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# Destabilized Artistry in the Rhetorical Presidency

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## **Destabilized Artistry in the Rhetorical Presidency**

The presidency was once a carefully scripted and carefully controlled site of speech production. Today's media environment has not lessened efforts at control, but it has rendered these efforts increasingly problematic. Previously disruptive and disfluent ways of speaking now serve a useful role in presidential address, allowing mass-mediated audiences to apprehend the presidency in ways that appear to be more intimate and more authentic than careful scripting allows. In response to this new and fast-evolving rhetorical landscape, this essay argues that rhetorical scholars should attend not only to traditional forms of presidential public address but also to moments of presidential disfluency. Hesitations, corrections, awkward pauses, botched colloquialisms—all are unexplored and potentially important sites for rhetorical inquiry.

*Key Words: literacy, orality, paralanguage, presidential rhetoric, public address, rhetorical criticism, rhetorical presidency, speech disfluency, vocal political aesthetics.*

## Destabilized Artistry in the Rhetorical Presidency

In oratory, the very cardinal sin is to depart from the language of everyday life.

–Cicero

### Presidents and Plebeians

New media continue to smash old barriers between official and ordinary public cultures.<sup>1</sup> Whether it is the oratory of an American president or the antics of an American Idol, the speech and action of today's elected officials are routinely dispersed in a dynamic collage of sound bites, disjointed images, and instantaneous commentaries, all of which are in turn available for reuse by ordinary citizens as they navigate day-to-day public affairs.<sup>2</sup> Realizing this, some rhetorical critics have shifted their attention from the established eloquence of “good men speaking well” to the imitative public discourse of ordinary citizen-subjects, suggesting that the art of persuasion in mass-mediated democracy might have less to do with an orator's ability to sway an audience than with an audience's tendency to recycle and revise portions of an oration in their everyday talk.<sup>3</sup>

This essay argues that the opposite is also true. In addition to plebeians who sometimes sound like presidents, we have presidents who sometimes sound like plebeians. In addition to ordinary citizens who skillfully affect the rhetorical conventions of official public culture, we have speakers-in-chief who regularly stammer their way through quotidian forms of address. Much to the embarrassment of professional

politicians (and usually to the amusement of their mass audiences), official public discourse is often perforated with moments of everyday talk. Hesitations, corrections, awkward pauses, botched colloquialisms—all have a tendency to crop up and, more often than not, to interrupt otherwise high-flown bouts of oratory.

How are rhetorical scholars, with their taste for artfully wrought public speech, to account for these interruptions? There are at least two answers to this question. The first originates in the biblical tradition of *sermo humilis*, gains momentum in Europe's vernacular revolution, finds a modern analogue in Dickens' portrayal of Uriah Heep, and culminates in what Pierre Bourdieu describes as "strategies of condescension."<sup>4</sup> From the Bible to Bourdieu, official rhetorical culture has thrived on deliberate and wildly cunning appropriations of the low style, often in an effort to secure public authority, or, at the very least, to rally popular opinion.<sup>5</sup>

Consider, for instance, the shift in presidential speaking styles that occurred in the early-twentieth century. "Before 1901, presidents spoke in the orotund style. Men like Grover Cleveland and William McKinley sounded in today's terms like Shakespearean actors: affected, mannered, staged, bombastic, and pretentious. R's were trilled, consonants were emphasized, vowels were wavered, and most phrases were declaimed, thus ending with a triumphant up note," Greg Goodale notes. "After the turn of the century, candidates for political office in the United States switched to plain speaking, and in particular a variant that to twenty-first-century ears sounds like an instructional style. The plain style rejected grace, ornament, embellishment, and affectation, and sounded sincere because it was less theatrical, less rehearsed, and less artificial than orotund speech. This style sounded to voters during the elections of 1908 and 1912 a lot

like their own voices and thus appropriately American and manly.”<sup>6</sup> Goaded by a variety of social, cultural, and technological changes, early-twentieth-century American presidents became artists of everyday talk, deriving much of their public authority from strategic appropriations of common, colloquial ways of speaking.

The second way to account for hesitations, corrections, awkward pauses, and other moments of disfluency in official public discourse is no less rangy. From the malapropisms of Mrs. Malaprop to the spoonerisms of Reverend Spooner to the “bushisms” of America’s forty-third president, one thing is certain: although many of today’s speakers-in-chief continue to affect the low or humble style, and often to great political advantage, many of their lowest, most humbling rhetorical moments are accidental, having little to do with the strategic aims of their discourse.

It is here, in the realm of rhetorical accident, that this essay takes its start. As we aim to demonstrate, many of these rhetorical accidents are symptomatic of the unruly and increasingly fractious relationship between literacy and orality in the Western rhetorical tradition. From Plato to radio to YouTube, the art of public address continues to endure disconnects between its written past (speech as text), its performative present (speech as utterance), and its recorded future (speech as transcript). And many of these disconnects, as we argue in this essay, are unexplored opportunities for rhetorical inquiry.

Our essay proceeds in three parts. First, we consider a brief example of the connections between literacy, orality, disfluency, and the presidency. We then analyze this example with specific attention to the issues of intimacy, authenticity, legibility, and vocal political aesthetics. We conclude with a discussion of what analysis of this sort

might mean for rhetorical critics who take seriously the implications of disfluency in public address.

### Reading in Public

Recall Aristotle's use of the term *hypokrisis*. It was a variation on the Greek *hypokritēs*—the term for a stage-actor and thus for someone pretending to be what they are not. Delivering a speech was for Aristotle akin to acting out a part, specifically that of the *logographos*, the speechwriter, or, to keep it theatrical, the playwright.<sup>7</sup> Like theatrical performance, rhetorical delivery consisted in the embodiment of a script, a “fleshing out” of sorts in which the written word gave way to the visual and auditory codes of spoken discourse.

This tradition of delivery resurfaced in the elocutionary rhetorics of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. From Mason's *Essay on Elocution* (1748) to Austin's *Chironomia* (1806), elocutionary manuals and anthologies helped provincials, women, and other socio-linguistically marginalized groups learn how to speak like educated English elites. Self-control, moderated sentiment, an accent not their own—stage-acting was the name of the game, and one learned to play it by reading texts aloud. When read aloud, polite literature promised to teach subaltern individuals and groups how to speak and act like proper English men and women.<sup>8</sup>

By the early-nineteenth century, the art of public speaking was beginning to function as it often does today—namely, as the art of reading in public. As presidents and other political actors continue to load their speeches into teleprompters, the art of public address continues to become the art of electronically mediated recitation. Persuasive

artistry of this sort requires different, albeit related, skills than those required of extemporaneous speaking. Nowhere have these rhetorical skills been more apparent than in presidential address, as Sarah Palin recently reminded the American public with her critique of Barack Obama's teleprompter usage (albeit only days before she was caught reading from the palm of her own hand).<sup>9</sup> And nowhere have these skills been less apparent than in the rhetoric of everyday life. Indeed, when it comes to delivery, what routinely happens at the level of official political culture rarely occurs in local forums of collective life. For better and for worse, much of the rhetoric of everyday life is completely unscripted. *Dianoia, lexis, hypokrisis*—all are usually off the cuff. And, not surprisingly, all are usually in complete disarray.<sup>10</sup>

But oratorical messes are not limited to pep rallies, wedding toasts, and PTA meetings. Every now and again, they find their way into the rhetoric of high-ranking public officials. Consider, for instance, David Letterman's recently retired segment on "Great Moments in Presidential Speeches." The setup was always the same. First, audiences heard FDR on "fear itself." Next, JFK on "what you can do for your country." And finally, some wayward rhetorical moments with George W. Bush, the disfluency of which is easily captured using transcription methods characteristic of discourse analysis: "Let me just remind you where we have been (.) through." "Our people have done really a great job (.) of (.) hauling in a lot of the key operators: Kaliek Sheikh Mohammed, Abu Zabeta, Ramsey Al- (.) uh (.) Ra- (.) Ramsey Al Shee::b or >whatever the guy's name was<." "My da::d (.) like many of your rel- uh uh folk uh who got relatives here (2.3) many of you (.) whose relatives (.) did the same thing (.) who are (1.4) you're here, they're relative- probably aren't."<sup>11</sup>

We could go on citing examples, but the point seems clear enough, especially in the case of George W. Bush: no script, no eloquence.<sup>12</sup> What made this segment funny was its attention to the discrepancy between George W. Bush and the enunciative modality of the American presidency. Not only did Bush lack the eloquence of previous presidents, notably FDR and JFK, but he lacked a simple competency in basic English. Moreover, because the eloquence of Roosevelt and Kennedy helped to establish and legitimate their executive abilities, establishing presidential speech as a marker of presidential authority, Bush also seemed to lack the stature and leadership qualities of his predecessors.

What makes this discrepancy between George W. Bush and the enunciative modality of the American president especially relevant to this essay is the media bias on which it depends. Literacy, not orality, is the key to eloquence. The truth of presidential speech is not in spoken discourse but on the teleprompter. Sticking to the script, as the clips of FDR and JFK well illustrate, is the recipe for persuasion. What, then, was Letterman suggesting when he routinely prefaced the babbling Bush with two of his most fluent predecessors? The suggestion is not that Bush cannot speak, but that Bush cannot read. It is his potential illiteracy as a president more than his actual ineloquence as a speaker that cracks us up.

Consider, again, his blunders. Sure, enunciation is an issue. His talk is riddled with hesitations, repairs, awkward pauses, and other paralinguistic flaws. But its salient feature—its defining failure—is *linguistic*. At issue in “Great Moments in Presidential Speeches” is not only Bush’s poor delivery, but also his failure to arrive at proper words and phrases. *Dianoia* and *lexis* are his shortcomings; *hypokrisis* merely follows suit.



What is laughable is his lack of thought content and verbal style—maybe even more so than the performance in which this lack becomes legible.

### From Pathology to Authenticity

The American presidency has always been a rhetorical institution.<sup>13</sup> But it has not always been rhetorical in the same ways.<sup>14</sup> In the early republic, for instance, presidents delivered fewer public speeches and were more careful with their words. Because their oratory was often scripted, it also tended to be less spontaneous. As the institution developed, and as mass media increasingly focused on the presidency, it became more obviously transparent, allowing more of the president's actions to become more apparent to more American citizens than ever before.<sup>15</sup> Even Lincoln's beard (or the lack thereof) could become a matter of public concern.<sup>16</sup>

By the early-twentieth century, the presidency and the media were expanding side by side. As the former gained political power, the latter granted it increased coverage.<sup>17</sup> That Letterman's segment on "Great Moments in Presidential Speeches" routinely began with a clip from FDR is in keeping with this tandem growth. Emboldened by his facility in managing both print and electronic media, FDR was the first president to create a library dedicated to the presidency and the first president to collect and publish the entire corpus of his presidential papers. Both of these self-promotions did important political work, helping to establish the presidency as the rhetorical and political epicenter of American history and American politics.<sup>18</sup> Every president since Roosevelt has continued the practice, which now occurs at a spectacularly accelerated pace. The papers and

addresses of American presidents now become available to the public almost in real time.<sup>19</sup>

But there is an important difference between the published discourse of FDR and that of more recent American presidents: FDR's papers and addresses were carefully edited. While all (or nearly all) of his public speeches are included in the 13 volumes of his papers, almost all of the press conferences, for instance, are excerpted. And the "official" versions of his speeches include very few, if any, of his extemporaneous remarks. All of the glitches and corrections that might have occurred—indeed, that must have occurred, even from as talented a speaker as he—are noticeably absent. Perhaps there would not have been many errors of this sort, for the president, conscious as few other chief executives have been of the power of his discourse, seems to have chosen his words carefully and generally read from prepared texts. Even so, with the health of his presidency intimately connected to the fluency of his speech, concerns about his personal health waxing and waning according to the fluency of his speech,<sup>20</sup> it is no surprise that the Roosevelt presidency, as understood through his public papers, is verbally seamless, eloquent, and carefully scripted.

While Harry Truman was famous for his tendency to depart from such scripts, the public record of his presidency—as with most of FDR's successors—is notable for both the comprehensive nature of the texts, which purport to be full records of the presidency, and for the formality of the entries. The presidency, viewed through these records, is a remarkably staid institution. Even as the presidential style became more vernacular, less formal, more conversational, the public papers present a formal, seamless rhetoric, suitable for the presidency as the central governing mechanism of the nation.<sup>21</sup>

While those papers still present this view of the presidency, beginning with the Johnson and Nixon administrations—and with the increasing incursion of television into the presidency—other views also became available.<sup>22</sup> Most scholarly attention has focused on the visual elements of television in developing our understanding of this shift, but also worth noting here are the immediate, auditory aspects of television. By making the spoken discourse of American presidents almost immediately available to mass audiences, more examples of presidential disfluency could enter into American public culture. Somewhat accordingly, the president began to seem more prone to the verbal slips and glitches characteristic of everyday talk.

Initially, this increased access to presidential disfluency disturbed the American public. As ordinary citizens gained access to the “private” or “human” side of the president, they also learned that the president’s human side was not all they could wish for in a speaker-in-chief, especially one who was, after all, the leader of the free world. Coverage of the Johnson years, for instance, was notable for the discomfort it caused by the crossing the traditional private/public divide. His surgical scar depicted as a map of Vietnam, images of Johnson picking up his beagles, Him and Her, by their ears—these images not only satisfied the curiosity of Americans but also, paradoxically, offended their sensibilities.<sup>23</sup>

By the end of the Nixon administration, this sort of unwitting self-revelation had become a sign of presidential pathology. This is partly because the protections once afforded to private citizens who became presidents were almost completely gone by the time Nixon began his presidency, resulting in the disclosure of personal and political dimensions of the office as never before.<sup>24</sup> But it had more to do with Nixon himself,

who was clearly one of the most uncomfortable public figures ever to appear in the presidential limelight. In March of 1973, for instance, an increasingly embattled Richard Nixon delivered a speech before a group of state legislators. Losing support in the nation's capital, he needed to buttress that support elsewhere, so he made a brief appearance before the assemblage, the evident purpose of which was to address issues of the federal budget and his promises concerning revenue sharing. His discourse, which was of substantially greater interest to state legislators than to ordinary citizens, was interrupted by the following peculiar biographical glitch:

As I indicated a few moments ago, our spending for domestic programs is double what it was 4 years ago. So, the priorities have been changed, and they should have been changed.

How were we able to change them? Why have we had success in our new dialog with the People's Republic of China, in our new relations with the Russians? I will tell you why. It isn't because Chou En-lai liked my handshake. And it isn't because I particularly liked vodka. I don't. I think it is a lousy drink. I don't like champagne either. There are other things I do like, but not those two.

The point I make is that it is simply because, when the President of the United States went to Peking, the government that rules one-fourth of all of the people in the world, when the President of the United States, for the first time, went to Moscow, the government that rules one of the most powerful nations the world has ever seen in terms of nuclear power and so forth, he was received there, he was able to negotiate because he represented a nation that was strong and a nation that was respected.

The day you send the President of the United States into the ring with a leader of any powerful country as the leader of the second strongest nation in the world, then you are in deep trouble.<sup>25</sup>

Nixon, in the middle of an effort to convince state legislators that his presidency was vibrant and worthy of their continued support, now supplied them with evidence that it was neither. After inserting a throw away reference to vodka, the president refused to

throw the reference away. One can almost hear him thinking, “I mentioned vodka, but they’ll think I’m a drunk; shouldn’t have done that; shouldn’t have said I don’t like vodka; there might be vodka drinkers in the room; they’ll think I’m a teetotaler; Americans don’t like teetotalers; I do drink scotch; maybe I should say that...” We have all experienced such horrific moments in our daily communication, digging ourselves into one hole, and then, while trying to climb out, inadvertently stumbling into another.

But Nixon recovered, if we can call it recovery, in a very different way. There is no evidence of nervous laughter or backtracking or any other repair strategies. Instead, he retreated to the third person and becomes “The President.” This locution was characteristic of the 37<sup>th</sup> president, a fact that makes it all the more revealing. His weirdly informal and autobiographic tangent revealed the seriously weakened state of his presidency; the retreat to institution language was an attempt to restore its power. It is notable that in making this shift, Nixon immediately referenced the power of the Peoples’ Republic of China and of the USSR and then promptly invoked a boxing metaphor: Politics was viewed here through the lens of competitive sport and the president’s power was thus rendered in terms of the national ability to compete with powerful opponents.<sup>26</sup> But linguistically, he had underlined precisely the opposite point: his power was reduced; he was a weakened leader, unsure of himself, evoking a painful litany of unnecessary detail.

The nature of Nixon’s presidency was, in fact, continually revealed through the president’s verbal spasms. The Nixon tapes, for example, were shocking not least because of their language—the profanity, the racial, religious, and ethnic slurs. To speak this way in the Oval Office was tantamount to doing so in church, many Americans

thought.<sup>27</sup> And certainly the end of his presidency, with the painfully memorable description of his mother as a “saint” during his farewell to the staff, and the multiple disfluencies that marked his finale as president, indicated just how near to collapse the president was, his breakdown as a person corresponding to the breakdown of his administration, and all in real time before a televised national audience.<sup>28</sup>

In the decades since Nixon, Americans have become more accustomed to seeing, hearing, and experiencing the presidency, and their presidents have become more adept at managing the confluence of private person and public persona.<sup>29</sup> But this management requires continual effort, for today’s American presidency is almost entirely accessible in real time. Presidential speeches, as well as commentary on those speeches, circulate via television, radio, and various electronic media as soon as they occur. The president tweets; the White House and the Obama re-election campaign have their own Facebook pages, as do the various Republicans in the race; and the American Presidency Project and White House web pages offer continuous updates about the president’s formal and informal speeches and activities.<sup>30</sup> With so many streaming points of access to the American presidency, it is not surprising that many citizens and officials no longer expect a seamless view of a perfectly crafted institution. Indeed, today’s mass audiences are well accustomed to the disfluencies of the rhetorical presidency.<sup>31</sup>

As these disfluencies circulate, they suggest at least two things about the American presidency. First, they suggest a close, almost intimate relationship between mass-mediated audiences and contemporary American presidents. Consider, for instance, a group of friends with a shared history. One person begins a story, only to be immediately interrupted: “Oh yeah, I remember that; too funny.” In this exchange, the

telling of the story is less important than the intimate relationship suggested by its interruption.<sup>32</sup> Presidents and presidential candidates also tell the same stories over and over again (as in the Obama campaign tale surrounding the phrase “fired up, ready to go”). We hear them in speeches, excerpted on the news, parodied by Jon Stewart, memorialized by social media. By “trivial repetition and dull daily reënforcement,” these stories and their tellers become familiar to us, establishing and maintaining a sense of intimacy.<sup>33</sup> To be sure, this intimacy is false,<sup>34</sup> but this does not stop Americans from voting for the candidate with whom they would most like to have a beer.<sup>35</sup>

There is little doubt that the American presidency is a scripted institution.<sup>36</sup> Pundits, commentators, and even presidents themselves routinely separate the personal dimensions of the institution from its public image, suggesting that the latter is carefully crafted and somehow less “real” than the former. In this sense, the rhetorical presidency is at once more transparent and more distant than ever before. Although American citizens see more of their president, they also stand further away from this public figure (the post-9/11 barriers around the White House being physical evidence, if it is needed, of this cultural distance).<sup>37</sup>

The public is aware of the political imperative driving presidential attempts to control public perceptions of the office through image management.<sup>38</sup> As more images of the president circulate, Americans become less confident of the authenticity of these images. Presidential disfluency, spontaneous and somehow “real,” reverses this process, allowing the public to experience the president as a person. They are markers of authenticity. And like presidential narratives, these markers circulate widely through American public culture, reinforcing the sense of intimacy between presidents and their

publics. George Bush's famous malapropisms, for instance, were endlessly repeated—and not just in dedicated segments like “Great Moments in Presidential Speeches”—reminding some audiences of their contempt for him and others of their affection. But in both cases, these malapropisms served as markers of a known, intimate relationship. What was once a sign of presidential pathology has now become a sign of presidential authenticity.

### Literate Speakers, Legible Speeches

If literacy is a key component of presidential eloquence, legibility is a key component of its analysis. While the tradition of rhetorical delivery in which American presidents participate presupposes an ability to transform written words into spoken discourse, the tradition of inquiry in which rhetorical scholars often examine these transformations presupposes an ability to reverse this process, converting spoken discourse into the written word. Which is a roundabout way of stating the obvious: Great moments in presidential speech often begin and end on the page.

What gets lost along the way? First to go are the visual and auditory codes of public speech. With literacy and legibility as the respective lodestars for eloquence and its analysis, the “rhetoric” of today's speakers-in-chief seems limited to their choice of words. What we often forget are sights and sounds of their delivery. Yet another reason to consider the disfluencies of recent presidents like George W. Bush: they remind us that oratory is not only a linguistic enterprise, but also a paralinguistic, and occasionally nonlinguistic, event.



Rhetorical scholars need not abandon standards of legibility in order to recover the visual and auditory codes of public speech. But they may need to adjust them.

Transcribing the visual codes of public speech is a notoriously difficult task and often results in little more than thick description. Which is fine because, as scholars of visual rhetoric and nonverbal communication well know, it is easy to supplement thick description with cut-and-pasted images of speakers in action—or, as social scientific journals now realize, to supplement their articles with data-laden DVDs and websites.<sup>39</sup>

Paralanguage is another matter. Pitch, loudness, tempo, silence, inflection, and the like—all are easily transcribed. In fact, thanks to conversation analysts, we have at our disposal an elaborate set of transcription techniques. Many of these techniques are at work in our transcripts of Bush’s utterances. Consider, for instance, the second utterance we quoted above: “Our people have done really a great job (.) of (.) hauling in a lot of the key operators: Kaliek Sheikh Mohammed, Abu Zabeta, Ramsey Al- (.) uh (.) Ra- (.) Ramsey Al Shee::b or >whatever the guy’s name was<.” Underlines indicate a stressed syllable or word. Hyphens signal an abrupt cutoff. Colons mark prolonged sounds. Words between “greater than” and “less than” signs designate speech that is quicker than the orator’s base rate.<sup>40</sup>

Even silence can be rendered on the page. Periods in parentheses refer to micro-pauses (“micro” because they are under two-tenths of a second). Numbers in parentheses represent longer moments of silence. Bush relies on both kinds of pauses, and, interestingly, he strings them together. Consider, again, the third utterance we transcribed: “My da::d (.) like many of your rel- uh uh folk uh who got relatives here (2.3) many of you (.) whose relatives (.) did the same thing (.) who are (1.4) you’re here,

they're relative- probably aren't." The lengthy pauses speak for themselves: they are moments of thought. But how about the micro-pauses in between: "...many of you (.) whose relatives (.) did the same thing (.) who are..." Discourse analysts call this speech pattern "controlled enunciation"—a way of speaking that, by inserting pauses between each word, presents speakers as working hard to be patient—even though they are a bit annoyed—with their listeners. As a rhetorical device, it altercasts their audience members as unreasonable, irritating, and sometimes even mentally challenged.

With whom was Bush struggling to be patient? An answer comes to us in his final remark: "...you're here, they're relative- probably aren't." Tangled up in this statement are two separate utterances. The first, had it found clear expression, would have shown Bush dialoging with his audience: "you're here, they're probably not," with "you're" referring to his audience members, and "they're" referring to their relatives, notably members of their families who, like George H. W. Bush, fought in World War II.

The second utterance, which is no less bollixed than the first, would have shown the president dialoging with himself: "you're here, their relatives probably aren't." In this iteration, "you're" is still a contraction of "you are," but "they're" has become its aural equivalent "their," effectively transforming his audience from the addressee of his discourse to its mass auditor, a collective witness to what has now become an awkward interaction with himself. Thus, as his audience recedes into the third person, Bush emerges as the second person—the "you" to whom his parting remark, and thus his controlled enunciation, is addressed. In this sense, it is him, not his audience, his discourse altercasts as unreasonable, irritating, and perhaps even mentally challenged.

Add to this the familial theme of his utterance, and the fact that it begins with “My da::d,” and its psycho-biographical intrigues become readily apparent. So also does its narrative quality. Consider the clumsy narrative in which this utterance occurred, quoted here at length because of the importance of its full context to our analysis:

I like to tell the story—as a matter of fact, I'm going to tell it as many times as people will listen—[laughter]—about my trip to Elvis's place. [Laughter] I went down there, as you might recall, with the then sitting Prime Minister of Japan, who no longer holds the office, Prime Minister Koizumi. He's a friend of mine. We went down there. I'd never been, thought it would be fun to go. He wanted to go a lot. [Laughter] He was an Elvis fan.

But I also wanted to tell a story. And here's the story: My dad, like many of your rel- uh uh folk uh who got relatives here many of you whose relatives did the same thing who are you're here, they're relative- probably aren't—[laughter]—joined the Navy to fight the Japanese. You know the kind of people I'm talking about. He's an 18-year-old kid; the Japanese had attacked America. They killed more people on 9/11 than were killed at Pearl Harbor.

And yet he went, just like the kids who are signing up today. We've got unbelievable men and women who are saying, “I understand the stakes, and I want to go defend my country”—as volunteers. That's what happened in World War II. And it was a bloody war, and a lot of people lost their lives. It was a tough, tough fight.

I find it to be really interesting that the son of this Navy pilot is on Air Force One flying down to Memphis, Tennessee, with the Prime Minister of the former enemy, talking about peace, talking about the fact that this country of Japan has sent 1,000 troops into Iraq, because the Prime Minister Koizumi and I understand that we're involved in an ideological struggle between decent people who want to live in peace and radicals and extremists who will battle democracy in order to be able to impose their will.

We talked about North Korea and the fact that not only the North Korea--man trying to get him a nuclear weapon and how destabilizing that would be, but we mourned the fact that thousands starve inside that country. We talked about HIV/AIDS on the continent of Africa and our understanding that to whom much is given, much is required; and that this great country, I assured him, would continue to take the lead in providing antiretroviral drugs to help save lives. And we talked about helping Afghanistan build up its democracy.

Isn't it amazing? My dad fought the Japanese, and I'm talking about keeping the peace. Something happened between World War II and today, and what happened

was, Japan adopted a Japanese-style democracy. Democracies yield the peace. Liberty has got the capacity to transform an enemy into an ally. Liberty has got the capacity to transform regions of hopelessness to regions of light and hope. Someday, an American President will be sitting down with duly elected leaders from the Middle East talking about keeping the peace, and our children and grandchildren will be better off for it.

Compare this extended narrative to Nixon's vodka anecdote. The tone is freer, more conversational. A certain informality governs Bush's word choice (Graceland, for instance, is referred to as "Elvis's place"). Bush evokes a sort of friendly intimacy, inviting his audience to enjoy some of his personal foibles with him ("I'm going to tell it as many times as people will listen"). But the invitation here is intentionally revealing—Bush's glitches lack the tortured quality of Nixon's self-revelatory ramblings, and are therefore perceivable as less authentic, prompting critics, if not audiences, to search for a motive behind the story that follows.

Bush's story recalls the heroism of his father and his father's generation, and serves as an implicit call for contemporary sacrifice and fortitude ("It was a tough, tough fight"). That heroism and fortitude, importantly, was not merely in the service of the national interest narrowly understood, but served a greater, transcendent purpose, "an ideological struggle between decent people who want to live in peace and radicals and extremists who will battle democracy to impose their will." Decency and democracy are thus aligned, and the struggle becomes one that is not bound in time to the specifics of the World War, but is rendered timeless, eternal.

The timeless struggle is key to the entire story, for Bush immediately associates "decent people" with the need to battle AIDS/HIV in Africa (although not, apparently, in Japan or the U.S.), and with the war in Afghanistan. The conflict, then, transcends time,

space, and issue domain, and is as applicable to policy as to war. Importantly, that set of struggles is carried out under American leadership, and thus establishes the “proper” role of the U.S. in world affairs, the dominant partner in global relationships. The U.S., in this narrative, once saved the world from the scourge of European dictators, and is now engaged in analogous battles—against disease, autocracy, extremists, and radicals.

When Bush began telling this story in the spring of 2004, it was central to his reelection campaign. But his telling of this story did not stop with his reelection. Between May 2004 and October 2006, when the abovementioned disfluency occurred, Bush told this story over 40 times, honing its delivery, sharpening its argument, and polishing analogical form. Time after time, he skillfully used this narrative to liken himself to his father and the second Iraq war to the Second World War.

That this story emerged in early 2004 is not surprising. It was an election year, and Bush, in line with so many of his predecessors, was attempting to build a political campaign atop an extended narrative. As presidential scholars have shown, incumbents and their challengers often use histories of the current administration, stories about the future, anecdotes about their own lives, accounts of American history (usually within an international context) to establish their connection to national destiny.<sup>41</sup> These stories form the basis of every campaign, and candidates, voters, and the media all come to rely upon their repetition, allowing for narrative consistency across a variety of venues, audiences, and other exigencies. John Kennedy’s “New Frontier” promised change, activity, movement; Ronald Reagan’s 1984 narrative of “Morning in America” offered a vision of national rebirth; Michael Dukakis framed his campaign as an immigrant narrative, emphasizing the inclusive aspects of the American Dream; John McCain gave

us a story of sacrifice and duty; Barack Obama offered a narrative about “the audacity of hope.” Although having a good story does not guarantee of political success, campaigns that lack unifying narratives are difficult to follow, uninspiring, and prone to failure.<sup>42</sup>

In addition to helping to organize campaign communication, these political narratives also serve to unite character and policy. Dukakis, for instance, was implicitly arguing for an inclusive nation; Reagan for one based on merit as the metric of fairness. Through these stories, candidates reinforce and extend the bumper-sticker slogans of their campaigns, and make the case for the (re)election. The anecdotes function to give policy emotional valences, making political choices salient and memorable. They also serve to explain the candidates’ vision of the nation, and unite that vision, the candidates’ personal history, and national identity.<sup>43</sup>

Political narratives were central to Bush’s 2004 reelection campaign. In the story we focus on here, Bush begins by noting his close relationship with Japan’s Prime Minister, and his father’s involvement in the Second World War, specifically its Pacific theater. This story performs several functions for Bush. First and most obviously, it reminds audiences of his family history, and associates him with his father’s valor—an important element given the son’s questionable war record. More importantly, it frames the current war in terms of WWII, and through that association, places the situation in Iraq in the broader context of American global hegemony. We fought the Empire of Japan, and because we defeated them, they are now a willing participant in the peace process, a democratic nation, and an important national ally. But the path to that resolution was “bloody,” and required numerous sacrifices from generations of Americans—dads, husbands, and grandfathers. Because presidents of that era “believed

in the capacity for liberty to transform societies, believed that a free society would convert the Japanese people from enemies to friends,” they were able to secure a just, stable, and equitable peace. So this rendering of WWII serves as an argument from analogy. Bush, in this story, becomes Roosevelt and Truman, envisioning a world based on American conceptions of freedom and democracy and successfully bringing that vision to life.

By October 2006, when Bush flubbed this story before audiences in Warren, Michigan, his identification with Roosevelt and Truman had begun to break down. The likeness of the second Iraq war to the Second World War could no longer bear the weight of the story Bush had been telling since May 2004. When his misspeak occurred in October 2006, public opinion of the war in Iraq was at an all-time low, midterm elections were only days away, and Democrats were poised for electoral victory.<sup>44</sup> With “exit strategy” and “date of withdrawal” on the lips of many Americans, it is hardly surprising that Bush’s disfluency began in an effort to describe the proximal distance between his immediate audience members and their relatives in the armed forces. Although it was designed to celebrate relatives who, like his father, proudly served in World War II, his utterance could not help but also remind audience members of their relatives who were then serving in Iraq—and much to the increasing frustration of the American public. In this sense, Bush’s disfluency did double damage, at once illustrating and enacting his political problems.

Vocal Political AestheticsIn addition to unfilled pauses, which give us moments of silence, presidential speech is often riddled with filled pauses, most of which are

overloaded with “ums” and “uhs.” Social scientists usually treat these verbal fillers as placeholders for someone’s speaking turn.<sup>45</sup> “Ums” and “uhs” tell audience members—especially would-be respondents—that a speaker is not done talking but needs a moment to consider his or her next phrase. In this sense, they are integral to the management of speech events—rhetorical devices that allow orations to proceed without interruption.

But there is more at stake in filled pauses than the politics of turn-taking. Although we frequently teach our public speaking students to avoid the “ums” and “uhs” of everyday talk, these vocal fillers may be symptomatic of the Atlantic republican tradition in which we also encourage our students to participate. If indeed republics are constituted in speech and endangered by silence, maybe it is advantageous to fill our pauses with “ums” and “uhs.”<sup>46</sup>

More than holding someone’s turn in a conversation or propping up the American republic, the “ums” and “uhs” of spoken discourse are slight but significant moments of what Søren Kierkegaard famously derides as “chatter” (*snak*). “What is it to chatter?” he asked Danish readers in the mid-nineteenth century. “It is the annulment of the passionate disjunction between being silent and speaking.” To illustrate this talkative annulment, Kierkegaard recalls the dysfunctional grandfather clock of a family he once visited:

The trouble did not show up in a sudden slackness of the spring or the breaking of a chain or a failure to strike; on the contrary, it went on striking, but in a curious, abstractly normal, but nevertheless confusing way. It did not strike twelve strokes at twelve o’clock and then once at one o’clock, but only once at regular intervals. It went on striking this way all day and never once gave the hour.<sup>47</sup>



Just as the regular strokes of this grandfather clock allow it to continue keeping time without ever telling anyone what time it is, so also does “chatter” communicate nothing more than its dysfunctional status as public speech. Like the “sociable model of communication” that Michael Schudson describes as aimless, unstructured, and inconsequential for democratic politics, chatter suspends the teleological, referential, and deliberative functions of civic discussion and debate—and always in service to nothing more than its own continuation.<sup>48</sup> “One who chatters presumably does chatter about something, since the aim is to find something to chatter about,” Kierkegaard quips.

In this sense, chatter communicates nothing other than itself, and herein lies its significance for rhetorical scholars. Unlike the Greek *hypokrisis*, which is premised on the ability of speech to deliver something, be it a felt or a feigned emotion, a handcrafted or a ghostwritten speech, chatter delivers nothing. Like teeth rattling against teeth, chatter and the “filled pauses” in which it routinely finds expression are distinguished by their emptiness, their insubstantiality, their lack of intention. And yet they are neither wordless nor ineffable. Instead, the chatter that often occurs in presidential speech, with all of its “ums” and “uhs,” is the mark of a specifically linguistic nothingness, or, as Peter Fenves aptly notes, a linguistic void in language itself.<sup>49</sup> It marks the point at which public speech has abandoned all objects of communication other than itself. Thus, if chattering presidents have nothing to say, it is not because they are unable to communicate, but because what they communicate cannot be said. It is the medium of public speech itself, in its “pure and endless mediality,” that finds expression in their discourse.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, as presidential scholars well know, what presidents actually say is often less important than them being widely seen and heard saying something.<sup>51</sup>

Or, at the risk putting too fine a point on this argument, we might say that chatter is the site at which public speech loses its rhetorical purpose, and in losing its rhetorical purpose arrives at what Kenneth Burke describes as its pure purpose—“a kind of purpose which, as judged by the rhetoric of advantage, is no purpose at all, or which might often look like sheer frustration of purpose.”<sup>52</sup> To be sure, all spoken discourse is rhetorically eventful. But it is chatter that transforms spoken discourse into a rhetorical event, allowing orators to disrupt or, as Burke would have it, to “interfere” in one of the basic norms of rhetorical culture: purpose. At its furthest reaches, purposeless discourse of this sort would be a means without end, in which political actors, by interfering in their own arguments, could redirect their discourse, even if only for a moment, from the pursuit of local political advantages to the production of new and ever renewing possibilities of gain.

Pure purpose is a regular feature of presidential oratory. Recall Bush’s “ums” and “uhs,” for instance. Technically speaking, these are discourse particles. Like “oh” (as in “Oh, I see”) and “well” (as in “Well, I guess that makes sense”), they are at once linguistic and paralinguistic, and irreducible to either mode of expression. They are words, but they have no direct semantic meaning. They are legible, but they are not assignable to any of the traditional grammatical word classes. They are neither nouns nor verbs nor adjectives nor articles nor conjunctions. And yet they are everywhere—not only in the ceaseless chatter of everyday life but also, as Letterman now reminds audiences with his “Obama ‘Uh’ Count,” in the soaring oratory of American presidents.

Dictionaries are of no use here. Nor are critical methods which limit us to their contents, as though public speech of any sort could be reduced to a simple sequence of words. Indeed, as classical, medieval, and modern rhetorical theorists well knew, there is always more to oratory than the orator's selection of words. In addition to linguistic content, public speech has a paralinguistic form. Stressed syllables, abrupt cutoffs, prolonged sounds, quickened speech, filled and unfilled pauses—all routinely find expression in even the most artfully wrought orations. And in this sense, all are relevant to the study of public address.

To be sure, it is difficult to study vocal political aesthetics prior to the advent of analogue recording technologies. However, as historical discourse analysts continue to demonstrate, it is not impossible.<sup>53</sup> More problematic for rhetorical scholars, we suspect, is the unsightliness of paralinguistic markers when they appear in oratorical texts. Underlines, hyphens, colons, greater than and less than signs, numbers, parentheses—all the transcription codes used in this essay are powerful reminders that, even though public speech is easily rendered on the page, it rarely follows the rules of written discourse, much less those of argumentative prose or literary production. Even the most eloquent speakers cannot avoid breaking-off words, repairing phrases, restarting sentences, and occasionally repeating themselves. Like the rest of us, they edit their discourse as they go and, in so doing, provide attentive listeners with important information about their beliefs, values, characters, and commitments. Only when rendered on the page do these performative details appear as “mistakes.”<sup>54</sup> And only when held to the standards of print culture do they appear unworthy of rhetorical analysis.

What this means for the study of public address almost goes without saying. If indeed oratory can be a rhetorical event, even when it dissolves into chatter, then we are poorly equipped for its analysis. For too long, rhetorical scholars have studied the art of public address apart from what is arguably its most aesthetic dimension: *vocalics*. In chorus with Greg Goodale, Joshua Gunn, and Samuel McCormick, the foregoing analysis reminds us that public speech always has a sound, and the meaning of this sound always exceeds a speaker's choice of words, stretching tensors of disfluency and hidden significance through even the most high-flown bouts of oratory.<sup>55</sup> In calling attention to these paralinguistic features, we do not mean to suggest that every oratorical text must account for the vocal contours of public address. But we do mean to suggest that, in an age of mobile communication technologies and twenty-four hour news coverage, when few presidential utterances go unrecorded, it might be time, once again, to consider the state of our art as critics of American public address.

### Conclusions

Analyzing vocal political aesthetics allows scholars of the rhetorical presidency and presidential rhetoric to focus on several things that otherwise elude us. First, doing so focuses our attention on the institution of the presidency, and the ways in which linguistic and social practices reflect and are reflected in presidential speech. It is interesting to note, as many scholars have done, that the presidency has become in some ways a more informal institution, with a more conversational presidential style. But it is difficult for rhetoricians studying individual speeches to do anything with that insight. Placing our attention on the disfluencies that are not represented in the formal record of the institution

allows us to more closely analyze what audiences actually heard, rather than forcing our attention on what presidents and their staffers wish those audiences had heard.

Presidential power, as we have demonstrated here, both reflects and is reflected in presidential language. To focus our critical attention only on the edited, scripted, controlled version of presidential language as it appears in the formal public record is to fail to apprehend the ways that presidential language and presidential power may be compromised as they interact with and within today's mass-mediated democratic public culture. The presidency works in dialogue with this public culture; it does not stand apart. But if it is viewed only through the public records, it appears vastly more removed and infinitely more powerful than it may in fact be.

This focus also allows us to attend to the ways in which presidential messages circulate. Rather than assuming that important presidential messages are stable, scripted texts, presidential disfluencies direct our attention to fragments of presidential speech. This is not to say that some addresses do not merit traditional methods of rhetorical criticism, nor is it to argue that those methods are irrelevant to our understanding of the contemporary presidency. We do want to argue, however, that expanding traditional methods of rhetorical criticism in order to enable attention to more fragmentary elements of presidential speech would also enhance our ability to comprehend how presidential address might work on a multiplicity of levels. Noting the prevalence of presidential chatter, for example, does not, by itself, do much to advance our understanding of the presidency. But focusing on the kinds of chatter presidents employ, the timing of such employments, and the ways it subverts or enables other elements of the presidency might allow us to go far in this direction.

This is especially important as new media continue to make available more and more of the presidency in real time. The carefully constructed and scripted view of the presidency is now supplemented and may one day be entirely replaced by a more immediate, less controlled—and infinitely less controllable—perspective on the office. Presidential misstatements, glitches, and malapropisms now enter American public culture at an accelerated and still accelerating pace. Rhetorical scholars need to find ways to adapt our choices of texts to reflect that pace.

Finally, there is an emerging conversation among rhetorical scholars about the paralinguistic dimensions of public speech. To isolate the discourse of the world's most prominent speaker from this conversation would be to separate scholars and scholarship that can and should be profitably united. The presidency, which is probably the most publicly accessible political institution in the world, is also a site where the dynamics of language, power, and politics figure most prominently .

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<sup>1</sup> David Amerland, *The Social Media Mind: How Social Media is Changing Business, Politics, and Science, and Helps Create a New World Order* (New York: New Line Publishers, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Robert Hariman, "Afterword: Relocating the Art of Public Address," in *Rhetoric and Political Culture in Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Thomas W. Benson (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1997), 163-83. See also James P. McDaniel, "Figures for New Frontiers: From Davy Crockett to Cyberspace Gurus," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88 (2002): 91–111.

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, Samuel McCormick, "Earning One's Inheritance: Rhetorical Criticism, Everyday Talk, and the Analysis of Public Discourse," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 89 (2003): 109-31.

<sup>4</sup> See Pierre Bourdieu, *Language as Symbolic Power*, trans. Gino Raymond and Mathew Adamson, ed. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 68-9. On the history of *sermo humilis* in American public discourse, see Kenneth Cmiel, *Democratic Eloquence: The Fight over Popular Speech in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

<sup>5</sup> Elvin T. Lim, "Five Trends in Presidential Rhetoric: An Analysis of Rhetoric From George Washington to Bill Clinton," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 32(2002): 228-45.

<sup>6</sup> Greg Goodale, "The Presidential Sound: From Orotund to Instructional Speech, 1892-1912," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 96 (2010): 168.

<sup>7</sup> See Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Bk. 3, Ch. 1 (1403b-1404a).

<sup>8</sup> See Thomas P. Miller, "Eighteenth-Century Rhetoric," in *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*, ed. Thomas O. Sloane (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 230.

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, Sefan Sirucek, "EXCLUSIVE: Palin's Tea Party Crib Notes," *The Huffington Post*, 7 February 2010: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/stefan-sirucek/did-palin-use-crib-notes\\_b\\_452458.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/stefan-sirucek/did-palin-use-crib-notes_b_452458.html)

<sup>10</sup> See, for instance, McCormick, "Earning One's Inheritance," 122.

<sup>11</sup> The Late Show with David Letterman, "Farewell Tribute to Great Moments in Presidential Speeches," available online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wbhzyoNwQYk>. We have attempted to document these moments of presidential disfluency using the transcription system developed by Gail Jefferson, especially as this system is appropriated in McCormick, "Earning One's Inheritance." Some of the most commonly noted symbols, several of which we discuss later in this essay, include the following:

.	(period) Falling intonation.
↑	(arrow pointed up) Rising intonation.
,	(comma) Continuing intonation.
-	(hyphen) Marks an abrupt cutoff.
::	(colon[s]) Prolonging of sound.
<u>never</u>	(underlining) Stressed syllable or word.
WORD	(all caps) Loud speech.
°word°	(degree symbols) Quiet speech.
>word<	(more than and less than) Quicker speech.
hhh	(series of h's) Aspiration or laughter.
.hhh	(h's preceded by period) Inhalation.
[ ]	(brackets) Simultaneous or overlapping speech.
=	(equals sign) Contiguous utterances.
(2.4)	(number in parentheses) Length of a silence.
(.)	(period in parentheses) Micropause, 2/10 second.
( )	(empty parentheses) Nontranscribable segment of talk.
(word)	(word or phrase in parentheses) Transcriptionist doubt.
((laughter))	(double parentheses) Description of nonspeech activity or sound quality.

<sup>12</sup> For analyses of Bush's rhetoric in historical context, see Robert E. Denton, Matthew T. Althouse, Gwen Brown, and Stephen Cooper, eds., *The George W. Bush Presidency: A Rhetorical Perspective* (Lanham, MA: Lexington Books, 2012); Elvin T. Lim, *The Anti-Intellectual presidency: The Decline of Presidential Rhetoric from George Washington to George W. Bush* (New York: Oxford, 2008); Allan A. Metcalf, *Presidential Voces: Speaking Styles from George Washington to George W. Bush* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2004).

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Mel Laracey, *Presidents and the People; The Partisan Story of Going Public* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2010); Martin J,

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Medhurst, *Before the Rhetorical Presidency* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008); Martin J. Medhurst, *Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> Karen S. Hoffman, *Popular Leadership in the Presidency: Origins and Practice* (Lanham, MA: Lexington Books, 2010).

<sup>15</sup> Although this phenomenon is most often associated with the media environment of the late twentieth century, there is evidence that it began much sooner. See, among many others, Roderick P. Hart, *Seducing America: How Television Charms the Modern Voter* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998); Roderick P. Hart, *The Sound of Leadership: Presidential Communication in the Modern Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Eloquence in an Electronic Age: The Transformation of Political Speechmaking* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

<sup>16</sup> See <http://rogerjnorton.com/Lincoln50.html> for a copy of the well-publicized letter 11 year old Grace Bedell addressed a letter to Republican presidential candidate Abraham Lincoln concerning his public appearance and its relation to his electoral hopes.

<sup>17</sup> James Ceaser and his coauthors associate this with the “Rise of the Rhetorical Presidency” and attribute it to the growth of the media, changes in campaigning, and what they call “the modern doctrine of presidential leadership.” They note the importance of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson but place most of their emphasis on more modern presidents, beginning with FDR. See James W. Ceaser, Glen E. Thurow, Jeffrey Tulis, and Joseph E. Bessette, “The Rise of the Rhetorical Presidency,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 11(1981): 158-171.

<sup>18</sup> For a discussion of this point, see Parry-Giles, Shawn J. "Archival Research and the American Presidency: The Political and Rhetorical Complexities of Presidential Records." In *The Handbook of Rhetoric and Public Address*. Edited by Shawn J. Parry-Giles and J. Michael Hogan, pp. 157-183. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell Publishers, 2010.

<sup>19</sup> In keeping with the requirements of federal law as it has developed since Roosevelt, presidential documents are now available in a myriad of forums. Executive orders and proclamations, for instance, are published in *The Federal Register* and *The Code of Federal Regulations* (Title 3). Signing Statements and other statements regarding legislation can found in *The United States Code of Congressional and Administrative News* and in *The Congressional Record*. Speeches and other kinds of public address, details of administrative appointments, and the like are available in *The Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* and *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States* and through [whitehouse.gov](http://whitehouse.gov).

<sup>20</sup> On the relationship between his speech and his health, see David W. Houck and Amos Kiewe, *FDR's Body Politics: The Rhetoric of Disability* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003).

<sup>21</sup> This, of course, influences the way the mass public receives, understands, and remembers the institution and those who occupy it. For an analysis of the intersections between popular culture and the presidency see Shawn Parry-Giles and Trevor Parry-Giles, *Constructing Clinton* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002).

<sup>22</sup> Jamieson, *Eloquence in an Electronic Age*.



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<sup>23</sup> Certainly, the most important biographer of this complicated president is Robert A. Caro, whose third installment of his magisterial series on Johnson is *The Passage of Power: The Years of Lyndon Johnson* (New York: Knopf, 2012). Other important biographies illuminating the painful distance between Johnson's private self and his public image include Robert Dallek, *Lyndon B* (New York: Penguin, 2005); Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream* (New York: St. Martin's 1991); Randall Bennett Woods, *LBJ: Architect of American Ambition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

<sup>24</sup> There is a voluminous literature on both the public and the private pathologies of Richard Nixon. Some of the more important studies that emphasize the intersections between those pathologies include Don Fulson, *Nixon's Darkest Secrets: The Inside Story of America's Most Troubled President* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2012); Theodore H. White, *Breach of Faith: The Fall of Richard Nixon* (New York: Dell, 1976); Garry Wills, *Nixon Agonistes: The Crisis of the Self-made man* (New York: Mariner Books, 2002).

<sup>25</sup> Richard M. Nixon, "Remarks to State Legislators Attending the National Legislative Conference," March 30 73. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3787>

<sup>26</sup> On the confluence of politics, the presidency and sports, see Alan Bairner, *Sport and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2012); Michael Hester, *America's #1 Fan: A Rhetorical Analysis of Presidential Sports Encomia and the Symbolic Power of Sports in the Articulation of Civil Religion in the United States*. A dissertation submitted to the Georgia State University Department of Communication, Atlanta, GA, 2005).

<sup>27</sup> Watergate transcripts were, of course, famous for the number of "expletive[s] deleted." See, among many others, White, *Breach of Faith*; Stanley I Cutler, *Watergate: A Brief History with Documents* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

<sup>28</sup> Contrast, for example, the carefully scripted announcement of his decision to resign with his other, increasingly revelatory and uncomfortable farewells: Richard Nixon: "Address to the Nation Announcing Decision To Resign the Office of President of the United States," August 8, 1974. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=4324>; Richard Nixon: "Remarks on Departure From the White House," August 9, 1974. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=4325>.

<sup>29</sup> Although Bill Clinton's travails certainly serve as a recent example of the perils of this confluence. See, among others, William H. Chafe, *Privas, 2005).te Lives/ Public Consequences: Personality and Politics in Modern America* (Cambridge: Harvard University pre

<sup>30</sup> See <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/index.php> and <http://www.whitehouse.gov/>; [www.mittromney.com](http://www.mittromney.com/); [www.ricksantorum.com](http://www.ricksantorum.com/); [www.newt.org](http://www.newt.org/).

<sup>31</sup> There is even a website dedicated to documenting presidential errors. See <http://presidentialblunders.blogspot.com>

<sup>32</sup> For a discussion of this point, see Teru I. Morton, "Intimacy and Reciprocity of Exchange: A Comparison of Spuses and Strangers," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 36(1978): 72-81.

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<sup>33</sup> Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 26.

<sup>34</sup> See Jamieson, *Eloquence in an Electronic Age*, XXX.

<sup>35</sup> See David Brooks, "South Carolina Diarist," January 16, 2012, *New York Times* <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/17/opinion/south-carolina-diarist.html>

<sup>36</sup> For two very different perspectives on this fact, see Jeremy D. Mayer, "The Presidency and Image Management: Discipline in Search of Illusion," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34(2004): 620-631; Kurt Ritter and Martin J. Medhurst, eds. *Presidential Speechwriting: From the New Deal to the Reagan Revolution and Beyond* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2004).

<sup>37</sup> This is generally referred to as "the presidential bubble." See, for example, [reasonableviews.com/2011/11/23/the-presidential-bubble/](http://reasonableviews.com/2011/11/23/the-presidential-bubble/)

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, Lori Cox han and Diane j. Heith, *In the Public Domain: Presidents and the Challenges of Public Leadership* (New York: SUNY Press, 2005).

<sup>39</sup> See, for instance, the CD-ROM accompanying *Journal of Communication* 52.3 (2002).

<sup>40</sup> Interestingly, many of today's transcription conventions date back to classical forms of punctuation, the primary function of which was to help readers segment texts in preparation for their oral delivery. Commas, colons, periods—all marked places in the text where oral readers were to pause for a breath. See M. B. Parkes, *Pause and Effect: An Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>41</sup> See, among many others, William F. Lewis, "Telling America's Story: Narrative Form and the Reagan Presidency," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73(1987): 280-302. Samuel Popkin, *The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

<sup>42</sup> Paul Waldman, "The Power of the Campaign Narrative," *The American Prospect* July 17, 2007, [prospect.org/article/power-campaign-narrative](http://prospect.org/article/power-campaign-narrative)

<sup>43</sup> Mary E. Stuckey One Nation (Pretty Darn) Divisible: National Identity in the 2004 Conventions. *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 8(2005): 639-656.

<sup>44</sup> Earl N. Phillips, "Partisan Divide on War and the Economy: Presidential Approval of George W. Bush," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53(2009): 905-933.

<sup>45</sup> A concise review of this literature is provided in Daniel C. O'Connell and Sabine Kowal, "The History of Research on the Filled Pause as Evidence of *The Written Language Bias in Linguistics* (Linnell, 1982)," *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research* 33 (2004): 459-74. See also Michael Erard, *Um... Slips, Stumbles, and Verbal Blunders, and What They Mean* (New York: Anchor Books, 2007)..

<sup>46</sup> On the aversion to silence in republican rhetorical culture, see Robert Hariman, *Political Style: The Artistry of Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 111.

<sup>47</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Two Ages*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 97, 80.

<sup>48</sup> Michael Schudson, "Why Conversation is Not the Soul of Democracy," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 14 (1997): 297-309.

<sup>49</sup> Peter Fenves, "Chatter": *Language and History in Kierkegaard* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), xii.

<sup>50</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Means without End: Notes on Politics*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 59.

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<sup>51</sup> See, for instance, Murray Edelman, *Constructing the Political Spectacle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988). On the role of mass media in this process, see Hart, *The Sound of Leadership*; Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Packaging the Presidency: A History and Criticism of Presidential Campaign Advertising*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>52</sup> Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 270.

<sup>53</sup> See Laurel J. Brinton, "Historical Discourse Analysis," in *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, eds. Deborah Schiffrin et al (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 138-60.

<sup>54</sup> This argument is developed more fully in Robert Hariman, "Amateur Hour: Knowing What to Love in Ordinary Democracy," in *The Prettier Doll: Rhetoric, Discourse, and Ordinary Democracy*, eds. Karen Tracy et al (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007), 239.

<sup>55</sup> Greg Goodale, "The Presidential Sound: From Orotund to Instructional Speech, 1892-1912," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 96 (2010): 164-84; Joshua Gunn, "On Speech as Public Release," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 13 (2010): 175-216; Joshua Gunn, "Speech is Dead; Long Live Speech," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 94 (2008): 343-64; Joshua Gunn, "Gimme Some Tongue (On Recovering Speech)," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 93 (2007): 361-4; Samuel McCormick, "Earning One's Inheritance: Rhetorical Criticism, Everyday Talk, and the Analysis of Public Discourse," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 89 (2003): 109-31.