penny ESPN planned to charge cable operators was considered a poor business decision). The main point is despite the “newness” of ESPN, the network, much like we saw with CNN, had to position its programming in a certain way in order to make sense to audiences. Chet Simmons’s hiring and his history with NBC Sports also highlights the tension between sameness and difference on cable television. Again, like CNN, ESPN elevated this programmatic tension by relying on history and self-consciously highlighting the role ESPN itself was playing in the history of television.

ESPN slowly built its audience through non-traditional sports and increased programming from the more established leagues. Some critical sport events they were able to secure rights for included auto racing, boxing, and golf. They also included some not so critical sports like slow-pitch baseball, Australian rules rugby and the CFL. Two kinds of programming made ESPN in to the powerhouse it is today. One was coverage of NCAA football and baseball. The other was *SportsCenter*. NCAA (with live events) and *SportsCenter* (with in-depth meta-coverage of sports news) made ESPN a destination channel. Unlike waiting for sports news from the paper or local/network television, viewers could watch *SportsCenter* to learn about games. By playing the same nightly episode throughout the day, viewers knew watching for over sixty minutes would give you the information and highlights you were looking for about your particular fandom.

The point I want to highlight is that though live events were critical to ESPN early on, what was as important (and possibly even more) was its news reporting. Liveness is a well-known element of the television apparatus, and the ability for viewers to feel they are there at that moment is something other media cannot deliver. The sports news reporting though gave form and order to that liveness in terms of the end game result, the season standing and players and other personal you see on screen. As Scannel was discussing with broadcasting, we can say that *SportsCenter* gave the historicity of the world everyday.²² In this specific case the everyday historicity that was constructed every day was for the world of sports. By watching SportsCenter daily, viewers could feel they are part of a world shared together that has meaning, and meaning beyond the end result of game. The sports world *SportsCenter*'s dailiness gave form where everything "meant" something, or could be explained in some way. The historicity of ESPN was similar to the historicity of CNN. What was different for ESPN and sports television news though was the lack of what Doane called the crisis or catastrophe. The historicity was established by the dailiness of broadcast, but was solidified and made real through the specific HNPs. Now, as an example of how history was built into ESPN's broadcasts from the very beginning I wish to focus on ESPN's very first broadcast in 1979.

ESPN'S FIRST BROADCAST

The need to contextualize ESPN's coverage was evident from the channel's first broadcast on September 7, 1979.²³ Following a montage and complete original song describing the exciting action ESPN will be bringing, anchor Lee Leonard welcomed audiences by saying, "If you are a fan, you have gone to sports heaven!". In the first half hour Leonard brought up some of the sports they would be covering and introduced the SportsCenter desk with anchor

George Grande. He also introduced other major figures at the network including the Rasmussen founders, President Chester Simmons, Stuart W. Evey, vice president of major financial backer Getty Oil, and others before conducting an interview with the President of the NCAA Bill Flynn. The half hour introduction framed ESPN as similar to the sports coverage audiences had been used to on broadcast networks, just with more. As Margret Mullen argued with all cable programming, ESPN was similar to network television but different, with different in this context being more: more time, more sports, more coverage.

The message of familiar but different was given in two main ways as seen in the first broadcast. One was the extreme focus on technology. Founder Bill Rasmussen walked viewers through the technology of cable television twice in the limited amount of time he was on screen. Once by standing in an apple picker next to one of ESPN's large land-transmitter satellite dishes, and again in voice over with graphics describing the process. Rasmussen also gave the history of cable television, explaining that thanks to the technology of satellites, ESPN could reach the whole nation at the speed of $1/5^{\text{th}}$ of a second. Actor John Forsythe also appeared outside a ESPN production truck, explaining ESPN will have the ability to cover live events from all over the United States. The focus on technology in the opening broadcast is a bit odd but can be understood as part of the "newness" of the technology. However, it shows that ESPN was not just selling sports to viewers, but also the technology of cable broadcasting itself, which it allowed the channel to be about only one segment, sports, of the traditional network programming spectrum.

After Rasmussen's discussion of technology, George Grande addressed the second way the channel would be similar but differ from network coverage. We returned to the SportsCenter desk, which had the traditional look of a television news set except for the light, cream color

palate. Grande gave the results of the women's US tennis open final where Billy Jean King was defeated by a young Chris Evert. Grande, explaining that this is how the channel will differ from what sport viewers usually saw, started to speculate that the time has come for Billy Jean King to retire. Comparing her to Lou Brock, a professional baseball player who decided to retire that month, Grande suggested King too should know when the time has come to "hang it up." Outside the high-level television sports personalities like Howard Cosell, sports television anchors were rarely that openly opinionated about athlete's personal decisions. Grande and *SportsCenter* on ESPN were showing that they would push those practices, here with a suggestion that King think about retiring.



Figure 4 Scene from first ESPN broadcast in 1979²⁴

In its very first special, ESPN was telling its history to the audience, but in *real time*. Many other seeds of future ESPN coverage can be seen in the first half hour opening, however for our purposes the most important is the setting of the tone for ESPN as the sports lover's home.²⁵ What would make it that home would be excess, or, to borrow Doane's formation, information. ESPN president Chester Simmons quantified that information in hours of broadcast time, explaining that two months of ESPN's coverage of sports would equal a whole year of the

network's coverage. NCCAA President Flynn said that the NCAA was looking forward to teaming up with ESPN because of the ability to broadcast all the national championships never seen on television like lacrosse, tennis, swimming, diving, golf and so on. ESPN was offering more of the basic function of television: information in a continuous and endless flow that will always be there. Eventually to make it more "real" and significant, it would turn not to crisis events, but a to a self-conscious performance of history.

SPORTSCENTER TENTH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL

For ten years, ESPN grew by providing an endless flow of sports to viewers. Several personalities like Bob Ley, Charlie Steiner, Linda Cohen and Chris Berman emerged as faces for the network. While still relying on live programming, ESPN also began to shift towards more structured programming that could stand out as moments of temporal organization. As I discussed with CNN in the previous chapter, these moments can be termed HNPs and worked to give order to the daily, continuous reporting on the network. As with hard news, the following diagram also serves to visualize the work of these programs, but with "current events" being sports.

ESPN, just like CNN with its constant non-stop flow, needed to present a way to combine the desperate forces of viewers, producers, current events and time into a logical whole. As with CNN, the HNP was one method the network employed. The difference from CNN, however, was the extreme role ESPN itself played in its historicization of cable sports broadcasting. ESPN was not only telling a history that gave form to the constant reporting of the network, it was also putting the network's coverage in the middle of the history of sports television. In fact,

throughout the 1990s the network was constantly producing programming that looked at the past, but through a decidedly ESPN frame.

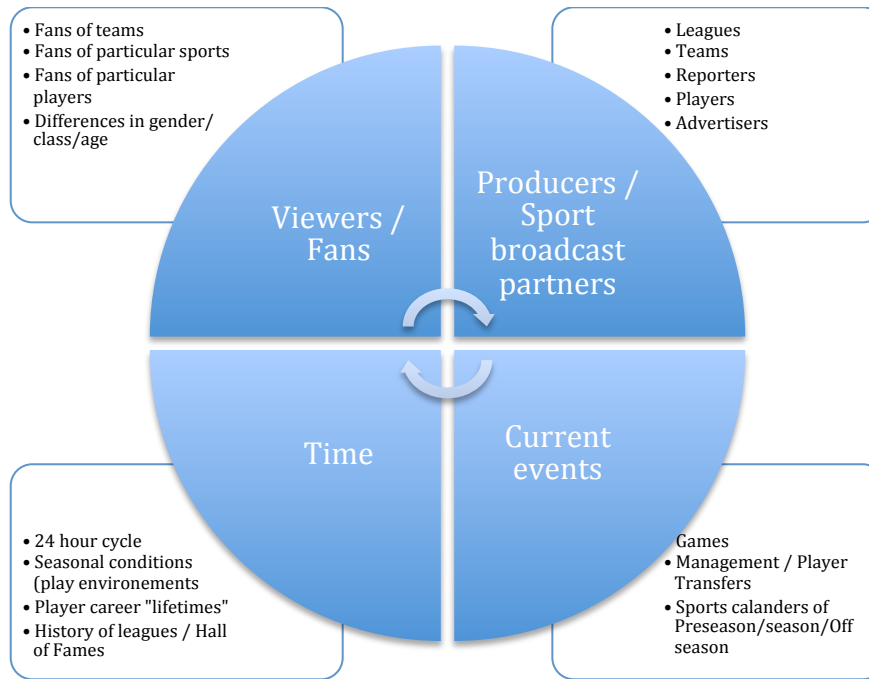


Figure 5 Historicizing News Programs on ESPN

One of the first examples of historicizing ESPN in the history of sports and most self-conscious breaks in the endless flow of programming occurred ten years after the first moments of the network with the “ESPN SportsCenter Tenth Anniversary Special.”²⁶ The hour plus program commemorated the tenth anniversary of both the *SportsCenter* series as well as the network, indicated how closely the two are tied. Opening with devotional like images of the sky with instrumental score and the date September 7, 1979, in text on the screen, omnipotent and unsourced voiceover narration intoned “It began as a dream over a decade ago.” After a series of shots of satellite dishes and thunderclouds in quick succession we see images of car racing, horse racing, track and field, college baseball, skiing, boxing, cycling, college football, sailing and

college basketball. ESPN anchor Chris Berman then welcomed viewers to this look back at ESPN's history and the awarding of the "Decade Awards," starting with a look at the network's first events which "established us to you."²⁷

The first events we see in the special are college basketball and a look at the production of the ESPN broadcast. Again the omnipotent voice over narration returns and, I argue, we see the beginning of a new kind of programming on the network to the ten years prior. Of course the anniversary celebration is somewhat mundane; however, it represents a shift in how the network presents itself and its programming to the audience. As suggested by the first broadcast and even the quick clips of the various sports seen on ESPN at the beginning of the "Tenth Anniversary Special", the emphasis for ESPN was traditionally in coverage of events or, more broadly, information. *SportsCenter* position further demonstrates the importance of information as an organizing principal for programming and appeal. However, the shift at looking back at both past events and how the network covered them is significant in it introduces another register for viewers: it asks them to *see* what the network is doing. While what is being shown is not a catastrophe or crisis in exactly the way Mary Ann Doane describes it, it is a break with the continuous flow of information traditionally seen on the channel. At the same time it reifies the continuous flow as, like Caldwell discusses, the true source of pleasure and joy in watching the network.

A moment in the special that exemplifies this shift is when the program shows a typical college basketball production. Specifically, we are taken out of the flow of watching games into a very meaningful moment: how the production crew creates the illusion of flow. In a darkened, TV monitor-filled room, producers and technicians watch the screens and talk urgently about how to construct the program in a way that effaces their labor of production. As with many live

sporting events, the goal is to give the viewers a sense of a roving eye in the broadcast, putting emphasis on their experience as viewers and not the construction of the image through ESPN. As John Caldwell has argued, the 1980s gave birth to what can be termed *televisuality*, a foregrounding of style in television production and consumption that grew from industrial changes of the time. With televisuality, the creation of the televisual images is not just a subtext but also the text itself. In the special, the omnipotent narrator builds on this point by highlighting ESPN's major advancement in sports television with what they term the "electronic cut in." With college games occurring at simultaneously across the country, ESPN pioneered the practice of cutting from one game to another and returning to the original, keeping "the action moving." According to the anniversary special, the experience of viewers of ESPN flowing nonstop from game to game, without an overt nod to the complex technology allowing for the flow, was all part of design by the channel.

The discussion of production of flow, along with the somewhat technical terms of "electronic cut in," breaks the spell of invisible production. Instead, the program historicizes production as part of the network. As Caldwell has argued about television style during this period, ESPN was foregrounding the production of its style. New technology, economic crisis, and audience expectation combined to create the highly self-aware and self-referential, non-cinematic, videographic televisual style that dominated the late 1980s.²⁸ In the special we see a group of ESPN employees in a production meeting talking about the strategy for the games that evening. As we watch the predominately male group, we hear from the narrator that they will get little to no sleep over the next few weeks leading up to the March NCAA Basketball Tournament. The focus on the technology and the physical sacrifices of workers is very much an example of ESPN depicting what Caldwell describes the "culture of production."²⁹

What is unique in this context however is how this is all seen in an anniversary special, which is itself very broadly modeled on an Edward R. Murrow style. Despite being about sports and occurring nearly four decades later, Chris Berman communicates to the audience in way reminiscent of Murrow looking at the duel shot of the Brooklyn Bridge and Golden Gate bridge in the first episode of *See It Now*: in awe of the technology and pledging to continue to humbly serve the viewer. While there is the obvious implication that this is what ESPN does and will do, the main context is this is what ESPN has *historically* done and what the supragenre of television news requires it to do. The special presents ESPN's work as part of a past, a point further emphasis by the end of the college basketball segment with an image of Michael Jordan (possibly the greatest professional basketball player of all time) in his college University of North Carolina uniform. The special is presenting college basketball and ESPN's production of it as important because it is an origin of what we know today, in the contemporary moment. By having a past that it can reference, 24-hour sports television is connected to the history of the genre.

ESPN BOOM IN THE 1990'S

The "Tenth Year Anniversary" special not only provides a look at how ESPN saw itself and its relationship to viewers, it also is a marker for end of the beginning for the channel. The popularity and awareness of ESPN in the 1990s exploded. Where CNN could point to their coverage of the Gulf War as a definitive moment where the channel became a household name in American media, there is no similar clear event for ESPN. Instead, I would argue two developments, one industrial and one based on programming, contributed to ESPN's growth in the 1990s. Both of these developments were also due to particular media formations in the

1990s. The two events are Disney's merger with ABC/ESPN in 1996 with the larger industry wide effort towards "synergetic" operation of properties and the development of the *SportsCenter* program. Both events contributed to ESPN's self-awareness of its historicity and would be expressed in its HNP's like the ESPYs and *SportsCentury*.

In 1996 Disney acquired Capital Cities/ABC, the parent company to ESPN. While Disney's merger with ABC heralded a new era of media consolidation, putting one of the original three legacy broadcast networks under the control of what has historically been a film studio, many analysts saw ESPN as the most significant part of the transaction. Disney CEO Michael Eisner confirmed the importance of ESPN to the overall deal by describing the cable channel as the "crown jewel" of the ABC purchase.³⁰ At this point ESPN had already several spinoff properties such as ESPN2, however with Disney as its corporate parent, the synergetic work of the network exploded. The connection to Disney allowed it become an even larger lynchpin of basic service packages. Not carrying ESPN's bevy of cable channel spin offs by providers would not only damage the relationship with ESPN, but also the parent company Disney *and* their long list of other cable networks they have ownership stakes in (including but not limited to A&E, Lifetime and the History Channel).

Within a few years, ESPN extended further and further into new realms, including print (ESPN The Magazine), radio (ESPN radio) and restaurants/branded live entertainment areas (ESPN Zone).³¹ Not only did ESPN itself become more involved in other areas beyond television, ESPN also became a platform for various ABC/Disney properties. Actors from various Disney projects would often be seen on ESPN to talk sports and pitch their work to the audience. At times this was overt, like an often cited appearance by Whoopi Goldberg on SportsCenter to promote her film *Eddie* (1996) where she played a New York Knicks fan

selected to be the team's first female head coach. However, other times such promotion would be indirect, such as Disney channel child stars seen courtside and giving short interviews to reporters coming out off or into commercial breaks.³² Such appearances obviously helped to promote the stars, but also helped create the impression that these stars had crossover potential by the fact they are in such a popular sports-heavy mediascape. One example of this could be the infamous Nicollette Sheridan appearance before the ABC Monday Night Football game where she is presented as being naked in the Eagles locker room attempting to seduce Terrell Owens. The skit was controversial (no doubt due in fact of Sheridan being a white woman and Owens a black man) for its shameless promotion of the show *Desperate Housewives* within the "real" diegesis of the NFL.³³

By the late 1990s, synergy was the dominant way to understand media programming and was the ideological force behind media consolidation.³⁴ While evidence is thin in terms of the actual benefit of these practices, media corporations were deeply steeped in the discourses of synergy, cross platforming, and multiple use of commonly owned properties. Synergy with ESPN meant another avenue for Disney media products, which sometimes included sports, to reach audience. More broadly however, synergy was a strategy to bring all media experiences under the one company umbrella. ESPN in this period was more than just one network; it was a way of life as demonstrated by things like the branded entertainment space of ESPN Zones. The success of the Disney/ABC/ESPN can be compared to the relative failure of the later Time Warner/AOL merger because of the latter's inability to expand the consumer experience under the guise of the parent conglomerate. When we discuss the HNPs of the late 1990s on ESPN, I believe the drive to bring outside experiences inside the ESPN brand was a major impetus for the series *SportsCentury*.

The other significant development that contributed to the explosion of ESPN's popularity in the 1990s was the success of *SportsCenter*. While *SportsCenter* had been the network's flagship nightly news and highlights program, it was in the 1990s with distinctive anchors like Keith Olbermann, Dan Patrick, Rich Eisen and Stuart Scott where the program became appointment viewing. Like CNN's earlier programming that were filmed in two hour segments to be repeated throughout the day, *SportsCenter* originally was two version, a morning and afternoon hour long program, that was repeated throughout their respective times. The network eventually moved to a rotating anchor crews for multi-hour shifts for live coverage, including introducing a late night version that included the final scores for East Coast games with updates from in progress West Coast games.

In 1988, ESPN hired John Walsh to run *SportsCenter*. Though many in the network saw the program as valuable, there was a little direction to the show. Walsh came from a newspaper background and was empowered by ESPN President Bornstein to make the show more of a journalistic enterprise rather than a straight recap show. One of the first things Walsh did was move away from the simple, mechanical like format of going through game results and highlights based mostly on sport. How information would be given to the viewer, in what narrative or formal set up, was considered as being as significant as the actual information itself. As Steve Anderson explained in *Those Guys Have All the Fun*, previously *SportsCenter* was following the model of CNN's score-and-highlights show where they would "start with baseball and you'd do all the American League, and then the next segment would be all the National League, and then the third segment would be the NBA. Once you started a sport you had to finish it off. Now, when John [Walsh] came in, he said, 'Let's look at the first segment as the front page of a newspaper'."³⁵ Interestingly, Walsh was using the model of an older media

technology, the newspaper, for a program on a 24-hour network, not that of a similar 24-hour news network. The thinking the experience of watching *SportsCenter* should follow the experience of reading the sports page was a change for ESPN, one which further demonstrates the historicity world-making of the sports network.

Part of constructing the shared historicity of the network with its viewers was through its repetition and dailiness. John Walsh tells of a story where after finding out the 6pm version of the show was preempted by a replay of a golf tournament he went directly to a restaurant where then President Steve Bornstein was eating and went “nuclear.” Walsh believed that in order to get people to care about the show, to feel invested in it, SportsCenter had to be on every day, that ESPN had to “care about the show.” Caring about it meant that it had to be a fixture in the daily flow of the network.³⁶

The 11pm/EST version of the show co-hosted by Keith Olbermann and Dan Patrick was widely cited as the most popular version of the show in its history. Ratings might not prove such a statement, but a great deal of anecdotal and popular press accounts frequently mention the high, comedic energy between the two anchors and the irreverent, extremely self-aware approach they had in presenting the nightly highlights. The Olbermann / Patrick *SportsCenters* are the primary text for what has become the standard jokey, pop culture referencing sportscasters speaking directly to an audience intimately aware of their inside jokes and other insular language. Instead of treating games as do or die battles to the death, *SportsCenter* treated the games as fun, light spectacles. The games more profound value came from their connections to the history of the game (particularly with Keith Olbermann and his frequently displayed depth of baseball knowledge). An example of the trivia nerd approach to sports can be seen the “Do You Know” segments used to end the program pioneered by Olbermann and Patrick.³⁷

SportsCenter became synonymous with the brand ESPN because of the anchors, but also because of the marketing campaign that helped to solidify its position as an icon in the sports world. The “This is *SportsCenter*” ad campaign, a series of mockumentary 30 second spots produced by Wieden+Kennedy, presented the Bristol offices of ESPN as the center of the sports universe. The campaign having lasted some 20 years has become an icon in the advertising industry and pop culture.³⁸ Taking its title from the opening voice over line for every episode of *SportsCenter*, the ad campaign presented a fantastical world where superstar athletes, ESPN personalities and sports brands and mascots all intermingled in a cubicle office environment. The ads presented the work of ESPN and the larger business of sports as a form of “fandom labor.” The performances of the anchors, their work, was embedded in the larger sports entertainment complex where viewership is not just simple consumption but part of one’s larger identity of being a fan. “This is *SportsCenter*” was more than a tagline for an ESPN program, but an entry point into a whole way of life, one which defined a person’s entire being.

Though management at ESPN was happy for the success of the *SportsCenter* brand, they were worried about the oversized success of some of the anchors, which were labeled as “talent” in the language of entertainment production. Books like *Those Guys Have All the Fun* and *ESPN: The Uncensored History* spend a great deal of time focusing on these clashes between talent and management, particularly the epic struggle between Keith Olbermann and the executives at ESPN. The main concern for management seemed to be with maintaining a position of control over talent as to not be forced to pay what they saw as enormous salaries for workers that were, to them, essentially interchangeable. In their view, as described by these sources, the personal connections viewers made with anchors were disruptive to the larger connection with the network. Some anchors, like Chris Berman, were elevated within the

network hierarchy, however there was a distinction between those “company men” and more independent, and often irreverent, hosts. The major example of the later was the mercurial Keith Olbermann who had been fired from or had left the network several times and was known for his clashes with management.³⁹ Those anchors were celebrated in part because of how they so completely served the brand and/or were beholden to it (the biggest example of this being Mike Tirico). So even though the *SportsCenter* show had never been more popular, the executives within the company had shown signs of preferring one kind of viewer attention to another.

Both the Disney merger and the explosion of *SportsCenter* contributed to the growth of ESPN but also provided complex challenges. With the Disney merger and the demands of synergy, there was pressure to spinout the network’s programming into increasingly far removed properties unrelated to sports. With *SportsCenter* was the pressure to maintain interest in specific programming but without a corresponding connection to talent or stars, which has historically been what drives viewership. The fact both of these were occurring during the 1990s and the maturation of 24-hour cable television news offerings, I argue the HNP was deployed in response to these two specific pressures and to issues with the form more generally.

HISTORICIZING NEWS PROGRAMS IN SPORTS: ESPYS AND JIMMY VALVANO

For the rest of this chapter I will be examining some examples of the HNP. The first will be the ESPYs and how they were a platform for the iconic Jimmy Valvano speech often referred to as “Never Give Up.” The moment was so significant to the history of the event and the channel ESPN started the Jimmy V foundation to raise money to cure cancer and does an annual fundraiser for the foundation on air through its many outlets.

Starting in 1993 ESPN launched the ESPY Awards (short for Excellence in Sports Performance Yearly), an annual sports award show for the best performances and athletes of the year. In part motivated by the MTV Video Music Awards and the MTV Movie Awards, the ESPY brought the award show genre and all its built in expectations such as red carpets, high fashion and heartfelt speeches, on to the network in a program they could control. While sports themselves already are highly competitive by nature, the awards frame also brought in history, specifically how awards can be used to compare divergent objects across time. For example, the Oscars allow us to compare performers over decades by the fact of winning or the number of wins, despite the huge differences in the style and kinds of performances. The popularity of theatrical versus method acting or expectations for female performance or even the kind of films produces by the studio system are all washed away into a singular coherent narrative by the history of the Oscars and the number of wins by an individual. Just like there are many ways to judge a film career, the Oscars provide a shorthand for doing. Though the ESPYs never could reach that level of narrativization of an athlete's career, it is an attempt to flatten out differences across sports into one singular narrative for a given year and over years.

The ESPYs have been criticized and mocked for as long as they have existed as a worthless manufactured spectacle.⁴⁰ One particularly well known criticized practice has been telling which of the "nominees" would win. An example of this was seen following Michael Jordan's return to the NBA and that year's "Best Comeback" ESPY award. Bill Murray, the award presenter, went through all the other nominees for the award, but undercut the drama by blurting out that of course Jordan would be winning the award over all the other nominees (including Monica Seles who had recovered from being stabbed by a fan during a match).⁴¹ For my purposes here I will not dwell the logic or righteousness of an awards show for sports, a field

of activity that is already defined by annual awards for performance. What I want to highlight is how ESPN has used such programming to add predictability to its schedule through a historic mindset, focusing specifically on the Jimmy Valvano speech at the 1993 ESPYs and how it has been used annually to brand the network.

Jimmy Valvano was a well-known and liked coach of the NC State men's basketball team. The undisputed highlight of his career was NC State's surprising 1983 NCAA Championship run that culminated in a shocking upset of the heavily favored University of Houston in the final game. With players like Hakeem Olajuwon and Clyde Drexler, two future Hall of Famers, on the University of Houston, NC State's win proved the supremacy of coaching in college basketball. The clip most often played from that game is not of any play but of Valvano hugging coaches and players and running on to the court in a crazed manner looking for others to celebrate with but doing it so manically as to be alone and seemingly lost. The image had become so identifiable with that team because of how the clip seemed to encapsulate Valvano's identity as a college coach. Unlike other coaches known for their disciplinary, militaristic disposition, like Indiana University's Coach Bobby Knight, Valvano was known as a more positive, loving leader. Not that he was not also harsh at times in his coaching, but in comparison his persona was one more on belief and team support. Instead of winning being a mere relief, for Valvano and the underdog NC State, it was pure joy.

After retiring from coaching, Valvano became a college basketball analyst on ESPN. Valvano, along with fellow analyst Dick Vitale, quickly became a well-liked figure for viewers and his colleagues. It came as a serious blow when Valvano was suddenly diagnosed with terminal cancer and given just a few months to live. Valvano was determined to keep fighting, even coming to Bristol and going on the road for work and television appearances despite his

obvious poor condition and serious pain. With one of the executives at ESPN describing Valvano as literally “dying on our air” a decision was made to set up a charitable organization for cancer research called the V Fund.⁴² The announcement would coincide with Valvano being given the first Arthur Ashe award at the ESPYs. On the night of the awards, despite his extremely weak state and his protestations that he could not give a speech in his condition, his colleagues and friends refused to take no for answer and Valvano went on stage to deliver what can only be described as a moving and hopeful elegy for himself. After acknowledging the honor of being recognized with an award named after Arthur Ashe, Valvano delivered a memorable speech with humor, humility and real emotion. He mentioned specific family and friends and also made an appeal to give to the fund with his name to support cancer research. In one often quoted segment, Valvano drew attention to the setting of the speech, a sports award show and the common trappings of playing award winners off or generally telling them they have a few seconds left:

I talked about my family, my family's so important. People think I have courage. The courage in my family are my wife Pam, my three daughters, here, Nicole, Jamie, LeeAnn, my mom, who's right here too. That screen is flashing up there thirty seconds like I care about that screen right now, huh? I got tumors all over my body. I'm worried about some guy in the back going thirty seconds? You got a lot, hey va fa napoli, buddy. You got a lot.⁴³

In *Those Guys Have All The Fun*, beyond the obvious affections those around Valvano had for him, many spoke of the emotions of watching him speak with the knowledge it would most likely be his last time. President Steve Bernstein later said while he had seen a lot of television in his life, he had “never seen anything like that.”⁴⁴ Valvano's speech, and the emotions it generated, elevated the ESPYs into a meaningful event. Even more however, his speech elevated the entire network. Immediately following his speech and the thunderous applause, ESPN personality Robin Roberts followed him on stage. Unsure what to say, she decided to express what she was feeling and that she had never been prouder of ESPN then at that moment. Years

later she said explained how Jimmy Valvano's speech showed that ESPN could be more than just games, scores and highlights, that "this thing can be bigger than that."⁴⁵

Within a few months, Jim Valvano died. The speech stood as his last public statement and testament to his positive attitude even in the face of death. The set up by ESPN that bares his name, the V Fund, began to raise money for cancer research and eventually involved a great deal of support from ESPN. In fact, today ESPN hold an annual Jimmy V fundraiser where contemporaries of Jimmy Valvano talk about him and the important work of the foundation in searching for a cure. Not too far visually from these remembrances and fundraising drives is the Jimmy V speech, which is also often hailed as not only legendary to his legacy but to the legacy of the network. ESPN executives credit the fund as being the ESPN charity and, at the same time, demonstrating the care ESPN gives to its employees who receive cancer diagnosis.⁴⁶

What I want to point out here though is how a manufactured event became a platform for a genuine human moment, which in turn was again turned back to a manufactured annual event. Of course all awards shows are constructions, but nothing about the ESPYs is particularly genuine outside of a need for television programming during the dull summer months. Yet out of them, one of the most "real" moments of the network occurred and has been replayed and replayed to the point it is part of the narrative of ESPN. Jimmy Valvano as a person had been processed into a symbol, but not even for the cancer research fund that bears his name but for the network that uses his image to show that they fund cancer research. Valvano's speech has inevitably lost some of its original pathos by the fact it has been played over and over again, and it has been used in promotional materials by the network (even if it is for the fund that bares his name). What was and still is a painful and genuine television moment has been replayed into a manufactured event that is part of the ESPY highlight package.

Jimmy V Week for Cancer Research

ESPN wraps up each year with a celebration of Jim's life by hosting "Jimmy V Week for Cancer Research." ESPN's V Week festivities kick off in December with the presentation of Jim Valvano's ESPY speech on the ABC Supersign in Times Square in New York City. During this week, ESPN employees come together to dedicate their time to encouraging people to support The V Foundation in memory of their inspirational and beloved friend, Jim Valvano. The week culminates with the Jimmy V Women's and Men's Basketball Classics, each live on ESPN networks. ESPN's focus on The V Foundation during this week has made it one of the largest annual fundraisers.



ESPY Awards

After his diagnosis with bone cancer, Jim announced in his speech during the first ever ESPY Awards in 1993 that he and ESPN had formed The V Foundation for Cancer Research. Today, amidst the celebration and glamour of the ESPY Awards, ESPN continues to remember Jim.

Figure 6 Image from "ESPN, Founding Partner" page of the V Foundation website⁴⁷

The use of Valvano's image in this way was one of the self-conscious creations of history by the network outside the events that happen in games. As Robin Roberts said, it proved the network could be more than sports and the ESPYs were part of that transformation. By the end of the 1990s, the program, which initially had trouble getting athletes to attend as it was a completely manufactured event, had the biggest names in sports, including Michael Jordan, Wayne Gretzky, Kobe Bryant, eager to attend. Valvano's speech gave the ESPYs a recognizable moment, while the end of the decade awards and the simple fact the show had been built into an annual media event made it an annual media event. As Miller and Shales said, the ESPY "itself

may still have meant next to nothing, but the TV special [became] a bona fide annual event.”⁴⁸

Like the MTV Video Music Awards, the combination of being on television and having a past made the ESPYs more of a must attend occasion.

I believe the ESPY awards provide a model for further historicizing done by ESPN by the end of the 1990s. Packaging the past and even more creating a past to be packaged by the network was a key conceptual project ESPN was engaged with by the end of the decade. For the rest of this chapter I will focus on the *SportsCentury* series, both *SportsCenter of the Decade* and *Top 50 Athletes of the 20th Century*, and how they produced a kind of history that brought order to the rest of ESPN’s programming, even if that history had very little connection to the actual history of what had been on the channel.

HISTORICIZING NEWS PROGRAMS IN SPORTS: *SPORTSCENTURY*

The summit of the HNPs on ESPN was two series that played on the network in 1999. Part of the larger end of the millennium theme that gripped a lot of American television programming, ESPN produced two programs that presented the past for contemporary audiences in similar yet distinct ways. Both were branded as part of the yearlong *SportsCentury* programming on the channel. One was *Top 50 Athletes of the 20th Century*, a series of thirty minute long documentary like programs that focused on one athlete from a ranked list of the top 50 athletes of the 20th Century as voted by a chosen ESPN panel of experts. The other was *SportsCenter of the Decade* that presented past sports news as if it were on a historically accurate *SportsCenter* program. I will expand on both at length as they each represented a different tactic of presenting the past.

Broadly, the *SportsCentury* brand stood out from the rest of ESPN's programming stylistic and narratively. In terms of narrative, *SportsCentury* was not recapping a just completed event or trying to predict the future of a particular game or match. Instead the show created a narrative that both explained the past and quite literarily transcended the century. Short segments on *SportsCenter*, or specials like the Tenth Anniversary special analyzed above, had looked at the past, recalled a forgotten player, or presented a memory of a particular anniversary. *SportsCentury* programming went further and created a definitive account of the past through a list ranking different histories against each other. The story crafted by the series was historical and historicizing. It provided stories of the past but also gave a method to understand those stories. The narrative of the past and how we talk about the past was the narrative of the show. This self-conscious nature of presenting the past is one of the critical components of the HNP.

Sportscenter Of The Decade

The *SportsCenter of the Decade* series most clearly showed this practice. Each episode of the program would look at one decade, starting the 1950s, and run through the major sporting events and personalities of the era as if it was a nightly *SportsCenter* show. For example, in the 1950s episode of the show, *SportsCenter* anchors Bob Ley and Kenny Mayne introduced and narrated clips of games like the 1951 NL playoffs between the Giants and Dodgers (the famous "Giants win the pennant" call) with whatever archival footage available.⁴⁹ In between these "highlights" were reports by *SportsCenter* anchors on figures and stories from the time such as Ben Hogan's return to golf or the college basketball point shaving controversies. Interspersed through all of these *SportsCenter* branded reporting on the 1950s was author and historian David Halberstam narrating about the 1950s generally with a slight sports angle on the major political,

social and cultural events of the time. In one roughly three minute long segment, Halberstam mentions, by essentially listing them with short asides, the Rosenbergs trial, General McArthur's dismissal, various novels popular in the 1950s, *I Love Lucy*, and Elizabeth Taylor. Following a commercial we return to Halberstam who describes the Richard Nixon's Checkers speech and Eisenhower's election as President.

The set of the "*SportsCenter* of the Decade: the 1950s" episode is modeled after what one would imagine the 1950s looked like based on television sitcom reruns. In contrast, David Halberstam reports from what seems to be a space station or perhaps inside a digital archive. The space looks wholly unreal, constructed entirely on green screen like a weather update, with archival images appearing at appropriate times behind Halberstam illustrating whatever cultural, political or social historical event he is describing. With the use of images, the futuristic look of the set and that much of what he says is a simple reciting of historical facts, Halberstam's claims are presented with an air of authority and, most significantly, authenticity. The larger, non-sports history presented in *SportsCentury: SportsCenter of the Decade* is separated in terms of visual style and delivery from the sports reporting history, while the sports reporting history is provided by the same talent that reports on contemporary sports events in the nightly *SportsCenter* broadcasts.

The "historic" sports highlights recapping in the *SportsCentury: SportsCenter of the Decade* clips take on the same jokey and punny tone of contemporary *SportsCenter* programs, but instead of pop culture, the *SportsCentury SportsCenter* uses references to the generalized history viewers were just told or might already be familiar with. For example, when talking about the end of the Yankee championship streak at the beginning of the 1950s, Bob Ley introduced the clip package by saying "To paraphrase a question asked to Senator [Joseph]

McCarthy a few months ago, ‘at long last sir do you have no dynasty?’⁵⁰ The use of “a few months ago” references the attempt to create the illusion that the broadcast we are watching was actually from the time period being described. However that type of reference would only make sense to us in the present moment and be nonsensical to someone actually watching a sports highlight show.

Bob Ley’s “at long last” illustrates the larger purpose and the end result of creating these two kinds of spaces and informational segments in the *SportsCentury: SportsCenter of the Decade* program. There is work being done by this high-level play at being in the past with the perspective of today. The *SportsCenter* highlights for events that happened fifty plus years ago combined with the listing of non sports events and what can loosely called analysis by experts like Halberstam made for a truly jarring viewing experience. What the mixture of images does though is provide a historicity context for the historic sports reporting we see. Building on that, the historic sports reporting we see in the program is very much like the contemporary sports reporting on the network, so much so one could draw a direct line between the representation of fictional past *SportsCenter* with the *SportsCenter* of now and the future not yet aired. I would even argue that the program acts in much the same way the coda to *Good Night and Good Luck* worked as I discussed in the introduction. It uses a historical material and presents it in an ahistoric manner in order to show the narrative meaning of history to our contemporary moment. The historicizing show mimicked the way ESPN covers events today.

The impact of this is to not so much say something about the past, as it is to say something about the present. As Mimi White has argued in regards to scripted television shows representing the past, historic television programs are by their nature say more about the present than being a so called real reference of the past. Borrowing from Michel de Certeau’s

“understanding of historical representation as a strategic assertion of unity and interpretive coherence,” White argues the unity created in representations of history by television is more about today than the supposed unity of the past.⁵¹ From this, I argue what is represented by these historical recreations is a particular perspective on today. The *SportsCenter* clips from archival footage of games from five decades ago tells us about the contemporary year it was broadcast on ESPN, not about the game (or the generalized time) being referred to. What it is saying about ESPN in the contemporary moment is that the network is the primary source for all sports news. However, beyond that, by combining it in a larger historical narrative that goes beyond just sports (as demonstrated by the Halberstam segments), the programs are also showing that sports can be the appropriate lens to understanding *all American historical events*, in the past and the present.

We can see the clearest demonstration of how these historicizing programs privilege sports information, and ESPN’s presentation of it, as the fundamental way of understanding the world in how they deal with race. A key part of the historical unity created by the HNP are discussions of race that argue that our contemporary moment is much more educated and refined from the past. An example of an approach to historiography creating a unified whole from the past can be seen in the first episode of the *SportsCenter of the Decade* series that covered 1900-1949.⁵² The episode covered five decades instead of one most likely due to the fact that archival sports footage from the time was rare, requiring another framing device besides the television frame. Like the other episodes in the series, the show took efforts to make it look as if it was from the past, however the absence of commercial television in this specific period lead to more creative representations. Instead of the *SportsCenter* set with contemporary anchors doing highlights, *SportsCenter of the Decade 1900-1949* centered around several veteran newspaper

men who covered sports at the time talking from a newsroom set. Lead by Dick Schaap, host of the network's weekly Sunday morning show *Sports Reporters* (which could be described as the *Meet the Press* for sports columnists), the older newspaper men would talk about their memories from wooden desks as appropriately costumed extras behind them pounded away on making copy on mechanical typewriters. The entire scene was shot in the same sepia tone as the 1950s *SportsCenter*, but here with the older reporters and the addition of extras, the effect is more pronounced as an over-the-top stylistic choice. The sepia tone to recall faded photographs, stereotypical mis-en-scene of a newspaper newsroom with typewriters, ashtrays, hats and mahogany desks and the predominance of older, white male reporters are all symbols to mark the show as belonging to the past, but a past that is directly connected to our present.⁵³



Figure 7 Stills from ESPN's *SportsCenter of the Decade: 1900-1949*⁵⁴

The connection was made not through the discussion of the sports popular at the time, but the social issues, particularly race, around sports in the 1900-49s. While there was one segment on women sports that focused on the great Babe Didrikson delivered by Andrea Kramer (off camera through a radio broadcast signified by images of a stand alone home radio set), the undercurrent through the entire episode was race, particularly in the stories of Joe Louis, Jack Johnson, Jackie Robinson and the Negro Leagues. Danny Glover, this time playing the role of

David Halberstam in the computer archive clip center, also highlighted this focus on race with contextualizing segments talking about Paul Robeson and black music in the early 20th century, and segregation and the general attitude of hate against blacks in the US. Glover’s identity as a civil rights activist is clearly the surrounding context for these short segments talking about race and American history. Due the dearth of clips, much of the show consists of people talking, with an emphasis on the older reporters who covered the era. Many of these segments did cover race, but what is interesting to note that although they are all white, they were acutely aware of the role race was playing in their coverage. For example, in talking about Joe Lewis, one reporter remarked how he was often the favorite boxer of white fans because of his fight against German Max Schmeling but also because of he seemed “to know his place,” in contrast to the flamboyant Jack Johnson. The same reporter wondered if that type of fandom of a black athlete was not in itself racist. Later in the program, another reporter discussed the fact that not only were the sports segregated while he covered them, there were no black sports reporters.



Figure 8 Danny Glover in the archival space in a still from *SportsCenter of the Decade: 1950s*⁵⁵

These examples in the text of the reporters are an example of the historical narrative programming Mimi White describes, however it is a form presented as real. Going a step further, White suggests that shows where sexism and racism have to be recreated in order to be historically accurate in a strange way make sexism and racism a common contemporary television occurrence.⁵⁶ Instead of making acts of oppression in the past outside of our daily experience, it in fact normalizes them. In a similar manner, although the *SportsCenter of the Decade: 1900-49* was acknowledging the gender and racial politics present in the period, the program mostly serves to bring the oppression of the past into the current moment without a sustained critique of its legacy today. So in terms of boxing, the program provides one of the first instances where race was a major factor in the marketing and consumption of the event, but does not connect that past to the reality that even today race, though much more subtly, is a major factor in the appeal of boxing and, at times, trades on some of the ugliest stereotypes to create narratives for the matches. It brings up the explicitly racist and sexist past of sports, but in a way that firmly places it in the past.

The unifying idea in the hodgepodge of material for the *SportsCenter of the Decade* was style. The format of the program followed *SportsCenter* despite the fact it made very little temporal sense. It needs to be pointed out that *SportsCenter* is a daily show, covering the events of now. Even a *SportsCenter* recapping the past year is vastly different than one covering events that existed before ESPN and in some cases before televised coverage. Highlight packages of newsreels, which are themselves highlights, have no utility in the way the nightly highlights of a typical *SportsCenter* broadcast would have. Cognitively there is no underlying need for this show. However, in terms of style, the program works to fix *SportsCenter*'s format and representation of sports as one with a deeper historical basis. The style of *SportsCenter* is made

to be timeless rather than the result of a particular mixture of personality, technology and reception. The *SportsCenter of the Decade* series grounded the daily reporting of the network in a tangible and meaningful historic past. The two parts of the programs worked in concert. On the one hand, *SportsCenter*, with the direct address to the viewer common to traditional news broadcasts, conveyed one kind of truth in telling the viewer what is happening today is real. On the other hand, the *SportsCentury* programs use the address of documentary, creating a different kind of truth. The series had the look and feel of a documentary, meaning it used archival still and video footage, talking head interviews, omnipotent voice over and a constant musical score to evoke a broader kind of truth than the truth evoked in news broadcasts. Together, the two halves of the program work to establish ESPN as a source of factual and real information, for today and all time.

Top 50 Athletes of the 20th Century and Rankings

Along with the *SportsCentury: SportCenter of the Decade* series, ESPN also ranked the top one hundred athletes of the century with each of the top fifty getting one thirty-minute special. These episodes entitled *SportsCentury: Top 50 Athletes of the 20th Century* played two at a time on a weekly basis throughout 1999. Ranking players or debating generally the “greatest of all time” in a sport is so commonplace that it is a staple of talk sports radio.⁵⁷ The reason for the appeal of this kind of discussion is its inherently subjective nature, which permits the flourishing of debate so many sports fans love to engage in with references to stats, championships and, most importantly, the vague feelings a given star engendered in audiences. While the ranking of all-time-greats in a given sport or time period is not new, the idea of ranking ALL athletes over a hundred years as ESPN did is a particularly hubristic activity.

However, ESPN presented the *SportsCentury* rankings not as an attempt to generate good debate and hear from the people (as is often the case with sports media) but to fix a list of top athletes, events and general moments of the century as designated by a “distinguished panel of 48 journalists, historians, observers and administrators” for what is “the most extensive documentary series in ESPN history.”⁵⁸ The emphasis on expertise and deliberate consideration in a quasi-democratic forum suggests the decisions by the committee represented a deeper, objective truth best suited by the documentary form (and not sports talk blather). The end result was a list that included men and women, black and whites, even non-humans, and ranked them in terms of significance to the century that was just concluding. Each of the thirty minute programs showcasing the top fifty on the list gave their biography and reasons why they were chosen. These episodes followed typical talking head objective narration documentary style mixing together archival footage, interviews and some limited contemporary footage, all hosted by an ESPN personality.⁵⁹

I would argue that the compilation of the list existed in two different historic registers. The first was the level of what the panelists were charged with doing. The second was how ESPN itself was presenting the history of the last hundred years. What I mean by this is that the list is more a reflection of the current moment than an accurate representation of who the most important athletes of the last century. As an example of this I would like to look at the episode for OJ Simpson, who was ranked #49 on the list.⁶⁰ The position itself shows the conflicted nature of the list, high enough to be included in the series but not high enough to outrank many other athletes who might have been insulted by the comparison.

The OJ Simpson *SportsCentury* episode opens with ESPN host Dan Patrick on camera saying they (ESPN) knew OJ’s pick at #49 would be “controversial,” which is in itself an

interesting statement. Rankings like these are meant to be controversial in the sense they would generate discussion and debate. Patrick is referring to another level of controversy outside the ranking to the idea that athletic performance is separate from personalities and actions of people off the field of play. Obviously for Simpson, Patrick is referring to Simpson's notorious, non-sports reputation as an accused murderer. The controversy is not so much looking at OJ Simpson, who was considered one of the best at his position in the history of football, a Hall of Famer and still holder of record for most rushing yards in a 14 game season, as one of the most significant athletes of the past century. The true controversy is acknowledging it on a network (and even a ranking list) that often does build the myth of athletes beyond their performances. In the most dramatic of circumstances, ESPN is admitting the sports we watch are different from the people that perform them on the same network that is often presenting a completely contrary view. Patrick and the episode as a whole directly address this contrast when he transitions into the central question throughout the episode: "Can we every really know these athletes? The answer might be found in our look at OJ Simpson."⁶¹

The episode does spend a great deal of time outlining Simpson's college and professional successes, with interviews from people like Al Michaels, Jim Brown, Tony Dorset, John McKay, Keith Jackson and many sports personalities testifying to his singular greatness as a running back. The show also talks about Simpson's media persona as an affable and, above all, non-threatening black man. Patrick described Simpson's persona as being the ultimate family man, so much so "corporate America embraced him as their first African-American spokesperson."⁶² Athletes like Kareem Abdul-Jabar and Jim Brown, known for their commitment to black equality and social change, are interviewed criticizing Simpson's disavowal of any political stance, while others say Simpson opened doors for black Americans no amount of protest ever could.

It is in the last third of the episode that focuses entirely on his post-murder trial legacy (with almost no footage or coverage of the trial itself save a lone still, sepia tone image of the white Bronco from his June 1994 car chase). Through out the last segment, which includes George Plimpton, all the participants are mournful that the memories of Simpson's athletic skills have been forever tainted. As an example of this, we see contemporary footage of young black boys asked who is OJ Simpson and their response that he's a murderer. Simpson himself is interviewed and actually is the only voice to say the series is supposed to be about athletes so he would like to be discussed as an athlete. The episode ends with Patrick back as host saying "we are left with disturbing questions", mainly how do reconcile two images of OJ Simpson's and can we ever know an athlete.

The Simpson episode of *SportsCentury* Fifty Greatest Athletes is a fascinating text for my study because it shows the complicated ways history is deployed by 24-hour cable television news as a way to order and provide meaning to the entirety of coverage and, more significantly, how it occasionally failed. Creating a list of past athletes a way to for the network to produce programming, but it also helped position the perspective and scope of the daily work on the channel. However, it also raised questions that could not be controlled and often exceeded the text. With the OJ Simpson episode, ESPN is asking questions it cannot fully answer. The deeper, unspoken question is how can the network mix together hagiography of the type it often engages in, with reporting on reality and clear events, which also makes up a great deal of daily coverage of the channel. Rankings, and programs on the rankings, are one way the network can create some objective historic standard, but that objectivity is a myth. The rankings are not the definitive view into the past but one constructed by the network for its own purposes, some of

which go beyond just filling programming time. The programs become a space to think out problems in its coverage it cannot easily answer.

CONCLUSION

Like CNN and as another example of the new genre of 24-hour cable television news, ESPN used history as a way to organize its current reporting. History as a programming theme was presented in what I term HNPs. While the time frame for the two networks does not overlap precisely, history is used to do the same work, specifically the connecting of audiences, producers, events and time through the image and the larger network brand. By the end of the 1990s, ESPN relied on history, and more broadly historicity, to give its current reporting on games and athletes deeper meaning. History was a break from what Caldwell calls the “*hypostatized time and massive regularity*” of television, which in sports is the coverage of news and live events.⁶³ The breaks brought by history highlight the continuous coverage of the network and the invisible productions that bring such joy to viewers. History was also a way ESPN could present itself as a critical part of sports history generally, even though at times the effort to create a logical whole failed.

In the last two chapters I have described how history is activated in the 24-hour cable television news genre, both in political/general news and sports news, to give depth and context to its continuous, non-stop reporting. The result of this use of history by the genre will be the focus on the next two chapters. First, as CNN’s objectivity in reporting came under attack in the late 1990s by charges of liberal or mainstream bias by various critics taking part in the so called “Culture Wars”, the presentation of history as an objective reality by its historical series’ came under equal scrutiny. I will show how history was politicized by examining CNN’s series *The*

Cold War and the resulting controversy. In the fourth chapter, I will look at the challenges of new media to cable television and how cable television news worked to contain it through historicization before turning away from history and towards programming modes like tabloid, stunt and political conflict to maintain viewers.

CHAPTER THREE – “THE RIGHT SIDE WON”: CNN’S COLD WAR AND THE POLITICIZATION OF THE HISTORICIZING NEWS PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will explore how CNN represented history through its HNPs by the end of the 1990s. In this period the representation of history during the “Cultural Wars” in the United States became a different kind of battlefield from that of the Gulf War in the early 1990s. In the first chapter of this study I argued that history, through the HNP, a key part of CNN and the 24-hour cable television news genre. With the change to constant and continuous news programming, the everyday historicity of earlier television news broadcasts moved from the background into the foreground on CNN through HNPs. In the second chapter I showed how the utilization of history on ESPN, another 24-hour news channel, promoted the network’s own constructed past and provided another necessary contrasting register for its live, continuous programming.

In this chapter I will demonstrate the “late” period use of history by the 24-hour cable television news genre, during which it became more difficult to present the past as something accessible and the same for the entire audience. By the late 1990s, the work of HNPs and other self-conscious productions of history no longer worked in the same way to order the overall programming of the network, contrast from live programming, or join together audiences, producers, events and time. Many conservative activists and organizations saw CNN as similar to other outlets of the liberal mainstream media. I argue critical viewers also saw the cable television news’s use of history in political terms, rejecting previous deployments of historicity as biased propaganda and not mere programming choices by the network. Following a discussion

of the Culture War of the 1990s and conservative media criticism of mainstream media, I will look at CNN’s position and the persona of Ted Turner at the end of the 1990s. Finally I will do an in-depth analysis of the miniseries *The Cold War* and demonstrate how the program and its representations of history became a highly contested site for political disagreement and the effects that debate had on the use of history by cable television news.

THE LATE HISTORICIZING NEWS PROGRAM

In the first two chapters of this study I have outlined and demonstrated the ways in which the HNP was able to give the 24-hour news form cohesion conceptually and stylistically. I have used the following diagram as a visualization of the work of HNPs, but will adjust it even further to demonstrate what I mean by this “late” period:

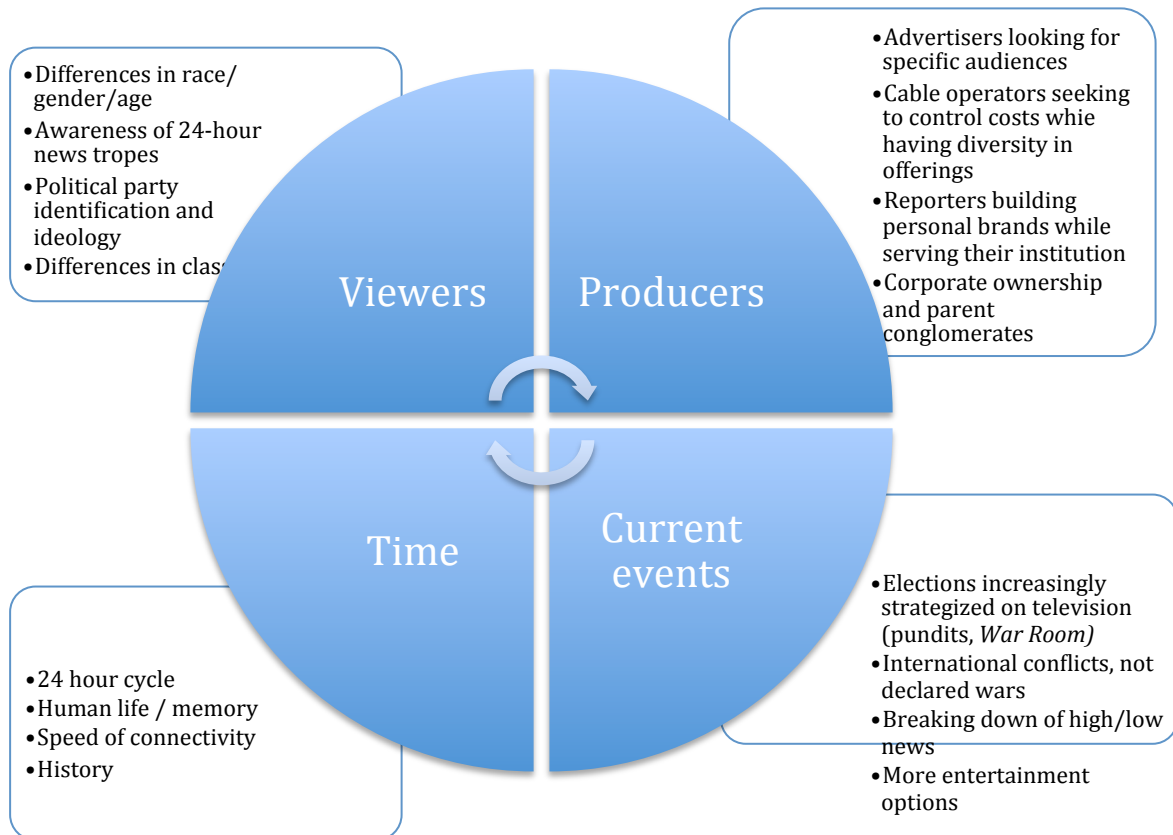


Figure 9 Late Historicizing News Program Process

As the diagram demonstrates, HNPs were responding to increasing differences in the viewers as well as more intense differences in producers of content, including the cable networks, advertisers, content producers and executives. HNPs worked to meld those various groups through the conceptual categories of current events, which had also become more divisive and diverse, and time, which was still stable except for the increase use of technology that changed the individual experience with it. The style of these programs were still often documentary-like with omnipotent narration, aesthetically pleasing or astonishing visuals, expert/impressionable testimony, and cinematic narratives. HNPs of the late 1990s were still able to use their style to create a history that seemed objective and worked as an organizing force for the daily reporting done by the network. The major difference in terms of the content of HNPs was the increased production values and goals for audience engagement and narrative ambition.

While the HNP was reaching a height at the end of the 1990s on ESPN, hard news networks like CNN were facing challenges and criticism that was making this model untenable. Except for some highly political charged moments like segregation and labor rights, American sports are commonly considered to be apolitical. As a result ESPN's recreation of history was not an overtly political act. In contrast, CNN's representations of history were increasingly seen as political statements and not the simple act of enunciating a shared cultural understanding. The ability for the HNP to bring together disparate groups and concepts into one whole became unsustainable.

As I will discuss in this chapter, the 1990s Culture Wars warriors argued that the reporting and general outlook of news media was liberal and not open to a conservative worldview. The founding of Fox News, a new outlet for 24-hour cable television news that

directly claimed to give a different slant on current events, caused a fracturing of the unifying work of the programs illustrated in my model. Instead of historicizing news programming being a vehicle for forming a whole out of the parts, the programs were interpreted by the right, at best, as biased representations seeking to avoid difficult realities or, at worst, acts of explicit propaganda for a particular political view. According to these critics, the HNP created a whole, but for the purposes of dividing audiences along partisan lines. So instead of a process of historicization that gave meaning to the entire reporting of the network, the HNPs were programs that justified the political slant of the network. CNN's history was increasingly framed by conservative commentators as not a universal history, but a tainted history.

CULTURE WARS

The political slant of reporters and networks was a major battleground for the so-called "Culture Wars" of the 1990s in America. At the 1992 Republican National Convention, former presidential candidate and activist Pat Buchanan referred to the ongoing, multifaceted political fissure in the United States as a "Culture War." The term became a shorthand for the left/right, conservative/liberal, religious/secular, puritanical/permissive, blue/white collar divides that defined the decade. Though these divides were broadly understood as being between Republicans and Democrats, they often transcended party politics. As an example, one need not look much further than Pat Buchanan himself, who was granted speaking time at the convention because of his New Hampshire primary win against his party's sitting president. The speech defending "traditional values" was held up as one of the factors President Bush lost his reelection campaign due to how it alienated large demographic groups the GOP needed to win.

The term “Culture Wars” is entirely appropriate because it both dates the conflict to a specific time period in United States history and also is emblematic of what the conflict was at the time.¹ Divides between left and right in America are by no means new. “Silent Majority” and “Red State / Blue State” are just two postwar examples of shorthand used to describe the conflict between the two extremes of political ideology. The Culture Wars are similar and uses war terminology very much in the lexicon of American policy and politics (drugs, poverty, cancer and so on). The Culture Wars were a particularly 1990s formulation of that conflict, as minus any actual sustained shooting war with a foreign enemy (outside the Gulf War and limited conflicts), a great deal of the energy of politics in that decade went towards domestic political conflicts.

The Culture Wars of the 1990s was in some ways the final reckoning of the Baby Boomer youth of the 1960s and 1970s that experienced what Todd Gitlin referred to as the weakening of all authority, “including the authority of journalism...by the triple whammy of the Vietnam war, the Sixties movements, and Watergate”.² The most establishment symbol of this generation’s rise in political power was President Bill Clinton. As a man who was fighting age during the Vietnam War but avoided the draft due to educational deferments, Clinton represented a certain type of nightmare of leadership for more militaristic and conservative elements of the nation. On the other hand, Clinton’s poor childhood in Arkansas, his educational achievements at elite institutions despite a lack of family connections, and his return and support of his home community also spoke to a whole generation of people who were against the war. In terms of television, we can see Clinton’s ascendancy as the revenge of *All in the Family*’s Meathead’s generation over Archie Bunker (or the revenge of Reaganite Michael P. Keaton’s parents in *Family Ties*). Clinton’s lack of military experience, his “I feel your pain” rhetoric, his

insufficiently religiosity leading his policy decision and, most critically, his lack of shame or guilt around pleasure in its many forms, went beyond politics. He was an emblem for a whole mass, collective identity that could be describe as “liberal” but also extended across class, race, gender and generational divides.³

On the other, conservative side was another vision for what America is and what it should be that was incredibly political in nature, but mostly expressed itself not in terms of specific policy but in terms of culture. Groups like the Moral Majority and the Christian Right wielded political power in the 1980s into the 90s, but while still very much involved in politics, the end of the Reagan/Bush era changed the ground and axis of argument. Struggles over issues like gun control, abortion rights, censorship, homosexuality, drug use, and religion in public life obviously had legal and policy bases, but they were argued in divisive personal terms that made compromise or negotiation nearly impossible. In his speech, Buchanan described the battle as a “religious war” over the “soul of America.”⁴ Buchanan, further demonstrating the divide, referred to Bill Clinton as “a draft-dodging, pro-gay greenhorn married to a radical feminist” and Al Gore as someone “who put insects, rats and birds ahead of families, workers and jobs.”

Through histrionics, Buchanan persuasively described the political situation as “a cultural war, as critical to the kind of nation we will one day be as was the Cold War itself”.⁵ Though talked about in terms of religion or politics, the Culture Wars was more marked by a conflict of global ideological world-views. Previously, what side you were on many of the issues listed above did not come from your political party identification, but in the 1990s the parties positioned themselves to represent themselves as guardians of a particular belief. To be specific, being a Republican did not necessarily mean you were pro-life or being Democratic did not necessarily mean you were pro-choice. However, as the conflict of the Culture War continued,

party ideology started to fall into “cultural” categories. As a result the ideological struggles in the US in the 1990s were not fought primarily in the ballot box or courtrooms, though they occasionally were, but in the culture and, by proxy, the television screen.

According to people like Pat Buchanan, what was expressed in popular culture and on television would be critical for the kind of nation the United States would be.⁶ The production and reading of culture were main fronts for the Culture Wars, especially considering a great amount of attention was paid to quasi-governmental organizations like the National Endowment of the Humanities, the National Endowment of the Arts and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.⁷ Reading culture and texts was important to both conservatives and the left. As popular culture and moving image studies became more established in academic settings, the power of representation to shape political choices and views became more mainstream.⁸ In fact, the main critiques of British cultural studies in regards to the shaping and maintaining of hegemony and the multivariate position of readers in engaging with texts became so widespread they were mimicked, to questionable efficacy, by those on the right. It is this use of reading and political critique employed by the right against so called mainstream liberal media that I want to focus on next as a way to explain the position of CNN by the late 1990s.

RIGHTWING CRITIQUE OF MAINSTREAM MEDIA

British cultural studies approach to culture and its texts was based in part on trying to understand why the revolution of the proletariat had not occurred despite the continued economic oppression of classes, races and nations. Influenced a great deal by Antonio Gramsci and his writing on ideology and inspired as an intervention against the Thatcher regime, British cultural studies saw that people were not simply brutalized and forced into believing certain things about

their society and political structures, but instead saw the realities and beliefs of their worlds as true and coming from themselves.⁹ Popular culture, found in books, television, radio, newspapers, magazines, adverts, and cinema, often provided the core ideologies of the dominant classes, but also occasionally gave voice to critical perspectives in order to be fresh and be seen as new. The reader, already fully inundated by dominant ideology, reads these texts, dynamically consumes their messages in a way that seems appropriate to them, and produces new ideologies that are often subtly reproduced beliefs aligned with power.

Stuart Hall, one of the major figures in British cultural studies, popularized the idea of reader positions in approaching a television text.¹⁰ The first was the dominant position, where the reader would directly read (or decode) whatever message was intended (or encoded) in the text. Hall explains when a viewer does this “we might say that the viewer *is operating inside the dominant code*.”¹¹ The second position was the negotiated position where the reader accepts some meanings and not others. The negotiated reading results in a “version of the dominant ideology...shot through with contradictions, though these are only on certain occasions brought to full visibility.”¹² Finally the third position is that of the oppositional position, where the reader understands the encoding of the dominate message but reads it from the position of rejection and direct critique. Hall described this position as a political moment that “coincides with crisis points within the broadcasting organizations themselves...when events which are normally signified and decoded in a negotiated way begin to be given an oppositional reading”. Hall ended the essay by saying the oppositional position is where “the ‘politics of signification’ – the struggle in discourse – is joined.”¹³

Hall’s three positions for readers were meant to describe how people engage with popular culture and, while not often accepting blindly the messages within it, read it from their own

frame, and are in dialogue with the text. Though readers are active and opposition is possible, readers/viewers are using the raw material of culture that is encoded with dominant messages. Hall and British cultural studies would broadly see these dominant messages as more conservative or rightist, but mainly in service of power.

By the 1990s this kind of reading of culture had become so popularized, in part through the embrace of its pedagogy by American universities and colleges that it was being used in new and unpredictable ways. Instead of seeing media as a propaganda machine for conservatives or those in power, many critics of the media attacked it as spreading liberal ideology or, more commonly, part of the breaking away from traditional American values and meanings.¹⁴ Conservative critics saw the media as more invested in pushing an agenda that aligned with the values and worldview of those who worked in the media industries, namely college educated, liberal, socially progressive people. It was in the 1990s that terms like “politically correct” became commonplace. Instead of defending actual speech deemed hateful or bigoted by others, “political correct” suggested that critics were attempting to enforce some form of dangerous liberal ideological orthodoxy against innocent victims merely using words that meant no harm. Pundits and politicians like Rush Limbaugh, Ann Coulter, Newt Gingrich, Jerry Fawell and Pat Robertson described the media as a malevolent force in the United States not just because of it brainwashed people, but because it normalized a truly radical, leftist agenda.¹⁵

One example of how charges of liberal bias played out can be found by looking at an 1996 op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal* written by then CBS reporter Bernard Goldberg about the liberal media bias on his own network.¹⁶ Claiming that charges of liberal bias are self-evidently true and probably responsible for the lack of faith viewers have in reporting, Goldberg described a recent story on the network on Steve Forbes’s flat tax proposal. Focusing on the reporter’s use

of loaded words like “scheme” and “elixir”, evaluating expert sources’ own biases, and deploying comparison by saying Hillary Clinton’s health care plan would never be described as “wacky” like Forbes’s tax plan, Goldberg demonstrated what he saw as the overwhelming bias of the story. Like other examinations of liberal bias, including his later best-selling book on the subject *Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distort the News*, Goldberg found the politics of the text solely through his in-depth reading of it and knowledge of the (liberal) messages encoded within it.

These kinds of readings of liberal bias in texts were almost always based on an *a priori* belief that the media is in fact liberal, making it incompatible with the multi-variant reading and methodology of Hall and British cultural studies. However, while not a direct example of the deep logics or the search for possible meaning in the text advocated by Hall, the general pose of critique and hidden agendas is one conservatives increasingly embraced. The belief that media was too liberal has been fairly wide spread for decades.¹⁷ As Gallup polls have suggested “regardless of whether the media do favor a liberal point of view, the plurality of Americans perceive it does” and have done so for many years.¹⁸ The suggestion that audiences read the media’s messages as predominantly liberal and the need to see media texts through an conservative lens was one pushed by conservative media critiques with some obvious success.

Beyond reading though, these conservative groups looked to fight against the “mainstream media” by creating their own oppositional media forms. Instead of shows like *Murphy Brown* and *The Simpsons* (both of which were famously attacked by the first Bush administration), shows like *Seventh Heaven* about a Pastor and his family were promoted because of their adherence to traditional values. Christian rock and other praise music and the *Left Behind* series were other conservative entertainments that found niche audiences that made

them profitable. However, nowhere was a more overtly conservative approach successful than in talk radio. In the 1990s, conservative talk radio not only was credited as influencing national elections, it was also incredibly financially lucrative. Rush Limbaugh had real political power, especially following the 1994 Republican take over of Congress and polling that indicated “that people who listened to 10 hours or more a week of talk radio voted Republican by a 3-to-1 margin.”¹⁹ Beyond politics though, his power within the radio industry was enormous. Limbaugh in the 1990s was broadcast on over 600 stations and was one of the highest paid media personalities in the US, including several *New York Times* best selling books and a nationally syndicated, though short-lived, television show.²⁰

Despite Limbaugh’s reach and political strength, the existence of self-identified conservative outlets even in the mid 1990s was nearly non-existent, in part due to the fact there were no media outlets that really self-identified as liberal or progressive. The idea that a media outlet, particularly a news outlet, would state their political views directly to its audience was anathema to the professional mores of journalism. Following postwar newspapers and, most critically, the ur-text of Edward R. Murrow, reporters presented themselves and their work as incisive and uncomfortable for those in power, but never directly calling for a particular political agenda of a particular party.²¹ As a much criticized source of liberal bias in the media and the undisputed leader in cable television news, CNN created an opening for another kind of network, that would be “more” balanced by leaning towards conservative viewpoints. It was in this kind of environment that a challenge to CNN was conceived.

FOX NEWS

Fox News was launched in 1996 and since that time has been identified with two major figures: Rupert Murdoch and Roger Ailes. Murdoch's decision to have Ailes as President of a new cable news network was very telling considering Ailes background as a Republican media consultant. Ailes started his professional career in his early 20s as a producer for *The Mike Douglas Show*. In an illustrative story told in many different places, Ailes met Richard Nixon in 1968 while he prepped for an appearance on the show. Nixon was lamenting he was defeated in the 1960 election by Kennedy because of the candidates' televised 1960 debate and that Kennedy had to resort to a "gimmick." Ailes immediately shot back, saying, "television is not a gimmick, and if you think it is, you'll lose again."²² Nixon hired Ailes as a campaign media advisor and the young Ailes developed one of the lynch pin of Nixon's television strategy in 1968, a series of town hall meetings (dubbed "Man in the Arena") with Nixon in the middle of a circular stage fielding questions from the audience.²³ Ailes was also a source for the famous political campaign book *The Selling of the President* by Joe McGinnes that showed how Nixon was packaged and marketed as a consumer product for voters to buy, with Ailes heavily focused on how Nixon looked on television. Ailes went on to advise President Nixon and was remained a figure in Republican politics for decades, including playing a major role in George H. W. Bush's 1988 campaign and being intimately involved with the infamous Willie Horton ad.

When he was selected to create Fox News by Murdoch, Ailes distanced himself from his long history as a political operative and focused on his more recent career as a journalist. Fox News positioned itself as a fresh perspective on the news with the slogans of "no spin" and "fair and balanced." Operationally this meant being free of liberal bias. There has been quite a lot written about Ailes and Fox News' political posturing, their relationships to Republican politicians and advisors, scandals involving top talent and other topics that have painted the

network as biased and overly conservative.²⁴ Separate from proving the political persuasion of Fox News, my purpose in this study is to focus on how Fox News was a new arrival in the 24-hour cable television news industry which sought to challenge CNN by providing audiences with an alternative view of the news and, by extension and indirectly, the network's representation of history.

Unlike MSNBC, another cable news network that launched around the same time, Fox News's challenge to CNN did have a political bent. In an interview following the 1988 election, Ailes explained his view that "there are three things that the media are interested in: pictures, mistakes, and attacks. That's the one sure way of getting coverage. You try to avoid as many mistakes as you can. You try to give them as many pictures as you can. And if you need coverage, you attack, and you will get coverage."²⁵ By extension, Ailes's organization of Fox News to challenge CNN's dominance was aggressive in terms of attacking the apolitical tone of cable television news. For example, one of Ailes's first decisions was to hire Bill O'Reilly in October 1996 for an evening news/talk program called *The O'Reilly Factor*. Unlike its main competition in the time slot, CNN's *The Larry King Show*, Bill O'Reilly had highly political positions and often challenged reporters and guests on their assumptions in an aggressive way. O'Reilly's style is so unique that he is described by some as "the most vulgar and insufferable bores in the history of television" and that he routinely "hectors, lectures, and berates his guests if they are slightly left of center or represent positions he opposes."²⁶ The show was one of the network's first and to this day most recognizable programs.

One of the more succinct accounting of Fox News's rise comes from Steven Barnett in his *The Rise and Fall of Television Journalism*. Barnett argues that Fox News's success was based on 1) "attention-grabbing visual presentation," 2) a tabloid style that focused on crime and

scandal over economics and politics, 3) the domination of evening opinion and interview shows like O'Reilly, and, most importantly, 4) "cleav[ing] to a coherent approach to American politics – driven from the top by Murdoch and Ailes – which was patriotic, overtly Conservative and openly supportive of the Republican Party."²⁷ Fox News's reliance on an overt political viewpoint and highlighting entertainment and flashy visuals over "substance" are subjects of criticism the channel. However, I want to focus on is how this type of news was specifically very different from CNN's in its presentation of time and the past.

As a 24-hour channel, Fox News, like CNN, was dealing in the now. However, starting from a point of trying to achieve "fair and balanced" reporting with "no spin," Fox News was basing their reporting in contrast to the supposed unfair and unbalanced reporting of the mainstream media. In juxtaposition with CNN, which had worked for years in context of a larger historic narrative, Fox News put their reporting in context of *other* contemporary reporting. Their strategy was to serve a particular "underserved" cable television news audience, which explains programming borrowed from popular conservative talk radio, heavy on opinions and attack. In this context, the past for Fox News was not something that had to be told but was more something that is already believed. Like the assumption of liberal bias, the particular history of "patriotism" that held on to a all encompassing political view was self-evident and did not have to be created as much simply known. The details of how the founding and running of the country as good or bad only had to be explained in argument with another political view, not presented as an objective truth that organizes the other objective truth of the news networks as CNN had represented itself from its beginning.

Fox News definitely faced entrenched opposition from forces already in power, which directly fed into the network's self-created identity as an outsider and critique of more traditional

news sources. When the channel launched in 1996, it was not available in New York City or Los Angeles. Interestingly, Fox News was buoyed by an anti-trust consent decree from Time Warner following its merger with Turner Broadcasting System which required Time Warner cable systems to offer another news channel besides CNN. Time Warner however choose MSNBC, leading to an acrimonious struggle in New York City, the headquarters for Fox News, where then Mayor Rudy Giuliani's administration pressured Time Warner to carry Fox News.²⁸ Giuliani even went as far to carry the Fox News channel for a time on one of the public channels allotted to the city in their contract with Time Warner. While Fox News was an outside force, as this story indicates it also very much on the inside in terms of its overall ideology with the backing and support from traditional political power structures, making it a voice to be reckoned with.

The combative tone of Fox News was very much in line with the larger Culture War of the time. I want to draw attention to the more basic point that, while embedded in traditional power structures, Fox News was aggressive and very different from the traditional mores of professional journalism. CNN was largely unprepared for the change in how cable television news would operate in the late part of the 1990s. For the rest of the chapter, I want to talk about the changes at CNN (particularly with Ted Turner's management of the network) and focus extensively on the *Cold War* series and how history became contested ground within the previously established formal framework of cable television news.

TED TURNER AND CNN

By the mid-nineties, CNN was an official part of the cable landscape, a major source of national and international news and a long way from its early days in the basement of a recently

purchased country club. For professionals, especially those involved in politics and non-finance business, CNN was a ubiquitous presence, always on in Washington DC offices, hotel rooms and waiting areas around the US and, increasingly, the world. Starting with the network's coverage of the Gulf War, the network was the go-to source for breaking and live coverage, including events like the Clarence Thomas hearings, the OJ Simpson murder trial and political coverage. Fox News sought to compete with CNN in part because of the latter's total domination of the market, which suggested a product with slight differentiation could draw an audience.

Ted Turner and his Turner Broadcasting System (TBS) were also at the apogee of his power and popularity. With the Telecommunication Act of 1996 deregulating the cable and telecommunication industries, allowing for new levels of cross ownership and consolidation, there was a massive rush of proposed mergers, takeovers and even eventual completed deals.²⁹ Eventually CNN was just one of the properties in the Turner – Time Warner merger of 1996. The resulting conglomerate was the largest telecommunication corporation on the planet with Ted Turner in a crucial management role as Vice Chairman in the conglomerate.³⁰ With the success of TBS and CNN, Turner was widely seen as not just a media mogul but a visionary businessman who was an embodiment of America's capitalist ethic. Turner was wealthy because of his ability to take risks on innovation and willingness to invest in change. His energy and drive made him a success in other fields of outside television, including sports (with his Atlanta Braves, a perennial World Series loser) and philanthropy (with his gift of one billion dollars to the United Nations).³¹ Turner was also the largest private landowner in the United States till as recently as 2011 (when John C. Malone passed him). An avowed environmentalist, Turner also invented the campy and heavily didactic 1990s children animated series *Captain American and*

the Planetears. On top of it all, he was married to controversial liberal activist, exercise guru and award winning actress Jane Fonda, placing Turner in a rarified air of global celebrity.

It was his gift to the UN, his marriage to Fonda and his long standing commitment to environmental causes and fighting climate change though that gave Turner's success and power a partisan political flavor. The United Nations was an organization that was the focal point of countless rightwing critiques of a rising internationalist cabal threatening US sovereignty through the 1980s and 1990s. Many of the causes Turner showed interest went beyond the boundaries of the US. While not exactly a typical liberal, Turner's idiosyncratic temperament as the "Mouth of the South," consistent rejection of tradition and embracing of causes that looked beyond national borders made him more of an outsider than an establishmentarian despite his great wealth. His long running feud with Rupert Murdoch and the fact Murdoch was launching a renegade, more right leaning news network to CNN, a television form essentially invented by Ted Turner, also contributed to the perception of Turner as more left than right. The significance of the perception of Turner's politics is important because it was part of the larger perception of the politics of CNN and, specifically, the *Cold War* series he conceived.

It is also important to consider Turner and CNN's position at the time of the *Cold War* series. Turner had sold his company for an unprecedented amount of money that created one of the world's largest conglomerates with him in a prominent leadership position. CNN, based out of its large Atlanta headquarters, was a brand name known around the world with outposts and reporters stationed in just as many places. Though Turner had been fighting the inclusion of MSNBC and Fox News on cable providers' offerings, on the whole CNN did not look to be particularly worried about the threat posed by competitors. Turner and the network's vision was beyond even the daily news but to a larger, more elusive judgment of history. We can see the

attempt to push to the limits of the 24-hour cable news form with a program like the CNN's *Cold War*. In the following sections I will discuss the *Cold War* series on CNN and how it was positioned within the network, but first I want to give some background by describing its forefather, *The World At War*.

THE WORLD AT WAR

The concept for a series on the Cold War originated with Ted Turner, supposedly as he was in St. Petersburg during his 1994 Goodwill Games. Thinking of the producer of the popular and influential documentary series on World War Two, Turner is said to have told his associate, "And I want it to be headed up by that guy who made *The World at War*. Go get me Jeremy Irons!" meaning, instead, Sir Jeremy Isaacs.³² *The World at War* series was a landmark historical retelling of the World War Two, grand in scope but also intimate in how it relates the personal horrors of war. The cold open opening sequence of the first episode is chilling and sets the tone for the whole series. With aerial photography of a the ruins of a French town Oradour-sur-Glane, series narrator Lawrence Olivier recounts how in 1944 all the residents of the town were gathered in the central square. The men were sent to a barn where the women and children were sent to a church, "this church" he says as we see an image of the town's destroyed church. In a calm tone Olivier says how the women and children heard the gunshots that murdered the men and how they too were soon killed. As we see more aerial footage of the town that now stands as a monument to the terrors of the war, Olivier says this was just one of the atrocities suffered by people in Oradour-sur-Glane, just like that in Germany, Poland, England, Guam, Burma, before ending with the phrase a "world at war" and the sudden cut to the title card for the series engulfed in flames.



Figure 10 Still of title at opening of *The World At War*³³

Made in the 1973, just thirty years following the end of the war, the highly dramatic and cinematic style of the series is widely regarded as a landmark program in British television history.³⁴ With rarely before seen archival footage, including some color material, the series also included interviews with “everyday” people to highlight the personal experience of the conflict amongst detailed military history of specific battles. The 26 episodes in the series were all conceived as individual essays on one aspect of the war. The major theme throughout the entire series, and recalled again in its closing moments that returned again to the village of Oradour-sur-Glane, was the imperative to remember what had happen. The last word of the series spoken by Oliver over the images of the destroyed French village is simply “Remember”, which is spoken as both an incantation and imperative. Yet as Jeremey Issacs outlines in a “Making Of” Program about the series, it was a particular kind of remembering work they saw for the series. It would not be the memory of their “parents’ war” which had the nostalgic tint of happiness and positivity (as Britain was spared the horrors of mainland Europe and occupation). It would be a

history for the contemporary generation and one that touched on the everyday person's experience.

In the "Making of *The World At War*" program, Issacs describes how his team of producers and researchers saw their work in telling the history of the war.³⁵ Emphasizing a style where there would be no reenactments and no direct addresses to the camera by an authorial presences (which he wryly remarks is as he is doing at that moment), Issacs describes the World At War series as "television narrative." By this term he was referring to an emphasis on actual visuals from what was being describing and eyewitness testimony, essentially describing the tropes of cinematic documentary and not a typical news broadcast one would find on television. Still, in using the term "television narrative," Issacs was emphasizing a style of presenting history for television where there would be no judgment or specific didactic lesson. In order to highlight this, he uses testimony from various Germans during the war, some famous like Albert Speer, but also typical housewives, recalling moments when they realized the true horrors of what was being done during the war. I would suggest too that what Issacs is calling "television narrative" is also the style of the massive dramatic miniseries that were popular in the late 1980s like *Winds of War* and *War and Remembrance*. These programs also presented history as a story, but with the key difference being they never claimed to be historic documents like *The World at War*.

In spite of the rhetoric of not judging but simply wishing to bear witness to what had happened, Issacs ends the "Making Of" program with a series of clear, unambiguous historical claims. In the same series of clips ending the program including Speer and others, we move to the story of German woman recalling a late night train ride with a soldier who took part in great atrocities and now wished to die in battle. Issacs turns from watching the footage on a television

screen to his lower right and re-describes the testimony of the woman as he looks directly into the camera as it slowly zoomed in on him building to his last sentence:

Her head on his shoulder, his coat cover his knees. You wouldn't find details like that in history books but it is stories like that make popular television history possible. The Second World War cost more than fifty million lives, it shaped the world we live in. The United States of America came out of isolation becoming the greatest power on the world stage. Soviet Russia emerged from another isolation to impose her grip on half of Europe. Germany was divided. There has been peace in Europe for more than forty years. The story of the second World War was a story with dark beginnings and a happy end. Mussolini's fascism, Japanese militarism, Hitler's Nazism were smashed. The right side won.³⁶

The right side did win, and it is not unusual to see a British program make such a claim in regards to World War Two. The scope of the comment though, from the memory of a single German woman who poetically recalled the night spent talking with a soldier to a definitive telling of not only the geopolitical but moral results of a conflict that “shaped the world we live in,” is a thumbnail of the entire series and, more importantly of how it engaged history on television. Eyewitness testimony and visuals matter over didactic narration, however, despite efforts to not directly tell the audience what to think, there is still a clear implication and argument to the historical narrative presented. For World War Two it is easy in a way to say the right side won, and perhaps it is also possible to say the same thing about the Cold War. However, the possibility for ambiguity in our time is itself a highly political position. The view of how to interpret and present history on television is significant because by the time Issacs produced the *Cold War*, views that used to be in the exclusive realm of aesthetics and academic historians became the material of populist political debate.

CNN'S COLD WAR

Eager to produce a project of similar scale about another global conflict, Turner created the concept for CNN's *Cold War*. In short order, and on a budget of some \$15 million, which was considered a large sum for original production for a news network, Isaacs, series producer Martin Smith, and a team of writers, archivists, interviewers, and historical advisors began compiling footage by going through Western and recently opened Soviet and KGB film archives, conducting interviews with major historical figures like George H. W. Bush, Gorbachev, Castro, former bureaucrats at every level of both sides, and everyday men and woman who were affected in some way by global events. Ted Turner had minimal input into the actual content of the series, other than two major guiding principles: the series was to be international in perspective, and not be overly triumphant about the Western victory.

The resulting 24-part series originally ran in one-hour blocks (including commercials) every Saturday night at 9pm on CNN from September 1998 – April 1999. Spanning the 50-plus years of the conflict, episodes, while moving in roughly chronological order, focused on various broad topics and specific events (such as the fall of the Berlin Wall, nuclear weapons, Vietnam, and espionage). Where as Laurence Olivier narrated *World at War*, each episode of *The Cold War* was narrated by Kenneth Branagh. The distinctive and emotive yet restrained performances of both men not only echo each other, but also bring to mind the work of Edward R. Murrow discussed throughout this study. All three speak from authority and as stand ins for the voice of history. Like Murrow's television reports, *The Cold War* had a great deal of reporting. Consisting of a combination of original interviews and archival footage, each episode had a kind of narrative arc, complete with dramatic openings and conclusions and revelatory moments. The series has an obvious favor towards what can be told and/or seen; there are no historians

explaining broader points, Branagh's narration is limited, and preference is given to the testimonies of actual participants. It is a project like *World at War*, only more thoroughly influenced by the work of oral historians and others who emphasized a "bottom-up" reading of historical events. Despite this view, each episode ended with a single title card stating "Series Concept - Ted Turner" to remind viewers that despite the "bottom-up" reading of history, this series has one person to thank for its existence.

What is also of great interest are the periphery programs and products associated with the *Cold War* series. During its original run, every episode was followed by a program called "Cold War: Postscript" which usually included two "reports" about the present day effect of the events discussed in that night's episode, followed by a discussion with experts at the Newseum in Alexandria, Virginia. The program, usually hosted by a CNN correspondent, typically followed the same standardized format. The "reports," also given by less senior CNN correspondents in the field, often vary greatly in tone and purpose. One following an episode that touched on the beginnings of the UN Security council revisited its first meeting place in Hunters College and the workings of the UN more generally, while another about Spies focused on Hollywood's search for a new villain to replace Russians.

At the end of the "Postscript" show, viewers would be taken to the CNNinteractive newsroom, where they would be told to visit the Cold War website for transcripts of complete interviews, interesting images, and a chat with people who had experiences similar to those discussed on tonight's episode. Lesson plans for instructors were also available.³⁷ Commercials also offered a chance to buy your own copies of tonight's episode, as well as the whole run of this "groundbreaking, landmark" series at a lower introductory price by calling a toll-free number. There was also a companion book to the series entitled *The Cold War*, written by Sir

Jeremy Isaacs and Taylor Downing, which was advertised at the end of each episode.³⁸ These commercials and the series as a whole are an interesting example of conglomeration (especially considering Time Life was part of the Time Warner corporation). Going even further I think the inclusion of lesson plans and online sites where viewers can continue the conversation suggests an earlier 1997 example of transmedia storytelling than its supposed dominance in the convergence culture of the 2000s. However, for our purposes I want to understand how these examples of HNPs brought history into the 24-hour cable television news genre at the end of the 1990s.

Red Spring and Postscript

The *Cold War: Postscript* episodes show the work of integrating the series and the history into the story world into the everyday reporting of the network. The Postscript episodes covered the same material as the Cold War episode, however with a style more like CNN daily news reporting than documentary filmmaking. In order to more explicitly demonstrate this I will focus on one CNN *Postscript* episode following the “Red Spring” *Cold War* episode that aired on January 17, 1999 at 9 pm.³⁹ The “Red Spring” episode was mainly about growing ferment living under an increasingly oppressive Soviet regime, the end of Khrushchev’s reign and the opening of the Czechoslovakia government that lead to the eventual USSR invasion. Many episodes of the Cold War end rather abruptly, with this one being no different concluding with narrator Kenneth Branagh’s statement that “the dream of democracy within the Soviet system was crushed.” After some commercials, here specifically for a VHS copy of the Cold War series, the official Cold War book and a Time Life collection of the best classical rhythm and blues artists of 1959, continuing throughout the 60s, the *Postscript* program began with CNN

correspondent Ralph Begleiter in Prague.⁴⁰ After explaining this episode of Postscript would look at how the invasion of Prague helped drive Soviet satellites to the West, Begleiter explains the roundtable portion of the program will look at why the US did not intervene then and how it will judge possible interventions in the future.

Though Begleiter is in Prague, there is no particularly compelling reason for him to be beyond showing him at some of the historic sites mentioned directly or seen in passing in the documentary episode immediately prior. He introduces one story, entitled “Prague...Sprung” by a reporter who interviews two witnesses to the invasion and what they remember of what happened. Though the story covers the same material of the episode, and even mimics its content by interviewing regular citizens, the overall style is very much like a traditional daily news broadcast. The story has a reporter who mostly speaks through out in omnipotent voice over, even when interviewing others, and the entire five minute package mixes together stock footage, some archival footage, and standard talking head footage in a manner subservient to the audio track. The next story begins with President George H. W. Bush’s visit to Prague commemorating its independence and is broadly about US support for countries and dissents like Vacal Havel and Poland’s Lech Walesa. This second story is also very much like nightly news reporting even though it covers a great deal of ground, jumping from nations and historic periods in its roughly six minute run time.⁴¹ The unique thing about both stories however is the subject matter and its motivation. Both stories are about the past, however, they are not motivated by an anniversary or other driving narrative reason besides the documentary miniseries that preceded it. Yet, it is presented as news in a style on the news network that follows other news stories.



Figure 11 Lech Walesa in still from *Cold War: Postscript* following the "Red Spring" episode⁴²

The roundtable panel takes place in the studio and is moderated by Begleiter (obviously back in the US following his apparently brief journey to Prague to introduce the program) and is mainly focused on the lack of US intervention during the Czechoslovakia invasion in 1968 and how the US will judge future interventions in this post-Cold War era. This discussion is greatly complicated from our current, contemporary perspective in that one of the guests on the panel is Condoleezza Rice, then Provost at Stanford and former member of the National Security Council under George H. W. Bush. The conversation that included two other Soviet experts is fascinating in how it both is able to frame the past and use that frame to explain what the future will be like. After discussing why the US did not intervene more forcefully when the Berlin Wall fell (explaining that the US did not want to be seen as dancing on the wall with everything essentially going their way), Rice is very open that US foreign policy will be much more confusing with the lack of the Soviet Union's existence ordering all decisions. In an interesting

moment, however, that abstract historical argument is made even more complicated and political when the question of Iraq and Saddam Hussein is brought up by Begleiter. Foreshadowing future rhetoric, Rice says Saddam Hussein is a unique case because he is unlike any other leader. Rice expands on her point by saying, “it is the thought of Saddam Hussein, who is really a maniac, in possession of weapons of mass destruction that sobers everyone” and that many would welcome “American toughness” on Hussein.⁴³

I would suggest that Rice’s appearance amongst two more academic and less overtly political experts (neither had served in political positions), demonstrates the edge of what CNN was doing by broadcasting the *Cold War* series overall. It presented the events of the past as neutral guides for understanding the future. However, those interpretations were inevitably political in the way any reading of history is political. Rice was not only defending a particular foreign policy decision under George H. W. Bush, she was defending the decision of a Republican administration at the time out of power before a presidential election. In talking about the decisions of intervention in places like Kosovo and Chechnya, she referred to a nonpartisan history of American foreign policy. Yet, she was also discussing the decisions of a Democratic president with a different set of political values from her own party. The *Postscript* program’s efforts to contextualize specific *Cold War* episodes were problematic in terms of treating History as just representation of past events due to the inevitable way the past is wrapped up in the politics of today.

The politicization of the past also comes through the reporting style of the program versus the cinematic documentary style of the *Cold War* program as a whole. Returning to the specific example of the *Postscript* show following the Red Spring episode, it is very difficult to describe the two news stories as objective in tone. Though the style is that of a news report on

the network that would present a news event from multiple angles without taking a side, the news reports on the *Postscript* show take the point of view that the end of the Soviet empire is a good thing generally and specifically America's support of specific dissidents was noble and just. Separate from the morality of such positions, we should note that because the news report is presenting the past it has less of an attachment to the journalistic ethics of objectivity and non-bias. The ability to make specific conclusions is assisted by the presence of a more authoritative documentary style in the program that preceded it, making the reporting in the *Postscript* show, though very different in style, able to take on that definitive tone.

Though the conclusions of this specific report (that the invasion of Czechoslovakia and crushing of a nascent democratic movement was a crime) are fairly universally agreed upon in the West, it was the way in which definite conclusions from CNN were embedded in the stylistic tropes of the 24-hour news form that gave fuel to outside groups that saw CNN as a predominately liberal political organization. Here the conclusion was something conservatives would agree with it, but the idea of even showing the humanism or possible justifications of the other side were seen as an affront to the righteousness of the US struggle. The HNP became the ground for explicit political argument, with the interpretations of the past offered by the programs discussed not as objective retelling but political indoctrination. The indoctrination conservative critics most objected to was the idea of false equivalences.

CONSERVATIVE CRITIQUE OF CNN'S COLD WAR

Cold War was praised for its comprehensive view and extraordinary footage. The series received a Peabody Award and other recognition and easily recouped Turner's initial investment in viewership, advertising sales, and foreign broadcast on networks like the BBC. But, the series

came under some scathing critique, mostly from the political right. These mostly conservative groups criticized CNN for its liberal bias as a news organization reflecting the views of its leader Ted Turner. The fact his name is listed first for “Series Concept” for the *Cold War* series and the programming around the episodes gave these critics an unforeseen opening for their attacks. The view that the history of the program, made by internationalist Ted Turner, was insufficiently nationalistic is an indication of how strongly the HNP presented very clearly “pro-American” historical narratives. Even before a single episode aired, Arnold Beichman, a research fellow at the Hoover Institution, wrote a piece in the *Washington Times* slamming the project. His prediction was “since its patron is Ted Turner, the billionaire superliberal of liberals, [the film] will follow two themes of mainstream academic historical writing: (1) the overriding anti-American theme that nobody won the Cold War....(2) the Cold War as America fought it was an undemocratic aberration”.⁴⁴

Culture warriors against the series argued that it was an exercise in “moral equivalence.” Sometimes also referred to as “ethical relativism,” the supposed objectivity of so-called liberal institutions like the mainstream press and US colleges and universities was common grounds for criticism by conservatives. To be sure there was critique from the left. *The Nation*, for example, argued the series was *too* clear on the bad guys and good guys. However, it was the attacks of the right that were the strongest, and mostly focused on the inherent “superliberal-ness” of academics and media figures like Ted Turner. In *Commentary*, Gabriel Schoenfield wrote an article entitled “Twenty-four Lies about the Cold War” and *Washington Post* columnist Charles Krauthammer railed against the series, especially Episode Six (“Reds 1948-1953”) which focused on both Stalin’s Gulags and McCarthyism of the 1950s, by saying “a blot is no mirror to an ocean of blood”.⁴⁵ Series executive producer Sir Jeremy Isaacs and series historical advisor

John Lewis Gaddis, widely considered the eminent American scholar of the Cold War, provided equally strong defenses of the charges of “moral equivalence” by arguing no one can possibly watch the series and actually believe the crimes of mass killing and political oppression by the Soviets is the same as the actions of the taken by the West. After pointing out differences in historical interpretation are not signs of incompetence or some political agenda, Gaddis argues the series “cultivate[s] critical minds” in the best tradition of what history should do with its open, non-triumphant, non-polemic style that refuses to lecture its audience from up high and tell them what to think.⁴⁶

The main thrust of the conservative response to CNN’s *Cold War* was that it was not sufficiently literal in its presentation of sides in terms of good versus bad. This is the same kind of argument conservative groups had generally made about the reporting on the network. The critique of style and the objectivity of journalism was well-trodden ground for CNN. What is new in this context is how explicitly this fight has been taken to historiography of a documentary series that is presented as another genre, documentary film, that is meant to be read very differently from contemporary news reporting. The reaction of these critics is one of the first instances of when a HNP is seen more as news programming, and therefore biased and subjected, and less historical and part of the aesthetic tradition of documentary film. In fact, the critics of CNN used the documentary format of the *Cold War* as a way to elevate their criticisms. Instead of disagreeing with their representation of current news, conservative critiques disagreed with the entire worldview of the network. The importance of the HNP comes to the forefront in this struggle. Bring doubt to the veracity of the programming that provides the basis for the whole 24 hour news form, the form itself looks more like a construct, one with a biased, liberal perspective.

The sustained conservative critique of the series is reflected in a book printed by the Hoover Institution and edited by Mr. Beichman, *CNN's Cold War Documentary: Issues and Controversy*, that is a compellation of articles and responses by people on different sides of the “debate.” In a letter that accompanies the book (which promises additional complimentary copies if desired), then Hoover Institute director John Raisian explains the need for the book by writing “when CNN/Turner decided to describe this period, it is not surprising that questions of interpretation should arise.”⁴⁷ Where a historian like Gaddis sees the cultivation of critical thinking and the introduction to the levels of complexity in the past, others see “controversy,” and critics like Krauthammer see “moral equivalency.”

The “moral equivalency” critique boils down to seeing the *Cold War* series as not sufficiently praising the West’s victory over a global threat second only to Nazi Germany and not framing any West excesses or failures as nothing compared to the horrors of the USSR and the eventual victory secured over it. According to this logic, the danger of suggesting any kind of equivalence to the two sides is that it will lead future generations to not understand that “the right side won.” The emphasis on images, personal stories, and the enormous power and influence of CNN and Ted Turner is not only faulty history but could lead to a similar leftist threat in the future if not remembered the “correct” way. The conservative critique in many ways takes serious the power of television to construct narratives of the nation as described in the Introduction. Arnold Beichman in his introduction to his edited collection says as much with the title, “The Cold War Was a Just War.” Beichman takes direct aim at and also echoes Isaacs and his *World at War* series by saying the Cold War was “a conflict in which one side was morally right and the other side morally wrong. Such a view, of course, is widely accepted in thinking about World War II and Adolf Hitler. There is no reason why Josef Stalin, a master genocidist,

should be regarded as morally superior to Hitler.”⁴⁸ Not to put too fine a point on it, considering the US government that prosecuted both wars thought exactly that (aligning with Stalin over Hitler), but the clear view of the critics was that assigning any difference between World War II and the Cold War was to engage in a sort of “red washing” by liberal media forces.

To further this point of CNN’s involvement in this mistelling of history, I wish to quote a bit from Richard Pipes conclusion in his piece in the volume:

The CNN series on the Cold War is an ominous portent of what we can expect in the future: massive media undertakings carried out with financial means beyond the wildest dreams of scholars and their publishers to impress the public, with each generation more responsive to visual and aural than to verbal messages, an oversimplified and potentially biased interpretation of historical events. What scholar can hope to supplement his work with such paraphernalia as a web site, manuals and posters for high schools, an accompanying, richly illustrated value, and a collector’s edition of videocassettes distrusted by Warner Home Video described as commanding the “largest distribution infrastructure in the global video marketplace”?⁴⁹

It is a bit ironic to hear a Harvard professor complain in an original essay in a Hoover Institute publication being sent for free to anyone who wants it that his views cannot compete and will be drowned out. There is also in this passage a plaintive, populist mourning of the little guy against the most elite, monied forces in our country that, despite its source in this particular instance, has deep resonance in American politics. Ultimately, it is strikingly how similar this line of argument is to classic critiques of mainstream media being too liberal: the culture of a privileged elite simply spreading their political beliefs as fact through the all-powerful tools of technology crushing all opposition. Although this is an independently produced documentary series, although Ted Turner’s actual involvement in its content was quite limited, although the series is about events that happened 50 years ago, although the presentation of actions by the USSR and the US are not really presented as equal in degree or scope, and although its focus on evidence is fairly democratic in its highlighting of common people’s experience, its very presence on CNN

places its historicizing in the universe of the network's news reporting, requiring the standard ideological response from enemies towards its reading of the past.

In my view, the critique of the *Cold War* series by conservatives comes down to two main factors. One, the network is drawing conclusions the critics disagree with and two, CNN, and its founder Ted Turner, have too big of a megaphone to make their views seem like real history. The two objections are intricately connected and part of the larger rightwing critique of the mainstream media in general. However, they are different because the former is an ideological conflict and the latter a critique of the media system and specifically one person. The conflation of these topics together into one whole is why *Cold War* was such a target for conservative criticism.⁵⁰ CNN's presentation of history gave conservative critics a platform for saying the network's views are wrong, in deep, moral and ethical ways, without directly engaging with the politics of such pronouncements, especially when the basis for saying the network's viewers are wrong is almost entirely political. Why then did CNN open itself up to such criticism? In the next section I will consider what exactly the *Cold War* did for CNN.

WHY COLD WAR

Beyond the prestige factor of playing a series like the *Cold War*, there were some industrial reasons for CNN to spend as much broadcast time and resources on producing and playing the series. The *Cold War* helped CNN in terms of brand identity and product differentiation. In 1995, the year work began on the *Cold War* series, Time Warner and Turner Broadcasting System announced a merger that would eventually consist of a buy out by Time Warner of TBS and the placement of Turner on the executive staff of Time Warner. There were initial problems with the SEC and FCC about the enormous size of the resulting company, but

after federal investigation, the deal was approved and went through in 1996. Around the same time, Rupert Murdoch's News Corp sued TBS and Time Warner for blocking its then just launched news station Fox News network from Time Warner cable stations (which had decided to pick up MSNBC instead).⁵¹

With CNN's inclusion into the Time Warner umbrella, and rising competition from Fox News and MSNBC, brand identity and differentiation took on more urgency, especially for the network that had been widely considered the dominant player in the genre. Projects like the *Cold War* and its subsidiaries not only provided new revenue streams for the network, they provided it with a prestige and respect not easily acquired by its competitors. CNN is more than news; it will educate you and your family on the history of the last century. Instead of seeing the work of journalism as an inherently politicized and biased practice like Fox News, CNN presented itself as above petty machinations and report the objective truth against the backdrop of an objective and balanced reading of history.

What is critical to note then here is that while the *Cold War* was helpful for CNN to differentiate its product from Fox News, it also represented a break in how the 24-hour news genre used the past. As I described in chapter one, HNPs ordered the breaking news and ongoing coverage of the network into a meaningful whole. The use of the past in special programs to elevate and organize contemporary coverage was still occurring on ESPN and other, non-overtly political networks. By the end of the 1990s, this practice had become so ingrained into the form that how the past was recreated and discussed no longer was just foregrounding everyday historicity in context of its daily reporting. Historicizing was, in many ways, too dominant an activity and was an activity synonymous with CNN's entire outlook. The megaphone of Ted Turner and CNN shows that the scale of performing and re-performing history in the genre could

not be limited to “just” the subgenre of HNPs. Throughout this study I have shown that the “big history” of the HNP is how the genre of cable television news was able to make meaning. However, by the end of the 1990s this practice of bringing together disparate elements like viewers, producers, events and history has become entirely too political to actually succeed bringing people together.

While CNN is presenting an academic and investigative look at the past, other sources like Fox News look to the past as more concept and dogma. As Jeffrey Jones has argued, part of Fox News’s success has been built on performing ideology as news, which has helped it grow its audience and brand.⁵² However, with a series like the *Cold War*, CNN was building on its brand as a news outlet addressing deeper ontological questions of how we understand time itself. The closing moments of the *Cold War* series artfully evoke the sadness of the US, even in victory, by focusing on the enormous human costs of the struggle, showing both a Russian and American mother visiting a place of remembrance for their soldier sons, and a moment of sympathy President George H. W. Bush had when receiving the last call from President Gorbachev on Christmas, 1991. Unlike *The World at War*, the *Cold War* does not end with a call to Remember, but with an image of President George H. W. Bush addressing the nation from the Oval Office saying that the Cold War is over. The last image of the series can be read as a newscast, an old one marking an important event, but one you might have seen on that network, just like any other future historic moment you might see again if you continue watching the news on CNN

The political and organized reaction to the *Cold War* series was emblematic of a larger cultural struggle over the meaning of decades of geopolitical maneuvers and what lessons the West’s victory gives the contemporary moment. In the next chapter I will discuss one such interpretation of the end of the Cold War, Francis Fukuyama’s *The End of History*, and how a

common response was to see the West's victory as a definitive answer to the questions of politics and government for all of time. For the purpose of this study however, I again want to highlight the main distribution outlet for the *Cold War* series: a 24-hour cable television news network. The view of the series could be seen as somewhat ambivalent in terms of who deserved to win or lose, with a less definitive take than the similar *World at War* series, however it still was extremely didactic in its message to viewers, especially considering the extra packaging around each program on CNN and online. Regardless, the curiosity and lack of totalizing conclusions in regards to the struggle to the USSR marked CNN as a liberal *contemporary* news network (or at the very least an easy target for conservative commentators as such). History as a genre no longer could be controlled as a programming tactic to provide meaning and order to constant, nonstop news. It now was another example of the overall worldview of the network itself. On one hand it presented CNN as a serious, unbiased source of information. On the other, it suggested the network was a mouthpiece for a view of the US that did not see it as an unadulterated source of good in the world. History could not be controlled as it had been in the early 1990s and was again inscrutable and in flux. By the end of the 1990s, the past could not be deployed in a no cost way to order the rest of the programming on the network. History became the excess of the cable television news genre that could not be easily harnessed by its text.

CONCLUSION

As I have demonstrated through my consideration of the *Cold War* series, the HNP subgenre no longer was able to produce a shared history but one that seemed politicized and biased in a way similar to the daily reporting on the network. Of course CNN was using the

programs as similar HNPs had been used on the network. They also were using it as a way to project a presence in cyberspace with all the online supplemental materials discussed above. The development of the online news space leads this study to the final chapter and the role of history in the 24-hour news form during the rise of the Internet as a source of information in the late 1990s. The “newness” of new media was often celebrated as fulfilling the McLuhan promise of the “global village.”⁵³ However I discussed in the Introduction, such a view was reductive and often papered over attending feelings of fear and worry.

We can see an example of this unique mixture of hope and terror in a commercial played on CNN during many of the *Cold War* episodes during its original run.⁵⁴ In the ad a baby, alone, is shot with various high tech communication devices, including a toy computer screen that says “e-mail,” a fax machine, and a cell phone. The voice over addresses the baby directly saying the baby, and by extension the audience, has been born in the information age. Despite all the technology available though, the voice over ensures they will still need to rely on the printed word, specifically *USA Today*. The final lines from the voiceover says USA Today might not have the most words, but they have the right words, while we see text saying the paper is available in hotels and newsstands.

I find this ad interesting for two reasons. First, the direct awareness that while new information technologies are quickly outpacing older forms, older forms are still better in the sense of curation (in how they collect, organize and ultimately display information). The ad is arguing that although one might be getting information more directly (i.e. “all the words”) via new media, *USA Today*, and print more generally, is still better because it can sift and organize that information into something manageable. The second reason I find the ad interesting is that the subject is a baby. The narrative of the commercial is that the new generation will be native

users of new information technology, but the ad betrays the anxiety for both the news industry and the current day adult news consumers that this new generation will be unfamiliar with the tropes and styles of news delivery common for the time. As a result, this new generation and the information tools they use must be infantilized in some way.

I look at this ad as an entry point to my final chapter, which examines how the 24-hour cable television news genre represented and processed the existential threat of new media technologies to its industrial and ideological basis. Though 24-hour cable television news was a new technology compared to print and broadcast news, the form had more affinity and often modeled itself after those older mediums. The Internet too was modeled on older mediums, but it represented a radical new way to receive information compared to cable television news. As a result, cable television news attempted to historicize new media as a subservient form but was, as we will see, unable to do so.

CHAPTER FOUR – “SERIOUS NEWS DOESN’T HAVE TO BE BORING”: NEW MEDIA, THE “END OF HISTORY” AND SUMMER 2001 CABLE TELEVISION NEWS

INTRODUCTION

As the decade came to an end, the entire media landscape was in a very different place in terms of technology and industrial organization than it was in 1991. With the 1996 Telecommunication Act, media mergers and consolidation had reached unprecedented levels. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Turner – Time Warner merger was just the first in a series of major changes in ownership allowed by deregulation. Also, new technologies like the World Wide Web, cell phones, satellite radio and other digital media technologies were changing the way people were able to access information. Along with new expectations by audiences for content more aligned with their specific desires and needs, the end of the Nineties was the beginning of an epochal change in media we are still trying to understand as a society to this day.

These changes were strongly reflected in cable television news. Specifically, how the 24-hour news genre changed in its representation of history was emblematic of the larger social excitement and anxiety around the fundamental shift brought by new media. The end of the 1990s, specifically stretching to right before the September 11th attacks, represents the end of one kind of relationship to history embedded in the 24-hour cable news genre and expressed through the HNPs I have discussed throughout. In Chapter One I showed the rise of the HNP to bring sense and logic to the 24-hour news form by foregrounding the everyday historicity of broadcasting. In Chapter Two, I showed how the practice of creating history within the flow of live events stretched to “soft” news like sports on ESPN. In Chapter Three I showed how the use of history presented by cable television news began to shift towards the ends of the 1990s and

came to be politicized and grounds for struggle in the larger Culture Wars. In this final chapter, I will show how history became less a programming staple on the 24-hour news network but more a diffuse concept that existed in the digital ether.

The metaphor I will use to how history was represented in the 24-hour news form by the end of the 1990s is “the cloud.” Instead of presenting history as straightforward, objective within the frame of the news channel in the HNP, history was more and more something that was accessed from elsewhere. The operating historiographic metaphor for the HNP to this point has been that of the library or archive within the corporate office: a physical space holding critical narratives of the past that can be accessed through a use of time to engage with it. The difference with the cloud is that history is now elsewhere, out of the building. It can be accessed with more temporal ease, however it does not have the same physicalness and is mostly understood through a deeper level of abstraction (as demonstrated in the sample corporate images of cloud computing, which is what I am drawing this metaphor from). Still, history in the cloud is similar to that of the in-house library as it was assumed to be commonly known and shared, just no longer in the official text of the network. History could be found on other non-news cable channels in the form of popular documentary programs or, increasingly, the Internet. Without history, or more specifically historicizing, giving meaning to the 24-hour news form, cable news came to more heavily rely on its own practices, professionalism and industrial track records to prove its reporting and content as reliable. Yet, in a contradictory fashion, cable television news also presented new media technology as inherently untrustworthy because it had no similar history to reference. Instead of the network and its programming, viewers could now create their own historiographic experiences, but the network presented that ability as fundamentally flawed.



Figure 12 Example Illustrations of Cloud Computing¹

In this chapter I will consider how cable television news no longer represented history within the genre by outsourcing it to the cloud and how, simultaneously, it historicized the new media technology threatening its very existence. Personally, I became aware of the power of the Internet when the various sides of the Northern Ireland conflict agreed to the Good Friday peace accord in 1998. The entire lengthy document was posted online by news organizations giving readers the ability to read it themselves and in its entirety hours after the parties' agreement. The difference between reading the actual document versus a summation of the agreement was a revelation. With an event of this historic magnitude for millions of people intimately involved, it was hard to image how reading a 500-1000 word story or watching a 3-minute television report on it would ever compare to reading the actual power sharing accord. How could television news compete?

The only way it could was through the continuing framing of cable television as the dominant medium of news and information through its programming's ability to communicate to viewers. At this late era, new technology would not be radically different from cable television news but would instead follow and be part of its processes. We saw a hint of that in the CNN postscript programs for the Cold War where the online components clearly "continued the

conversation” of the television text. Other new media technologies would simply extend the supremacy of cable television news over the mass audience.

However, at the same time there was real fear on cable news of the technology and how it would render print, and eventually television, redundant. The fear and anxiety around new media often centered around the issues of professionalism, technology and elite responsibility. These issues were at the heart of the historic narrative cable television told about itself, and as such, the fear of new media was incorporated into the larger history of cable television news. With the Internet acting as the cloud for which television news would place its larger historical understandings, 24-hour cable television news on the eve of the September 11th attacks was dominant and, simultaneously, ineffective and somewhat mindless. Relying entirely on professionalism, technology and elite responsibility instead of creating and maintaining a shared sense of the past, cable television news was without any internal or external purpose besides gaining viewers. The dominance of tabloid-like formats and story topics in the summer of 2001 demonstrate how detached from larger history cable television had become.

In this last chapter I will illustrate the complex moment for cable television news programming at the end of the 1990s, how it presented and attempted to tame the threat of new media, how the previous HNPs had given away to a cloud history that no longer joined viewers, producers, current events and time into a whole, and how finally that led to the domination of tabloid, stunt like programming on news networks. I argue that the way history was presented by the 24-hour cable news genre, as a narrative performance that underlined togetherness and oneness, was simply no longer sustainable in the same way it was at the beginning of the decade. In order to make this argument, I will be looking at a wide array of texts and events that shaped the very end of the 1990s, starting with popular metahistorical works that sought to explain all of

human history like *The End Of History* and *The Clash of Civilizations* and served as models for historicization by cable television news in the post Cold War moment. Next I will show how C-SPAN can be read, still in the heavily programmed world of cable television news, as a version of “Internet television” with its presentation of direct access to information with little editorial comment. I will then discuss the Stephen Glass plagiarism scandal and how it represented the fear of new media and the ability for the traditions of journalism to combat the weakening of the industry. Next I will show how professional journalism in cable television turned to predictable self-evidently historic programming like the Clinton impeachment, the Y2K crisis and the 2000 election in an effort to position television as a more historically significant and trustworthy source of news than the Internet. Finally, I will consider the rise of three modes of news programming in the summer of 2001 and read it as a type of prelude to coverage of the September 11th attacks. Before getting into all of those examples and cases, I want to return to the model for HNPs and explain how the Internet and the end of the 1990s changed it.

HISTORICIZING NEWS PROGRAMS IN THE CLOUD

The model (see Figure 1) I have been using throughout this study has been of programs on 24-hour cable news that took disparate elements into one, combining the four elements of viewers, producers, current events, and time into a “knowable” whole. However, by the end of the 1990s, the ability for the 24-hour cable television news form to present the past as unified became impossible. The first reason for this is the political implications I discussed in the previous chapter through a consideration of CNN’s *Cold War*. The second reason is the rise of the Internet and other new media technologies. The change new media brought was not only because they made history and information more easily available, because in a way books and

access to a library would have a similar ability. It was the way in which information was individualized and driven by the desires of users. Instead of coming from centralized programmatic forces that ordered the rest of what one would see on a cable news network, the users are much more able to control and drive their historiographic experience.²

Much has been written about how new media technology has allowed for niches to be turned profitable and the “long tail” where previously out of print material can find new audiences.³ It is undeniable that digital media has major ramifications for the economic underpinnings of the media industries and attending industrial/public relationships. More recently, writers like Jennifer Holt have drawn attention to how the digital media infrastructure delivering “connected viewing activities” to consumers is incredibly defuse and much less stable in terms of regulations and policy. Referring to the rules and policies that govern cloud storage and its underlying electronic structures as “cloud policy,” Holt argues that the struggle over control and defining access and storage through broadband to the “cloud” will have a profound impact on connecting viewing.⁴

Though describing a more contemporary viewpoint with the fight over “cloud policy” an economic struggle for the future of the Internet, I think the “cloud” is a helpful concept for understanding the changes I am suggesting happened in cable television news and its use of history at the end of the 1990s. The “connected viewing activities” Holt is referring to with the cloud policy is the practice of watching a film or listening to music on your computer, mobile phone, home television or other device such as with iTunes or Google Play. As a user, you do not own a physical copy of the content, but a right to view and access the content where ever you wish. I suggest that the same concept helps us understand what happened to history on cable television news in that the representation of history by the genre was no longer work that was

done by the cable network. History, and by extension historicity, was no longer an object that was made physical by the 24 hour cable news network in a HNP such as the *Cold War* or *SportsCentury*. It was something the user herself could access by going away from the cable news genre, and could construct according to their own desires.

So along with economic changes, digital media also led to a new understanding of how we engage with history, especially a history produced by others. Instead of being part of the everyday broadcast, history during the rise of the Internet became something elsewhere, up in the cloud. History, as narrative, as knowledge, exists out in the cloud: accessible but not necessarily part of the same material being viewed. Whereas the HNP was able to join viewers, producers, current events, and time into a whole, with the Internet these categories became unconnected. Each is accessible in the cloud of cyberspace, but they were no longer glued together by a program on a cable network tied to the contemporary broadcast of news and information. The model I have been using of the HNP processing these parts into a whole was no longer tenable. Instead of a whole constituted through a process, these concepts began to break apart and exist separately in their own categories as listed below. The HNPs that did the work to combine those four elements in to wholes were no longer able to because of the deep divisions *within* those elements.

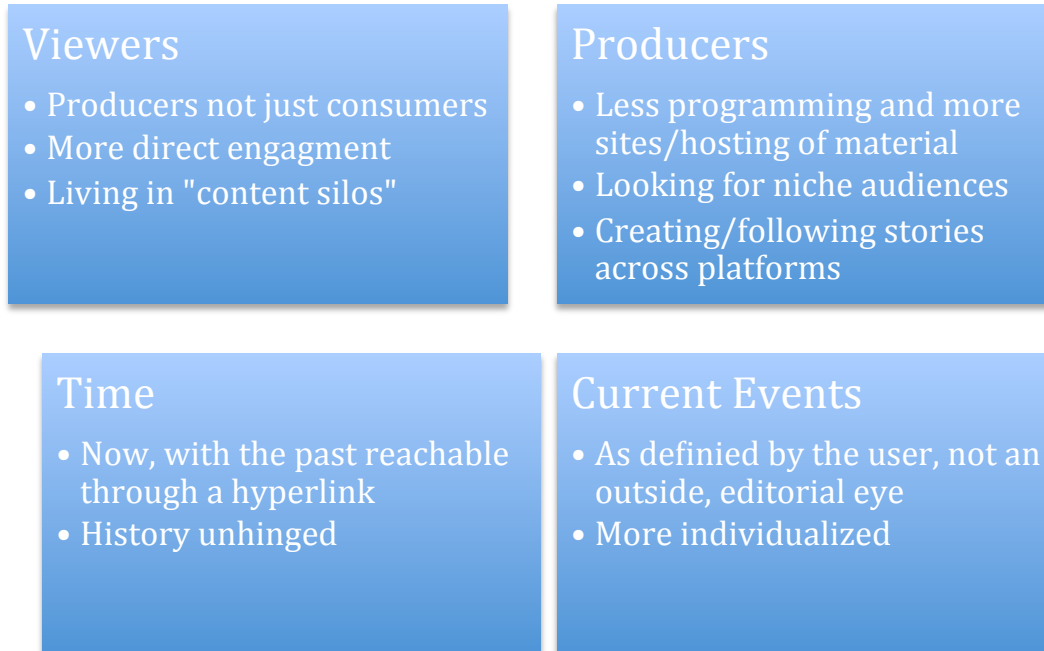


Figure 13 Lack of Cohesiveness in Historicizing News Programs at the End of the 1990s

As I argue in Chapter Three, the breaking apart of a singular metahistory tying together all the reporting on the network was due in part to the politicization of history. However, it is also due, contradictorily, to the faith in professional ethics and practices of journalism. The belief in journalism being able to make television news meaningful was due to the history of the form discussed throughout that emerged from the Murrow Myth, along with a particular view of history that grew in popularity on cable television news by the end of the 1990s and the post-Cold War era.

THE END OF HISTORY

By the late 1990s, history was seen as a reliable subject of reporting for the cable television news genre. For example, in the lead up to the NATO / US lead bombing of Kosovo in 1999, CNN spent as much time describing the history behind the violence and placing the

operation in the history of American foreign intervention as talking about the military campaign itself. On the eve of the strikes on March 23, 1999, CNN's *Inside Politics* included a report from Senior Political Analyst William Schneider that opened with "there's a rule on US military intervention" that you should drop bombs and not send troops.⁵ This rule, which is never attributed to anything besides the common sense lessons of history that he recounts in the story, is because of domestic politics, not the military necessities of the conflict. Schneider began to recount historical moments where bombing had failed to achieve victory (from Hitler in Britain to Johnson and Nixon in Vietnam) but was interrupted by the live coverage of NATO head Javier Solana announcing NATO would be taking action against Serbian forces in Kosovo. Coverage of this announcement then led to a story entitled "Kosovo Primer" which was accompanied with a map of Europe with Yugoslavia highlighted above an image of an open book. The pre-taped segment included a CNN reporter interviewing a Christian Science Monitor reporter who gave a brief background to why Kosovo was so important to Serbian national identity stretching back centuries, essentially summed up with the statement that Kosovo is kind of like the "West Bank to the Serbs."⁶

The mixing of historiography, stock and archival footage with live/breaking news coverage and contemporary analysis was typical of CNN at this time. Though the critiques of conservative pundits as described in the previous chapter served to make the history and worldview presented seem tinted by liberal politics, the idea that a common history could be accessed and presented in an objective way through the professionalism of journalism was an operating ideology one would see again and again on cable news networks. Instead of using documentary style narration and style, these segments were more like the rest of the content on the network. The use of history became less set apart and more everyday by the end of the 1990s

and was simply part of the overall dailiness of the reporting of world events. Instead of being placed in another program, history had fully been part of explaining the news in a more seamless way by being a part of the news style of the network.

One of the guides in the popular imagination for looking at history was Francis Fukuyama's *The End Of History and the Last Man*.⁷ Published in 1992, *The End of History* was more than a political science book, it was a metaphor for the era of its publication. In a self-evident argument, Fukuyama presented Western democratic systems as the winner of the Cold War. The clever addition, and what made Fukuyama a well-known author in some elite circles was how he took capitalism's victory as an endpoint for all of human history. Civilization had built to this moment, and while he never claimed nothing of note would happen again, he did argue that nothing would shake the supremacy of Western democratic, market centric, neoliberal orthodoxy as the goal for other civilizations. In the decades since, Fukuyama has looked at events like the rise of the Chinese model and Islamic fundamentalism as actually confirming his hypothesis as they are not sustainable in the way liberal democracies are, and argued that the rise of industrial, educated middle classes invariably leads to societies demanding more rights and freedoms within controlled, yet free market economic systems.⁸

Why did this idea gather such power in popular imagination? In one way it worked as an answer to the problem of "what next?" with a simple evasion: nothing, because we have arrived. He sidestepped both the analysis of Ernest Mandel on the period of late capitalism and Fredrick Jameson's theorizing that the capitalistic system lead to the dominance of postmodernism as a cultural form by considering the contemporary moments as an end point instead of another manifestation of a certain economic social system.⁹ While Jameson and other analysts of postmodernism might refer to "the end of history" as the end of a particular way of thinking

about history (and historiography) as intellectually fresh and rigorous, Fukuyama means it as an end to alternatives. He papers over the enormous conflicts and anxieties within the capitalistic system by not seriously contemplating other possible outcomes besides a very “old” definition of liberal democracy.

Another distinguishing appeal of Fukuyama was how peaceful his history seemed. Though they share similarities in terms of totalizing post-Cold War geopolitical world views, it was not like Samuel Huntington’s vision of constant war between culture and religion. Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations* presented a more classical understanding of human history as groups fighting each other.¹⁰ The difference in Huntington’s analysis was instead of fighting over economic/political beliefs, global struggle would be based on more supposedly basic, essentialist characteristics such as religion and cultural identity. By contrast, Fukuyama presented that kind of struggle as a minor one and one that would be confined by the victory of Western democratic capitalism. Fukuyama assured readers the Other was no longer a problem of major concern because history had taken us to the point of the Other being inside or us.

More than any of this though, I believe the appeal of the narrative was its status as a narrative. It was a story with an end point with the added benefit that the end point was the collective us in the present day. Every era considers itself as the natural conclusion of all that preceded it, but here was confirmation by an academic supported by a history widely known. The *End Of History* was a metatext that gave journalists, and by extension cable television news, a powerful tool for how to present the end of the Cold War, the coming 21st century and history itself. It gave form to the contemporary reporting of cable television news in a conveniently flattering, historic context: one told by experts but relying a great deal on bland and broad assertions, yet with conclusions so indisputable that no one familiar with the facts could dismiss.

The publication and popularity of Fukuyama's book coincided with the rise of the major threat to the supremacy of cable television news in the US: the Internet. How cable television news reacted to the Internet is a multifaceted and overdetermined relationship, but for the purposes of this dissertation my main focus is on how the Internet, as a new technology, was historicized by cable television news. At the same time totalizing as meta-theories were gaining prominence in mainstream discourse, the news industry was facing new technologies that would radically change their profession forever. Cell phones, emails, digital cameras all brought changes into the process of television news, but the threat to its supremacy was most symbolized in the World Wide Web. Where cable television was an advancement of the newspaper and nightly news, being constant and ever present, the web and Internet generally promised true user freedom. The newscasters and systems of shifting presentation of information would no longer be necessary with the news consumer able to get direct information on events and material with no filter. *The End of History*, however, provided comfort to cable television news as it suggested that new technology would not lead to new social formations. In fact, the operating ideology that there could be no drastic change in political and social structures suggested in a specific sense that new technology would be more an extension of previous technology than a radical new paradigm shift. In other words, cable television news, with its history and reputation would always be in a dominant position vis-a-vis to the Internet and new media technologies.

Despite the assurance of cable television news and the larger tropes of journalism being the dominant narrative producer and presenter for facts and history, the power, detail and reach of new media technology could not be ignored. I argue then that the way television historicized new media technology in news delivery was shot through with fear and anxiety. New media, and specifically the Internet, was shown to be a source of voices and views that could not be

controlled by the apparatuses of television or the journalistic profession and did not look to the Murrow Myth as its operating ur-text. For the rest of this chapter I will be examining how these two impulses, cable television news positioning the Internet and new media as secondary to the narrativizing and historicizing power of the 24-hour form along with cable television news fear and anxiety of the same new media technology, played out in the late 1990s. To start however, I want to describe how C-SPAN, a 24-hour cable television news channel but vastly different from CNN, Fox News, MSNBC and others in the field, mimicked the form of the Internet while demonstrating the limits of cable television when compared to this new news form.

C-SPAN AS PROTO-INTERNET TELEVISION NEWS

C-SPAN was conceived in the mid-1970s by its founder and CEO Brian Lamb, a former Washington DC bureau chief at *Cablevision*, a trade magazine for the developing (and at that time booming) cable industry. Lamb created C-SPAN as a non-profit, non-partisan, cable-industry financed channel that would cover Congress and other national public affairs. The channel is funded by 6 cents per subscriber from cable providers. Though never directly mandated by Congress, C-SPAN also worked as a way to address the concerns of federal regulators that the cable system would largely be outside of the FCC and other broadcast rules and legislation.¹¹ Since the systems cable television used to deliver content to subscribers were legally private, cable networks were not subject to the same rules that governed over-the-air broadcasters. Cable providers, wanting to keep the industry from being directly regulated by the federal government (especially in terms of programming), presented a combination of public access television and C-SPAN to show they worked with public interest in mind, even if not legally required. C-SPAN was specifically tasked with carrying non-partisan public affair

programming with particular emphasis on Congress and electoral politics. C-SPAN is funded completely by cable companies and has no other source of funding, so it never has commercials or even the fundraising common to public broadcasting. In fact, the lack of commercials means its viewership is not measured by Nielsen, though executives insist other data shows high audience numbers.¹²

The popularity of C-SPAN can also be determined anecdotally. C-SPAN's "brand" of television as a raw, unfiltered presentation of American politics is visually flat and it lacks packaging, graphics or any form of commentary, but its bareness is greatly appealing to many viewers.¹³ By the end of the 1990s however, the C-SPAN house style of simply presenting the political debates of the day without comment but with depth was becoming more difficult to maintain. I argue that part of that difficulty was due to the possibilities of new media technology like email, blogs and newspaper websites. While C-SPAN was able to provide one kind of record, it was still tied to the history of the supragenre of television news by being a television channel. The Internet, on the other hand, was more able to provide more raw material, more directly and, most crucially, to provide more opportunity for direct engagement with people and their opinions. Also, the blandness of C-SPAN in a sense encouraged the rise of opinion and, most crucially, context from other locations like the Internet and (at the time) the World Wide Web.

We can see an example of this from the *Washington Journal* program on C-SPAN, the network's morning show. The program provided a mixture of news, interviews, and viewer responses in different 20-30 minute segments. During the late 1990s, these segments were usually in studio, with on the road call-in programs reserved for special series like "American Presidents." The program followed the house style of C-SPAN as the hosts of the program

existed to introduce segments and engage with guest, but in an extremely non-confrontational, nearly robotic way. I purposely am using the word robotic here as the hosts carried themselves with a blandness and zero degree of personality that is striking for the era in political news television.

For example, in one episode of the program on March 25, 1998, one of the topics of the day was President Clinton's expression of regret for America's role in the slave trade during a trip to Africa.¹⁴ Callers to the program were solicited by political preference, with a different call in number for Republicans, Democrats and Independents. The first callers to the program were during a morning news round up with the program's host Lew Ketcham and then *Baltimore Sun* reporter David Folkenflick. The callers focused on the slavery statement by President Clinton with the first two emphatically angry that Clinton would express regret as one caller saying it made her "blood boil" to hear an apology for something "I had nothing to do with." Callers also directly suggested the Clinton was using the trip and statement of regret to distract from his own personal political problems at home. This visceral response was matched by two other callers, who explicitly self-identified as African-Americans, disgusted by the previous callers' anger at the apology for slavery.

As the exchanges continued, the host would occasionally ask a follow up question about why a caller felt a certain way, mimic the language back to the caller, but then thank them for their call and move on either to the next caller or another completely unrelated news item. Despite such a heated, divisive subject, the host's response was similar to any expression of opinion from any source, whether guest or call/email/fax from the audience. The host's demeanor on C-SPAN at the time was one of conduit, with little to no personality or view from them, regardless of their subject. In fact, the hosts' names were often deemphasized, rarely

appearing on screen (if at all) and only once or twice an hour. Instead, the hosts spoke in the language of “we” as in “we will be on this topic for the next 15 minutes” and so on. Unlike the anchors on networks like CNN, ESPN or Fox News, C-SPAN hosts had little to offer in terms of personality, point of view or anything giving them a unique presence. The house style of C-SPAN goes beyond just non-partisan into being a mere passway between news, politics and the audience, no matter the specific news, political position or the audience member. In moments like a discussion of America’s moral responsibility in the face of slavery, the style is almost comical.

By the end of the 1990s during the height of the Clinton impeachment scandals and the Cultural War generally, C-SPAN was mindful of being a space apart from more heated, partisan and journalistically professional news television outlets.¹⁵ What is interesting to note for this study is that this detachment in affect was matched with a machine-like representation of content to the audience. Through out a program like *Washington Journal*, the host would present articles for the audience very directly with an image of the article in the newspaper along with pen tip pointing to the portion being read out loud. Occasionally portions would be underlined ahead of time allowing for easy reference. Though the moving from article to article would be driven in part by the conversation, the mention of the articles would be made in a monotone, flat way.

The style of presentation extends to every facet of C-SPAN production. For example, on *Washington Journal*, guests would be asked by the host in a very direct fashion about their beats or views with little emotion behind follow ups. Political guests, like members of Congress, would often be from both parties and posed the same questions. Even the use of texts on the screen would be limited to identifying the person talking, the program or event being shown, time (if relevant) and other extremely basic information. In between segments of the program

and without the benefit of commercial breaks to cut to, the viewer would see a studio establishing shot that broke down the fourth wall, shot from an overhead camera of the set that showed cameras and other behind-the-scenes studio personal turning over guests before returning to the new segment. When a viewer turned to C-SPAN, they knew they would not be getting the unique perspective from a host or high production and if there was political disagreement, it would be heavily balanced by an opposing view and presented in a placid, non objective frame. An example of the calmness and orderliness of political coverage on the network can be seen in the choice of cloud shots in between programs like cherry blossoms blooming around the Tidal Basin.

I would argue that this generic, even tone in C-SPAN coverage, while still providing content which itself can be highly charged and political but often merely informational, in some ways is similar to the experience of using the Internet. The metaphor I would use is that of the interface, where C-SPAN is the interface with political news and information like a web browser is to the same news and information. The difference is that while the individual user controls the direction of the web browser, the programmers of C-SPAN control the network. The similarity exists in how the news and information is presented, meaning direct and with little commentary from the interface itself. With the introduction of email, C-SPAN would occasionally include comments mailed into their email address. In the day I have been describing, C-SPAN showed one viewer's email completely unedited. The email had the viewer's name, email address, date and text, which was in all capital letters arguing Clinton was spending too much money on "AFRICAN EDUCATION." The way C-SPAN presented email was more akin to seeing it on a computer screen than on television screen, even at the level of content. What was different is the lack of control by the user though the interface.

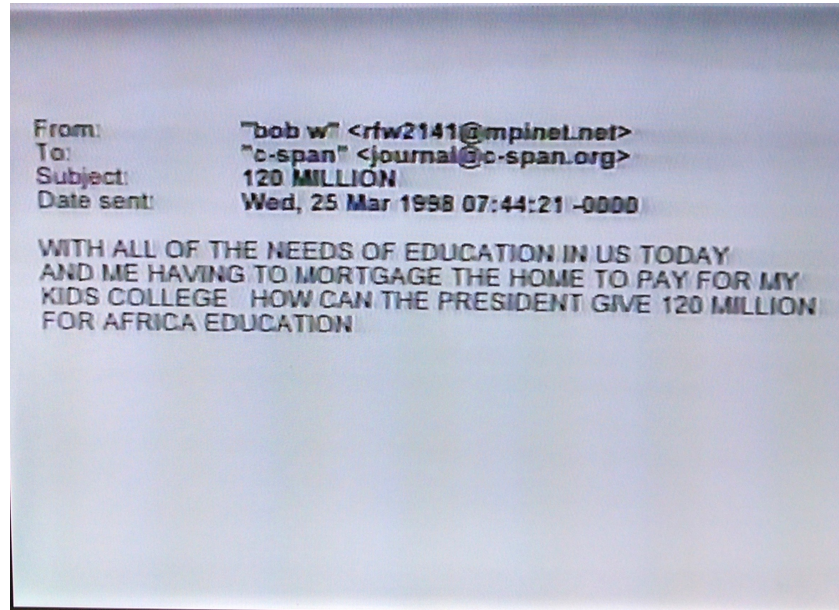


Figure 14 Screen shot of email read on CSPAN's Washington Journal¹⁶

Throughout the 1990s, as earlier in its existence, C-SPAN has been the source for Congressional testimony, gavel to gavel political convention coverage, campaign events (especially Presidential elections but including state races), and other literary and cultural events, all presented with no editorial commentary, directly to viewers. Though these events could be taped or live, a few minutes or several hours in length, the network has been a trusted source for viewers of all political sides and beliefs, as they knew they would be getting unfiltered access to raw content. The Internet has largely surpassed C-SPAN's offering because of the ability and, more critically, the promise of digital technologies to be all encompassing and driven by the desires of the user.. With neither user control nor the amount of material, C-SPAN's tone and style only offered the detached, even handed and inclusive interface borrowed more from television journalism but taken to its outer extremes.

C-SPAN is the outer example of the established television journalistic style of the 24-hour cable television news genre attempting to present the vast amount of information that could be more easily accessible in other formats, particularly the entire Internet. Even in this "mutated"

form, C-SPAN could show some lineage back to the ur-text of Murrow, particularly in terms of the anchors unflappability and belief in the democratic system. The journalistic practices of television news not only were the frame for material, but the historic quality of the frame itself made the material real, reliable and responsible. Throughout this study, I have argued this is why the 24-hour news form relied on HNPs because it worked to frame and make meaning out of its contemporary reporting. With the rise of more alternative paths to material and history, the importance of professionalism and standards of journalism (as best represented though the Murrow ur-text) in comparison to random voices from the web was a key way to differentiate television news as a supragenre with a real history. While I am describing a generalized fear and loathing of new media, I wish to talk about one specific instance of it as presented in the *New Republic* – Steven Glass affair and the feature film about the scandal, *Shattered Glass*.

SHATTERED GLASS

A rising star reporter with the *New Republic*, Steven Glass was discovered in 1998 to have fabricated an enormous amount of his professional writing over the course of several years. The initial discovery of Glass's mendacity was by a new online, and since defunct, publication *Forbes Inc. Online*.¹⁷ The story was a major affair as it shined an unfavorable light on a publication ideologically in favor during the centrist Clinton years. More broadly though it brought into question some of the basic tenets of print journalism, such as trustworthiness in its internal systems to protect from events such as like this from happening, and its status over other media forms in terms of elite standing.

Though not about cable television news directly, I believe the Glass affair is relevant because it touched on many of the same anxieties around television journalism and new media.

In a direct way, Glass shook the trust of readers and practitioners in the journalistic profession that what one reports is true. Trust in television news was based on the veracity of images and a genre convention that the visuals themselves would not be “enhanced” like in cinema or entertainment media generally. Beyond the form, the trust in the trustworthiness of what is produced comes from a trust in the institution behind the product. Trust in the reality of journalism is a bedrock of the Murrow Myth. Viewers and readers could trust what is real from what they consumed from newspapers, magazines, and cable television news because of a trust in the form and the institutions producing the form.

In new media that trust is, at best, illusive or, at worse, nonexistent. A user of the Internet can only believe a given site or email based on other factors outside of the site or email. This lack of verifiability in new media was exploited by Glass and a focus of his deception in the film *Shattered Glass* (2003). Glass set up fake websites and emails for the fraudulent sources he used to support his reporting. The sites’ unprofessional looks raised eyebrows from his editors and accusers, yet the fact they existed confirmed elements of Glass’s story. The story that started the Forbes Inc Online investigation into Glass was itself about hackers (entitled “Hack Heaven”) and a supposed shadow labor market of companies looking to hire hackers in order to protect their systems. The early, unregulated stage of the Internet medium along with a generalized feeling of it being on the outer limits of proper behavior helped in creating a plausible impression for Glass’s story. More importantly for our purposes however, it is part of a larger fear in new media’s inability to be truthful or to deliver truth.

The Glass affair is also relevant to cable television news because it shows reliance on a particular labor culture to protect the medium. Glass’s age and overwhelming (perhaps calculated) need to be liked are highlighted in most retellings of the affair, and is often presented

as the solution to how it occurred. The fact there was a massive loophole in the fact checking processes is often addressed, however its exploitation is not seen as an intuitional flaws but more as the personal flaws in the character of Glass. (The *New York Times* had a similar response to the Jayson Blair scandal nearly a decade later saying they could not stop someone who was dedicated to putting outright lies into the paper.) The failings of the individual in other journalistic scandals is often a focal point, and with understandable reasons. It is the individual failings that inoculate the entire profession from the kind of damaging, massive fraud that such cases reveal as a possibility.

Though it was a new media outlet that caught Glass's lies, what the story of the Glass affair suggests more that it is journalism that saved itself. Both *Shattered Glass* and the story it was based on highlight the reporting necessary to prove Glass had made up whole stories. One of the key hinge points was if a particular hotel in DC had minibars and fridges and the old fashion grunt reporting work of the Charles Lane character to track down the truth of this seemingly mundane fact. What makes the focus on reporting so interesting in this case though is how the *New Republic* is not a reporting outlet particularly. Its agenda is more shaping policy debates and promoting its center-left ideology. Seeing the work of the *New Republic* being that of reporting though places the magazine in the industry and orbit of other news outlets. By belonging in the category of news, the *New Republic* belongs to an industry history that elevates and shields its production.

The significance of the standards of journalism compared to other professions came up again when Glass attempted to gain admittance to the California Bar to practice law in the state in 2009. After being rejected on the basis of his failing the moral fitness requirements of being a member of the bar, Glass fought to the California Supreme Court. In an unanimous decision, the

Supreme Court upheld the Bar's decision, noting in great detail that Glass had not fully redeemed himself from his past transgressions as a journalist.¹⁸ Some journalists agreed with the findings, but some argued that the Bar was holding Glass to an unreasonable standard. In an interesting piece in *Slate*, David Plotz outlined how Glass had betrayed him as his editor at *George* magazine and depicted his now wife Hanna Rosin as a fool in Glass's novel *The Fabulist*. However, he went on to write he did not agree with the California Supreme Court's decision. Stating clearly he did not trust Glass, he still believed that the Court was more invested in saying their profession was too honorable and respectable to allow a known liar like Glass to practice it, concluding "law isn't holy orders. It's a job."¹⁹ While just one reporter's view, it suggests the contradictory view of journalism as a profession with standards and a history, however one that is self-policing and outside of specific qualifications or licensing borders. Journalism is a "job" but one that still relies on a community that knows and protects its standards and history in a non-legalistic way.

New media, on the other hand, is a form without that history to contextualize what it is doing. More dangerously for the traditional view of journalism, new media rejects structures that suggest control or expertise outside of clearly defined, measurable results. In a way, the crisis at the *New Republic* and other outlets Glass wrote for works to show what journalism values. Television news could also point and lean on a history of representation that defines it work as being in the public interest, as objective, as a necessary operation to produce informed citizenry. New media can be part of that story as long as it was subservient to the standards of journalism promoted by television in the United States for nearly a half of a century.

LATE 1990S SELF-AWARE HISTORIC PROGRAMMING - THE CLINTON IMPEACHMENT

The documentary program with a loose connection to news or current events became a staple of programming for cable news channels by the late 1990s. It was a reliable part of many cable networks like A&E, Discovery, and the History channel. We can call these documentary news programs because they were rarely straight documentary shows. It is meaningful in that most programs had a hook that related back to contemporary topics with new info. Shows on the Nazis continued to be a reliable subject for the History channel, just as shark programming was popular on Discovery. What was more in demand, though, were programs on impeachment or the sexcapades of past presidents that could easily be marketed as “ripped from the headline” programming, providing the “real” story of a subject already in the news.

The larger point is the kind of documentary programming cable news channels had done in the past was starting to look like the documentary programming happening else where on cable, and not just for news networks. Outside of live/crisis reporting and politically slanted electoral coverage, cable television news at the end of the 1990s was looking like many other options on television for viewers. Combined with the threat of new media and the internal competition within the industry over a dwindling audience, the lack of variation from other cable networks in general marked the beginning of a crisis period that cable news has never fully escaped.

How though was this crisis represented? One way was the search for totalizing narratives like *The End Of History*. I argue that another was a total embrace of more traditional entertainment programming choices. Less a turn away from hard news as many have criticized the cable news industry, but more of seeing hard news as something that should still appeal to

audience like any other media text, including elements of pleasure, narrative and suspense. Stories that presented those elements became the stories that were reported on, and more importantly for my purposes, retold and re-inscribed as part of the history of television news.

One of the programming logics for making entertainment programming choices that came strongly to the fore was “stunt” programming. “Stunt” programming refers to choices that stand out from the regular, more episodic and formulaic nature of a given show. For entertainment programming this might mean special guests or a unique form (like a live audience). NBC during the late 1990s relied heavily on stunt programming, particularly for its Thursday night comedies. This included extra long episodes (super-sized) and special guest stars that would transverse the entire evening’s lineup. Stunt programming like this for news is fairly difficult, which is why it would more frequently appear in the taped documentary specials on the network. For example, “Shark Week” is a model for this kind of programming, where the entirety of a Discovery’s primetime schedule is giving over to purely shark programming.

The main example of stunt programming on cable news has been discussed in the previous chapter with CNN’s *Cold War*. Beyond the documentary itself the network carried post-scripts and occasional special stories in its daily news shows. Though planning for such programming in advanced might require something like the a special series, occasionally events would allow for such stunt programming as well. The Clinton Impeachment and subsequent trial could be seen as such an example. By its very fact, the Impeachment was an extraordinary event that had only happened one other time in US history. The resulting trial was also a unique event, requiring rules and procedures made out of whole cloth, as well as unique visuals such as Chief Justice William Rehnquist sitting in as head jurist in the well the US Senate with all the Senators in attendance.

With all the pomp of the Clinton Impeachment, many networks focused on the structure and process of the trial and surprisingly little on the political ramifications and context of the event. For example, in the week leading up the House vote, undecided Republicans held forth on multiple interviews playing out their decision making process and how they still were unsure what they would do. In the end, every single Republican voted for impeachment. In retrospect, impeachment was a partisan exercise. Yet the logic of news reporting and journalism of a particularly unbiased, objective way made the kind of analysis and longer view predictions of the likelihood of a trial with a conviction seem the provenance of partisanship.

However it also linked to the logic of programming: filling time with predictable, and in many was scripted, conflict. Though the impeachment itself had lurid details, it was the reliability of a Republican vs. Democrat, President vs. Congress narrative that sold the story as one that could order coverage for months. For a while, interest in the scandal was astronomical, leading to all time high numbers for CNN and CNBC, whose prime time ratings rose 75 percent in 1998 almost totally on Clinton coverage.²⁰ What brought an end to the coverage was not just Clinton's acquittal by the Senate, but the fact the conflict was not able to sustain the level of interest in viewers. As one commentator explained in giving voice to viewer frustration, "As a political event, Clinton's ongoing scandal may yet match Watergate. As a TV event, however, the hearings fell far short. What was missing was any comparable sense of gravity, dignity or uncertainty."²¹ Despite the visuals and historic nature of the proceedings, polling showed most Americans just did not find the events as compelling or wrenching as the Republican House members did pre-Impeachment. The Impeachment trial and entire build up seems today to have been largely forgotten.

Yet the whole moment served two purposes for journalism. One, it demonstrated the persistent, raw power of the press to make moral decisions about those they cover and generally set the tone of coverage. An example of this was how David Border, the dean to the Washington press corps, and Sally Quinn, columnist, author, Washington socialite and wife to Washington Post managing editor Ben Bradlee, took Clinton to task for his lack of manners and deference to the beltway crowd. Border, famously quoted by Quinn, said, “[Bill Clinton] came in here and he trashed the place...and it’s not his place” in discussing how he shamed the entire Washington establishment with his behavior and social missteps.²² In the Impeachment drama, despite their deep involvement as a key player, the press was in an odd remove as “referee” of the events. For example, issues that polling showed most Americans considered not the proper material for news coverage, namely the sexual affairs of Presidents, were judged as such by the press. Though in a sense arrogant and possibly partisan, coverage was driven by a well-known and historic understanding of the press as watchdogs, doing the unseemly digging in the name of protecting democracy.

The second thing it did was provide a historic stage in which their reporting could take place on. By impeaching President Clinton, the Congress did something that had only been one other time in US history. Even Nixon was never formally impeached. Such a rare event meant that the stuff of the Starr Report and the sexual behaviors were obviously newsworthy. The point though is not that the findings of reporters were newsworthy because they were important, but instead they were newsworthy because they were covering historic circumstances. The background that was often provided elsewhere by cable television news to explain why a given event was of important was self-evident in this case. In fact it was not the actual sex but the combination of events that gave the reporting its meaning of being newsworthy. Specifically the

Paula Jones lawsuit and the previous Supreme Court decision that allowed it to go further. Clinton was not just a President facing scandal; he was a president facing historic scandal.

History here did not add up to much, but it filled a lot of airtime. The coverage of historic events highlighted their unique nature, but along with their uniqueness was a sense of the reliance on institutions and the past that controlled for them and their unpredictable tendencies. The Impeachment was a strong example of this as while it was once in a lifetime, it was in many ways highly predictable and controllable. The trial itself, while visually unprecedented, was a mundane, at time dreary slog in that the outcome was known. Like the Republicans who were unsure if they would vote for Impeachment or not, all the Democrats voted against finding Clinton guilty and thus keeping him in office and marking the entire event as just political theater.

I will now examine two other examples of the kind of self-conscious historic reporting cable television news engaged in. The first, the Y2K bug, is specifically related to new media. The other is the 2000 US Presidential election crisis that, though not exactly planned, played out in ways that allowed for structured but spontaneous television coverage. Both events are strong examples of the kind of planned crisis coverage cable television moved towards in the end of the 1990s. Like elections and confirmation hearings, planned crisis events gave news programmers a chance to present multi-day storylines and perhaps even other kinds of programming rather than breaking news coverage. Also critical was its status as an event that could be understood, if not technically, but in meaning. Something bad would happen to computers and possibly by extension everyone by 2000 for Y2K, and a President would be elected by the end of the unexpected, but legally controlled electoral process. The hook for both stories, along with its ability to be scheduled, made it the perfect issue to fit into the logic of cable television

programming. At the same time, the coverage failed to do the same work for the genre as the HNPs did at the beginning of the decade.

Y2K BUG

The turn of the century can be described as a meaningless change of dates like the turning over of an odometer to a round number full of zeroes. Yet, we as humans give these collective moments value because we see the change in dates as meaningful. With the coming of the year 2000, not only was it the end of a decade and a century, but also a millennium. Despite the amount of peace of prosperity in the West, especially the US, and the lessening of the threat of nuclear war from the end of the Cold War, the coming of the new era encouraged a doomsday fear amongst some people and certain subcultures. Before the turn of the century, the year 1999 loomed in popular culture as a harbinger of doom, but a doom often built on technology and its failures. One example is the film *Strange Days* (1995) where a black market exists in biotechnology that allows someone to experience the memories of another person. The film focuses on a sleazy salesman who sells others memories for those seeking voyeuristic pleasure, much like a pimp representing sex workers, and is eventually drawn in to a murder plot once he discovers one of the memories in his possession is of a killing. I mention this film because I feel it was emblematic of dystopic future often associated with technology taking what is human and making it profoundly anti-human with no concerns for limits to decency or morals. Other popular films of the time, like *Gattaca* (1997), *Virtuosity* (1995) and *Enemy of the State* (1998), depict similar future worlds over run by technology in profoundly dangerous ways.

The amorphous fear of the future and new technologies had a literal representation in the Y2K “bug.” The Y2K bug melded together the computer (the most pervasive, familiar symbol of

technology in daily life), our increasing dependence on it, and the fear of its power over us into a clear narrative that became one of the dominant tropes of coverage of the new millennium. The Y2K crisis was built on the fact that some older, “legacy” programs used the last two digits of the year to stand for the appropriate 20th century date in an effort to save precious memory space. So 97 meant 1997 and 79 meant 1979 and so on. The fear was that a computer would interpret the date 2000 as 1900 and essentially melt down the program. The problem was particularly pronounced for some of the oldest computers and programs, which were most likely used by the earliest adapters, meaning government bodies and public works utilities. While some dealt with the issue as an annoyance, some prominent news source treated the possibilities as nothing less than catastrophic. Though the concern was known to many computer programmers and other experts, the June 1997 Newsweek cover with the story “The Day the World Shuts Down” represents a high point in public awareness and fear of Y2K.²³ Despite similar overblown language from people like Michael S. Hyatt creating images of an end of days scenario in promotion of his book *The Millennium Bug: How to Survive the Coming Chaos*, a great deal of the coverage on television were of project managers like John Koskin, Chairman of the President’s Council on the Year 2000, describing the issue as one of mainly project management and steady, focused work.²⁴

More critical though for our purposes though is the electronic, computer based nature of that fear. The story was based on fear of machine technology leading to humanity’s doom. Fear of technology has been well discussed, and especially media technology. Early radio was seen as a haunted medium, literarily bringing faraway voices out of the ether into your home. Other devices like television and cable TV itself have been portrayed as threats to families, communities and human society in general. While new media technology like cell phones and

the Internet have followed the same trends, the unknown nature of what changes they would bring added a new depth to the fear. The Y2K story was a perfect vehicle for the anxieties of new media. Y2K symbolized the idea that while computers and technology were improving people's lives, there was a hidden cost that would someday become apparent. The idea that the problem existed deep in the machine code of our devices and was waiting for the coming of the new millennium to strike was another powerfully symbolic elements of the story. How a person or group responded to the threat said more about their feelings towards technology and the future more than the specifics of the actual bug.²⁵

While television news did cover the Y2K bug for the reasons mentioned, the subject matter made it a more difficult topic for the media to cover. Some computer experts where frustrated that the general public and the media were not communicating the full possible danger.²⁶ While the subject made for a way to give voice to fears of technology and was generally an intriguing topic, eventually the cable networks' familiarity with the issue and the fact that most concerns were addressed made continual coverage more difficult. For example, on the eve of the transition, CNN officials were confident that they had done everything they could to continue being on air.²⁷ Outside of an NBC made-for-TV movie named *Y2K*, there was no *Newsweek*-like cover story event that placed cable television news in the same stratosphere of reporting doomsday scenarios as possible outcomes to the bug. So while the Y2K bug worked as a way to give voice to a fear of technology, it did not prove to be as reliable a topic in terms of both creating visuals and generating on-going drama. However in a few months, the 2000 Election however would be a rich source for both.

2000 ELECTION CONFLICT

In 2000 the dominant story was the US Presidential election. The 2000 election has been described by some as the first Internet election. What is not as commented on however is how it was also the third presidential election of the 24-hour news cycle driven by cable television. Lessons learned from the Clinton War Room era had become well worn, even to the point that the two stars of *The War Room* (1993) documentary, George Stephanopoulos and James Carville, worked in the media themselves. Media coverage of the race itself became a large story. How the media framed both Gore and Bush, and how that framing responded with or against the framings the respective campaigns desired, was a major issue in an election that was otherwise lacking in a defining issue.

The thirty-six day period between Election night and the Supreme Court decision effectively handing the Presidency to George W. Bush was an extraordinary time for television, especially cable television news. Even before the controversy, the 2000 US Presidential election was profoundly shaped by television and the multiple channels that, as Douglas Kellner describes, “multiplied political discourse and images, with a large number presenting round-the-clock political news and discussion.”²⁸ The Internet was a growing source of information, however television was still the dominant means by which people received their information. The common thinking was that the major networks and CNN were neutral while Fox News, MSNBC, and CNBC were partially leaning towards Bush and conservatives in general.²⁹ Despite claims of media bias and posturing, it was not till Election Night when the US news media took center stage when different networks went back and forth on their projections for Florida and the eventual winner. That incident was one of the many that highlighted the enormous informal power television news holds in American democracy. Though the broadcast networks dominated

the coverage of election night, the cable networks themselves were also in conflict. The ability of the 24-hour news cycle and the cyclical nature of news programming in general to demand a winner by the end of the night was one of the engines that drove the momentary crisis of Election Night 2000. The need of the winner to set up the President-elect period was so logical that the inability to name on that night was jarring for all involved.

After the election night debacle of calling the race for different candidates, the resulting spectacle of the drawn out process of counting votes and accompanying extreme partisan rancor was all covered non-stop by television news. The scandal and struggle provided for great drama for television news, if not strong images. In fact two indelible images from television news coverage of that time, a male vote counter squinting and closely examining a ballot with his eyeglasses removed and reporters trying to read the just released and decisive court decision in the dark on the steps of the Supreme Court building, are images of illegibility and not being able to see clearly.

As Kellner points out, the period was fascinating for media scholars precisely because of this level of unpredictability and chaos where “the live broadcasts of press conferences, judicial hearings, demonstrations, and interviews...often provide more telling information and insight than the canned nightly news and partisan discussion.”³⁰ While C-SPAN had always been there for the kind of engagement and information Kellner is describing and I had described above, it was the presence of the Internet that made the 2000 Election conflict so compelling and unique in terms of American political conflicts. Kellner describe the Internet as the home of the more “accurate analyses, more intelligent and reasoned commentary (on both sides)...that never made it onto the television screens” in the battle for the White House.³¹ He argues this was in part due to the fact the Internet “is now the repository of around-the-clock publication of almost every

major news organization, newspaper, journal, and print publication, as well as a library of its own Webzines, Web sites, discussion rooms, listserves, e-mail, and other sources of news and information.”³²

However, Kellner makes the fascinating observation that for the first time as well, the “excesses of the Internet were also observable daily on television” in the form of uncontrolled commentary, flame wars, blustering and simple immediate and unfiltered response.³³ Kellner argues that as the Internet goes through the “process of mass mediation, commercialization, and banalization” it will become like other commercial, mass market media with its perspective standardized, homogenized and more superficial and tabloidized.³⁴ At that moment though, the Internet and other online sources seemed to provide more meaningful and diverse perspectives, despite the obvious shortcomings, than the canned and packaged perspective of television news during those thirty-six days. Though neither the Internet or television was perfect, it was the Internet that gave users the access to information and commentary he or she desired directly. Even C-SPAN had some form of programming philosophy that could never equal the supposed freedom and directness of the Internet. By accessing the cloud of information and history that existed beyond the cable television news genre, users could produce their own experiences.

In contrast, television, especially at moments of crisis as in the 2000 Election dispute, seems to have an agenda set by those in power. Of particular note for this study is how the HNPs that might have been noticed as just informative programming were now clearly seen as political, biased texts. Douglas Kellner points to two such programs on the eve of the 2000 elections, one on MSNBC entitled *Waging War: General Schwarzkopf's Diary* and another (also on NBC affiliates) about the Bush family, both he argues were attempts by the networks to curry favor with the Republican party and present them as legitimate future leaders of the US.³⁵ In a

transformation that started with what I discussed in Chapter 3, by the end of the 2000 Election and the following conflict, cable television news was no longer the mere reporter of news and the history could not be used as a way to set a common and unassailable background for events. HNPs could no longer order the ongoing reporting of the network with a supposedly objective and apolitical retelling of past events. Despite attempts by television news to paint the Internet as without a past or any kind of ethics, it was the Internet that would provide access to history and, as such, meaningful perspectives on current events.

SUMMER 2001

In retrospect, it seems like the inauguration of George W. Bush as President in January 2001 was the last “event” of the 1990s, with the September 11th attacks marking a new era of America history. I have been using this periodization throughout, thinking of the 1990s as starting with the first Persian Gulf War of 1991 and ending with the 9/11 attacks. To this end, I want to spend some time considering the Summer of 2001 and what it suggested about what cable television news considered as news. For the purposes of this study, the Summer of 2001 demonstrated the end point of how history had been utilized by the form. With the politicizing of history I discussed in the previous chapter and the outsourcing of history into the cloud with new media technology as I discuss in this chapter, the past no longer was a reliable source of programming for 24-hour cable news. I argue that the embracing of scandal and an “if it bleeds, it leads” mentality suggested not just a lowering of standards for news, but more of an idea that historical context would be found more and more online. Instead, cable television news would be the location of live coverage, talk and opinion. Cable television would focus on niche audiences,

trying to reach the audiences fascinated by one particular story rather than the totality of the daily news.

In her explication of the multi-channel transition of television, Amanda Lotz has used the work of Joseph Turrow on magazines as an analogy. Turrow wrote that increasingly specialized magazines were more successful in terms of advertising dollars but fueled a type of mass cultural fragmentations of “gated informational communities” dangerous for democracy. Lotz argues that “the redefinition of television in the course of the multi-channel transition as a medium that supports fragmented audiences and polarized content consequently has exacerbated the cultural trends and outcomes” Turrow identified.³⁶ Cable television news went through a transition from a medium that was able to reasonably represent a mass audience understanding of contemporary events. I would extend this argument though beyond just the need for advertising dollars (though obviously that is a major reason) to how it represented the past. No longer able to historicize in a direct and obvious way, either because its representation of the past was considered overtly political or simply not efficient with the ability of technology, cable television news could no longer hold on as a source of information for all audiences.

The summer before the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, cable television news had reached a kind of equilibrium as an industry and a form, but was on the edge of a transformation. Threats from technology and the Internet to the cohesiveness of the industry existed, however on the whole the production and, most crucially, texts of cable television news were fairly predictable. Outside of the reliably partisan Fox News, most of cable television news had a uncomplicated understanding of what they did: report objectively on politics, international news and some “scandalous” cultural topics. Fox News’s insistence on putting a conservative slant in contrast to the liberal slant of the other outlets was the most overt conflict in the industry. Fox

News, as discussed in the previous chapter, not only was more conservative, it relied more on engaging graphics and interview/opinion shows to grab viewer's attention.

Outside Fox News, then, cable television news reporting by the Summer of 2001 was fairly predictable, in the sense that it was about process and professional standards of objectivity and balance leading to preordained coverage. Cable television was a daily and constant presence in the political and daily life in the United States, yet it saw itself as apart from the workings of that daily life through the concepts of "objectivity" and professional detachment. This kind of perspective was only possible through a specific socio-cultural understanding of what journalism and particularly television journalism should be, one I have suggest that can be seen in the ur-text of Murrow.

The Summer of 2001 was the mature and high style of a genre of cable television news, but the industry had to reach new audiences in new ways. The new modes in which cable television news reached beyond the traditional style of reporting to more niche audiences were three fold: Tabloid, Stunt and Politics. Each of these modes came to be the basis of cable television news post 9/11. I will look at examples of each to demonstrate how they existed as a type of reporting on cable television news in more detail.

Tabloid: Chandra Levy disappearance

The growth of narratively rich, "tabloid" material on cable news networks was similar to the switch to human stories that characterized the introduction of penny papers in the mid 1800s. Before that time, newspapers were the organs of political parties, the only groups that could afford the exorbitant costs. As new technology was developed, mainly paper from wood pulp instead of more expensive cloth-like material, the costs of putting out a newspaper dropped

enough to make it a profitable enterprise. In order to get readers, instead of being purely ideologically driven, newspapers began to report on stories that would be appealing to a mass public. These stories, about crime or love, or generally human interest tales, made newspapers for the first time a profitable business venture. As technology effected the newspaper industry in the mid 1800s with a new economic system that changed the content, I would argue that the Internet brought about unexpected changes in the content of news on television. In fact, new media and the Internet were threatening the position of television as the most important, immediate media of the time. While in the “news” business, cable television news turned to a different kind of story that they could dominate more than the Internet, especially in an era where the technology of the Internet (particularly video) was not equal to that of television. Cable television news could give a story wall-to-wall coverage with live video, even if there was nothing new to report. So instead of covering the minutiae of the Clinton impeachment, cable television news covered the visuals and the historic importance of the event. Without visuals, complicated and abstract stories like Y2K were simply not as interesting as tabloid material.

An example of this is the Chandra Levy disappearance and resulting scandal involving Representative Gary Condit. During the investigation into Levy’s disappearance, family members and police sources indicated she was having an affair with Condit, a married Democratic Congressman who represented the California district Levy was from. Through never declared a suspect by the DC police, Levy’s family felt Condit was evasive in his responses. Through a series of interviews with the press and occasional coordinated appearances on multiple television programs, the Levy family drew attention to Condit as possibly having information that could help find Chandra. The story gripped the public with 63% of Americans saying they were closely following the case.³⁷ The coverage reached a crescendo point with

Condit's August 23, 2001 interview with Connie Chung (described as the biggest TV news "get" since Barbara Walters's interview with Monica Lewinsky) and only really declined due to the September 11th attacks.³⁸

The amount of coverage of the case itself became a story. In an article in *The Washington Post*, media critic Howard Kurtz described its coverage on television as a continual topic of discussion across multiple programs:

CNN, MSNBC and Fox News Channel now rehash the story every 12 minutes or so. It's kicked around on "Crossfire," "Hannity & Colmes," "Talk Back Live" and "Hardball," by Wolf Blitzer, Paula Zahn, Greta Van Susteren, Geraldo Rivera, Larry King and Bill O'Reilly, who demanded Condit's resignation last night. It was all over the Sunday talk shows.³⁹

In describing how CNN would be run under his regime, recently named CEO Walter Isaacson said the Levy story was definitely an example of something the network would follow. With networks like Fox News (which broke one angle of the story through an exclusive interview with a flight attendant who claimed to have had an affair with Representative Condit) challenging CNN's status as news leader, Isaacson explained that the Levy story would be on the network "because it's a fascinating story. Serious journalism doesn't have to be boring."⁴⁰

Isaacson's statement here and the many of people Kurtz talked to for his piece suggest that covering Levy's disappearance and the possibility of a Congressman's involvement in her murder were justified as "serious journalism." The constant nature of cable television news and the news cycle in general turned stories that might have been the more appropriate for other, less reputable outlets into major daily topics for more self-described serious reporters. Isaacson's statements, such as saying under his leadership "an eye-glazing piece like the ins and outs of NATO expansion" would most likely not get a lot of coverage on CNN, demonstrates the desire to get at the audiences that might go elsewhere for tabloid coverage.⁴¹ The pressure to reach this

audience was very real for the entire industry and the Levy story clearly was leading to massive ratings, particularly in the usually down summers. CNN, Fox News and MSNBC all saw large jumps in their ratings compared to the previous year (with Fox News experiencing the biggest boost of 136%), which was mostly explained as being related to the Levy story.⁴²

Isaacson also said in the same interview that they plan on changing CNN's coverage "to expand the definition of news beyond geopolitical events and pronouncements out of the nation's capital."⁴³ News of this kind would be like the material he covered while running *Time* magazine, topics such as "breakthroughs in medicine and technology, and schools with successful voucher programs. People want to know about things like laser eye surgery."⁴⁴ I argue these topics make up Stunt programming, the second type of coverage cable television news increasingly turned to.

Stunt programming: "Summer of the Shark"

As discussed above, stunt programming was a programming logic that permeated network approaches to building audiences at crucial times like sweeps. As John Caldwell describes it, "special episodes of series are frequently aired to attract a higher-than-representative audience and so 'spike' ratings."⁴⁵ I used stunt earlier to describe the Clinton impeachment broadcasts and here I want to extend it further for cable television news as coverage of a topic that similarly is "news" yet also works to spike viewers as being different from regular news. For cable television news it is best not to think of stunt programming as specific "special episodes" but instead as special topics that are draw viewer attention across multiple days of programming. There is an obvious element of tabloid interest in these topics, however the fascination is different from the particular scandalous nature of the subject. To be more precise, I would not

call Levy programming “stunt” programming because of the more tabloid, political scandal elements to it.

I suggest stunt programming in cable news is more along the lines of other kinds of fictional stunt programming that Caldwell describes as the “cross-network stunt.”⁴⁶ The example I would use for this from the Summer 2001 was the large amount of coverage given to shark attacks. The saturation of coverage on shark attacks led some to dub it the Summer of the Shark. A series of deadly shark attacks led to a large amount of coverage by all American media. In the month leading up to the September 11th attacks, the top three stories on the broadcast cable nightly news in terms of minutes of coverage were Western wild fires, Chandra Levy’s disappearance, and shark attacks.⁴⁷ *Time* magazine’s June 30, 2001 cover story was on shark attacks.⁴⁸ CNN covered the various attacks and even aired a special episode of “Wolf Blitzer Reports” called the “The Shark Scare” on September 3, 2001, a mere week before the terrorist attacks that would make this level of attention fairly ridiculous.⁴⁹

The CNN special is of particular note because of the enormous amount of self-justification in the piece. It starts off acknowledging that the statistics do not show that shark attacks are on the rise and that you are more likely to be struck by lightning than be attacked by a shark. Still, Wolf Blitzer warns the audience to not say such things to the parents of a 10-year old who died from a shark attack and that statistics do not make it easier for the victim of the first ever recorded shark attack in Virginia Beach. Blitzer then asks, “What’s going on?” before a program talking to various experts, including Peter Benchley, the author of the novel *Jaws*. I think this example indicates that reporters were very aware of this lack of evidence to support the claim of an overwhelming number of attacks. Experts, such as George Burgess, director of the International Shark Attack File at the University of Florida, later showed that the number of

shark attacks in 2001 was actually lower than usual.⁵⁰ The artificial nature of the story, stretching beyond the actual attacks and into a supposed overarching “trend,” is what makes the story stunt programming. The Summer of the Shark was meant to organize reporting across networks in a short hand that audience could readily understand.

In discussing multiple stunt genres, including the cross-network stunt, Caldwell suggests they do two things. One, stunts allow the production cultures that produce TV “to come to the foreground on-air (and thus to celebrate and codify their accomplishments in secondary industrial accounts, trades, and professional meetings.”⁵¹ Two, the programs allow audiences and producers to bring shape to cross-industry relations which “in the era of post-network instability that defines television in the age of digital, staying immersed inside of a show’s lock-tight diegesis is a luxury, one that many new shows simply cannot afford.”⁵² Though referring to fictionalized stories, Caldwell’s description of stunt programming could also be used to describe certain topics covered by 24-hour cable television news. With history no longer able to provide the same kind of all-encompassing background for the contemporary coverage of a cable news network, stunt programming like shark attacks were able to fulfill the same purpose.

Politics: Stem Cell Research

The third stylistic mode embraced over history by television news at the end of the 1990s was Politics. Politics has always been an obvious topic for cable television news as seen throughout this study. However by the end of the 1990s, its continual coverage took on a new, more overtly superficial and more spectacular level. The political debates following the 9/11 attacks have been described as hyper partisan and, especially in the build up and execution of the Iraq invasion, bordering on state propaganda (a point I will expand on in the conclusion). Yet the

Summer of 2001 gave us a small window of the way politics would be addressed and used by cable television news: as the basis for the coverage of conflict but minus a critical distance that challenged or critically questioned the combatants outside of the argument. Borrowing from the writing of philosopher Thomas Nagel, media critic Jay Rosen has termed this tendency the “view from nowhere” as it takes objectivity as a goal in and of itself.⁵³ Instead of providing a specific (political, moral, ethical, etc.) perspective, contemporary journalism attempts take the impartial view of a dispassionate, dissociated observer in order, as Rosen argues, “to secure a kind of universal legitimacy that is implicitly denied to those who stake out positions or betray a point of view.... because they think it has more authority than any other possible stance.”⁵⁴

The specific case from the Summer of 2001 that demonstrates the “view from nowhere” mode was the controversy over then President George W. Bush’s decision on embryonic stem cell research. Having pledged during his campaign not to use federal dollars to destroy frozen embryos for stem cell research, President Bush announced on August 9, 2001 in his first nationally televised address that he would approve federal spending on limited, already existing stem cell lines. The decision was presented as a compromise, considering that Bush did not go as far as social conservatives wished and ban all stem cell research from embryos, he did approve more spending into new, yet unknown, lines. For the purposes of this study, it is interesting to note that the speech came at a point where some commentators had already discussed a slump for the new president and the speech’s effectiveness was judged almost entirely through its status as a performance.⁵⁵ In the analysis of the decision, the *New York Times* completely read the decision in purely political terms, leaving aside not only the science but the morals and principles of the decision suggested in the article’s title.⁵⁶ Even in terms of politics, the focus in the article was about how the decision “looked,” with attention given to how “Mr. Bush and his aides ended

up turning this decision into a prism through which they were asking Americans to evaluate his leadership style and seriousness of purpose.”⁵⁷ Another review of the speech in the *Washington Post* by TV critic Tom Shales also saw it completely as performance, particularly in contrast with Clinton who Shales said looked as if “he found being on television the second best thing to having sex.”⁵⁸ Shales included the surprising admission by Dan Rather that radio and television news has trouble covering the complexities of the stem cell issue and so he could “with, I think, impunity, recommend that if you're really interested in this...you'll want to read, in detail, one of the better newspapers tomorrow.”⁵⁹

The example of Bush’s decision on stem cells shows a new way to cover news as simply politics, with no particular tie to policy or morals, even if the topic required it. Without the grounding of a common historic understanding, the reporting on politics took on a purely competition-and-conflict style that allowed for endless coverage. With the “view from nowhere,” the political mode would not alienate viewers because it would have no position besides objectivity. Also, the coverage of politics easily could lead to the stunt or tabloid style depending on the issue (for example, Bush’s speech here was his first nationally televised address and could be used as stunt programming to break away from shark attacks and Chandra Levy coverage). The political mode would be one of the major styles of the post 9/11 era and it was developed at the end of the 1990s.

CONCLUSION

The end of the 1990s saw cable television news at a crossroads. The use of history was considered increasingly biased in terms of politics. Also, with the threat of the Internet and the ability to construct more individual and responsive histories for users, history was no longer

within the text of the cable television news genre and had been conceptualized more as existing in the “cloud”. With these changes, the 24-hour news form required a reconceptualization of its underlying logic. One response by cable television news to the Internet threat was to depict new media as unreliable in comparison due to the lack of a ur-text like Murrow and the other professional standards of journalism. Pressure to bring in audiences lead to a reliance on programming that was historically minded (elections, scandals) with consumer interest, however that historic awareness faded further and further away as an operating logic to the 24-hour cable television genre. Eventually, by the Summer of 2001 cable television news no longer looked at history as a justification of its coverage and went more aggressively towards audiences with tabloid, stunt and political programming.

The September 11th attacks not only marked a new era of geopolitics (for example the beginning of the “War on Terror” or, perhaps more accurately, the end of the post-Cold War period), it marked the transition into a new era of cable television news. The use of history by the 24-hour news genre would never be the same as it was at the beginning of the 1990s. However, we can only understand the role of history in the post-9/11 age by understanding specifically what had changed in the mass information media environment. In the conclusion of this study, I will argue the outsourcing of history and the work of remembering to the Internet has lead to a failure of the 24-hour cable television news genre to be a source of civically responsible news and information. In its space has come the entertainment, “fake” news programs of Jon Stewart and Steven Colbert as flag bearers of the traditions of the supragenre of television news to this day.

CONCLUSION

BRIEF SUMMATION

In the beginning of this project I contrasted the difference between what I termed the “remedial historiography” of writers like McLuhan and Baudrillard, which framed television as an ahistorical reality unto itself with the deep, multi-layered historiography of the medium by media studies. As an example of this kind of historicization, I defined television news as a supragenre, 1990s 24-hour cable television news a genre, and the HNP a subgenre critical to how the larger genre made meaning overall. Finally, I considered how Edward R. Murrow and the larger myth of Murrow not only marked the emergence of the television news supragenre, but gave us an ur-text and institutionalized language in which to see the supragenre as historical.

Through the four case studies, I examined how the HNP processed and performed history and what that meant for the larger 24-hour cable news genre. In the early 1990s with CNN and with ESPN we saw how the HNP connected the disparate elements in 24-hour cable television news of viewers, producers, events and time itself into a whole and allowed the constant and continuous reporting of the networks to make sense. We then saw, through an analysis of CNN’s *Cold War*, how what was previously considered objective historicizing by the cable networks came under increasing attack of being as political and biased as the everyday reporting of the network. Finally, by the end of the 1990s, the HNP was unable to provide the unifying force for the genre as it had in the past due to larger technological and industrial changes that pushed history off the network and into “the cloud,” leading to the rise of more tabloid, stunt and political news programming. In this Conclusion, I will consider the surprising stable formation of the television news supragenre, especially in terms of its connection to history and historiography, in the rise of rise of “fake” television news programs like *The Daily Show* and

the figure of Jon Stewart. I think the journey of the cable television news genre is an example of the development of genre as described by Thomas Schatz. In describing the evolution of a given film genre, Schatz wrote a “genre’s progression from transparency to opacity—from straightforward storytelling to self-conscious formalism—involves its concentrated effort to explain itself, to address and evaluate its very status as a popular form.”¹ I believe the ability of Jon Stewart, a comedian on a “fake news” show, to tap into the ur-text and institutional language of Murrow is a demonstration of a similar journey from transparency to self-consciousness in the genre.

DEATH OF IRONY AND THE SERIOUSNESS OF FAKE NEWS

The September 11th 2001 attacks defined a new geopolitical reality for the United States. In the aftermath the US not only launched two wars, but also engaged in a series of security actions the details of which are still unknown to this day. As with any dissertation, a great deal of topics and perspectives fall outside the scope of my project. For example, one particularly interesting media talking point to immediately come out of the 9/11 attacks was that we would now see the “death of irony” or that we now lived in a “post-ironic age.” As chronicled by Stanford linguist Geoffrey Nunberg in a piece about how language had changed after the attacks, writers like *Spy* co-founder Graydon Carter at *Vanity Fair* and Roger Rosenblatt at *Time* were declaring that the time of the ironist had past and we now lived in an era of literalism.²

Of course the supposed “the death of irony” could be the subject of an entire other project, but it is worth considering here that despite the grand statements, irony did not die. In fact, ten years after the events of 2001, *New York Times* critic Michiko Kakutani suggested “9/11 did not really change daily life for much of the country,” especially in terms of its arts.³ I think

what is noteworthy then about those calls was not how they were marked a change in American culture, but more how they were aimed at news satirists. Even more noteworthy is how those news satirists, like Bill Maher, *The Onion* and *The Daily Show*, responded, at least in the immediate aftermath, by taking a new tact and largely agreeing. Bill Maher's comments about the bravery of the terrorist on the flights lead to the cancellation of his ABC show *Political Incorrect*, but it helped developed his persona as someone willing to say uncomfortable "truths" now found weekly on premium cable. While *The Onion* editors had published one of their most famous editions following the 9/11 attacks, nearly all the material had a mournful, exasperated at humanity's cruelty tone, that contradicted its more trademark parody of newspaper discourse.⁴ One of their editors at the time also was quoted as saying "none of us are feeling funny" in the moment.⁵ Finally, in announcing the 24-hour cable comedy channel Comedy Central would be suspending new episodes of *The Daily Show* for another week following the attacks, a spokesperson was quoted as saying, "When you're talking about a show that is a news parody and the news is so consumed about this tragedy, what's funny about what's unfolding here? Nothing....As someone at the show said succinctly, irony is dead for the moment."⁶

When *The Daily Show* did return nine days after the attacks, Jon Stewart opened the show with an 8-minute monologue. Stewart opened by acknowledging the familiar moment of the reintroduction of the show following the attacks by saying, "I'm sorry to do this to you. It's another entertainment show beginning with an overwrought speech of a shaken host—and television is nothing if not redundant. So I apologize for that."⁷ He then went on to describe the work of making people laugh and being on air as not a burden, but a privilege. With emotion, he described his own first memories of national tragedy when he was five years old and Martin Luther King had been shot, marveling at the fact America has endured it and other "tremendous

test[s] to this country.” Stewart ended the monologue by noting that the view from his apartment used to be the World Trade Center, what he called a symbol “of American ingenuity and strength. . . and labor and imagination and commerce,” but now it was of the Statue of Liberty and “you can’t beat that.”

I wanted to highlight Stewart’s monologue following a moment of great national tragedy because I believe there are a lot of similarities between Edward R. Murrow as discussed in the Introduction and Stewart’s language and television presence. Despite the great number of differences, such as in time, in the fact Stewart is much more overtly emotional and personal, and, most critically, Stewart is talking on a *comedy* show, I argue that what we are seeing in this moment is the continuing stability of the television news supragenre and an attempt to connect with its ur-text. One element in this connection is that both Murrow (with WW2) and Stewart (with 9/11) are speaking in the plaintive voices of witness, but still within the larger contexts of nationalism and national historical narratives. The key of connection is the performance of history. Like Murrow, Stewart is acknowledging in a highly self-aware manner not only what is being discussed is history, but that he is a subject with history that is both personal and (more keeping with Murrow) unique culturally and nationally to the country in which he lives.

With history moved off the 24 hour cable television channels in the “cloud,” meaning online and generally elsewhere from the cable television news genre, coverage became more political and more tabloid like. What I see as one of the odd results of that change is how history came back around in the faux-news genre and was in a way how these shows presented themselves as being part of the supragenre of television news. The clearest example of this can be seen in how Stewart himself has taken up, at times reluctantly but by the time of this writing with real gusto, the mantle of Edward R. Murrow.

THE MURROW MOMENT: STEWART THE TRUTH TELLER ON CROSSFIRE

One of the significant turning points for CNN and the embrace of political opinion and debate programming over reporting happened unexpectedly as a result of a visit by Jon Stewart to the set of *Crossfire* on October 15, 2004. *Crossfire* had been a long time staple on CNN programming starting in 1978 with hosts Tom Branden and Pat Buchanan. Visually, the show was shot with a black background and wooden table, with the appeal for viewers being the verbal combat of the various partisans on the issues of the day. The program expanded to an hour in 2002 and move into a newly built studio on the George Washington University campus that brought more color, movement and, most significantly, a studio audience for the daily tapings. Despite going back down to a half hour and an afternoon slot, the show had a much different look and feel from its origins when Stewart appeared on the show with hosts Paul Begala and Tucker Carlson. Stewart was there to promote his book *America (The Book): A Citizen's Guide to Democracy* but instead delivered a straightforward and devastating message that the show was “hurting America.” In an incisive critique delivered in a remarkably calm manner but in very quick responses due to the scattered questioning and frequent interruptions, Stewart explained what he saw wrong with the show:

I made a special effort to come on the show today, because I have privately, amongst my friends and also in occasional newspapers and television shows, mentioned this show as being bad....it's not so much that it's bad, as it's hurting America.... See, the thing is, we need your help. Right now, you're helping the politicians and the corporations. And we're left out there to mow our lawns....No, no, no, you're not too rough on them. You're part of their strategies. You are partisan, what do you call it, hack.... the interesting thing I have is, you have a responsibility to the public discourse, and you fail miserably.⁸

In response, Carlson, obviously surprised by this critique, tried to make light of Stewart asking him to be funny which made Stewart respond, with real anger, that he was not their performing monkey.



Figure 15 Stewart on Crossfire in 2004⁹

Crossfire never recovered from the performance and was eventually cancelled several months later. In another parallel with Murrow, Stewart's confrontation with *Crossfire* is in some ways equivalent to Murrow's confrontation with McCarthy (and again later with his 1958 RTNDA speech). Both Stewart and Murrow in these events are examples of and explicit visions of what television news *should* be. It is a continuation of the supposed best traditions of the supragenre of television news (even if they are not real). Stewart is not complaining just that the guests and hosts of the show are divisive in themselves, but that the divisiveness is not in service of a higher ideal beyond ratings and commercial success. The responsibility of personalities on television news to a larger social function is something Stewart is able to avoid by self-identifying as a comedian. Unlike the talent on CNN, he suggests he is outside of that form and not responsible to the same standards of the operating mythologies in its industry.

Stewart's position as a comedian, or more broadly an entertainer, and not a news anchor is something he has tenaciously stuck too throughout his time as the host of *The Daily Show*. What makes this stance noteworthy though is he has steadfastly clung to it even when he has done very un-entertaining things that seem much more advocacy and politically minded. The first example of this could be seen during the Bush era when the daily news included stories of government sanctioned torture, military adventures abroad and a domestic upheaval. During this period *The Daily Show* was more than daily comedy program but was often the only place on corporate television where left leaning viewers could find a narrative of the news that was not either pro-government or simply unopinionated "balance."¹⁰

Stewart and *The Daily Show*'s apolitical approach was pushed to its limit however with his Rally To Restore Sanity in 2010. Along side with *The Daily Show* spinoff Steven Colbert (and his "simultaneous" Rally to Restore Fear), the rally on the National Mall was a call for America, in the motto of the rally, "Take It Down A Notch." Though following and clearly inspired by Glenn Beck's own "Restoring Honor" rally, Stewart claimed it was never meant as a response to Beck's events.¹¹ The Rally To Restore Sanity event itself was later criticized for not having much of a clear point at all. The speakers and performances calling for a range of things, from educational reform to tolerance, with none of the stances far removed from a moderate, reasonable sounding political middle ground. Stewart closed the rally with a speech where he promoted a vision of politics based on merging practices at the Holland Tunnel. Places like that, according to Stewart, represent the America where people work together, where is everywhere in the country "except for [DC] and cable television." In describing the goal of the rally, Stewart himself was not so clear:

So, uh, what exactly was this? I can't control what people think this was. I can only tell you my intentions. This was not a rally to ridicule people of faith or people of activism or

to look down our noses at the heartland or passionate argument or to suggest that times are not difficult and that we have nothing to fear. They are and we do. But we live now in hard times, not end times. (cheers) And we can have animus and not be enemies. But unfortunately, one of the main tools in delineating the two broke. The country's 24-hour politico-pundit-perpetual-conflictinator did not cause our problems, but its existence makes solving them that much harder. The press can hold its magnifying glass up to our problems, bringing them into focus, illuminating issues heretofore unseen, or they can use that magnifying glass to light ants on fire and then perhaps host a week of shows on the sudden, unexpected flaming ant epidemic. If we amplify everything, we hear nothing.¹²

Stewart was widely criticized following the rally, but not for his politics but the lack of any.

Fellow comedian Bill Maher quipped that if you are going to call thousands of people to the Mall for something you should make it about something.¹³ In a multi-segment, strangely combative interview with Rachel Maddow, Stewart admitted the rally was ill-conceived but did not relent on the idea that finding common ground and being reasonable were fine and respectable political goals. He also again returned to the idea he was not a political figure at all and just an entertainer, even suggesting that to look at him otherwise suggested a real problem in our political culture today.¹⁴

The point I want to make here again is that the basis for Stewart's major criticism are not systemic problems or unequal distribution of goods, but the cable television genre and its constant amplification of conflict over reasoned debate. Stewart often took the pose of a righteous critic, one still making jokes but speaking from a position of an unassailable moral authority. I believe this stance is what connects him to Murrow myth of using television news to bring about positive, yet responsible social change, but without calling for anything too abrasive or politically pointed. It is more a generalized critique that comes from a bemused world-weary outrage similar to the personas of other *The Daily Show* correspondents like Steve Colbert and John Oliver who have gone on to their own shows. Stewart however is still, oddly for a self-defined comedian, the widely seen heir to Murrow. In fact, when Stewart drew attention to

Congressional blocking of a 9/11 first responder's health care bill later in 2010, *New York Times* described his actions as having “echoes of Murrow.”¹⁵

In 'Daily Show' Role on 9/11 Bill, Echoes of Murrow - The ...
www.nytimes.com/2010/12/27/.../27stewart.html?... - The New York Times -
Dec 26, 2010 - Jon Stewart's role in pushing for a bill to provide health care for 9/11
responders has drawn comparisons to Edward R. Murrow.

Times compares Jon Stewart to Edward R. Murrow ... - Politico
www.politico.com/.../times_compares_stewart_to_murrow.html - Politico -
Dec 27, 2010 - The New York Times wonders whether Comedy Central's Jon Stewart is
a modern day Edward R. Murrow ...

It's true: Jon Stewart has become Edward R. Murrow (updated)
www.theatlantic.com/.../jon-stewart...edward-r-murrow.../973... - The Atlantic -
Mar 13, 2009 - Through karmic guidance, I sprang awake at the exact moment Jon
Stewart was beginning his merciless demolition of interview with Jim ...

Jon Stewart Gets Ultimate Liberal Praise: 'Modern-Day ...
www.mrc.org/.../jon-stewart-gets-ultimate-liberal-... - Media Research Center -
Dec 27, 2010 - ... Liberal Praise: 'Modern-Day Equivalent of Edward R. Murrow' ... A
prime example is comedian-activist Jon Stewart, host of "The Daily Show" ...

Jon Stewart 'The Modern-Day Equivalent Of Edward R ...
www.huffingtonpost.com/.../jon-stewart-the-modern... - The Huffington Post -
Dec 27, 2010 - And does that make that comedian, Jon Stewart -- despite all hi... ... Jon
Stewart 'The Modern-Day Equivalent Of Edward R. Murrow?': NYT.

Jon Stewart: Edward R. Murrow Incarnate, or Something ...
abcnews.go.com - Entertainment - ABC News -
Dec 27, 2010 - Jon Stewart: modern day Murrow or schizophrenic satirist? That
question (or something like it) is on the minds of many people after a New York ...

Is Jon Stewart Today's Edward R. Murrow? - The Wire
www.thewire.com/entertainment/.../jon-stewart...edward-r-murrow/21732... -
Dec 27, 2010 - Chronicling Jon Stewart's role in drawing national attention to the stalled
bill ... host could be "the modern-day equivalent of Edward R. Murrow.

Is Jon Stewart the next Edward R. Murrow? - The Week
... ..

Figure 16 Google search for "Jon Stewart" and "Edward R. Murrow"¹⁶

WITHER HISTORY IN TELEVISION HISTORY?

The reason I think Stewart and *The Daily Show* is a good place to end this dissertation and its examination of the role of history in 1990's 24-hour cable television news is two-fold. One, it shows how the performance of television news history, even in its most “superficial” performative way, is mostly done today outside 24-hour cable television news. While I have stretched further than the end of the 1990s in this consideration of Stewart, I do think there is no doubt that he is firmly in the tradition of television news that emerged from Murrow's first broadcast. The comparison to Murrow is apt in that he demonstrates many of the aspects of the Murrow myth I discussed in the introduction. Yet, though the comparison holds, those

similarities are skin deep. It is a performance of Murrow and, as seen in Stewart's constant claiming he is not a reporter, a performance that is not referring back to a known past as much as the concept of a ur-text. I have written throughout this study that the HNPs of the 1990s created an objective, known history for viewers and practitioners in order to forge conceptual concepts like time and current events together. With Stewart and other mock news shows we see the same forging of disparate elements, however around niche, already created audiences. *The Daily Show* is the final example of the "cloud history" I discussed at the end of the 1990s. Instead of connecting to a known, commonly shared historic past, *The Daily Show* connects to an identity, leaving for viewers to find their own information and instead giving them a perspective or take on events. Meanwhile the 24 hour cable television news form has lost any semblance of cohesion, focusing almost totally on political posturing and tabloid coverage.

The second reason I wished to end on a consideration of Stewart has to do with the field of television and media studies I have addressed this study towards. Stewart, faux-news, fandom (as demonstrated by the physical attendance of people to a rally held by a television figure), political expression, and formal readings of satire, are all topics around *The Daily Show* that have received a great deal of recent scrutiny by academics in the United States. Though extremely diverse, an underlying theme in these projects is the approach to popular culture championed by writers like Henry Jenkins that see media consumption and creation through non-hierarchical fan communities as forms of political expression. Under this theory, attending a rally held by a television personality is significant in that it is a political expression of some kind. *The Daily Show* has also led to writings about genre like a collection of essays about satire television edited by Jonathan Gray, Jeffrey P. Jones and Ethan Thompson. Within the "industry" of academia, there is a huge interest and demand for these kinds of perspectives. Scholars want to

write about them, students want to take classes on them and publishers want to publish about them.

I wish to suggest however without a significant historical understanding of the supragenre of television news, these kinds of analysis are deeply flawed. In many ways it is a return to the “remedial historiography” I outlined in the beginning of this study. By relying too much on the mere existence of the text, too much weight is given to television news in terms of its power to drastically change society or fundamental alter our collective understandings by merely existing. Yet we know that technology alone is not enough to change entrenched industrial, sociological and cultural forces. For example, at the time of this writing the video of the death of Eric Garner by NYPD officers and other video taped police shootings has made explicit the capriciousness and brutality of the police towards black men.¹⁷ These videos are unbelievable powerful and terrifying and are energizing people to take to the streets and demand action. However, the video themselves are surprisingly powerless and, as in the case with Eric Gardner, are not even enough to bring about indictments against the people who are seen to have caused his death.

In many ways, the overt visuality of these videos shows that the image is real, but is also powerless unless part of a specific structure of texts, like the genre of cable television news, that convey meaning and history through their deep, multifaceted backgrounds and connections. Media studies has powerful tools to understand texts, most of all is an ability to describe a given text’s historiography. Yet, we still do not know much about television news. I would warn against looking at it as either a minor, obvious programming form, or on the other hand, celebrate its new shapes and formulations as radical changes that represent drastic breaks from the past. I hope this study opens up new ways to consider television news for media scholars.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- “About : AEJMC.” Accessed January 13, 2015. <http://www.aejmc.org/home/about/>.
- “About Us.” *Media Matters for America*. Accessed August 9, 2014. <http://mediamatters.org/about>.
- Allen, Robert Clyde. *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled Television and Contemporary Criticism*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992. <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=880024>.
- Anderson, Chris. *The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business Is Selling Less of More*. New York: Hyperion, 2006.
- Anderson, Christopher. *Hollywood TV: The Studio System in the Fifties*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994.
- Andrea H. Tapia. “Technomillennialism: A Subcultural Response to the Technological Threat of Y2K.” *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 28, no. 4 (Autumn 2003): 483–512.
- April Eisman. “The Media of Manipulation: Patriotism and Propaganda – Mainstream News in the United States in the Weeks Following September 11.” *Critical Quarterly* 45, no. 1–2 (July 2003): 55–72.
- “A Report on Joseph McCarthy.” *See It Now*. CBS, March 9, 1954. UCLA - Film & Television Archive.
- Arnold Beichman. “Cold Water and Cold War Triumphalism.” In *CNN’s Cold War Documentary: Issues and Controversy*, edited by Arnold Beichman, 95–97. Stanford, Calif: Hoover Institution Press, 2000.
- Auletta, Ken. *Media Man: Ted Turner’s Improbable Empire*. 1st ed. Enterprise. New York: Norton, 2004.
- Barnett, Steven. *The Rise and Fall of Television Journalism: Just Wires and Lights in a Box?*. London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011.
- Barnouw, Erik. *The Image Empire: A History of Broadcasting in the United States, from 1953*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1970.
- Barthes, Roland, and Annette Lavers. *Mythologies*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1972.
- Baudrillard, Jean. *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.
- “Before Desert Shield.” *World Today*. CNN, August 1, 1991. UCLA - NAPA.
- Bernard Goldberg. “Networks Need a Reality Check.” *Wall Street Journal*, February 13, 1996.
- Bibb, Porter. *It Ain’t as Easy as It Looks: Ted Turner’s Amazing Story*. 1st ed. New York: Crown Publishers, 1993.
- Bissinger, Buzz. “Shattered Glass.” *Vanity Fair*, September 1, 1998. <http://www.vanityfair.com/magazine/archive/1998/09/bissinger199809>.
- Boddy, William. *Fifties Television: The Industry and Its Critics*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990.
- Bordwell, David, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson. *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960*. Reprint edition. Columbia University Press, 1985.
- Brian Stelter. “C-Span Founder to Step Down as Chief Executive.” *The New York Times*, March 19, 2012, sec. Business/Financial Desk.
- Brock, David, Ari Rabin-Havt, and Mediamatters.org. *The Fox Effect: How Roger Ailes Turned a Network into a Propaganda Machine*. New York: Anchor Books, 2012.

- Browne, Nick. "The Political Economy of the Television (Super) Text." In *American Television: New Directions in History and Theory*, 69–79. Routledge, 2013.
- Bush, George. *A World Transformed*. 1st ed. New York: Knopf; Distributed by Random House, 1998.
- Bush, George H. W. "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the Persian Gulf Crisis and the Federal Budget Deficit." US Congress, September 11, 1990.
http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2217&year=1990&month=9.
- Caldwell, John Thornton. *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008.
- . *Televisuality Style, Crisis, and Authority in American Television*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1995.
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=32732>.
- Carey, James W. *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*. Routledge, 2009.
- Carter, Bill, and Brian Stelter. "Jon Stewart's Advocacy Role in 9/11 Bill Passage." *The New York Times*, December 26, 2010, sec. Business Day / Media & Advertising.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/27/business/media/27stewart.html>.
- Catharine R. Stimpson. "The Culture War Continues." *Daedalus* 131, no. 3, On Education (Summer 2002): 36–40.
- Cathy Keen. "'Summer Of The Shark' In 2001 More Hype Than Fact, New Numbers Show." *University of Florida News*, February 18, 2002.
<http://news.ufl.edu/archive/2002/02/summer-of-the-shark-in-2001-more-hype-than-fact-new-numbers-show.html>.
- "CBS Persian Gulf War: Live Coverage." CBS, January 16, 1991. UCLA - Film & Television Archive.
- Charles Haddad, and Henry Unger. "Ted Turner: 'You Only Live Once'; Making a Megadeal: After Weeks of Talks, Time Warner Has Agreed to Buy; Turner Broadcasting, Creating the World's Largest Entertainment Company." *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, September 23, 1995, All edition, sec. Business.
- Charles Krauthammer. "CNN's Cold War: Twenty-Four Hours of Moral Equivalence." In *CNN's Cold War Documentary: Issues and Controversy*, edited by Arnold Beichman. Stanford, Calif: Hoover Institution Press, 2000.
- "CNN Persian Gulf War: Live Coverage." CNN, January 16, 1991. UCLA - NAPA.
CNN's Cold War Documentary: Issues and Controversy. Hoover Institution Press Publication, no. 466. Stanford, Calif: Hoover Institution Press, 2000.
- Curtin, Michael. *Redeeming the Wasteland: Television Documentary and Cold War Politics*. Rutgers University Press, 1995.
- Daniel Heim. "The Real Story on C-SPAN; Book Explores The Man Behind The Network." *Roll Call*, April 29, 2008, sec. Around The Hill Bookshelf.
<http://www.lexisnexis.com/lxacui2api/api/version1/getDocCui?lni=4SD1-YBV0-TX4S-C0VB&csi=270944,270077,11059,8411&hl=t&hv=t&hnsd=f&hns=t&hgn=t&oc=00240&perma=true>.
- David Carr, and Tim Arango. "A Fox Chief at the Pinnacle of Media and Politics." *New York Times*, January 9, 2010.
- David Rohde. "Ted Turner Plans a \$1 Billion Gift for U.N. Agencies." *New York Times*, September 19, 1997.

- Diane Ravitch. "Education After the Culture Wars." *Daedalus* 131, no. 3, On Education (Summer 2002): 5–21.
- Doherty, Thomas Patrick. *Cold War, Cool Medium: Television, McCarthyism, and American Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.
- Don Kaplan. "The Chandra Effect Boosts Cable News." *The New York Post*, August 2, 2001.
- Douglas Kellner. "The Persian Gulf TV War Revisted," n.d.
<http://pages.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/papers/gulfwarrevisited.htm>.
- Downing, Taylor. *The World at War*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; London: Palgrave Macmillan ; On behalf of the British Film Institute, 2012.
- Drew Juber. "The President on Trial; Television; Deliberations Have Appeal of Wreck You Rubberneck." *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, January 14, 1999.
<http://www.lexisnexis.com/lncui2api/api/version1/getDocCui?lni=3VJM-VSX0-0026-G52P&csi=270944,270077,11059,8411&hl=t&hv=t&hnsd=f&hns=t&hgn=t&oc=00240&perma=true>.
- Durham, Meenakshi Gigi, and Douglas Kellner. *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2001.
- Edward R. Murrow. "Keynote Address to the Radio and Television News Directors Association." presented at the Radio and Television News Directors Association, Chicago, IL, October 15, 1958.
- Elizabeth Mendes. *In U.S., Trust in Media Recovers Slightly From All-Time Low: More Americans Say Media Are Too Liberal than Too Conservative*. Gallup, September 19, 2013. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/164459/trust-media-recovers-slightly-time-low.aspx>.
- ESPN. "ESPN's SportsCentury Panel," n.d.
<https://espn.go.com/sportscenury/features/00016538.html>.
- "ESPN Editor Is Very Impressed With ESPN Event." *Deadspin*. Accessed August 10, 2014.
<http://deadspin.com/5587175/espn-editor-is-very-impressed-with-espn-event>.
- "ESPN Signs On." ESPN, September 7, 1979. Paley Center Collection.
- "ESPN Tenth Anniversary Special." ESPN, September 8, 1989. Paley Center Collection.
- "FAQ » Pressthink." Accessed January 13, 2015. <http://pressthink.org/faq/>.
- "Fifty Greatest Athletes: #49 OJ Simpson." *SportsCentury*. ESPN, January 29, 1999. Paley Center Collection.
- "Ford 50th Anniversary Show." CBS and NBC, June 13, 1953. UCLA - Film & Television Archive.
- Francis Fukuyama. "At the 'End of History' Still Stands Democracy." *Wall Street Journal*, June 6, 2014. <http://online.wsj.com/articles/at-the-end-of-history-still-stands-democracy-1402080661>.
- Frank Bruni. "The President's Decision: News Analysis; Of Principles And Politics." *The New York Times*, August 10, 2001, Section A; Column 4; National Desk; Pg. 1.
- Frantzich, Stephen E, and John Sullivan. *The C-Span Revolution*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996.
- Freeman, Michael. *ESPN: The Uncensored History*. Lanham, Md: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2001.
- Fukuyama, Francis. *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York; Toronto; New York: Free Press ; Maxwell Macmillan Canada ; Maxwell Macmillan International, 1992.
- Gans, Herbert J. *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time*. 2 edition. Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 2005.

- Gary Edgerton. "The Murrow Legend as Metaphor: The Creation, Appropriation, and Usefulness of Edward R. Murrow's Life Story." *Journal of American Culture* 15, no. 1 (March 1992): 75–91.
- George Clooney. *Good Night, and Good Luck*, 2005.
- George Rosen. "Ford's Half-Century TV Cavalcade: A 500g, 2-Web Star-Studded Jubilee." *Variety*, June 17, 1953.
- Gitlin, Todd. *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left, With a New Preface*. First Edition, With a New Preface edition. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003.
- Goldberg, Robert. *Citizen Turner: The Wild Rise of an American Tycoon*. 1st ed. New York: Harcourt Brace & Co, 1995.
- Howard Kurtz. "Media Defend Fascination With Story of Missing Intern." *The Washington Post*, July 10, 2001, STYLE; Pg. C01.
- . "News Media Sputter as Senate Slams the Door." *The Washington Post*, January 27, 1999. <http://www.lexisnexis.com/lncui2api/api/version1/getDocCui?lni=3VN6-TPY0-007D-J07Y&csi=270944,270077,11059,8411&hl=t&hv=t&hnsd=f&hns=t&hgn=t&oc=00240&perma=true>.
- "Humor Muted on Late-Night Shows." *USA Today*, September 17, 2001, sec. TV.
- Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.
- Hyatt, Michael S. *The Millennium Bug : How to Survive the Coming Chaos*. Ex-library edition. Washington, D.C. : Lanham, MD: Regnery Publishing, 1998.
- "Inside Politics, March 23, 1999." *Inside Politics*. CNN, March 23, 1999. UCLA - NAPA.
- Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1991.
- Jay Rosen. "The View from Nowhere." *Pressthink*, September 18, 2003. <http://archive.pressthink.org/2003/09/18/jennings.html>.
- . "The View from Nowhere: Questions and Answers." *Pressthink*, November 10, 2010. <http://pressthink.org/2010/11/the-view-from-nowhere-questions-and-answers/#p4>.
- Jeffrey P. Jones. "Fox News and the Performance of Ideology." *Cinema Journal* 51, no. 4 (Summer 2012): 178–85.
- Jenkins, Henry. *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture*. New York: New York University Press, 2006.
- Jennifer Holt. "Media Pipelines and Cloud Policy." In *Connected Viewing: Selling, Sharing, and Streaming Media in a Digital Age: Selling, Streaming, & Sharing Media in the Digital Age*, edited by Jennifer Holt and Kevin Sanson. Routledge, 2013.
- Jeremy Isaacs, and Taylor Downing. *Cold War: An Illustrated History, 1945-1991*. 1st edition. Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1998.
- Jim Valvano. "ESPY Awards Speech." Radio City Music Hall, March 4, 1993.
- Joe McGinniss. *The Selling of the The President, 1968*. London: Andre Deutsch Limited, 1970.
- John Caldwell. "Convergence Television: Aggregating Form and Repurposing Content in the Culture of Conglomeration." In *Television After TV: Essays On A Medium in Transition*, edited by Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson, 41–74. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.
- John Dempsey. "Time's Up For CNN." *Daily Variety*, July 10, 2001.
- John Raisian. Memo. "CNN's Cold War Documentary." Memo, May 2000.

- Jon Stewart. "Closing Speech." presented at the Rally To Restore Sanity, Washington DC, October 30, 2010.
- "Jon Stewart." *Crossfire*. CNN, October 15, 2004.
- "Jon Stewart." *The Rachel Maddow Show*. MSNBC, November 12, 2010.
- "Jon Stewart: The Most Trusted Name in Fake News." *Fresh Air*. NPR, October 4, 2010. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=130321994>.
- Julie Bosman. "California Denies Scored Journalist Stephen Glass Right to Practice Law." *New York Times*, January 27, 2014, sec. Media.
- Kakutani, Michiko. "The 9/11 Decade: Artists Respond to Sept. 11." *The New York Times*, September 1, 2011, sec. U.S. / 9/11 Anniversary. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/01/us/sept-11-reckoning/culture.html>.
- Katharine Q. Seelye. "Republicans Get a Pep Talk From Rush Limbaugh." *New York Times*, December 12, 1994.
- Katz, Elihu. "The End of Journalism? Notes on Watching the War." *Journal of Communication* 42, no. 3 (Summer 1992): 5–13.
- Kellner, Douglas. *Grand Theft 2000: Media Spectacle and a Stolen Election*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001.
- . *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics Between the Modern and the Postmodern*. Routledge, 1995.
- . *The Persian Gulf TV War*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1992.
- Larry Eichel. "Bush's Summer Slump? Once Energetic Presidency Seems out of Step with American Public." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 6, 2001, sec. Editorial.
- Larry Lebowitz. "Disney a Real Player; Acquisitions Turn Disney Into a Force." *St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)*, March 22, 1997, Three Star edition, sec. Sports.
- Leonard Doyle. "Iraqi Baby Atrocity Is Revealed as Myth." *The Independent*, January 12, 1992, sec. Foreign News Page.
- Liam Rector. "Reports from the Culture Wars: The Long, Hot, Barnburning Summer." *Harvard Review*, no. 2 (Fall 1992): 104–8.
- "Line in the Sand: War or Peace?" *ABC News Special*. ABC, January 14, 1991. UCLA - NAPA.
- Lotz, Amanda D. *The Television Will Be Revolutionized*. New York: New York University Press, 2007.
- Lotz, Amanda D. *The Television Will Be Revolutionized*. NYU Press, 2007.
- Mankekar, Purnima. *Screening Culture, Viewing Politics: An Ethnography of Television, Womanhood, and Nation in Postcolonial India*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999.
- Margaret Murray. "Y2K: A Personal History." *Math Horizons* 7, no. 2 (November 1999): 17–20.
- Mark Clothier. "CNN Unsure of Outside Influences." *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, December 29, 1999, sec. Business.
- Mark Landler. "Giuliani Pressures Time Warner to Transmit a Fox Channel." *New York Times*, October 4, 1996, sec. New York Region.
- Mary Ann Doane. "Information, Crisis, Catastrophe." In *Logics of Television: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, edited by Patricia Mellencamp, 222–39. London: BFI Books, 1990.
- Matt Chereffe. "Bill Maher's Harsh Critique of the Stewart/Colbert Rally." *Gawker*, November 6, 2010. <http://gawker.com/5683124/bill-mahers-harsh-critique-of-the-stewartcolbert-rally>.

- Mccarthy, Terry. "Why Can't We Be Friends?" *Time*, July 30, 2001.
<http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1000420,00.html>.
- McLuhan, Marshall, and Quentin Fiore. *The Medium Is the Massage*. 9th edition. Gingko Press, 2001.
- McLuhan, Marshall, and Lewis H. Lapham. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Reprint edition. Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1994.
- McLuhan, Marshall, and Bruce R Powers. *The Global Village: Transformations in World Life and Media in the 21st Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Michael Sicinski. "The Deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner: Documents of Barbarism." *MUBI*, December 9, 2014. <https://mubi.com/notebook/posts/the-deaths-of-michael-brown-and-eric-garner-documents-of-barbarism>.
- Michel Foucault. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History." translated by Paul Rabinow, 76–100. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.
- Miller, James A, and Tom Shales. *Those Guys Have All the Fun: Inside the World of ESPN*. New York: Back Bay Books, 2011.
- Mimi White. "'Reliving The Past Over and Over Again': Race, Gender, and Popular Memory in Homefront and I'll Fly Away." In *Living Color: Race and Television in the United States*, edited by Sasha Torres, 118–39. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998.
- Minow, Newton N. "Television and the Public Interest." presented at the National Association of Broadcasters, Washington DC, May 9, 1961.
<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/newtonminow.htm>.
- Mittell, Jason. *Genre and Television: From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture*. 1 edition. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Mullen, Megan Gwynne. *The Rise of Cable Programming in the United States: Revolution or Evolution?*. Texas Film and Media Studies Series. Austin, Tex: University of Texas Press, 2003.
- Murrow, Edward R, and Elmer Holmes Davis. *This Is London*,. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1941.
- Nagel, Thomas. *The View From Nowhere*. Reprint edition. Oxford University Press, 1989.
- National Communication Association. "What Is NCA?," n.d. <https://www.natcom.org/about/>.
- Naureckas, Jim. "Gulf War Coverage: The Worst Censorship Was At Home." *Extra!*, April 1991. <http://fair.org/extra-online-articles/gulf-war-coverage/>.
- Newcomb, Horace, and Paul M. Hirsch. "Television as a Cultural Forum," 1984.
<http://web.mit.edu/211.432/www/readings/tv%20as%20a%20cultural%20forum.pdf>.
- Nunberg, Geoffrey. "Since Sept. 11, We're Watching Our Words." *Los Angeles Times*, November 4, 2001. <http://articles.latimes.com/2001/nov/04/opinion/op-65510>.
- Olbermann, Keith. *The Big Show: Inside ESPN's Sportscenter*. New York: Atria, 1997.
- Olmstead, Kenneth. "How Americans Get TV News at Home." *Pew Research Center's Journalism Project*, October 11, 2013. <http://www.journalism.org/2013/10/11/how-americans-get-tv-news-at-home/>.
- Patrick J. Buchanan. "Address to the Republican National Convention." presented at the Republican National Convention, Houston, TX, August 17, 1992.
- "Persian Gulf War: NBC." *NBC Special Report*. NBC, January 16, 1991. UCLA - NAPA.
- Persico, Joseph E. *Edward R. Murrow: An American Original*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988.

- Plotz, David. "Stephen Glass Should Be a Lawyer." *Slate*, January 27, 2014.
http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/jurisprudence/2014/01/stephen_glass_of_shattered_glass_the_california_supreme_court_rejects_the.html.
- Postman, Neil. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. Revised edition. New York, N.Y., U.S.A: Penguin Books, 2005.
- "Postscript: Red Spring - The Sixties." *CNN Cold War Postscript*. CNN, January 17, 1999. UCLA - NAPA.
- Promotional Video. Cable Operators Programming Seminar Presentation Reel*, 1980.
- Rajiv Chandrasekaran. "Y2K? Y Indeed, Many Shrug; Local Crisis Groups Are Bugged at a Year 2000-Complacent Public." *The Washington Post*, August 4, 1999, Final edition.
- Randall, Eric. "The 'Death of Irony,' and Its Many Reincarnations." *The Wire*, September 9, 2011. <http://www.theatlanticwire.com/national/2011/09/death-irony-and-its-many-reincarnations/42298/>.
- Rasmussen, Bill. *Sports Junkies Rejoice!: The Birth of ESPN*. Hartsdale, N.Y.: QV Pub., 1983.
- "Red Spring: The Sixties." *Cold War*. CNN, January 17, 1999. UCLA - NAPA.
- Richard Pipes. "The Cold War: CNN's Version." In *CNN's Cold War Documentary: Issues and Controversy*, edited by Arnold Beichman, 44–55. Stanford, Calif: Hoover Institution Press, 2000.
- Richard Sandomir. "'A Big Pain' At ESPN Shifts Focus at MSNBC." *New York Times*, October 4, 1997, sec. B.
- . "TV Sports; ABC Sports Is Dead at 45; Stand By for ESPN." *New York Times*, August 11, 2006.
- Rob Brown. "For You, My Friend, The War Isn't Over." *The Independent*, November 24, 1997.
- Robert Bianco. "As a TV Event, Impeachment Hearings Fall Short." *USA Today*, December 14, 1998, Final edition, sec. Life.
- Rudy Martzke. "ABC Apologizes for Intro to 'Monday Night Football.'" *USA Today*, November 17, 2004, sec. Sports.
- Sally Quinn. "In Washington, That Letdown Feeling." *Washington Post*, November 2, 1998.
- Sari Horwitz, Scott Higham, and Sylvia Moreno. "Who Killed Chandra Levy? Chapter Nine: Media Frenzy." *The Washington Post*, July 22, 2008, sec. Metro.
- Scannell, Paddy. *Radio, Television, and Modern Life: A Phenomenological Approach*. Oxford, UK; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1996.
- . *Radio, Television & Modern Life: A Phenomenological Approach*. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996.
- Schiller, Dan. *Theorizing Communication : A History: A History*. Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Schwartz, Nick. "Stuart Scott's ESPYs Speech Was His Finest Television Moment." *For The Win*, July 17, 2014. <http://ftw.usatoday.com/2014/07/stuart-scott-espys-speech-ESPN-valvano-cancer>.
- Schwoch, James, Mimi White, and Susan Reilly. *Media Knowledge: Readings in Popular Culture, Pedagogy, and Critical Citizenship*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992.
- SDM. "Cable: CNN: Where Have All the Viewers Gone?" *Broadcasting (Archive: 1957-1993)*, July 1, 1991.
- Seib, Philip M. *Broadcasts from the Blitz: How Edward R. Murrow Helped Lead America into War*. Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2006.

- Sheppard, Si. *The Partisan Press: A History of Media Bias in the United States*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2008.
- Sloan Commission on Cable Communications. *On the Cable: The Television of Abundance; Report*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co, 1971.
- Society for Cinema and Media Studies. "About Us," n.d. http://www.cmstudies.org/?page=about_us.
- Spigel, Lynn. *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America*. 1 edition. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1992.
- "SportsCenter of the Decade: 1900-1949." *SportsCentury*. ESPN, June 18, 1999. Paley Center Collection.
- "SportsCenter of the Decade: The 1950s." *SportsCentury*. ESPN, June 25, 1999. Paley Center Collection.
- Steve Marantz. "The Mouse That Roars; Behind Disney's Cuddly Exterior Lurks a Hungry Giant Intent on Spinning Its Arrival on the Sports Landscape from Expansion into Domination." *The Sporting News*, December 23, 1996.
- Streeter, Thomas. *Selling the Air: A Critique of the Policy of Commercial Broadcasting in the United States*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Stuart Hall. "Encoding/Decoding." In *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*, edited by Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas Kellner, 163–72. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2006.
- Terry Lefton. "This Is SportsCenter." *Sports Business Journal*, September 19, 2005.
- "The Daily Show: September 20, 2001." *The Daily Show*, September 20, 2001.
- The Making of "The World At War."* DVD. The World At War, n.d.
- "The Shark Scare." *Wolf Blitz Reports*. CNN, September 3, 2001. <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0109/03/wbr.00.html>.
- The V Foundation. "ESPN, Founding Partner," n.d. <http://www.jimmyv.org/partners/espn-founding-partner/>.
- Thomas Schatz. *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking, and the Studio System*. First Edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981.
- Thomson, Irene Taviss. *Culture Wars and Enduring American Dilemmas*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010.
- Tom Shales. "Bush's Rare Appearance in The National Pulpit." *The Washington Post*, August 10, 2001, STYLE; TOM SHALES; Pg. C01.
- "USA Today Advertisement." CNN, January 17, 1999. UCLA - NAPA.
- Vivian Sobchack. "'Happy New Year and Auld Lang Syne': On Televisual Montage and Historical Consciousness." In *Reality Squared: Televisual Discourse on the Real*, edited by James Friedman, 92–116. New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2002.
- "War In The Gulf: A Look Back - Air War." *CNN Special Reports*. CNN, July 30, 1991. UCLA - Film & Television Archive.
- "War In The Gulf: A Look Back - Desert Shield." *CNN Special Reports*. CNN, July 29, 1991. UCLA - NAPA.
- "War In The Gulf: A Look Back - The Ground War." *CNN Special Reports*. CNN, July 31, 1991. UCLA - NAPA.
- "War In The Gulf: A Look Back - Victory." *CNN Special Reports*. CNN, August 1, 1991. UCLA - NAPA.
- "Washington Journal, March 25, 1998." C-SPAN, March 25, 1998. UCLA - NAPA.

- Whittemore, Hank. *CNN, The Inside Story*. 1st ed. Boston: Little, Brown, 1990.
- Wiener, Robert. *Live from Baghdad: Gathering News at Ground Zero*. 1st ed. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Williams, Christian. *Lead, Follow or Get out of the Way: The Story of Ted Turner*. New York: Times Books, 1981.
- Will Leitch. "The Worst Day in Sports (and the ESPYs) Is Finally Behind Us." *New York Magazine: The Sports Section*, July 15, 2010.
http://nymag.com/daily/sports/2010/07/the_worst_day_in_sports_and_th.html.
- "Year in Review - 1985." CNN, December 29, 1985. UCLA - NAPA.

INTRODUCTION

¹ Kenneth Olmstead, "How Americans Get TV News at Home," *Pew Research Center's Journalism Project*, October 11, 2013, 1, <http://www.journalism.org/2013/10/11/how-americans-get-tv-news-at-home/>.

² I will be using "network" to refer to what might be more accurately referred to as cable television channels, acknowledging that "network" is more traditionally used to refer to over-the-air broadcast networks (e.g., NBC, CBS, ABC, etc.). Due to the slippery nature of the language in these definitions, I will ask for the reader's understanding and that when I refer to broadcast networks, I will explicitly use the word "broadcast" to differentiate them from cable networks.

³ I refer to this specific vision of history as "big history," especially in the Chapter 1 and CNN's Gulf War historicizing coverage.

⁴ In the introduction to a reprint of McLuhan's *Understanding Media*, Lewis Lapham says McLuhan examined the "diktats of two technological revolutions that overthrew a settled political and aesthetic order". The first was the invention of movable type printing and the second was electronic media. McLuhan saw "insurgent technologies give rise to new structures of feeling and thought." Marshall McLuhan and Lewis H. Lapham, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, Reprint edition (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1994), xi–xii.

⁵ Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium Is the Massage*, 9th edition (Gingko Press, 2001).

⁶ It is not for nothing that McLuhan was telling the media studies professor that he "knew nothing" of his work considering the often vague and at times contradictory nature of his writings.

⁷ McLuhan and Lapham, *Understanding Media*.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 7–21.

⁹ Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

¹⁰ Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*, Revised edition (New York, N.Y., U.S.A: Penguin Books, 2005).

¹¹ John Thornton Caldwell, *Televisuality Style, Crisis, and Authority in American Television* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 338,
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=32732>.

¹² Ibid. Emphasis in original

¹³ Ibid., 318.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America*, 1 edition (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1992), 4.

¹⁶ An example of this is noted NYU Journalism Professor Jay Rosen's writing on his Pressthink blog. While often insightful, Rosen is often focused on journalism as an act. In the FAQ at Pressthink, Rosen answers the question "Is journalism an academic discipline?" with "Journalism is not a discipline the way history or psychology are, but the practice of it *takes* discipline, and its virtues are things I find virtuous in a writer, any writer, including citizens who may take up their pens. Accuracy, for example. If it's getting a street address right, that's a fairly simple matter. Accurately portraying how someone else thinks when it's not your experience, your world, your argument— way harder. And there's no method for that; it's a virtue, a discipline. Try it sometime, if the point seems unclear." "FAQ » Pressthink," accessed January 13, 2015, <http://pressthink.org/faq/>.

¹⁷ Consider the mission statement for the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC), founded in 1912 and consisting of some 3700 members: "AEJMC's mission is to promote the highest possible standards for journalism and mass communication education, to encourage the widest possible range of communication research, to encourage the implementation of a multi-cultural society in the classroom and curriculum, and to defend and maintain freedom of communication in an effort to achieve better professional practice, a better informed public, and wider human understanding." When not using communication studies approaches to mass media, the journalism studies part of the AEJMC is focused on results in better "professional practices". Audiences too are defined in terms of being more informed or "wider understanding", which is more results orientated than trying to understand how audiences are formed or created by journalism. "About : AEJMC," accessed January 13, 2015, <http://www.aejmc.org/home/about/>.

¹⁸ Herbert J. Gans, *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time*, 2 edition (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 2005).

¹⁹ Professional academic organizations like the National Communication Association (NCA) and the International Communication Association (ICA), like Communication Studies itself, are much too big to claim what all the scholars in them are like with any sense of confidence. For example, the NCA says they advance "Communication as the discipline that studies all forms, modes, media and consequences of communication through humanistic, social scientific and aesthetic inquiry." I still believe however it is possible to speak generally about trends in these fields as I explain in this section. National Communication Association, "What Is NCA?," n.d., <https://www.natcom.org/about/>.

²⁰ The rest of quote from Carey is very helpful for understanding the ritual view of communication: "...less as sending or gaining information and more as attending a mass, a situation in which nothing new is learned but in which a particular view of the world is portrayed and confirmed. News reading, and writing, is a ritual act and moreover a dramatic one. What is arrayed before the reader is not pure information-but a portrayal of the contending forces in the world.We do not encounter questions about the effect or functions of messages as such, but the role of presentation and involvement in the structuring of the reader's life and time. We recognize, as with religious rituals, that news changes little and yet is intrinsically satisfying; it

performs few functions yet is habitually consumed. Newspapers do not operate as a source of effects or functions but as dramatically satisfying, which is not to say pleasing, presentations of what the world at root is. And it is in this role—that of a text—that a newspaper is seen; like a Balinese cockfight, a Dickens novel, an Elizabethan drama, a student rally, it is a presentation of reality that gives life an overall form, order, and tone.” James W. Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (Routledge, 2009).

²¹ The mission statement of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS), the leading scholarly organization for media studies in the US, states in its first sentence that it is “dedicated to promoting a broad understanding of film, television, and related media through research and teaching grounded in the contemporary humanities tradition.” In contrast to the NCA statement where humanities is included as one approach amongst three (the other two being social science and aesthetics), we can see how media studies is much more humanities focus than other disciplines that look at media text. Society for Cinema and Media Studies, “About Us,” n.d., http://www.cmstudies.org/?page=about_us.

²² Douglas Kellner, *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics Between the Modern and the Postmodern* (Routledge, 1995), 24.

²³ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 3–4.

²⁶ James Schwoch, Mimi White, and Susan Reilly, *Media Knowledge: Readings in Popular Culture, Pedagogy, and Critical Citizenship* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 3.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

³⁰ Caldwell, *Televisuality Style, Crisis, and Authority in American Television*, 180.

³¹ Vivian Sobchack, “‘Happy New Year and Auld Lang Syne’: On Televisual Montage and Historical Consciousness,” in *Reality Squared: Televisual Discourse on the Real*, ed. James Friedman (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 93.

³² *Ibid.*, 103–104.

³³ *Ibid.*, 93.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 109.

³⁵ Purnima Mankekar, *Screening Culture, Viewing Politics: An Ethnography of Television, Womanhood, and Nation in Postcolonial India* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999), 49.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 54.

³⁸ Jason Mittell, *Genre and Television: From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture*, 1 edition (New York: Routledge, 2004).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, xi.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴¹ The ability of images (or spectacle) to “exceed” the narrative system of film is discussed a great deal in David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960*, Reprint edition (Columbia University Press, 1985). In thinking about the power of images to create history and meaning I am also thinking of

the following from John T. Caldwell: “People make images; cultures represent themselves with images; political interests contest images; oppositional groups appropriate images” in Caldwell, *Televsuality Style, Crisis, and Authority in American Television*, 338.

⁴² As an example of how an ur-text would “work”, in Neal Stephenson’s fictional novel *Snow Crash* he hypothesizes a mythological ur-language that is hardwired into the brains of every human as a baseline for human experience. The ur-language became a threat to humans during ancient times due to the ease in which a linguistic virus could spread, leading to the creation of multiple languages during the age of Babel.

⁴³ Roland Barthes and Annette Lavers, *Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 114.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁴⁵ Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” trans. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 77.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 83–86.

⁴⁸ Gary Edgerton, “The Murrow Legend as Metaphor: The Creation, Appropriation, and Usefulness of Edward R. Murrow’s Life Story,” *Journal of American Culture* 15, no. 1 (March 1992): 88.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Mentioned in several biographies of Murrow including Persico, Kendrick, and Edwards and suggested in the film *Good Night, and Good Luck*

⁵¹ Gary Edgerton, “The Murrow Legend as Metaphor: The Creation, Appropriation, and Usefulness of Edward R. Murrow’s Life Story,” 90.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 89.

⁵³ Philip M Seib, *Broadcasts from the Blitz: How Edward R. Murrow Helped Lead America into War* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2006), 2.

⁵⁴ In one of his reports, Murrow outlined the military uses of radio, but ended his report on its propoganda powers: “If you believe that this war will be decided on the home front, then you must believe that radio used as an instrument of war is one of the most powerful weapons a nation possesses. If you believe, as I do, that this war is being fought for the control of men’s minds, it is clear that radio will be a deciding factor. As employed by belligerent nations, it is the lash driving millions of questioning people backward toward an uncertain future. Truly there is danger in the air in Europe today, and the danger is not alone from bombing planes.” Edward R Murrow and Elmer Holmes Davis, *This Is London*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1941), 76.

⁵⁵ Seib, *Broadcasts from the Blitz*, 10.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, x.

⁵⁷ In the forward to a major biography of Murrow, author Joseph E. Persico describes Murrow’s life as “really two, stories, his own and the history of broadcast journalism. The two are inseparable”. Joseph E Persico, *Edward R. Murrow: An American Original* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988), x.

⁵⁸ Murrow’s editorial at the end of the broadcast: ending of the broadcast: “Earlier, the Senator asked, "Upon what meat does this, our Caesar, feed?" Had he looked three lines earlier in Shakespeare's Caesar, he would have found this line, which is not altogether inappropriate: "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves.

No one familiar with the history of this country can deny that congressional committees are useful. It is necessary to investigate before legislating, but the line between investigating and

persecuting is a very fine one and the junior Senator from Wisconsin has stepped over it repeatedly. His primary achievement has been in confusing the public mind as between the internal and the external threat of Communism. We must not confuse dissent with disloyalty. We must remember always that accusation is not proof and that conviction depends upon evidence and due process of law. We will not walk in fear, one of another. We will not be driven by fear into an age of unreason if we dig deep in our history and our doctrine, and remember that we are not descended from fearful men, not from men who feared to write, to speak, to associate and to defend causes which were for the moment unpopular.

This is no time for men who oppose Senator McCarthy's methods to keep silent, or for those who approve. We can deny our heritage and our history, but we cannot escape responsibility for the result. There is no way for a citizen of a republic to abdicate his responsibilities. As a nation we have come into our full inheritance at a tender age. We proclaim ourselves—as indeed we are—the defenders of freedom, what's left of it, but we cannot defend freedom abroad by deserting it at home. The actions of the junior senator from Wisconsin have caused alarm and dismay amongst our allies abroad and given considerable comfort to our enemies, and whose fault is that? Not really his, he didn't create this situation of fear, he merely exploited it and rather successfully. Cassius was right, 'The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves.' Good night, and good luck." "A Report on Joseph McCarthy," *See It Now* (CBS, March 9, 1954), UCLA - Film & Television Archive.

⁵⁹ Persico, *Edward R. Murrow*, 373.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Thomas Patrick Doherty, *Cold War, Cool Medium: Television, McCarthyism, and American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 163.

⁶² Ibid., 166.

⁶³ Erik Barnouw, *The Image Empire: A History of Broadcasting in the United States, from 1953* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 54.

⁶⁴ Doherty, *Cold War, Cool Medium*, 161–162.

⁶⁵ Barnouw credits the Murrow/McCarthy exchanges with both showing the viability of television for advertisers and encouraging network and advertiser moves away from the kind of controversial reporting Murrow produced. While seemingly paradoxical, it keeps with the larger narrative of the supragenre of television news balancing between controversial, hard hitting coverage and the need to be non-threatening and placid. Barnouw argues "the television excitements of 1953-55 and rising audience statistics were bring many new sponsors into television. They wanted television time and programs, but generally not of the *See It Now* type". Barnouw, *The Image Empire*, 184.

⁶⁶ "Ford 50th Anniversary Show" (CBS and NBC, June 13, 1953), UCLA - Film & Television Archive.

⁶⁷ The *Ford 50th Anniversary Show* was very similar to the David O. Selznick production *Light's Diamond Jubilee* which was sponsored by GE and celebrated the 75th anniversary of the lightbulb. The program aired on October 24, 1954 on all four broadcast channels at the time and has been written about by Christopher Anderson, *Hollywood TV: The Studio System in the Fifties* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994).

⁶⁸ George Rosen, "Ford's Half-Century TV Cavalcade: A 500g, 2-Web Star-Studded Jubilee," *Variety*, June 17, 1953.

⁶⁹ Image of the mushroom nuclear cloud is also seen in *Light's Diamond Jubilee*

⁷⁰ The speech ends with “This instrument can teach, it can illuminate; yes, and it can even inspire. But it can do so only to the extent that humans are determined to use it to those ends. Otherwise it is merely wires and lights in a box. There is a great and perhaps decisive battle to be fought against ignorance, intolerance and indifference. This weapon of television could be useful.” Edward R. Murrow, “Keynote Address to the Radio and Television News Directors Association” (presented at the Radio and Television News Directors Association, Chicago, IL, October 15, 1958).

⁷¹ William Boddy also suggests it was no a wholly original view in that it also “echoed the ‘elitist’ television critics” of the time. William Boddy, *Fifties Television: The Industry and Its Critics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 207.

⁷² George Clooney, *Good Night, and Good Luck*, 2005.

⁷³ Barnouw, *The Image Empire*.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 8–18.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 17–18.

CHAPTER 1

¹ Newton N. Minow, “Television and the Public Interest” (presented at the National Association of Broadcasters, Washington DC, May 9, 1961),

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/newtonminow.htm>.

² Amanda D. Lotz, *The Television Will Be Revolutionized* (NYU Press, 2007).

³ Thomas Streeeter, *Selling the Air: A Critique of the Policy of Commercial Broadcasting in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 270.

⁴ Megan Gwynne Mullen, *The Rise of Cable Programming in the United States: Revolution or Evolution?*, Texas Film and Media Studies Series (Austin, Tex: University of Texas Press, 2003), 64.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁶ Sloan Commission on Cable Communications, *On the Cable: The Television of Abundance; Report* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co, 1971); Mullen, *The Rise of Cable Programming in the United States*, 69–71.

⁷ Mullen, *The Rise of Cable Programming in the United States*, 73.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹⁰ Streeeter, *Selling the Air: A Critique of the Policy of Commercial Broadcasting in the United States*, 3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹² *Ibid.*, 21.

¹³ Mullen, *The Rise of Cable Programming in the United States*, 64.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁶ Streeeter, *Selling the Air: A Critique of the Policy of Commercial Broadcasting in the United States*, 175.

¹⁷ Streeeter argues the rise of cable “was not a radical change in industry structure towards entrepreneurialism but rather a series of incremental adjustments within the existing

oligopolistic, enter-periphery, advertising-supported system of electronic media. Cable has not revolutionized the basic corporate liberal structure of television; it has been integrated within it.” Ibid.

¹⁸ According to Mullen, “the mid-1970s cable operators, particularly MSOs without ties to the communities they served, had very little incentive to offer any thing but the cheapest, most readily available, and most popular types of programming.” Mullen, *The Rise of Cable Programming in the United States*, 92.

¹⁹ Hank Whittemore, *CNN, The Inside Story*, 1st ed (Boston: Little, Brown, 1990), 118.

²⁰ Mullen, *The Rise of Cable Programming in the United States*, 112.

²¹ Ken Auletta, *Media Man: Ted Turner’s Improbable Empire*, 1st ed, Enterprise (New York: Norton, 2004); Porter Bibb, *It Ain’t as Easy as It Looks: Ted Turner’s Amazing Story*, 1st ed (New York: Crown Publishers, 1993); Robert Goldberg, *Citizen Turner: The Wild Rise of an American Tycoon*, 1st ed (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co, 1995); Christian Williams, *Lead, Follow or Get out of the Way: The Story of Ted Turner* (New York: Times Books, 1981).

²² Whittemore, *CNN, The Inside Story*, 18.

²³ Ibid., 24.

²⁴ Ibid., 12–13.

²⁵ Ibid., 18.

²⁶ Ibid., 32.

²⁷ Ibid., 34.

²⁸ As reported by Whittemore. Ibid., 35–36.

²⁹ Ibid., 22.

³⁰ Ibid., 56. Emphasis in original.

³¹ Ibid., 61.

³² Ibid., 118.

³³ Ibid., 49.

³⁴ Auletta, *Media Man*, 46.

³⁵ Whittemore, *CNN, The Inside Story*, 156.

³⁶ *Promotional Video. Cable Operators Programming Seminar Presentation Reel*, 1980.

³⁷ Cable networks make a profit through the advertising and subscription rates they charge cable providers. I will discuss this in more detail in the following chapter on ESPN.

³⁸ Whittemore, *CNN, The Inside Story*, 236. Emphasis in original.

³⁹ While acknowledging that “broadcasting” and “cablecasting” are technically very different processes, the experience of consuming (and even often producing) their content is very similar. In that regard and with respect to the technical differences, I believe this history of broadcasting by Scannell is very applicable to the history of cable television.

⁴⁰ Paddy Scannell, *Radio, Television & Modern Life: A Phenomenological Approach* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996), 3.

⁴¹ Ibid., 7.

⁴² Horace Newcomb and Paul M. Hirsch, “Television as a Cultural Forum,” 1984, <http://web.mit.edu/211.432/www/readings/tv%20as%20a%20cultural%20forum.pdf>; Nick Browne, “The Political Economy of the Television (Super) Text,” in *American Television: New Directions in History and Theory* (Routledge, 2013), 69–79.

⁴³ Scannell, *Radio, Television & Modern Life: A Phenomenological Approach*, 15.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 13.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 15.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 16.

⁴⁷ *Promotional Video. Cable Operators Programming Seminar Presentation Reel.*

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Scannell, *Radio, Television & Modern Life: A Phenomenological Approach*, 5.

⁵⁰ Robert Clyde Allen, *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled Television and Contemporary Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992),

<http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=880024>. NEED MORE?

⁵¹ Both in terms of the coverage before, during and after the conflict. For example, Douglas Kellner called CNN's nightly news program on the military buildup *Crisis in the Gulf* "the most jingoistic and militarist program during the first months of the confrontation," a new distinction for a cable network. Kellner has also called the ensuing war one of the first televised events of the global village in which the entire world watched a military spectacle unfold via global TV satellite networks." Douglas Kellner, *The Persian Gulf TV War* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 86; Douglas Kellner, "The Persian Gulf TV War Revisited," n.d., <http://pages.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/papers/gulfwarrevisited.htm>.

⁵² Scannell, *Radio, Television & Modern Life: A Phenomenological Approach*, 21.

⁵³ Michael Curtin, *Redeeming the Wasteland: Television Documentary and Cold War Politics* (Rutgers University Press, 1995).

⁵⁴ Dan Schiller, *Theorizing Communication: A History: A History* (Oxford University Press, 1996), 79. Quote from citation

⁵⁵ "Year in Review - 1985" (CNN, December 29, 1985), UCLA - NAPA.

⁵⁶ George Bush, *A World Transformed*, 1st ed (New York: Knopf; Distributed by Random House, 1998); George H. W. Bush, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the Persian Gulf Crisis and the Federal Budget Deficit" (US Congress, September 11, 1990), http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2217&year=1990&month=9.

⁵⁷ A key example of the human rights/police action framing of the conflict is the later discredited "Nayirah" testimony to the US Congressional Human Rights Caucus on October 10, 1990. A young girl who gave her name as Nayirah testified to seeing Iraq soldiers removing babies from incubators and leaving them to die. The story was cited by several senators and President Bush as the reason to liberate Kuwait, but was later found to be unsubstantiated and part of a professional pro-Kuwaiti public relations campaign. Leonard Doyle, "Iraqi Baby Atrocity Is Revealed as Myth," *The Independent*, January 12, 1992, sec. Foreign News Page.

⁵⁸ Elihu Katz, "The End of Journalism? Notes on Watching the War," *Journal of Communication* 42, no. 3 (Summer 1992): 5-13.

⁵⁹ Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*.

⁶⁰ "Line in the Sand: War or Peace?," *ABC News Special* (ABC, January 14, 1991), UCLA - NAPA.

⁶¹ Jim Naureckas, "Gulf War Coverage: The Worst Censorship Was At Home," *Extra!*, April 1991, <http://fair.org/extra-online-articles/gulf-war-coverage/>.

⁶² It is interesting to note that FAIR is criticizing American media for doing something very similar to what Murrow did in his coverage of WW2 in terms of "advocacy" reporting. I think this demonstrates how Murrow acts as a ur-text for television news more in an abstracted, rather than a specific, sense.

-
- ⁶³ Robert Wiener, *Live from Baghdad: Gathering News at Ground Zero*, 1st ed (New York: Doubleday, 1992).
- ⁶⁴ “CNN Persian Gulf War: Live Coverage” (CNN, January 16, 1991), UCLA - NAPA.
- ⁶⁵ “Persian Gulf War: NBC,” *NBC Special Report* (NBC, January 16, 1991), UCLA - NAPA.
- ⁶⁶ CNN Broadcast (1991). Screenshots by Sudeep Sharma.
- ⁶⁷ “CBS Persian Gulf War: Live Coverage” (CBS, January 16, 1991), UCLA - Film & Television Archive.
- ⁶⁸ CBS Broadcast (January 17, 1991). Screenshot by Sudeep Sharma.
- ⁶⁹ “CNN Persian Gulf War: Live Coverage.”
- ⁷⁰ Katz, “The End of Journalism? Notes on Watching the War,” 5–6.
- ⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 5.
- ⁷² SDM, “Cable: CNN: Where Have All the Viewers Gone?,” *Broadcasting (Archive: 1957-1993)*, July 1, 1991.
- ⁷³ “Before Desert Shield,” *World Today* (CNN, August 1, 1991), UCLA - NAPA.
- ⁷⁴ The end of this series was an hour long special report hosted by John Holliman on the one year anniversary of the US bombing entitled “Iraq: One Year Later”. The existence of *another* historic special gives one the idea of how much historicizing CNN engaged in the short time after the war.
- ⁷⁵ “War In The Gulf: A Look Back - Desert Shield,” *CNN Special Reports* (CNN, July 29, 1991), UCLA - NAPA; “War In The Gulf: A Look Back - Air War,” *CNN Special Reports* (CNN, July 30, 1991), UCLA - Film & Television Archive; “War In The Gulf: A Look Back - The Ground War,” *CNN Special Reports* (CNN, July 31, 1991), UCLA - NAPA; “War In The Gulf: A Look Back - Victory,” *CNN Special Reports* (CNN, August 1, 1991), UCLA - NAPA.
- ⁷⁶ “War In The Gulf: A Look Back - Air War.”
- ⁷⁷ “War In The Gulf: A Look Back - The Ground War.”
- ⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 2

- ¹ Whittemore, *CNN, The Inside Story*, 22.
- ² To say there were no models for all sports news programming is an overstatement. Public access cable and local television news would often have limited programming based on a local sports team (one of which was the basis of the “da Bears” parody on Saturday Night Live). The most widely known syndicated, broadcast national program however was *The George Michael Sports Machine*, which first aired in 1984, several years after the launch of ESPN.
- ³ Mary Ann Doane, “Information, Crisis, Catastrophe,” in *Logics of Television: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, ed. Patricia Mellencamp (London: BFI Books, 1990), 223.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 233.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, 227.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, 238.
- ⁹ Caldwell, *Televisuality Style, Crisis, and Authority in American Television*, 27–31.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 30. My emphasis

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² The Munich Olympics attack that resulted in the death of Israeli athletes is the most obvious “sports catastrophe,” however other than the venue and the victims it had little to do with sports.

¹³ Rasmussen background and motivations in creating ESPN is provided in Michael Freeman, *ESPN: The Uncensored History* (Lanham, Md: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2001); James A Miller and Tom Shales, *Those Guys Have All the Fun: Inside the World of ESPN* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2011); Bill Rasmussen, *Sports Junkies Rejoice!: The Birth of ESPN* (Hartsdale, N.Y.: QV Pub., 1983).

¹⁴ Mullen, *The Rise of Cable Programming in the United States*.

¹⁵ Rasmussen, *Sports Junkies Rejoice!*, 74.

¹⁶ Ibid., 75.

¹⁷ While dismissive to entirely base ESPN’s dominance of sports on the luck of getting in very early, Rasmussen himself doesn’t seem to dismiss it. Much of Rasmussen’s memoir is focused on the teaching the ability of cable satellites, more than anything having to do with television production in general. Again, compared to Ted Turner, Rasmussen was not an entertainment/media visionary as much as a lucky businessman.

¹⁸ Locking the rights to the SASTCOM 1 transponder was so monumental to Rasmussen and the network that his book includes the complete telegram and contract from RCA guaranteeing it.

¹⁹ Miller and Shales, *Those Guys Have All the Fun*, 15–25; Also mentioned in Freeman, *ESPN*.

²⁰ Rasmussen, *Sports Junkies Rejoice!*, 174.

²¹ Ibid., 183.

²² Paddy Scannell, *Radio, Television, and Modern Life: A Phenomenological Approach* (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1996).

²³ “ESPN Signs On” (ESPN, September 7, 1979), Paley Center Collection.

²⁴ ESPN broadcast (1979). Screen shot by Sudeep Sharma

²⁵ Lee Leonard asks NCCA president Flynn why college football cannot have a playoff system like college basketball, a common question for the next thirty years.

²⁶ “ESPN Tenth Anniversary Special” (ESPN, September 8, 1989), Paley Center Collection.

²⁷ Ten years later, the 1990s “All Decade Awards” would be one of the major draws for athletes, celebrities and viewers for the ESPY Awards in 1999.

²⁸ Caldwell, *Televisuality Style, Crisis, and Authority in American Television*, 5–11.

²⁹ John Thornton Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008).

³⁰ Larry Lebowitz, “Disney a Real Player; Acquisitions Turn Disney Into a Force,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)*, March 22, 1997, Three Star edition, sec. Sports.

³¹ In 2006, ABC Sports was shuttered as a separate division and all sports broadcasting on the channel was under the “ESPN on ABC” banner, further extending the channel’s reach beyond the flagship. Richard Sandomir, “TV Sports; ABC Sports Is Dead at 45; Stand By for ESPN,” *New York Times*, August 11, 2006.

³² A thorough look at examples of sports / Disney synergy can be found in Steve Marantz, “The Mouse That Roars; Behind Disney’s Cuddly Exterior Lurks a Hungry Giant Intent on Spinning Its Arrival on the Sports Landscape from Expansion into Domination,” *The Sporting News*, December 23, 1996.

³³ Rudy Martzke, “ABC Apologizes for Intro to ‘Monday Night Football,’” *USA Today*, November 17, 2004, sec. Sports.

-
- ³⁴ Lotz, *The Television Will Be Revolutionized*, 2007, 108–109.
- ³⁵ Miller and Shales, *Those Guys Have All the Fun*, 165.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 172.
- ³⁷ Keith Olbermann, *The Big Show: Inside ESPN's Sportscenter* (New York: Atria, 1997); Richard Sandomir, "'A Big Pain' At ESPN Shifts Focus at MSNBC," *New York Times*, October 4, 1997, sec. B. Sandomir discusses the jocularly of the show.
- ³⁸ Terry Lefton, "This Is SportsCenter," *Sports Business Journal*, September 19, 2005.
- ³⁹ Richard Sandomir, "'A Big Pain' At ESPN Shifts Focus at MSNBC."
- ⁴⁰ Will Leitch, "The Worst Day in Sports (and the ESPYs) Is Finally Behind Us," *New York Magazine: The Sports Section*, July 15, 2010, http://nymag.com/daily/sports/2010/07/the_worst_day_in_sports_and_th.html; "ESPN Editor Is Very Impressed With ESPN Event," *Deadspin*, accessed August 10, 2014, <http://deadspin.com/5587175/espn-editor-is-very-impressed-with-espn-event>.
- ⁴¹ Miller and Shales, *Those Guys Have All the Fun*, 448.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, 248.
- ⁴³ Jim Valvano, "ESPY Awards Speech" (Radio City Music Hall, March 4, 1993).
- ⁴⁴ Miller and Shales, *Those Guys Have All the Fun*, 251.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 252.
- ⁴⁶ At the 2014 ESPY Awards, long time ESPN anchor Stuart Scott was awarded the Jimmy V Award for Perseverance and also emotionally discussed his own ongoing, long time public battle with cancer. Scott passed away in January 2015. Nick Schwartz, "Stuart Scott's ESPYs Speech Was His Finest Television Moment," *For The Win*, July 17, 2014, <http://ftw.usatoday.com/2014/07/stuart-scott-espys-speech-espn-valvano-cancer>.
- ⁴⁷ The V Foundation, "ESPN, Founding Partner," n.d., <http://www.jimmyv.org/partners/espn-founding-partner/>. Screen shot by Sudeep Sharma.
- ⁴⁸ Miller and Shales, *Those Guys Have All the Fun*, 446.
- ⁴⁹ "SportsCenter of the Decade: The 1950s," *SportsCentury* (ESPN, June 25, 1999), Paley Center Collection.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁵¹ Mimi White, "'Reliving The Past Over and Over Again': Race, Gender, and Popular Memory in Homefront and I'll Fly Away," in *Living Color: Race and Television in the United States*, ed. Sasha Torres (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 119.
- ⁵² "SportsCenter of the Decade: 1900-1949," *SportsCentury* (ESPN, June 18, 1999), Paley Center Collection.
- ⁵³ The set seems to be an allusion to the *New York Times* from the *The Kingdom and the Power* era
- ⁵⁴ ESPN broadcast. Screen shot by Sudeep Sharma.
- ⁵⁵ ESPN broadcast. Screen shot by Sudeep Sharma.
- ⁵⁶ Mimi White, "'Reliving The Past Over and Over Again': Race, Gender, and Popular Memory in Homefront and I'll Fly Away," 121.
- ⁵⁷ These conversations are often referred to as "G.O.A.T." conversations for "greatest of all time."
- ⁵⁸ ESPN, "ESPN's SportsCentury Panel," n.d., <https://espn.go.com/sportscentury/features/00016538.html>. The experts highlighted out of the total group included reporters from competing outlets: "Donna Lopiano (Women's Sports

Foundation), David Halberstam (journalist), Anita DeFrantz (IOC Vice President), Robert Lipsyte (New York Times), Curt Gowdy (legendary broadcaster) Bryant Gumbel (CBS/HBO commentator), George Will (political commentator), the late Jim Murray (Los Angeles Times), Bob Costas (NBC commentator) and Steve Bornstein (ESPN Chairman & CEO, and ABC Sports President).”

⁵⁹ The top five athletes on the top fifty list were (in order) Michael Jordan, Babe Ruth, Muhammad Ali, Jim Brown and Wayne Gretzky.

⁶⁰ “Fifty Greatest Athletes: #49 OJ Simpson,” *SportsCentury* (ESPN, January 29, 1999), Paley Center Collection.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Caldwell, *Televisuality Style, Crisis, and Authority in American Television*, 30.

CHAPTER 3

¹ “Culture War” is a term that has been in used in many circumstances to describe a clash between worldviews that may occasionally explode into violence but is mostly expressed in other forms. In the US it was almost entirely limited to social and cultural clashes that played out in politics, but with limited acts of violence. To name another example of a “culture war” would be that of the 1980s/90s India which did become extremely violent at times. Purnima Mankekar has written about India’s Culture Wars and how the entertainment programs on state run television were a battlefield in the struggles in Mankekar, *Screening Culture, Viewing Politics*.

² Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left, With a New Preface*, First Edition, With a New Preface edition (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), xx.

³ Irene Taviss Thomson, *Culture Wars and Enduring American Dilemmas* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010). Irene Taviss Thompson argues talk of a decade long culture war in the US is overblown and there do not exist singular ideas that unite Liberals and Conservatives against each other. Instead a majority of Americans actually hold moderate views. I still believe the divides presented on television news, though perhaps not reflected in actual citizens, are significant in in how that was presented as a political shorthand for viewers.

⁴ Patrick J. Buchanan, “Address to the Republican National Convention” (presented at the Republican National Convention, Houston, TX, August 17, 1992).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Other examples of this kind of thinking would be George Bush’s criticism of the Fox show *The Simpsons* as portraying the American family in negative terms and Vice President Dan Quayle’s of the lead character in *Murphy Brown* deciding to have a child out of wedlock.

⁷ For example in 1992, for the first time ever, both major political parties had planks on how arts funding should be decided, with Republicans saying no “obscene or blasphemous art” should be federally funded and Democrats holding to no such restrictions.

⁸ As one writer has argued: “[H]igher education has been prominent in the culture wars, at once a source of dissent and experimentation, a strategic target, and a provider of warriors for the Right, Left, and center. Higher education has mattered because it maintains and produces masses of intellectual capital and because it recruits and trains human capital, including a national and

international elite.” Catharine R. Stimpson, “The Culture War Continues,” *Daedalus* 131, no. 3, On Education (Summer 2002): 36–40.

⁹ A strong, in-depth summary of critical media and cultural studies can be found in Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas Kellner, *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 1–29.

¹⁰ Stuart Hall, “Encoding/Decoding,” in *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*, ed. Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas Kellner (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2006), 163–72.

¹¹ Emphasis in original. *Ibid.*, 171.

¹² *Ibid.*, 172.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 173.

¹⁴ Even liberal education historian Diane Ravitch has suggested that turning away from controversy and traditional “white male heroes” has created a “curriculum without content” and underpreparing American youth as inheritors to their shared cultural legacy. Diane Ravitch, “Education After the Culture Wars,” *Daedalus* 131, no. 3, On Education (Summer 2002): 5–21.

¹⁵ Though not specifically referring to the media, Pat Robertson in a 1992 fundraising letter to members of the Christian Coalition wrote: “The feminist agenda is not about equal rights for women. It is about a socialist, anti-family political movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism, and become lesbians.” Quoted in Liam Rector, “Reports from the Culture Wars: The Long, Hot, Barnburning Summer,” *Harvard Review*, no. 2 (Fall 1992): 104–8.

¹⁶ Bernard Goldberg, “Networks Need a Reality Check,” *Wall Street Journal*, February 13, 1996.

¹⁷ Herbert Gans’s *Deciding the News* was an earlier, social science analysis of this question of liberal bias in newsrooms by focusing on the demographic data of journalists at newspapers and television news broadcasts and hypothesizing how the similarities of members in the group could lead to slanted coverage. Gans, *Deciding What’s News*.

¹⁸ Elizabeth Mendes, *In U.S., Trust in Media Recovers Slightly From All-Time Low: More Americans Say Media Are Too Liberal than Too Conservative* (Gallup, September 19, 2013), <http://www.gallup.com/poll/164459/trust-media-recovers-slightly-time-low.aspx>.

¹⁹ At a speech to freshman Republican House members, Limbaugh was named an Honorary Member of the 1994 Congress and warned the lawmakers to watch out for the liberal beltway media looking to take them down. Katharine Q. Seelye, “Republicans Get a Pep Talk From Rush Limbaugh,” *New York Times*, December 12, 1994.

²⁰ While the rise of Fox News might make this formulation seem incorrect, it is interesting to note a broad textual divide between radio/audio media being mostly on the right and television/visual media on the left. I think this could be a rich subject for future study.

²¹ Si Sheppard, *The Partisan Press: A History of Media Bias in the United States* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2008).

²² David Carr and Tim Arango, “A Fox Chief at the Pinnacle of Media and Politics,” *New York Times*, January 9, 2010; Joe McGinniss, *The Selling of the The President, 1968* (London: Andre Deutsch Limited, 1970), 63.

²³ Joe McGinniss, *The Selling of the The President, 1968*, 72–76. Includes a memo from Ailes about the events.

²⁴ One of the long standing and in-depth critics of conservative media has been Media Matters for America, a “Web-based, not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) progressive research and information center dedicated to comprehensively monitoring, analyzing, and correcting conservative misinformation

in the U.S. media.” “About Us,” *Media Matters for America*, accessed August 9, 2014, <http://mediamatters.org/about>.

²⁵ David Brock, Ari Rabin-Havt, and Mediamatters.org, *The Fox Effect: How Roger Ailes Turned a Network into a Propaganda Machine* (New York: Anchor Books, 2012), 37.

²⁶ Douglas Kellner, *Grand Theft 2000: Media Spectacle and a Stolen Election* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 124.

²⁷ Steven Barnett, *The Rise and Fall of Television Journalism: Just Wires and Lights in a Box?* (London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011), 216.

²⁸ Mark Landler, “Giuliani Pressures Time Warner to Transmit a Fox Channel,” *New York Times*, October 4, 1996, sec. New York Region.

²⁹ During the period of 1994-1996, Turner was in talks to buy CBS, NBC, and Turner itself possibly being taken over by Time Warner and even possibly Rupert Murdoch

³⁰ Charles Haddad and Henry Unger, “Ted Turner: ‘You Only Live Once’; Making a Megadeal: After Weeks of Talks, Time Warner Has Agreed to Buy; Turner Broadcasting, Creating the World’s Largest Entertainment Company.,” *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, September 23, 1995, All edition, sec. Business.

³¹ Turner’s donation to the UN was the largest since the original grant of land from Nelson Rockefeller for its New York headquarters. Some say it was the largest private donation in world history. David Rohde, “Ted Turner Plans a \$1 Billion Gift for U.N. Agencies,” *New York Times*, September 19, 1997.

³² Rob Brown, “For You, My Friend, The War Isn’t Over,” *The Independent*, November 24, 1997.

³³ *The World at War*. Screen shot by Sudeep Sharma.

³⁴ Taylor Downing, *The World at War* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; London: Palgrave Macmillan ; On behalf of the British Film Institute, 2012).

³⁵ *The Making of “The World At War,”* DVD, *The World At War*, n.d.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ This was 1998, so there is as hopeful, breathless quality to these explanations of online capabilities. The site is still up at cnn.com/specials/cold.war

³⁸ Jeremy Isaacs and Taylor Downing, *Cold War: An Illustrated History, 1945-1991*, 1st edition (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1998).

³⁹ “Red Spring: The Sixties,” *Cold War* (CNN, January 17, 1999), UCLA - NAPA.

⁴⁰ “Postscript: Red Spring - The Sixties,” *CNN Cold War Postscript* (CNN, January 17, 1999), UCLA - NAPA.

⁴¹ One interesting moment in the story is a quick shot of Walesa in the countryside at a casual moment wearing a CNN t-shirt, creating an odd moment where CNN’s logo is on the screen in two places: on the subject and on the bottom of the screen as a chyron.

⁴² CNN broadcast. Screen shot by Sudeep Sharma.

⁴³ All quotes from “Postscript: Red Spring - The Sixties.”

⁴⁴ Reprinted in Arnold Beichman, “Cold Water and Cold War Triumphalism,” in *CNN’s Cold War Documentary: Issues and Controversy*, ed. Arnold Beichman (Stanford, Calif: Hoover Institution Press, 2000), 95.

⁴⁵ From a *Washington Post* October 30, 1998 column, reprinted in Charles Krauthammer, “CNN’s Cold War: Twenty-Four Hours of Moral Equivalence,” in *CNN’s Cold War*

Documentary: Issues and Controversy, ed. Arnold Beichman (Stanford, Calif: Hoover Institution Press, 2000), 113.

⁴⁶ Reprints of letters to *Commentary*, July-August 1999. *CNN's Cold War Documentary: Issues and Controversy*, Hoover Institution Press Publication, no. 466 (Stanford, Calif: Hoover Institution Press, 2000), 20–25.

⁴⁷ John Raisian, “CNN’s Cold War Documentary,” Memo, (May 2000).

⁴⁸ *CNN's Cold War Documentary*, xiv.

⁴⁹ Richard Pipes, “The Cold War: CNN’s Version,” in *CNN's Cold War Documentary: Issues and Controversy*, ed. Arnold Beichman (Stanford, Calif: Hoover Institution Press, 2000), 54.

⁵⁰ The Beichman text also focuses a great deal on the Issacs and Downing text *Cold War: An Illustrated History, 1945-1991* as well.

⁵¹ It was during this scuffle between media moguls that Turner compared Murdoch to Hitler.

⁵² Jeffrey P. Jones, “Fox News and the Performance of Ideology,” *Cinema Journal* 51, no. 4 (Summer 2012): 178–85.

⁵³ Marshall McLuhan and Bruce R Powers, *The Global Village: Transformations in World Life and Media in the 21st Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

⁵⁴ “USA Today Advertisement” (CNN, January 17, 1999), UCLA - NAPA.

CHAPTER 4

¹ Both images are stock images for cloud computing available at Shutterstock.

² Henry Jenkins, *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

³ Chris Anderson, *The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business Is Selling Less of More* (New York: Hyperion, 2006).

⁴ Jennifer Holt, “Media Pipelines and Cloud Policy,” in *Connected Viewing: Selling, Sharing, and Streaming Media in a Digital Age: Selling, Streaming, & Sharing Media in the Digital Age*, ed. Jennifer Holt and Kevin Sanson (Routledge, 2013).

⁵ “Inside Politics, March 23, 1999,” *Inside Politics* (CNN, March 23, 1999), UCLA - NAPA.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York; Toronto; New York: Free Press ; Maxwell Macmillan Canada ; Maxwell Macmillan International, 1992).

⁸ Francis Fukuyama, “At the ‘End of History’ Still Stands Democracy,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 6, 2014, <http://online.wsj.com/articles/at-the-end-of-history-still-stands-democracy-1402080661>.

⁹ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991).

¹⁰ Samuel P Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

¹¹ Stephen E Frantzich and John Sullivan, *The C-Span Revolution* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996).

¹² Brian Stelter, “C-Span Founder to Step Down as Chief Executive,” *The New York Times*, March 19, 2012, sec. Business/Financial Desk.

¹³ Stephen Frantzich, an author of a book on Brian Lamb, describes his style, and by extension the entire channel, as “the midpoint between Dan Rather and Mike Wallace, a ‘gotcha’ journalist, and Larry King, a puffball journalist... [Lamb] is more in the center: ‘I want information. Give me the facts ... and we’ll let the audience decide if you make sense.’” Quote from Daniel Heim, “The Real Story on C-SPAN; Book Explores The Man Behind The Network,” *Roll Call*, April 29, 2008, sec. Around The Hill Bookshelf, <http://www.lexisnexis.com/lxacui2api/api/version1/getDocCui?lni=4SD1-YBV0-TX4S-C0VB&csi=270944,270077,11059,8411&hl=t&hv=t&hnsd=f&hns=t&hgn=t&oc=00240&perma=true>.

¹⁴ “Washington Journal, March 25, 1998” (C-SPAN, March 25, 1998), UCLA - NAPA.

¹⁵ Howard Kurtz, “News Media Sputter as Senate Slams the Door,” *The Washington Post*, January 27, 1999, <http://www.lexisnexis.com/lxacui2api/api/version1/getDocCui?lni=3VN6-TPY0-007D->

[J07Y&csi=270944,270077,11059,8411&hl=t&hv=t&hnsd=f&hns=t&hgn=t&oc=00240&perma=true](http://www.lexisnexis.com/lxacui2api/api/version1/getDocCui?lni=3VN6-TPY0-007D-J07Y&csi=270944,270077,11059,8411&hl=t&hv=t&hnsd=f&hns=t&hgn=t&oc=00240&perma=true). While other networks were livid by the Senate decision to have some close door session, Lamb’s objections were more of disappointment in the lack of faith in sunshine in government affairs.

¹⁶ C-SPAN broadcast. Screen shot by Sudeep Sharma

¹⁷ Buzz Bissinger, “Shattered Glass,” *Vanity Fair*, September 1, 1998, <http://www.vanityfair.com/magazine/archive/1998/09/bissinger199809>. Bissinger’s article was the basis for the film *Shattered Glass* and is widely regarded as the definitive telling of the Glass affair.

¹⁸ Julie Bosman, “California Denies Scored Journalist Stephen Glass Right to Practice Law,” *New York Times*, January 27, 2014, sec. Media.

¹⁹ David Plotz, “Stephen Glass Should Be a Lawyer,” *Slate*, January 27, 2014, http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/jurisprudence/2014/01/stephen_glass_of_shattered_glass_the_california_supreme_court_rejects_the.html.

²⁰ Drew Jubera, “The President on Trial; Television; Deliberations Have Appeal of Wreck You Rubberneck,” *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, January 14, 1999, <http://www.lexisnexis.com/lxacui2api/api/version1/getDocCui?lni=3VJM-VSX0-0026-G52P&csi=270944,270077,11059,8411&hl=t&hv=t&hnsd=f&hns=t&hgn=t&oc=00240&perma=true>.

²¹ Robert Bianco, “As a TV Event, Impeachment Hearings Fall Short,” *USA Today*, December 14, 1998, Final edition, sec. Life.

²² Sally Quinn, “In Washington, That Letdown Feeling,” *Washington Post*, November 2, 1998.

²³ Margaret Murray, “Y2K: A Personal History,” *Math Horizons* 7, no. 2 (November 1999): 17–20. Recounts her father writing a book about the issue in 1984

²⁴ Michael S. Hyatt, *The Millennium Bug : How to Survive the Coming Chaos*, Ex-library edition (Washington, D.C. : Lanham, MD: Regnery Publishing, 1998); “Washington Journal, March 25, 1998.”

²⁵ Andrea H. Tapia, “Technomillennialism: A Subcultural Response to the Technological Threat of Y2K,” *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 28, no. 4 (Autumn 2003): 483–512. This study looked at three subcultures (evangelical Christians, militia survivalists and computer programmers) and how they saw the Y2K bug through their own filter based on beliefs and values related to technology and its role in society.

-
- ²⁶ Rajiv Chandrasekaran, “Y2K? Y Indeed, Many Shrug; Local Crisis Groups Are Bugged at a Year 2000-Complacent Public,” *The Washington Post*, August 4, 1999, Final edition.
- ²⁷ Mark Clothier, “CNN Unsure of Outside Influences,” *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, December 29, 1999, sec. Business.
- ²⁸ Kellner, *Grand Theft 2000*, 1.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, 2. Also cites studies that found the media as a whole tilted towards Bush
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 130.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 128.
- ³² *Ibid.*, 128–129.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, 129.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.* Cites Schiller 1999 and McChesney 2000
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 125.
- ³⁶ Amanda D Lotz, *The Television Will Be Revolutionized* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 36.
- ³⁷ Sari Horwitz, Scott Higham, and Sylvia Moreno, “Who Killed Chandra Levy? Chapter Nine: Media Frenzy,” *The Washington Post*, July 22, 2008, sec. Metro.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*
- ³⁹ Howard Kurtz, “Media Defend Fascination With Story of Missing Intern,” *The Washington Post*, July 10, 2001, STYLE; Pg. C01.
- ⁴⁰ John Dempsey, “Time’s Up For CNN,” *Daily Variety*, July 10, 2001.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴² Don Kaplan, “The Chandra Effect Boosts Cable News,” *The New York Post*, August 2, 2001.
- ⁴³ John Dempsey, “Time’s Up For CNN.”
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁵ John Caldwell, “Convergence Television: Aggregating Form and Repurposing Content in the Culture of Conglomeration,” in *Television After TV: Essays On A Medium in Transition*, ed. Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 61.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 64.
- ⁴⁷ April Eisman, “The Media of Manipulation: Patriotism and Propaganda – Mainstream News in the United States in the Weeks Following September 11,” *Critical Quarterly* 45, no. 1–2 (July 2003): 55–72.
- ⁴⁸ Terry Mccarthy, “Why Can’t We Be Friends?,” *Time*, July 30, 2001, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1000420,00.html>.
- ⁴⁹ “The Shark Scare,” *Wolf Blitzer Reports* (CNN, September 3, 2001), <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0109/03/wbr.00.html>.
- ⁵⁰ Cathy Keen, “‘Summer Of The Shark’ In 2001 More Hype Than Fact, New Numbers Show,” *University of Florida News*, February 18, 2002, <http://news.ufl.edu/archive/2002/02/summer-of-the-shark-in-2001-more-hype-than-fact-new-numbers-show.html>.
- ⁵¹ John Caldwell, “Convergence Television: Aggregating Form and Repurposing Content in the Culture of Conglomeration,” 64.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*
- ⁵³ Thomas Nagel, *The View From Nowhere*, Reprint edition (Oxford University Press, 1989); Jay Rosen, “The View from Nowhere,” *Pressthink*, September 18, 2003, <http://archive.pressthink.org/2003/09/18/jennings.html>.

⁵⁴ Jay Rosen, "The View from Nowhere: Questions and Answers," *Pressthink*, November 10, 2010, <http://pressthink.org/2010/11/the-view-from-nowhere-questions-and-answers/#p4>.

⁵⁵ Larry Eichel, "Bush's Summer Slump? Once Energetic Presidency Seems out of Step with American Public.," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 6, 2001, sec. Editorial. In a prescient aside the author remarks: "Bush would benefit, as well, from a strong, reassuring performance in the face of international crisis or national tragedy. On that front, history assures us, he'll get his chance, sooner or later."

⁵⁶ Frank Bruni, "The President's Decision: News Analysis; Of Principles And Politics," *The New York Times*, August 10, 2001, Section A; Column 4; National Desk; Pg. 1.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Tom Shales, "Bush's Rare Appearance in The National Pulpit," *The Washington Post*, August 10, 2001, STYLE; TOM SHALES; Pg. C01.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

¹ Thomas Schatz, *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking, and the Studio System*, First Edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981), 38.

² Geoffrey Nunberg, "Since Sept. 11, We're Watching Our Words," *Los Angeles Times*, November 4, 2001, <http://articles.latimes.com/2001/nov/04/opinion/op-65510>.

³ Michiko Kakutani, "The 9/11 Decade: Artists Respond to Sept. 11," *The New York Times*, September 1, 2011, sec. U.S. / 9/11 Anniversary, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/01/us/sept-11-reckoning/culture.html>.

⁴ Sample headlines included "Hugging up 76,000 Percent" and "Not Knowing What Else To Do, Woman Bakes American-Flag Cake"

⁵ Eric Randall, "The 'Death of Irony,' and Its Many Reincarnations," *The Wire*, September 9, 2011, <http://www.theatlanticwire.com/national/2011/09/death-irony-and-its-many-reincarnations/42298/>.

⁶ "Humor Muted on Late-Night Shows," *USA Today*, September 17, 2001, sec. TV.

⁷ "The Daily Show: September 20, 2001," *The Daily Show*, September 20, 2001.

⁸ "Jon Stewart," *Crossfire* (CNN, October 15, 2004).

⁹ CNN broadcast. Screen shot by Sudeep Sharma

¹⁰ Some of suggest the financial success at the box office of Micheal Moore's documentary *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004) was due in part that there was very little *popular culture* available that the directly criticized the dominate narrative of Bush's foreign policy.

¹¹ "Jon Stewart: The Most Trusted Name in Fake News," *Fresh Air* (NPR, October 4, 2010), <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=130321994>.

¹² Jon Stewart, "Closing Speech" (presented at the Rally To Restore Sanity, Washington DC, October 30, 2010).

¹³ Matt Chernetes, "Bill Maher's Harsh Critique of the Stewart/Colbert Rally," *Gawker*, November 6, 2010, <http://gawker.com/5683124/bill-mahers-harsh-critique-of-the-stewartcolbert-rally>.

¹⁴ "Jon Stewart," *The Rachel Maddow Show* (MSNBC, November 12, 2010).

¹⁵ Bill Carter and Brian Stelter, “Jon Stewart’s Advocacy Role in 9/11 Bill Passage,” *The New York Times*, December 26, 2010, sec. Business Day / Media & Advertising, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/27/business/media/27stewart.html>.

¹⁶ Screen shot by Sudeep Sharma

¹⁷ Film critic and scholar Michael Sicinski has written on how the video of Eric Garner’s death is the most powerful film of 2014. While not an artwork, he writes that it calls in question what is art for in a world of such brutality. In my opinion his consideration of this specific video of a real death that occurred in real time in context with the possibilities of constructed artistic expression is an example of the beauty and enormous possibility of media studies when turned to “reality” as in television news. Michael Sicinski, “The Deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner: Documents of Barbarism,” *MUBI*, December 9, 2014, <https://mubi.com/notebook/posts/the-deaths-of-michael-brown-and-eric-garner-documents-of-barbarism>.