Georgia State University

ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University

Spring 5-14-2021

THE PARATEXT IN THE AGE OF ITS TECHNOLOGICAL REPRODUCIBILITY: EXAMINING PARATEXTUALITY IN MODERN MASS MEDIA

Erik K. Clabaugh
Georgia State University, erikclabaugh@gmail.com

Recommended Citation

THE PARATEXT IN THE AGE OF ITS TECHNOLOGICAL REPRODUCIBILITY:

EXAMINING PARATEXTUALITY IN MODERN MASS MEDIA

by

ERIK KENNETH CLABAUGH

Under the Direction of Greg Smith, PhD

ABSTRACT

This project complicates and expands upon the Genettian concept of paratext, focusing on paratextual functionality and meaning-making practices related to the development of American mass media during the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. Utilizing Ellen McCracken's "interior" and "exterior" pathways as a basis for paratextual vector analysis, this dissertation examines paratextual functionality in four case studies focusing on the late 19th century newspaper advertising of John Wanamaker, the WWII-era radio serial *Captain Midnight*, the 1950s television program *The Disneyland Story*, and the comment section of *Breitbart News* during the second decade of the 21st century.

INDEX WORDS: Paratexts, Mass communication, Newspaper advertising, Radio serials, Television, Internet comment sections

THE PARATEXT IN THE AGE OF ITS TECHNOLOGICAL REPRODUCIBILITY:

EXAMINING PARATEXTUALITY IN MODERN MASS MEDIA

by

ERIK KENNETH CLABAUGH

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of the Arts

Georgia State University

2021

THE PARATEXT IN THE AGE OF ITS TECHNOLOGICAL REPRODUCIBILITY:

EXAMINING PARATEXTUALITY IN MODERN MASS MEDIA

by

ERIK KENNETH CLABAUGH

Committee Chair: GREGORY M. SMITH

Committee: Ethan Tussey

Kathryn Wilson

Shawn Powers

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Academic Assistance

College of the Arts

Georgia State University

May 2021

DEDICATION

For my mother, who bought me a landspeeder, and my father, who helped me paint it.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe debts to many.

First, I want to acknowledge Greg Smith, not just for his help on this project, but also for all the instruction and guidance he has provided me throughout graduate school. Words are not enough. I have learned much from you, Greg. Thank you.

I would also like to acknowledge my committee members: Ethan Tussey, Kathryn Wilson, and Shawn Powers. I greatly appreciate your time, guidance, and instruction. As professors, each of you challenged me in unique and productive ways. As committee members, you gave freely of your time and insight. You have made me think in new ways. Thank you.

Finally, thanks to my wife Kristy, and my boys, Spenser and Harrison, for their patience, love, and kindness. This project would not have been possible without your support. I love y'all. Also, thanks to Boomer, our yellow Lab. He honestly didn't do much to help, but he's a loveable pooch, and I promised my son Harrison ("He's part of the family, Dad!") I would include him here. So, thanks, Boom-Boom!

Now, on with the show…

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

1   INTRODUCTION

> The general history of the paratext, punctuated by the stages of a technological
> evolution that supplies it with means and opportunities, would no doubt be the
> history of those ceaseless phenomena of sliding, substitution, compensation, and
> innovation which ensure, with the passing centuries, the continuation and to some
> extent the development of the paratext's efficacy. - Gerard Genette

1.1   **Foundational Assertions**

This project complicates and expands upon the Genettian concept of paratext, focusing

on paratextual engagement and meaning making practices related to the development of

American mass media during the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. As such, it proceeds from, and

argues in support of, a number of assertions regarding the evolution of textuality.[1] Four such

claims are of foundational import: 1) Paratextual engagement constitutes the dominant mode of

mass media interaction. Put simply, we engage with paratexts more often than the texts

themselves. 2) Paratextual functionality is a constitutive component of broader transformations

in the phenomenology of perception. As proponents of the history of vision have suggested, new

modes of living result in new ways of seeing. This project explores how these changes in

perception reflect ideological shifts related to the redistributions of power that attended the

growth and expansion of capitalism, the rise of mass media platforms, and the emergence of

popular culture. 3) In such contexts extant models for understanding paratextuality are

shortsighted. Traditional scholarly paradigms theorize paratexts as "thresholds" or "vestibules,"

which serve to influence meaning making processes by "presenting" their primary texts to

readers/viewers. These models depend on antiquated theories of top-down communicative

---

[1] I use the term 'textuality' in a wide sense. Borrowing from Robert Scholes, I embrace a twofold definition encompassing not only "media and modes of expression," but also " the way we look at texts to combine the perspectives of creator and consumer…" (35). Broadly understood, textuality is as much about interpretation and the creation of meaning as it is the text proper.

exchange and the kind of textually centered scholarship that dominated media studies in the middle-part of the last century. Consequently, they fail to acknowledge—much less explain— how paratexts work to influence meaning making processes related to those elements outside the domain of the so-called primary text. Paratexts do not frame the texts they accompany; they frame interpretation. In doing so, they manage meanings and our expectations regarding time, space, things, people and ideas. 4) Given these assertions, it is time to reassess paratextuality and consider how, in the context of our contemporary media culture, paratexts have come to (re)appropriate the authority of their primary texts while concomitantly extending their framing functions along multiple vectors of meaning. This project accomplishes these tasks by examining the evolving functions of paratextuality through four historical case studies focusing on examples culled from media forms that have come to define mass communication in both the modern and postmodern eras: newspapers, radio, television, and the Internet. First, however, it is useful to develop our foundational assertions more fully.

In today's media-rich environs we are far more likely to encounter, either intentionally or otherwise, those elements of promotion, synergy, criticism, artistic expression and cultural negotiation that surround media texts than the actual texts themselves. By way of illustration, for every film we venture out to the theater to see, we are first likely to be confronted with at least two or three trailers, dozens of reviews, scores of social media posts, and hundreds of advertisements. What's more, long after both film and spectator have left the multiplex, new paratexts continue to crowd the so-called primary text. In the case of even the most abysmal box office failure one can expect, at a minimum, to encounter DVD displays, cover art, metadata on streaming sites, and promos and advertisements for subsequent cable and network showings. In

short, the film as text is incalculably outnumbered by its paratexts.[2] This applies equally to those other forms of mediated entertainment—television programs, video games, books, magazines, websites, amusement parks, etc.—that infiltrate and comprise our daily lives. Through ubiquity, paratexts sustain a form of textual dominance.

Of course, this is not the first time paratextuality has enjoyed hegemony over popular modes of media engagement. As early as the 4th century A.D., Christian artists adopted the techniques and visual language of the Romans in order to create socially relevant symbolic images epitextually linked to the stories that comprise both the Old and New Testaments (Janson 256-257).[3] Subsequently, when Constantine the Great made Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire, extra-textual devices flourished as ornamentation for the newly constructed houses of public worship that seemed to appear instantaneously and in immense numbers (Ibid. 257).[4] For at least the next thousand years the architectural flourishes which adorned these spaces—including mosaics, paintings, sculptures, reliefs and stained glass windows—became the principal forms through which the majority of largely illiterate and non-Latin speaking Western Christians came to engage with the narratives that defined both their world and their place in it.

In an increasingly secular era, it is, perhaps, difficult to truly comprehend the ideological import of paratextual iconography during this millennium. Religion permeated nearly every aspect of everyday life and narrative visual paratexts were central to achieving this level of cultural saturation.[5] Graham Rossiter explains:

---

[2] Jonathan Gray makes a similar argument when he suggests, "Films and television shows… are only a *small* part of the massive extended presence of filmic and televisual texts across our lived environment" (Show, 2).

[3] The Catacomb of SS. Pietro e Marcellino in Rome provides one particularly relevant example as it juxtaposes architectural panels illustrating the narrative of Jonah with those of Christ's crucifixion.

[4] Interestingly, popular hagiographic accounts of Constantine's victory at Milvian Bridge make much of his use of the Chi-Rho as an element in his *vexillum*, or military standard. The Chi-Rho, an early christogram and pre-Christian paratextual device, was frequently used to mark significant passages in the margins of texts (Southern 281).

[5] Rossiter describes the religious *Weltanschauung* of the time as "all-encompassing" (89), and suggests that European society "overdosed on religion" during the Middle Ages (91).

The works of religious art in early medieval Christian churches were more like films than paintings because of their religious story-telling and symbolic purposes. They were both narrative and symbolic/theological in their meaning. Christians got many of their religious cues from them. The content of practically all the art they could see was religious… It reinforced their beliefs because there in front of them was imagery that reminded them of what they believed in and it gave a sense of communal assurance and validation to those beliefs. For those who did not travel extensively, and this was the majority, the religious world depicted in their churches described their small universe. They drew on its religious imagery to understand that universe and their place in it (90).

As this passage suggests, the paratextual devices commissioned by the Christian church functioned as more than mere "thresholds of interpretation."[6] In the case of the illiterate majority, these works usurped the authority and privilege typically ascribed to the primary texts.[7] Rather than framing Biblical narratives and influencing the meaning making processes that accompanied engagement with Christianity's sacred writings, these visual narratives superseded their own second-order textual status, becoming prime sites of engagement. They served as powerful substitutes for inaccessible written accounts and possessed all of the authenticity and weight attributed to the Scriptures. Moreover, they also operated as guides for understanding one's religious identity and rank in a tiered social order. In this *de facto* caste system social mobility was essentially nonexistent as individuals were born into their station (Rossiter 90). Political and religious leaders were acutely aware of this hierarchical arrangement and exploited

---

[6] Of course, this phrase serves as the subtitle of the English language translation of Gerard Genette's pioneering work *Seuils* a.k.a *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. Indeed, the term '*seuils*' is French for 'thresholds.'
[7] This might be understood as an early example of how secondary and tertiary texts tend to "migrate toward primary textual status" (Caldwell 99).

paratextual devices to reinforce existing power structures and preserve their hegemonic positions, sometimes going as far as to insert their own likenesses in visual Biblical narratives (Ibid. 90).[8] In creating these apocryphal images leaders naturalized their dominant social rank as if by divine right.

With the advent of the printing press and the ensuing Reformations, paratextual supremacy faced a significant challenge.[9] Protestantism—particularly the forms practiced by Zwingli, Calvin, and, to a lesser extent, Luther—actively sought to mitigate the influence of Catholic iconography.[10] Even then, however, the tensions between text and paratext would not be easily relieved. For example, reformers in England insisted on the destruction of religious imagery and the installation of publicly accessible printed Bibles in churches in order to further their project and alter existing popular Christian beliefs (Spolsky 305). Yet, widespread literacy would not become a reality until the eighteenth century (Ibid. 306). As a result, for nearly 300 years eager followers were deprived of both images *and* words to guide their beliefs, leaving reformers frustrated with the pace of progress and worshippers without access to the narratives that provided a foundation for the construction of social identity. At the same time, on the Continent, a series of Reformation and Counter-Reformation Popes placed an even greater emphasis on the Church's commitment to the production of narrative visual paratexts as

---

[8] By way of example, see the fifth century mosaics at San Vitale in Ravenna where an image of the Emperor Justinian appears adjacent to that of Jesus on his throne, thus reinforcing the sanctity of Justinian's position as Christ's vice-regent on earth and the inevitability of his rule.

[9] As Rubin notes, there appears to be a strong correlation between the establishment of printing presses and the acceptance of the Reformation in metropolitan areas during the first half of the 1500s (282).

[10] Of course, this did not prevent Protestant leaders from employing their own range of apocryphal biblical paratexts in order to assert and maintain their newfound authority. One need look no further than the cradle of the Reformation to find images that echo those created for the Emperor Justinian 1000 years prior. Cranach the Elder's *Wittenberg Altarpiece* greets visitors to the Wittenberg City Church. In one panel of the triptych Cranach substitutes images of leading reformers (including Luther himself) in the place of Christ's apostles at the last supper. In another, an image of the martyred Christ is inserted into a scene of Luther preaching to the faithful. While apologists have labored to make sense of these images and others like them in the context of Protestant doctrine, it is easy to see how they might encourage the veneration of reformers. For more on Cranach and the rationalization of didactic Protestant iconography, see: Noble 97-163.

ideological weapons in the war for souls.[11] Spurred on by the Council of Trent, this focus on the

patronage of the visual arts, rather than the written word, would eventually give rise to the

Baroque movement and yield an ever-more dynamic array of rhetorically powerful epitexts.

Masterworks such as Rubens' *The Elevation of the Cross*, Caravaggio's *The Conversion on the*

Way to Damascus, and Bernini's *Ecstasy of St Teresa* provide but a few examples of how

secondary texts deftly fulfilled the Council's directive that artworks function as key sites of

spiritual engagement while simultaneously serving as populist means of religious pedagogy.[12] As

Mulcahy observes, "Trent was especially wary of artistic expressions that spoke to the

'enlightened connoisseur'" (133). Consequent appeals to the uneducated marked a break from

the more restrained and spiritually nuanced Mannerist movement and endowed Church

commissioned narrative visual paratexts with an unprecedented level of affective impact.[13] In

their response to the ascetic visual representations of Protestantism the Counter-Reformation

prolonged the cultural dominance of paratextual forms by intimately linking Catholic spiritual

values and the propagation of awe to the aesthetic representations of narrative visual paratexts. A

picture, they knew, was worth a thousand words.

Ultimately, this particular mode of paratextual dominance would endure until the advent

of the Industrial Revolution.[14] It is during this period of intense socio-economic upheaval that

---

[11] It was during the 16th century that Pope Gregory XIII established of the *Propagandio,* a college of propaganda dedicated to centralizing power, converting infidels, and quelling the unrest sown from the seeds of Martin Luther's heretical Protestantism. The college was subsequently expanded by Pope Clement VII, who added a public information office, fundraising department, seminary and publishing house. Still later, during the early part of the 17th century, Pope Gregory XV went on to create an organization dedicated to the 'propagation of awe.' All of these efforts focused on reinforcing the link between visuality and religious belief. For more, see Brown 383-386.

[12] As quoted in Wittkower, the Council decreed: "By means of the stories of the mysteries of our redemption, portrayed by paintings or other representations, the people be instructed and confirmed in the habit of remembering and continually resolving in mind the articles of faith" (21).

[13] Mulcahy observes, "In its sensual appeals, illusionistic imagery, theatrical presentations, along with lavish use of gilt, stucco, and richly colored marble, the impact of a Baroque church interior is 'immediate and overwhelming…'" (134).

[14] There were, of course, other moments when this paratextual rule was challenged. For example, Byzantine iconoclasm had a chilling effect on visual biblical paratexts during two relatively brief periods during the 8th and 9th

my historical case studies begin. It is also during this period that we see the introduction of a series of profound changes in textuality. In the case of media, the onset of modernity heralds an explosion of textual forms. Newspapers, magazines, films and books crowd the nascent urban marketplace and compete for the attentions of a newly literate populace.[15] In the case of the audience, new technologies also mean new ways of seeing. Benjamin and other proponents of the 'history of vision' famously suggested the arrival of the modernity resulted in deep-seated transformations in the phenomenology of perception.[16] And- while these assertions have been vigorously critiqued from a physiological/evolutionary perspective, there is little doubt that modernity and the accompanying maturation of industrial capitalism informed meaning making practices in profound ways. [17]

As both Danto and Bordwell have maintained, vision is a physiological attribute and, as such, immune to the influence of cultural factors (Danto 1; Bordwell 142). Even so, if we think of vision more broadly, as more than mere "optical reality," Benjamin's claims regarding the mutability of the 'sensorium' come into focus (Danto 1; Nanay 138). Indeed, considering the physiological component of vision as only one element in the larger physiological/cognitive

---

centuries. Nevertheless, widespread practices of the time—including the mixing of paint scraped from religious paintings with Eucharistic bread and wine and the use of images as baptismal godfathers—suggest that reports concerning the death of paratextuality during these periods were greatly exaggerated (Elsner 382).

[15] There is some controversy in the academy surrounding literacy and the Industrial Revolution, although, as West observes, "It is generally agreed by all participants that people were more literate at the end of the Industrial Revolution period… than they were at the beginning" (371).

[16] While Benjamin arguably makes the most clearly articulated claims regarding modernity and the history of vision the same basic notion informs the works of Baudelaire, Simmel, Nietzsche, Kracauer, Moholy-Nagy, and Malevich, to name but a few. For a detailed summary, see Frisby's *Fragments of Modernity* 11-38.

[17] In what is perhaps the most influential critique of the history of vision, David Bordwell makes the case that vision— a hardwired physical attribute—may only be altered through evolution and that Darwinian theory precludes the inter-generational transmission of culturally acquired traits. While Bordwell's argument is undeniably elegant (as are the vast majority of Bordwell's arguments), Nanay rightly points out that it assumes Benjamin's use of the terms "seeing" or "sight" refers to the "physiological apparatus" and not something "much broader and less restrictive," such as the cognitive processes of meaning creation (139-41) For Bordwell's complete critique, see *On the History of Film Style* 141-49.

equation of *interpretation* makes his thesis quite clear.[18] Vision, *per se*, is static. However, the

interpretation of vision—meaning making, by any other name—is continually subject to the

forces of history and social mores (Danto 1-9). Thus, while vision may not have a history,

perception most certainly does. The texts we choose to behold, and the way we make sense of

them, change with the cultural moment.

As just such a cultural moment, modernity signaled an ideological shift wherein primary

texts began, for the first time, to assert their preeminence on a mass scale while paratextual

devices seemed to retreat into the kind of secondary status contemplated by Genette and his

followers. As literacy spread and industrial capitalism gained momentum the all-mighty

consumer appeared to inherit newfound authority from the ruling class of yore.[19] In modernity,

paratexts still performed the function of didactic ornamentation. However, rather than adorning

cathedrals and asserting dogma, these devices clung more often to other texts and served as

appeals rather than edicts. The distinction lay in the tone and tenor of interpellation. One hailed

simply, "Hey, you there!" The other did the same, but quickly followed with "Won't you buy

me?"[20] One situated the subject by denying agency; the other seemed to acknowledge it *a priori*.

The principal function of paratextuality had changed.[21] In the context of this new cultural

---

[18] In revisiting Benjamin's language, it is plainly evident—to this author, at least—that he was discussing more than
the mere physiological faculty of sight. For Instance, in the second, and arguably more authoritative iteration of *Das
Kunstwerk*, Benjamin does not reference 'vision' or 'sight,' but rather, repeatedly alludes to the whole "mode of
human sense perception" (Illuminations 222).

[19] Benjamin makes a similar point at the very outset of section five of his work "On some Motifs in Baudelaire." He
notes of the newly literate crowd: "It became a customer; it wished to find itself portrayed in the contemporary
novel, as the patrons did in the paintings of the Middle Ages" (Motifs 42).

[20] By way of example, one needs look no further than the development of the newspaper headline as a marketing
tool during the late 19th century. As Paulette Kilmer points out, early headlines often pushed the limits of good taste
in order to appeal to potential readers/buyers and stand out in a sea of competition. She notes, "Alliteration, puns,
doggerel, and even acrostics appeared in newspaper heads, often depicting tragedy or disaster in ways tasteless or
crass, but nevertheless engaging" (220).

[21] This is not to say the earlier religious era lacked a commercial component. The Church controversially trafficked
in indulgences, ecclesiastical positions, and assorted *sacra* throughout this period (Tingle 184-86; Wharton 413-14).
Indeed, it is worth remembering the full title of Luther's Ninety-five Theses translates to "Disputation on the power
and Efficacy of Indulgences" (Latin: *Disputatio pro declaratione virtutis indulgentiarum*). And yet, while narrative

moment paratexts seemed to labor as subordinate textual forms, working to encourage the viewer/reader along a trajectory inward toward the purchase, consumption, and interpretation of the newly dominant primary text. This moment, however, would be short-lived.

As my project will illustrate, the initial empowerment of the consumer and subsequent ideological shift in paratextuality merely signal the start of a more pronounced transformation in the functionality of paratextual devices. Beginning with the ambiguous relationship between early newspapers and advertising and moving through the paratextual exploitation of the Internet era, my case studies work to complicate extant theories of paratextuality by examining flows of meaning and power from a dynamic perspective. In doing so, I illuminate a number of ideological shifts that have altered textuality during the last century and a half and shaped the way we "see" while working toward a new understanding of paratextual functionality that accounts for influence that extends well beyond the domain of the primary text and into the realm of people, places, time, things, and ideas.

1.2 Some Words about Words

The term 'paratext' finds its origins in the work of the French theorist Gerard Genette, who utilizes the term to describe the range of elements that surround and augment a literary work. In his 1987 treatise, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, Genette provides a description that clarifies the relationship between text and paratext while suggesting a definition for both:

---

biblical paratexts no doubt worked to legitimate and aid in this commercialization, they failed to acknowledge and appeal to the agency of the consumer in the same fashion as modern paratexts. Take, for example, Lotto's *Legend of St. Brigid* in the Oratorio Suardi, which depicts a Catholic bishop granting of plenary indulgences with images of Christ's crucifixion and almsgiving displayed prominently in the background. Like the mosaics at San Vitale discussed earlier, the insertion of the bishop amongst images of Christ and other biblical figures works to reassert the authority of the Church rather than that of the worshipper.

A literary work consists… of a text, defined (very minimally) as a more or less long sequence of statements that are… endowed with significance. But this text is rarely presented in an unadorned state, unreinforced and unaccompanied by a certain number of verbal or other productions... And although we do not always know whether these productions are to be regarded as belonging to the text, in any case they surround it, and extend it, precisely in order to *present* it, in the usual sense of this verb but also in the strongest sense: to *make present*, to ensure the text's presence in the world, its 'reception' and consumption... These accompanying productions, which vary in extent and appearance, constitute what I have called elsewhere the work's paratext. (1)

As the passage above suggests, within the literary paradigm the field of paratexts is quite expansive, including a wide range of extratextual elements such as book covers, title pages, introductions, prefaces, dedications, epilogues, book reviews, type fonts, and even the author's name. This quote also reveals the structuralist assumptions that inform much of Genette's theorizing. Each of these elements labors to make the literary work a reality and governs its interpretation.[22] Not only do paratexts "surround" and "extend" the work, they simultaneously affect its "reception" and "consumption." This characteristic is critical

---

[22] There is a little Stuart Hall on my shoulder as I write this and he is insisting that different readers will interpret texts in different ways regardless of paratextual influence. Even so, it is difficult to overstate the importance of paratextuality in meaning making for a theorist such as Genette. For example, early in the introduction to *Paratexts* he quotes Lejeune who suggests the paratext is a "fringe of the printed text which in reality *controls one's whole reading of the text*" (qtd. in *Paratexts* 2, emphasis added).

to the Genettian theory of paratextuality and is rooted in a distinction between the "work"

and the "Text" made previously by Roland Barthes.[23]

For Barthes, the work is a physical thing, or in his words, "a fragment of substance,

occupying a part of the space of books (in a library for example)" (157). The Text, on the

other hand, is an *activity* of production. It is the *process* wherein the reader engages with

the work and goes about the creation of meaning. Without the reader, the work is merely a

book sitting on a shelf. However, once the reader picks up that book, and begins to make

sense of it—in a mode necessarily informed by the paratext, which is, in turn, informed by

the cultural moment—reading and engagement become a constitutive acts. Their very

performance creates the Text.[24] From this perspective, then, the presence of paratext

becomes a necessary condition for meaning making. For Genette, the paratext is the key

ingredient in Barthes' transformation from work to Text.[25] It is the very thing that enables

the existence of the Text and dictates its reception.

Given the centrality of the paratext in the process of textual engagement, as well as

the proliferation of media and varying forms of media scholarship in recent decades, it

should come as little surprise that subsequent scholars have adapted Genette's definition in

order to apply his theories outside the realm of literary criticism. Important studies have

examined paratextuality and its functions in the fields of cinema (Allison 2010, 2008, 2003,

---

[23] Please note: I use a capital "T" when discussing the Barthesian "Text" in order to identify the term as a proper noun and distinguish it from the more commonly used "text." Henceforth, the reader should be aware that any time the word "Text" appears, I am referring specifically to the Barthesian concept rather than referring more generally to a meaningful cultural artifact.

[24] Radway makes a similar point concerning this kind of performative metamorphosis. Arguing against consumption as a metaphor for textual engagement she suggests that readers "remake" texts rather than "ingesting" or "consuming" them (26).

[25] Genette tells us as much at the outset of Paratexts when he notes, "the paratext is what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public" (1).

2011; Stanitzek 2005, 2009; Cavalcante 2013; Kernan 2004; Benzon 2013), television (Coulthard 2010; Gray "Coming Up" 2010; Gray & Lotz 2012; Johansson 2006; Karpovich 2010), digital media (Leavenworth 2015; Malone 2015; Birke & Christ 2013; Fiadotau 2015), and music (Sutton 2015; Bossuyt et al. 2008). In almost all of these instances, the authors maintain Genette's fundamental distinction between text and paratext and reinforce the role of the paratext as framing device for the text proper.[26]

One notable exception, however, comes from Jonathan Gray who ups the ante regarding the significance of the paratext in the creation of meaning by cautioning readers that the line between text and paratext is not as clear as they might suppose. In his 2010 meditation on film, television, and off-screen studies, *Show Sold Separately*, Gray advises:

> … early warning should be provided to those readers who are accustomed to calling the film or television program 'the text' or, in relation to paratexts, 'the source text.' To use the word 'text' in such a manner suggests that the film or program is the entire text, and/or that it completes the text. I argue, though, that a film or program is but one part of the text, the text always being a contingent entity, either in the process of forming and transforming or vulnerable to further formation or transformation (6-7).

Following Barthes, Gray is suggesting that if we look at the text as an activity of production, then this action is never truly complete. Thus, any attempt to establish a final, static, once-and-for-all definition of 'the text' is, in some ways, short sighted. With this, I am

---

[26] Genette and subsequent theorists have made much of the liminal qualities of paratexts. They are, in some sense, both part of the text and apart from it. To revisit and earlier quote, Genette reminds us "…we do not always know whether these productions [paratexts] are to be regarded as belonging to the text" (1). Despite this, I maintain that a distinction is necessary at this early point in our examination.

in wholehearted agreement. Indeed, in the course of my project I take Gray's logic a step further by suggesting that "the text" is, in fact, a shifting *status* that might be applied to any number of entities based on an array of dynamic considerations. Not only is "the text" never complete, *à la* Gray, it is rarely, if ever, a constant in paratextual equations.

For his part, Genette does, at times, labor to make the text/paratext relationship clear. He suggests the distinguishing characteristics of paratextuality are best understood in terms of five key elements, each of which influence the ways in which the paratext ultimately serves its primary text: the *location* of the paratextual device (where), the *date* of its appearance or disappearance (when), the form in which the paratext *is made manifest* (how), the paratext's *sender and receiver* (who), and its *function* that "its message aims to fulfill (to do what?)" (4). In turn, these elements give rise to additional terms that will prove helpful in our quest for a more dynamic appreciation of contemporary paratextuality.

With regard to the matter of spatiality (where), Genette distinguishes between peritext and epitext. *Peritexts*, he suggests, are those paratexts (I know…) that enjoy a close proximity to the primary text and include devices such as tables of contents, book covers, bibliographies, and the like. *Epitexts*, on the other hand, maintain a sort of distance from their texts and include secondary and tertiary forms of discourse such as reviews, press releases, movie posters, interviews, fan fiction, film trailers, close academic readings, and generic classifications.[27]

---

[27] It is interesting to think of genre classifications—as Jason Mittell does—being determined by epitextual forms of discourse. In such an equation, paratexts beget paratexts (or at least determine a work's paratextual status), creating layer upon layer of frames of influence.

In terms of temporality (when), Genette provides a catalogue of paratextual elements all defined in relation to the primary text. For our purposes, we will concentrate on four: *Prior* paratexts are those that make their public appearance before the text, such as film trailers, pre-publication announcements/promotions, and prospectuses. *Original* paratexts appear at the same time as their texts—think film credits or a televisual opening title sequence. The *later* paratext is one that appears within a relatively brief period of time following the emergence of the primary text. Examples of later paratexts might include promotional discourse surrounding a film's initial DVD release, or audience ratings and reviews such as those found on Rotten Tomatoes. Over time, however, paratextual devices migrate toward the status of *delayed* paratexts—those that, through a kind of reframing, exert their influence long after the debut of the foundational text. Examples of delayed paratexts include the 'introductions' that precede the showing of *Turner Classic Movies,* a new foreword for the re-edition of a novel, or additional commentary tracks on anniversary and special edition DVD and Blu-Ray releases.

Typically, as Genette observes, literary paratexts are made manifest (how) in *textual*, or verbal, form; this is what he calls their *substantial* status. Prefaces, reviews, endnotes, and dust jacket synopses all fit this bill and share linguistic status. Nevertheless, it is also important to recognize that paratextual value may be endowed in iconic (e.g. photos, illustrations), material (e.g. typography, paper stock), or factual elements (e.g. the race or sex of the author) as well. Certainly, in the era of social media sharing, saturation advertising campaigns, and ever-broader merchandise licensing agreements, one may reasonably argue that the substantial status of modern paratexts is at least equally vested in factual, material, and iconic forms as in any purely linguistic mode.

The *pragmatic* quality of a paratextual device is, for Genette, inevitably tied to what he calls the "situation of communication"—a state that is largely contingent upon the force of the message, its intended audience, and the sender's degree of responsibility and authority (who) (8). While *authorial* paratexts (those sent forth by the creator of the foundational text) are quite common, the sender of the paratext need not be its author. For Genette, the status of sender is achieved via "putative attribution and an acceptance of responsibility" (8). Thus, with a literary work, the sender of a given paratext might just as well be the publisher—a *publisher's* paratext—as the author of the primary text. What's more, sender status may also be assigned to a third party through a delegation, and corresponding acknowledgment, of responsibility. In such an instance, a third party might agree to write a preface to a new edition of a book at the request of the work's author or publisher. Such a preface would constitute an *allographic* paratext. The key here, then, for Genette, is that, "By definition, something is not a paratext unless the author or one of his associates accepts responsibility for it" (9). Pragmatic distinctions may also be made with regard to a paratext's intended audience. For example, *private* paratexts are those intended for either the author's eyes alone (these are, certainly, the most private of all paratexts) or a very limited number of individuals who are prohibited from sharing their paratextual knowledge with the world at large. *Public* paratexts, on the other hand, are those intended for any and all forms of consumption by members of the general audience—no matter the ostensible degree of specificity (Genette 9).[28] The final element in Genette's "situation of

---

[28] For example, a dedication might address but a single reader at a very specific time—as when Antoine de Saint-Exupery famously dedicates *The Little Prince* "To Leon Werth, when he was a little boy"—or no reader at all—as when Mark Z. Danielewski informs readers of *House of Leaves*, "This is not for you"—and still function as a public paratext.

communication" involves what he calls the "illocutionary force" of the paratextual message (10).[29] Here again, a question of intent enters into the paratextual equation. This time, however, we are concerned with the intended function of the message rather than its target audience. As in linguistics, the illocutionary force of a paratextual message has more to do with what is *meant* than with what is *said*.[30] For example, in the case of a trailer for Antoine Fuqua's 2014 film *The Equalizer* which flashes intertitles reading, "From the director of *Training Day* and *Olympus has Fallen*," the illocutionary force of the message has more to do with an intertextual appeal to potential spectators than supplying facts concerning the director's filmography. Thus, the "preferred" message becomes, "If you liked these movies, you'll like this one too."

Ultimately, however, its performative qualities (to do what?) lend the paratext its unique character. The ontology of the paratextual device is, for Genette, bound up in its subordinate status and catalytic functionality:

> … the paratext in all its forms is a discourse that is fundamentally
>
> heteronomous, auxiliary, and *dedicated to the service of something other than*
>
> *itself* that constitutes its *raison d'etre. This something is the text.* Whatever
>
> aesthetic or ideological investment the author makes in a paratextual
>
> element (a 'lovely title' or a preface-manifesto), whatever coquettishness or

---

[29] It is at this point in his paratextual theorizing that Genette must part ways with Barthes, or, at least, with Barthes the poststructuralist. While his countryman famously proclaimed "*La Mort de l'auteur*" two decades prior to the publication of *Paratexts*, Genette refused to concede the importance of authorial intention—amongst other influential factors—in his extensive mapping of the systemic operations of transtextuality. Genette was, and still remains, a structuralist. Indeed, as Prince notes, "[Genette] claims that he never knew what poststructuralism was and that nobody else did either" (5). For an interesting and direct comparison of the two's thinking on these matters, see Kemp's "Pastiche, Structuralism and Authorial Intention" (93-104).
[30] For a thoroughgoing explication of linguistic utterances, intentions, and consequences see J.L. Austin's *How to do things with Words* (108-146).

paradoxical reversal he puts into it, *the paratextual element is always*

subordinate to 'its' text, and this functionality determines the essence of its

appeal and its existence (12, emphasis added).

The paratext, then, while a necessary condition to the production of meaning, is

nonetheless subservient to the text proper. It stands apart from the text—in a temporal

and/or spatial capacity—solely in order to act upon it. This is, according to Genette, its

reason for being.

As new media platforms have emerged and transmedia storytelling has become the

standard industry approach to the creation and marketing of contemporary narratives the

Genettian model of paratextuality has enjoyed newfound popularity.[31] As Genette's

theories have been applied outside the world of printed literature, modifications have been

made in order to make these theories more relevant to the study of nascent media forms.

For example, in her 2013 study of paratextuality and e-readers, Ellen McCracken expands

on the models of temporality and spatiality originally proffered by Genette by

contemplating how electronic literature opens up space for new paratexts that encourage

readers to travel along differing vectors of meaning (106-107). New elements of motion—

beyond turning pages and moving one's eyes across the page—have become integral parts

of reader engagement on portable electronic devices such as Kindles and iPads. As

McCracken notes, "If one conceives of the principal verbal literary text as the center, one

can identify exterior and interior pathways leading readers both away from and more

deeply into the words at hand" (106). *Centrifugal* paratexts prompt readers to travel

---

[31] For a recent evaluation of the increasing popularity of paratextual studies in the academy, see Doherty's "The Paratext's the Thing."

outward from the primary text. Examples include hyperlinks in the text proper that lead

readers to secondary forms of discourse such as book reviews, author biographies and

publisher's web pages. Alternately, *Centripetal* paratexts privilege engagement on inward

vectors, prompting readers to travel more deeply into the foundational text by offering

ways to alter the layout of the text, the size of fonts, or, as with Amazon's concordance-like

X-Ray feature, search the "bones of the book" for the appearance of specific characters or

terms (Amazon.com, Inc.).

While McCracken's interior and exterior vectors usefully enhance the Genettian

model and supplement notions of peritexts and epitexts, her overall approach—much like

Genette's—nonetheless maintains that paratexts occupy a kind of second-order textual

status. They are defined, at least in part, in the negative—by what they are not. According

to these formulations, paratexts are not primary texts. Instead, they are subordinate to the

foundational works that they seek to present and modify. This kind of thinking is hardly

limited to Genette and McCracken. Indeed, despite their application of paratextual theory to

differing fields of study, a good number of scholars seem determined to utilize and

preserve definitions of paratexts that present them as little more than textual modifiers.[32]

It strikes me, however, that as we journey further outside the cloistered realm of

literature and delve more deeply into the paratextual analysis of other mass media the

nature of paratextual functionality becomes increasingly complex. For instance, in the case

of literature, the primary text is arguably easy to identify. Returning to our earlier passage

from Genette we may recognize the primary text as "a more or less long sequence of verbal

---

[32] Examples include: Allison, "Beyond Saul Bass," "Catch Me," "Title Sequences;" Birke and Christ; Fiadotau; Johansson; Karpovich; and Sutton.

statements that are more or less endowed with significance" (1).[33] However, as soon as we begin to consider other mass media—particularly those that developed in lockstep with the onset and maturation of industrial capitalism—we find the primary text, as well as the full range of paratextual operation, to be much more elusive.

1.3 **Putting Our Words to Work: A Brief Analysis**

How are we, for instance, to make sense of a 2007 magazine advertisement for the DVD release of *Hearts of Darkness* (1991), a sixteen-year-old documentary film about the production of *Apocalypse Now* (1979), a twenty-eight-year-old feature film loosely adapted from Joseph Conrad's century-old novella *Heart of Darkness* which boasts the inclusion of *Coda* (2007), a bonus documentary about the making of *Youth Without Youth* (2007), another, more recent, feature by Francis Ford Coppola that is based on Mircea Eliade's obscure two-decade-old novella of the same name? If this last sentence was difficult to parse, it was meant to be. It illustrates just how intricate contemporary equations of paratextuality have become. This complexity confronts us with a number of questions: If we accept that the print ad is a paratext, then which of the others is the primary text? What exactly is the ad "presenting?" And finally, how does the advertisement function vis-à-vis time, space, author, reader, and vectors of meaning?

There are, of course, a number of "common sense" answers to the first two questions. In the most facile sense, the advertisement sustains a delayed epitextual relationship to *Hearts of Darkness*, which is presented as the primary text and framed

---

[33] I use the qualifier "arguably" because, as Stanitzek observes, "to conceive of the paratext as an 'external form' is a somewhat problematic metaphor" ("Paratexts in Media" 30). In a very real sense, the "long sequence of verbal statements" that make up the so-called primary text can only exist through the function of paratextual devices such as fonts, page layout, etc. (Genette 1). Thus, "no text ever has a truly paratext-free moment" (Stanitzek "Paratexts in Media" 30).

through the use of both iconic (Coppola decked out in sunglasses and jungle fatigues, helicopters flying in formation, stylized fonts) and textual forms (the title of the documentary, the film's tagline, snippets of critical praise). Yet, as Gramsci has rightfully observed, common sense (what he calls "*buonsenso,*" or literally, "good sense") must be viewed with suspicion as it represents the kind of uncritical worldview that is both product and propagator of the dominant ideology (419-25). In the case of our advertisement, the common sense answers to our initial questions perform an act of exnomination by concealing a multitude of transtextual relationships and naturalizing paratextual hegemony. It is only through a more nuanced analysis of the advertisement and its accompanying text—one that is mindful of Genette's elements of where, when, who, how and what as well as McCracken's vectors of meaning and engagement—that this exnomination is laid bare. The characteristics of textual engagement and paratextual dominance left unnamed here are precisely those that allow us to answer our final question regarding time, space, authors and readers. Helpfully, they also allow us to revisit the foundational assertions that inform this project. It is useful, I think, in order to bring us full circle, to briefly examine how these characteristics are naturalized.

First, it is evident that our advertisement privileges paratextual engagement as the dominant mode of media interaction. The ad is itself a paratext to the nth degree. It functions in an original peritextual capacity vis-à-vis the magazine in which it appears. In a very literal sense it, "ensures the text's presence in the world" through the generation of advertising revenue (Genette 1).[34] However, as soon as we consider the paratext's sender,

---

[34] As Upton Sinclair once observed, "Financially speaking, our big newspapers and popular magazines are today more dependent upon their advertisers than they are upon their readers… [A] popular magazine is a device for submitting competitive advertising to the public, the reading-matter being bait to bring the public to the hook" (254).

receiver and illocutionary force, we are sent along a centrifugal vector away from the

magazine and toward the texts that comprise the contents of the DVD.[35] At this juncture,

the advertisement's concomitant paratextual functions become evident as it operates in

both delayed and original epitextual capacities—delayed in regard to *Hearts of Darkness*, a

film already some 8 years old, and original with regard to *Coda*, a documentary released

concurrently with the DVD—sending readers/viewers along centripetal vectors further

into the films. Yet, as we delve deeper into these documentaries our "primary texts" reveal

themselves to be paratexts as well, with *Hearts of Darkness* and *Coda* operating at the level

of delayed and original allographic epitexts respectively. And, as the audience engages with

these works on deeper and deeper levels they are paradoxically sent along centrifugal

vectors outward toward the original films, which, in turn, serve as epitextual framers of the

seminal novellas. In this scenario, onion-like layers of paratextuality attest to the ubiquity

of paratexts as well as the notion that paratextual engagement now constitutes the

principal mode of contemporary media interaction.

The interchanging flows of meaning and strata of paratextuality present in our

example emulate changes—on the levels of both quotidian experience and ideology—to the

mode of perception heralded by the arrival of the modern and postmodern eras.

Alternating vectors of meaning send reader/viewers traveling along differing trajectories

---

[35] At the risk of overcomplicating an already knotty example, I should note that the illocutionary force of the advertisement differs depending on the perceived sender. In the case of the film's producers the ad frames the documentaries it promotes and asks potential consumers to purchase the DVD (an inquiry/proposal). In the case of the magazine's publishers, the advert frames not only the periodical, but also its readership. As with television, what is being sold is not so much the space the ad occupies, as it is the eyeballs of potential consumers (see previous endnote). Accordingly, from one perspective, the illocutionary point of the ad as utterance is to frame the audience as the kind of urbane, educated, and thus, financially solvent, folks capable of appreciating 'making of' documentaries focused on the works of a notorious auteur (an assertion/promise). In both of these instances, the ad works as a publisher's paratext; yet, it functions to different illocutionary ends.

that mirror the movements of the bustling urban crowds that vexed and transfixed Engels, Poe, and Baudelaire during the first half of the nineteenth century.[36] No longer is the reader/viewer encouraged to enjoy the kind of sustained engagement afforded by a one-way centripetal journey from the threshold of the paratext into the text proper. Rather, interaction with the advertisement results in the experience of a fragmented, multi-directional transtextuality that works to obscure the identity of the so-called "primary text." The reader/viewer moves in a herky-jerky fashion through a riot of texts all wanting to be heard above the other. In such cases it is quite possible that the foundational text is never even identified, much less explored. Instead, the reader/viewer is faced with a seemingly unending procession of paratexts, or referents, which work to commodify both their own textual status (e.g. movie trailers that reach tens of millions of views on YouTube and generate untold Internet-based ad revenue while increasing studio market cap) as well as that of the (para)texts they supplement. This commodification is, of course, commonly characterized as an ideological symptom of late capitalism as a cultural moment, and, as my project will detail, both the progenitor and consequence of a new way of seeing.[37]

It should be readily observable from our brief analysis that the Genettian theory alone—one that closely resembles the linear "sender-message-receiver" model of communication developed in the 1940s and 50s— is insufficient for the rigorous

---

[36] Benjamin details this preoccupation with urban movement and modernity through analyses of Engels' *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, Poe's "The Man of the Crowd," and Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal*. (Motifs 42-50).

[37] This, I believe, is where Baudrillard goes wrong in his famous essay on "Similacra and Simulations". We are not so much faced with a postmodern situation in which the simulation precedes the original (or, as Baudrillard puts it, "the territory no longer precedes the map"), as we find ourselves in a predicament wherein the paratext supersedes the text (166).

evaluation of contemporary paratextuality.[38] The model contains a number of assumptions

that prove especially problematic in a transmedia context. For example, in his explication of

the "publisher's paratext," Genette essentially ignores the possibility of multiple

publishers—in our example there are at least two, one for the work being advertised and

another for the text containing the advertisement—and the varying degree of authority and

responsibility each might possess with regard to the foundational text.[39] Likewise, he fails

to make room in the paratextual equation for more than one author. As our example

demonstrates, each layer of paratextuality enjoys its own creator—the novellas are written

by Conrad and Eliade; the feature films are directed by Francis Ford Coppola; the

documentaries are directed by Eleanor Coppola, George Hickenlooper and Fax Bahr, and so

on. Again, the assumption of a single author, like that of a lone publisher, complicates

questions of textual authority and responsibility. What's more, even though Genette goes to

great pains to explore the temporal and spatial dimensions of paratextuality, he assumes

that these factors remain constant. They do not. As the distance and duration between text

and paratext mounts, the paratext moves to either a) usurp the authority of the

foundational text, or, b) seek out another "primary text" to influence. Remember how, in

our superficial examination, *Hearts of Darkness* appeared to fulfill the role of the primary

text? This is due, in no small part, to the delayed nature of this paratext as well as its

---

[38] As Saenger observes, even though Genette developed his theory of paratextuality during the late 1970s and early 80s, his "terms are designed to cope with texts of the French nineteenth century" (15, note 35). This narrow focus clearly has ramifications for the application of Genettian theory across other media.

[39] Indeed, Genette essentially dismisses the importance of the 'publisher's epitext' due to its often commercial nature. He tells his reader: "I will not dwell on the publisher's epitext: its basically marketing and promotional function does not always involve the responsibility of the author in a very meaningful way; most often he is satisfied just to close his eyes officially to the value-inflating hyperbole inseparable from the needs of trade" (347).

epitextual distance from both *Apocalypse Now* and *Heart of Darkness*. Thus, Genettian

orthodoxy is caught flat-footed in the face of a "primary text" on the move.

It would not be possible to observe the shortcomings of the Genettian model and the

changes brought about via the spatio-temporal properties of contemporary paratextuality

without the benefit of McCracken's vectors of meaning. Operating in concert with Genette's

paratextual elements of "where," "when," "how," who and "to do what," examination of

these pathways aids in the creation of a dynamic mode of investigation capable of

accounting for the transtextual tendencies that have come to characterize contemporary

media. Specifically, through such combinatory analysis we are able to recognize the current

state of paratextuality in which ubiquity lends itself to dominance, supposedly subordinate

texts vie for primary status, transtextual devices grant agency through appeals in the form

of directive illocutionary points, and paratexts work to influence meaning making

processes along manifold vectors of engagement across multiple 'texts.'

1.4   So, What's New?

This project contributes to the literature on paratextuality in at least three

significant, interconnected ways. Leading these contributions is the notion that paratexts

manage expectations beyond the realm of a single "primary text." Paratexts function along

vectors that lead far outside such arbitrary boundaries. To suggest otherwise, is to turn a

blind eye to the full scope of paratextual influence. Paratexts impact meaning-making

processes across an enormous range of lived experience. More than simply serving a

solitary master text, they hold the potential to affect our engagement with cultural milieus,

material artifacts, social practices, communal understandings, and even people. Take, for

instance, the time I included a humorous footnote in a paper for graduate seminar and was

chastised by the instructor: "Don't do this. No one will take you seriously."[40] The

illocutionary point of this comment is made plain through the instructor's choice of words.

It's not that readers might doubt the seriousness of the *work* laid out before them. Rather, it

is the earnestness of the *author* that is called into question. Consequently, it becomes

apparent that paratexts manage impressions of persons as deftly as they do texts. What's

more, the offhand nature of these comments suggests that paratextuality functions in ways

that are perhaps innately understood but not consciously unrecognized.

Throughout my case studies, I extend the theory of paratexts as framing systems

across the provinces of people, places, temporality, material things, and ideas. In doing so I

argue for an understanding of paratextuality that places paratexts at the forefront of

textual engagement and meaning-making processes. This paradigm runs contrary to the

textually centered approach to paratextual inquiry that has enjoyed favor in the academy

since the publication of Genette's seminal studies. As a consequence, I intervene in the

ongoing scholarly discourse by asserting that it is, more often than not, a mistake to

characterize paratexts as purely subordinate forms of mediated expression. It is imperative

that we acknowledge the primacy of paratexts and divest ourselves of the biases that

diminish their importance if we hope to gain a more thoroughgoing understanding of how

media is actually used.[41]

---

[40] "They're all going to laugh at you!"

[41] Biases against paratexts are deeply ingrained in our collective unconscious. We are taught this systemic prejudice as schoolchildren and sublimate it as adults. Consider if you will, how many of us were forced to suffer through *Ethan Frome* (apologies to Edith Wharton) during our formative years rather than learning what we needed about the book's characters, themes, plot and motifs from *CliffsNotes*—the veritable paragons of perfunctory paratextuality. We knew, back in those days, that it was sometimes necessary—and preferable—to watch Redford as Gatsby rather than trying to make it through Fitzgerald in an afternoon. Paratexts were part of our academic survival kit. As adults, however, we deny the legitimacy of these paratextually-motivated heuristics for surviving the vicissitudes of the educational apparatus.

Finally, I break with orthodoxy by exploring paratextual logic through the lens of historical case studies. While I would stop short of calling this effort a cultural history, it nevertheless interrogates how paratextual devices function in the context of distinct historical moments. This is, to my knowledge, the first time such an effort has been made. In utilizing a dynamic approach to paratextual analysis, I follow multiple vectors of meaning as they lead in underexplored and sometimes unexpected directions, all the while exposing how paratexts serve in relation to what might be described as "structures of feeling" (Williams 132). To put it another way, my study concerns itself with paratexts as systems for the management of "meaning and values as they are actively lived and felt," rather than dealing with them exclusively in their abstract capacity as textual modifiers (Ibid.). This is not to say that I ignore or refute the Genettian notion of paratexts as thresholds to particular modes of understanding. Instead, I complicate and expand upon Genette's paratextual calculus by questioning exactly where such thresholds truly lead.

1.5 **Case Studies**

To undertake an exhaustive examination of the evolution of contemporary paratextuality is beyond the scope of this project. As Genette notes, "each element of the paratext has its own history," and, even a half-hearted attempt to flesh out such histories would fill limitless volumes (14). All the same, I suggest that a chronological examination of specific paratextual messages within the context of relevant modern media forms provides us with valuable insight into the depth and breadth of paratextual influence. The history of paratextuality, indeed, the history of all media, is inextricably tied to the development of

technology [42] (Genette 14). And, while I am mindful of the perils of technological

determinism, we must acknowledge at the outset that mass media platforms are

simultaneously the products of technological progression, keys to understanding cultural

biases and social dominance, and, in the most fundamental regard, paratexts themselves

(Innis 21-31).[43] To paraphrase McLuhan, we might say that the medium—rather than being

the message—is the paratext. Accordingly, the close analyses of representative examples

culled from the media that best illustrate the technological and communicative affordances

of the modern and postmodern periods holds a kind of twofold potential. Through these

case studies we are able to trace—albeit generally—the recent evolution of paratextual

hegemony and how this dominance relates to specific cultural moments.

To this end, my first case study coalesces around two mainstays of modernity: the

newspaper and the department store. John Wanamaker, the founder of the eponymous

retail establishments, is responsible for a number of firsts in his chosen profession. He was

the first dry-goods merchant to offer a "money back" guarantee (Applegate 75), the first to

utilize price tags ("Who Made America?"), the first to hire a full-time copywriter for

advertising purposes (Fox 25), and, most importantly, the first to run full-page newspaper

advertisements ("Wanamaker, America's Master Merchant" 5).

Wanamaker, an early and vigorous proponent of print advertising, began running

his full-page ads intermittently in 1879 ("Wanamaker, John"). By 1919, his "Grand Depot"

store, located on Market Street in Philadelphia, was the single largest retail buyer of

---

[42] Of this connection, Genette eloquently observes: "The general history of the paratext, punctuated by the stages of a technological evolution that supplies it with means and opportunities, would no doubt be the history of those ceaseless phenomena of sliding, substitution, compensation, and innovation which ensure, with the passing centuries, the continuation and to some extent the development of the paratext's efficacy" (14).
[43] One need only think of a few of the peritextual elements identified by Genette, including paper stock, printer's ink, typeface, and formatting in order to recognize that paratexts literally create texts (33-36).

advertising space in the world—utilizing three half-page advertisements in twenty local

weeklies and three to four daily full-page ads in the city's major metropolitan newspapers

("Wanamaker, America's Master" 64). [44] Wanamaker's advertisements proved a boon to

both his business and the city's newspapers. Retailers throughout the U.S. and Europe took

note, closely imitating his ads in both style and content. (Shrock 53; "Wanamaker,

America's Master" 64).

This project concentrates on a sample of approximately 300 full-page Wanamaker

advertisements from 1899 issues of Philadelphia's *The North American*.[45] By conducting an

analysis of these ads in juxtaposition with the issues' journalistic content, I make the case

for a mode of paratextuality which aided in the legitimation of America's new consumer

culture—a culture so at odds with established social practices as to be "almost violently

hostile to the past and tradition" (Leach xiii). In short, I argue that Wanamaker's

advertisements, and those like them, did more than merely supplement the publications in

which they appeared. Beyond ensuring the presence and continued livelihood of America's

burgeoning daily newspapers through the generation of ad revenue, these paratexts also

worked to manage cultural expectations and the meanings ascribed to things during a time

when "consumer goods, consumer longings, and consumer pleasures" first began to take

center stage in American lived experience (Leach 5).

I focus on *The North American* for a number of reasons. As has been widely observed

since de Tocqueville, the growth of the press in America is a "crucial part of the story nation

---

[44] I should note that Wanamaker, a devout Christian, ran his "daily" ads every day but Sunday.

[45] My sample size calculation is based on the examination of full-page Wanamaker advertisements appearing (late January forward) in *The North American*. Special attention will be given to those ads appearing under the banner of the "Wanamaker Daily Store News," which began appearing October 10, 1899 and continued through the year's end.

building" (Wallace 1). Newspapers were—and to a lesser extent, remain—forums for public debate, tools for the manufacture of consensus, and vital elements in the construction of place (Ibid.). They helped to shape America, its attitudes, communities, and institutions. This is particularly true of *The North American*, which, in 1899, held the distinction of being the oldest daily newspaper in the country and a direct descendant of *The Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser*, the nation's first successful daily newspaper ("Philadelphia North American"). It was, in the words of *Pearson's Magazine*, not "only a big newspaper," but a "great one" with a hard-earned reputation for intrepid reporting and unflinching honesty ("Backbone" 123).[46] It also happened to be owned by Thomas Wanamaker, John Wanamaker's son ("Dies in Paris" 1).

My decision to concentrate on issues published during the final year of the 19th century is likewise driven by a multitude of factors. *The North American* became part of the Wanamaker family empire in 1899, the same year the elder Wanamaker began running daily full-page newspaper advertisements (Gibbons 2: 15-16). By this time the family had enjoyed over two-decades experience in publishing and advertising and had, by all accounts, become quite proficient at both (Gibbons 1: 96-109; 2: 14-27).[47] As a result, this period arguably marks the maturation of Wanamaker's advertising style, an "innovative," "plain," "straightforward" approach that evolved "in parallel" with the form and character of newspaper copy (Gibbons 2: 17-19). In fact, at first glance, it often remains difficult to

---

[46] Pearson's enthusiastically writes of *The North American*: "It is great because it is good. It is good because it is good for something. It doesn't cater, it doesn't truckle, it doesn't lie. When there is a head to be punched, it punches it. It doesn't matter who is the owner of the head. The head needs punching. *The North American* does the rest" (123).

[47] John Wanamaker began publishing religious tracts in the 1870s. He went on to launch a number of publications including *The Farm Journal*, an 8-page paper that circulated in rural areas surrounding Philadelphia and enjoyed an audience of more than 1,000,000 readers (Gibbons 1:198)

distinguish the "Wanamaker Store News" from journalistic content (See appendix for an example of the ads' layout).[48] Finally, as the turn of the century marked a move away from traditional Christian values and towards a "secular business and market-oriented culture," Wanamaker's choice of advertising sites (almost exclusively newspapers) and style worked to calm the public's anxieties regarding the onslaught of freshly manufactured goods that heralded a radically new way of life (Leach 3).

To be clear, I am not attempting an intervention in dialogue concerning turn-of-the-century advertising. Such an effort is outside my bailiwick. Instead, my contribution lies in exploring Wanamaker's marketing efforts in terms of paratextual functionality. I take a two-pronged approach to this investigation. I begin by examining how paratexts are utilized in *The North America*n to appeal to the sovereignty of the consumer while affirming the authority of the newspaper as a trusted cultural institution.[49] From there, I detail how the "Store News" exploits this functionality to legitimize a commercial narrative concerning the sale of material goods.[50] Based on these analyses, I posit that the newspaper, as a medium, necessarily complicates Genettian logic by demonstrating how particular paratextual devices privilege divergent vectors of meaning. In the case *The North American* paratextual influence effectively extends in at least two directions—inward to manage engagement with journalistic narratives and outward to establish frames for decoding a new world of material abundance and the things that comprise it.

---

[48] In this respect, Wanamaker's advertisements appear to be precursors to the "advertorials" commonly found in newspapers and magazines today.

[49] *The North American*'s slogan speaks to both of these ends: "It's all here and it's all true."

[50] Wanamaker's ads recreated the look and feel of a front page, complete with headlines, illustrations, a multi-column layout, weather report, and masthead reading: "Wanamaker Daily Store News." The masthead was altered in 1901 to better reflect the commercial nature of the accompanying copy. It subsequently read, "Editorial Page of the Wanamaker Store" and was set in the style of Wanamaker's handwriting rather than the large type commonly associated with journalistic headlines (Sinberg 8).

For my second case study I turn to the medium of radio. By the late 1930s cinema

and broadcast radio had cemented their positions as the dominant forms of mass-mediated

entertainment (Kallis 1). Radio, due to its nearly constant presence, enjoyed a particularly

privileged place in the everyday life of Americans (Loviglio xiv). Unlike motion pictures,

which were limited by the necessity of theatrical exhibition, radio bridged the gap between

public and private space. During its period of expansion during the 1920s, listening to the

radio was, quite often, a communal activity (Barfield 3-14, 51-53). As friends and neighbors

purchased the first radios, private homes became impromptu public gathering places.

Conversely, when equipped with a working crystal set and passable speakers, businesses,

churches, government buildings, and even sidewalks took on an intimate air as hushed

crowds congregated to listen. Later, as the cultural status of the medium shifted throughout

the 1930s, radio went from novelty to necessity and listening practices became

increasingly private and family-based (Barfield 15-23). Nevertheless, the programs being

broadcast into homes had a unifying effect. As Kallis observes, "More than newspapers,

books, film, or any other medium, radio broadcasts provided a common experience

throughout the nation" (1). The radio, like the television some two decades later, brought

the outside world in and provided Americans with important cultural touchstones in the

form of popular programming. Here, I focus on just such a program.

Captain Midnight debuted as a syndicated show in 1938 (Kallis 2). A "five-a-week

quarter-hour disc series," *Midnight* was pre-recorded at the Chicago advertising offices of

its producers Blackett, Sample, and Hummert and distributed to 18 radio stations

throughout the Midwest ("Skelly Turns" 10). Sponsored by Skelly Oil for its first two

seasons, the series proved popular. As a consequence, the Wander Company—makers of

Ovaltine and formerly sponsors of the already popular *Little Orphan Annie*—purchased

Captain Midnight for national syndication on the Mutual Broadcasting System beginning in

1940 ("Wander Shifts" 47). The program was the creation of Robert M. Burtt and Wilfred G.

Moore, former WWI pilots, who had already enjoyed success with another well-liked

fifteen-minute serial *The Air Adventures of Jimmie Allen* (Harmon 8). Like *Allen*, *Midnight*

was an aviation-inspired program aimed at the youth market.

Little differentiated *Captain Midnight* from other 'juve strips' of the time (Gold 28).[51]

Its plots were formulaic, its narrative and stylistic devices well worn, and its characters

familiar.[52] Yet, it is, in some ways, precisely this hackneyed quality that makes *Captain*

Midnight such a worthy subject for analysis. As one of the most popular and longest

running quarter-hour radio serials on the air, the show arguably represents the genre at its

zenith (McFarland 8-10).[53] *Midnight's* subject matter, aviation, was heavily romanticized

across both film and radio and played an important role in the cultural imaginary at the

time of the serial's debut (Kallis 2). Its protagonist, Jim "Red" Albright, was reminiscent of

his predecessor Jimmie Allen, but all grown up (Harmon 8).[54] In his Captain Midnight guise,

Albright was a "costumed, double-identity superhero" who arrived on the pop-culture

scene the same year as Superman and owed much to the Shadow, whose alter ego, Lamont

---

[51] The term "strip" is industry slang for a radio or television program that appears in the same time slot on consecutive days of the week in order to appeal to a target demographic thought to be watching or listening at certain times—think radio morning shows and daily commuters or *The Price is Right* and aging Baby Boomers (For the record I'm not trying to make ageist generalizations here. According to *Broadcasting and Cable*, the median age for a *Price is Right* viewer is 64. For more figures on age and daytime viewership, see O'Dell).

[52] Upon *Captain Midnight's* debut *Variety* noted: "About the only difference between the characters in this show and the characters in other kid thrillers is that the 'Captain Midnight' protagonists are more brave, more noble and more heroic than the brave, noble and heroic characters in the rival strips. And the villains are more villainous and diabolical. It's cliff-hanging on the same old pattern…" (Gold 28).

[53] *Midnight* ran as a quarter-hour serial from 1938 till 1949 when producers gave in to pressures to change to a half-hour format. The program did not adapt well and was cancelled six months later. For more, see: McFarland 7-9.

[54] In fact, Ed Prentiss, the announcer of *Jimmie Allen*, went on to become the voice of Captain Midnight for most of the show's run.

Cranston, was also a WWI fighter pilot (Harmon 8). And the serial's extensive use of premiums—the form of paratextual exploitation for which *Midnight* is probably best remembered—represents the culmination of already established practices popularized by programs such as *Gangbusters*, *Little Orphan Annie*, and *Jimmie Allen.*

My project explores a number of multi-part 'adventures' (approximately 160 individual episodes) from *Captain Midnight's* eleven-year run. The earliest programs originate during Skelly Oil's sponsorship. The latter storylines were broadcast during the war years and sponsored by Ovaltine.[55] Through the analysis of these adventures I argue a series of points related to paratextuality, authorial identity, and audience. In doing so, I demonstrate the ways in which paratexts function as frames for understanding not only radio programs, but also people—including ourselves and those around us.

I begin my examination of *Captain Midnight* by demonstrating how the program's efferent paratextual vectors work to create an "imagined community" of listeners bound together through calls to uniquely participatory modes of engagement (Anderson 5-7). As with Benedict Anderson's critical appraisal of nationalism, this community of listeners is "*imagined* because the members…will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communication" (Anderson 6). *Midnight's* paratexts promote precisely this kind of perceived fellowship. Listeners are coaxed to transcend the ineludibly solitary character of meaning making and instead think of themselves in communal terms.

---

[55] I should, at this point, note that I do not have access to all of the episodes that comprise these story arcs in their entirety. Due to the passage of time and the sheer quantity of programs produced during the show's run a number of the transcribed recordings have been lost. Even so, because we are engaged in a paratextual analysis rather than a narrative one, I maintain that the absence of these installments is inconsequential.

Far from merely enabling the serial's Barthesian metamorphosis from work to Text, members of the listening audience are compelled to "join," "help," and "take part" in the narrative adventures of Captain Midnight as well as the construction and maintenance of a kind of abstract secular sodality.[56] You're not just a listener, you're a member of the "Flight Patrol," a recruit in the "Secret Squadron," a "red-blooded young American," and such statuses are task-oriented ("the thing to do now, is to get started…") and relationally focused ("this medal proves you're a member… and only members can take part in the big adventures ahead") (Blackett "Perada: 167"). Ultimately, this two-fold (textual/social) paratextual operation performs an unexpected ideological task by extending the textual production of subjectivity beyond the spatio-temporal site of engagement. Such is the power of paratextuality that it is capable of interpellation during moments when the text is conspicuously absent.

During the Skelly years, audience members are situated by paratextual discourse as members of a "secret" organization rather than individuals: "…you'll find your Medal of Membership waiting for you at your Skelly Service Station… It's a secret medal, you know… you flash it when you're among friends" (Blackett "Perada: 172"). Later, during the war, at Ovaltine's behest, listeners were compelled to think of themselves in aspirant nationalistic terms: "Every red-blooded young American wants to be able do big things, to be husky and hearty, and full of the pep and energy and good spirit that make people admire you just the way they admire Captain Midnight" (Blackett "Suicide Squadron: 3"). In both of these

---

[56] As Rentmann observes in his cultural history of the nascent medium, "Radio stimulated the social imagination" (268).

instances, listeners are invited to not only construct the serial as Text, but also to construct themselves as community members according to paratextually defined parameters.

In following another of *Midnight's* centrifugal paths we arrive at the authors' doorstep, though it is not at all clear who is at home. As I have already pointed out, authorship of the serial and responsibility for its paratextual messages are vested in two anthropomorphized entities over the course of the program's run. These acts of overt paratextual exnomination point to the importance of the role played by corporations in the commercial landscape of the 1930s and a link to nationalism during the 40s.

The corporation had become a "person" during the latter part of the 19th century and Skelly's sponsorship worked to put a friendly face to this propagandist reification as the Great Depression drew to a close.[57] So-called "corporate personhood" was made manifest—or at least rendered semi-plausible—via performative paratextual utterance. In "bringing" its audience a daily dose of serialized excitement, Skelly Oil enjoyed a form of capitalist transubstantiation wherein the corporation assumed corporeal form. *Captain Midnight's* paratexts did not so much safeguard "the text's presence in the world" (Genette 1), as they ensured Skelly Oil's "existence" and "reception" by framing notions of corporate personhood as both benevolent and inevitable. As social critic Edmund Wilson observes, having faced down the gravest economic outlook in modern history, moneymaking enterprises alone were "not enough to satisfy humanity," instead, we needed a "little common culture to give life stability and sense" (Qtd in Leach 39-80). *Captain Midnight*,

---

[57] Here I refer to the 14th Amendment, which, in addition to establishing heretofore-unrecognized civil liberties for natural persons, also granted equal rights to corporations. This was, of course, only the beginning of the legal anthropomorphization of corporate entities that have consequently enjoyed many of the benefits of natural personhood while paying few of the costs.

and, by centrifugal paratextual extension, Skelly Oil, appeared to supply that common culture.

Later, as the U.S. entered WII, Skelly the munificent corporate entity gave way to Ovaltine the "nation's protective and nerve-restoring food beverage" (Ovaltine). While series announcer Pierre Andre made it clear at the beginning of each installment that *Captain Midnight* was brought to listeners every day by the "makers of Ovaltine," any distinction between product and persons was quickly obscured. After that first declaration of authorial responsibility, product and producer seemed to morph into a single entity. The beverage had become bedfellow: "Your good friend Ovaltine, that one you've known for so many years, is one of the riches sources of vitamins and minerals in the world" ("Fighting With the Commandos). Listeners were encouraged to think of Ovaltine not as a malted milk supplement but as a conscious actant in the construction of a jingoistic, American, wartime ethos based in physicality and performance—no small achievement for a quintessentially Swiss product.[58] According to the company's paratextual pronouncements, serving Ovaltine three times a day helped assuage the fears of American mothers faced with the nutritional challenges of war-related food rationing ("Silver Dagger: 2"); just two daily doses provided young listeners the strength they needed to be healthy, active, and honest American boys and girls capable of important tasks like collecting waste paper for the benefit of the war effort ("Suicide Squadron: 1"); and if you couldn't drink a single serving because your local retailer was out of Ovaltine, then you simply had to persevere knowing that the shortage

---

[58] Dr. Albert Wander conceived Ovaltine—or Ovamaltine, as it was originally known—in 1904, in a small town just outside of Berne, Switzerland (McGrath).

was due to the astonishing amounts being ordered by U.S. government for soldiers at home and abroad ("Secret Squadron Strikes").

As with the Skelly Oil sponsorship, Ovaltine's patronage also situated its audience as members of an imagined community. This time, however, it was an imagined *political* community, a nation, just as Anderson theorized. Even more to the point, however, Midnight's paratexts not only worked to privilege this awakening of nationalist self-consciousness; but also encouraged a way of thinking about Ovaltine wherein the line between producer and production became hopelessly blurred.[59] The makers of Ovaltine were indistinguishable from their product. Together these Swiss symbionts basked in the warm glow of American patriotism and military pride emanating outward from the serial proper. In such an equation Genette's centripetal logic fails. Ovaltine's paratexts did nothing to frame *Captain Midnight* as primary text. Instead, it is the radio program that labored to paratextually manage expectations regarding Ovaltine—thereby framing a privately-held foreign foodstuff company, its workers, and its product as a single integral component in the establishment and maintenance of American wartime spirit.

In my third case study, I turn my attention to the examination of a form of dualistic paratextual functionality I have dubbed "paratext-as-text." Commonly utilized in pre/early-modern, top-down style mass communication systems; the paratext-as-text represents a mode, or functional type, of performance in which the paratext functions in both primary and paratextual roles. Typically, the paratext-as-text is called upon to operate in a principal textual capacity when the foundational text is absent or inaccessible. In such instances, the

---

[59] This conflation of creator and creation is itself a symptom of modernity—Mary Shelly knew as much when she created "Frankenstein's monster"—that has carried over to the present. Industrialization turned people into things and things into people. As a consequence, I can think of myself as a "truck guy" whenever I drive my Ford.

sender is granted the privilege of authoring an iteration of the primary text while simultaneously framing its interpretation. As a consequence, the paratext-as-text is a valuable tool for social institutions interested in privileging dominant, or preferred, readings of mass mediated messages.

In order to explicate this neologism, I look to two examples of paratextuality from markedly different eras: Lorenzo Ghiberti's *Gates of Paradise* and Walt Disney's "The Disneyland Story." Utilizing John Hartley's concept of "television as transmodern teaching" as a conceptual bridge, I demonstrate how both the early-Renaissance Catholic Church and Disney used paratext-as-text as a central components in their didactic, top-down, non-literate, mass communication systems. In this way, I lay bare how both organizations utilized narrative visual paratexts in order to educate audiences about primary texts that were largely inaccessible, while simultaneously promoting worldviews consistent with the socially constructed realities and organizational narratives of their respective institutions.

Commissioned in 1425 and installed on the eastern side of Florence's San Giovanni Baptistery in 1452, Ghiberti's *Gates of Paradise* are made up ten relief panels in gilt bronze depicting scenes from the Old Testament. Like many early-modern sacred works, they were required to operate as a primary text for illiterate parishioners incapable of reading the scriptures, as well as paratexts for clergy and the well-educated Florentine merchant class.

In keeping with this dual functionality, the doors served in both denotative and connotative capacities. By substituting for scripture, the *Gates* operated as information delivery vehicles, supplying the kind of narrative detail and focused messaging traditionally associated with primary texts. At a glance, viewers were familiarized with the religious figures and narrative events that made up the Old Testament's most powerful accounts of

sin, sacrifice, and salvation. At the same time, as connotative frames, Ghiberti's panels functioned to naturalize the Church's patriarchal social structure and unequal distribution of power, promote a "great man" style understanding of historical/biblical events, and encourage a dichotomous worldview that differentiates between a corrupt, physical existence and a divine, spiritual immortality. The panels also establish a typological link between Eve and the Virgin Mary that promotes themes of matriarchal veneration that run counter to the Church's patriarchal structure and encourage a collectivist understanding of Catholicism that is at odds with the emphasis on individual agency so central to the concept of salvation. These messages, while conflicting, are wholly in keeping with the tensions and contradictions that characterize Catholic theology. Thus, by serving as both primary text and paratext, Ghiberti's *Gates* served the didactic aims of the Catholic Church with remarkable efficiency.

On the surface, the *Gates of Paradise* and "The Disneyland Story" seem to have little in common. After all, Ghiberti's bronze doors are considered to be one of greatest artistic achievements of the early Renaissance (LeMon 127), while "The Disneyland Story," is a relatively pedestrian piece of 1950s televisual ephemera. Nevertheless, the works are similar in a number of ways. Just as Ghiberti's *Gates* are comprised of 10 self-contained, thematically linked narrative panels, Disney's "Story" is made up of eight discrete segments connected by their association with the yet unbuilt Disneyland theme park. Both works are capable of standing alone as primary texts; yet also serve to paratextually frame the interpretation of related works. And, most importantly, both serve in pedagogical capacities by educating audiences about institutionally approved "ways of seeing."

When Walt Disney first approached his bankers, shareholders, and brother Roy about investing in an amusement park they wanted nothing to do with it (Watts 385). Frustrated and unable to secure financing through conventional channels, Disney turned to television—a medium he both feared and despised (Mosely 230). After a number of false starts, Disney struck a deal with the fledgling American Broadcasting Corporation. In exchange for content and use of the Disney name, ABC would pay half a million dollars in cash and guarantee $4.5 million in loans in order to fund the Disneyland theme park (Watts 385). As a direct result of the deal, *Disneyland* the TV program debuted in the fall of 1954 and Disneyland the park opened approximately a year later. Within those twelve months the television show quickly topped the ratings and propelled ABC to 'major network' status (Mosely 244). *Disneyland* would go on to appear—under a variety of names, including its best known iteration, *The Wonderful World of Disney*—for over 50 years, eventually becoming the longest-running prime time show in television history ("The Wonderful" 1441-1442).

Like Ghiberti's *Gates* before it, "The Disneyland Story" was required to serve as both text and paratext. In order to satisfy the financial requirements of the network, the program needed to function effectively as text in its own right. Yet, to serve Disney's needs as a promotional vehicle, the show also had to educate viewers about his still-unfinished theme park and his burgeoning media empire. In examining "The Disneyland Story," I demonstrate how the show accomplishes both of these tasks by providing viewers with facts and figures concerning the park while schooling them in the "Disney way of seeing"— a discretionary worldview and corporate narrative based in an amalgamation of the quotidian and extraordinary.

In my final case study I return to the topic of news. This time, however, my focus is on electronic media.

The *Breitbart News Network*, more commonly referred to as *Breitbart News*, or, simply *Breitbart*, was established as a news-aggregator in 2007 by the conservative media personality Andrew Breitbart. After Breitbart's death in 2012, control of the site was handed off to its co-founder Stephen K. Bannon, who served as the company's executive chairman until leaving to become CEO of Donald Trump's presidential campaign in August of 2016. Bannon subsequently returned to his role as chairman in August of 2017, only to step down again in January of 2019. *Breitbart* enjoyed a considerable uptick in popularity under Bannon's stewardship, rising to become, at its apex, the 29th most visited website in the United States, surpassing both *FOX News* and *The Washington Post* in readership (Cadwalladr).[60] At the same time, the site has come under considerable criticism for its continuing alignment with the so-called 'alt-right' political movement and the endorsement of an increasingly "racist, sexist, xenophobic and anti-Semitic" agenda (Elliot and Miller).

Much of this criticism has focused on the website's paratexts. The Southern Poverty Law Center's Hatewatch blog recently suggested "that *Breitbart News* under… Stephen Bannon fostered a comment section—a sample of *Breitbart's* readership—that increasingly reflected language specific to the white nationalist… movement" (Amend and Morgan). Similarly, Ben Shapiro, *Breitbart's* former editor-at-large, has intimated that Bannon has worked to turn the site's comment section into "a cesspool for white supremacist mememakers [*sic*] (Shapiro). More recently, the social media activist organization Sleeping Giants has targeted Disqus—the

---

[60] Breitbart has slipped some since this peak. Today, it ranks as the 63rd most trafficked site in America (Alexa Internet). To put this in perspective, CNN comes in at 26 and The New York Times at 32 (and Pornhub beats them all at number 22, but that's for another project).

provider of software that powers *Breitbart's* comment section—as part of their larger campaign to "call out" companies that appear to profit from business dealings with the alt-right (Captain).

Breitbart's headlines have garnered similar criticism. Since Bannon's official relationship with the Trump campaign began, there has been a never-ending stream of newspaper, magazine, and blog articles decrying *Breitbart's* headlines.[61] In fact, so much attention has been lavished on them that many are now relatively well known. Leads such as "Birth Control Makes Women Unattractive and Crazy," "Bill Kristol: Republican Spoiler, Renegade Jew," "Would You Rather Your Child had Feminism or Cancer?" and "Gay Rights Have Made Us Dumber, It's Time To Get Back In The Closet" have become synonymous with the site and continue to serve as basis for criticism of Bannon, Trump, and his administration more broadly.[62]

This project does not seek to offer moral judgments concerning *Breitbart*, its creators, or audience. There is, as I have already indicated, no shortage of such critiques. I am instead concerned with exploring the interrelationships between the site's paratexts, its readership, and their intellectual labor. In short, I am interested in how *Breitbart's* digital paratextuality governs the production, commodification, and interpretation of *ideas* during a time when mass communication has increasingly incorporated many the transactional elements typically found in dyadic communication.

I begin my case study with an account of the website's ideological genesis, detailing the many ways Andrew Breitbart's indictment of the so-called "Democrat-Media Complex" seems to coopt the logic of Adorno and Horkheimer's "Enlightenment as Mass Deception." Though he

---

[61] A cursory search of the web reveals articles critical of Breitbart's headlines from *CNNMoney*, *Huffington Post*, *The New York Times*, *Esquire*, *Mother Jones*, *Rolling Stone*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *U.S. News and World Report*, to name a few of the better known publications.

[62] Prior to the 2016 election, Hillary Clinton tweeted a number of Breitbart's headlines in an effort to humiliate Trump for choosing Bannon as his campaign CEO. For more, see Ellefson.

spent considerable time demonizing the Frankfurt School throughout his career, Breitbart's rhetoric is undeniably similar to that of the school's two best-known thinkers. At base, only the villains have changed. Where Adorno and Horkheimer write disapprovingly of the "culture industry" and the influence of monopoly capitalism, Breitbart substitutes the "Democrat-Media Complex" and cultural Marxism. Both narratives demonstrate nostalgia for a romanticized past, portray media gatekeepers and stakeholders as ideologically corrupt, and bemoan the ways in which resistant subaltern voices are continually marginalized.

Despite their similarities, however, there is at least one key distinction between Breitbart's narrative and that of Adorno and Horkheimer. Whereas the Frankfurt School scholars believe the masses to be mute victims of the culture industry, Breitbart pinpoints the Internet as a means of populist expression and resistance. In analyzing a number of the site's most widely-condemned pieces, accompanying comment sections, and instances of reflexive discourse on paratextuality (e.g. "The Left's War on Comment Sections" and "Offended by Breitbart's Headlines?"), I demonstrate how the site's user-generated paratexts function as 'mechanisms of reply' (to borrow a phrase from Adorno and Horkheimer). More than mere thresholds or frames, these paratexts elevate tertiary discourse to primary textual status while giving voice to the so-called "silent majority."

In the second part of the chapter, I make the case that Breitbart's comment section represents an new mode of paratextuality that is uniquely well suited to exploiting the voice of silent majority and advancing the logic of American populist conservatism. By examining user comments in terms of Genette's five key elements of paratextuality (where, when, how, who, and to do what?), I detail how these devices operate in concert with the site's other paratextual elements in order to create a situation of ambiguity with regard to textual status, authorship,

auctorial responsibility, and paratextual influence. In turn, this ambiguity allows the site's editors, readers, and political allies to experiment with political ideas and strategies that fall outside the boundaries of acceptable discourse without assuming responsibility for the site's content. In short, Breitbart and its political allies perpetuate their hegemonic status and further their populist politics by upending the pragmatic rules of paratextuality and surrendering their voice to the very public they work to influence.

1.6   A long Time Ago in a Galaxy Far, Far Away…

When I was a young boy my mother took me to the Kay-Bee toy store in the Oxford Valley Mall and bought me a *Star Wars* Landspeeder.[63] I still recall standing next to her at the counter as she paid for the toy ($4.99 plus tax); it was one of the happiest moments of my young life.

Upon arriving home I tracked down my father and enlisted his aid in the unboxing and subsequent installation of vital components including the engine and interior controls. All the speeder's important parts came in the form of stickers and you only had one chance to get them right. I couldn't abide crooked controls.

When the speeder was finally out of the box and had its stickers in all the right places I was euphoric. I couldn't wait to play with it. Still, my father urged me to slow down. There was something wrong.

It was too clean! My speeder looked nothing like the grime-encrusted anti-gravity craft Luke Skywalker raced around the sands of Tatooine. Something had to be done.

"Wait here," he told me.

---

[63] By Kenner!

He was back in an instant with a set of fine-tipped hobby brushes and small jars of earth toned model paints. We sat together that afternoon, my father and I, and painted my landspeeder until it looked just like Luke Skywalker's.

From that day onward, the painted speeder became my signature piece of Jedi-approved ephemera. Each of my neighborhood friends possessed their own *Star Wars* toys. John had the Millennium Falcon, Timmy owned an X-Wing Fighter, Ralph's parents bought him the Death Star, and I had my speeder. And unlike my friends' toys, mine was extra-special. It was the only one of its kind.

Huizinga himself would have likely been fascinated at how these toys shaped the parameters of our play as well as our young social identities. If Timmy and I wanted to enact a narrative involving the Death Star we knew we had to play at Ralph's house. Of course there was no guarantee that Ralph would be amenable to our proposed storyline, so there was always an element of intellectual danger involved in such collaborations. Nevertheless, the writing was on the wall. We had to go to Ralph's because he was the kid whose parents bought him a Death Star. They had bought him a Death Star because they were rich. Timmy and I did not have Death Stars because our parents were poor.[64] It was all very simple. These toys defined who we were, dictated the terms of our play (where, how, what, and with whom), and supplied us all with an idea of how we fit into the world around us.

I close with this memory not because I am nostalgic—although, I am—but because it neatly illustrates the need for a broader, more dynamic approach to paratextuality. The Genettian model, for all of its insight and complexity, is insufficient for the critical appraisal of how paratexts operate in the larger context of everyday lived experience. The action figures and

---

[64] Surely we were destitute. Why else would my parents deny their sweet young boy the simple pleasures afforded by a *Star Wars* Death Star Space Station complete with a working elevator and an SB-920 laser cannon?

playsets that my friends and I obsessed over were, without question, paratextual devices.[65] Yet,

their vectors of influence were quite different than those Genette contemplates. These

extratextual playthings did little, if anything, to affect our engagement with the *Star Wars*

films.[66] They couldn't. They were too far removed in a spatio-temporal, epitextual sense. Years

passed between the release of the first three films, and, with nary a VCR in sight, they could only

be viewed during theatrical release and when parents were willing chaperones.[67] During the 44

weeks *Star Wars* played in theaters, I saw the film twice. Nevertheless, I played with my *Star

Wars* action figures every day. Growing up in the 1970s, paratexts were everywhere and primary

texts were difficult to come by.[68]

  Today, primary texts are more readily available than ever before. Still, their paratextual

counterparts remain even more prevalent. In a world of narrowcasting and Netflix, paratexts

dominate textual engagement in accordance with industry pragmatics and spectatorial necessity.

If you're creating "niche programming," you had better let your niche know about it. If you're

going to offer your content across media platforms, you need a way to alert the digital natives. If

you're going to market the global to the local (*Hrvatski Idol*, anyone?), you need to package your

paratextual devices and sell them as a "format." Paratexts form a kind of shorthand between

industry and audience. They alert us as to what's in stock at the Redbox, what's playing at the

---

[65] Indeed, if *Jaws* (1975) introduced the world to Hollywood's new practices of paratextual exploitation through its book tie-in and saturation advertising, then *Star Wars* (1977), with its books, comics, TV specials, action figures, playsets, etc.—let everyone know (including Alan Ladd Jr. and the other executives at Fox who let Lucas retain licensing and merchandising rights in exchange for a lower director's salary) that multi-platform storytelling and traffic in extratextual materials was the new normal.

[66] If anything it was the other way around, as with my speeder, where its appearance in the primary text affected my engagement with the toy.

[67] Truly, the stars had to align. I can remember driving by the theater when *Star Wars* was first released and begging my parents to take me. My father took one look at the line and told me I'd have to wait till the furor abated. I finally got to go about six months later.

[68] Jonathan Gray makes a similar point in his assessment of *Star Wars* action figures ("Show" 181-84). And while he stresses the centrality of toys in the overall fan experience, he stops short of suggesting, as I do, that such devices defined their owners at least as much, if not more so, than their so-called primary texts.

theater down the road, and remind us of the detritus lingering in our Netflix cues. Paratexts are the tools the culture industry uses to generate "hype," "synergies," and "promos" (Gray "Show" 3). As audience members, paratexts help us to choose which texts to engage and provide us with guidelines for making sense of them. Such is the *doxa*.

With this project I look past these common beliefs by asserting that paratexts manage meaning making. As a result, their influence extends well beyond the texts they are assumed to serve. In implementing a broadly dynamic approach to paratextual analysis—one that combines elements of Genettian logic with an expanded formulation of McCracken's interior and exterior vectors of engagement—I demonstrate that paratexts do not merely exert their influence over books, video games, films, television programs, or other denizens exclusive to the realm of textuality. They also privilege specific modes of perception—ways of seeing the world and our place in it.

2   NEWSPAPER PARATEXTS: INTERPELLATIVE PARATEXTUALITY AND PSEUDO-GEMEINSCHAFT IN A TIME OF CHANGE

> A generation that had gone to school on a horse-drawn streetcar now stood under the open sky in a countryside in which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds...
> - Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller"

By the close of the 19th century the United States was well on the way to becoming the world's foremost industrial capitalist nation. During the three decades following the Civil War manufacturing output in the U.S. increased by 296 percent (Steeples & Whitten 17). Propelled by the rapid growth of railroads, technological advancements in industrial equipment and mechanization, unparalleled agricultural expansion, and market-making innovations in finance and communication the American economy underwent a radical shift, moving away from its agrarian roots and toward ever-more-efficient forms of industrialization. As a consequence, despite the depression of 1893-1897, the U.S. bested Great Britain—the very birthplace of the Industrial Revolution—in total manufacturing output during the "Gay Nineties" (Weinberg 139).

This economic change was accompanied by equally significant cultural disruption. The trend toward urbanization and increased population growth altered where and how people lived and upended traditional notions of community. The emergence of new economic classes necessitated a reevaluation of social standing and mobility. Changing roles for women and children tested the traditional family structure. Improvements in transportation and communication altered the way people thought of time and space and industrialization challenged the most basic understandings of humankind's relationship with the natural world. In short, the onset and early development of industrial capitalism brought with it a bevy of challenges that required near-constant affective reassessment and intellectual adaptation from those that lived through it.

In the face of this social upheaval, industry progressed undaunted. Americans became astonishingly efficient at making things;[69] and the goods they produced—like so many symptoms of modernity—seemed to demand a new mode of collective cognitive orientation. As William Leach explains:

> From the 1890s on, American corporate business, in league with key institutions, began the transformation of American society into a society preoccupied with consumption, with comfort and bodily well-being, with luxury, spending, and acquisition, with more goods this year than last, more next year than this. American consumer capitalism produced a culture almost violently hostile to the past and tradition, a future-oriented culture of desire that confused the good life with goods… It was the culture many people the world over soon came to see as *the* heart of American life (xiii emphasis in original).

As two such 'key institutions,' newspapers and department stores worked together to usher in the new culture of desire. Their stories are indissolubly linked, both to one another, as well as to a broader narrative of social disruption and anxiety. When modernity arrived in America, alienation and uncertainty came with it. The nation's newspapers changed with the zeitgeist. In their early capacity as political organs, they informed readers about how to vote. Later, however, as they became independent commercial ventures, newspapers informed the public about how to *live*. Department store advertising afforded the news media their autonomy. [70] In return, the papers granted mass merchants access to a rapidly growing audience eager to make sense of the modern world. This was, in part, the appeal of the dailies. Newspapers

---

[69] By the late 1890s production had, in many instances, outstripped distribution and retailers and manufacturers alike began to fear that "overproduction" would result in economic catastrophe (Leach 16).

[70] According to Gibbons, by the end of the 19th century, newspapers began to look to department stores as their "principal source of revenue" (2: 16).

provided readers with the information required to chart their positions in a fast-changing, forward-looking society where the past and tradition no longer provided succor. In doing so, they worked to naturalize new sets of power relations, 'familiarize' the public with the cast of characters and institutions responsible for the ascendency of consumer culture, and alleviate the sense of alienation that accompanied this emerging way of life and the material goods that helped to make it possible.

In this chapter, I utilize dynamic vector analysis to trace crisscrossing trajectories of influence and emphasize the role paratexts played in the processes enumerated above. Specifically, my work attends to two different periods of commercial newspaper advertising. I begin with a discussion of the social construction of the consumer as it was enabled through the paratextual exploits of the American penny press. Later, I move on to John Wanamaker's 1899 retail print advertising in Philadelphia's *The North American*—the intersection of two of the era's most influential social institutions[71]—in order to draw attention to a series of previously overlooked modes of paratextual functionality.

My central hypothesis is, on its face, deceptively simple. Paratexts don't just mediate our engagement with the texts they accompany. Rather, they reflect and shape the ways we make sense of the world and our place in it. Paratexts are, in the context of modern mass media, frames that privilege particular "ways of seeing." In some sense, what I am proposing here is akin to linguistic relativism—a notion that, in its weaker instantiation, asserts that language influences what and how we think. I make the same assertion regarding mass media paratexts. In some of

---

[71] It is difficult to overstate the cultural import of Wanamaker and *The North American* during the late 1890s. According to Leach, Wanamaker and his department stores "legitimated fashion, fostered the cult of the new, democratized desire and consumption, and helped produce a commercial environment steeped in pecuniary values" (*Desire* 34). At the same time, *The North American*—by then a Wanamaker family-owned enterprise—was both the oldest paper in the country and one of its most respected (Scharf 1970-71).

their earliest modernist iterations, these devices—in the form of newspaper mastheads, decks, bylines, mottos, advertisements etc.—seem to simply influence our engagement with a particular newspaper or consumer product. Upon more careful examination, however, we see that they clearly encourage certain modes of perception. Against the backdrop of the dramatic upheaval brought about by the onset and maturation of modernity, these devices labored to paratextually interpellate a new class of consumers, and later, worked to frame the impersonal character of the high-capitalist mass market in the familiar terms of pre-industrial social relations.

In the first part of this chapter, I detail how the paratexts of the penny press worked to aid in the negotiation of a new hegemony necessitated by industrial capitalism. As noted in the introduction, paratexts have long functioned as ideological devices. From the mosaics of San Vitale to the *Wittenberg Altarpiece,* paratexts have served the ideological ends of the ruling class. Yet, at the turn of the previous century, the growth of industry and subsequent rise of consumer culture required a new social balance—one more robust and nuanced than its predecessor. The 'consensus' these paratexts helped to manufacture was distinct from that which preceded it. Whereas lords and clerics once ruled through 'divine right' and promises of physical and spiritual protection, the merchants and manufacturers of modernity perpetuated their status through unprecedented appeals to the agency of the masses and by establishing a particularly delicate socio-economic equilibrium. By interpellating the public as sovereign consumers, these paratexts helped to create the very culture necessary for the perpetuation of industrial capitalism.

In the second part of my study, I consider how John Wanamaker's advertising in Philadelphia's *The North American* labored in concert with the paper's journalistic content to establish a pseudo-gemeinschaft that belied the complexity, scope, and atomizing character of modernity. Arguably the most influential retailer of the early-modern era, Wanamaker purchased

The North American in 1899, and used it as a showcase for his unique style of advertising. By providing readers with information and common points of reference across the new social landscape, the paper established itself as a trusted cultural institution and encouraged readers to map their subjectivity in terms of an imagined set of social relations closely linked to the notions of familiarity, personal ties, and moral obligations that characterized pre-industrial organic communities. Rather than merely functioning as thresholds to journalistic content, *The North American's* paratexts worked didactically to position readers as consumers and acknowledge their central importance in the calculus of the new economy while framing the newspaper as an invaluable tool for understanding their place in an emerging social order.

2.1   Paratexts, Ideology, and the Consumer

In the United States, newspapers and department stores grew together, albeit at different paces. Throughout the first decades of the 19th century, the majority of American newspapers were small-circulation, 4-page weeklies with strong political affiliations and content to match (Baldasty 3).[72] By the 1890s, however, many of these same newspapers had grown to become widely circulated 8 and 12-page dailies, and were, in most instances, free from the constraints of partisan funding (Ibid). The evolution of the department store was decidedly more rapid. Prior to the 1880s, American commercial enterprise was limited to small dry goods stores, itinerant peddlers, and regional wholesale operations; department stores, as we've come to know them, had yet to appear (Leach 20).[73] Over the next two decades, however, large-scale 'palaces of

---

[72] Of course, not all early 19th century newspapers were partisan in character. As Baldasty observes, "literary and commercial papers had flourished" in large American cities since the 1700s (6). Nevertheless, "partisan content dominated pre-Civil War American newspapers (Ibid.).

[73] This is not to say that the notion of a department store was entirely foreign. A move toward larger retail stores began in earnest around the middle of the century, and in Europe, Bon Marche was established in Paris in 1852. It is also worth noting that many of the elements of shopping and retailing that have come to be associated with department stores have roots in social practices of value exchange dating at least as far back as the 17th century. For more on the gradualist historical understanding of department store evolution, see: Rentmann 192-193.

consumption' seemed to crop up overnight and came to dominate the urban marketplace with startling alacrity. According to Leach, during this period, department stores were going up "at such a rate as to outpace anything comparable going on elsewhere in the world" (*Desire* 20).

By the dawn of the 20th century, department stores controlled vast sums of capital and relied on business models that demanded constant advertising to aid in the high volume sale of low priced goods (Applegate 76). As a consequence, mass-market retailers supplanted political parties as the chief patrons of American journalism. This patronage allowed for the development of newspapers that covered events from a place of relative autonomy—a position that was likewise encouraged by both declining material costs and technological innovation[74] (Ershkowitz 69-70).

Newly ascendant retail behemoths poured gold into the coffers of metropolitan dailies during the final decade of the 19th century. Dry goods stores had been steadily growing in size and adding 'departments' since the middle of the century (Rentmann 191). By 1900, large-scale retailers had achieved a heretofore-unimagined level of commercial hegemony and the influential merchants behind these juggernauts understood the value inherent in metropolitan newspaper advertising (Hower 148). Not only did the papers reach a large and still growing, industrialized, urban-based audience, they were also uniquely suited to addressing the ideological, cultural, and socio-economic discontinuities provoked by the vicissitudes of industrial capitalism.[75]

---

[74] According to one New York newspaper, the cost of newsprint declined by 80% during the last three decades of the 19th century. Concurrently, advertising revenues doubled during the 1870s and increased by another 80% during the 1880s. By the turn of the century it is estimated that commercial advertising provided American newspapers and periodicals with 55% of their total income (Starr 252).

[75] In 1880, city dwellers comprised nearly one-quarter of the U.S. population. By 1890, this number had increased to one-third, thus creating what Gerald Baldasty reservedly calls a "sizable market for dry goods merchants" (56).

Chief among these discontinuities was the pronounced shift in social relations that accompanied the emergence of the consumer as the primary cultural and economic engine of the mass market. While hegemony had always required a finely tuned balance between coercion and consensus (what Gramsci termed *dominio* and *direzione*, respectively) the consensus building of the new economy necessitated a dramatic readjustment.[76] Specifically, it required an unprecedented surrender of agency on the part of the hegemonic class to the benefit of those they worked to subjugate. Under the tenets of feudal society,[77] the 'consent' of the peasantry could be understood as form of obligation or necessary concession—notions that frame the calculus of power relations in terms that, although not quite passive, certainly imply a lack of agency of the part of the subaltern classes. In contrast, in order to preserve control of the mode of production under industrial capitalism, newly enriched merchants and manufacturers were forced to depend not only on the abstractly exploitative affordances of wage labor, but also on the public's desire to consume.[78] Submission alone was no longer sufficient; workers had to become active consumers if the status quo was to be maintained.

It is all too easy, when grounded in the dualism of the Western tradition, to think of producers and consumers as discrete entities, as distinct and separable as mind and body. In the

---

[76] It is worth noting that Gramsci's *dominio* has seen a corresponding realignment in the context of 'late capitalism.' This is evident in a number of recent trends including the militarization of local police forces, greater levels of armed government security in both state and privately-owned institutions, the dramatic rise in US incarceration rates since the 1980s, and the increased emphasis and resources dedicated to "see something, say something" style 'outreach' programs that tempt would-be informers with the potential to exercise the kind of 'hard power' typically reserved for state officials.

[77] I use the term "feudal society" intentionally to invoke Marc Bloch's purposefully broad conceptualization of a pre-capitalist European social order that incorporated the peasantry, nobility and clergy into a complex land-based system of reward and obligation. For more see: Bloch 443-447.

[78] There has been much made of the concept of 'consumption' and its etymology. Here its roots in the Latin '*consumere*' (to use up, eat, or waste) seem entirely apropos.

context of high capitalism,[79] however, these entities are necessarily inseparable.[80] As Baudrillard

observes, "Production and consumption *are one and the same grand logical process in the*

expanded reproduction of the productive forces…" ("Consumer Society" 51, emphasis in

original) What Baudrillard is getting at here, albeit somewhat opaquely,[81] is that production and

consumption are intimately linked. In order for a new economy based on mass production to be

perpetuated, people had to buy the goods being produced. This reliance was not only new, but

potentially troublesome to a ruling class that was being forced to reckon with a novel form of

economic risk. The shift from a feudal, land-based socio-economic system to one driven and

sustained by capital, served to engender a form of hegemonic precarity. Unlike land, an

economic driver that maintains itself as an inexhaustible resource, capital required constant

replenishment—a scenario that necessitates the collaboration of the subaltern classes in the form

of active and willing consumption.[82]

The fathers of the American penny press seemed to have an instinctive understanding of

the opportunities that came with this newfound precarity. As if intuiting the intrinsic insecurities

of high capitalism's ruling class, disruptors including Benjamin Day, Horace Greeley, and James

---

[79] For the sake of clarity, I should note that I am using the terms 'industrial capitalism' and 'high capitalism' interchangeably to represent the period of time between the onset of industrialization and the inception of WWI. This is in line with my broader periodization of economic phases, which are based on those formulated by Werner Sombart, whose masterwork *Der Moderne Kapitalismus* divided capitalism into early (ending with the onset of the industrial revolution), high (beginning around 1760), and late (beginning after WWI) stages.

[80] Here, I had desperately hoped to coin the portmanteau, "prosumer." Sadly, it seems Alvin Toffler beat me to the punch. For more, see his 1980 work, *The Third Wave*.

[81] When reading Baudrillard I am frequently reminded of H.L. Mencken's critique of Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. Faced with the intentional obfuscation and self-indulgence of Veblen's prose, Mencken inquires, "Well, what have we here? What does this appalling salvo of rhetorical artillery signify? What was the sweating professor trying to say?" ("Professor Veblen" 271)—all thoughts I have had a thousand times throughout my graduate studies.

[82] It is this unique logic of high capitalism that Henry Ford publicly employed when, in 1914, he famously increased the pay of his workers to $5.00 a day. While this move was ostensibly designed as a cost-saving measure aimed at employee retention—turnover had become a dire problem due to the soul-crushing nature of assembly line labor—it also marked a key step in Ford's plan for a system of mass production because it afforded laborers the opportunity to purchase the very cars they were manufacturing, thereby opening an important new market. For more, see: Curcio 70-81.

Gordon Bennett positioned themselves as "attention merchants" (Wu 11-21), pied pipers of modernity, capable of aggregating and re-selling the consideration of a mass audience.

The paratexts of the attention merchants' penny newspapers did little to frame journalistic content in a Genettian sense. Nor did they serve as 'thresholds' to the stories they peritextually accompanied. Instead they worked to pragmatic and ideological ends. For evidence, one needs look no further than the front page of the first-ever edition of *The Sun*. The sole journalistic headline located above the fold reads simply, "An Irish Captain" ("An Irish" 1). The story it accompanies recounts the numerous duels of the bellicose titular character, but his nationality and rank never come into play. In this case, the headline functions more as a signpost than a frame—a pragmatic device used to signal the beginning of a story and break up the large swaths of text that characterized the monotonous aesthetics so typical of early newspapers. This kind of functional paratextuality was certainly not uncommon at the time. As one popular manual for copy editors observes, "Newspaper headlines in their earliest stage were merely captions" and, while they served to "mark clearly where articles begin… often, they apparently [had] no other purpose" (Garst & Bernstein 94). But, of course, these devices did serve another purpose, though it was cloaked in the naturalizing guise of ideology.

The work being done by the paratexts of the penny press, and later, the press writ large, was that of interpellation. Their mastheads, slogans, bylines, illustrations, and captions all conspired to hail the reader.[83] Importantly, however, this interpellation was different in tone and character than that which preceded it. Unlike the authoritarian call of the policeman

---

[83] On a related note, it is interesting to consider how this interpellation was made material through the ritual calls of newsboys—a job created by Benjamin Day in 1933 to market *The Sun* (DiGirolamo 471). As Althusser famously explained, "Ideology has a material existence… [it] always exists in an apparatus and in the practice or practices of that apparatus" (184).

contemplated by Althusser, the summons that issued from the pages of America's 19th century newspapers came in the form of appeals rather than edicts. These devices still toiled to constitute the individual as subject, but the nature of this subject position was no longer purely subordinate. These summons encouraged readers to recognize themselves first and foremost as *consumers*—a role that required the active exercise of individual agency in a way that was fundamental to the maintenance of the capitalist ruling class.

The importance of consumer agency has been undervalued in certain critical assessments of capitalist social relations.[84] From the cynical elitism of Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of the 'culture industry' to the progressive economics that undergird Galbraith's formulation of the 'dependence effect," we see, time and again, a desire to negate the active will of the consumer. Indeed, even Marx, for all his insight into the dialectics of social processes, was so explicitly concerned with the relations of production that he gave short shrift to the relations of consumption. Here then, I want to suggest that if we view the capitalist economic model through the lens of a more broadly applied materialist dialectic (i.e. as a constantly negotiated dialectical process rather than a static system of exploitation) it becomes evident that the empowerment of the consumer in the context of the mass market presents itself as a socio-economic antithesis to the capitalist exploitation of workers' surplus labor. Both are concealed (the exploitation of

---

[84] Over the past 150 years, many critical theorists have either downplayed or outright ignored the authority of the consumer in capitalist relations of consumption (with the Birmingham CCCS and its heirs as the obvious exceptions). For instance, in their famous piece on the 'culture industry,' Adorno and Horkheimer—the Statler and Waldorf of the Frankfurt School—denied the very existence of consumer agency, cynically proclaiming that the consumer had no choice but to "accept what the culture manufacturers offer him" (The Culture Industry 3). Despite the subsequent development of a variety of bottom-up conceptions of consumerism and popular culture, this school of thought has persisted. Some 60 years on, Robert McChesney makes a similar, if more nuanced, argument about how corporate consolidation in oligopolistic media markets works to negate the power of the consumer in even the most unregulated laissez-faire economic scenario (175-205). While there are many worthwhile points to consider in arguments of this kind, I suggest that it is imperative to acknowledge the agency of the consumer as a determining factor in shaping everything from creative content to the pantheon of corporate hegemons who rule over the contemporary media landscape.

surplus labor by the appearance of being paid for a full day's work, and the necessity of

consumption by the false dichotomy of producer and consumer), both are essential for the

preservation and expansion of capital (the synthesis), yet as operations, they are functionally

opposites. Industrial capitalism, then, may be understood from this dialogical perspective as the

synthesis of exploitation and empowerment. Accordingly, we see that mass consumption is a

necessary condition for mass production. Without the consumer, the wheels of capitalism cease

to turn. [85]

Given its central importance in the operations of the new economy, it is notable that the

role of the consumer that began to take shape in the 1830s and 40s was antithetical to well-

established family, community, and religious principles (Leach, *Land of Desire* 3-16).

Traditional ideals were being supplanted by pecuniary value and Americans were being

encouraged to think of fulfillment in material rather than spiritual terms (Cooley 301-3).

"Consumptionism" (Strauss 578), as it came to be called, represented a dramatic transformation

of worldview—a metamorphosis necessitated by the precarious ontology of capitalism itself. The

focus of industry had changed. Instead of producing things people wanted, the goal was now to

make people want the things being produced. As the journalist and cultural critic Samuel Strauss

would later observe, the primary challenge of the new industrial capitalism was "not how to

produce the goods, but how to produce the customers. (578-9) Of course, there was no need to

'produce' consumers in the conventional sense. They were always-already present—crowding

---

[85] Should one have any doubt regarding the *de facto* sovereignty of the consumer, one only need consider that the brief history of high capitalism is littered with the corpses of mighty corporate hegemons who once enjoyed oligopolistic market dominance but underestimated the power of fickle consumers. Their names are legion and familiar: Woolworth's, RKO, Edison Records, Bethlehem Steel, TWA, and Trump Hotels and Casino Resorts to name but a few.

the streets, factories, and tenements of the country's fast-growing industrial centers. These would-be consumers simply had to recognize themselves as such.

The papers of the penny press facilitated this uneasy recognition by interpellating readers as active consumers, who, in the context of their newfound 'leisure time' enjoyed a level of status and socio-economic significance foreign to their pre-industrial forebears. This sovereignty was iteratively articulated via paratextual appeals that did as much to situate readers as consumers as to "ensure the presence" the newspapers they accompanied. Turning again to *The Sun*, we find the cost of the paper—"Price One Penny"—prominently displayed in the masthead. While this placement was, in itself, not the least unusual, it is important to note how the novel affordability of the paper worked to supplement the paratext's efficacy on at least two fronts. Not only did the announcement of *The Sun's* comparatively low price (roughly one-sixth the cost of many of its competitors) work to draw readers inward toward the paper's contents along a centripetal vector *a la* Genette, it also enhanced the centrifugal interpellative functionality of *The Sun's* paratexts more broadly. Whereas any visible pricing of merchandise hails observers as prospective consumers, this potentiality is realized in inverse proportion to the price itself. It is a simple equation: As an item's cost increases, the size of its prospective consumer base decreases. In the case of the penny papers, however, the monadic character of one-cent pricing worked to interpellate the largest possible audience of would-be consumers. And, if the pricing alone was not enough, the mission statement directly below the masthead makes things abundantly clear: "The object of this paper is to lay before the *public, at a price within the means of everyone*, all the news of the day, and at the same time afford an advantageous medium for advertising" (emphasis in original). Anyone with a penny in their pocket was acknowledged as a potential buyer and this ideological positioning marked a seminal stage in the "democratization of desire

and consumption" (Leach, *Desire* 34). Unlike paratexts of yore, which seemed solely concerned with representations of the ruling class and the subsequent *de facto* subjugation of the so-called masses, readers of Day's paratexts saw *themselves* reflected in *The Sun's* commercial discourse in ways that echoed and amplified the democratic ethos inherent in the paper's affordable pricing.

The paratexts of the penny newspapers encouraged readers to construct a cognitive bridge between their responsibilities as citizens and their new role as consumers. These positions were linked by necessity. In order for country to prosper, the economy had to succeed. In order for the economy to succeed, the people of the country had to consume. Accordingly, the role of consumer presents itself as the next inevitable step in the teleological march of economic nationalism. The conflation of citizenship and consumerism is readily apparent in the inaugural issue of Day's *Sun* wherein the Great Seal of the United States is displayed in the center of the masthead (just to the left of the advertised price) replete with Latin motto, "E Pluribus Unum" (*The Sun,* 3 Sep, 1). The message is clear: just as a multitude of citizens had come together in order to form a single great nation, so must the individual consumers of industrial capitalism work collectively to inaugurate the next great phase in the evolution of capitalism. This sentiment is only furthered by *The Sun's* motto: "It shines for all" (*The Sun*, 24 November, 1), a paratextual proclamation that, like the paper's one-cent pricing, assures readers their part in the new consumerism is not simply encouraged, but preordained.[86]

---

[86] While Day's *Sun* might not have literally "shined for all," there is no denying that the penny press writ large quickly amassed a staggeringly large audience. In 1830, the combined circulation of all New York daily newspapers equaled roughly 25,000. By 1835, the city's top three-penny newspapers alone enjoyed a circulation of more than 44,000. Nationally, between 1830 and 1840, the total circulation of all daily newspapers jumped from 78,000 to 300,000 (Schudson 18).

This paratextual subject positioning was not limited to *The Sun*. For years after its 1835 debut, *The Herald*, James Gordon Bennett's wildly successful New York penny daily, ran with the majority of its front page bedecked with advertisements. These commercial paratexts frequently occupied three of the four columns (in later years, this would swell to four out of five as Bennett could afford a larger format and a corresponding increase in column count) that made up the paper's front page. Granting advertisements such prime real estate clearly privileged the rhetoric of consumptionism over journalistic discourse. This favored status was cemented by the fact that Bennett's advertisement's enjoyed headlines rendered in bold and in larger typeface than the captions and leads that accompanied the paper's journalistic fare. The combined effect was to create an extratextual site of commerce every bit as eye-catching as the bazaars and arcades that were already popping up around Europe. A reader perusing the front page of the October 30, 1835 edition of *The Herald* was confronted with the opportunity to purchase a dizzying array of items—from fresh Portuguese leeches ("Leeches, Leeches….For sale wholesale or retail at 145 Broadway, six doors above the City Hotel"), to pickles ("Gerkins, Onions, Mixed and Piccolilly"), to opiated syrup ("For Coughs and Colds")—all before they ever encountered the news of the day (*The Herald* 1).

In the introduction to this work, I suggested that paratexts manage expectations in ways that extend beyond the domain of the primary text and into the realm of social practices and cultural understandings. In the case of the penny press, we see an interpellative functionality that labored toward the naturalization of consumptionism as the next certain step in a teleological progression of a capitalism that was inseparable from the democracy which provided the structure for its operation. Rather than merely framing the reading experience, these paratexts provided readers a lens for making sense of their emergent roles as consumers in a new phase of

capitalist expansion that required their active participation as never before. In an important sense, these paratexts worked to 'create' the very consumers required to maintain the viability of both the penny press and industrial capitalism more broadly.

This act of ideological genesis was accomplished by privileging a complex form of paratextual directionality. As peritexts, the papers' prices, mottos, headlines, leads and captions acted as centripetal forces, goading readers further inward toward the purchase and consumption of the texts to which they clung. Simultaneously, however, these same devices encouraged a ricochet of engagement that compelled the reader's attention back outward along centrifugal vectors of ideological self-recognition and the acknowledgment of his or her subject position in the emergent totality of high capitalism. In such a cases, interpellative paratextuality creates an experience akin to gazing into a mirror—the sites of engagement and meaning making forever split between the site of reflection and all that is reflected.

2.2   **Paratexts, Anxieties, and Pseudo-Gemeinschaft**

A half a century after the penny press began to interpellate a new breed of consumer, the broader transformations that had begun in the 1830s and 40s showed no signs of slowing. Modernity, industrialization, and their corresponding socio-economic effects exerted a destabilizing force on American life that gained strength during the last decade of the 19th century (Lears 54-56). Change was afoot, and brought with it anxieties that that resonated through society, complicating notions of tradition, memory, labor, and everyday lived experience.

Walter Benjamin took note of these apprehensions as well as the corresponding variations in the structure of phenomenological awareness associated with modernity. First in "The Storyteller" and more fully in "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," Benjamin suggests that nature of

experience itself had changed.[87] "Long experience"(*erfahrung*) had given way to "isolated experience" (*erlebnis*). [88] Collective and collected intelligence, of the form knowable through experience and shared across generations via tradition and orality, had been superseded by an understanding of awareness that was ungrounded, transitory, unrelatable, and incommunicable— one that, at its core, represented the very experience of the modern (*die moderne*). This isolated experience was proximate (in both the temporal and geographic sense) and inescapably linked to the traumata and trepidations of urban modernism, which were legion: the shock of the crowd (*chockerlebnis*), the unnavigable geography of metastasizing cityscapes, the phenomenological strain of technology, the paradoxical isolation of a life lived amongst an anonymous urban multitude, the alienation inherent in the Taylorization of labor, and the *unheimlich* quality of mass-produced goods that no longer carried the hallmarks of artisans, history, community, or tradition.

At the close of the century, newspapers offered a balm for these disquiets. While notionally incapable of—or, perhaps, simply disinterested in—conveying the kind of "long experience" theorized by Benjamin, the medium was entirely suited for the transmission of information that characterized the "isolated experience" of the new era. In his discussion of Proust's *À la Recherché du Temps Perdu*, Benjamin observes:

> Man's inner concerns do not have their issueless private character by nature. They
> do so only when he is increasingly unable to assimilate the data of the world
> around him by way of experience. Newspapers constitute one of many evidences
> of such inability. If it were the intention of the press to have the reader assimilate

---

[87] "If conditions for a positive reception of lyric poetry have become less favorable, it is reasonable to assume that only in rare instances is lyric poetry in rapport with the experience of its readers. This may be due to a change in the structure of their experience" ("Some Motifs" 156).

[88] For an excellent examination of these forms of perception see Jennings & Eiland, 643.

the information it supplies as part of his own experience, it would not achieve its

purpose. But its intention is just the opposite, and it is achieved: to isolate what

happens from the realm in which it could affect the experience of the reader

("Some Motifs" 158).

Here then, in the context of journalistic content, information supplants experience for

good reason.[89] The move from early-market to second-stage monopoly capitalism brought with it

what Frederic Jameson refers to as "a growing contradiction between lived experience and

structure" ("Cognitive Mapping "348). Jameson is, of course, calling upon Althusser's well-

known assertion regarding ideology in order to point out that phenomenological awareness alone

was no longer sufficient to comprehend one's place in the social system.[90] Given a milieu

wherein perception is inadequate for understanding one's "real conditions of existence,"

information presents itself as both a viable and valuable alternative because it allows for the

production of cognitive maps—mental models for making the world, and our place in it,

understandable.

There are a number of consistencies throughout our historical descriptions of the cultural

turn toward consumer capitalism, Benjamin's observations on the metamorphic quality of

experience, and Jameson's account concerning the limits of phenomenological awareness. Each

contemplates a radical break with the past and established conventions, emphasizes the limits of

lived experience (shared or otherwise), and points to the necessity for a new quotidian heuristic.

To put my last point more plainly, all three formulations indicate that, at this particular historical

---

[89] Benjamin notes, "Historically, the various modes of communication have competed with one another. The
replacement of older narration by information… reflects the increasing atrophy of experience" ("Some Motifs" 158).
[90] "Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser).

moment, people needed a frame for understanding an everyday life that was different, in almost every respect, from any lived before.

At the close of the 19th century, newspaper editors sought to fill this need. Evidence is found in the evolution of journalistic content. As newspapers moved away from their early roles as partisan political organs, they gravitated increasingly toward general interest coverage. Surges in advertising and circulation resulted in lengthier papers and the dailies filled these additional pages with new kinds of content. By the late 1880s, newspapers had introduced sport pages, women's sections, entertainment reporting, and personal advice columns (Starr 254). When papers did report on politics, it was with a new degree of autonomy. The focus on local news quickly extended to cover regional and national events and feature reporting expanded broadly. As Gerald Baldastry explains in his historical account of the commercialization of the 19th century press, content once "dominated by politics and advocacy," quickly grew to include, "business, crime, accidents, fires, divorce, suicide, labor, education, religion, sports, inventions, disease, weather, books, theater, music, fashions, and recipes, to list a few" (3). Newspapers were increasingly less concerned with governance and more concerned with the living of everyday life.

The breadth and consistency of this coverage offered readers reference points from which they could chart their own locations in a social system that had become unmanageable. In his articulation of cognitive mapping as an instrument of socialist politics Jameson invokes Kevin Lynch, who, in his own influential study of city form, observes that urban alienation is directly proportional to one's inability to create mental maps of modern cityscapes (Jameson 350). Jameson suggests that the same may be said of alienation with regard to the unmapability of the social structure (Ibid.). By providing information about topics that went beyond party politics

and into the realm of everyday lived experience, newspapers provided readers with materials for making the new socio-economic topography understandable, thereby mitigating the alienation associated with the upheaval of the modern.[91]

Newspapers helped readers make sense of the change that roiled around them and were healthily rewarded for it. Writing about the press at the close of the 19th century, Paul Starr observes, "If any single institution or organ dominated the public sphere in this era, it was the daily newspaper" (252). During the last three decades of the century, the number of daily newspapers almost quadrupled, going from 574 in 1870 to 2226 in 1900 (Ibid.). During the same time period, average circulation jumped from 2600 to more than 15,000 with some of the largest metropolitan dailies boasting of more than half a million regular readers (Ibid.). This, in turn, led to an increase in advertising revenues. Data from one New York paper shows advertising income doubling in the 1870s and then increasing by another 80% by 1890 (Ibid.). Much of this income came from department stores. As Herbert Ershkowitz notes, "More than anything else, daily advertising from department stores helped to finance the expansion in size and numbers of these journals, and as a result significantly shifted control over the metropolitan newspaper" (69). No longer beholden to political parties for financial support, the non-partisan press was here to stay.

Such was the state of journalism early in 1899 when John Wanamaker purchased Philadelphia's *The North American*, the oldest continuously operating paper in the United States, from Morton McMichael for $200,000 (Ershkowitz 100). Wanamaker, who was, at the time, campaigning for governor of Pennsylvania, quickly 'sold' the paper to his son Tom in order to avoid potential conflicts of interest (Ibid.). Thomas Wanamaker would run *The North American*

---

[91] For the record, I am not suggesting that cognitive mapping affords an accurate representation of a person's relation to a social totality. In fact, I think it likely that such maps are almost, if not always, inaccurate. Nevertheless, the accuracy or inaccuracy of cognitive mapping does not impinge on its effectiveness in assuaging feelings of alienation.

until his death in 1908 when ownership of the paper passed to his brother Rodman (Ibid.).

Nevertheless, the record indicates that the acquisition of the paper, like so many other

Wanamaker ventures, was the brainchild of the elder Wanamaker, and his influence on its

operation was undeniable.

In some ways, Wanamaker's purchase of *The North American* seemed the most natural of

developments. It was one of only four Philadelphia newspapers in which he routinely advertised

(Ershkowitz 120), [92] and, the paper, like Wanamaker himself, was Republican in politics, had a

distinctive religious bent, and dedicated much time to the examination of business matters. As

Thomas Scharf observes of *The North American* in his *History of Philadelphia*:

> Originally published by S.C. Brace and T.R. Newbold, it was established by a
>
> number of wealthy gentlemen who, observing that the press of the city then paid
>
> little or no attention to religious matters or to the proceedings of charitable
>
> organizations, determined to establish a daily commercial newspaper that should
>
> be high-toned, independent, and semi-religious in character (1970).

What's more, the overall tenor and reputation of the paper seemed to echo a sensibility

perceptible throughout Wanamaker's advertising. *The North American*, like Wanamaker himself,

seemed to enjoy a reputation for both honesty and fairness that many of its contemporaries

lacked (Scharf 1970-72; "How *The North American*" 1-2).

It is, at this point, worth remembering that the same penny newspapers that established

the business model for successors including *The North American* sometimes resorted to

questionable journalistic practices in an effort to turn a profit. When *The North American* was

first published under that name in 1839 with the earnest paratextual slogan, "Devoted to truth," it

---

[92] The other three were the *Ledger*, *The Press*, and *The Times* and Wanamaker advertised in all four every day but Sunday. For more, see Ershkowitz 120-121.

was just four short years after Benjamin Day drove circulation of *The Sun* to dizzying heights with his five-part series detailing the fictitious discovery of life on the moon.[93] The contrast between Day's reports of libidinous, moon dwelling, man-bats and the somber editorial style of Wanamaker's *North American* could not be more evident.[94] As one editorial published shortly after Wanamaker's acquisition makes clear:

> The guiding star of its [*The North American's*] existence will be truth.
>
> The truth it will publish, no matter whom it helps or whom it hurts. Its columns will be always hospitable to truthful news… It will be a journal to be trusted for truth, accuracy completeness and honesty. No exigency will induce a departure from any of these canons of worthy journalism ("How *The North American*" 1-2).

The North American's commitment to truth in reporting provided the perfect backdrop for Wanamaker's larger extratextual project.

The emphasis on authenticity in reporting echoed Wanamaker's ad sense. According to all reports, Wanamaker was not only wholly dedicated to newspaper advertising "over all other forms of publicity" as a basic form of "capital investment" (Gibbons 1: 98-104), but also as a form of socio-cultural pedagogy (Gibbons 1: 107). As such, it was important that the information being sent out rang true. This conviction was borne out in what Wanamaker told one of his better-known advertising consultants in 1896 shortly after opening his New York location and dedicating more than $1 million a year to advertising: "Tell the truth even though it hurts" (Qtd in Gibbons 2: 19).

---

[93] The original "Moon Hoax" articles appeared in *The Sun* between Tuesday, August 25 and Monday August 31st, 1835.

[94] I take great joy in using the phrase "libidinous, moon-dwelling, man-bats" in an academic context.

Wanamaker, in wedding his candid retail advertising to an equally forthright newspaper, appeared to have a firm grip on a tenet of paratextuality that has been oft overlooked in scholarly examinations. That is, texts manage our perception of paratexts at least as much as paratexts work to influence textual engagement. To put it another way, we often judge a cover by its book.[95] In such a scenario, the Genettian characterization of paratext as framing device is problematized as the directionality of the framing function is reversed. Here, the process of meaning making finds its origin in the interior of the text and travels along centrifugal pathways that extend to the work's commercial paratexts and beyond. The text has become threshold.

In the case of *The North American*, the paper itself becomes the legitimating agent for its advertisements and commercial discourse. The newspaper assumes the functionality of a paratext with seamless precision. It is the paper, not the advertisements that serve as a "privileged place of pragmatics and strategy" (Genette Paratexts 2). *The North American's* reputation for journalistic integrity works to the benefit of its advertisers by exerting its influence on public perception, an influence that is ultimately instrumental in privileging the preferred reading of the paper's original, peritextually-situated commercial discourse as authentic.

I stress that these advertisements enjoy an original, peritextual relationship with their text because their proximity in both time (they appear concurrently with the paper's journalistic content) and space (they occupy the pages of the text proper) amplify the legitimating influence exerted by the newspaper. Certainly, if we were to interrogate the ontology of the newspaper as a medium, both timeliness and a premium on space would be central to our understanding.

---

[95] This simple, if counter-intuitive, notion has long been understood by advertising professionals and other media-savvy arbiters of taste. To provide a contemporary example, this is why companies such as Nike, Moen, Expedia and Acer all recently pulled their advertisements from noted right-wing conspiracy theorist Alex Jones' YouTube channel (Liptack). It's not that Jones' audience suddenly lost its viability as target demographic for the sale of sneakers, faucets, plane tickets and laptops; rather, it is that these advertisers became concerned about how the channel's content would influence perception of their brands.

Accordingly, the propinquity of these commercial paratexts strengthens the force of the newspaper's framing function.[96] The closer they are, the stronger the influence.

What is striking about Wanamaker's advertisements in particular is that they are not only proximate in terms of spatial and temporal characteristics, but also share significant aesthetic similarities with the paper's journalistic content (see Appendix A).[97] Even before Wanamaker's acquisition, he was running full-page advertisements, which, by their very scale and autonomy,[98] seemed to assume a level of journalistic gravitas. Contributing to this impression were the ad's daily recurrence (every day but Sunday), layout (a six-column spread that closely mimicked the seven-column layout of the paper's other pages), incorporation of a weather report, tagline reporting the location and date of publication, use of large-font headlines and decks (secondary headlines that provide additional information about the subject covered in the subsequent copy), and a six-column by-line at the bottom of the page that appeared to cite Wanamaker himself as the author of the ad's content.[99] Wanamaker was, in effect, enhancing the legitimacy of the framing afforded by the primary text by reproducing its journalistic paratexts in a commercial context. He was making his ads look like news.

Some months after acquiring *The North American*, Wanamaker would follow this strategy to its logical end and literally turn his advertisements into 'news' (see Appendix). Gibbons takes note of this formative moment in Wanamaker's advertising practices:

---

[96] Consider, if you will, the contrast in the paratextual efficacy of a book cover that appears attached to, and concurrent with, its accompanying text and one that is found years later floating about independent of its host.

[97] Wanamaker is, without question, the father of the modern "advertorial."

[98] The placement of ads in relation to other content was already an important issue when these advertisements appeared. By the close of the 19th century both advertisers and their agents were in the habit of specifying the precise location of their advertisements so as to benefit from, or mitigate, the potential effects of neighboring content (Baldastry 65).

[99] According to Applegate, Wanamaker did, in fact, write many of the early store advertisements himself (76). Later, despite employing some of the earliest copywriters in the industry, he still maintained close oversight. As Gibbons reports, "As his business grew he employed able men to carry out his ideas; but never relinquished the control of every detail of advertising" (1:97).

> The idea that came to him was simplicity itself. A newspaper was for news—
>
> people read it for that; but the news must be accurate and worth publishing… He
>
> decided to put before Philadelphians every day merchandising news, written in
>
> plain, straightforward language, and printed in clear readable type… (2:19).

So it was that on October 10, 1899 *The North American* ran a full-page ad with its own masthead

reading "Wanamaker Store News" (8). The page featured the already familiar six-column layout,

dateline, weather report, and headlines, but now Wanamaker's by-line had been reduced in size

to a single column appearing at the end of the ad's copy in order to more closely replicate those

accompanying the paper's journalistic content. By mid-December, the Wanamaker Store News

added an additional column (to match *The North American's* seven), illustrations, and had

adopted increasingly complex layouts that included multi-column 'stories' about featured retail

items. As a consequence, Wanamaker's advertisements had become virtually indistinguishable

from traditional journalistic fare.

It is worthwhile to pause and reflect on the intricacy of the paratextual calculus at hand.

At first glance, Wanamaker's advertisement fits neatly into the Genettian model. It surrounds

and extends the primary text and, in a very practical (pecuniary) manner, and ensures *The North*

American's presence in the world. The Store News offers itself as an original, textual, public,

peritext that arguably acts in both an authorial and publisher's paratextual capacity.[100]

Nonetheless, when we consider the question of the advertisement's performative qualities and

privileged vectors of influence—that is, what it does and to what—things become decidedly

more complicated. For Genette, the paratext is always subordinate in status and dedicated to the

service of 'its' text (Paratexts 12). In the case of Wanamaker's advertisement, however, we find

---

[100] This, of course, depends on how much influence on perceives John Wanamaker exerting on the daily operations of *The North American*.

a paratext frustrated with its auxiliary station and eager to assume the primacy of the newspaper it attends. In fact, the advertisement works to adopt the status of the primary text by coopting and deploying the newspaper's journalistic paratexts (headlines, bylines, datelines, illustrations, etc.) in a kind of liminal, meta-paratextual capacity. Wanamaker's advertisement flouts its self-knowledge in a way that mitigates its second-order textual status. Despite its own paratextual position, Wanamaker's Store News knowingly employs the paratextual functionality typically enjoyed by primary texts in order to privilege its construction of a constellation of meanings that lie far outside the parameters of the newspaper itself.

In terms of directionality, the ad's dominant framing influence extends along efferent vectors that travel away from, rather than inward toward, *The North American*. This lays bare the dichotomous character of commercial paratexts in modern mass media. Such advertisements, like Genette's literary paratexts, find their *raison d'être* in the service of something other than themselves (Genette, *Paratexts* 12). Yet, this 'something' is, in truth, *some things*. The ads serve the newspaper that hosts them in a primarily economic capacity. However, in terms of meaning making, *The North American* does more to influence the reception of The Wanamaker Store News than the other way around. The service Wanamaker's advertisement provides the paper is fiscal rather than phenomenological and its dominant framing work extends outward towards Wanamaker's stores, products, readers, and the world they occupy. By serving multiple masters in a variety of capacities, the Store News provides us an early glimpse of "paratextual relativity," a concept I develop more fully in chapter four. For now, however, we may content ourselves by observing that textual status is constantly negotiated and that the potential vectors of paratextual influence are legion.

The Store News demonstrates a level of layered directional complexity that far exceeds any contemplated by Genette. On a micro-scale, each merchandise-oriented 'article' in Wanamaker's advertisement works to frame the reader's perception of its corresponding product as primary text. This is, of course, the principal purpose behind each of Wanamaker's 'articles.' Yet, when taken as a whole, The Wanamaker Store News—as its name suggests—also operates in the service of the store as primary text. Just as the advertisement exploits the familiarity of journalistic aesthetics in order to legitimate and privilege its commercial discourse, so does it employ the compartmentalized layout of the newspaper to acquaint readers with the 'departmentalized' geography of Wanamaker's store.
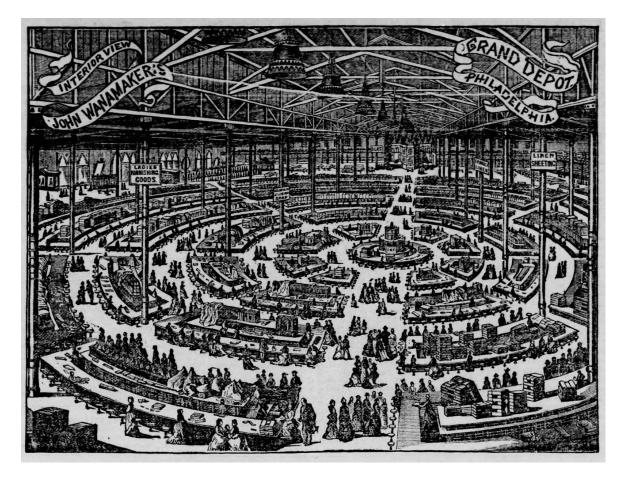

Figure 2.1 Wanamakers Department Store, March 1878. (Credit: Philadelphia Times)

As the sketch above illustrates, the Store News doesn't just mimic *The North American's* appearance, it also bears a strong resemblance to the interior of Wanamaker's Grand Depot as it appeared to shoppers at the turn of the century.[101] The store's signage neatly approximates the headlines and subheads that announce both *The North American's* articles and the Store News' promotional narratives, while the geometrically arranged aisles of the Depot echo the gutters and alleys that help to comprise the newspaper's layout. At the same time, the products on display evoke the illustrations that clarify and reinforced the paper's journalism as well as Wanamaker's promotions. In each instance, the logic of modernity—with its relentless rationalism and dedication to reductivist typologies (the article on the baseball game is to the sports section as sheeting is to the linens section)—is made material via an iterative aesthetic, one tailor-made to provide bewildered consumers with relevant constructs for making sense of a new and radically different world. This repetition occurs throughout the development and maturation of industrial capitalism (e.g. the organization and layout of world's fairs, the planning and construction of burgeoning cityscapes, the scientifically-managed floor plans and Taylorized labor of American factories, etc.) works to negate the shock of the new through familiarity. Surely, the world was changing, but it was doing so according to clearly identifiable patterns that reverberated through cognitive, physical, and cultural space.

The positioning of the advertisement—situated between the "State News" on page 7 and "Woman's World" on page 9—works to legitimate Wanamaker's commercial message while targeting a specific demographic. By following the state news ("For All the Latest Authentic

---

[101] Wanamaker opened his first department store, the "Grand Depot," in 1877. It occupied the buildings that had previously housed the Pennsylvania Railroad's freight station. While the location underwent a series of renovations and expansions in its early years, the basic layout remained relatively consistent until Wanamaker replaced the Grand Depot with a two million square foot, 12-story (with 9 dedicated to retail) building in 1910. Notably, Wanamaker completed the construction in three stages and kept his store in operation throughout.

STATE NEWS Read These Columns Daily" [9]), the Store News appears as if it were nothing more than another naturally occurring, geographically-determined generic category in a pre-established journalistic hierarchy of national news, state news, local news, and store news. And, in locating the store news next to the women's page, proximity worked to gender Wanamaker's commercial content and make it function as a bridge between the masculine discourse of the public sphere and the feminine discourse of domesticity. While the state news told of escaped convicts and farmers on trial for murder (7), the page headlined "In Woman's World" offered "Brief but Breezy" accounts of women's use of slang and the acclimation of hairless dogs to Philadelphia's winters (9).

In this sense, and others, Wanamaker's advertisements occupy a liminal zone—one, which, like department stores themselves, straddled the binaries of modernity: old versus new, public versus private, urban versus rural, masculine versus feminine, and novelty versus tradition. They were advertisements, but they were also news. They were appeals that also sought to educate.

Genette emphasized the liminal nature of paratexts, suggesting that they operate as zones of mediation between text and off-text (*Paratexts* i-xviii). With Wanamaker's centrifugal paratextuality, however, we find his advertisements mediating between realms that reside entirely off-text. Indeed, the liminal qualities of these commercial paratexts seemed to privilege a pedagogic functionality that operated on both sides of the border between public and private life and blurred the line between autocratic instruction and appeal to the sovereign consumer. Whereas the 'articles' in earlier full-page advertisements struck an almost whimsical, contemplative note—"It was a cute idea, combining linen and cotton to make a dress fabric" (Wanamaker. "Linen Grenadines" 8)—the new copy extended and amplified the interpellative

functionality of penny press paratextuality by simultaneously educating and hailing the new

consumer class with an unparalleled frankness. The statements leave little room for

misinterpretation: "You are not coming fast enough for these Continental Bicycles;" "It's

dangerous to keep on summer underwear too long;" "Ladies will wear mixed rough cheviots and

homespuns this season" (Wanamaker. "Dress Goods" 8). Not only did these paratexts hail

readers with sense of self-assurance reminiscent of Althusser's policeman ("Hey, you there!"),

but they also made unequivocal statements with regard to how everyday life was to be lived in

both the public (cheviots) and private (summer underwear) realms.

In some ways, the pedagogical aspirations of the Store News harkened back to the

paratextual functionality of yore. Like the biblical paratexts of the Contrareformatio that usurped

the primary status of the scriptures for the illiterate multitude, Wanamaker's advertisements

assumed the legitimacy and informative value of their primary text in order to offer a frame for

the perception and understanding of the world writ large. In this sense, the advertisements

labored on a grander scale than the paratexts of the penny press. While the attention merchants'

paratexts functioned to create the consumer class needed to sustain industrial capitalism,

Wanamaker's paratexts worked to situate these consumers in a deceptively familiar environment

by privileging a mode of phenomenological understanding I describe as "pseudo-Gemeinschaft."

Ferdinand Tönnies popularized the concepts of "Gemeinschaft" and "Gesellschaft"—the

German words for "community" and "society"—in his 1887 work of the same name. Writing

against the very backdrop of emergent urban modernism that troubled Benjamin and enriched

Wanamaker, Tönnies articulated the nature of modernity from a sociological perspective. He

argued that this new era could be best characterized as a move from Gemeinschaft—"the lasting

and genuine form of living together"—to Gesellschaft—a "transitory and superficial" mode of

coexistence (Tönnies 35). Gemeinschaft was old, organic, and characterized by tradition, a sense

of familiarity, and closeness in social relations. Gesellschaft, on the other hand, was new,

machine-like, and made manifest in impersonal social interactions that were governed by reason

and efficiency. A quote from early in Tönnies' treatise captures the distinction neatly:

> In Gemeinschaft with one's family, one lives from birth on, bound to it in weal and
>
> woe. One goes into Gesellschaft as one goes into a strange country. A young man
>
> is warned against bad Gesellschaft, but the expression bad Gemeinschaft violates
>
> the meaning of the word. (33-34)

As this short passage suggests, Gesellschaft and the alienation so commonly associated

with modernity and urban industrial capitalism are closely linked. Moreover, there is an

equivalency between Tönnies' Gemeinschaft and Benjamin's "long experience." Both are

worldviews that were seemingly displaced with the advent of modernity; and these 'ways of

seeing' depend on tradition, acquaintance, and a kind of shared intelligence typically found in the

small, rural communities that characterized the pre-modern era. So, while the newspapers of the

period might have been incapable of conveying the long experience or Gemeinschaft

contemplated by Benjamin and Tönnies, the newspaper's advertisements nevertheless

encouraged the application of these established ways of seeing to modern life and the products

that supported it.

Wanamaker's advertisement portrays a kind of sociability that belied the commercial

nature of the relationship between mass-market retailer and urban consumer. The store's full

page ad from Christmas Day, 1899 exalts this sense of pseudo-Gemeinschaft over the cool

rationality of faceless, urban commerce: "Scarcely a word today about business, except to

heartily thank you every one for the goodwill and generous appreciation that made the store so

enjoyable and useful" ("Ring the Christmas" 12). There is, in this expression of thanks, with its

absence of naked promotion, a spontaneity that is closely aligned with the "natural will" Tönnies

associates with Gemeinschaft (105). Such natural will is "inborn and inherited" (Tönnies 105)

and is representative of a human instinct to "be together because we are social animals"

(Sandstedt and Westin 131). Of course, the convivial ethos of this paratextual message is only

amplified by its temporal proximity to Christmas, a holiday that—in the past, at least—has been

commonly associated with warmth, generosity, goodwill and family. Concurrently, the ad frames

the function of the store in terms of public service rather than pursuit of profit. This was a theme

that Wanamaker actively tried to cultivate and appeared to authentically endorse. Sounding more

like J.S. Mill than J.D. Rockefeller, Wanamaker said in 1896: "Stores ought not to exist simply

for the benefit of the men who keep them but for the greatest good of the greatest number" (qtd.

in Leach, *Land of Desire* 112). Here then, we see an expression of appreciation and a

simultaneous representation of the store not as a soulless exemplar of high-capitalist modernity,

but rather as a benevolent cultural institution providing a valuable public service.[102] This image

was, in some sense, consistent with the perception of the broader public. As Leach explains,

"over time many Americans had come to consider the department store as an eleemosynary

institution maintained for the purpose of serving the public without regard for profit"

("Transformations" 330). Given the enormous profitability of his stores,[103] such beliefs were

clearly a testament to the efficacy of Wanamaker's paratextual discourse.

Wanamaker's advertisements facilitated a new collective intelligence and dispelled the

sense of Gesellschaft that characterized the anonymous and alienating quality of commerce

---

[102] Leach dedicates an entire chapter to the notion of department store as public service. See *Land of Desire* 112-150.

[103] As an example of profitability, during its inaugural year, Brown & Wanamaker, Wanamaker's first store, yielded a near 700% return on initial capital investment ("Death Overtakes" 1).

under industrial capitalism.[104] The pedagogic functionality of these commercial paratexts made every reader a pupil, but did so without the pedantry of formal schooling. Instead of boasting of the spectacle of the new, Wanamaker's ads framed his stores as familiar extensions of what had come before. If readers were overwhelmed or confused by the novelty and scale of the new palaces of consumption, Wanamaker's advertising copy lets them know they needn't be. A February 10, 1899 advertisement asks, "What is a Department Store?" (Wanamaker. 8) In response, the paper's paratext offers a frame for common understanding that is, at once, recognizable and instructive. The advertisement makes no mention of the breathtaking size of the stores or the astounding scope of their inventories.[105] Rather, a store of the "Wanamaker type" is simply comprised of "stores within a store" ("What is" 8) In a statement that foreshadows the formal practice of corporate "public relations," we see a focus on goodwill:

> Every department manager must be systematic and unremitting in his efforts to keep in touch with the public needs, and he employs methods, which would confuse the average merchant by their intricateness and the amount of executive watchfulness necessary for their successful operation. ("What is" 8).

The ad's emphasis on familiarity and service are in keeping with the notion that "bad Gemeinschaft" is a contradiction in terms. Throughout Wanamaker's ads we see attempts to frame the retailer/consumer relationship in terms of the kind of fairness and honesty notoriously

---

[104] Of course, the collective intelligence being fashioned by Wanamaker's paratextual discourse differed significantly from that found in the context of true Gemeinschaft. The collective intelligence of old was the result of collected, shared experience rather than a mass-mediated, top-down message being broadcast from one to many.
[105] By way of example, upon its opening, Wanamaker's Grand Depot store featured more than two acres of retail floor space and an initial inventory valued at $500,000—a figure that exceeded the cost of the land the store occupied (Gibbons 1 : 146).

absent in the impersonal social relations of Gesellschaft.[106] An October 11, 1899 advertisement

tells male consumers, "Bring back the suit that does not do what it ought to" ("Clothing for Men"

8). Elsewhere, this same advertisement takes responsibility for the goods on offer: "If our house

furnishings are not, as a whole, better than you will find in any other store, it's the fault of the

head of that department, and he asks us to say so" ("House Furnishings" 8). In an analogous

example, a November 17, 1899 advertisement offers readers insight into the mass production of

women's suits: "The maker is going into a trust, and besides, had a contract to keep a lot of

Italian tailors…. busy until the end of this month. He didn't want to have any of this year's cloth

left when he starts his new enterprise. So… we took what he made" ("Women's Suits" 8). Such

'behind the scenes' narratives offer readers a rare glimpse of the motivations that undergird the

production and marketing of goods in the context of industrial capitalism and are typically

obscured in Gesellschaft. In doing so, they work to humanize Wanamaker's goods and stores,

while simultaneously flattering readers by granting them access to knowledge typically reserved

for industrial insiders.

Wanamaker's ads also worked to establish new cultural rituals and traditions. Every year

the end of December brought with it not just the seasonal holidays, but also the annual White

Sale—a commercialized iteration of the winter solstice, a form of capitalist renewal: "The "last

shopping day of the old year—the White Sale is the bridge to the new" (Wanamaker. "Important

Sales" 1). What's more, the Wanamaker Store News provides one of the earliest examples of the

discursive construction of Christmas in Consumptionist terms: "The store works more smoothly

---

[106] It is worth noting that, at this time, snake oil merchants were the second greatest source of advertising revenue for the nation's metropolitan dailies.

in a Christmas crowd than ever before, and yet the crowd gets bigger and bigger every year"
(Wanamaker. "Wanamaker Daily" 8). In this simple observation regarding the growth of holiday
shopping, the ad paratextually naturalizes the commercial nature of the holiday. If Christmas
draws nigh, you should be out shopping. Moreover, the Store News complicates paratextual
directionality by literally coaching readers in the spatial performance of ritual holiday shopping:
"Do you want help? Keep to the right. Avoid the whirlpool in the centre of the store unless you
have Christmas reasons for diving into the sea of leather and fancy articles, art-embroideries,
perfumes, toilet-articles, etc., that are there" (Ibid.). In this manner, Wanamaker literally maps a
path for readers to negotiate a new, distinctly modern terrain.

By the late 1890s, changes associated with modernity had produced a host of cultural
anxieties. The social system, now dramatically different than any prior iteration, had become
unnavigable for many. Newspapers of the time helped readers map this unfamiliar terrain. When
John Wanamaker purchased *The North American* in 1899, the paper had already established a
reputation for honest reporting that echoed the candor of his department stores' advertising.
Wanamaker intuitively understood the transactional relationship that exists between text and
paratext and leveraged the paper's reputation in order to enhance that of his brand. He
recognized that the text too, serves as threshold, and allowed the reputability of *The North
American* to extend centrifugally to his extratextual promotions, products, and stores. Following
this strategy to its logical end, in October of 1899, Wanamaker turned his advertisements into
'news'.

Just as the newspapers of the time sought to help readers make sense of a turbulent new
era, the Wanamaker Store News worked to encourage novel ways of seeing—but did so using a
familiar lens. By crafting a sense of familiarity, sociability, and tradition, the Store News

functioned to privilege a kind of pseudo-Gemeinschaft that mitigated the shock of modern consumptionism and its trappings, and allowed newly-sovereign consumers to understand their rapidly-evolving world in comfortable, well-established, pre-industrial terms.

2.3 **Newspaper Paratexts & Ways of Seeing**

During the 19th century, against the backdrop of significant socio-economic change, newspapers emerged as the dominant form of mass communication in the United States. During the first half that century, the fathers of the penny press utilized a form of paratextuality that acknowledged the agency of consumers in ways that were truly novel. Headlines, prices, and the conflation of consumption with democratic citizenship all conspired to discursively construct the sovereign consumer as a valuable, and heretofore unrecognized, cultural necessity. With the advent of high-capitalism, social relations had changed and participatory consumption had become a necessary condition of the prevailing cultural logic. In order to perpetuate its own existence, mass production required mass consumption and the paratexts of the penny press interpellated readers as active consumers.

Later, as industrial capitalism matured, commercial newspaper paratexts like The Wanamaker Store News worked to encourage the application of a pre-industrial mode of social relations to the alienating practice of mass production and marketing. In order to paratextually privilege this sense of pseudo-Gemeinschaft; Wanamaker's advertisements mimicked the aesthetics of conventional news stories, and, in doing so, exploited the centrifugal sense of legitimacy offered by *The North American* as a primary text. In short, the journalistic authenticity of Wanamaker's newspaper rubbed off on his advertisements, which, in turn, offered new frames for seeing the world in the context of a socially turbulent age.

3 RADIO PARATEXTS: PERFORMATIVE LISTENING AND THE PARATEXTUAL OBFUSCATION OF AUTHORSHIP

The pictures are better on radio. - Adam Clayton Powell III

Radio evolved in fits and starts. With its origins in the wireless telegraphy of Marconi and Morse, radio was conceived as a point-to-point communication system (Benjamin "Radio" 349). Over the ensuing decades, however, the medium's primary use would shift from maritime shipping, to naval defense, to hobby, to—in the context of the United States, at least— commercial network broadcasting. Radio's uneven evolution was characterized by ingenuity and uncertainty, and was spurred along by a colorful assortment of characters.[107] Writing of the medium's inception, historian Louise Benjamin suggests, "The early era in radio history was a complex period of experimentation, litigation, and financial turmoil for the many inventors who had vision but who often missed out on the rewards of success" (349). Feminist scholar and cultural critic Susan Douglas offers a less generous, if more succinct, account: "Ever since the 1840s, after the telegraph was introduced, various… crackpots had sought to send signals through water or air without connecting wires" (41). Regardless of how one characterizes radio's pioneers, however, it was the desire to send messages, as if by magic, over the ether that eventually led to almost thirty years of radio dominance in American mass media.

---

[107] Take, for instance, Lee de Forest, the inventor of the Audion tube and self-proclaimed "father of radio" who bragged of amassing and losing no less than four fortunes over his career. De Forest courted his first wife (not coincidentally, de Forest's wives, like his fortunes, numbered four) exclusively over the wireless. The two were married for less than a month before separating. (Adams 117). Or, we might also consider Samuel Morse, the inventor of Morse code and single-wire telegraphy. An accomplished portrait artist and founder of the National Academy of Design, Morse was also an ardent supporter of slavery and unrepentant nationalist who ran for mayor of New York City on a fervently anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant platform and received less than 1500 votes (Billington 361-384).

Despite decades of development, radio's move toward media dominance did not get fully underway until the second decade of the 20th century. The 1920s marked the beginning of what Paul Starr calls the "popular radio boom" (328). In the two short years between 1921 and 1923, the number of radio stations in the United States grew from 30 to 600 (Sloan 352). Concurrently, revenues from receiver sales more than doubled, growing from $60 to $136 million (VanCour 3). By 1929, this figure would top $840 million (VanCour 3). At the same time, corporations including AT&T and RCA began to experiment with permanent broadcast networks; while stations such as KDKA in Pittsburgh and CFCF in Montreal worked to create rapidly-growing audiences with regularly scheduled programming that enticed listeners to tune in on a consistent basis (Sloan 352-4). By the end of 1929, over half the homes in the U.S. had at least one radio (Sterling and Kittross 862, 826), and the medium had bested its nearest competitor, the cinema, in the contest for mass media dominance. At the close of the decade, Americans spent some 150,000,000 hours a week in front of the silver screen; however, this figure paled in comparison to the 1,000,000,000 they spent listening to radio (Cantril and Allport 14).

Throughout the 1930s, Americans relied on the radio as their principal source of news, culture, and entertainment. Even in the depths of the Great Depression, the number of American households equipped with radio receivers climbed steadily (Starr 254). One Depression-era study of unemployed families found that in homes where "outside activities such as church-going, movies, entertaining, clubs, and visits had been curtailed, that the radio assumed tremendous importance as the *chief recreation of the family group*" (Holter 164, emphasis in original). Grimly highlighting the medium's increased significance, one participant explained: "If we lost the radio, I'd be willing to dig my own grave" (qtd. in Holter 164). As these quotes suggest, during the 1930s, radio became central to American family life, and not simply as a form of

recreation. It served as a mode of parental control, a key element in the social lives of young people, a measure of a family's social status, and a link to the outside world.[108]

Radio's place in American culture became even more prominent during the 1940s. As the country emerged from the largest financial crisis in its history and staggered headlong into the Second Great War, radio seemed to permeate every facet of American life. Oral historian Ray Barfield paints a picture:

> On small tables beside living room chairs, copies of *Radio Mirror* shared space with issues of *Life*, *Look*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*. Listeners ritually kept copies of the daily newspaper's radio program grid handy for reference, even though experienced listeners knew by heart the days, times and dial positions of their preferred programs. Individual and family schedules had long been adjusted to the broadcast times of favorite comedians, musical hours…and news commentators. Programs that once seemed brash and startling had grown familiar, like old friends who were expected to drop by for a daily or weekly visit. (25)

As the war raged on, radio took on an increasingly didactic role. Millions of anxious Americans—many with loved ones serving abroad—took the equivalent of a crash course in geography as they followed news reports of far off battles in Europe and the South Pacific.[109] At the same time, corporate sponsors, celebrities, and the government all worked together in coopting the airwaves to educate listeners about the roles they could play in the war effort—roles that were performative as well as ideological. Not only did the radio seek to inform audiences

---

[108] For a sometimes-heartbreaking account of how radio functioned amongst the Depression-era unemployed in these various ways, see Holter 164-167.

[109] One corporation, the George F, Cran Company of Indianapolis, offered radio listeners a "Follow the Flag to Victory" boxed set containing a large wall-mountable map and "Victory Markers" so families could follow along with news reports and plot the Allies' progress. For more, see Barfield 26.

about rationing, the benefit of war bonds, and the tending of victory gardens, it also labored to

construct an entire set of normative cultural values related to American nationalism (Hilmes

Radio, 6). In short, during the Second World War, radio programming worked to teach audiences

how to think and be "American"—and a nation listened.

In this chapter, I focus on radio paratextuality during the height of the medium's

popularity. By examining the extra-textual elements associated with radio's *Captain Midnight*

(1938-1949), one of the era's most popular quarter-hour adventure serials, I explain how these

devices worked to privilege a distinct mode of performative audiencing while simultaneously

framing the program's "creators" in ways that obscure the true nature of the show's authorship.

As already established in the previous chapter's discussion of interpellative paratextuality

and the framing of the consumer, paratextual influence extends centrifugally into the realm of

social relations. In the first part of this chapter, I again consider how paratexts influence how we

think of ourselves in relation to those around us. This time, however, the directionality of the

paratextual vectoring is still more complicated. Whereas the journalistic and commercial

paratexts of *The North American* conspired to lure readers inward only to bounce them, mirror-

like, along outward paths of engagement, *Captain Midnight's* paratexts perform similar actions,

but, in an additional step, propel listeners back into the text even more deeply. Fueled by

marketing premiums, this final centripetal trajectory encourages a mode of textual engagement

that transcends traditional notions of meaning making through paratextually-choreographed

performative listening.

In the second part of this case study, I consider how *Midnight's* paratexts work to

complicate and obfuscate notions of "authorship." Unlike the credits of a film or television

program, a newspaper byline, or the cover of a book, the radio serial is noticeably lacking in

authorial paratexts. In the context of serial radio dramas of the era, which were typically scripted

by advertising agencies at the behest of corporate sponsors, this absence was both commonplace

and strategic (Meyers 121). *Captain Midnight's* eleven-year run spanned both the final years of

the Great Depression and the entirety of World War II.[110] As a result, the serial navigated periods

of institutional advertising as well as direct selling (Meyers 106-7); and, while these techniques

differed in substantive ways, both relied on "sponsor identification" in order to sell the sponsor's

products (Meyers 107). Here, I consider how *Midnight's* paratexts labor to create this sense of

identification across two sponsors, eleven years of programming, a depression and a world war.

3.1   Captain Midnight: An Origin Story

Captain Midnight first took to the airwaves in the fall of 1938 (Harmon 26). The series

was the second foray into adventure serials for creators Robert M. Burtt and Wilfred G. Moore,

veteran radio scribes who enjoyed prior success with *The Air Adventures of Jimmie Allen* (1933-

1937). As with their first series, *Midnight* was an aviation-oriented serial. Former military

pilots,[111] Burtt and Moore were keenly aware of the powerful ways aviation had entered the

cultural imaginary. Commercial flight was still in its infancy,[112] and, as Kallis observes, "In the

1930s through 1950s, aviators were among the most glamorous figures in the public's mind" (2).

---

[110] It should be remembered that while U.S. economic recovery began as early as 1933, full recovery did not occur until America's involvement in WWII. In 1938—the year *Captain Midnight* debuted—the nation was still in the midst of the recession of 1937-1938, an economic downturn that occurred in the larger economic context of the Great Depression. As a consequence, during Midnight's first year on the air, the unemployment rate hovered at a dismal 20% (National Bureau of Economic Research) and manufacturing output fell 37% year over year (Estey 22-23).

[111] While both Burtt and Moore enjoyed distinguished flying careers, apocryphal origin stories abound. For example, according to *On the Air: The Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio*, both Burtt and Moore were WWI flying aces (aviators crediting with shooting down at least five enemy planes) and happened to meet at a party after the war (17). Despite this contention, neither Burtt nor Moore appears on official lists of WWI aces. Likewise, the documentary *Lost Hero of the Golden Age* suggests that Burtt and Moore flew together as members of the 28th Aero Squadron in 1918 (FizzFop1). Here again, there is no record of either Burtt or Moore having served with the 28th.

[112] By way of example, Pan Am initiated transatlantic passenger service in 1939; just months after *Captain Midnight* debuted on American radios. For a brief timeline of commercial aviation see: Roth and Perry.

Americans were captivated with air travel and the industry was experiencing unparalleled

growth. While fewer than 6,000 airline passengers were recorded in the U.S. in 1926 (Thomas

22), this number would grow to more than 1 million by 1938 (US Department of Commerce). In

such a context, Burtt and Moore knew that "an aviator was considered rather heroic just by his or

her profession; and one who would also go on exotic adventures—fighting wrongdoers in the

process—would be considered especially heroic" (Kallis 2). It was with this in mind that the pair

created their first protagonist, Jimmie Allen.

Jimmie Allen was, in many ways, the perfect hero for early 30s radio. Syndicated by

World Broadcasting and initially airing on three Midwestern stations (WDAF Kansas City, KLZ

Denver, and KVOO in Tulsa),[113] *The Air Adventures of Jimmie Allen* was a 15-minute adventure

serial aimed squarely at the youth market (Harmon 2). Allen, the eponymous lead character, was

a daring boy aviator,[114] who, along with his mentor, WWI fighter pilot Speed Robinson, fought

off any number of kidnappers, spies, warlords (in pre-communist China, no less), air mail

robbers, and mad scientists during his four seasons on the air. Allen's youth,[115] combined with

the allure of aviation, made the character particularly compelling for the children and adolescents

who comprised the show's audience.

A steady flow of premium offerings made the serial even more captivating. During the

show's inaugural season, *Allen's* sponsor, Skelly Oil, offered listeners an extra twelve-part

adventure. Published on newsprint with installments offered on a weekly basis, this early

exercise in transmedia storytelling told of a sinister mad scientist bent on cloaking entire cities in

---

[113] Seven additional stations were added shortly after the serial premiered.

[114] When the series began, Jimmie was only an apprentice pilot. Nevertheless, in the course of the first season he would not only earn his wings, but would also go on to best his mentor in a transcontinental air race. For more on the first two seasons' storylines, see Harmon, *Radio Mystery* 2-3).

[115] It is worth noting that John Frank, the serial's 40 year-old director, played the 16 year-old Allen when the show debuted.

a "smothering fog," thereby rendering them inaccessible to air traffic (Harmon 4). Subsequent

premiums included photos of Jimmie and Speed (1934), membership cards for the Jimmie Allen

Flying Club (1934), Flying Cadet Flight Wings (1934), Jimmie Allen Club Newspapers (1935),

Weather Bird Air Corps Flying Club I.D. bracelets and patches (1935; 1936), and a Jimmie Allen

branded knife (1936), to name but a few.[116]

Radio premiums first emerged in 1933 when Colgate-Palmolive offered NBC daytime

serial listeners garden seeds in exchange for Super Suds box tops ("Price Promotions" 14). The

promotion was an immediate hit and the company was deluged with box tops, filling over

600,000 premium requests in the first 10 days ("Price Promotions" 14). After Colgate-

Palmolive's initial success, radio premiums quickly became commonplace. What differentiated

Skelly Oil's *Jimmie Allen* premiums, however, was that they had to be picked up in person at

participating Skelly service stations and could not be requested by mail.

By 1937, Burtt and Moore felt that *Jimmie Allen* had run its course. As the prospect of

another World War seemed increasingly likely, the writers decided to take a more mature

approach to the aviation serial (Tumbusch 33). The result was *Captain Midnight*. As with *Jimmie

Allen*, *Midnight* focused on the adventures of a daring aviator; yet this protagonist was no

adolescent. Captain Jim "Red" Albright was a WWI American Flying Corps fighter pilot who

earned his code name by flying deep into enemy territory on a top secret mission against 100 to 1

odds, returning victorious at the stroke of midnight (Blackett-Sample-Hummert, "Formation

of"). In later episodes, Captain Midnight and his ward, Chuck Ramsey, fought Ivan Shark, a

Eurasian criminal mastermind, who, along with his daughter Fury and henchmen Fang and

---

[116] Because Jimmie *Allen* was syndicated in a variety of markets, the show enjoyed a number of regional sponsors
that offered a wide variety of premiums. Here, I am concentrating exclusively on Skelly Oil premiums. For more on
Allen's regional sponsors, see Tumbusch 93-95.

Gardo, was bent on world domination. The themes and language of the show were decidedly more mature than what listeners had come to expect from *Jimmie Allen*. Captain Midnight was a grown-up hero for grown-up times, and, while the serial's time slot—*Midnight* aired alongside other youth-oriented serials between 5:00 and 6:00 p.m.—and quarter-hour "cliffhanger" format meant "the majority of the audience was composed of children," the show also enjoyed a "sizeable 'minority' audience of adults" (Kallis 2).

Blackett, Sample, and Hummert, a Chicago-based advertising agency with extensive experience in creating radio serials, produced *Captain Midnight*.[117] Delighted with the show's grown-up appeal, Skelly Oil sponsored *Captain Midnight* for its first two seasons. Later, in September of 1940, the Wander Company, makers of Ovaltine, purchased the serial from Skelly for national broadcast over the Mutual network (Harmon, *Radio & TV* 27). Up until 1939, Wander had sponsored *Little Orphan Annie* (1931-1942),[118] the Hummert-produced children's radio drama based on Harold Gray's popular comic strip of the same name (Kallis 3). However, as American involvement in the war began to seem imminent, the makers of Ovaltine wanted to associate their brand with a more forceful, patriotic protagonist. As Kallis notes:

> Captain Midnight was a vigorous, mature figure, who could easily be identified
>
> with defense of the United States. Orphan Annie, no matter how clever a
>
> youngster, was hardly such a figure" (3).

---

[117] Formed in 1924, Blackett-Sample-Hummert pioneered the radio soap opera, creating a host of successful daytime serials including *Betty and Bob*, *Stella Dallas*, *Ma Perkins*, *Just Plain Bill*, and the *Romance of Helen Trent* (Meyers 108). By 1934, BSH controlled more network radio time than any other agency; and, during its zenith in the early 1940s, was producing 45 different programs and purchasing $12 million of airtime annually ("Dancer-Fitzgerald-Sample).

[118] After 1939, Quaker Puffed Wheat sponsored Little Orphan Annie.

The Wander Company would go on to sponsor *Midnight* through the war years and beyond, eventually going as far as to sponsor a *Captain Midnight* TV series on CBS for two seasons in the mid-1950s.

3.2   **Paratextually-Choreographed Performative Listening**

There is little that is passive about media spectatorship. Since active audience theory first emerged from the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in the 1970s,[119] scholars have argued that, rather than being passive recipients of dominant ideological messages, audiences actively work to create meaning from texts based on their social positions and personal histories. Making sense of even the most banal pop culture artifact requires a level of dynamic engagement that belies the text's ostensible lack of sophistication. "Audiencing," to borrow a term from John Fiske, is thirsty work ("Audiencing" 345-359).

Here, I build upon traditional notions of audience engagement by arguing that that radio paratexts, and the paratexts of radio drama in particular, are instrumental in the construction of a kind of paratextually-choreographed performative listening, a mode of audiencing made manifest through cognitive, social, and physical practices. Performative listeners are called upon to serve as textual co-authors, to act as narrative participants, and encouraged to conceptualize themselves as members of listener communities—both real and imagined. These processes are facilitated in three ways: 1) via the use of non-verbal, radiogenic paratexts, 2) by means of the narrator's discursive encouragement of listener performance (performative prompting), and, 3) through the use of marketing premiums designed to promote listener engagement.

---

[119] Arguably, we might trace the emergence of active audience theory back still further to the post-structuralist theorizing of Barthes' "From Work to Text" (1971) and/or Eco's *The Open Work* (1965), both of which foreground the role of the reader/listener in making sense of a mediated text. I begin with the Birmingham School for the sake of simplicity and because of the Centre's sustained focus on active reception in its many forms.

Due to its exclusive reliance on aural codes, radio has long been characterized as a "blind" medium (VanCour 107).[120] Discourses concerning the medium's dearth of images go back nearly a century, emerging alongside the first on-air radio dramas (VanCour 103-107).[121] From the start, radio plays were seen as a threat to conventional theater performances. Accordingly, theatrical trade publications sought to portray radio's lack of a visual imagery as an "insurmountable obstacle, dooming it to second-class status in the pantheon of the arts below more authentic, sensory-rich forms of stage theater" (VanCour 108). Concurrently, however, a competing narrative—I shall call this the "immersive engagement narrative"[122]—developed amongst radio advocates who understood the medium's dependence on aurality as the key to a uniquely captivating form of listener engagement.

Radio dramas, like books, were immersive and left "the audience to fill in the narrative gaps of the story and encourage imaginative play" (Echols 44). One listener recounts just this sort of deep engagement while on a road trip with his family; his story begins as he asks his father to search the dial for show:

> I thought I'd died and gone to heaven because luck was with me that time. After just a little fumbling around to get a station, what came out loud and clear was nothing less than *The Lone Ranger*! And… it was the very beginning of the show! I can't tell you what the show was about anymore; it was a lot of years ago.

---

[120] This designation strikes me as unjust. As Verma points out, "we routinely call radio a 'blind medium' but never call photography a 'deaf medium' or let its silence blind us to its visual features" (9). Nevertheless, the notion (cliché) has proven enduring.

[121] According to broadcast historian Howard Blue, Eugene Walter's *The Wolf* was the first radio drama (1). The play aired on Schenectady's WGY in August of 1922 (Blue 1). Adapted from a three-act stage play, the 40-minute show proved so successful that WGY's program director went on to commission and broadcast another 43 stage-play adaptations over the following 12 months (Hand and Traynor 15).

[122] It should be noted that this is a narrative that appears repeatedly throughout media history. In this instance, it was applied to radio.

All I can remember was it was The Lone Ranger and the adventure was all around me. I was a living part of it… I was there! Riding along with the Masked Man and Indian, sharing in the chase and shooting! It was as plain as day in front of me; the imagination was extra-energized; I was part of the Lone Ranger adventure sure enough! My body might have been riding along in a car along a darkened desert highway, hunched over a bench seat, hanging on every word that came out of the radio, but my mind was seventy years in the past in the middle of a shoot-out with the bad guys. I was in heaven. (Qtd in Barfield 116-117)

The immersive engagement narrative maintains that the robust mode of reception described above goes beyond even the most enthusiastic forms of active audience theory imagined by cultural studies heavyweights such as Hall, Fiske and Jenkins. In such a scenario, listeners are doing more than encoding and decoding (Hall 90-103), making meaning out of the program based on their pre-existing, socially constructed subject positions (Fiske, *Television Culture* 62-83), or creating fan-made paratexts through the practice of "textual poaching" (Jenkins, *Textual Poachers* 25-33). According to this way of thinking, members of the radio audience are, in a very real sense, co-producing the program. The radio drama, as text, is not merely polysemic (Fiske, Television Culture 84-93), or "open" (Eco, *The Open Work* 3-4); it is incomplete. Thus, rather than serving a site of struggle (Fiske, *Reading the Popular* 6-7), the radio drama functions as a site of mutual creation.

Such thinking has led scholars and practitioners alike to conceive of radio as "theater of the mind" (Verma 1-14), a turn of phrase that adeptly captures the medium's capacity to encourage the production of mental images, which, by virtue of their cerebral construction, remain unburdened by the constraints of physical settings. Cantrill and Allport explain:

Given the slightest encouragement the listener can build his own imaginative

scene. In many cases he prefers it to the settings provided by the stage of screen

for there is never a defect nor an incongruity in one's own imaginative

creations… The listener can jump through time and space with an alacrity that

defies even the advanced techniques of the stage or screen. Years can pass and

centuries can change with amazing swiftness and little sense of incongruity. A

few strains of music and the listener glides back to the days of the Romans; a

whistle of a train and he is across the continent… This ability of the radio listener

to create his own imaginative background is probably the reason why radio drama

excels the stage in its productions… (232-233)

As this quote suggests, supporters of the immersive engagement narrative conceptualize radio's

so-called "blindness" as a blessing rather than a curse. It is precisely the medium's exclusive

reliance on aural codes that privileges a form of deep engagement in which the listener's

imagination proves a constitutive component in the creation of both meaning and fully realized

narrative.

Much emphasis has been placed on the role of extra-linguistic elements in privileging

immersive engagement—particularly in the context of the radio drama. During the 1920s, newly

developed, medium-specific discourses of *radiogénie* suggested that radio was decidedly

different from all forms of media that had preceded it, and, as a consequence, required the

development of distinct "radiogenic forms" (Lacey 93). Such forms were made manifest in

"broadcasts that recognized, celebrated, and exploited radio's distinctive qualities" (Lacey 93)

through the use of techniques "tailored to the medium's electric sound technology" (VanCour

46). In the context of radio drama, this meant, amongst other things, the foregrounding of

dialogue, extensive use of specialized sound effects and music (both diegetic and otherwise), and a 'natural' acting style and method of delivery that differed distinctly from that of the stage performer (VanCour 170). Early radio plays did not take advantage of such radiogenic forms and suffered for it. They were, in essence, simply stage plays read on air (Cantril and Allport 228). It was only by harnessing the influence of the extra-textual elements described above that producers turned radio drama into one of the most popular forms of broadcast entertainment in the United States.[123] It is through these paratextual strategies that radio earned its moniker as 'theater of the mind.'

3.2.1   *Non-Verbal Radiogenic Paratexts*

Genette tells us that paratexts vary significantly across "period, culture, genre, author, work, and edition," and, with the ongoing emergence of new forms of media, paratexts are constantly proliferating (*Paratexts* 3). From this perspective, we may understand many so-called radiogenic components as emergent paratextual devices that developed alongside a medium (radio) and genre (the radio drama) at a particular moment in history. Interestingly, despite their novelty, these devices echo the functionality of the non-verbal paratexts commonly associated with printed publications.[124] The sound effects, music, and vocalics of the radio drama are analogous to the illustrations, fonts, and layout of a book. Each element labors to influence the reception of the work and its related messages with varying degrees of effectiveness, and, when combined, exert a force that is different from the sum of its component parts.

Non-verbal radiogenic paratexts encourage listeners of radio dramas to act as textual co-authors via the production of cognitive imagery, effectively creating what Cantril and Allport

---

[123] As of 1935, the radio drama ranked sixth in popularity amongst 42 recognized forms of broadcast entertainment (Cantril and Allport 93).

[124] Theorists including Pallet (3) and McCracken (107-110) place a strong emphasis on the importance of non-verbal paratexts in the framing of the primary text.

call a "new mental world" (267). In her study of the monster in classic radio serials, Katherine Barnes Echols tells readers: "Radio's distinct advantage over television is the freedom it allows listeners to recreate for themselves the events of the story based only on what they hear;" and often, what they are hearing are sound effects. (46). Thus, in the context of the horror genre, "a knife chopping cabbage is a head severed from its body, a hammer crushing spareribs is breaking bones, and an empty oil drum and crumpling tissue paper simulates an echo and crackling flames" (Echols 47).

In many instances, these extra-textual devices do more of the narrative heavy lifting than a program's dialogue. As Hi Brown, the producer-director of the popular CBS serial *Inner Sanctum,* told *The New York Times,* "I use sound unashamedly… I believe in a minimum of writing. The sound really gives the picture, so let the sound carry it" (qtd. in Sage 11). Such thinking has led producers like Brown to consistently create segments comprised entirely sound effects with durations between 45 seconds and a full minute—an eternity in a non-visual medium (Sage 11). Liminal in character, these lengthy aural interludes simultaneously create and fill narrative gaps, constructing spaces wherein "the listener fills out the setting in his own mind where the script… leaves off" (Sage 11). In such instances, the listener is generating a psychical iteration of the narrative itself.

Turning to Captain Midnight, we hear how extra-textual, non-verbal codes are used to create "sound–induced perceptions" (Spandoni 67). In the first episode of the Ovaltine years, we see how very simple aural effects encourage the cognitive construction of setting and diegetic space while concomitantly facilitating the introduction of a new character:

> SFX: Knock on door.
>
> General: Come in.

SFX: Door opens. Footsteps.

General: Major Steel

Major: Sir, everything is prepared. (Blackett-Sample-Hummert, "Formation")

In this example, the knock on the door, its opening, and subsequent footfalls—all aural paratextual signifiers—conspire indexically to suggest the intimacy and spatial depth (or lack thereof, the scene is set in a WWI dugout) of the scene's diegetic space while simultaneously cueing the arrival of a new character. This sense of spatiality is reinforced with additional footsteps and the door opening and closing five more times as the scene unfolds. Here, sound effects reinforce sound effects.

At times, paratextual elements are reinforced through the program's dialogue, as when Captain Midnight is ushered through a secret passage into his controller's clandestine headquarters. Because of the extensive interplay between text and paratext, this portion of the program is worth quoting at length:

Man: You will follow me.

SFX: Footsteps.

Man: Now then.

SFX: Wall opens.

Captain Midnight: Very interesting. The wall in front of us, part of it seems to be moving.

Man: You will follow me through the opening.

SFX: Footsteps.

Captain Midnight: Very Clever. I would never have dreamed there was an entrance through that wall.

Man: We hope no one else will either. Now then, I'll close the door.

SFX: Wall closes.

Man: You will follow me down the stairs in front of us.

SFX: Footsteps continue under next lines.

Captain Midnight: Indirect lighting I see.

Man: Yes. All lighting is indirect within the house.

SFX: Footsteps, then stop.

Man: Now then, from here you go on alone.

Captain Midnight: Well, I see nothing but concrete walls and a flagstone floor.

Man: I know. I step on a certain flagstone near the wall…

SFX: Floor opens.

Captain Midnight: Well, more surprises. A section of the floor is rising. Now I see a circular staircase.

Man: Yes. You will descend the staircase according to your orders.

SFX: Footsteps on staircase.

Man: After your head is below the floor, I'll close the opening. Good-bye and good luck!

Captain Midnight: Good-bye and much obliged.

SFX: Floor closes. Footsteps on staircase.

Captain Midnight: Ah. There's the steel door. That must be the button that will open it.

SFX: Steel door opens.

> Captain Midnight: Well, I guess here is where I am supposed to make myself
>
> comfortable. So I'll try out one of those easy chairs.
>
> SFX: Steel door closes. Air conditioning motor hums.
>
> Captain Midnight: I see the door is beginning to close again. That hum indicates
>
> an air conditioning system. I wonder how long it will be. (Blackett-Sample-
>
> Hummert, "Formation")

Throughout this scene, the dialogue supports, clarifies, and reinforces the influence of the sound effects. Aural codes that might otherwise prove ambiguous—a floor opening, the hum of an air conditioner—are made meaningful and given much-needed context through the characters' verbal exchanges.

At other times, sound effects and other non-verbal cues are structurally reinforced via non-diegetic paratextual narration, as when Jim Albright sets out on the assignment that will earn him his *nom de guerre*. Because it is central to Captain Midnight's origin story, the scene provides some valuable exposition before it is interrupted by sound effects, followed by Pierre Andre's familiar baritone:

> General: If you fail tonight, it will be the end for all of us. If you are successful,
>
> our country will be saved from defeat. Do you understand?
>
> Captain Midnight: I do.
>
> General: You are ready to go?
>
> Captain Midnight: My plane stands outside the door.
>
> General: Good. Henceforth, until you have accomplished your final task, you will
>
> not be known by your true name. The name you will be known by rests in the

hands of fate. How long do you think it will be before we know the outcome of this night's venture?

Captain Midnight: Sir, if I have not returned by twelve o'clock you will know I failed.

General: You are a brave man, Captain. Now, God's speed.

Captain Midnight: Thank you, sir.

SFX: Footsteps. Door opens, and then closes. Plane starts, takes off.

Announcer: And so, into the night roars a plane piloted by a lone man, upon whose shoulders rests the fate of this country.

Hours later, he has not returned. A general of the Allied army is waiting in a dugout… (Blackett-Sample-Hummert, "Formation")

Here, as in our first example, paratext reinforces paratext; now however, the extra-textual calculus is far more complex. In the first instance we heard identical, non-verbal, diegetic elements gaining strength through repetition. In this case, Andre's narration picks up precisely where the program's non-verbal codes leave off. With the sound of the aircraft's engine giving way to Andre's description of the plane roaring into the night, we find non-verbal, diegetic paratexts being extended and augmented by verbal, non-diegetic paratexts.

What is intriguing about all three of our *Captain Midnight* examples is that, by privileging the production of mental imagery, each demonstrates previously unidentified modes of paratextual functionality. In the first instance, sound effects strengthen sound effects as the recurrent opening and closing of the door and consequent footfalls serve to iteratively manage listener's narrative expectations regarding the scene's diegetic space. Paratexts still labor in a Genettian capacity to influence listeners' reception of the primary text; however, they also work

to reinforce and bolster the strength of this influence through repetition. Each paratextual articulation of sound intensifies the framing potential of the sound effect that follows. The more these extra-textual codes are reinforced, the greater their efficacy in privileging the production of related forms of mental imagery.

Our second example complicates traditional notions of the symbiotic relationship between text and paratext. According to the Genettian paradigm, paratext influences the reception of the primary text. Here, however, the vector of influence is reversed and another step is added in the production of meaning; the primary text (in the form of dialogue) works to frame and clarify the listener's understanding of the work's paratexts (the program's sound effects). It is only at this point, that the serial's sound effects are sufficiently fleshed-out so as to perform their paratextual duties in full and propel the listener centripetally back into the text at a heightened level of engagement.

Finally, in the third instance, diegetic sound effects are complimented by non-diegetic narration. One set of extra-textual aural codes replaces another, and, in doing so, conspire symbiotically to foster a uniquely active mode of listener engagement. Sound effects encourage audiences to fill narrative gaps while the narrator's non-diegetic discourse contextualizes these codes and amplifies their influence.

If, as radio executive, scholar, and journalist Adam Clayton Powell III suggests, "The pictures are better on radio" ("You are"), it is due, in no small part, to the work performed by radiogenic paratexts. Paratexts are fundamentally oriented toward influencing the production of meaning. However, in the context of radio drama, this orientation is strengthened in ways that were unanticipated in Genette's theorizations. It is, at least in part, through repetition, centrifugal

textual amplification, and the non-diegetic extension of diegetic, paratextual, aural codes, that radio assumes its status as 'theater of the mind'.

3.2.2   *Narrator's Discursive Encouragement of Listener Performance*

When creators Robert M. Burtt and William G. Moore moved on from *The Air Adventures of Jimmie Allen* to *Captain Midnight,* Allen's longtime sponsor, Skelly Oil, moved with them. Skelly's sponsorship was notable for two reasons: 1) The nature of the company's primary business in relation to the serials' target audience, and, 2) the procedures and requirements associated with their promotions.

Despite the fact that both *Midnight* and *Allen* were ostensibly aimed at the youth market, Skelly Oil did not peddle products geared towards young people. Formed in 1919, by "determined wildcatter and independent oil producer" W.G. Skelly, the company operated refineries and service stations throughout the Midwest ("Skelly Oil").[125] Rather than selling breakfast cereal *à la* General Mills through their longtime sponsorship of *The Lone Ranger,* or hot cocoa *à la* Dari-Rich's sponsorship of *Terry and Pirates,* Skelly's "service stations sold tires, gasoline, and other products aimed at adults rather than their offspring" (Kallis 2). In some ways, Skelly's sponsorship seemed fitting given Midnight's comparatively mature themes, plotlines, and dialogue. As I have already noted, the serial appealed to a surprising number of adult listeners. Yet, the serial's other extra-textual elements—its timeslot, duration, cast, voice-over narration, sponsor premiums, and the tertiary-level, extra-textual discourse surrounding the show—left little doubt that the program was aimed principally at young people.

---

[125] Despite being a relatively small, regional oil company, Skelly was responsible for a number of industry innovations. For example, they were the first to standardize the appearance of their service stations so as to make them readily identifiable to consumers throughout the Midwest region and were also the first to offer female customers their own credit cards. The cards were gendered, with the traditional "credit card" for men offered in plain white with red and yellow print, while the card for female customers was offered in light blue and read "Lady's Courtesy Card" ("Skelly Oil"). Getty Oil bought out Skelly in the 1970s.

The demographic gulf between *Midnight's* sponsor and audience resulted in a commercial dissonance that Skelly sought to overcome through the narrator's discursive encouragement of listener performance—a tactic we might more simply refer to as 'performative prompting.' Not only did Pierre Andre's non-diegetic narration work to situate listeners discursively, it also engendered a form of reflexive positioning wherein children were encouraged to recognize and fulfill their ideological positions performatively. In other words, these paratexts prompted listeners to do things, and, in doing them, make sense of their social positions. The introductory non-diegetic narration from the serial's January 12, 1940 episode provides a good example:

> Announcer: Now listen… Does the motor in your family car snap right into action the minute dad steps on the button, just like an airplane motor does? Or, does your car sound more like this when dad goes to start it up in the morning?
>
> SFX: Engine cranking, not turning over.
>
> Announcer: Well sir, I don't know whether your car sounds like that or not, but if it does, here's something for you to tell your dad, something to help make your car start like an airplane.
>
> Your dad doesn't want your car to be slow starting. He wants it to be the fastest starting car on your block, just like you do.
>
> So listen, the chances are 100 to 1, all your car needs is a faster starting gasoline. So, if you want to do dad a big favor, ask him to try a tankful of Skelly tailor-made Aromax Gasoline! And, here's why… Skelly Aromax gasoline is tailor-made for quick starting in your weather. It's "weather right" for your car.

Say, won't you and dad both be proud of your family car when it starts like an

airplane? You just watch and see if dad doesn't turn to you with a great big smile

when he sees how fast your car starts with that tailor-made Skelly Aromax

gasoline… tell dad to stop at your Skelly service station for some good old Skelly

Aromax, the gasoline that's tailor-made for quick starting in your kind of weather.

*(*Blackett-Sample-Hummert, "Mysterious Voice")

In the scenario laid out above, Skelly appeals to Captain Midnight's youthful listeners in

hopes of getting them to serve as emissaries on the oil company's behalf; and the commercial

logic undergirding this prompting is elegant in its simplicity: use the kids to get to the parents.

As anyone with children can attest, this tactic is both time-tested and highly effective.[126]

Notably, however, in this instance, the narrator's prompting is not focused on the fulfillment of

the child's selfish desires, but rather on helping the family. Far from being "seen and not heard,"

the youthful listener is encouraged to understand his or her familial role as that of a pint-sized

consigliere to the *paterfamilias*—a stern, but loving figure, who, despite his authority and no-

doubt extensive automotive knowledge, simply hasn't heard about "weather right" gasoline yet.

The reward for performing this task is twofold. There is, of course, the obvious satisfaction of

hearing the family car come to life "like an airplane;" but even more important is the sense of

pride and patriarchal approval that comes when the engine roars to life and dad turns "to you

with a great big smile..." *(*Blackett-Sample-Hummert, "Mysterious Voice").

Skelly's premium promotions also worked to get parents into the oil company's service

stations by appealing to youthful listeners. Typically, however, in these instances, the children's

motivations were less altruistic than in our previous example. As noted earlier, Skelly's

---

[126] Just ask any of the long-suffering parents found in your local McDonald's "PlayPlace."

premiums differed than those offered through other programs. They did not require any proof of purchase and could not be had through the mail. Premiums could only be obtained by visiting your local Skelly service station. Notice how the performative prompting in this example from October 25, 1939 sets the stage for at least two visits to the service station to secure a 'Spinning Propeller Medal of Membership' in Captain Midnight's Flight Patrol:

> Announcer: Here's all you do. Drive over to your Skelly service station the next time you're out riding with mother or dad. Tell your Skelly man you want to join the new 1940 Flight Patrol. He will be happy to give you your official Junior Pilot's application card right away… he'll send right in for your Spinning Propeller Medal of Membership. And he'll put your name on the list for all the wonderful big gifts and presents that are coming later. But don't delay! Ask mother or dad to stop at your Skelly service station with you, tonight! (Blackett, Sample, and Hummert "Perada Treasure: 173")

In order to obtain this extra-textual loot and gain entrance into the Flight Patrol, listeners need to persuade their parents to take them to the local service station to first obtain and fill out an application, and then again later in order to pick up their membership medals. If a child wanted a propeller medal, he or she had to do quite a bit of prompting too.

While all paratexts encourage engagement, these paratexts transcend the realm of mere cognitive labor, prompting young listeners to perform rhetorical acts of persuasion and *physically* travel along centrifugal vectors, moving away from the text and toward the "outside world."

Such privileging of physicality and centrifugal engagement runs counter to the always-inward facing paratextuality of Genette and is symptomatic of the commercial patronage of mass

media in the modern and postmodern eras. As we have seen, both here and in our previous

discussion of newspaper paratextuality, the function of the commercial paratext is frequently

contradictory. To the extent that the commercial paratext—in the form of an advertisement or

sponsorship—is the extra-textual manifestation of corporate benefaction, its peritextual presence

ensures the existence of the primary text. The commercial paratext is what calls the primary text

into being and guarantees its continued existence. However, in order to be effective in this

context, the commercial paratext must send audiences away from the very text it engenders.

As a consequence, the links that bind these modes of performative listening to the

primary text are often tenuous. In our first example, other than the peritextual proximity of the

narrator's discursive prompting, it is only the name of the product—"Aromax Gasoline"[127]—and

its association with airplane engines that provide a connection between the program's

commercial paratexts and the serial proper. Likewise, In the case of the spinning propeller

Medal of Membership, it is only the fact that the medal proves one's membership in the "Flight

Patrol" that links the premium thematically back to the aviation-centered primary text.

As if sensing the troublesome paradox at the center of so many commercial paratexts, the

Wander Company took pains to institute a new series of premium promotions when they

assumed sponsorship of *Captain Midnight* in September of 1940. Using a formula that had

already proven effective during their patronage of *Little Orphan Annie,* Wander offered

premiums that promoted their product, but also encouraged listeners to delve more deeply into

the serial itself.

Unlike Skelly's premiums, which seemed to abandon listeners once they had managed to

find their way to a service station, Ovaltine's Code-O-Graph premiums prompted listeners back

---

[127] The spelling of "Aromax" seems questionable in an aviation scenario. One would think it should be "Aeromax Gasoline," but who am I to second-guess?

into the text by encouraging a kind of interactive narrational engagement.[128] When equipped with the appropriate Code-O-Graph, listeners were able to decode secret messages—typically offered at the end of the program in the form of "Secret Squadron Signal Sessions"—that offered hints about narrative events still to come in the serial's next installment. Inevitably, the program's cliffhanger endings amplified Pierre Andre's performative prompting:

> Announcer: Down, down, turning over and over from the terrific impact, Captain Midnight's dive-bomber plunges toward the sea below. We know that both Captain Midnight and Mudd are wearing parachutes; but they were only flying at 6,000 feet! Weakened and stunned by the crash, will the two Secret Squadron agents be able to extricate themselves from a madly gyrating plane?
>
> Don't miss the furious action and sensational climax of this chapter, "Suicide Squadron"!
>
> Announcer (Voice distorted, as if speaking over a military transceiver): And now, clear the airwaves!
>
> SFX: Radio picking up a message in Morse code.
>
> Announcer (Still distorted): Stand by; the Secret Squadron Signal Session is on the air.
>
> Announcer (Normal voice): And the first thing, we have a thrilling secret code message from Captain Midnight! It's an exciting clue about tomorrow's adventure

---

[128] The Wander Company offered faithful listeners a total of eight Code-O-Graph premiums between 1940 and 1949. Popular premiums included the Mystery Dial Code-O-Graph (a police-style badge with a secret decoder wheel built in) of 1940, the Photomatic Code-O-Graph (a decoder badge similar to the Mystery Dial, but with a photo of Captain Midnight) of 1942, and the Whistling Code-O-Graph (a plastic whistle with a secret decoder wheel) of 1947. It is also worth noting that, despite their popularity, no Code-O-Graphs were offered during the 1943-1944 season due to war-related material shortages. For a comprehensive guide to all *Captain Midnight* premiums, see Tumbusch 32-37.

in Master Code number 2. So write that down, code number 2. And here's the

message.

Alright, the first word: eight, eighteen…

That's all. Now remember, set your Code-O-Graph for Master Code number 2

and figure out the secret message for tomorrow night's adventure and listen

regularly for more of these exciting Secret Squadron Signal Sessions. Tune in

tomorrow, same time, same station, to *Captain Midnight*.

Until tomorrow then, this is Pierre Andre, your Ovaltine announcer, saying

goodbye and happy landings! (Blackett, Sample, and Hummert "Suicide

Squadron: 2")

In this example, the Signal Session's temporal proximity to Midnight's perilous nose-

dive seems to link the two, goading the listener to decode the message in order to find out

Midnight's fate (no surprise, he survives to fly another day) and alleviate the narrative tension so

central to the success of the serial form.

By enlisting audience members as cryptographers, the Wander Company, along with

scripters Burtt and Moore, turned listeners into active narrative participants. By all accounts,

listeners relished the role. Some 70 years after sending away for his *Captain Midnight* Code-O-

Graph badges, retired art professor and premium collector Anthony Evangelista still recalls the

experience:

What was nice about radio was that it included you into the programs. Captain

Midnight was on after school. You could send for a decoder. They'd work a

message into the program and with the decoder you could figure it out and you

would know what was going to happen the next day… It made you part of what

was going on so you couldn't wait to get those packages at home… You can't

imagine what it was like wanting to run home after school for a package. (qtd. in

Whalen)

As Evangelista's testimony suggest, these premiums didn't just frame listener's

understanding of the serial; they transcended their own subordinate status by functioning as

constitutive performative components of the serial's narrative arc. Consequently, decoding

messages often became as central to listener engagement as listening to the serial proper.[129] As

Joan Waller remembers:

Missing a commercial proved almost as much of a disappointment as missing a

moment of the action itself. I enjoyed sending for the advertised products,

especially those, like the decoder ring, which became part of the story. (qtd in

Barfield 114)

Indeed, the allure of the premium and this mode of performative audiencing was so great

that Waller's husband, Robert, who grew up the son of a Midwest tenant farmer during the Great

Depression, recalls trying to participate in *Captain Midnight's* Signal Sessions despite not being

able to afford the premiums: "Being too poor to send off for the decoder ring, I frequently copied

the clues about the next programs in hopes of breaking the code. I do not recall any success, but

it was fun trying" (qtd. in Barfield 114). Performance had become so central to the experience of

the text that the outcome of that performance was no longer even relevant.

What all this makes clear is that *Midnight's* Ovaltine premiums, like Skelly's, encouraged

a mode of performative audiencing that went beyond merely listening to the program. Unlike

Skelly's premiums however, Ovaltine's extra-textual offerings were effective in leading the

---

[129] One can only guess at what Stuart Hall might have made out of audiences *literally* decoding mass mediated
messages.

listener centripetally back toward the primary text and overcoming, at least in part, the paradox

of commercial paratextuality. While corporate sponsorship produced programs like *Captain

Midnight*, it also prompted listeners to disengage from these works and turn their attentions

elsewhere. In the case of Ovaltine, however, engagement with the sponsor (paratextually

manifest in the serial's premiums) also resulted in deeper modes of centripetal engagement with

the primary text.

3.2.3   *Radio Paratexts, Performance, and Imagined Communities*

As Benedict Anderson observed more than three decades ago, mass media (specifically,

"print-capitalism") has played a central role in the creation of the modern nation—an entity that

he defines as an "imagined political community" (6). It is imagined, he suggests, "because the

members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them,

or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (6). This

sense of communion stems in large part from the ways in which print-languages "laid the bases

for national consciousnesses" (Anderson 46). Anderson cites three: The establishment of

standardized reproducible print languages or "unified fields of exchange and communication

below Latin and above the spoken vernaculars (Anderson 46), the "fixity of language" afforded

by mechanical reproduction (Anderson 46), and finally, the creation of so-called "languages-of-

power" or the privileging of dialects that more closely resembled dominant print-languages

(Anderson 47).

More recently, Michelle Hilmes has expanded on the relationship between imagined

communities and mass media by suggesting that American radio, during its golden era, served as

"the nation's voice" (*Radio Voices xvii*). Writing primarily from the perspective of race, Hilmes

notes that, as the only medium capable of reaching all of the country at once, network radio

"created not only a marketing and distribution system, but a system of meanings, a system of

transmission of cultural values and mediation of cultural tensions that valorized and made

common some aspects of everyday experience and marginalized or excluded others" (*Radio

Voices* 6). This shared system of meaning, she argues, provided listeners with an idea of what it

meant to be "American."

Throughout her examination, Hilmes looks to primary texts to prove her thesis. She

considers, for example, how programs such as *Sam 'n' Henry*, and later, *Amos 'n' Andy*, worked

to construct notions of "whiteness" and "blackness" that obscured the vast cultural differences

between European ethnic groups while simultaneously accentuating distinctions between "black"

and "white" (Hilmes, *Radio Voices* 89-96). Hilmes is concerned with representation, and, as a

consequence, focuses on character, plot, and dialogue, observing that blackness on radio was

"marked by minstrel dialect, second-class citizen traits, and cultural incompetence" (*Radio

Voices* 93). This, she argues was the sole way in which blackness was represented during radio's

heyday and, as a consequence, all other forms of representation were free to be categorized as

"white" (*Radio Voices* 93).

Hilmes' reading of these programs in the context of race, representation, and national

identity is undeniably productive; yet, her observations do not account for the significance of

commercial paratexts in the radio-based production of imagined communities. Indeed, upon

close examination, it becomes evident that radio paratexts, and commercial radio paratexts in

particular, adhere more closely to Anderson's tripartite model of capitalist 'print-language' than

the programs' dialogue or diegetic discourse.

Since its emergence in the second half of the 19th century, companies have utilized the

tactic of branding to consciously exploit "the human desire for affiliation and identification"

(Mumby 290). In doing so, advertisers had no choice but to construct a language that was far more fixed and standardized than that utilized in the radio programs themselves. The sheer scope of popular radio genres during the 1930s and 40s prohibited the kind of linguistic constancy and stability contemplated by Anderson. After all, both convention and verisimilitude dictated that the dialogue of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* not sound like that of *The Goldbergs*. Nor could the Western-flavored language of *The Lone Ranger* bear much of a likeness to the decidedly more urban and urbane dialogue of *The Green Hornet*.[130] Nevertheless, the extra-textual commercial discourse surrounding all of these programs was consistent to the extent that it was a language of inclusivity that favored the already privileged vernacular of interpellative media-capitalism as a "language-of-power." No matter a program's generic classification, its sponsors—like Althusser's policeman—were interested in "you." Their discourse, verbal and otherwise, hailed listeners, iteratively situating audience members across a continuum of imagined communities from small to large.

In a very basic sense, extra-textual factors such as the ritualistic act of tuning in to the same station at the same time, singing along with a program's theme song ("Who's the little chatterbox? The one with pretty auburn locks. Who can it be? It's Little Orphan Annie!"), or reciting its all-too-familiar, yet consistently thrilling, preamble (A fiery horse with the speed of light, a cloud of dust, and a hearty "Hi-Yo, Silver away!") served to ritualistically unite listeners in the imagined community of "audience." Still, the commercial paratexts that surrounded these programs worked even more vigorously to foster a sense of listener affiliation.

During both the Skelly and Ovaltine years, *Captain Midnight's* audiences were encouraged to seek membership in imagined listener communities. Under Skelly's sponsorship,

---

[130] The linguistic gulf between the two serials is made all the more evident when one considers that the Lone Ranger (Dan Reid) was the Green Hornet's (Britt Reid) great-uncle.

young people were prompted to join Captain Midnight's Flight Patrol, a select group of listeners, who could be identified by their Flight Patrol Membership Cards and Membership Medals. Indeed, it was only by virtue of first obtaining a membership card that one was then entitled to wear the Flight Patrol Badge; and the language on that card worked as a credo to bind listeners on an ideological basis similar to that of the Boy Scouts of America: "As a Junior Pilot of the Captain Midnight Flight Patrol, I pledge myself to be honest in all things, fair to all others, brave in the face of danger, courteous to my superiors and elders and alert at all times to the fine principles of our Flight Patrol" (Tumbusch 33).

Later, during the Ovaltine era, the Flight Patrol gave way to Captain Midnight's Secret Squadron and membership in the organization was closely and repeatedly linked to performative audiencing. For example, the Flight Commander Ring of 1941 was not offered over the air and was only available to those listeners who had recruited other members to the Secret Squadron. The ring came with a Flight Commander Handbook and a secret code inscribed inside the ring that allowed them to decode their own "special" messages. Similarly, the Photomatic Code-O-Graph and manual, a brass badge offered between 1942 and 1944, not only allowed listeners to decode secret messages, but also provided a photo of Captain Midnight that owners were encouraged to replace with their own image and use as a form of identification, similar to that "used in defense plants" (Widner). Once a young listener inserted his or likeness in the Code-O-Graph, they were use a "hammer and a nail to fix the picture in permanently" by pushing down four metal tabs around the photo (Widner).

These kinds of extra-textual artifacts encouraged performative audiencing to the extent that listeners were called upon to do more than just listen. Obtaining and utilizing these items—visiting service stations to acquire a membership card, decoding secret messages, affixing one's

likeness to a membership badge—provided listeners with a sense of belonging and identification. Rather than merely influencing meaning making on the level of engagement with the primary text, these devices operated in both textual and social capacities. Deciphering messages with one's Code-O-Graph not only propelled a listener along a centripetal vector into the program's ever-evolving narrative, but the act of decoding as well as the premium itself also served as ritualistic and material signifiers of membership in small-scale, performance-based, imagined listener communities.

As the country's involvement in WWII became a reality, Captain Midnight's commercial paratexts worked along similar lines to create a normative vision of the United States as a large-scale, imagined, political community. Here again, membership was framed in terms in terms of performativity. In fact, we may view the prior construction of performative listeners as a rehearsal for this larger performance. Notice how, in this example, Captain Midnight (voiced by Ed Prentiss) engages in the same forms of non-diegetic discursive prompting practiced by Pierre Andre in our earlier examples for Aromax Gasoline and the Spinning Propeller Medal of Membership:

> Captain Midnight: Hello fellas and girls. A few days ago, I told you about a way that you could all do your part in America's National Defense Program. Now, I know how anxious you are to help Uncle Sam in this big job. So tonight, I'm going to tell you just exactly how to get started. There are three things you can start doing right away.
>
> First, every time you get a dime, or a quarter, or a fifty-cent piece, you can buy a Defense Savings Stamp in that denomination. Then, when you've saved up $18.75 worth of saving stamps you can turn them in for a $25.00 Defense Savings

Bond. Yes, a Defense Savings Bond that cost you only $18.75 will bring you

$25.00 in cash in only 10 years.

Now the second thing you can do, is to tell your mother and dad about Defense

Saving Stamps and Defense Saving Bonds. Tell them it's a wonderful way to save

money for the future and to help protect America's future at the same time.

And, here is the third thing you can do. You can send a postcard to your local

postmaster, or address it to 'USA' in care of this radio station, asking for more

information about Defense Saving Stamps and Defense Saving Bonds. Then, you

can show this material to mother and dad when it comes.

Now, as red-blooded young Americans who believe in America's future, I'm sure

that I can count on every one of you to come through on this job that Uncle Sam

wants us to help on. Let's make ourselves star salesmen of Uncle Sam's new

Defense Savings Bond from this day on.

How about it, boys and girls? Are you with me? (Blackett, Sample, and Hummert,

Hemisphere Defense")

As before, listeners are both discursively positioned ("…as red-blooded young

Americans…") and encouraged to engage in reflexive positioning through performance ("Tell

your mother and Dad about Defense Saving Stamps…"). Accordingly, listeners are not only

textually situated as members of an "audience" or as "Americans," but are also prompted by the

program's paratexts to construct these identities for themselves through action. Identification, as

audience member or American, is not merely understood; it is performed.

Such calls to action seem well suited to the era of radio's media dominance. As noted at

the outset of this chapter, the medium's so-called "golden age" spanned not one, but two of the

largest crises in American history: The Great Depression and the Second World War. In such contexts, *Captain Midnight's* commercial paratexts provided 'ways of seeing' that reflected and facilitated the changing nature of social roles while reaffirming the value and importance of community on all scales.

The performances being encouraged via the nation's airwaves were not only conducive to commercial enterprise, but also essential for survival in the face of economic and wartime hardships. As Pierre Andre and Captain Midnight were urging listeners to take on the responsibility of educating their parents on matters ranging from car care to war bonds, the roles performed by young people were fast changing. In many instances, the nation's youth were prompted to accept ever-increasing levels of responsibility in American social institutions. For example, in 1939, more than one-third of families earning between $1,600 and $2,500 a year—what was, at the time, considered a "middle-class" income—relied on more than one wage earner (United States Census Bureau, "Families" 32-33); and, as feminist historian Winifred D. Wandersee Bolin observes, these "extra family wage earners were not wives and mothers," but children (68). What's more, amongst those sons and daughters not bringing in extra paychecks, 47 percent of boys and 22 percent of young women under the age of 18 were listed in the 1939 census as "unpaid family workers" (133; 137). Even at the very tail end of the Great Depression, the familial role performed by children was not a passive one.

In a similar fashion, as American involvement in WWII got under way, young people were increasingly called upon to do their "patriotic duty" as so-called "citizen soldiers" (Ossian 71-73). By 1943, roughly half a million older American teenagers labored in "vital defense plants," while another 580,000 adolescents under the age of sixteen worked in other wartime industries (Ossian 72). Such levels of participation prompted the director of the War Production

Board, Paul McNutt, to write in *Parents* magazine that "National defense begins at home" and that the country's mother and fathers should recognize that such efforts would likely extract "a heavy price from youth" (qtd. in Ossian 72).

Youth involvement in social institutions, both tangible (the family) and imagined (the nation, the audience), was central to overcoming the difficulties that confronted the country in the 1930s and 40s. As the first medium with a truly national reach, radio presented itself as a force capable of shrinking the physical and ideological distances between Americans. Listeners across the country shared narratives via newly formed networks; and, as Michelle Hilmes has noted, these stories served as a kind of national voice. At the same time, however, radio's commercial paratexts labored even more assiduously to situate listeners in ideological terms through the dominant and consistent language of interpellative media-capitalism. To put it another way, while golden age radio narratives obliquely informed audiences about their role in the country's difficulties, commercial paratexts spelled these responsibilities out in detail. Through branding, radio sponsors spoke a universal language of inclusion that fostered affiliation and identification in performative terms that were clearly and repeatedly defined. These paratexts did not so much influence engagement with the texts they accompanied as they provided listeners with a sense of affiliation and a roadmap for furthering these notions of inclusivity.

3.3 The Paratextual Obfuscation of Authorship

Paratexts do not merely affect our engagement with primary texts. They also function to frame our perception of a work's author. It is inherent in the nature of mass media that audience members rarely meet the authors of the texts they consume. Yet, as readers, viewers, or listeners, we often feel that we possess very well established notions of what a particular author, director,

or composer is like. Many times, these notions have their origins in our engagement with the creator's work and are then honed and amplified via epi- and peritextual forms of extra-textual discourse. For example, anyone sitting down to read *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* will undoubtedly generate some impression of Hunter S. Thompson as a drug-fueled pioneer of "new journalism." However, such understanding, be it good or bad, is magnified exponentially as the interpretation of his work passes through the prisms of Ralph Steadman's artwork, Thompson's countless magazine interviews, and his frequent and often unpredictable appearances on late-night television. In such instances, the reader's understanding of the author begins with the primary texts but then extends centrifugally through the work's paratexts and beyond.

At other times, if we are unfamiliar with an author's work, our entire knowledge of that author may be paratextually constructed. This explains why, for example, legions of *Breitbart* readers harbor a robust distaste for Lena Dunham without ever having met her, seen one of her programs, or read any of her writing. Or why, during the so-called "satanic panic" of the 1980s, so many otherwise rational parents, police officers, and church officials could be convinced through the cursory examination of album covers that the members of KISS were, in fact, "Knights in Satan's Service." Such negative assessments are based exclusively on engagement with extra-textual representations of authorship, and these representations have become ubiquitous.

The paratextual construction of authorship is central to the co-marketing of text and author that has become a mainstay of contemporary media-capitalism. Hegemons of the culture industries have long understood that it is economically beneficial to group author and text together in a synergetic association wherein the perception of one continually holds the potential to influence the perception of the other (and vice versa). This symbiosis is most evident in the

realm of paratextuality because, as I have suggested above, paratexts represent a space where both text and author are "made present" to audiences as well as the general public. Indeed, the paratext is the rare zone in which author and text may coexist without the risk of cognitive dissonance—and *s*avvy media marketers have been quick to use this to their advantage.[131] Such co-marketing is readily evident throughout the contemporary media environment: Movie posters for *Us* (2019) include both the film's title and a line of text proclaiming, "A new nightmare from the mind of Academy Award winner Jordan Peele;" the cover of Gillian Flynn's *Sharp Objects* features the author's name in larger print than the work's title while reminding readers she is the "Author of the #1 New York Times bestseller *Gone Girl;*" and teasers for *How to Get Away With Murder* announce Shonda Rhimes' executive producer role in the same breath as the show's title, genre, and airtime. In each case, these promotions invoke the name of the author in an attempt to positively influence engagement with their media creations. Yet, in order to do so, these paratexts must also rely on pre-existing paratextual constructions of their authors (as Oscar winners, best-selling authors, producers of other hit programs, and the like) while simultaneously reinforcing and extending these constructions. In this sense, then, just as "the paratext is what enables a text to become a book" (Genette *Paratexts* 1); it is also the paratext that enables the text's creator to become author.[132]

In his chapter dedicated to the "Name of the Author," Genette discusses authorship in terms of onymity (when the author signs the work with his or her real name), pseudonymity (when the author signs the work with an assumed name), and anonymity (when the author does

---

[131] A number of authors, including Stephen King, Bret Easton Ellis, and Philip Roth, have intentionally included themselves as characters in their novels in order to exploit the reader's resultant unease.
[132] Here, as in the previous chapter, we find that paratextual subordination and textual primacy are relative with regard to the cognitive focus and subjective experience of the observer. I explore this kind of paratextual relativity further in chapter four's analysis of the paratext-as-text.

not sign the work at all) (*Paratexts* 39-54). What he does not consider, however, is the situation

we are faced with in the case of *Captain Midnight* and similar productions. The radio serial, as a

genre, is distinct from other mass media in that the works' true authors go largely unrecognized

while false notions of authorship are intentionally promulgated for financial benefit.[133] As a

consequence, the radio serial does not fit neatly into Genette's three categories. Instead, the radio

production presents itself as unique in that it intentionally obfuscates the true nature of

authorship as part of its pecuniary ontology.

     Captain Midnight is no exception. Throughout both the Skelly and Ovaltine eras, the

work's true authors—Wilfred G. Moore and Robert M. Burtt—are never identified. Nor are the

show's actors, crew, or their employers, the Blackett, Sample, and Hummert Agency. Instead,

the serial is "brought to" its audience by its sponsors. As we have already observed, these

benefactors had little part in the authoring of the serial other than their patronage. Nevertheless,

both Skelly and Ovaltine were clearly identified, through paratextual discourse, as the parties

ultimately responsible for the broadcast.

     In one sense, the reasoning behind this obfuscation of authorship was simple. The show's

creators hoped that, by identifying the sponsor, audiences would feel a sense of gratitude for the

entertainment being provided and, as a result, buy the sponsor's product. As radio historian

Cynthia B. Meyers notes:

> The lack of on-air credit was the outcome of the decision by advertising agencies
>
> and their clients—the sponsors—not to distract audiences from the product being
>
> advertised; they hoped listeners would smoothly associate the pleasing
>
> entertainment with their products, with Kraft cheese or Lucky Strike cigarettes.

---

[133] The closest comparison would likely be with early motion pictures, which did not regularly include credits until the early 1920s.

Drawing attention to the construction of the entertainment would undermine that

association. (2)

There is, in this equation, a paratextual logic at work that begins with the serial, extends

outward through the work's paratexts, and eventually works to influence the public's perception

of the works purported authors. Thus, rather than merely framing listener engagement with the

primary text, these paratexts also worked to construct a "preferred" understanding of the serial's

underwriters.

For Skelly Oil, this preferred understanding highlighted the company's apparent

generosity. Coming out of the Great Depression, many Americans harbored a general distrust of

corporations.[134] At the same time, with the emergence of "modern public relations" during the

previous two decades, executives realized that "their companies could sell more products if they

were associated with positive public images and values" (Campbell, Martin, and Fabos 365). As

a consequence, it is unsurprising that *Midnight's* early paratexts put a great emphasis on Skelly's

corporate beneficence. Unlike other companies focused on the relentless pursuit of profits, Skelly

was providing "free" entertainment to listeners throughout the broadcast region. As social critic

Edmund Wilson observes, having just endured the most catastrophic financial crisis in American

history, financial rewards alone were "not enough to satisfy humanity," what was needed instead

was "a little common culture to give life stability and sense" (qtd.in Leach 39-40). *Captain

Midnight*, and, by centrifugal paratextual extension, its sponsor, appeared to supply that common

culture.

---

[134] For example, a series of 1937 Gallup surveys indicate that regulating perceived corporate abuses such as false or misleading advertising, prohibiting child labor, and putting caps on war-time business profits were foremost on Americans minds (Rosentiel and Allen).

Audiences were iteratively reminded of what Skelly was doing for them at the beginning

of each program: "The Skelly Oil Company presents…. *Captain Midnight*! Brought to you every

day, Monday through Friday, at the same time by the Skelly Oil Company, Skelly Jobbers and

Dealers" (Blackett, Sample, and Hummert, "The Perada Treasure: 167"). Skelly didn't just

"present" the show, they did so every day at the same time without fail, and the program's first

lines left little doubt who was responsible for this free entertainment.

Likewise, the serial's conclusion often highlighted the "free" premiums and related

entertainment Skelly offered its listeners:

> Announcer: Now an important word to you fellas and girls. You don't want to be
>
> left out when the big adventure comes, do you? You don't want to miss out on all
>
> the free gifts and prizes that are coming. So get your official application card in
>
> Captain Midnight's new 1940 Flight Patrol right away; and have your Skelly man
>
> send in for your free Medal of Membership… Remember it doesn't cost you a
>
> cent! Not even a penny for a stamp! (Blackett, Sample, and Hummert, "The
>
> Perada Treasure: 167")

As already noted, Skelly's premiums differed from others of the time because they did

not require any proof of purchase or financial layout on the part of listeners. Of course, free

premiums were not entirely about establishing goodwill with the audience. They worked to bring

premium seekers and their parents into Skelly service stations, and, even more to the point,

served as an early means of audience measurement. Writing of premiums, radio historian Jim

Cox notes:

> Until the arrival of professionals who scientifically gathered statistical data on
>
> radio listening habits, concerned parties had little choice but to depend on less

> exacting means of judging a show's acclaim… When the sponsor knew how
> many gizmos had been shipped, he could guesstimate the size of the total
> audience. (42-43)

Nevertheless, one can imagine that listeners who received their premiums knew little of this *quid pro quo* and were simply happy to "get something for nothing." In this respect, the promise of the premium was similar to that of commercial broadcasting writ large, which seemed to reward listeners with "free" entertainment after the initial purchase of a receiver.

Later, the advent of U.S. participation in WWII had a significant impact on *Captain Midnight's* paratextual construction of audience. During the early, Skelly years, listeners were encouraged to engage in forms of listening that positioned them as members of relatively small, active, serial-focused, imagined communities. During the Ovaltine era, however—a period that coincided with American involvement in the war—*Captain Midnight's* paratexts transformed these active listener communities into an active political community and crafted a picture of American youth that was, at once, hearty, healthy, and patriotic. The central ingredient in this active, jingoistic construction was, of course, Ovaltine.

To this day, Ovaltine enjoys a close association with American pride. The webpage for The Himmel Group, the longtime advertising agency for Ovaltine in the United States, notes, "Ovaltine's incredible heritage and brand equity as an all-American, nutritious beverage has lasted for over 100 years" (Ovaltine History). This century long association with American identity is particularly noteworthy when one understands that Ovaltine is a decidedly Swiss invention.

Originally known as Ovalmatine, the chocolate malted milk beverage was created in Berne, Switzerland in 1904 by Dr. Albert Wander (McGrath). It was not until 1917, some 13

years after it debuted, that Ovaltine (as American consumers would come to know it) established a U.S. production facility in Villa Park, Illinois (McGrath).[135] Even then, the Wander Company and Ovaltine never employed more than 300 Americans (McGrath). Despite this, Ovaltine, through its paratextual construction of authorship, represented itself as an essential ingredient in the dynamic Americanism necessitated by wartime demands:

> Announcer: Well folks, whatever your part in this war may be, you're probably working harder at it than you've ever worked before. Whether you're in business, on a farm, or in the war plant; whether you're wearing uniform, running a wartime home, or going to school. Whatever you're doing, you're undoubtedly feeling as we all are the added pressure of wartime living.
>
> To withstand this pressure, one-thing scientists agree upon, we must be properly nourished. We must have the foods that give us energy, staying power, and also the important vitamins and minerals so very essential to good health.
>
> Now, isn't it good to know that you can rely on Ovaltine as an aid to extra endurance for these strenuous times? Extra strength for your harder wartime work, added stamina to keep you at your best for your job… Ovaltine is a highly nourishing all-around strengthening food… So remember, if the job you're doing is important, if you're working harder these days and want to be sure you're getting the extra food-energy, the extra vitamins and minerals, and other vital and essential food elements you need, why don't you turn to Ovaltine right away?
>
> Why not start tonight and enjoy a glass of delicious refreshing Ovaltine?

---

[135] Today, the factory serves as luxury loft apartment homes. A one bedroom can be had starting at $1535 a month for a 908 square foot space.

> And say, have pad pencil and paper ready tonight for a thrilling secret code
>
> message in just a few minutes! (Blackett, Sample, and Hummert "Signal From the
>
> Sky")

There is, in this example, evidence of a kind of interpellative evolution. Listeners who were, only a few years prior, encouraged to think of themselves as active listeners were now positioned as active Americans. Just as they were once called upon to fulfill their duties as members of the audience, recruits in the Flight Patrol, or junior cryptographers, they were now being asked to satisfy their obligations to their country and its war effort—and Ovaltine was central to this project.

Listeners were encouraged to think of Ovaltine not as a malted milk supplement, but rather as a conscious actant in the construction of a patriotic wartime ethos based in physicality and performance. Serving Ovaltine three times a day helped to assuage the fears of American mothers faced with the nutritional challenges of wartime rationing (Blackett, Sample, and Hummert, "Silver Dagger: 2"). Just two daily doses helped to provide young listeners with the strength they needed to be healthy, active, and honest American boys and girls capable of important tasks like collecting waste paper for the benefit of the war effort ("Blackett, Sample, and Hummert, "Suicide Squadron: 1"). And, if you couldn't get Ovaltine at your local grocer, then you knew it was simply because of the astonishing amounts being ordered by the U. S. Government for soldiers at home and abroad (Blackett, Sample, and Hummert, "Secret Squadron Strikes"). In short, Ovaltine helped listeners act like Americans.

Captain Midnight's paratexts performed acts of exnomination, which, in keeping the work's true authors unnamed, allowed the preferred understandings of the show's sponsors to become naturalized. By hiding the program's creators, new authors could be constructed.

Against the backdrop of the Great Depression, Blackett, Sample, and Hummert used paratexts to create a corporate identity for Skelly Oil that stressed the company's generosity and contribution to American popular culture. As the Second World War placed the U.S. on uncertain footing, the agency once again employed paratextuality in order to construct a vision of a Swiss company and product as quintessentially American.

3.4   Conclusions

Audiencing is always dynamic. Yet, the listeners of radio's golden age were especially active; and this activity was motivated, in large part, by the medium's paratexts. Non-verbal radiogenic paratexts prompted listeners to create cognitive productions of the texts they enjoyed, essentially acting as textual co-authors. What's more, audience members were paratextually encouraged to act as participants in small-scale, radio-based, imagined communities such as Captain Midnight's Secret Squadron. As part of their duties, they served as amateur cryptologists, decoding messages that revealed and reinforced key narrative components. At the same time, young audience members were prompted to encourage their parents to visit Skelly Service Stations so they might obtain the free premiums being provided by a benevolent corporate benefactor. Later, as the U.S. got caught up in the machinations of WWII, radio paratexts worked to create a larger, imagined, political community, shaping the very idea of what it meant to be and act American.

Beyond modeling the audience's subjectivity, radio paratexts also functioned to intentionally obfuscate authorship of radio productions. While advertising agencies wrote much, if not all, of the entertainment American's enjoyed during the medium's golden years, it was the advertisers that received credit. The intros and conclusions of radio serials crafted an allographic notion of authorship that affected listeners' perception of the programs' sponsors far more

enthusiastically than they shaped the audience's perception of the text in and of itself.

What all this suggests, of course, is that paratextual functionality operates along both centripetal and centrifugal vectors in order to ensure the presence of not only the text (as Genette would have it), but also the audience and author. Paratexts position us as active subjects and provide us with calls to action. They hail us and prompt us, encouraging dynamic modes of consumption (both textual and material) essential to the perpetuation of modern media capitalism. They compel us to read, watch, and listen, all the while reinforcing constructed notions of authorship. Thus, to paraphrase Shakespeare, we might say that paratexts are the stuff texts, audiences, and authors are made from.

4   FROM THE GATES OF PARADISE TO "THE DISNEYLAND STORY": PARATEXT-AS-TEXT IN DIDACTIC, NON-LITERATE, TOP-DOWN, MASS COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

> Society needs artists, just as it needs scientists, technicians, workers, professional people, witnesses of the faith, teachers, fathers and mothers, who ensure the growth of the person and the development of the community by means of that supreme art form which is "the art of education." – Pope John Paul II, *Letter to Artists*

> Imagination is the mold from which reality is created. – Walt Disney

To this point, this project has focused on paratextual functionality in two distinctly modern mass media platforms: newspapers and radio. In this chapter, I take a slightly different tack. Here, I examine a form of paratextual functionality commonly found in both pre- and (post)modern[136] mass communication systems, one in which the paratext is called upon to serve dual roles as both text and paratext. I have dubbed this dual functionality "paratext-as-text."

Using John Hartley's notion of "television as transmodern teaching" as a theoretical connective, I illustrate how the early-Renaissance Catholic Church, and later, Walt Disney, utilized paratext-as-text as a key element in their didactic, top-down, non-literate, mass communication systems. Specifically, I attend to two seemingly disparate, yet structurally and functionally similar works: Lorenzo Ghiberti's *Gates of Paradise* and Walt Disney's "The Disneyland Story." In doing so, I demonstrate how each of these works used narrative visual paratexts in both primary and paratextual capacities in order to educate audiences concerning primary texts that were ostensibly inaccessible, while simultaneously privileging broad "ways of

---

[136] I place the prefix "post" in parentheses here for two reasons: 1) Because it is difficult to nail down a starting date for the postmodern era, and, 2) because, as I will later illustrate, I have reservations about characterizing Disneyland, in any of its iterations, as an example of "postmodernism" as theorized by thinkers such as Jameson and Baudrillard.

seeing" that were consistent with the socially-constructed realities and organizational narratives that characterized these institutions.

4.1   **Program, Park & Paratext-as-Text**

No one but Walt Disney believed in Disneyland, or at least that's the way it seemed in early 1953. The City of Burbank had rejected Disney's permit to build a theme park on the grounds of his existing studio a year earlier; at the same time, shareholders of Walt Disney Productions filed suit against Disney and won, claiming the construction of an amusement park was outside the scope of the company's charter (Gennaway 27-28). As a consequence, with the economic resources of Walt Disney Productions effectively out of play, Disney's bankers refused to finance a deal (Watts 385). Upon seeing Disneyland's proposed location in Anaheim, longtime celebrity friend Art Linkletter—who would go on to host the park's opening day on live TV with co-hosts Ronald Reagan and Bob Cummings—pronounced Disney "crazy" (Gennaway 32). Even Roy Disney, Walt's brother and lifelong business partner thought the park a bad investment (Watts 385). Siding with dubious shareholders, Roy encouraged his brother to start a separate venture to pursue his project and refused to invest more than $10,000 of the studio's money in what he considered to be little more than one of his brother's many "screwy ideas" (qtd. in Gennaway 34).

Following his brother's advice, Walt Disney incorporated WED Enterprises in December of 1952 and began pouring his own funds into his new project (Gennaway 34.) Within a year, having raided the family accounts, sold his home in Palm Springs, and borrowed heavily against a 30 year-old life insurance policy, Disney was running out of money (Barrier 239; Gennaway

39).[137] With resources dwindling and no clear path toward conventional financing, Disney had little choice but to embrace television—a medium he had, for the most part, intentionally avoided.

As with many in the film community, Disney was wary of television (Mosely 230). He was concerned about the burgeoning medium's potential impact on the film industry and viewed much of its early content to be substandard. Thus, when originally approached by CBS and NBC in attempts to secure the rights to regularly air his studio's back catalog of theatrical films— precisely the kind of deal that proved irresistible to many other film executives at the time— Disney refused (Brode, "Of Theme Parks" 183).

For years, the Disney brothers understood television not as an alternative visual storytelling platform, but, as Roy described it, "as strictly an exploitation medium for theatrical pictures" (qtd in "Disney to Use" 1). TV wasn't good for showing movies, but it was terrific for selling them. The Disneys learned this from two earlier flirtations with the medium. On Christmas Day 1950, Walt hosted "One Hour in Wonderland" for NBC, and later, in 1953, appeared on CBS's *Toast of the Town* with Ed Sullivan. These appearances coincided with the release of full-length Disney animated features—*Alice in Wonderland* and *Peter Pan*, respectively—and provided each with a healthy box office boost (Brode, "Of Theme Parks" 183).

Hoping to leverage television to promote and finance his theme park in the same manner as his films, Disney approached the networks. After being turned down by both NBC and CBS— the two largest broadcasters were eager to strike a deal with Disney, but could not agree to his

---

[137] Disney's prolific spending on such projects proved to be a source of marital discord. In a 1956 interview, Lillian Disney spoke to a reporter about the family finances noting, "I've always been worried. I never have felt secure. Never… He's always telling us how wealthy we are, how much we've got, and we haven't got anything" (qtd. in Barrier 239).

list of demands (Brode, "Of Theme Parks" 183)—Disney was finally able to secure the terms he wanted with ABC. In doing so, Disney and the nation's third-place network inked deal that, according to then network president Leonard Goldenson, was, at the time, the "largest programming package in history" (Goldenson 123). Given the size of the deal, the terms were relatively straightforward. In exchange for $500,000 in cash and another $4.5 million in loan guarantees, ABC would receive 34.48% ownership in the theme park, all profits from the Disneyland's food concessions for a ten-year term, and, perhaps most importantly for ABC, seven years' worth of television programming in the form of an hour-long weekly series (Goldenson 123).

The deal was good for both ABC and Disney. At the time, ABC was lagging well behind its competitors and was desperate for popular programming.[138] What's more, Goldenson—an ex-Paramount executive who had moved to ABC as part of a regulatory-arduous merger—had long been interested in bringing above-the-line film talent to his network in an effort to legitimate the medium and compete more directly with CBS and NBC (Goldenson 34-40).[139] Sealing the deal with Disney helped to do both. Within a year, ABC was able to leverage their newfound clout in order to reach a similar agreement with Warner Brothers—one of the storied "Big Five" studios of Hollywood's Golden Age. The Warner deal was, by any measure, wildly successful, and left NBC, CBS, and a host of other major film studios scrambling to catch up (Barnouw 193-198).[140]

---

[138] At of the contract signing, ABC had scored only one Top Twenty ratings hit with *The Lone Ranger* (Brode, "Of Theme Parks" 183).

[139] Prior to completing the deal with Disney, Goldenson had unsuccessfully courted a number of Hollywood players including Sam Goldwyn and David O. Selznick (Goldenson regularly played poker with the pair), Walter Wanger, and Orson Welles. In the case of Welles, Goldenson went as far as to provide the auteur filmmaker with complete artistic control and a $200,000 budget (a staggering sum when one considers that the average cost of single episode of *Dick Tracy*, one of 1952's most popular series, cost only $9,500) to shoot a pilot that ultimately proved un-airable. For more, see Goldenson 34-40.

[140] The Warner deal gave birth to the Western series *Cheyenne*, which ran on ABC from 1955 to 1963. The show was the first hour-long Western and proved so popular that it quickly spawned a legion of successful imitators

For Disney, the agreement meant that he had not only secured the funds to build his beloved theme park, but that he also had a platform to advertise it.

"The Disneyland Story," the first episode of the *Disneyland* series, premiered in October of 1954; the Disneyland theme park opened in July of 1955. During the short nine-month period in between, the television program rose to the top of the ratings and quickly propelled ABC to "major network" status (Mosely 244). Over the next half-century, the program would go on to air under a series of different titles, run on each of the big three networks, and become the second longest-running prime-time show in television history ("The Wonderful" 1441-1442).[141] Disneyland Park has enjoyed even greater success. Since opening its doors to the public in 1955, the theme park has hosted more than 708 million visitors—with 18.3 million in 2017 alone— making it the most visited amusement park in the world (Rubin 10).

As this brief history suggests, Disneyland the place owes its existence to *Disneyland* the television program. The two are, to some degree, inseparable. Disney himself tells viewers that Disneyland the place and *Disneyland* the show are "all part of the same" ("The Disneyland Story"). This assertion of unity hints at the complex relationship between the show and the park—a relationship in which *Disneyland* the program is not only required, but also designed, to serve in both textual and paratextual capacities.

"The Disneyland Story's" paratextual *bona fides* are undeniably strong. The show, according to Disney's well-documented business plan, was only created in order to facilitate the construction and marketing of the theme park. In this sense, we find that the program perfectly

---

including *Maverick*, *Wyatt Earp*, *Gunsmoke*, *Tales of Texas Rangers*, *Death Valley Days*, and *Frontier*, to name but a few.

[141] In 2018, *The Hallmark Hall of Fame* surpassed *Disneyland* as the longest-running primetime series on television.

matches Genette's performance-based definition of paratextuality. While I have quoted it

elsewhere, it bears repeating:

> The paratext in all its forms is a discourse that is fundamentally heteronomous,
>
> auxiliary, and dedicated to the service of something other than itself that
>
> constitutes its *raison d'etre*. This something is the text… The paratextual element
>
> is always subordinate to 'its' text, and this functionality determines the essence of
>
> its appeal and its existence. (Genette 12)

From both finance and marketing perspectives, *Disneyland* the program is clearly

"dedicated to the service" of Disneyland the theme park, a place,[142] which—even though it does

not yet even exist—must, by definition, occupy the role of the text in relation to the show as

paratext. The program is subordinate to the place and the very 'non-existence' of the park

seemingly renders this paratextual equation irreversible. The park may not serve as a paratext to

the program because, as Genette explains, "… A text without a paratext does not exist and has

never existed… [Yet] paratexts without texts do exist…" (3). The paratext must accompany the

text because it is what makes it present, what "ensures the text's presence in the world."

Following this logic, then, "The Disneyland Story" appears to deftly fill the role of a prior

authorial paratext laboring to present a primary text (the park) that is literally still under

construction.

Still, the reasoning laid out above ignores an important point. While there is little doubt

that "The Disneyland Story" was, in large part, created in order to educate a rapidly growing

---

[142] Here, I use of the term "place" in the sense that it is described and contrasted with "space" by De Certeau. At the time "The Disneyland Story" was filmed and aired, the park, as such, did not yet exist. It was nothing more than a plan—a more or less stable "configuration of positions" that could not yet qualify as a "space" because it could not be "practiced" (De Certeau 117).

national TV audience about the park's existence,[143] it also had to stand on its own as a television program. Certainly, from ABC's perspective, the program's relationship with the theme park was relatively unimportant, if not outright risky. After all, what if, as many predicted, Disney's theme park flopped? Goldenson and ABC wanted a program that would lure viewers to the network, not Anaheim; in order to do so, *Disneyland* the program had to serve as a text in its own right.

In serving in these dual capacities, the *Disneyland* series, and "The Disneyland Story" in particular, are examples of what I have termed "paratext-as-text," *a mode of paratextual performance* that affords the sender of the paratextual message greater control over resultant productions of meaning. As such, paratext-as-text is not easily defined as a *type* of paratext, *ala* Genette's peritext, epitext, authorial paratext, and so on. Rather, it is a *function* that a paratext might perform. In this respect, paratext-as-text is best understood as what Genette describes as a "functional type" (*Paratexts* 13). To wit:

> … in contrast to the characteristics of place, time, substance, or pragmatic regime, the functions of the paratext cannot be described theoretically… in terms of status. The spatial, temporal, substantial, and pragmatic situation of a paratextual element is determined by a more or less free choice from among possible alternatives, only one term—to the exclusion of the others—can be adopted… Functional choices, however, are not of this alternative, exclusive, either-or kind. A title, a dedication or inscription, a preface, and interview can have several purposes at once, selected—without exclusion of all the others—from the (more or less open) repertory appropriate to each type of element... The functions of the

---

[143] Film historian Douglas Brode goes as far as to suggest that without the television program, Disneyland might have been relegated to a Knott's Berry Farm level of notoriety, remaining "virtually unknown outside of Southern California" ("Of Theme Parks" 185).

paratext therefore constitute a highly empirical and highly diversified object that must be brought into focus inductively, genre by genre and often species by species. The only significant regularities one can introduce into the apparent contingency are to establish these relations of subordination between function and status and thus pinpoint various sorts of *functional types* and, as well, reduce the diversity of practices and messages to some fundamental and highly recurrent themes… (Paratexts 12-13, emphasis in the original)

Much like Genette's title, dedication, or inscription, the paratext-as-text is contingent in its functionality, capable of acting in both primary and paratextual roles. As the case studies that follow make clear, the paratext-as-text is typically called upon to serve in a principal textual capacity in instances when the original primary text (the text being paratextually invoked) is unavailable, or otherwise inaccessible. In such cases, the paratext assumes much of the authority and functionality of the primary text—a scenario which inherently grants the sender of the paratextual message the ability to "author" an iteration of the primary text while concurrently framing its interpretation. In the context of linear, top-down mass communication systems where feedback is necessarily limited and receivers bring infinitely varied fields of experience to bear on their interpretations of the messages being presented, the paratext-as-text presents itself as a particularly useful tool in privileging dominant, or preferred, readings of the message at hand and its referents (those elements, textual or otherwise, that the paratextual message succeeds in framing).

It is, at this point, useful to briefly address issues relating to the scope of paratextual influence. As Jonathan Gray has rightly pointed out, traditional Genettian understandings of paratextuality represent a "potential challenge" to cultural studies' "belief in the power of

audiences" (Brookey & Gray 107). For example, when Genette quotes Philippe Lejeune's

assertion that the paratext may be viewed as "a fringe of the printed text which *in reality controls*

one's whole reading of the text" (qtd. in *Paratexts* 2; emphasis added), the "reader," or receiver

of the paratextual message, appears robbed of agency. Little, if any, room is provided for

negotiated or resistant readings. In the very next sentence, however, Genette tempers this

statement by suggesting that the paratext is a:

> … zone not only of transition but also of transaction: a privileged place of
>
> pragmatics and strategy, of an influence on the public, an influence that—whether
>
> poorly understood and achieved—is at the service of a better reception for the text
>
> and a more pertinent reading of it (more pertinent, of course, in the eyes of the
>
> author and his allies). (*Paratexts* 2)

Genette's seemingly contradictory assertions (Does the paratext control the whole

reading of the text, or is it merely a zone of influence which exists in a transactional context?)

point to the tension inherent in all communicative exchange, a tension Stuart Hall sums up neatly

when he writes, "The codes of encoding and decoding may not be perfectly symmetrical"

("Encoding" 54).

Audiences make sense of messages based, in part, on their fields of experience, those

"life experiences, attitudes, values and beliefs" that comprise their social histories and subject

positions (McCornack 10). Accordingly, the level of fidelity between the message the sender is

trying to convey and the receiver's interpretation of that message is most productively measured

in terms of degrees. Complete congruence is seldom achieved, and it is in the context of this

transactional ambiguity that the pragmatic value of the paratext is laid bare. Paratexts do not

dictate readings, but they do work to privilege some interpretations while discouraging others. Jonathan Gray invokes de Certeau to explicate this influence:

> I like Michel de Certeau's metaphor of "walking in the city." He likens textual structure to urban structure and design, but notes that we can still walk through a city in many different ways. Urban planners, traffic flow experts, and owners of private property have their preferred notions of how they want you to get from one place to another, and they cut down all sorts of options to make other options more enticing. But in the end we have agency, and we do not have to follow their paths entirely. This is what paratext creators are doing—they are some of the key would-be urban planners and land developers of the textual world. They too are trying to direct us in one way or another, to get us through a text in particular way. We may ignore them, but it is their job to try to tell us, "Hey, go over there!" (Brookey & Gray 107)

The value of the paratextual message lies in its ability to direct its addressees toward particular avenues of interpretation, and this value is magnified when the paratextual message functions as a stand-in for the absent primary text it purportedly seeks to frame. To carry de Certeau's metaphor one step further, we can say that the paratext-as-text offers our textual urban planners the opportunity to create a roadmap for a portion of the city that, for whatever reason, cannot be traversed. As a consequence, the map becomes the viewer's sole frame for understanding that space and the mapmakers are free to depict non-preferred routes as perilous (*Hic sunt dracones!)* or leave them out altogether.

It is tempting, when confronted with the ubiquity of paratexts and the seemingly all-pervasive presence of marketing across the contemporary media landscape, to think of the

paratext-as-text as a new phenomenon. Paratexts seem to be assuming the role of primary texts

everywhere we look—both MOMA and LACMA have featured exhibitions of classic film

posters in the past year,[144] weekly television programs such as AXS TV's *Nothing But Trailers*

are, as the show's name suggests, comprised entirely of motion picture previews,[145] and websites

such as *Art of the Title* focus entirely on the aggregation, display, and analysis of the extra-

textual materials that surround films, video games and television productions.

Nevertheless, paratext-as-text is not new. Indeed, it long served as the textual mainstay of

the medieval Catholic Church, an organization John Hartley has shrewdly categorized as "the

first mass medium" (598). For centuries, the Church relied upon narrative visual paratexts—

typically in the form of later biblical epitexts—in order to educate and inform its massive, and

largely illiterate, following. Church commissioned paintings, frescos, sculptures, and stained

glass windows served to teach the faithful about the bible stories they were otherwise unable to

read, while simultaneously structuring "a unified social reality for the people of the time, shaping

their views of meaning and purpose in life" (Rossiter 89). In this sense, these narrative visual

paratexts worked as both denotative information delivery platforms, by providing the "who,

what, when, where and how" of biblical accounts, and as connotative lenses capable of

facilitating expansive worldviews. As Graham Rossiter explains:

> The works of religious art in early medieval Christian Churches were more like
>
> films than paintings because of their religious story-telling and symbolic purposes.
>
> They were both narrative and symbolic/theological in their meaning. Christians got

---

[144] Here, I am thinking of "What Price Hollywood?" and "The Art of the Movie Poster: Highlights from the Mike Kaplan Collection," respectively.

[145] The series tagline: "Every Thursday night, Nothing But Trailers offers the best trailers, old and new, in AXS TV's collection. No expensive popcorn, no sticky floors, no BS, this is only the good $#!t every Monday night starting at 8/7c" ("Nothing But").

many of their religious cues from them. The content of practically all the art they

could see was religious… It reinforced their beliefs because there in front of them

was imagery that reminded them of what they believed in and it gave a sense of

communal assurance and validation to those beliefs. For those who did not travel

extensively, and this was the majority, the religious world depicted in their

churches described their small universe. They drew on its religious imagery to

understand that universe and their place in it. (Rossiter 90)

Over time, however, a number of factors, including the "commercial, religious,

administrative and intellectual 'revolutions' of the fifteenth century onward" (Houston), worked

to produce a shift from restricted- to mass-literacy that resulted in the paratext taking on an

increasingly subordinate role in mass communication. Later, in the first half of the 19th century,

the introduction of the steam-powered rotary press seemed to permanently relegate the paratext

to second-class textual status. Together, the forces of mass literacy and industrial printing

methods conspired to create what theorists including McLuhan, Kittler, Giesecke, and

Einsenstein describe as an "alphabetic monopoly," or a "shift from a cultural mindset reliant on

auditory information, image and decoration to one in which the letter ruled supreme" (Mufti &

Peace 140).

Still, a funny thing happened on the road to postmodernity. Just as any form of hegemony

is constantly negotiated, the dominant position of the written word was vigorously and

repeatedly challenged throughout the 20th century as new media emerged which privileged the

oral and visual traditions that once held sway. In what amounts to a paradoxically regressive

teleological progression, after the advent of industrial printing, each subsequent mass media

platform of the industrial era privileged and relied upon conventions of premodern

communication. Silent films revived the visual tradition, only to cede ground to broadcast radio and its reliance on orality, and together these two surrendered much of their cultural status to television—a medium that, in its "aims to synthesize radio and film" (Adorno & Horkheimer 97), brought the oral and visual traditions fully back to the fore. As these traditions enjoyed a revival, so too did the paratext-as-text.

In what follows, I demonstrate how "The Disneyland Story" represents this reemergence of the paratext-as-text as a significant mode of paratextual functionality. I begin by presenting a theory of "paratextual relativity," which maintains that: 1) all paratexts are capable of serving as texts; 2) key elements, including the relative locations of paratext and text in time and space, the forms (media) of the text and paratext, the sender and intended receiver of the message being communicated, and the illocutionary force or intended function of that message all influence assessments of textual status; and 3) that distinctions between text and paratext ultimately depend upon the social history and subject position of the addressee. Turning to the Church for an example, I examine Lorenzo Ghiberti's *Gates of Paradise*, a work that I go on to link in theoretical, stylistic, and functional terms to "The Disneyland Story."

4.2   **Paratextual Relativity**

While there is a tendency to think of textual status in a binary fashion, the line between text and paratext is often difficult to discern. When confronted with media artifacts, we are inclined to categorize them in an "either/or" fashion—as either texts or paratexts. This is particularly true if such artifacts share or reference the same subject matter. Thus, a film is a text, its promotional poster a paratext; an album is a text, its liner notes paratexts; a book is a text, its footnotes paratexts, and so on.

Still, we needn't to drill down far before such seemingly simple distinctions become troublesome in their ambiguity. For example, if we consider a book's typesetting—the style and size of font and the way it is composed on the page—we find that we are dealing with a liminal textual component capable of fulfilling either primary or extratextual status with equal facility. The style of type is, from the perspective of the *reader*, paratextual in its functionality to the extent that it is subordinate to the illocutionary force of the author's message and/or the reader's interpretation thereof. Thus, it would seem that the work's typesetting falls neatly into the category of paratext. However, if we approach the work's *mise-en-page* from the perspective of the typographer, the typesetting assumes principal textual status. It becomes an end in itself, no longer ancillary in character or operating in the service of another. Indeed, from the typographic viewpoint, a newly subordinate order of paratextual elements—weights, widths, styles, optical sizes, grades, effects, etc.—become apparent in their service to the typesetting as primary text.

The scenario above illustrates a phenomenon I term paratextual relativity and indicates that assessments of textual status are intrinsically subjective and hinge in large part on the social history and subject position of the addressee. Put simply, one person's paratext may be another's text, because each comes at it from a different perspective. These perspectives are, in turn, further informed by the combinatory effects of the key textual elements identified by Genette in the introduction to *Paratexts*—namely, a work's "spatial, temporal, substantial, pragmatic, and functional characteristics" (4).

Each of the qualities catalogued above holds the potential to independently influence assessments of textual status, yet they rarely work in discrete fashion. For example, when evaluating a work simply in terms of the functions it aims to perform, a commercial text—one that labors primarily to promote pecuniary interests—is more likely to be assigned paratextual

status than one that principally seeks to inform or entertain. Hence, a movie trailer is a paratext, while the film it advertises is a text. Nevertheless, the influence of any single key textual element is, more often than not, altered and/or amplified when combined with additional principal characteristics. So, when we consider the trailer's commercial functionality in combination with its location outside the film's diegesis, its prior temporal status (trailers are routinely released well in advance of the films they promote), its abbreviated duration, its medium (film, same as the movie proper), as well as its sender (typically a studio's marketing department and/or an independent boutique production shop) and addressee (a group of spectators that concomitantly comprise both an audience and a *potential* audience) we find the trailer's status a paratext thoroughly cemented.

While there are only five key textual elements, their potential combinations are infinite. There are no limits on how far removed a text and its paratext might become in temporal or spatial terms, no restrictions on the potential addressees a work might touch, no limitations on the depth and breadth of the social subjectivity of these addressees, no checks on the number of prospective senders anxious to contribute to the discourse, and finally, no constraints on the possible functions of a message. As a consequence, we find that textual status is also relative to the extent that any work must always be capable of fulfilling the roles of both text and paratext at the same time. As Genette himself observes, "Most often, then, the paratext is itself a text: if it is still not *the* text, it is already *some* text" (Genette 7).

Consequently, if the line between paratext and text is often difficult to discern, it is because the boundaries between these categories are always unsettled. For his part, Genette maintains that the paratext "is an 'undefined zone' between the inside and the outside, a zone without any hard and fast boundary on either the inward side (turned toward the text) or the

outward side (turned toward the world's discourse about the text)" (2). It is this liminal quality,

the lack of a "hard and fast boundary" between the paratext and primary text that allows one to

bleed into the other in the eyes of the observer. Of course, a host of elements, including *where*,

when, *how*, *who*, and *to do what*, all hold the power to influence understandings of textual

position in important ways. Yet, it is ultimately the social experience of the receiver that

determines textual status. Accordingly, we must view all paratexts as also capable of serving in a

principal textual capacity and *vice versa*.[146]

4.2.1   Ghiberti's Gates of Paradise

For an early example of this dual functionality we may consider Lorenzo Ghiberti's

'Gates of Paradise' (*la porta del paradiso*).[147] Commissioned in 1425 and installed on the

eastern side of Florence's San Giovanni Baptistery in 1452,[148] the doors are composed of ten

relief panels in gilt bronze depicting scenes from the Old Testament. Due to both their beauty

and groundbreaking "representation of space and linear perspective," the East Doors are

considered by many contemporary art historians to be some of the most noteworthy works of

early-Renaissance art ever produced (LeMon 127).

---

[146] Of course, if looked at from the position of the poststructuralist Barthes of "The Death of the Author," arguably one of the most influential figures in Genette's theorizing, the primary text is not limited to serving merely as paratext, but also holds the potential to function in architextual, metatextual, hypotextual, and hypertextual capacities.

[147] According to many early apocryphal accounts, it was none other than Michelangelo that gave 'the Gates of Paradise' their famous appellation. Angiola recounts one of the best known versions of the story: "…one day, as Michelangelo stood before Ghiberti's doors, he was asked by a companion what he thought of them. Michelangelo replied that the doors were so beautiful that they were worthy to serve as the Gates of Paradise. Legend would have it that the name caught on and that the East Doors have been known ever since as the Gates of Paradise" (242). While Michelangelo may have, in fact, made such a statement, the name almost certainly derives from the notion that the Baptistery itself serves as a gateway that "opens the portals of the Kingdom of heaven" for newly baptized Christians (Angiola 242).

[148] Notably, *San Giovanni*, or St. John, is both the patron saint of Florence as well as the *Arti Dei Mercanti de Calimala*—the elite Florentine guild of cloth importers entrusted with maintaining the Baptistery and who commissioned Ghiberti's work (LeMon 129).

As with many early-modern sacred works, the Gates of Paradise were required to operate as both primary texts for the illiterate multitude, as well as paratexts for church officials and the increasingly well-educated Florentine merchant class. This dual functionality is particularly evident in the panels' *mise-en-scène*. As Old Testament scholar Joel LeMon observes, "Rather than depicting a single instant in a biblical narrative, Ghiberti's panels combine multiple scenes into one image that conveys critical elements of long and complex stories" (126). By way of example, the door's first panel—I say first, because the panels are clearly intended to be read from the top down and left to right, in the style of a Western manuscript (LeMon 128n6)—includes not only the image of God creating both Adam and Eve, but also portrays the couple's disobedience, and their subsequent banishment from paradise (see fig. 1). This "composite image," or *istoria*, presents as a visual narrative and contributes to the panels' efficacy when called upon to operate in the role of primary text. Ghiberti does not limit himself to the presentation of a single scene, as was the practice up until that point; rather, his work provides a visual representation of key narrative occurrences throughout Genesis 1-3. The panel tells the *story* of Adam and Eve instead of merely capturing a discrete narrative event, and it does so in images rather than words, thereby fulfilling the role of primary text for those incapable of accessing the written account. Additionally, however, in a more sophisticated sense, the work also influences the ways in which literate worshippers engage with the scriptures by highlighting those narrative happenings Ghiberti deemed worthy of representation. In this sense, the panels function in the mode of "ethico-theological critique" by emphasizing some narrative events while effectively ignoring others (leMon 128). The doors and their narrative panels function in different textual capacities according to the subjective histories and social positions of the spectators/worshippers being addressed.

Beyond dual textual functionality, paratexts are also relative with regard to the targets or their influence. As we have already observed in the preceding chapters, paratextuality operates along diverse vectors of meaning. This is why, for example, radio paratexts are just as capable of influencing a listener's perception of a serial's sponsor as they are of shaping that listener's understanding of the show itself. Likewise, this multivalent influence explains why a newspaper advertisement might do as much to situate a reader as a consumer as it does to influence that reader's engagement with the newspaper as a text.

Figure 4.1 Ghiberti, Lorenzo. *Creation Panel from Gates of Paradise.* (Photo Credit: Justin Norris)

Frequently, in ambiguous scenarios in which paratextual influence flows along multiple vectors concurrently, the dominant trajectory of paratextual influence is principally determined via spatio-temporal proximity (the first two of Genette's five elements of paratextuality). As texts and paratexts drift apart in both time and space and the textual status of these works gets called into question, the targets of their influence are also subject to change. Correspondingly, if the purpose of a paratext is to "present" a text and influence its "reception and consumption" (Genette 1), we must, at varying times and places, pause and reassess just what that text may be. For example, in her review of a traveling exhibition of Ghiberti's relief panels,[149] painter and art critic Maureen Mullarkey takes note of the effects of spatio-temporal distance on their functionality and textual standing:

> Severed from their purposes as sacred architecture, Ghiberti's panels are on show as capital assets. They are a pay-per-view spectacle presented solely in terms of the inventory of techniques that created them and those that restored them. When Ghiberti wrote that he worked on the Gates "with the greatest diligence and the greatest love," he referred to more than lost-wax processes and linear perspective. Ghiberti understood his commission as serving the liturgical function of the Baptistery, a symbol of communal identity inseparable from the particularity of the West. (50)

Mullarkey's lament centers on issues of paratextual relativity. Freed from their traditional spatio-temporal moorings, Ghiberti's panels lose much of their prior functionality. The works undergo a series of complex and occasionally contradictory metamorphoses related to their

---

[149] After an undergoing an extensive restoration process during the early 2000s, three of Ghiberti's reliefs panels—*Adam and Eve*, *David and Goliath*, and *Jacob and Esau*—went on a multi-city tour with stops in Atlanta, Chicago, and New York.

twofold textual status and resultant vectors of influence. In removing the works from their centuries-old setting on the eastern face of basilica, the panels, as paratexts, cease to exert peritextual influence over visitors' engagement with the baptistery—their ornate gilt forms no longer framing the entrance to a sacred site and ritual sacrament that the faithful have long viewed as literal gateways to paradise. Likewise, the panels' epitextual influence is similarly diminished. The move from sacred to secular public space, combined with the waning authority of the Catholic Church over the past five centuries, has rendered the panels' exegetical authority mute—no longer sacrosanct hermeneutic devices, the panels have become nothing more than "pay-per-view spectacle" (Mullarkey 50). Robbed of their paratextual functionality, the panels—like our hypothetical typeface example above—assume principal textual status, with their artistic, rather than theological, characteristics taking on central importance. In the museum setting, observed by aesthetes instead of parishioners, the reliefs become an end in their own right and techniques—such as linear perspective, lost-wax processes, burnishing, planishing, mercury evaporation, and the like—assume the paratextual duties of influencing observers' engagement with the works.

The capacity of paratexts to serve in both principal and subordinate textual roles based on the subjective histories and social positions of their addressees is the textual quality at the heart of paratextual relativity. It is also the characteristic that enabled extra-textual devices to assume hegemony over mass media during the pre-modern era. When presented to an educated audience, these devices influenced the production of meaning central to textual engagement and thereby privileged certain meanings above others. For a largely illiterate populace, visual paratextual narratives, in all their myriad forms, assumed the authority of the primary texts from which they derived.

4.3 **Connecting the Gates of Paradise to "The Disneyland Story": Didactic Mass Communication Systems and Ways of Seeing**

At first blush, the link between one of the most influential examples of sacred early renaissance art and a 1950s TV show about a theme park—especially one built largely on the popularity of a cartoon mouse—may seem tenuous at best. Yet, when one examines the functional characteristics of these works, clear ties emerge.

4.3.1 Television & the Catholic Church as Pedagogical Apparatuses

Television teaches. Not in the pedantic manner of traditional schooling, but in a broader informal sense.[150] In "Television as Transmodern Teaching," John Hartley makes the case that television:

> … spans, transcends and conjoins modern, pre- and postmodern aspects of contemporary life; specifically by using oral, domestic discourses to teach vast, unknowable 'lay' audiences modes of 'citizenship' and self-knowledge based on culture and identity. (598)

In pre-modern Europe, he argues, teaching was done via three social institutions: family, apprenticeship, and the Church. And, while these institutions often worked in combination, each was primarily responsible for a particular mode of education. As he tells it, "persons were formed into *selves* by the family, into *roles* by apprenticeship into craft… and into *souls* by the church" (Hartely 598). In the context of modernity, however, the role of the Church is supplanted by television:

---

[150] As John Hartley observes, "…one of the main attractions of TV is that it is not like formal education. The pleasure of media is that they can be taken outside of the institutional confines of scholastic compulsion, tedium, control, and conformism" (598).

It is my view that the private, informal, but systematic teaching of 'self-hood,'

belief-system ('soul') and social 'role' remains with families, but that the part

played in the medieval period by the church has been taken over in the modern

era by the media, culminating in television. In this model, TV is not an extension

of school, though it may be a competitor for hearts, minds and methods;

historically it is devoted to teaching other things than those for which schooling

was invented and is best suited. (Hartley 560)

What Hartley is suggesting here, is that television and the Church are linked to the extent

that the "uses of television," carry on the pedagogical social functions "already present in pre-

modern Europe" and performed by the Catholic Church (595). Specifically, he maintains that

television is "organizationally and socially a secularization of the medieval Catholic Church"

(Hartley 595);" and that "television, via cross-demographic communication, visual culture, talk

and narrative… teaches the formation of identity and citizenship in a society characterized by the

unkowability of its nevertheless sovereign populations" (Hartley 603). In the context of modern

and postmodern eras characterized by mass literacy, television, with its almost exclusive reliance

on oral and visual storytelling, has become heir to the Church's "non-literate tradition" (Hartley

600). In short, both Church and television constitute didactic, top-down style, non-literate mass

media platforms that work to educate audiences about institutionally preferred "ways of seeing."

In using the above phrase, I am, of course, invoking Walter Benjamin's well-known

argument concerning the "history of vision." Benjamin begins the fourth section of the second,

and arguably more authoritative, version of "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological

Reproducibility" with this controversial assertion:

> Just as the entire mode of existence of human collectives changes over long
>
> historical periods, so too does their mode of perception. The way in which human
>
> perception is organized—the medium in which it occurs—is conditioned not only
>
> by nature but by history. (23)

As I have noted in the introduction to this work, a number of scholars—most notably David Bordwell and Arthur Danto—have criticized Benjamin's suggestion along evolutionary and physiological lines, suggesting that, in order to be true, Benjamin's assertion would necessitate a form of culturally-activated Lamarckian evolution[151]—an intragenerational transformation in the physiological quality of vision.

Nevertheless, a closer look at the language of "Das Kunstwerk" suggests that such interpretations are too literal. Throughout the essay, Benjamin uses the word *sinneswhahrnehmung*,[152] a term that is often loosely translated from the German as "sense perception," but is also equivalent to "apperception" (Langenscheidt), or "The mental process by which a person makes sense of an idea by assimilating it to the body of ideas he or she already possesses" (Oxford). When considered in light of this latter meaning, it becomes evident that Benjamin is not concerned with vision or sense perception as such. Rather, he is simply proposing that people make sense of the things they perceive based on what they already know— a knowledge that is always-already informed by socially produced factors, all of which are subject to the forces of history, including a person's subjectivity, self-concept, and social

---

[151] "If vision has adapted itself in a few decades to collective experience and the urban environment, we have a case of Lamarckian evolution" (Bordwell 142).

[152] "Innerhalb großer geschichtlicher Zeiträume verändert sich mit der gesamten Daseinsweise der menschlichen Kollektiva auch die Art und Weise ihrer Sinneswahrnehmung. Die Art und Weise, in der die menschliche Sinneswahrnehmung sich organisiert – das Medium, in dem sie erfolgt – ist nicht nur natürlich sondern auch geschichtlich bedingt."

relations.[153] In short, the physiological modes of sense perception do not change, but the act of meaning making is constantly evolving.

The work of the paratext is to influence meaning making. Consequently, it should come as no surprise that they too operate in a state of constant variation. As the act of meaning making changes, paratexts change with it. Genette confirms this assertion when he tells his readers, "The ways and means of the paratext change continually, depending on period, culture, genre, author, work and edition…" (2). It is particularly interesting, then, to find that television's adoption of the oral and visual traditions of the medieval Catholic Church and assumption of its pedagogical social functions was accompanied by the reemergence of the paratext-as-text, a device characterized by its capacity to serve in both primary and subsidiary textual capacities.

Both the medieval Catholic Church, and later, television, functioned as pedagogical apparatuses, exploiting pre-modern modes of "song, story, sight and talk" (Hartley 600) in order to influence audiences on both macro and micro scales. These scales coincide neatly with the ritual and transmission views of communication that have informed American culture for almost two centuries (Carey 2). On the macro, or ritual, level, both institutions work towards privileging certain wide-ranging worldviews by supplying addressees with "a common symbolic experience… a common discourse, [and] a set of shared formal conventions" (Fiske 80), all of which are essential elements in the formation of the subjective "social foundations of values and world views" (Berger and Luckman 4). In this sense, both the Church and television worked towards what Berger and Luckman have designated the "social construction of reality" (1). On a micro, or transmission scale, these communication platforms labored to share specific kinds of

---

[153] Bordwell would likely find my interpretation of Benjamin unsatisfying. Early in his critique of the "history of vision doctrine," he tells readers, "We might start by asking what is meant by 'perception' or 'vision.' If such terms are shorthand for 'thought' or 'experience,' the position becomes vague, if not commonplace" (142).

knowledge across both time and space. This mode of communication is not as focused on the construction and maintenance of broad worldviews, as it is with "'imparting,' 'sending,' transmitting,' or 'giving information to others'" (Carey 2).

To sum up then, the medieval Catholic Church and television are linked to the extent that both are non-literate, didactic, mass communication platforms that concomitantly function as information delivery systems as well as vehicles for the structuring and reinforcement of particular 'realities,' 'worldviews,' or 'ways of seeing.'

4.4   **Analyzing Ghiberti's Creation Panel and Disney's "Disneyland"**

With its dual functionality, the paratext-as-text is uniquely well suited to serving the counterposed functions of the communication platforms described above. When operating in the capacity of the primary text, the paratext-as-text enhances the function of communication systems as information delivery vehicles, providing the kind of authoritative detail and focused influence traditionally associated with first-order textual engagement. In the case of the *Gates*, the initial trio of panels—depicting the tales of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and Noah—visually reconstruct the Old Testament's most powerful accounts of sin and its consequences—while subsequent panels—portraying the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, and Solomon—focus on tales of sacrifice and salvation. In each instance, Ghiberti's commitment to detail and use of composite images allows these reliefs to effectively function as primary texts.

If we look to the *Creation* panel from a transmission perspective, we are confronted with an abundance of first-order narrative information. As an *istoria*, the panel provides a visual representation of four vignettes, or *effetti*, all tied together by their presence within the panel's 79.5 cm square frame, yet made distinct through variations in scale and relief. In the lower left,

God creates Adam; in the center, he creates Eve; in the middle left, Eve is tempted by the

serpent; and on the far right, the couple is banished from paradise. Each of these unified, yet

discrete, accounts conveys an extraordinary level of narrative detail. Ghiberti's Adam, like the

Adam of Genesis, is birthed from the soil, dazed and gaunt; yet, unmistakably crafted in the

image of his creator. Eve's birth is still more detailed. A choir of angels looks on adoringly,

while another assists the creator in conjuring Eve from the rib of a slumbering Adam.[154] In the

Temptation relief, Eve plucks fruit from the tree with one hand as she hands Adam their

forbidden bounty with the other. The serpent separates the two, his maleficence enhanced by his

human head. And, in the final *effetto*, an angry God—attended by host of wrathful cherubim—

casts the Adam and Eve from the garden. The transgressors, now clothed in the leaves that

betrayed their disobedience, are shown standing outside the literal gates of paradise, their faces

upturned in expressions of shame and fear. In each instance, the details tell the story.

As a paratext-as-text for the modern era, "The Disneyland Story" works in a similar

fashion. From the jump, the show's opening credit sequence (itself a peritext of a paratext)

provides detailed information concerning authorship, structure of the show, and the

corresponding composition of the park:

> ANNOUNCER: Walt Disney's, Disneyland!
>
> Each week as you enter this timeless land, one of these many worlds will open to
>
> you:
>
> Frontierland! Tall tales and true, from the legendary past.
>
> Tomorrowland! Promise of things to come.
>
> Adventureland! The wonder world of nature's own realm.

---

[154] Scripture does not support the notion of angels being present (let alone acting as co-creators) at Eve's genesis. As LeMon observes, angels "appear only in Gen. 3:24, as God stations cherubim at the gate of Eden" (141).

Fantasyland! The happiest kingdom of them all. (Walsh)

After a brief tour of the filmmaker's Burbank studios, Disney and an announcer provide still more finely detailed information to viewers, complete with accountings of scale and perspective:

> Disney: (Pointing to a large, wall-mounted, rendering of the proposed theme park) that's it. Right here. Disneyland, seen from about 2000 feet in the air and ten months away…
>
> Now, on a site of 240 acres near the City of Anaheim in Southern California— right about in here (gestures with a pointer)—we've begun to build Disneyland the place…
>
> Now, next year, our television show will be coming from this Disneyland. But, this year, we want you to see, and share with us, the experience of building this dream into a reality.
>
> Announcer: (The scene shifts to a three-dimensional architectural rendering of the park): This is a quarter-inch to the foot square model of Disneyland.
>
> When you come in the main gate, past the railroad station, down the steps, and across the band concert park, straight ahead lies the heartland of America… an old fashioned main street…
>
> Disney: At the foot of Main Street, about where you're sitting is the plaza. The plaza, or the hub, is the heart of Disneyland. Shooting out from here, like the four cardinal points of the compass, Disneyland is divided into four cardinal realms— the four different worlds from which our television shows will originate. They are: Adventureland, Tomorrowland, Fantasyland, and Frontierland. (Walsh)

More than establishing a particular worldview, the illocutionary force of this authorial paratext is dedicated to the transmission of information. Disney and his narrator attend to housekeeping, focusing on factual details up front. The audience is briefed on the size of the park, its location, its layout, its projected completion date, and the "lands" that constitute its central attractions. What's more, this oral recitation of facts is visually reinforced through the camera's careful inspection of Disney's map and architectural model. With no actual park (arguably the primary text from an authorial perspective) to present to viewers, the television program must act as a stand-in if viewers are to be educated on the 'who, what, where, and when' of Disneyland.[155] Again, as Disney himself reminds us, "Disneyland the place and *Disneyland* the show are all part of the same" (qtd. in Walsh).

4.4.1   *The Creation Panel and "Disneyland" as Connotative Frames*

With regard to the second of our functions, it is in its paratextual, or ritual, capacity that the paratext-as-text works most vigorously to frame and privilege broad ways of seeing. Tellingly, Roland Barthes uses precisely this kind of paratextual device in his treatise on "Myth Today," when he famously examines the cover of *Paris-Match* (itself a peritext) in order to provide an example of myth as a second-order semiological system.[156] As he recounts for his readers:

---

[155] This marks an interesting tension between "The Disneyland Story" in its role as an authorial paratext and in its operation as a publisher's paratext. As I have noted earlier, the work's author (Disney) and its publisher (ABC) have different, if not competing, interests. Accordingly, we can understand the focus of the program's illocutionary force as being simultaneously directed at a minimum of two targets. As an authorial paratext, the work is, first and foremost, concerned with informing viewers about the park in order to 'sell them' on Disneyland the place. As a publisher's paratext, however, the program seeks to reverse this trajectory and 'sell' advertisers on both the program and the network more broadly. There is an evident distinction, then, between the pragmatic status of a program such as "The Disneyland Story"—which seeks to influence multiple publics' understanding of multiple primary texts—and the literary paratexts contemplated by Genette—which seeks to influence a one audiences' perception of a single work.

[156] It is also telling that Barthes makes no mention of the article that accompanies the image, clearly indicating that he views the cover's influence as extending primarily along centrifugal pathways.

I am at a barber's, and a copy of *Paris-Match* is offered to me. On the cover, a young negro in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the Tricolour. All this is the very meaning of the picture. But, whether naively or not, I see very well what it signifies to me: that France is a great empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this negro in serving his so-called oppressors. I am therefore again faced with a greater semiological system… (115)

As with myth, the paratext-as-text operates as a kind of meta-language. It is a "second language, in which one speaks about the first" (Barthes 114). Denotation begets connotation and "form" begets "signification" as the sign of the first-order semiological system, "becomes a mere signifier in the second" (Barthes 113). Put more simply, when functioning on the ritual level, a degree of abstract meaning is added to the paratext-as-text, which allows it to influence meaning making on a wide-ranging scale.

Returning again to Ghiberti's Adam and Eve, we see this second-order process at work. Already supplied with the details required in order to effectuate a denotative interpretation of the relief, viewers are free to associate connotative meanings with the panel—meanings that, via centrifugal pathways of influence, hold the potential to shape ways of seeing that extend well beyond the realm of textuality and into the province of everyday lived experience.

In the Creation of Adam *effetto*, the depiction of God as a wizened old man influences perceptions of gender relations, naturalizing the patriarchal structures of family, church, and politics that dominated the Florentine republic during the renaissance period.[157] While not as

---

[157] For an example of this patriarchal misogyny, we might consider a now infamous passage from Niccolò di Bernardo dei Machiavelli, arguably the best-known official of the Florentine Republic. In chapter 25 of *The Prince*,

blatantly misogynistic as later Florentine public works such as Giovanni da Bologna's *Rape of a Sabine* (1581 - 1583) or Benevento Cellini's *Perseus Slaying Medusa* (1545 - 1554),[158] the Adam *effetto* nevertheless reinforces and extends the themes of male primacy found in the Book of Genesis. Adam is not only created first—his emergence from the otherwise barren landscape suggests that, contrary to the account offered in Genesis 1.1-25, Adam's origin chronologically precedes both the creation of plant life in the form of "grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth (*King James Version*, Gen. 1.11),[159] as well as the vivification of "every living creature that moveth." (Gen. 1.21)—but he is also crafted in God's image. Ghiberti's Adam appears as a younger iteration of his creator, similar in almost every respect except for his obvious frailty and the length of his hair and beard.

This visual representation of physical likeness carries with it larger theological and ideological implications. If viewed from the perspective of biblical typology—typology being a favored mode of biblical analysis during the Renaissance, in which the events of the Old Testament are "interpreted as an allegory, prophecy, or prefiguration of… New Testament events"[160] (Dilbeck 23)—Adam's familial resemblance to his creator clearly presages the coming

Machiavelli counsels: "Fortune is a woman and if you wish to keep her under it is necessary to beat and ill use her; and it is seen she allows herself to be mastered by the adventurous rather than by those who go to work more coldly. She is, therefore, always woman-like, a lover of young men, because they are less cautious, more violent, and with more audacity to command her" (qtd. in Carroll 6).

[158] A number of feminist art historians, including Yael Even, Margaret Carroll, and Mary Garrad, have compellingly demonstrated how representations of sexual violence such as Cellini's *Perseus* and Bologna's *Rape*—arguably the two most prominent works in the famed Piazza della Signoria—reflect the level of "absolutist patriarchal control" that dominated Florentine culture during the Renaissance (Garrard 5). For more, see Carroll 3-30, Even 10-14, and Garrard 5-43.

[159] It should be noted that the King James Bible offers two contradictory accounts of Genesis. In the first chapter, God creates animal and plant life prior to Adam's vivification (Genesis 1.11-22). In the second, man is created before all other life (Genesis 2.4-9).

[160] Typological interpretations are particularly relevant in this context, as they find their origins with the third-century theologian Origen Adamantius whose works were translated into Latin by fifteenth-century scholars and "incorporated into the lectionaries of Renaissance Florence for use in liturgical services" (Dilbeck 23). For more on the influence of typology on the Renaissance church, see Dilbeck 23-25.

of Christ, who is often regarded as the "last" or "second Adam" (Dilbeck 26).[161] Such an

interpretation privileges a worldview that clearly delimits two modes of existence or being, one

natural and the other spiritual. This delineation is articulated in the New Testament by the

Apostle Paul who draws a connection between the two:

> And so it is written. The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam
>
> was made a quickening spirit.
>
> Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and
>
> afterward that which is spiritual.

The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.

> As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are
>
> they also that are heavenly.
>
> And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the
>
> heavenly.
>
> Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of god;
>
> neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.
>
> Behold, I shew you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.
>
> In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall
>
> sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.
>
> For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on
>
> immortality.

---

[161] Concerning the issue of 'familial resemblance,' it is interesting to note that it was standard practice for the same actor to play both Adam and Jesus in mystery plays throughout the Middle Ages (O'Collins 10).

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have

put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written. Death

is swallowed up in victory. (1 Cor. 15.46 – 15.54)

In portraying Adam as the "earthly" precursor to the "spiritual" Jesus, Ghiberti opens the

door[162] to a dichotomous worldview based squarely upon some of the most fundamental tenets of

Christian theology. We are all from Adam, who is literally 'of this earth,' and given the breath of

life by a beneficent, supremely powerful, male God.[163] As such, we are part of the natural world,

weak, corrupt, and subject to disease and mortality. Yet, Adam's genesis also prefigures the

coming of Jesus, who, although born in human form, is of the spiritual world—an incorruptible

savior who, through the greatest of personal sacrifices, cleared the way for believers to enter the

kingdom of heaven. In this manner, Ghiberti's *Creation of Adam effetto* prompts viewers along a

centrifugal vector by privileging a worldview that regards natural life as merely temporary—an

inferior precursor to an eternal spiritual life in heaven. Disease, suffering, and even death are

trivialities compared to the glory that waits for the saved among us. As Paul tells the faithful in 1

Corinthians 15:48-49, "As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the

man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the likeness of

the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven."

With the preceding in mind, it becomes apparent that the *Creation of Adam effetto* also

works to promote a 'great man-style' understanding of history and its resultant social structures.

While Thomas Carlyle would not articulate this theory until 400 years after the completion of the

Porta del Paradiso, the themes that undergird his reasoning are omnipresent in the kind of

---

[162] Get it? "Opens the door"… *Gates of Paradise*??!! Cue the rimshot! ☺

[163] God's authority is visually affirmed in a number of ways including his dress, stature, posture, and mature countenance. These elements are enhanced by Ghiberti's composition, in which God looms over a recumbent Adam, who, in his deference, is unable or unwilling to meet his creator's gaze.

typologically inspired ways of seeing the relief that would have been encouraged via the oral

traditions of the early-Renaissance Florentine Church. In *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the*

Heroic in History, Carlyle states:

> For, as I take it, Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in
>
> this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here. They
>
> were the leaders of men, these great ones; the modellers, patterns, and in a wide
>
> sense creators, of whatsoever the general mass of men contrived to do or to attain;
>
> all things that we see standing accomplished in the world are properly the outer
>
> material result, the practical realization and embodiment, of Thoughts that dwelt
>
> in the Great Men sent into the world: the soul of the whole world's history, it may
>
> justly be considered, were the history of these. (3)

The *effetto* works to promote Carlyle's hypothesis by privileging a reading in which the

course of history is not merely altered, but literally set in motion by God, arguably the greatest

'man' of all. Once underway, this historical flow of events is radically transformed through the

action of the first man, Adam, who, in a sole act of disobedience, initiates a hereditary cycle of

ancestral sin that condemns countless future generations to death and suffering. It is only through

Christ's sacrifice (again, a single momentous act performed by one man), that humankind might

once again enjoy eternal life.

The *effetto's* favoring of this great man-style understanding of the world also works to

educate believers concerning the paradoxical relationship between the individual and the social

group that is evident in much of the Church's teachings. Significant change (e.g. creation itself,

humankind's spiritual deliverance), the *Creation of Adam* suggests, comes not from working

together as a group, but rather from the efforts of the individual.[164] At the same time, however, this individualism is unaccompanied by any of the deep-rooted distrust of established institutions traditionally associated with such lines of thinking (e.g. the Protestant Reformation, neoliberal economics). Instead, it is precisely the monumental actions of solitary 'men' and a corresponding emphasis on individual agency that are used to justify the structure and existence of collectivist socio-cultural institutions including the Church itself.

To better understand this paradox, it is useful to consider Geert Hofstede's seminal definition of individualism and collectivism:

> *Individualism* pertains *to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism* as its opposite *pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive ingroups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.*
>
> (92, emphasis in the original)

While there has been considerable debate amongst Christian apologists concerning the degree to which original sin should be considered a voluntary phenomenon, Catholic theologians and church officials nonetheless agree that the sin of Adam deprived humankind of a number of divine gifts (e.g. spiritual immortality, beatific vision, mastery of earthly appetites, and

---

[164] Ghiberti reinforces this theme of individualism by including two self-portraits (one on the left portal and another on the right) in the design of the gates. Placed amongst the tondo heads and standing figures of numerous prophets and prophetesses that comprise the figurative borders surrounding the relief panels, these self-portraits act as markers of authorship. Tellingly, despite having ample room, Ghiberti chose not include any portraits of his many collaborators. Accordingly, onlookers are encouraged to think of the gates as the product of a single master craftsman, even though, as Gary M. Radke notes, "Savvy patrons knew that the master would be delegating much of his work" (52), employing as many as twenty-one assistants at one time to aid him in the creation of the doors (Radke 52). This impression of sole authorship is further strengthened through a kind of artists signature inscribed across the valves of the doors which reads, "*Laurentii Cionis Ghibertis/Mira arte Fabricum*" (roughly translated: Lorenzo Cionis Ghiberti/Wonderful art Fabrication).

sanctifying grace), which may only be reinstated via the exercise of individual agency.

Accordingly, in order to enjoy eternal spiritual life and an earthly lifetime of the collectivist

benefits and protections afforded by church membership, one must "look after himself or herself

and his or her immediate family" through sacramental participation. As the *Catechism of the*

Catholic Church explains:

> The three sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders confer, in
>
> addition to grace, a sacramental character or 'seal' by which the Christian shares
>
> in Christ's priesthood and is made a member of the Church according to different
>
> states and functions. This configuration… remains forever in the Christian as a
>
> positive disposition for grace, a promise and guarantee of divine protection, and
>
> as a vocation to divine worship and to the service of the Church. (290)

Thus, it is only through individual action that group affiliation, and its benefits, can be achieved.

The panel's second *effetto*, the *Creation of Eve*, exists in state of tension with the first.

Whereas the *Creation of Adam* works to naturalize patriarchal social structures and emphasize

the importance of individual agency in the context of Catholic collectivism, the positioning of

the Eve narrative and the staging of its figures challenges these traditionally masculine themes by

privileging the feminine via a celebration of divine maternity while encouraging an

understanding of community membership as preordained rather than a consequence of conscious

choice.

Ghiberti's Eve, like the Eve of Genesis, is created by a male God and is formed from

Adam's rib. Nevertheless, she is portrayed as anything but subordinate. In fact, Ghiberti

positions her as the main protagonist in his visual narrative. As Dilbeck observes:

Eve is the most prominent figure in this panel, not Adam. Not only is she the

central figure in the Creation scene (surrounded and framed clearly by a host of

angels and Adam's reclining body below), but also God the Father is placed

directly above her at the top of the composition, emphasizing the central scene.

(28)

Unlike Ghiberti's Adam, Eve emerges as a wholly formed figure, proudly upright, in

possession of her cognitive faculties, and fully capable of meeting the gaze of her creator.

What's more, though Eve materializes from Adam's slumbering form,[165] his figure blends with

the undulating landscape in such a way so as to downplay his narrative significance while

reminding observers of his humble, earthly origins.

As Dilbeck suggests, Eve's importance is visually reinforced via the impressive host of

angels that attend her vivification. Not only do these cherubs outnumber those portrayed in the

Creation of Adam effetto, but they also appear to play an active role in Eve's conception. While

one choir of angels looks on intently, three others grasp her arms and shoulders, as if lifting her

up out of Adam's side and proudly presenting her to her creator. All the while, another angel

boosts her from her midsection with one hand strategically placed over her womb.

This depiction of angelic involvement is without precedent. Amy Bloch notes:

Ghiberti's decision to place the angels so prominently in the scene of Eve's

creation—around her, gently touching her body, embracing her form, and lifting

her arms—makes his representation utterly different from all other medieval and

---

[165] In another typologically relevant representation, Eve is shown emerging from an opening in Adam's side that presages the last of the so-called "five wounds of Christ," the place where Jesus' chest was pierced by the lance of Longinus in order to ensure his demise. Interestingly, these wounds have taken on their own centrifugal paratextual significance, making symbolic appearances in the flag of Portugal, the flag of Georgia (the country, not the state), and the Crusader's Cross (wherein the five-fold cross, or cross-and-crosslets are used to represent the five wounds).

Renaissance examples of the scene, which sometimes include angels but never

present them quite so conspicuously or imply their direct, physical involvement in

the event. (31)

Theologians, including Philo and Augustine, have debated the role of angels in creation

based on the plural wording of Genesis 1:26, a passage which reads, in part, "Let *us* make man in

our image, after *our* likeness…" (emphasis added). While Philo and his fellow Hellenistic

Jewish philosophers believed this plural phrasing was indicative of angelic involvement in the

formation of humankind, Augustine and subsequent medieval and Renaissance exegetes

maintained that the use of "us' and "our" referred instead to the presence of the Trinity at the

moment of creation (Philo 57-61; Augustine 132).

Given the influence exerted by Augustine and subsequent like-minded Catholic

theologians on early-Renaissance Catholic dogma,[166] Ghiberti's portrayal of angelic intercession

was out of keeping with the commonly accepted theological tenets of the era. A survey of late-

medieval/early Renaissance, Church-sanctioned works bears this out. Similar paratextual

depictions of Eve's genesis, including Wilgemus of Modena's *Creation of Eve* (1099-110),

Pacino di Bonaguida's *Scenes from Genesis* (ca. 1320), Lorenzo Maitani's *Creation of Eve*

(1310-30), Piero Di Puccio's *Genesis* (1389-91), and Andrea Pisano's *Creation of Eve* (1334-

37),[167] are cherub-free. In fact, one needs only pass through Ghiberti's doors and enter the

Florence Baptistery to be confronted with a dome mosaic depicting Eve's creation *sans* angelic

---

[166] A number of important ecclesiastical figures including Ambrose Ambrosius and Peter Lombard supported Augustine's position regarding the impossibility of angelic intervention in creation. Indeed, Amy Bloch goes as far as to suggest that "by the time Ghiberti designed and modeled his Adam and Eve panel there seems to have been no major writer who ventured to support Philo's suggestion that the angels participated in Adam's [or, presumably, Eve's] formation" (19).

[167] It should be noted that Pisano designed the Florence Baptistery's South Doors.

intervention (*Creation* sequence, ca. 1270-75). Why then, would Ghiberti deviate from this tradition and what is the work being done by this visual narrative paratext?

Again, a typological approach to the *effetto* provides important insights. Just as Adam's presence presages the coming of Christ, Eve's appearance in the *effetto* heralds the arrival of the Virgin Mary. The calculated placement of the angel's hand on Eve's womb both celebrates her matriarchal primacy as the mother of all humanity and provides an obvious link to Mary.

> Since Eve is the mother of all living humans she prefigures Mary, but through her disobedience Eve causes death, or mortality. Because Mary is the mother of Christ, who dies to remove sin and open the gates of heaven, she creates life, immortality. The Virgin Mary is considered the new Eve… The new Eve redeems the sins of the old. (Dilbeck 26-27)

To the extent that the *Creation of Eve* effetto functions as an allographic peritext informing believers' engagement with the Baptistery and the ritual baptisms taking place therein, it works to privilege a way of seeing that emphasizes the divine feminine as a necessary condition to the process of spiritual salvation—a process which may only be achieved through collectivist ritual. It is because of Eve that baptism is required; but it is because of Mary, the second Eve and mother of the messiah, that salvation is even possible.

Matriarchal veneration has long been a theme in Christian theology. By the advent of the Quattrocento, the Marian theological tradition had been alive for more than a millennium. As early as the 3rd century, the *Sub Tuum Praesidium* identified the Blessed Virgin Mary not merely as the mother of Jesus, but also as the *Theotokos*, or "Mother of God,"[168] a status that would be confirmed by the Council of Ephesus in 431 and subsequently adopted as dogma by the Roman

---

[168] "Beneath your compassion, we take refuge, O Mother of God: do not despise our petitions in time of trouble, but rescue us from dangers, only pure, only blessed one" (translated from the Greek in Shaker 3).

Catholic Church. As the consequence of her divine maternity, in 1954, Pope Pius XII declared

Mary the *Regina Caeli*, or "Queen of Heaven" (Pius XII). Yet, as Pius observes in the course of

his encyclical, the Blessed Virgin had enjoyed this title from "the earliest ages of the Catholic

Church," and her sacred royal rank had been widely and frequently recognized by Early Church

Fathers including St. Ephrem, St. Gregory Nazianzen, and Origen of Alexandria (Pius XII).

Similarly, during the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), Pope Paul VI formally granted Mary

the title of *Mater Ecclesiae*; however, the practice of referring to Mary as the "Mother of the

Church" dates back as far as the 4th century writings of St. Ambrose of Milan, one of the four

original "Doctors of the Church" (Rahner 69-79). By the time Ghiberti began casting bronze for

his *Porta del Paradiso* in 1425, the link between Eve and Mary and their respective matriarchal

prominence were well established and regularly highlighted in church liturgy (Dilbeck 23).

When viewed from the typological perspective favored and promulgated via the oral

traditions of the early-Renaissance Church, Eve's prominence in the *istoria* and the active

angelic involvement in her creation serve to promote a form of matriarchal veneration that is

always-already linked to matrilineal membership in a fundamentally collectivist social

organization. Eve's act of disobedience, as depicted in the subsequent *effetto*, is the transgression

that dooms humanity to physical suffering and death while simultaneously creating the

prerequisite condition for spiritual salvation. It is her maternity, her status as the mother of all

humanity, that typologically links the first Eve to the second, and it is Mary's divine maternity

that positions her as Queen of Heaven, Mother of God, and Mother of the Church. In essence,

then, in its status as paratext-as-text, the *Creation of Eve effetto* operates didactically to establish

and reinforce a connection between the Old Testament and the New.

This connection also emphasizes the familial/non-voluntary aspects of collectivist religious affiliation. The early-Renaissance Catholic Church was, at this time, arguably the West's most powerful collectivist organization. As such, it benefitted—ideologically and pragmatically—by framing its structure and theology in familial terms, a practice that continues to this day. Bishops are "Venerable Brothers;" the Pope—himself the Bishop of Rome—is considered the "Patriarch of the Latin Church;" priests responsible for a congregation or parish are addressed as "Father;" "women religious" of all kinds (of both solemn and simple vows) are properly called "sister;" unordained "men religious" are "brothers;" the first "person" of the Trinity is not simply "God," but "God the Father;" the second is "God the Son;" and any baptized Christian is a "child of God." In assuming the language and logic of filial relations, the Church presents itself not as a group of ostensibly unconnected individuals who have come together for a shared purpose, but rather, as a family.

The concepts of family, and its corresponding obligations, serve as the very foundation of the collectivist worldview. It is in the context of the family that the "relationship between the individual and the group... is first learned" (Hofstede 107); a relationship which in turn dictates the "common sense" views that inform quotidian social relations. As Hofstede observes of collectivist societies, "There is no need to make specific friendships: who one's friends are predetermined by one's family or group membership" and "the family relationship is maintained by filial piety and chastity in women…"[169] (106). Accordingly, then, in conflating the actual family with the religious family, commitment to the Church, its ideologies, and hierarchical social structure become thoroughly "naturalized." Borrowing again from Hofstede, we find that

---

[169] The concept of Mary's "perpetual virginity" (the idea that Mary was a virgin before, during, and after Christ's birth) provides one of the most extreme examples of commitment to the collectivist value of female chastity in the history of Western civilization. This Marian doctrine has been accepted as dogma since Pope Martin I declared it such during the first session of the Lateran Council of 649 (Hurley 216).

this conflation also results in a higher "power distance"—the measure of "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations… expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (Hofstede 61). Thus, the benefits afforded to the Church for framing itself as family, and immersing young followers in its pseudo-familial milieu, become readily apparent. Troublesome notions of individuality are suppressed, independent thinking is discouraged, and dogma goes unchallenged. To wit:

> The child who grows up among a number of elders, peers, and juniors learns naturally to conceive of him- or herself as part of a "we"… the maintenance of a harmony with one's social environment becomes a key virtue that extends to other spheres… [and] direct confrontation of another person is considered rude and undesirable. The word no is seldom used, because saying "no" is a confrontation…
>
> In the collectivist family, children learn to take their bearings from others when it comes to opinions. Personal opinions do not exist: opinions are predetermined by the group. If a new issue comes up on which there is no established group opinion, some kind of family conference is necessary before an opinion can be given. A child who repeatedly voices opinions deviating from what is collectively felt is considered to have a bad character. (Hofstede 107-108)

Ghiberti maintains Eve's prominence throughout the remaining *effitti*. In the *Temptation effetto*, Eve's interaction with the serpent is clearly visible, while a tree largely obscures Adam's presence. Similarly, in the *Expulsion*, Eve is foregrounded in such a way as to mask Adam almost entirely. Given that the theme of redemption is central to the project of both the baptistery and the Church more broadly, it might seem both more logical and narratively satisfying for

Ghiberti to have brought his *istoria* to a close by emphasizing Adam in his typological capacity

as precursor to Christ. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that the denotative work of the

panel is the representation of *creation*—an act with which Ghiberti, perhaps the most innovative

artist of the early-Renaissance, was quite familiar. In showcasing Eve, rather than Adam,

Ghiberti is echoing this theme on the connotative level. Maternity, divine or otherwise, is, of

course, the *ne plus ultra* of generative acts. The story that Ghiberti is telling—the "to do what?"

of the *Creation Effetto* as paratext—is not only one of sin and redemption, but also one of the

birth of the Church and its continued relevance as a collectivist social institution. Eve is

foregrounded not because of her transgression, but because she is mother of all humanity. Mary,

by extension, is invoked because she is the Mother of the Church, matriarch of an eschatological

family.

On the connotative level, then, the *effetto* functions as a didactic paratextual device that

serves the Church's theological mass communication project by privileging a collectivist

weltanschauung while reinforcing the institution's high power distance. The Catholic Church of

the Quattrocento was, like any group of people assembled for a common purpose, constructed,

perpetuated and governed through a logic that was often contradictory.[170] The *Gates of Paradise*

worked to inform its viewer's understanding of the Church and their relationship to it, while

simultaneously making these contradictions appear both natural and inevitable. The Church's

patriarchal social structure and unequal distribution of power are legitimated via the *Creation of*

Adam effetto through its depictions of male primacy. These themes are furthered by the relief's

implicit endorsement of a "great man" style understanding of historical events and resultant

---

[170] Many of these contradictions are readily observable in Church vernacular. For example, in his status as the Bishop of Rome, the Pope is a "first among equals;" believers speak of the "immaculate conception" and the "virgin birth;" Christ's status as both God and man is referred to as "hypostatic union," and so on.

social impact. In doing so, the *effetto* typologically promotes a binal worldview that differentiates between an inherently corrupt, mortal existence and a divine, spiritual immortality. Participation in the former is assured by birth, while the latter can only be achieved through the exercise of individual agency. Throughout the remainder of the *istoria*, however, Eve's prominence and her typological link to the Virgin Mary promote strong themes of matriarchal veneration that conflict with the Church's patriarchal hierarchy. Moreover, the *effetto's* focus on familial/collectivist membership appears to work against the emphasis on individual agency that is expressed in the *Creation of Adam* relief. Ultimately, this tension may be reconciled as a reflection of the structural and theological contradictions that exist within the Church as a social institution.

Structurally, "The Disneyland Story" is quite similar to the *Gates of Paradise*. Just as the East Doors consist of 10 self-contained, yet thematically related, narrative panels, the first episode of *Disneyland* is comprised of eight self-contained segments connected by their links to the still-unbuilt theme park and the burgeoning Disney media empire.[171]

Of the eight segments, three—the introduction to Disney Studios, the "Story of Mickey," and the preview of next week's show—are thinly-veiled promotional vehicles, which work to advertise both previous Disney film projects (*Alice in Wonderland*, *Fantasia*, *Plane Crazy*) and upcoming releases (*20,000 Leagues Under the Sea, Sleeping Beauty*), while simultaneously contributing to the Disney corporate narrative.

---

[171] While Disney was just getting started in theme parks in 1954, the studio had already begun experimenting with television, branched out into live action movies, and had struck marketing deals that put the images of Disney characters on everything from Goofy Orange Juice to Donald Duck Bread.

The program's first segment provides a textbook example of a practice that has come to be known as "corporate storytelling." A strategy deployed in both public relations and organizational communication, corporate storytelling is:

> … the process of developing and delivering an organization's message by using narration about people, the organization, the past, visions for the future, social bonding, and work itself… to create a new point-of view, or reinforce an opinion or behavior. (Gill 664)

Corporate storytelling is, as this definition suggests, a discursive framing strategy meant to influence perceptions of organizations from without and within.

Disney's overview of its Burbank headquarters presents the story of a vibrant, bustling workplace in which extraordinary occurrences are part of the workaday world. Although the narrator assures viewers that it is, "just another working day here," the images that follow are anything but commonplace: Kirk Douglas arrives on the set of *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* riding on the back of a miniature convertible with sons Joel and Michael at the wheel; a hairstylist fastidiously—and unproductively—combs Peter Lorre's thinning crew cut as he luxuriates in the warmth of the California sunshine; Esmeralda the sea lion rehearses standing on one fin while balancing a ball on her nose; and a soggy, yet still dashing, James Mason battles a 40-ton squid on one of the studio's many soundstages. These star-studded clips, clearly designed to promote *Leagues'* upcoming release,[172] are quickly replaced with additional scenes that further emphasize just how different work at the studio is from the kinds of labor routinely performed in "traditional" corporate environs: Artists on the *Sleeping Beauty* soundstage sketch a

---

[172] *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* debuted in theaters just two months after *Disneyland's* television premiere and went on to become the second highest-grossing film of the year with box office receipts in excess of $8 million. *Leagues* was bested only by the Bing Crosby vehicle *White Christmas*, which earned an estimated $30 million (*Variety* 34).

comely young woman as she dances, sings, and twirls her way about the studio; in the "Music Department," adult men play at making cartoon noises on outlandish devices cobbled together from musical instruments and items procured from the local hardware store.

These visual narratives, all of which may be categorized as prior authorial peritexts, perform an array of paratextual functions. As promotional discourses for upcoming Disney releases, these segments flatter viewers by offering them "behind the scenes" glimpses of feature film production. They do nothing to frame the story worlds of *Sleeping Beauty* or *20,000 Leagues*. In fact, they do the opposite. They encourage potential audience members to view the films from an extra-diegetic perspective. Like spectators hip to a magician's trick, pleasure is derived not from watching (movie) "magic," but from knowing how it is performed and the satisfaction inherent in the possibility of sharing this information with others.[173] So, while these scenes are indisputably examples of paratexts, they do not so much frame the texts they accompany as they privilege a specific mode of spectatorship.

For employees within the organization, the introduction to Disney's studios encourages a ludic understanding of labor. Working in the "House of the Mouse" means that you're part of an organization where work is play, the miraculous is commonplace, and creativity is valued above all else. Employees are characters in a corporate fairy tale in which movie stars frolic alongside impossibly talented animals, beautiful young women are paid to play "princess," and "working" means never having to grow up. To work at Disney studios is to work in Neverland.

The outward, consumer-facing orientation of this corporate narrative means that viewers outside the studio walls are also encouraged to understand the Disney organization in these

---

[173] In his biography of P.T. Barnum, Neil Harris suggests this kind of information collecting and resultant pleasure are key elements in what he calls the "operational aesthetic," a distinctly modern mode of entertainment in which the spectator is more interested in how something is done, than in the final result. For more, see Harris' *Humbug: The Art of P.T. Barnum*, pp. 59-90.

fantastical terms while concurrently encouraging social comparison.[174] One can easily imagine

people of all stripes watching Disney employees playing at work and feeling wistful about their

own circumstances. Viewing the footage, an old aphorism comes to mind: "If you love what you

do, you'll never work a day in your life." Like many such motivational sayings, this statement is

more than a little naive.[175] Yet, when reinforced by extant media industry narratives that have,

since the early 20th century, billed Hollywood as the "land of dreams," the notion that a job at

Disney Studios is a privileged position that entails all play and no work becomes far easier to

accept. Moreover, this consumer-facing orientation also enables the segment to work as a kind of

meta-narrative for those employees within the organization who are too cynical, or pragmatic, to

buy into the company's "Disney as Neverland" rhetoric. In such circumstances, what matters is

not that the employees view their workplace as a kind of utopian "dream factory," but that the

public-at-large sees it this way. In this manner, even the most overworked Disney employee can

take solace in knowing that others outside the organization still perceive of their work in this

way. Like a budget-conscious fashionista rocking a counterfeit Birkin, satisfaction is derived

from one's perception of another's understanding and the importance of authenticity becomes

subordinate to the power of the narrative.

"The Story of Mickey" segment assists in the legitimation of the Disney corporate

narrative by placing Mickey at the center of the larger "Disney story," and by treating the

already-anthropomorphized rodent like a real person. The segment is presented as a frame story,

---

[174] Social comparison theory, first developed by Leon Festinger, maintains that when self-evaluating in ambiguous social scenarios (e.g. "Is this the right career for me?" or "Have I accomplished enough at this stage in my life?") people compare themselves to others in order to reduce uncertainty (Festinger 1-15).

[175] While the exact origins of this phrase are unclear (the Internet credits everyone from Confucius to Billy Joel), it is widely attributed to Marc Anthony (the Roman autocrat, not the best-selling salsa vocalist who was once briefly married to Jennifer Lopez). And, while I am sure Marc Anthony often enjoyed making Rome's eastern provinces great again, I am also certain that at least a few of those days really did seem like "work" (e.g. when, in 31 BC the Roman Senate declared him a traitor and he subsequently committed suicide).

with Walt reading from an oversized biography that dwarfs the books lining the shelves in the background:

> During the last few years, we've ventured into a lot of different fields. We've had the opportunity to meet and work with a lot of wonderful people. I only hope that we never lose sight of one thing; it was all started by a mouse. Now, that's why I want this part of the show to belong to Mickey. Because the story of Mickey is *truthfully* the real beginning of Disneyland. ("The Disneyland Story")

The segment repeatedly conflates fiction and reality while nesting additional stories within Disney's frame narrative. As he segues into the first of the Mickey nested narratives, the scene cuts to an insert shot of Mickey:

> Now that's how Mickey looks today. But I remember another time when he didn't look so prosperous. The first time I met Mickey, he was a hungry looking little mouse playing in his first movie. He was so poor, he didn't even own a pair of shoes. The picture was called *Plane Crazy*. Now that was the year that Lindberg flew the Atlantic. ("The Disneyland Story")

Disney's narrative conceit, that Mickey is real, is echoed in *Plane Crazy*. As the short begins, we see Mickey—who, like Disney, is flipping through an oversized book—gazing at an image of Charles Lindbergh. In the illustration, Lindbergh has just finished his successful non-stop flight from New York to Paris. He wears a lopsided grin and his hair, always chaotic, is in total disarray. Clearly worshipful, Mickey pulls out a mirror and tousles his own hair in imitation.

By placing Mickey and Lindbergh, or, more accurately, Lindbergh's image, in the same animated short, and by speaking of Mickey as if he were a flesh and blood movie star rather than

a cartoon mouse, the short conflates fantasy and reality in much the same manner as the Disney

corporate narrative. This is not to say that the presence of Lindberg's image ads verisimilitude to

the short. It does not. *Plane Crazy* is replete with the kind of gravity-defying physics and

exaggerated representations of reality that have come to characterize American animated short

subjects as a genre (Mari 16). Instead, what the use of Lindbergh's image does, is expand the

diegetic boundaries of the film in such a way that they become transparent. The diegetic world

and the "real world" overlap and each incorporates elements of the other; in doing so, they offer

a third alternative—a "way of seeing" in which fantasy informs one's perception of reality.

Baudrillard speaks to this "third alternative" in his work on simulacra, simulation and the

Disneyland theme park:

> To dissimulate is to feign not to have what one has. To simulate is to feign to have
>
> what one hasn't. One implies a presence, the other an absence. But the matter is
>
> more complicated, since to simulate is not simply to feign: 'Someone who feigns
>
> an illness can simply go to bed and make believe he is ill. Some who simulates an
>
> illness produces in himself some of the symptoms.' (Littre) Thus, feigning or
>
> dissimulating leaves the reality principle intact: the difference is always clear, it is
>
> only masked; whereas simulation threatens the difference between 'true' and
>
> 'false', between 'real' and 'imaginary'. ("Simulacra" 167)

Baudrillard is prone to hyperbole and this tendency is evident in the passage above. The

process he describes as "simulation" does not truly "threaten the difference" between reality and

fantasy for anyone other than the youngest of children.[176] Yet, as a voluntary, transactional

---

[176] And maybe not even them. Upon having our family photo taken with Mickey during a trip to Disney World last
summer, my then three-year-old son loudly announced to the other families waiting in the queue: "Mickey's not
real! That's just a man! It's just a man!"

practice, simulation does encourage participants to engage in a particular mode of perception. Even in the case of Disneyland, which Baudrillard considers the "perfect model of all the entangled orders of simulation" ("Simulacra" 168), both the park's employees and visitors are well aware of the dramaturgical ontology of the Disneyland experience. *The Disney Look*, an internally-authored employment manual issued to all park workers, refers to employees as "Cast Members" and cautions, "No matter where you work or what your role is, anytime you are in a public area, you are onstage" (Disney Parks, Experiences and Products, Inc. 3). Likewise, the official *Disney Parks Blog* uses the fact that "All the Disneyland Resort is a stage" as a selling point for potential visitors (Glover). Thus, reality is never at risk of being usurped by the imaginary. Simply put, everybody knows the score.

Still, Baudrillard is onto something. While his theory of simulation is overly-linear, robs its participants of agency, and leaves no room for negotiated or oppositional readings of the rapacious signs he so clearly fears, he is correct to the extent that what he calls "simulation" can be understood to engender an *iteration* of reality. As the authorial paratextual discourse cited above makes clear, the park (and, perhaps, the entire Disney organization) is meant to be understood in terms of collaborative performance. This is the "to do what?" of these paratextual utterances. Employees and patrons are performers and spectators wedded together in the transactional process of meaning making at the highest level of connotation. They are voluntarily collaborating in the creation of a discretionary worldview, a particular mode of social reality, one among many that may be adopted or discarded at will. Erving Goffman, the father of dramaturgical sociology, makes precisely this point in his discussion of teams and "out of character" communication:

… the performance given by a team is not a spontaneous, immediate response to

the situation, absorbing all of the team's energies and constituting their sole social

reality; the performance is something the team members can stand back from,

back far enough to imagine or play out simultaneously other kinds of

performances attesting to other realities. Whether the performers feel their official

offering is the 'realist' reality or not, they will give surreptitious expression to

multiple versions of reality, each tending to be incompatible with the others. (131)

Thus, as David Allen observes in his critique of postmodern readings of Disneyland, visitors to

the park are not "poor lost souls, trapped in Plato's cave" (34); rather, they are simply

participating in the creation of "another kind of [social] reality" (33).

The last of "The Disneyland Story's" film-targeted promotional segments is a preview of

the next week's show, a version of *Alice and Wonderland* that has been edited to fit *Disneyland's*

one-hour time slot. The piece occupies a unique temporal position, as it is both a prior and later

paratext. In its capacity as a later paratext, it refers back to the feature film that was released in

1951. As a prior paratext, its most obvious function is to generate excitement in anticipation of

the palimpsest to come. Yet, in this prior paratextual capacity it also does something more, it

serves as a kind of meta-textual, allegorical primer for experiencing Disneyland the place.

Viewers are told to "step into a world of wonder" as they meet a cast of "delightfully wacky

characters" ("The Disneyland Story"). All the while, we watch as Alice falls down the rabbit

hole only to be saved by her dress, which acts as a makeshift parachute and deposits her safely in

the midst of a fantastical new world. In this way, the segment provides a fictional narrative

representation of its own performative qualities. Just as Alice's dress affords her entry into

Wonderland unmolested, the preview segment provides viewers with a frame for safely

understanding their future engagement with the theme park free from the violence of cognitive dissonance produced by the intersection of fantasy and "reality." It primes them for experiencing the park not as "hyperreality," where, as Baudrillard puts it, images act as "murderers of real" ("Simulacra" 168), but instead as an alternative social reality wherein roles are played out safely and in accordance with the same kind of situational logic that governs the experience and performance of everyday life. The paratext is their parachute.

"The Disneyland Story's" five remaining segments—"Disneyland Overview," "Frontierland," "Adventureland," "Tomorrowland," and "Fantasyland"—are also promotional in character, and, like the segments detailed above, they make reference to past and future Disney film projects. What sets these sections apart, however, is their direct peritextual referencing of the still-unfinished theme park. As noted previously, "Disneyland Overview" operates primarily on the level of denotation—as a kind of information delivery vehicle providing details concerning the park's construction, location, layout, and other fact-based particulars. As a consequence, its paratextual functionality is relatively uncomplicated. The "land" segments, however, perform a more complex form of transtextual calculus.

Of the park's four realms, Frontierland is arguably the most controversial. It was, and remains, an homage to what Douglas Brode calls the American "Dream West" ("Dream West" 5). As such, it does not recreate a historically accurate version of the American "Old West" of the 19th and 20th centuries, a place and time often characterized by grim realities that proved "a bitter experience for pioneers… and a genocidal nightmare for indigenous people who stood in their way" (Steiner 5). Instead, Frontierland has always worked to co-author and reinforce a mythical conception of the Western Frontier that was already well established at the time of the park's founding. As cultural historian Michael Steiner details, nostalgia for an idealized iteration

of the American Western Frontier began even as the actual frontier was entering its final stages

of settlement:

> Currier and Ives lithographs idealizing frontier life bedecked Victorian parlors by
> the 1850s, and frontier homage plates titled "Western Ho!" and "Oh! Pioneers"
> were popular souvenirs at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition
> Exposition. Colorado ranchers were boarding urbanites hankering for the genuine
> frontier by the 1870s and dude ranching had become a national institution by the
> 1890s. Frontier nostalgia reached the Great Plains almost the moment the
> westward movement ended there with William F. Cody's first Wild West show—
> "The Old Glory Bow Out" in North Platte, Nebraska, on July 4, 1882—complete
> with a mock stampede of ragged, remnant buffalo… By the end of the century
> more than seventy Wild West troupes were touring the United States… staging
> mock battles between white "Rough Riders of the World" and former Indian
> enemies who, like the Buffalo, survived as picturesque reminders of glory days.
> (5)

By the time Disneyland opened its doors on July 17, 1955, the myth of "Frontierland" had

already occupied a place in the American imaginary for at least 100 years.

As a paratext then, the work of "The Disneyland Story's" "Frontierland" segment is not

to ready viewers to encounter a radically new, idealized version of the American West; nor is it

to legitimate the park's sanitized retelling of the country's dalliance with the moral depravity of

Manifest Destiny. Rather, the "to do what?" of the televisual "Frontierland" paratext focuses on

bringing the Disney "way of seeing" to bear on viewer's understanding of history. Just as the

introduction to Disney Studios works to encourage audiences to think of the company's Burbank

lot and corporate culture as liminal spaces (one physical, one socially-constructed) wherein elements of the fantastic and quotidian are interwoven, "Frontierland" mixes fantasy and reality in order extend the Disney brand to include a unique form of historiography.

"The Disneyland Story" announces its historical tack from the jump, suggesting, as previously noted, that "Frontierland" is comprised of "Tall tales and true, from the legendary past." This clever bit of wordplay, which comes at the very beginning of the program, serves as a textbook example of strategic ambiguity. The wording is structured in such a way that it is not at all clear if "Frontierland" is to be understood as a combination of apocryphal accounts and fact-based historical retellings, or if it is comprised entirely of "tall tales" that the viewer is meant to take at face value. This ambiguity, tailor-made to promote a knowing acceptance of the seamless integration of fantasy and reality, is a Disney trademark. It is, for instance, what distinguishes much Disney animation from that of Warner Brothers. While Disney's Mickey and the real-life Lindbergh coexist easily in the same diegetic world, Tex Avery's Bugs and Daffy are busily "laying bare the device" by acknowledging to the audience that they are aware of their own status as film"[177] (Mari 16). Disney's audiences know, without being told by the characters on-screen, that they are voluntarily suspending their disbelief and they are doing so in a in a very distinct, very "Disney" way. They are consciously choosing to adopt the Disney "way of seeing," and this branded vision is both the point and the pleasure of the meta-level Disney experience.

While this mode of perception was well established in Disney's cinematic corpus for more than two decades when *Disneyland* premiered on television, it had yet to be extended outside the movie theater.[178] Consequently, Disney takes pains to link his vision to the oral

---

[177] For two thoroughly entertaining examples see *Wabbit Twouble* (Warner Bros., 1941) and *Duck Amuck* (Warner Bros., 1953).
[178] *Plane Crazy* debuted in 1928.

tradition of American folklore in prefacing the segment. In doing so, he makes clear to the

audience that the conflation of fantasy and reality is not merely an acceptable heuristic for

understanding history, but also one that holds intrinsic value:

> Behind the gates of Frontierland is the inspirational America of the past century.
> Here is the treasure of our native folklore, the songs, tales, and legends of the big
> men who built the land.
> Some of them were completely legendary, like Paul Bunyan the woodchopper
> with his blue ox, Babe.
> Then again, we find that true stories about real people can be fabulous too. Now
> in our TV series from Frontierland, we're going to tell about these real people
> who became legend—like Davy Crockett, the first coonskin congressman. Davy's
> life was so fantastic; it was hard to tell where fact left off and fancy began.
> Now here's Norman Foster, director of the unit, who's going to shoot the story of
> Davy Crockett on Davy's own home ground, the Great Smoky Mountains of
> Tennessee. ("The Disneyland Story")

The tall tales being featured in "Frontierland" are presented as something more than

entertaining semi-fictional vignettes; they are "treasures." They are valuable because they are

constitutive components of an alternative, socially-constructed history. This history operates in

concert with the socially-constructed "reality" contemplated earlier, and is also one iteration of

many. Disney makes no efforts to conceal this fact. In referring to Frontierland as "the

inspirational America," he is implicitly acknowledging that it is not, in fact, the *real* America (to

the extent that such a thing can be said to truly exist). Likewise, the history that Disney presents

is not *real* history (to the extent that such a thing is practicable); it is *inspirational* history. It is as

if Walt Disney anticipated the postmodern logic of Roland Barthes and Hayden White who assert

that historiography is ostensibly another form of fiction. The story of Davy Crockett and the

other tall tales being spun in the context of the "Frontierland" milieu are the logical outcome of a

historicism in which "historical narratives are verbal fiction, the contents of which are as much

invented as *found* and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in

literature than they have with those in the sciences" (White 82; emphasis in the original).

With the actual Frontierland attractions still unrealized, "The Disneyland Story" relies

upon a prior paratext as a substitute. A gloriously coiffed Fess Parker, in spotless buckskin

regalia, but sans his trademark coonskin cap, poses stiffly with three other conspicuously well-

groomed performers in front of a faux-log cabin on the Disney soundstage. The Great Smoky

Mountains are nowhere in sight. He begins to sing:

> Born on a mountain top in Tennessee
>
> Greenest state in the land of the free
>
> Raised in the woods so he knew ev'ry tree
>
> Kilt him a b 'ar when he was only three
>
> Davy, Davy Crockett, king of the wild frontier…

The Ballad of Davy Crockett is itself an example of paratext-as-text. Written by George

Bruns and Thomas W. Blackburn to serve as the theme song for the five-part Davy Crockett

miniseries, the piece enjoyed stand-alone success as well. Three versions of the song (one

recorded by Bill Hayes, another by Fess Parker, and still another by Tennessee Ernie Ford) made

the Billboard charts in 1955 ("Most Played"), and quickly become part of the "Crockett Craze" that would go on to sweep the country.[179]

In its most obvious paratextual capacity, *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* serves up all of the backstory and ritual narrative review viewers need to make sense of the program. On another level, however, it also works to familiarize the audience with Disney's historicism. Fact and fiction are blended in such a way that viewers are immediately cued to the Disney way of seeing.

There is little doubt that viewers got the message when the program first appeared on the small screen. My seventy-nine-year-old father, who was 15 at the time of *Disneyland's* premiere, still recalls how he and his friends substituted their own lyrics for those of the original theme song. Due to the ribald nature of their modified wording, I offer only a snippet:

> At the tender age of four he won a prize
>
> For drinkin' the most beer with the reddest eyes
>
> He found him a girl, she told him a lie
>
> He blew off her head, and then began to cry
>
> Davy, Davey Crockett, champion at drinkin' beer

While anecdotal, this evidence nevertheless demonstrates a tacit, and surprisingly nuanced, understanding of Disney's historical conceit. It is, of course, a parody—an intentional repurposing of the popular ballad which, to quote Jameson, "capitalizes on the uniqueness" of the piece and exploits its "idiosyncrasies and eccentricities to produce an imitation which mocks the original" ("Postmodernism and Consumer Society" 113). In order to "mock the original," however, a good parody—which, I suggest, this is, despite its troubling adolescent misogyny and

---

[179] By some estimates, the total revenue surrounding Crockett-related merchandise reached $300 million and helped to solidify Disney's financial position even as the company continued to pour money into the new theme park (Telotte 27).

casual treatment of conjugal violence—must have "some secret sympathy for the original" (Jameson "Postmodernism and Consumer Society" 113). That is, the parodist(s), in this case a gaggle of teenage boys growing up in the decidedly working-class East End neighborhood of Altoona, Pennsylvania, must have a firm grasp of the convention being mocked in order to subvert it—and subvert it they do.

Intriguingly, it is this user-generated parody, and not the original (para)text, that is the most conspicuously postmodern in a Hutcheonsian sense. Unlike Jameson, who believes postmodern parody to be "impossible," having been replaced by the comparatively toothless practice of pastiche ("Postmodernism and Consumer Society" 114), Hutcheon views parody as "central to postmodernism" (90). She suggests that, as a critical practice, parody reflects postmodernism's inherent duplicity in that it "ultimately manages to install and reinforce as much as undermine and subvert the conventions and presuppositions it appears to challenge" (Hutcheon 1-2). In this way, she argues, parody, and postmodernism more broadly, work to "lay bare" the logic of cultural constructs that might otherwise appear natural. This is precisely what we see with the ironic repurposing of the ballad.

Of course, my father and his chums did not go about reprising *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* in order to intentionally denaturalize the narrative tactics and ideological implications inherent in Disney's branded historicism. This is an important point, not simply because their repurposing managed to do so anyway, but because it also demonstrates the efficacy of the paratext-as-text as a didactic device in the context of Disney's non-literate, top-down, mass communication system. Put simply, my father and his friends knew that Disney's technique of conflating reality and fantasy worked well for creating idealized representations of the past and present in a medium that educated audiences without giving an opportunity for feedback. They

also understood that these idealized representations were just that—idealized. By appropriating

the Disney Crockett in the same fashion that Disney appropriated the real Crockett (drunk

Crockett is to Disney Crockett as Disney Crockett is to real Crockett), and by applying the

fantasy/reality conflation conceit in order to create a "tall tale" in keeping with the darker

"realities" of life in a 50s era, blue-collar, railroad town (e.g. alcoholism, hyper-masculinity,

misogyny, casual violence), they were creating their own "historiographic metafiction"

(Hutcheon 14)—one that came in the form of a user-generated paratext-as-text that lampooned

the Disney way of seeing while acknowledging the power inherent in its layered, paratextually-

enunciated rhetorical strategies.

Just as the "Frontierland" segment educates viewers on how to apply the Disney way of

seeing to the past and the American West, "Tomorrowland" teaches the audience how to apply

this lens to the future and the new frontier of outer space. Catherine L. Newell eloquently

captures the symbiotic links between the "lands":

>Disney's Tomorrowland, with its beginnings as a documentary television show
>
>and in tension with Frontierland, paralleled the way in which the nostalgia for the
>
>frontier slowly became faith in the future in the American imagination.
>
>Tomorrowland's rocket and space station represented the promise of a new
>
>frontier. They were symbols of faith that outer space was twentieth-century
>
>America's "manifest destiny," the conviction that America was called by God to
>
>be a New Israel, and to settle and subdue the wilderness through hard work and
>
>faith. The two dichotomous frontiers summed up America's popular history: there
>
>once was a frontier that was conquered, but thanks to American ingenuity and
>
>gumption, soon a new frontier will open and offer Americans a chance to

recapture the pioneering spirit of the first frontiersmen by settling on the Moon. It

is the destiny of every American to strike out for new horizons that lie beyond the

edge of Earth's atmosphere, because the future lies just around the corner of

tomorrow. (417)

The "Tomorrowland" segment of "The Disneyland Story" begins by offering its Cold

War era viewers a teleological narrative to assuage their nuclear anxieties.

Ever since the invention of the bow and arrow, mankind has both worried and

been fascinated by the forward march of science.

Today, with the recent discovery of tremendous natural forces, and their

harnessing for man's use, man is still anxious, yet still hopeful.

In the programs to come from Tomorrowland, we plan to explore these forces,

and their use, to find some measure of understanding about the things that lie

before us. ("The Disneyland Story")

Disney's references to humankind's "worry" and "tremendous natural forces" are

obvious allusions to the threats posed by nuclear proliferation,[180] and are underscored by images

of a rocket taking flight and graphic illustrations of swirling stylized atoms. However, despite

these recognizable references, Disney adheres to the pragmatic rules that govern the language

and performance of his socially-constructed "reality." He makes no specific mention of atomic

power or the threat of nuclear annihilation, because to do so would be to violate the logic of

linguistic determinism that informs the Disney way of seeing. As any child who has invoked

"Bloody Mary" in front of the bathroom mirror understands, to mention something is to risk

---

[180] Less than one month after "The Disneyland Story's" premiere, the U.S.S.R. successfully tested their first two-stage hydrogen bomb. The device, codenamed the RDS-37, had a scaled-back yield equivalent to 1.6 megatons of TNT.

making it "real." Put another way, we might say that "ways of speaking" privilege and police "ways of seeing." Accordingly, the function of Disney's "Tomorrowland" preface is not merely to frame the viewer's engagement with upcoming programs or the physical "realm" as it will come to exist in the theme park; it also works to educate audiences concerning the unspoken "rules of exclusion" that regulate discourse within the context of "The Magical World of Disney."[181]

In "The Order of Discourse," Michel Foucault tells his readers, "We know quite well that we do not have the right to say everything, that we cannot speak of just anything in any circumstances whatever, and not everyone has the right to speak of anything whatever" (52). As is often the case, Foucault's focus is on unpacking the relationship between language and power; nevertheless, his statement represents an unlikely intersection of French poststructuralist theory with Goffmanian situationism. What Foucault, Goffman, and Disney all understood, in one form or another, is that successful impression management requires a tacit understanding of the pragmatic rules that govern communication in social context. By refusing to explicitly acknowledge the threat of nuclear annihilation in the preface to the "Tomorrowland" segment, Disney is providing viewers with a primer on these regulations. As the old saying goes, some things are better left unsaid.

As I have already suggested, the Disney way of seeing involves a mixture of the quotidian and the extraordinary, and the "Tomorrowland" segment works to reinforce this perception. However, because any contemplation of the future necessarily includes more fiction than fact, the segment works sedulously to ground the fantasy of prognostication with the

---

[181] It is noteworthy, given my premise that "Disneyland" used paratexts-as-texts to educate viewers concerning the pragmatic rules of performance in an alternative, socially-constructed iteration of reality, that the anthology series was renamed "The Magical World of Disney" when it returned to NBC in the 1988 season.

authenticity of empiricism. In this regard, the "Tomorrowland" segment, like the *Creation of Eve effetto*, exists in tension with the work's other narratives. While the introduction to Disney Studios, the preview of next week's show, and "Frontierland" all foreground the element of fantasy, "Tomorrowland" seeks to temper it.

In his narration, director Ward Kimball explains to viewers that the images they are about to see come from a "new science-factual series" ("The Disneyland Story"). Kimball's invention of a new generic category is telling, because it represents a preemptive move to offset the fictive ontology of divination. The narrative that follows is further legitimated via the rhetoric of science and space exploration. Kimball shares plans for space missions created by "our scientists;" the audience is regaled with "exploded views" of rocket ships; and pages of mathematical calculations and detailed aeronautical designs are laid out in front of the camera. All of these elements work to contribute a feeling of "realisticness" to what, in 1954, might have seemed like entirely unrealistic goals.[182] Ultimately, however, the jargon of science is not sufficient to achieve the blending of the fantastic and the everyday that characterizes the Disney way of seeing. As a consequence, Kimball introduces a cartoon "common man" to illustrate the unique difficulties of performing common actions—eating, sleeping, and drinking— in zero-gravity conditions.

"The Disneyland Story's" "Adventureland" and "Fantasyland" segments round out Disney's pedagogical project. Presented as a kind of "Disneyfied" iteration of *National Geographic*,[183] "Adventureland" exploits familiar colonialist tropes of discovery, barbarism, conflict and exoticism in order to achieve the desired ratio of wonder to mundanity. Using clips

---

[182] At the time "Disneyland" debuted, NASA had yet to be founded, the first successful launch of a space satellite was still three years away, and manned space flight would not occur for another seven years.

[183] As of March 20, 2019, The Walt Disney Company assumed a controlling interest (73% of shares) in National Geographic Partners, LLC.

from upcoming projects, the realm of adventure is presented as one of "unusual people and faraway places" ("The Disneyland Story"). Series producer Ben Sharpsteen introduces the segment in front of a wall bedecked with tribal masks and Far Eastern *objets d'art*; and the images that follow run the gambit from Moroccan nomads ("When tribesmen meet tribesmen upon an oasis… privation gives way to primal expressions of pent-up emotion.") to Portuguese *forcados* performing a *pega de caras* ("This is no ordinary bullfight, this is a contest that matches brute strength against human endurance!").

"Fantasyland" concludes the realm segments, and Disney uses intertextuality in order to frame both the physical "land" and the larger Disney worldview:

> Our last realm is Fantasyland. We cross the moat through Sleeping Beauty's castle into the world of imagination. Once here, we can fly with Peter Pan to Neverland, wander with Alice in Wonderland, ride Cinderella's pumpkin coach— In fact, anything your heart desires. Because, in this land, hopes and dreams are all that matter. ("The Disneyland Story")

Lest his introduction seem too purely fantastical, Disney follows his prologue with an abridged version of "The Laughing Place" from *Song of the South* (1946). In it, Br'er Rabbit exploits his penchant for storytelling in order to save himself from certain doom and lead his pursuers, Br'er Fox and Br'er Bear, into a cavern filled with angry bees. The moral of the story is clear. Not only is the Disney way of seeing pleasurable, it also serves as a form of protection. By mixing fantasy and reality, one is shielded from the vicissitudes of the latter.

As I have shown, though separated by nearly half a millennium, "The Disneyland Story" and Ghiberti's *Gates of Paradise* are structurally and functionally similar. Both employ narrative visual paratexts, in the form of self-contained, but thematically linked vignettes, as substitutes for

inaccessible primary texts. Ghiberti's *effetti* stand-in for the Old Testament while the *Disneyland* program stands-in for the still-unfinished theme park.

In its role as a connotative framing device, "The Disneyland Story" works as a discursive strategy that promotes the Disney way of seeing—a worldview founded on one central conceit: the intermingling of the quotidian and the extraordinary. This conceit is echoed repeatedly throughout the program's segments to varying ends. In the introduction to Disney Studios vignette, the theme is used in the context of corporate storytelling in order to craft a narrative wherein work and play become synonymous. In the "Story of Mickey" segment, the mixing of fantasy and reality is employed to set the stage for understanding the entire Disney experience (parks, films, television programs, toys, etc.) as a kind of collaborative performance in which sender and receiver conspire to create and maintain a discretionary worldview wherein disbelief is knowingly suspended in order to create a distinct social reality. The "Frontierland" portion of the program extends this discretionary worldview centrifugally into the realm of time and space in order to create a Disney branded historiography, a reflexive understanding of the past that playfully acknowledges its apocryphal qualities while sacrificing none of its pedagogical efficacy. The "Tomorrowland" segment applies this way of seeing to the future and space exploration, all the while establishing and reaffirming the pragmatic rules that govern communication in the "magical world of Disney." "Adventureland" applies the Disney lens to the far reaches of globe, and "Fantasyland" presents viewers with a modern fable extolling the protective benefits of the Disney way of seeing.

4.5   **Paratexts Frame Interpretation**

Paratexts are framing devices. Yet, as this chapter and others have shown, we are mistaken to assume they only function to frame the so-called "primary texts" with which they are

most obviously associated. In fact, it is, in some ways, a mistake to assign their influence to any text at all. A paratext no more "frames" its text than, in the context of semiology, a signified may be conflated with its referent. Paratexts do not frame texts; they frame *interpretation*. This is an important distinction, because, as we have seen, the targets of interpretation, as well as the act of interpretation itself, are subjective and hinge on a number of internal and external factors. It is this subjectivity that gives rise to paratextual relativity, allows paratextual influence to extend across centripetal and centrifugal vectors, and enables paratexts to operate on both first- and second-order levels of meaning creation.

While they do so to varying degrees, every mass communication project serves a pedagogical function, and the principal goal of every sender is always the same—to foster engagement on the part of the addressee and have her make sense of the message being sent. In order for a message to realize its purpose it must first be attended to, and understood by, its receiver. Barthes makes precisely this point in distinguishing "work" from "text." The "work," he suggests, is "the object of… consumption" (Barthes "From Work" 161), "a fragment of substance" that "can be held in the hand" (Barthes "From Work" 157). The "text," on the other hand, is "experienced only in an activity of production" (Ibid.), and requires its receiver to act in "practical collaboration" with its author (Barthes "From Work" 163). In his distillation of Barthes' theory, Jonathan Gray puts it succinctly when he suggests that: "…no text can be free of the individual reader" (*Show Sold Separately* 30).

Naturally, however, the degree of congruence between the receiver's interpretation and the message the sender was trying to communicate will vary according to a number of factors, both external and internal. What's more, as Stuart Hall famously observed, even if a message is received and the sender's illocutionary point understood, there is no guarantee that the receiver

will be decoding that message in accordance with its dominant, or preferred, meaning. This is why paratexts—and authorial paratexts in particular—have proven to be highly prized tools in the context of top-down mass communication systems. Paratexts exert their influence most strongly at the moment of "practical collaboration" when the act of consumption paradoxically becomes one of production—the very moment meaning is made. As a consequence, paratexts offer their authors an additional opportunity to police and facilitate the production of meaning, a process otherwise limited to the dyadic interaction of text and reader.

As a mode of paratextually functionality, the paratext-as-text affords its sender even greater influence over meaning making because it functions in both a principal, or primary-textual capacity, and in a subordinate, *para*-textual role. As a result of this dual functionality, the paratext-as-text has proven particularly useful in the context of didactic, non-literate, top-down, mass communication systems. In such scenarios, the paratext-as-text serves as a substitute for a primary text that is ostensibly inaccessible, while concomitantly influencing meaning making across a range of understandings.

Throughout the history of mass communication, hegemons have controlled messaging. When their perceived authority originated in texts that were otherwise unavailable to the multitudes, they substituted paratexts for texts. In doing so, they implicitly controlled both moral and story. Like the urban planners contemplated earlier in this chapter, both the early-Renaissance Catholic Church and Walt Disney sought to privilege certain paths of understanding while shutting down others. By harnessing paratext-as-text they were able to prod their audiences down their preferred avenues more vigorously than might have been otherwise possible.

In the case of the Church, Ghiberti's *effetti* worked to educate the illiterate faithful on the tales that comprise the Old Testament while concomitantly usurping its textual authority. As a

consequence, the Church was able to encourage its followers to construct their own cognitive maps for negotiating the world and their place in it—maps which privileged typological understandings of biblical tales that paradoxically stressed the importance of individual agency in the context of a collectivist organization with a firmly established hierarchical power structure.

In the case of *Disneyland*, Walt Disney was able to use "The Disneyland Story" to inform viewers about his theme park, a park that, at the time, did not yet exist. In using the program as a substitute for the park, Disney was able to educate his audience about the Disney way of seeing—a worldview that blended fantasy and reality in a manner that gave rise to a performative, contextually-situated form of socially-constructed reality replete with its own historiography and pragmatic rules of communication.

5   THE PARATEXTUAL MECHANISM FOR REPLY: *BREITBART NEWS* AND THE ONLINE COMMENT SECTION

"There are in fact no masses; there are only ways of seeing people as masses."
–   Raymond Williams

Thus far, I have examined paratextuality in the context of newspapers, radio, and television. In doing so, I have repeatedly shown that paratextual functionality is perpetually evolving. At times, the emergence of a new mass medium will result in new paratexts that perform novel functions, as is the case with both newspapers and radio. At other times, a nascent mass medium may revive a dormant form of paratextuality and exploit its functionality while attempting to influence a new audience, as is the case of television and the paratext-as-text. At the heart of all of these examinations is Genette's notion that "the ways and means of the paratext change continually" (3).

In this final case study, I look to the Internet to highlight one instance of changing paratextuality in the first decades of the 21st century, a time when online mass communication has increasingly incorporated transactional features that have long characterized more intimate, face-to-face, modes of interpersonal communication. Specifically, my study focuses on a peritextual element that has proven central to the popularity of, and controversy surrounding, the conservative news website *Breitbart.com*: its comment section.

In recent years, *Breitbart's* user comments have drawn extensive criticism. The site's comment section has been derided by conservative and progressive voices alike, with right-wing *wunderkind* and former *Breitbart* editor Ben Shapiro describing the section as a "cesspool," and the Southern Poverty Law Center declaring that *Breitbart* readers' comments "increasingly reflected language specific to the white nationalist 'alt-right' movement, including anti-Semitic sentiment" (Amend and Morgan).

Despite criticism from both ends of the ideological spectrum, the conservative news site has enjoyed considerable success. At the height of its popularity in 2017, *Breitbart.com* attracted over 2 billion pageviews and more than 45 million unique monthly visitors, numbers that placed it ahead of *Fox News*, the *Washington Post*, and *Buzzfeed* in web traffic. More recently, the site's readership has slipped, prompting a series of sensational headlines such as "Breitbart's Readership Plunges" (Schwartz & Scola), "Readership Plummets for Alt-Right Breitbart…" (Moore), and "Breitbart Readership in Free Fall…" (Patterico). Notwithstanding these dire assessments, *Breitbart.com* still ranks as the 62nd most visited website in the United States and the 279th most visited site in the world (Alexa Internet, Inc.).

What's more, *Breitbart's* readers engage enthusiastically with the site's content across a host of social media platforms. *Breitbart's Facebook* page, a paratextual device designed to drive viewers along centripetal vectors toward their main site, accumulated more likes, comments, and shares in the last four months of 2019 than pages for *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *USA Today* combined (Uberti). Similarly, *Breitbart News* is consistently named one of the top political publishers on Instagram as measured by likes, comments and followers. In the month of September 2017, the social media analytics firm NewsWhip gave *Breitbart* an audience engagement score of 8.69 (Nash). By way of comparison, *Politico* earned a score of .47, *CNN* came in at .21, and *Mother Jones* achieved a paltry .05 (Nash).

This robust reader engagement extends to *Breitbart's* site, where it is most evident in reader comments. Often, relatively short articles—between 100 and 300 words—garner thousands of reader responses. For example, a 139 word New Year's Day 2019 article about Chrissy Tiegen's televised endorsement of "vaginal steaming" garnered 16,871 comments (Caplan). Lest you think that this outpouring of feedback is due to Breitbart's predominantly male readership and their

prurient interest in Ms. Tiegen,[184] a comparatively staid article on Frank Biden's Costa Rican real estate investments amassed more than 13,000 comments in just over 24 hours (Alic).[185] As these numbers make clear, providing feedback is, for many *Breitbart* readers, an important component of their textual engagement.[186]

The significance of user feedback is not lost on Breitbart's editors, who have actively exploited the site's extratextual components in ways that foster audience engagement while challenging traditional Genettian notions of paratextuality. Over time, the site has achieved a synergistic relationship between these supposedly subordinate elements in which they work to usurp the primacy of the stories they accompany. For example, on the site's main page, every headline is accompanied by a link detailing the number of comments the article has received and clicking the link allows readers to bypass the article entirely and go directly to the accompanying comment section. The headline draws readers in; the comment section compels them to stay and add their own voices to the din. As a consequence, exclusively paratextual reading strategies are privileged while the site's actual journalistic content is relegated to subordinate status. This synergy and the resultant foregrounding of user-generated paratexts complicate questions of authorship, authorial responsibility, textuality, and paratextual influence in ways that are novel and uniquely well suited to the site's populist conservative ethos.

In order to understand how *Breitbart's* comment section works towards these ends, we must first examine its origins. As a consequence, I begin with a brief account of the ideological roots of *Breitbart's* founding, an act that was inspired by conservative provocateur Andrew Breitbart's contempt for what he calls the "Democrat-Media Complex" (Breitbart 103). Convinced

---

[184] According to the site's 2018 Media Kit, *Breitbart's* audience skews 60% male (Breitbart News Network).

[185] Frank Biden is Vice President Joe Biden's younger brother.

[186] According to a Breitbart spokesperson, the site receives "approximately 4 million comments on its articles each month, which equals roughly 48 million a year" (Warzel).

that the so-called "mainstream news media"[187] had been hopelessly corrupted by the twin evils of "cultural Marxism" and "Critical Theory"—forces he attributes directly to the influence of the Frankfurt School in American post-secondary education—Breitbart created his online news outlet as a journalistic platform for his own brand of right-wing populism. After his untimely death, control of the website was handed-off to *Breitbart* co-founder Stephen K. Bannon. Under Bannon's leadership, *Breitbart's* rhetoric became increasingly incendiary while readership, and reader comments, grew exponentially. With this growth, *Breitbart's* comment section became a central element in the construction of the site's textuality and remains so today.

Because these comments play such a prominent role in the construction of the article, they work to create a situation of ambiguity with regard to textuality, authorship, and authorial responsibility. The prefix "para" suggests that paratexts exist *outside* a central, or foundational, text. Yet, this is not the case with *Breitbart* readers' feedback. Not only do user comments appear unbidden on the same "page" as the story they attend, the volume and peritextual location of the comments violate the pragmatic rules of paratextual discourse. It is commonly understood that peritexts should not exceed the texts they accompany in length or duration; this is an unspoken socio-textual rule.[188] Nevertheless, this is exactly what happens in the case of *Breitbart's* comment section. As a consequence, it is not at all clear what is "para" and what is "text." For this same reason, authorship is called into question. If we accept Jonathan Gray's notion that "when you put

---

[187] The phrase "mainstream news media" is a descriptor used by conservative pundits, politicians, and others on the right to describe any established media organization that does not enthusiastically promote conservative political ideology and has little, if anything, to do with the popularity or scope of influence of the outlets in question. If ratings serve as any guide, conservative voices dominate American mass media. For example, Fox News was recently named the top-rated basic cable network for the fourth year in a row (Andreeva & Johnson), Sean Hannity and Rush Limbaugh host the two highest-rated radio programs in the country (Lipsky), and *Hannity*, *Tucker Carlson Tonight*, *The Ingraham Angle*, and *The Five* represent four of the top five programs in cable news (Joyella). If this doesn't represent "mainstream" popularity, I'm not sure what does.

[188] This rule becomes jarringly evident if we think about it being violated in the context of other media. For example, imagine going to see a film wherein the duration of the opening credit sequence was 100 times that of the film itself.

the work and paratext together, you get the text" (Gray and Brookey 102), then we must see the prominent role of reader comments as constructing an ambiguous form of authorship.

Similarly, *Breitbart's* comment section fails to provide any clear delineations of authorial responsibility and this begs a persistent question: Just who is accountable for the inflammatory comments that appear on the site? Much of the controversy surrounding Breitbart focuses on precisely this question, with some placing responsibility with the site's editors, others with *Disqus* (the comment moderating platform utilized by *Breitbart*), and still others with the comments' authors. If *Breitbart* is to be believed, each of these attributions is at least partially accurate. According to a site spokesperson, *Disqus* provides the first level of moderation by employing a "continuously updated word filter" to identify and eliminate offensive posts (Warzel). As a second defense, Breitbart's readers police comments by flagging objectionable content for review. Comments that receive enough flags from audience members are "automatically withdrawn from visibility, pending [Breitbart's] moderator review" (Warzel). Ultimately, I argue that this dispersion of accountability creates a "situation of communication" in which *Breitbart's* editors are able to selectively take responsibility for the reader-generated discourse they have already commodified, packaged as primary text, and published.

I close this chapter with a brief discussion of how Breitbart readers' comments extend their influence along centrifugal vectors in ways that impact the site's overseers and the wider political landscape. It has been a consistent theme throughout this work that paratexts routinely exert their force outside the realm of textuality, and these user-generated paratexts are no different. What is notable about them, however, is their "pragmatic quality." For Genette, the pragmatic quality of a paratextual message is tied up in the message's situation of communication (*Paratexts* 8)— specifically, the force of the message, its intended receiver, and the sender's authority. *Breitbart's*

user-generated comments are quite novel in these respects. Not only do they confound the traditional one-to-many model of mass communication by adding a direct mode of many-to-one feedback, they also have endowed their previously marginalized authors with a degree of authority and political gravitas they have been historically denied.

5.1 The Ideological Genesis of Breitbart News: The Coopting of "Enlightenment as Mass Deception"

In some respects, Andrew Breitbart was an unlikely candidate for founding a far-right news site. Born of Irish descent in 1969, Breitbart was adopted at 3 weeks old and raised Jewish (Beam). His birth certificate lists his biological father's occupation as "folk singer" (Ibid.), a job that was no doubt more prevalent in the late 1960s than it is today. His adoptive parents were well-to-do. His father, Gerry Breitbart, owned The Fox and Hounds, a popular Santa Monica steakhouse and celebrity watering hole. His mother, Arlene, was a banker. Growing up in the tony liberal enclave of Brentwood, California, Breitbart enjoyed a privileged, media-saturated childhood. In his autobiography, *Righteous Indignation*, he recounts:

> I was the ultimate Generation X slacker, not particularly political, and, in retrospect, a default liberal. I thought that going to four movies a week, knowing the network television grid, and spending hours at Tower Records were my American birthright. As a middle-class kid growing up in upper-middle-class Brentwood, my parents went overboard to provide me the highest standard of living. And I took advantage of their overwhelming generosity. (13)

After a mediocre performance in prep school, Breitbart went on to attend Tulane University, where he spent much of his time drinking, drugging, and gambling (Breitbart 19-25). When forced to declare a major, Breitbart cheekily left the decision to "an attractive group of

blonde coeds" he bumped into on campus (Breitbart 21). As he recalls, "After less than five minutes of discussing my academic interests or lack thereof, we decided upon American Studies" (Breitbart 21).

This choice would prove fateful. In the short run, the amorphous, multi-disciplinary character of an American Studies major allowed Breitbart to carry on his debauchery with few consequences while expending as little intellectual energy as possible. In his words, "it ensured I would accomplish nothing in the next few years" (Breitbart 21). Nevertheless, Breitbart read just enough to be dangerous, and, in the long run, the critical theory he managed to digest worked to inform his worldview in powerful, if contradictory, ways.

Upon graduating from Tulane, Breitbart experienced the kind of existential crisis that is often preceded by a liberal arts education. Directionless, and armed only with his American Studies degree, he leveraged his childhood friendships into a job as a script runner for a Hollywood production company. As he ferried screenplays about the Los Angeles area, he listened to AM radio. When he came across Rush Limbaugh, he had an epiphany:

> Limbaugh, like the professor I always wanted but never had the privilege to study under, created a vivid mental picture of the architecture of a world that I resided in but couldn't see completely: the Democrat-Media Complex. Embedded in Limbaugh's analysis of politics was always a tandem discussion of the media. Each segment relentlessly pointed to collusion between the media and the Democratic Party. (Breitbart 34)

After quitting his production job, Breitbart moved on to the world of online media, first working for the left-wing *Huffington Post*[189] and later for the *Drudge Report.* All the while, he

---

[189] Of his time at the Huffington Post, Breitbart said, "It became impossible for me to work with Arianna's staff. They're liberals" (qtd. in Oney, 36). Nevertheless, he cites his time with Huffington as the basis for his founding of

continued his AM radio education, and, importantly, returned to the critical theory he was exposed to at Tulane in an effort to understand the origins of the Democrat-Media Complex. In the end, it was his exposure to the writings of Camille Paglia that helped Breitbart to single out what he perceived as the pernicious source of media corruption:

> Her articles and assorted writings began to open my mind up to the fraud that is higher education in America. The origins of the problems in the media and in Hollywood begin in the sacrosanct, stultifyingly politically correct world of academia. It seemed to me that while Professor Limbaugh was focusing on the corrupt relationship between politics and the media and Professor Paglia was focusing on the corrupt relationship between politics and academia, I was beginning to hyper focus, as we ADD types are apt to do, on the corrupt relationship between Hollywood and politics, and how academia, the media, and the political class conspicuously either ignore or denigrate all the ideas, authors, and voices that were now my lifeblood. (Breitbart 36)

Spurred on by the voices of Limbaugh and Paglia, Breitbart set out to investigate "where that Democrat-Media Complex had been formed and why it had taken hold" (Breitbart 105). The problem, Breitbart decided, could be traced back to the influence of "cultural Marxism" in American colleges and universities, and the chief purveyors of this influence were the critical theorists of the Frankfurt School.

In his autobiography, Breitbart devotes an entire chapter to demonizing thinkers including Marcuse, Adorno, Horkheimer, and Fromm. His attacks are often overly broad and *ad hominem* in character. Writing of Adorno and Horkheimer's flight from Nazi Germany Breitbart asserts:

Breitbart, reasoning that just as the Huffington Post served as an electronic forum for progressives, *Breitbart.com* could serve as digital salon for those on the right. For more, see Oney 34-37.

These were not happy people looking for a new lease on life. When they moved to California, they simply couldn't deal with the change of scenery—there was cognitive dissonance… They had moved to heaven on earth from Nazi Germany and apparently could not handle the fun, the sun, and the roaring good times. Ingratitude is not strong enough a word to describe these hideous malcontents. (Breitbart 115)

While contemptuous of nearly all Frankfurt School theorists, Breitbart held particular scorn for Theodor Adorno. He describes Adorno's influence on American culture and education at length:

At the same time, Frankfurt School scholar Theodor Adorno was sliding Marxism into the American consciousness by attacking popular trends in the world of art… He argued that television and movies were problematic because they appealed to the masses—but television and the movies weren't catering to the public tastes, they were shaping them, Adorno argued. Popular art and culture had destroyed true art, which is always used for revolutionary purposes, he said. All popular art therefore had to be criticized as a symptom of the capitalist system. All art had to be torn down. Performance art and modern art found their philosophical foundation in Adorno. The long line stretching from the *Piss Christ* to Karen Finley smearing herself with feces to Susan Sarandon celebrating being hit with transsexual projectile vomit all had its roots with Adorno. (Breitbart 118)

It is not surprising that a populist demagogue like Breitbart would be taken aback by the elitist ideals expressed by Adorno. Throughout much of his best-known writings on art and culture

Adorno's contempt for the "masses"—and American masses in particular—is palpable.[190] What is surprising, however, is the way in which Breitbart—and the conservative movement more broadly—coopted many of the central arguments of Adorno and Horkheimer's famous critique of the "culture industries."

Much of the logic that informs Breitbart's critique of the mainstream media is identical to that of "Enlightenment as Mass Deception." Only the destructive ideological forces have changed. Where Adorno and Horkheimer decried the insidious force of monopoly capitalism, Breitbart substituted cultural Marxism. It is as if Breitbart read "The Culture Industry," became incensed over Adorno and Horkheimer's curmudgeonly elitism, and decided to recast them as the villains of their own story.

The similarities between the two narratives are striking. Both exhibit nostalgia for an idealized past, a time before malevolent ideologies corrupted the practice of everyday life. For Adorno and Horkheimer, this was the preindustrial era, a time when the twin horrors of monopoly capitalism and mechanical reproducibility had yet to sully the aura of cultural productions—a period prior to the advent of "aesthetic barbarism," when culture had yet to be subsumed "into the realm of administration." (Adorno and Horkheimer 104). For Breitbart, it was the time of our nation's founders, an era that produced "realistic men" who "understood human nature because they were part of the great Western tradition of philosophy and literature and history," and, as a consequence, truly understood the value of "limited government and individual liberty" (Breitbart 106-107).

---

[190] For example, in "A Social Critique of Radio Music" Adorno bemoans the democratizing effect of medium, asking: "Does a symphony played on the air remain a symphony? Are the changes it undergoes by wireless transmission merely slight and negligible modifications or do those changes affect the very essence of the music? Are not the stations in such a case bringing the masses in contact with something totally different from what is supposed to be, thus also exercising an influence quite different than the one intended? And as to the large numbers of people who listen to 'good music': *How* do they listen to it? Do they listen to a Beethoven symphony in a concentrated mood? Can they do so even do so if they want to?" (229-230)

Correspondingly, both narratives cast mass media gatekeepers and stakeholders as ideological despots hell-bent on perpetuating their hegemonic status via the brazen manipulation of messages delivered through their linear, top-down communication systems. Indeed, Breitbart's "Democrat-Media Complex" and Adorno and Horkheimer's "culture industry" are essentially one in the same. The only disparities lie in terminology and the motives ascribed to the ruling media classes. Both exercise their power unapologetically in a bid to create an overarching narrative of cultural uniformity. For Adorno and Horkheimer, "All mass culture is identical, and… Those in charge no longer take much trouble to conceal the structure, the power of which increases the more bluntly its existence is admitted (95). For Breitbart, these gatekeepers:

> … were all part of the same incestuous, elitist orgy… They were all from the same group of people who made tons of money, vacationed in nice places, flew first class—or private, and then dictated to the rest of America how to live 'sustainable' lives… they all felt the need to lecture Americans on how to behave sexually, what to eat, how to fly, where to shop… and what's more, they agreed on the answers to all those questions. (102-103)

Perhaps the most important parallel, however, comes in discussions of those who resist the messages that emanate from the ruling media class by offering alternative narratives. In both scenarios, subaltern voices are marginalized. Writing of the technological progression from telephone to radio, Adorno and Horkheimer tell their readers,

> The former [telephone] liberally permitted the participant to play the role of subject. The latter [radio] democratically makes everyone equally into listeners, in order to expose them in authoritarian fashion to the same programs put out by different

stations. No mechanism of reply has been developed, and private transmissions are condemned to unfreedom. (95-96)

Breitbart makes a similar argument about those who might seek to disseminate a story that goes against the grain of the mainstream media narrative: "If you've got a big story, the Complex will do what it always does: attack you personally using the PC lexicon. You immediately become a racist, sexist, homophobic, jingoistic nativist" (151). In both instances, dissenting voices are delegitimized, and consequently, relegated to obscurity. It is in this manner that the Democrat-Media Complex and the culture industry work to enforce cultural uniformity, and it is this "sameness" that Adorno, Horkheimer, and Breitbart all detested most intensely.

It is here, however, that the similarities between our cultural theorists end. Where Adorno and Horkheimer saw "no mechanism for reply," Breitbart saw the Internet. In his autobiography, Breitbart acknowledges that conservative media exists (he specifically cites Fox News and talk radio), but notes that "*those outlets are exponentially outnumbered and outgunned by the Complex*" (148, emphasis in the original). The solution, he suggests, lies with social media platforms and related digital venues that allow conservative voices relatively unfettered expression. In a chapter entitled, "Thank God for the Internet," he describes the World Wide Web as a "free-for-all libertarian haven" (41), and recalls:

> I saw, even at the very beginning, that this was a new medium born of unwieldy individualism, of people who so desperately wanted to communicate with the world outside of the Democrat-Media Complex (whether they were aware of that construct or not), that they sought out each other in this technological wilderness. I recognized that for the Internet to exist, and for people to have such a massive desire to get on it, there had to be a driving force—and that driving force was the

suffocating ubiquity of the Complex. Here was a place where freedom of speech

truly existed where you could say anything, think anything, be anything. (41)

It is plain from this passage that Breitbart viewed digitally mediated communication as a

remedy for the cultural uniformity being propagated by the cultural Marxists that he perceived as

controlling the mainstream media. This marks another important point of divergence from the

Frankfurt School narrative. While Adorno and Horkheimer imagined mass media as a linear

delivery system,[191] Breitbart perceived the Internet as the key to making a more transactional

model of mass communication a reality. In a discussion of conservative praxis, he tells his readers

to, "Get in the fight" (149), noting that online, "there's no Complex gatekeeper to stop us from

posting the truth about enemies of freedom and liberty in this country" (Ibid.). He concludes his

thoughts with a call to action: "You are soldiers in this war against the Institutional Left. You have

been issued your weapons. Go out and use them" (150).

Based on the popularity of the *Breitbart* comment section, it seems that many readers have

heeded its founder's call—but not in the manner that he proposed. Breitbart urged his readers to

act as "citizen journalists" (149), and make use of "the MP3 recorder, the phone camera, and the

blogosphere"[192] (150) in an effort to create counter narratives to the ones being presented by the

Complex. This is not what happened.

As if intentionally modeling the principle of selective exposure, many *Breitbart's* readers

proudly eschew engagement with mainstream media narratives altogether.[193] Rather than

---

[191] Such a view was likely informed by Adorno and Horkheimer's exposure to Joseph Goebbels' deft manipulation of mass media in the years leading up to and including WWII.

[192] "It's one thing to say that the left likes socialism, but it's a real story to get Barack Obama to admit it on camera, as he did to Joe the Plumber during the 2008 election cycle" (Breitbart 150)

[193] Prideful rejection of "liberal media" is a common theme on the *Breitbart* boards. Breitbart reader Jenga Kingston's response to a story about Latinx representation in Hollywood films provides a typical example: "I haven't been to a 'theater movie' in over 20 years. And anything I see on TV now I make sure that it was already included of [*sic*] what I pay for in the lineup of what I watch for other programs. Even then, most of the stuff from these liberal nutjob [*sic*] actors I don't even watch even if it doesn't cost me (Kingston).

generating new texts to countermand the effects of the Democrat-Media Complex, readers focus their attention on responding to the messages being disseminated on *Breitbart*. The comment section has become their "mechanism for reply" and, as such, has established a new standard for reader engagement.

Breitbart readers demonstrate little patience for traditional, top-down style modes of mass communication that lack feedback opportunities.[194] As one reader declares, "If there is no comment section, I won't read the article. Why? Because it shows me that the writer is an authoritarian jerk" (Living for Truth). The Breitbart faithful associate the opportunity to supply user-generated feedback with "fair and balanced" journalism and "think online stories without comment sections automatically are hiding something" (TARDRE).

Accordingly, sites that forego comment sections are viewed with a combination of suspicion and disdain. Efforts to suppress reader feedback are seen as desperate attempts, made by fading hegemons, to maintain their dominance and enforce a cultural uniformity that the public has largely rejected. As another *Breitbart* commenter explains:

> When I see a [*sic*] an article without a comment section what I see is not only a
> desire to control but also a real weakness, a fear that even a comment section often
> ignored by many readers is enough to completely derail their attempt of control.
> The political Left [*sic*] and more broadly the political elite are desperate to maintain
> control. The good news is they're losing that control. The bad news [is] the more

---

[194] It should be noted that this marks an overall trend in engagement with contemporary media more generally. As David Squires explains in *Social Media's Impact on Journalism*, "Today, the audience expects to have a choice in what information they choose to read and most believe they should have an active role in contributing to the content and voicing their opinions. Gone is the past concept of 'media professional' that determines what the audience's needs are in readership" (Squires).

they lose the more they push and become ever more extreme in their attempts to

control. (Roj Blake)

Echoing comments like the one above, *Breitbart's* editors have taken pains to craft a

narrative that links readers' ability to comment back to Breitbart's denunciation of the cultural

elites in charge of the Democrat-Media Complex. In doing so, they conflate the site's mechanism

for reply with technological progress, individual liberty, and *Breitbart's* unique brand of right-

wing populism. An October 2015 article makes the connection clear:

> The Internet was born open but is becoming closed everywhere. Nowhere is this
>
> more apparent than in the rush to shutter readers' comments sections at major news
>
> organizations. Cheered on by intolerant, snobbish cultural elites, news
>
> organizations from *The Verge* to *The Daily Beast* have, in recent months, informed
>
> their readers to take their opinions elsewhere… Having initially cheered on the
>
> death of the "gatekeepers of information," cultural elites are now scrambling to
>
> reinstall those barriers. Too late, they have discovered that people don't always
>
> agree with them—and now they want to push that disagreement into the wilderness
>
> of the Internet… Now [that] the whole population is tech-savvy enough to have
>
> their say, authoritarians are scrambling for a return to the era of broadcast news, in
>
> which viewers were left with calling up the station and ranting down the phone as
>
> their only means of robust criticism. (Bokhari)

In coopting the logic of "The Culture Industry," Andrew Breitbart refashioned Adorno and

Horkheimer's elitist, anti-capitalist lamentations into a meta-level manifesto of right-wing

American populism in which the Frankfurt School scholars became the villains of their own

narrative. In Breitbart's retelling, the mass media continue to serve as the delivery systems for an

oppressive ideology that attempts to enforce stifling cultural uniformity, but the ideology in question has morphed from capitalism to cultural Marxism. As in Adorno and Horkheimer's critique, subaltern voices continue to face the threat of marginalization; however, the Internet has presented the site's readership with the comment section as a mechanism for reply—a mechanism they not only embrace, but also have come to associate with "fair" and "unbiased" journalism.

5.2   The Comment Section as a Novel Mode of Paratextuality

In its capacity as a mechanism for reply the online comment section represents an emergent mode of paratextuality that deftly exploits and reinforces the shibboleths of American populist conservatism. In order to highlight both its originality and exploitative functionality, it is useful to consider the comment section in terms of Genette's five key elements of paratextuality: location (where), temporality (when), form (how), sender and receiver (who), and function (to do what?).

5.2.1   *The When and Where of the Online Comment Section*

Feedback to mass media texts has long taken paratextual form. For example, various non-verbal modes of audience response (e.g. laughing, clapping, hooting, hissing, etc.) are surely as old as performance itself and continue to exert a strong influence on media engagement.[195] Moreover, cultural productions of textual analysis and critique have a history that spans at least two millennia. As Golban and Ciobanu observe in *A Short History of Literary Criticism*:

> In the ancient period, the literary criticism emerged when first verbal artworks of imaginative invention originally performed orally were encoded in written texts, which occurred in classical Greece in the sixth to fourth centuries BCE. The verbal works of art became literature, and this led to coming into being of literary criticism. (16)

---

[195] The continuing popularity of the "laugh track" in contemporary situation comedies is a testament to this fact.

Accordingly, the "first critical voices raising questions about the value of literary texts" included both the *kritai*—a collection of "elite, cultured men who studied literary texts as artistic, social, and ideological discourses" (Nightingale 37)—and philosophers such as Aristotle, whose *Poetics* famously provided analyses of the works of Sophocles, Aeschylus, Euripides, and others.[196]

Notably, however, these paratextual enunciations were always later and epitextual in character. For example, Aristotle composed his critical analysis of *Oedipus Rex* a century *after* it was written, and his musings, when finally put to paper, were uniformly located *outside* the physical boundaries of Sophocles' tragedy. This kind of later epitextual discourse was the dominant modality of paratextual reply for 2000 years and only became progressively more ubiquitous during the modern era as mechanical reproducibility allowed mass media texts to become lengthier and increasingly prevalent.

The online comment section is more immediate and synchronous than its analog forebears. Whereas prior mechanisms for reply regularly involved lengthy temporal delays, the online comment is nearly instantaneous. For example, the comment hosting service *Disqus* allows its clients to set and enforce moderation rules using a number of "pre-moderation settings" that flag troublesome comments prior to publication based on factors such as the presence of external links (after all, *Disqus'* clients don't want their readers being sent along centrifugal vectors away from their site unless they're being paid by the click), a poster's reputation, or the presence of "restricted words" (*Disqus*, "Create and Enforce"). Nevertheless, if a reader with a "clean record" decides to post a link-free comment *sans* restricted verbiage,[197] it will appear online immediately following

---

[196] It is widely believed that Aristotle also wrote a critique of Homer's Iliad, though it has been lost to time (Golban and Ciobanu 17).

[197] For their part, *Breitbart* readers appear to be keenly aware of the restrictions imposed regarding verbiage and routinely use commenting strategies that allow them to circumvent these linguistic limitations. While *Disqus* policy

submission. In such cases, the only temporal delay between the publication of an article and its accompanying comment is the time it takes the reader to compose her message and click "submit."

Temporal propinquity is an integral component of the comment section's paratextuality and the importance of timeliness is reflected in the policies and practices that surround commenting. In their primer on moderation settings, *Disqus* encourages clients to close discussion threads "after 14 or 30 days" (*Disqus*, "Create and Enforce"). In theory, this advice is meant to make moderation simpler for those attempting to manage sites with extensive user feedback. In practice however, this suggested limitation works to bolster *Disqus'* reputation as a "fully real-time" platform that is "perfect for participation on breaking news, hot discussions, live events, and video content" (Shin et al. 253). By artificially limiting the time window for feedback, *Disqus'* clients focus user's engagement on their most recent content and lend the act of commenting a sense of urgency. The message is clear: Speak now or forever hold your peace.

This sense of temporal immediacy is further enhanced via *Disqus'* practice of using real-time social and email notifications to alert commenters of new activity related to their postings. By default, the platform's users are alerted whenever one of their comments generates a reply (*Disqus*, "Subscribe/Unsubscribe"). Users may also "opt in" to be notified via RSS or email any time a new comment appears in a subscribed feed. Such notifications constitute another layer of paratextuality, serving as epitextual prompts, or sub-paratexts, which prod users along centripetal vectors encouraging both timely engagement with, and further creation of, the user-generated peritexts that attend the site's journalistic content. In a sense, these alerts may be seen as the mass

---

maintains that, "Language that offends, threatens, or insults groups solely based on race, color, gender, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or other traits is against our network terms and has no place on the *Disqus* network" (qtd. in Warzel), this kind of inflammatory language is common. Commenters merely change the spelling of keywords in such a way as to avoid censorship by the hosting service's moderation algorithm. As a consequence, gay people become "D3ykes" and "fa ggots;" LatinX people are referred to as "wetb acks;" African Americans are represented as "knee grows;" and left-leaning women are framed as "bi itches" or "khunts."

communication equivalent of the prompting strategies commonly deployed in face-to-face interactions. Just as we use "silences and brief statements of encouragement to draw others out" in the context of real-time dyadic communication (Adler & Proctor 257), these notifications function to facilitate further dialogue while striving to make such exchanges as synchronous as possible.

Breitbart's online comment section also enjoys a unique mode of spatial immediacy in relation to its primary text. Unlike other popular news sites such as *Yahoo News*, *The New York Times*, and the *Daily Mail*—currently the three most visited digital news outlets that support comments (Bhangu)—which force readers to click additional links to access reader responses, *Breitbart*'*s* layout displays users' comments on the same page as its journalistic content. What's more, the site provides its readers at least two opportunities—via links adjacent to the story's headline on the site's home page and the article's main page—to bypass the principal article in its entirety and navigate directly to its attendant comment section. This peritextual positioning lends the site's comment section a degree of centrality, visibility, and discursive power not often enjoyed by user-generated paratexts.

One of the few close equivalents may be found in the art of classical graffiti, a mass mediated mechanism for reply that emerged in the United States around 1960, and which, like the practices of literary criticism discussed above, has roots stretching back to Ancient Greece (Balode 28). In the context of mass communication, spatial proximity and conspicuousness have a significant influence on the efficacy and impact of extratextual and para-institutional messages. This is one reason the *graffitista*—or "writers" as they are known colloquially—regularly risk both freedom and physical well being in order to post their work in highly visible locations that are

linked, symbolically or otherwise, to dominant social institutions.[198] In her sociological study of

graffiti writers, Elina Balode addresses these issues:

> According to artists, graffiti and street art is also a medium. It fulfills [a] media
> function when [an] artist by leaving his message shows to the society visually on
> the street topics that are pressing at that moment for [the] public. One of the artists
> stressed that it is mass medium in its core as street art is not subject to censorship
> or affected by any political power, it is exactly the same as the society is and sends
> to the society messages that are not broadcasted by traditional media. Looking from
> [a] historical viewpoint, already in the settlement centers of Ancient Greece the
> most current information was scraped straight into the walls of buildings, nowadays
> it is done with different methods, but according to artists, the idea stays the same.
> (31)

Of course, one primary difference between Balode's graffiti artists and *Breitbart's*

commenters is that the latter are engaged in a mode of expression that is not only sanctioned, but

also encouraged by the social institutions (*Breitbart*, *Disqus*) that provide the platform for their

paratextual utterances. Nevertheless, the testimony offered by Balode's artists is otherwise quite

similar to that of *Breitbart's* commenters. Both forms of expression are largely uncensored,[199] are

dedicated to the timely public display of messages that would otherwise be ignored by legacy

---

[198] Indeed, the practice of "tagging" is so hazardous that Wikipedia currently maintains an entry dedicated to tracking "graffiti and street art injuries and deaths" ("List of Graffiti").

[199] Despite the assertion of Balode's graffiti artist, we must acknowledge that graffiti is, to some degree, subject to censorship and that these modes of censorship closely resemble those that impact the content broadcast by *Breitbart's* users. There must be, for example, a degree of peer-based self-censorship that enters into both equations. One can no more imagine a precocious young writer spray-painting "Learning is fun!" on the side of a high school than a veteran *Breitbart* commenter like Bedford1 posting a transphilic statement like "Caitlyn Jenner is sexy!" on the site's message boards, even though such sentiments must surely be felt by some. In addition, both graffiti and online comments are subject to eventual erasure by the relevant authorities for any number of reasons.

media outlets, and are considered especially relevant to the messages' attendant subaltern counter-publics. A *Breitbart* reader's 2016 post provides a case in point:

> Comments sections are the great liberator of public opinion. For example, the MSM will champion people like Caitlyn Jenner, but the vast majority of the comments will be revulsion. Only then can you see how diametrically opposed the MSM and the populace really are. The brutal honesty of the comments section assures me that I am not a homophobe, or a racist or whatever. The MSM has been trying to shame us all of our lives and now they have been outed. (Bedford1)

Bedford1's comment ticks all the boxes. It is timely (Bedford1 made his post in 2016, just as Caitlyn Jenner's transition fully captured the public's attention), addresses an issue considered pressing by its target audience (the mainstreaming of transgender identity), portrays a sentiment that is representative of, and fundamental to, the beliefs of the counter-public it seeks to address (that gender identity is properly determined by biological sex), and, because of the transphobic nature of the post, it expresses a view that is incompatible with "mainstream media" representations.

Importantly however, unlike traditional graffiti art, Bedford1's comment draws much of its discursive power from the fact that it is, to some degree, institutionally authorized—a quality that is inextricably bound up with the spatial and temporal characteristics of semiotic practice. Because of its unauthorized placement, Graffiti is, more often than not, transgressive in character,[200] and it is this transgressive quality that contributes to its efficacy and discursive

---

[200] Although it should be noted that this transgressive quality is eroding as graffiti art is increasingly co-opted by mainstream culture. For an example, we need look no further than East Atlanta's Krog Street tunnel. Originally constructed in 1910 to serve the needs of Cabbagetown's mill workers, the tunnel became a canvas for gang-related graffiti in the 1980s and 90s. The messages that adorned the tunnel at that time "had the slash-and-burn bluntness of simple vandalism" and provided potential visitors "a big, dense warning that danger lurks, starting NOW (Jubera A1). Frustrated by years of unsuccessful attempts to cover up the graffiti, Cabbagetown officials began a mural project in 2002 that gave writers permission to tag the tunnel. Since then, the once parlous passage has morphed into

strength. As a semiotic practice, the public display of graffiti writing "violates the acceptable visual composition of places" (Karlander 43) and is considered by government hegemons to be "an illegitimate, unaesthetical and vile incursion into neat and orderly urban space, and thereby as a threat to a harmonious society more widely" (Karlander 43). It is this threat, linked as it is to aesthetic, spatial, and performative factors, that lends it the discursive power required to "introduce, amplify, and maintain topics, frames, and speakers, thus shaping public discourses and controversies that unfold in interconnected communication spaces" (Jungherr, et al. 404). This is not the case with online comments.

As I have already observed, reader feedback, like that found in *Breitbart's* comment section, is both sanctioned and encouraged by the institutions that host it. In the context of online media, comments equal engagement and engagement equals attention—and it is this attention that is ultimately packaged and sold to advertisers. Consequently, user-generated comments are the performative commodity at the center of *Disqus's* marketing and business plans. Much like *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *Twitter*, *YouTube,* and similar juggernauts of the digital economy, *Disqus* depends on what Tiziana Terranova has productively described as the "free cultural/affective labor" of its users in order to achieve and maintain financial viability (38). Naturally, this labor, as it is made manifest in the practice of commenting, is not "immediately recognizable as such" (Terranova 38); nor is it "produced by capitalism in any direct, cause-and-effect fashion" (Terranova 38). Indeed, it is evident from the tenor and content of users' posts that they do not view commenting as "work" at all, and, in the vast majority of instances, they are not remunerated

---

a family-friendly tourist attraction surrounded by high six-figure homes and is utterly devoid of any dint of danger. For a finely nuanced account concerning the decriminalization of graffiti and its effects on the meanings and practices of street art, see Ortiz van Meerbeke & Sletto 366-87.

for their efforts.[201] Even so, it *is* labor, and without it *Disqus* has nothing to sell. Accordingly, the financial calculus demands that the company encourage user-generated content creation and promote the resultant comments to its institutional subscribers as markers of engagement.

For its part, *Breitbart* courts comments enthusiastically. In a 2015 piece, Allum Bokhari, the site's senior technology correspondent, contrasts the outlet's views on reader feedback to those of left-leaning news organizations such as *The Pacific Standard, Brooklyn Magazine*, and *The Atlantic*: "At the risk of sounding too self-congratulatory, here at Breitbart we embrace reader's opinions. We love hearing from you guys!" (Bokhari). Similarly, in an interview with *Politico*, former Breitbart News executive chairman and White House Chief Strategist Steve Bannon suggests that one of the "best things about *Breitbart* are the comments…" (McCaskill). Of the interaction between the site's content and commenters (a group he affectionately refers to as "the hobbits"), he says:

> I noticed on *Breitbart* over the last month or two as whether certain appointments were made or certain things were done that didn't comport with behavior that deplorables or the hobbits thought were correct, it was interesting to see, you know, some of the articles written on the site and the intensity of the comments, and I think that's great. I think people are engaged. They feel like they have a voice, and

---

[201] At least one *Breitbart* commenter has managed to monetize his posting practices. The user, who goes by the screen name, That Kid from Kindergarten Cop, gained notoriety on the site (his comments have earned more than 51,000 "upvotes" from other readers) by repeatedly posting the same comment/movie quote on any articles concerning transexuality, transgenderism, or gender identity: "Boys have a penis. Girls have a vagina." In 2017, spurred on by the popularity of his posts, That Kid published a book entitled *The Gender Spectrum: A Compendium of All the Known Genders*. While exceedingly brief, the book purports to deliver "concise descriptions of each gender" and courts potential readers with a back-cover promotional blurb that reads: "You've read his bits of wisdom online now for years. Now, for the first time in print, you can relive and share with your friends and family the deep philosophical musings of That Kid from kindergarten Cop. His blowtorch of truth has melted snowflakes by the thousands and triggered SJWs into profanity laden screeds and now it is forever immortalized in print for your enjoyment" (Cover copy). *The Gender Spectrum* is currently available in paperback and Kindle formats and ranks as the 547,106th best selling title in Amazon's reference category.

just continue on… Everybody mocked them and ridiculed them, and now they've

spoken." (McCaskill)

When combined with the peritextual placement and largely peer-based moderation of *Breitbart's* comment sections, statements like the ones above have a powerful legitimizing effect on user-generated discourse. Because posts like Bedford1's are allowed to enjoy close spatial proximity with the texts they accompany and maintain this presence over a significant duration—Bedford1's comment is now four years old and still easily accessible—they gain discursive power. This power is then amplified via both tacit and explicit endorsement on the part of the media platforms that enable the practice of commenting and the institutional hegemons who have benefited from it.

When considering the "when" and "where" of the comment section, its status as a novel mode of paratextuality becomes increasingly clear. The online comment section, as it is manifest in the context of *Breitbart's* digital platform, is more immediate and synchronous than the paratextual mechanisms for reply that have preceded it. Online commenting is, in many cases, nearly instantaneous, and this temporal proximity is strongly reinforced through the policies and practices that surround it. Spatial propinquity is also encouraged via the authorized peritextual positioning of the comment section. Unlike its closest paratextual equivalent, classical graffiti, the online comment section derives its discursive power from the duration and institutional validation of its placement.

5.2.2 *The Who and How of the Online Comment Section*

If we reflect on the history of the mechanism for reply in terms of John Fiske's tripartite model of vertical intertextuality (*Television Culture* 118-125), we find that, until quite recently, mass-mediated feedback has traditionally occupied the position of the "secondary text." That is to

say, this feedback was typically provided by professionals (i.e. Andrew Breitbart's "cultural elites") and worked to "promote the circulation of selected meanings of the primary text" (Fiske, *Television Culture* 119). These meanings were, in turn, received and negotiated by the public at large, who typically did without a mass-mediated mechanism of reply.

Fiske maintains that, "Vertical intertextuality consists of a primary text's relations with other texts which refer specifically to it" (*Television Culture* 117). He further subdivides these referential texts into secondary and tertiary orders based largely on the criteria of authorship. It is, for Fiske, the "who" of these referential texts that determines their taxonomic rank. Secondary texts, as noted above, are those generated by professional critics or marketers, while tertiary texts "occur at the level of the viewer and his/her social relations" (*Television Culture* 117). In turn, each layer performs a different function in the construction of textuality as a whole. In Fiske's model, the primary text is comprised of relatively novel,[202] polysemic discourse. It is made up of what we might uncritically call an "original message," and the potential meanings inherent in this message are legion. Second-order, professionally authored texts then work to privilege some of these meanings while suppressing others. Finally, tertiary texts are those "that the viewers make themselves out of their responses" (Fiske, *Television Culture* 124).

Fiske describes the third-order texts created by audience members as "the final, crucial stage" of a text's circulation, and if we view mass communication as a linear, top-down process, this is undeniably true (*Television Culture* 117). Because meaning is made at the level of the individual audience member, these tertiary texts reveal much about "how the primary and secondary texts are read and circulated into the culture of the viewers" (Fiske, *Television Culture* 124). They are representative of the final stage of the Barthesian metamorphosis wherein the work

---

[202] I use the phrase "relatively novel" because, as Barthes convincingly argues in "Theory of the Text," "Any text is a new tissue of past citations" (39).

becomes text. If the primary and secondary texts are part of "an ideological system of bids and counterbids for the meaning of texts (Fiske, Television Culture 119), then tertiary texts reveal the winner.[203] This is, naturally, why researchers from the Birmingham CCCS forward have worked so vigorously to investigate and make public the third-level discourse of real life audiences.

The meanings expressed in these tertiary texts are the meanings that matter the most to everyone involved. For the creator of the primary text, third-order discourse provides hard evidence about how their message is being decoded. For the authors of secondary texts, tertiary texts reflect their degree of success or failure in framing the primary text. And, for audiences, the tertiary texts they create reflect the actual meanings being made from the various cultural productions to which they have been exposed. In addition, as we observed with Bedford1's post, these third-order texts often present readers a basis for social comparison, thereby affording them a range of socially acceptable decodings to choose from.

Despite the significance of third-order discourse in the tripartite model of intertextuality, such texts have historically been granted little in the way of widespread cultural import or consideration. Until very recently, primary and secondary texts have conspired to corner the market on cultural capital. This is what both Andrew Breitbart and the theorists of the Frankfurt School understood so well. While the culture industries' productions provided the fuel that fired the celebrity of critics such as Pauline Kael and Harold Bloom, their reviews—whether good or bad—lent gravitas to these productions.[204] All the while, the meanings being made by the "masses" garnered little attention.

---

[203] There is, of course, a possibility that both texts lose their bids for ideological supremacy should the receiver chose to respond to the primary and secondary texts in a wholly oppositional manner.

[204] For instance, I know more than one aspiring writer-cum-English professor who would be delighted just to have their work deemed important enough to be panned in the pages of *The New York Review of Books*.

Indeed, when such meanings were addressed at all, it was often with varying degrees of contempt. Take, for example, Pauline Kael's now famous review of *Dirty Harry* (1971). It is a cleverly written, second-order, paratextual device that, despite the arguably well-meaning intent of the author, fairly drips with elitist, "I know better" scorn. In it, Kael repeatedly takes aim at those who might read the film from a dominant position, tacitly suggesting, *à la* Adorno and Horkheimer, that such viewers are little more than cultural dupes. Early in her review, Kael calls the film, "a kind of hardhat *The Fountainhead*" ("Dirty Harry: Saint Cop")—a not-so-subtle, class-baiting reference to the blue-collar workers who attacked antiwar protestors in New York's 1970 Financial District Riot. In another passage so pregnant with contempt and casual racial animus as to make one wince, she notes, "The movie was cheered and applauded by Puerto Ricans in the audience, and they jeered—*as they were meant to*—when the maniac whined and pleaded for his legal rights (Ibid., emphasis added). Finally, she implicitly infantilizes proponents of the film by describing a young child's interaction with her father: "On the way out, a pink-cheeked little girl was saying 'That was a good picture' to her father. Of course; the dragon had been slain" (Ibid.). Nowhere in the piece does Kael acknowledge that the film might speak to viewers in a multitude of voices. In fact, she denies any possibility of polysemy by asserting, "*Dirty Harry* is not one of those ambivalent, you-can-read-it-either-way jobs, like *The French Connection…*" (Ibid.). Finally, towards the end of her critique, Kael sums up the film with a sweeping ethical pronouncement: "*Dirty Harry* is a deeply immoral movie" (Ibid.).

Such rhetoric is the hallmark of what W. Phillips Davison and subsequent media effects scholars have described as the "third-person effect," a hypothesis which maintains that, "individuals who are members of an audience that is exposed to persuasive communication (whether or not this communication is intended to be persuasive) will expect the communication

to have a greater effect on others than on themselves" (Davison 3). Put simply, people experiencing the third-person effect feel like they "know better" than those around them when it comes to making sense out of mass-mediated messages. Of course, sometimes, they do. But, other times, they do not. The effect does not discriminate. It applies to both the recognized expert and the tinfoil hat wearing conspiracy theorist.[205]

In every case, it is the self-serving bias at the heart of the third-person effect—an attitude that Davison neatly captures when he writes, "Each person may reason: I haven't been influenced by this widely publicized nonsense, but *they* probably have been" (12, emphasis in the original)—that often provokes feelings of anger, resentment, and shame in third-parties, particularly when such bias appears at the level of second-order, professional, mass mediated discourse. Imagine, if you will, how even a self-styled progressive who identified with *Dirty Harry's* anti-bureaucratic themes might have felt after reading Kael's review.[206] The implicit ethical calculus is hardly complicated. If, as Kael suggests, *Dirty Harry* is a "deeply immoral movie" ("Dirty Harry"), then taking enjoyment from the film is, *ipso facto*, a deeply immoral act. Add to this, that the review was written in 1972, a time when the reader/viewer was afforded little, if any, mechanism for reply capable of reaching a wide audience, and you have a perfect amalgam of structural and cultural influences capable of stifling the circulation of tertiary discourse in opposition to Kael's second-order, paratextual pronouncements. It is precisely this kind of chilling effect that Davison cites when he notes:

---

[205] In fact, there is good reason to suspect that the third-person effect may be more prevalent amongst experts than laypeople. As Davison observes, "A number of scholars have speculated that 'experts' are particularly likely to overemphasize the effects of the media. A journalist turned political scientist attributes this tendency especially to students of politics and to communication theorists, explaining that this may be because they are isolated from the actual operation of media organizations" (8-9).

[206] I for one have always been struck by the thematic similarities between Siegel's *Dirty Harry* and Forman's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975), a film Kael lauded as a "Smashingly effective version of Ken Kesey's novel" (*5001 Nights* 432).

The third-person effect is probably involved in the "spiral of silence" which, according to recent theory about the formation of public opinion, leads those on one side of an issue to express their opinions with more and more volume and confidence, while those on the other side of the issue tend to fall silent (12).

The socio-political significance of this chilling effect should not be underestimated, particularly in the context of American populist conservatism. It is the logic of the spiral of silence that Richard Nixon invoked when he lobbied the support of the "silent majority" in his November 3rd, 1969 address to the nation concerning continued U.S. involvement in the war in Vietnam (Nixon).[207] During the subsequent half-century, the notion of the silent majority has become one of the central themes of right-wing discourse, informing the thinking and strategies of countless arbiters of cultural and political conservatism, from Ronald Reagan to Donald Trump.

In calling for his readers to create their own primary texts in opposition to the narratives proffered by legacy media outlets, Breitbart hoped to mobilize the silent majority. By way of encouragement, like Nixon, he laid bare the spiral of silence, exploiting associated feelings of fear and isolation in order to gin up a kind of user-generated conservative media backlash.[208] At the same time, by "exposing," or simply "naming" (in a Barthesian sense), the previously-exnominated Democrat-Media Complex, Breitbart sought to frame much of the extant mass media discourse and agenda setting as *unheimlich*, thereby "denaturalizing" the seemingly inevitable hegemony of so-called mainstream media outlets. Yet, as I have previously observed,

---

[207] It appears that Nixon's "silent majority" appeal was successful. After the speech, the first-year president's national approval rating, which had been consistently hovering around 50%, rose to 81% (Perlman 444).

[208] In her seminal work on the spiral of silence, Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann writes extensively on the connection between fear, isolation, and the formation of prevailing public opinion, noting: "… fear of isolating oneself (not only fear of separation but also doubt about one's own capacity for judgment) is a integral part of all processes of public opinion. This is the point where the individual is vulnerable; this is where social groups can punish him for failing to toe the line. The concepts of public opinion, sanction, and punishment are all closely linked with one another" (43).

Breitbart's readers did not take to the Internet *en masse* in order to blog and vlog their way to populist mass media supremacy. Rather than crafting their own primary texts, they began commenting on the content being offered by Breitbart's "news network." In terms of vertical intertextuality, Breitbart's silent majority wanted to be heard, but they most wanted to be heard on the level of secondary discourse. They wanted precisely what Adorno and Horkheimer said they lacked—a mechanism for reply.[209]

Breitbart readers' desire to be heard at the secondary level is a pragmatic one. It is, metaphorically speaking, easier to frame a work than to paint it. In an era when labor has increasingly colonized the domains of private space and time, the demands of capital are such that many would-be conservative citizen journalists simply don't have the hours necessary for creating their own competing media narratives from the ground up. While Breitbart was correct when he observed that, "we all have the power to be citizen journalists via the Internet" (149), he overlooked the simple fact that the bills still need to get paid. Accordingly, for every Matt Drudge or James O'Keefe, there are thousands of Bedford1s. It is also important to note that merely owning the title of journalist does not guarantee readership. While it may be argued that gatekeepers no longer hold sway over access to media *forms* (e.g. film, print, video, sound recording, etc.), they still exert considerable control over access to media audiences.[210] Consequently, if it is the commenter's goal to be heard, it makes far more sense to remark on the articles that appear on an established site than it does to start a blog or to blindly send out a message on social media in hopes it gets noticed.

---

[209] In this sense, we might say that the "silent majority" was never really silent at all; they merely lacked a transmission medium that allowed them to be heard.

[210] By way of evidence, we can look to Alex Jones, the conservative provocateur behind *Infowars.com*. During the summer of 2018, Jones was "deplatformed" by a "cartel" of digital gatekeepers that included Apple, Facebook, YouTube, Spotify, and, rather humorously, YouPorn (Streiff). In the three weeks that followed, traffic for Jones's *Inforwars* site fell from a daily average of 1.4 million views to just over 700,000 (Nicas).

What we see here then, from a paratextual perspective, is an iterative layering of competing texts. In Fiske's model—which, having been formulated in the pre-Internet 1980s, is based firmly in traditional notions of textual relations—he explicitly details the ways in which the battle for meaning is waged on primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. Yet, what is left largely unmentioned is that these texts are also engaged in a competition for reach. The "primary text" is not merely primary in the chronological or foundational senses of the word, but is also primary in that it has, in the past, consistently reached the largest audience. Likewise, the secondary text has traditionally enjoyed a wider circulation than its tertiary counterpart.

Interestingly however, digital comment sections, like those found on *Breitbart*, have worked to upend this historical pattern. They have upset the "natural" order of intertextuality by elevating tertiary discourse to the level of primary text. Not only do reader comments occupy a position of spatial and temporal immediacy with regard to the site's journalistic content— privileges that ensure these tertiary texts a wide readership[211]—but they also share the same form. With the exception of the avatars that accompany reader's comments, these missives share a number of aesthetic elements with their primary texts. As with every article, each comment bears a byline with the author's name hyperlinked in blue and the time of publication. In both instances, clicking on the author's name leads the reader on a centrifugal path away from the article, to another page detailing the author's previous works. In the case of the *Breitbart* journalist, the page displays a clickable list of headlines from prior articles. In that of the commenter, the landing-page displays a comparable catalogue of links to prior postings. It is also noteworthy that both the site's journalistic content and its readers' comments appear in a similar typeface and font size. This is not to say that they are identical; they are not. At the time of this

---

[211] According to Disqus' promotional materials, "Over 50% of article views include comment reads" ("The #1 Way").

writing, *Breitbart's* news articles are presented in 12-point Georgia, while comments are displayed in 11.5-point Arial. As a consequence, it would be incorrect to say that no attempt is made to distinguish one from the other. Nevertheless, in their capacity as third-order discourse, *Breitbart* readers' comments bear a much stronger formal resemblance to their primary texts than what is found in the context of classical graffiti, water-cooler talk, or, as our *Breitbart* editor suggested, the angry phone call to the local news station. This aesthetic resemblance is further fortified via the length and style of commenters' prose. While some readers regularly post lengthy manifestos, the vast majority of commenters write in a pseudo-journalistic fashion, utilizing simple language and the subject-verb-object form to craft concise sentences and brief, two or three sentence paragraphs. As a result, it can be quite difficult to tell where the story ends and the comments begin.

As with their peritextual placement, these formal paratextual similarities have a legitimizing effect on user-generated paratextual discourse. To riff on an old axiom, if it looks like primary text, is situated like primary text, and reads like primary text, then it probably *is* primary text. It is this kind of abductive reasoning that John Wanamaker relied upon when he crafted his advertisements to look like news stories, and *Breitbart's* editors and Disqus' designers have followed the same retroductive logic in their efforts to elevate tertiary texts to primary status.[212] Just as Wanamaker's adoption of journalistic conventions worked to create a situation of communication wherein the cultural capital of the primary text was centrifugally extended to frame his advertisements, *Breitbart's* comment sections exploit these same formal

---

[212] In a way, we might say that *Breitbart's* editors and *Disqus'* designers have posthumously granted Andrew Breitbart's wish for vocal counter-public capable of creating digital narratives that compete with the "mainstream media" at the level of primary discourse.

qualities in order to lend authority to readers' user-generated feedback. As Peter Allen once sang, "Everything old is new again."[213]

Yet, despite this similarity, there are still important differences between Wanamaker's ads and *Breitbart's* comment sections. First, while Wanamaker's advertisements mimicked the formal conventions of the newspapers they appeared in, they were not, broadly speaking, related to the papers' journalistic content. While Wanamaker's ads commented upon the weather and made note of civic events that might affect business (e.g. parades and other public gatherings), they generally avoided making specific references to the news of the day. Instead, they worked to propel readers along centrifugal vectors towards his stores.

Second, and perhaps even more importantly, Wanamaker was a media gatekeeper *par excellence*. As previously noted, not only was *The North American* a family-owned enterprise, but Wanamaker's stores and his unprecedented advertising budget also provided enormous revenue streams for major papers from Philadelphia to New York. As a titan of American consumer capitalism, Wanamaker was the very definition of a cultural elite. His voice was heard, and heard clearly, by millions. *Breitbart's* readers, however, have not enjoyed these same benefits. Far from being cultural elites, they are self-described "deplorables," whose alt-right leanings have long relegated them to "silent majority" status.

More proper comparisons might be made between reader comments and other paratextual forms of mass-mediated reply such as the letter to the editor or the listener "call-ins" popularized by conservative radio programs. Still, even with these equivalents, we find discrepancies that prove digital comments to be a truly novel mode of paratextuality. While both the letter to the

---

[213] "Don't throw the past away
You might need it again some day
Dreams can come true again
When everything old is new again" (Allen, "Everything Old")

editor and the listener call-in have been elevated to the level of the primary text in much the same manner as reader feedback (that is to say that they both comprise a portion of the "content" of these works rather than existing entirely "in-para"), key differences remain with regard to the "who" and "how" of these user-generated utterances. For example, both letter and call are comparatively lacking in terms of accessibility. Whereas *Breitbart's* format allows virtually any user with a *Disqus* account to display their musings prominently, calls and letters are heavily screened, with only a select few finding an audience.[214] In this respect, the online comment section meshes far more productively with the egalitarian ethos of Andrew Breitbart's populist rhetoric.

Moreover, in terms of form, the reader comment more closely resembles the primary text than the call-in or letter. In its digital guise, the letter to the editor is regularly set off from journalistic content in a distinct and aggressive manner. Typically this is done with the help of paratextual devices, in the form of menu links—letters do not appear on the same pages as the stories and issues they comment upon and readers must click through menu options to read them—and bold, large-font headings, which identify readers' feedback as tertiary discourse. Similarly, listener calls, which have been heavily incorporated into conservative media discourse through popular segments such as Rush Limbaugh's "Open-Line Friday," often remain a clunky affair, in which the host and caller must go through a series of gyrations to ensure that he or she is, in fact, being heard. Thus, while both of these forms of tertiary discourse have been at least partially elevated to primary status, they are nevertheless more clearly identifiable with regard to their extra-textual origins.

---

[214] For instance, there is an entire "wikiHow" ("Six Steps: With Pictures!") dedicated exclusively to helping would-be callers get in touch with Rush Limbaugh (wikiHow Staff).

User-generated comments represent a form of paratextuality that is distinct from prior iterations. Within Fiske's tripartite model of vertical intertextuality, texts compete in terms of meanings and audience. Typically, primary and secondary texts—both the product of a select group of cultural elites—vied for influence over the meanings made by audiences while concomitantly reinforcing and naturalizing each other's discursive power. At the same time, however, the meanings actually being made by audiences at the tertiary level garnered little attention and enjoyed limited circulation, forcing many media consumers unwillingly into so-called "silent majority" status. Social and political conservatives from Nixon onward have exploited this chilling effect of tripartite intertextuality on third-order discourse in order to forward a populist agenda. As self-imagined members of this silenced constituency, many *Breitbart* readers have eagerly embraced the site's comment section in its capacity as mass-mediated mechanism for reply. At the same time, the comment section's formal, temporal, and spatial paratextual characteristics have worked to elevate readers' tertiary discourse to a higher textual rank.

5.2.3   The "To Do What" of the Online Comment Section

Our analysis of the "when," "where," "who," and "how" of *Breitbart's* comment section leads us inevitably to the consideration of Genette's final element of paratextuality: its function. Like the third-order meanings discussed above, a paratext's function is but one component in a larger textual calculation, but it is also the one that holds the greatest significance. It is, as we have previously observed, the paratext's "*raison d'etre*" (Genette, *Paratexts* 12).

While a paratext's temporal, spatial, formal, and authorial characteristics all play constitutive roles in its overall being, the paratext's function represents a whole that is, to borrow

from Kurt Koffka, something "other than the sum of the parts"[215] (176). For Genette, it is the

paratext's capacity to exert its influence that dictates "the essence of its appeal and existence"

(*Paratexts* 12), and while this functionality is enabled by these four subordinate elements, it also

enjoys its own independent subjective reality. Just as a work's sundry extratextual elements

(cover, foreword, table of contents, illustrations, etc.) all conspire to create a "book" that is at

once comprised of these things but still entirely different, so do the paratext's temporal, spatial,

formal, and authorial elements work to generate a paratextual force that is something "other

than" the mere sum of these characteristics. In the case of *Breitbart*, this "something" is a wide-

ranging ambiguity that applies to elements of textuality, authorship, and authorial responsibility

in ways that are uniquely well suited to the site's ideological mission. In order to fully

understand this functionality, it is important to consider how *Breitbart's* paratexts work

symbiotically in the context of "traditional" reading strategies in order to achieve this ambiguity.

Unlike the front page of a traditional newspaper, which contains both journalistic content

and extratextual elements, *Breitbart's* homepage is composed entirely of paratextual devices. At

first glance, photos, captions, headlines, bylines, advertisements, and hyperlinks all seem to vie

with one another in a colorfully baited tapestry of engagement opportunities. Upon further

examination, however, it becomes clear that the majority of these elements are layered in a

manner that places them most immediately in the service of one another rather than the articles

they attend. This layered paratextuality is reinforced and sustained via "traditional" reading

strategies.

Figure 5.1 provides an instructive example. If read in the top-down, left-to-right pattern

commonly associated with Western "reading gravity," the page's bright blue "Biden Berning!"

---

[215] From the frequently mistranslated German: "Das Ganze ist anders als die Summe seiner Teile."

headline presents itself as an intentionally ambiguous bit of wordplay which, despite its intrinsic

demand for clarification, still manages to announce the subjects of the accompanying news

piece. As a result, the headline works to trigger reader curiosity on two levels—first, by invoking

the names of Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders, two prominent targets of right wing vitriol, and

second, by using vivid language and tabloid-style alliteration to suggest that the Biden campaign

is experiencing a kind of far left, Sanders-related, progressive flameout. While inquisitive

readers can, at any time, click on the bright blue headline in order to go directly to the

accompanying article, the spatial immediacy of additional sub-paratextual elements and the force

of reading gravity encourage one to stay on the site's main page and keep reading. In some

sense, their mere presence seems to shout: Don't click yet; there's still more to see!

Figure 5.1 *Breitbart.com's* Biden Berning! Headline

Thus, rather than being immediately prompted along a centripetal vector deeper into the

site toward the article proper, the reader is encouraged to linger over the paratexts that attend and

work to clarify the headline. The subheadlines, rich with conservative trigger words like "radical" and "revolutionary," perform multiple functions, providing clarification for the enigmatic headline while simultaneously laboring to provoke the kind of affective arousal that often translates to reader engagement.[216] In turn, the photo of Biden and Sanders awkwardly bumping elbows further frames both the headline and the subheadlines, all the while offering a particularly unflattering image of Biden that is in keeping with a popular Republican narrative that seeks portray the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee as bumbling, out of touch, and suffering from age-related cognitive decline. Interestingly, the extratextual device that does the most to inform the reader about the actual subject matter of the news piece is the photo's cutline,[217] which, building on the subheadlines, explains:

> The proposed platform marks Biden's continued shift to the left, as the so-called "moderate" candidate—a label he has rejected—continues to be steered toward more radical positions to appeal to the party's base, offering "revolutionary changes." (Pollak)

This assemblage is then capped off with two more paratextual elements in the form of an author's byline and a black dialogue box indicating the number of reader comments the piece has amassed. Both of these devices are hyperlinked, leading readers to a comprehensive clickable list of the author's previous works and the article's accompanying comment section, respectively.

The preceding account suggests that many, if not all, of these extratextual elements are operating principally in the service of something other than the news piece they announce. In

---

[216] For more on the link between affective arousal and reader engagement in the context of narrowcasting, see Guerini & Staiano.

[217] The descriptive quality of the photo's caption is interesting, in part, because it harkens back to European journalistic conventions that held sway in the U.S. until the advent of the Spanish-American War in 1898. As Garst and Bernstein observe, prior to the war, "Newspaper headlines… were merely captions…" and "Headlines are almost exclusively an American development" (92).

certain instances, this is obvious, as in the case of the hyperlinked byline. Instead of working to

frame engagement with Biden/Sanders story, clicking on the author's name leads the reader to

page filled with additional headlines and leads, all of which compete for attention, potentially

diverting audiences from the original article entirely. In other instances, the principal function of

the paratext is obscured, only becoming apparent after additional engagement with the text as a

whole. For example, it is only after clicking "Biden Berning!" that the reader learns that this is

not the same headline that peritextually attends the piece. As Figure 5.2 makes clear, the "actual"

headline, or, more properly, the headline that enjoys the closest spatial proximity to the article,

"9 Radical Ideas in the Biden-Sanders 'Unity' Platform," is both less hyperbolic and more

descriptive with regard to the actual content of the piece. The mere presence of this alternative

headline suggests that the preferred function of "Biden Berning!" is something other than

framing the author's prose and this impression is only furthered by the alternative headline's

comparatively descriptive and affectively sedate language.

Headlines, and front-page headlines in particular, have always served multiple functions.

In their most fundamental capacities, headlines are expected to summarize news content while

simultaneously attracting a reader's attention (Dykstra 90). Yet, with our "Biden Berning!"

example and its associated paratextual elements, we find additional functionality. Specifically,

when combined with the inertia generated by reading gravity, our headlines, byline, photo, and

caption all work together to create what Alan Dykstra refers to as an "ideational moment" (91).

This moment is, for Dykstra, distinctly liminal, taking place in between "the textual style of the

headline and the pragmatic goal of reader selection" (Ibid.). As the reader lingers over the host of

paratextual elements displayed on the site's main page, certain forms of "belief systems"

knowledge are triggered (Lindemann 56). Importantly, as Lindemann explains, this type of

knowledge is made up of mutually held beliefs, which "may not be true," and are "based on what people *believe* 'to be the case', i.e., they depend on bias, prejudice, point of view, ideology" (56-57, emphasis in the original). Accordingly, what happens during the ideational moment is an activation of extant ideologies associated with, in the case of *Breitbart*, the so-called "alternative-right".

Figure 5.2 *Breitbart's* Biden Berning! Alternative Headline

So, while it is true that these headlines and subheadlines attempt to "draw readers in," they are not working as much to generate interest in the article proper, as they are laboring to draw the reader into a liminal ideological space where they are encouraged to "put on" their alt-right mindsets much like Clark Kent dons his Superman costume. Just as Kent is always secretly Superman, the *Breitbart* reader—because of the spiral of silence[218]—is always furtively alt-right.

---

[218] According to a July 22, 2020 poll by the Cato Institute, 77% of Republicans "have political opinions they are afraid to share" (Ekins).

In turn, this zone of paratextuality acts like a Metropolis phone booth, affording *Breitbart* readers a discrete space in between the action to fully convert into their ideological secret identities.

Following the principle of reading gravity, the reader, when finished with this ideational moment and the consumption of the paratexts immediately at hand, comes inevitably to the hyperlinked dialogue box indicating the number of comments the article has earned. This "natural" progression has led the reader away from the text and points encouragingly toward the site's comment section. The reader—now having completed his or her transformation—is prompted to click-through and engage directly with reader comments. The article itself is left out of the loop and we are faced with another level of layered extratextual elements wherein one group of paratexts (the headlines, subheadlines, photo, caption, etc.) works in the service of another (the readers' comments). Correspondingly, it is the comment section, rather than the article, that is elevated to the level of text, and, as such, serving in the capacity of the primary text has become of the section's principal functions.

At this point, we have been led back to the comment section, the principal subject of our analysis. Here we find that we are once again dealing with an example of the paratext-as-text. Nevertheless, there are important distinctions to be made between *Breitbart's* comments and the examples considered in the previous chapter that serve to cement the comments' novel paratextual status. Broadly, these distinctions are linked by ambiguity. The generation of this nebulosity is one of the comment section's principal functions. It is also the operation that makes its overall paratextual form uniquely fit for *Breitbart's* ideological mission.

As reading gravity privileges an entirely paratextual reading strategy, the comment section is elevated to the level of the primary text. This elevation correspondingly creates a situation of ambiguity concerning the composition of the work's textuality. Not only is it unclear

as to which element deserves the title of primary text, it is also no longer evident as to which

components are working together to create "the text" as a whole. In such a scenario, if the article

does any work at all (if it is even read), it operates in service to its own comment section. Reader

feedback reflects this notion by asserting the primacy of comments. As one reader asserts:

> The comments section is often better than the article itself, and I don't even mean
>
> it as an insult. Sometimes some very brilliant insightful people share stuff or an
>
> interesting exchange of ideas takes place. I've learned as much in the comments
>
> section if not more than in articles themselves. (Infidel007)

Another commenter shares similar sentiments:

> The comment section is more important than the article in many cases. I often
>
> find myself just scanning an article for the key points and then going straight to
>
> the comments section. Many readers are extremely adept at conveying the key
>
> points of an issue in just a few sentences. (Joseph Blough)

Descriptors like "better" and "more important" speak to the comment section's prominence in

the reading strategies favored by the Breitbart faithful. It is in the comments, rather than the

articles, that points are made, ideas are exchanged, and readers "learn." As a result, the article is

further demoted in terms of its constitutive textual value, becoming a kind of optional

component.

This is not to say that the article is without import. When it is read, it works as a writing

prompt for the site's commenters. It provides grist for the mill by augmenting and elucidating the

site's often-outrageous headlines and supplying specific points for discussion. In recent years

(the Bannon years in particular), *Breitbart* has endured repeated criticism for provocative

headlines such as "Birth Control Makes Women Unattractive and Crazy," "Would You Rather

Your Child Had Feminism or Cancer?" and "There's No Hiring Bias Against Women in Tech, They Just Suck at Interviews." Such headlines are outside the realm of commonly acceptable journalistic discourse—and this is precisely the point. The illocutionary force of these headlines is not directed toward summarizing or framing the articles they attend. Instead, they serve as both dog and factory whistles, cueing the ideational moment and subsequent reader engagement in the form of commenting. These headlines are intentionally provocative. They are designed to incite cognitive and physical action. The articles these headlines announce are often, but not always, comparatively staid. In some instances, the articles carry on the affective assault begun in the piece's headlines, goading readers into commenting with over-the-top proclamations that leave little room for negotiated readings.[219] When this occurs, readers are effectively trolled into declaring complete agreement or total abjection. More often, however, the articles offer the kind of journalistic narrative found in more mainstream publications. In these cases, the "who," "what," "where," "when," and "how" of the piece provide focal points for reader discussion.

Ambiguous textuality, as it arises from the noncompulsory status of the site's journalistic content, works to complement the site's populist ideology. By making the articles discretionary reading, *Breitbart's* editors are reflexively allowing that primary authority is vested in the reader rather than the writer. They are indirectly acknowledging that meaning, as it is made by the receiver and expressed in the form of "tertiary discourse," is the factor of greatest importance in the calculus of mass mediated communication because it reflects the way people make sense of a message in the context of everyday lived experience. By elevating this third-level discourse to a position of primacy while concomitantly allowing their first-order discourse to operate "in para,"

---

[219] This is particularly true with regard to articles written by far-right provocateur Milo Yiannopoulos. *Breitbart's* former tech editor, Yiannopoulos gained international notoriety for his online harassment of women involved in the so-called "Gamergate" controversy. He subsequently resigned his position at *Breitbart* in 2017 after making controversial comments regarding pedophilia (Farhi).

the editors have, in some sense, artificially fulfilled Andrew Breitbart's wish for a vocal

conservative counter-public who create their own "primary texts" in order to offer alternatives to

mainstream media narratives.

This functional ambiguity is further compounded with respect to authorial status and

responsibility. Unlike the site's articles, which typically bear the name of the author,[220]

comments are made using screen names that afford the writer anonymity. While a select group of

commenters presumably use their real names (for example, the post from Joseph Blough quoted

above), many choose to utilize anonymous screen names. Handles such as

H8WANNAB3COMMIES, Deplorable D, and MSM=MisleadingStupidM'fers serve multiple

functions, operating as pen names, markers of ideological affiliation, and affirmations of the

user's personal political beliefs. These user names work to iteratively strengthen and complete

the transformation that occurs during the ideational moment. For instance, every time commenter

Rightolife logs in, she is protecting her true identity, declaring membership in an alt-right

counter-public, rehearsing one of the central tenets of her political philosophy, and, quite

literally, donning a secret identity.

Thus, while such screen names work to reinforce the commenter's political self-concept,

they also render his or her true identity a mystery. It is never clear in these instances just *who* is

doing the commenting. As a consequence, commenters are free to test the boundaries of socially

acceptable discourse without fear of recrimination. Such freedom results in a near-constant

probing of discursive limits that inevitably leads to a broadening of socially acceptable discourse.

At the same time, so long as a message conforms to the site's ideological orthodoxy, fellow

readers and commenters are welcome to imagine the anonymous author in the most favorable

---

[220] Like many media outlets, *Breitbart* sometimes sources content from independent news organizations. When this happens, credit is frequently attributed to the organization (e.g. Associated Press) rather than an individual author.

terms, thereby strengthening the ties that bind these readers as members of an online community.[221]

This opacity problematizes the issue of authorial responsibility in ways that further challenge the paratextual status of reader comments. In the introduction to *Paratexts*, Genette observes, "By definition, something is not a paratext unless the author or one of his associates accepts responsibility for it" (9). Yet, as we have already observed, it is not readily discernable who is, in fact, responsible for the comments that appear on *Breitbart's* message boards.

Reader feedback is clearly allographic in character in the sense that it is written by someone other than the author or publisher. In theory, this would seem to place responsibility for comments with commenters. In practice, however, accountability is spread across stakeholders. While "*Disqus* doesn't moderate or manage" its "communities," the site's terms of service preclude "hate speech," "threats of harm," and "targeted harassment" ("Basic Rules"). Similarly, the hosting application's continuously updated word filter presumably plays a key role in censoring offensive content. Both of these features suggest that *Disqus* is, at least partially, responsible for objectionable user comments that appear on *Breitbart*. At the same time, members of Breitbart's audience, who are responsible for flagging offensive comment for review, share accountability. And, once flagged, it is *Breitbart's* moderators who are charged with deleting posts that violate its own lengthy "terms of use." Thus, instead of accountability being vested in a single party, it is conferred in a quaternary fashion to commenter, hosting application, readership, and publisher.

---

[221] This assertion is borne out by social scientific research. For example, J.B. Walther has found that members of online groups routinely rate their fellow group members as more socially and physically attractive than their in-person counterparts. Respondents also report greater feelings of intimacy and affection for online group members (342-369). In keeping with social identity theory, these feelings and evaluations can lead to increased "in-group favoritism and out-group derogation" (Lin, et al. 2446).

Rather than strengthening the oversight of user-generated content, as one might expect, this diffusion of responsibility creates an unprecedented level of ambiguity with regard to auctorial accountability. Because everyone is responsible, no one is. When objectionable comments slip through, *Disqus* can blame *Breitbart*, *Breitbart* can blame its readership, and outside observers are free to blame anyone and everyone involved. Accordingly, *Breitbart* readers' comments hover perpetually between "official" and "unofficial" status (Genette, *Paratexts* 10). Which is to say, that *Breitbart's* editors are free to take responsibility for comments when it suits them, and equally free to disavow any statements that might prove troublesome. Because alt-right conservatism flirts with values and ideas that fall outside the Overton window, this kind of plausible deniability is invaluable to the site's operators, who can implicitly endorse controversial messages without explicitly stating it. As Genette shrewdly observes, "it is sometimes in one's interest to have certain things 'known' without having (supposedly) said them oneself" (*Paratexts* 10). The anonymity of commenters and the diffusion of authorial responsibility mean that anything can be known and "no one" has to say it.

Breitbart's layered paratextual elements function in concert with Western-style reading gravity in order to invite readers to linger over the words and images that make up the site's home page. As each paratextual element labors to impact the reader's engagement with the next, they set the stage for an ideological transformation in which the reader is encouraged to fully assume his or her alt-right identity—an iteration of self that is often concealed for fear of social disapprobation. Once this metamorphosis is complete and the reader has followed the paratextual trail to its "natural" conclusion, he or she is directed to the comment section rather than the article proper. Here, the ambiguity of the comment section and its attendant paratextual functionality are fully manifest. Anonymous screen names allow commenters to generate content

without revealing their true identities, thereby promoting the circulation of messages that fall outside the boundaries of commonly accepted social discourse, while simultaneously promoting in-group fidelity amongst members of *Breitbart's* alt-right sub-culture. At the same time, paratextual layering and the non-compulsory status of the news article create a situation of ambiguity with regard to textual status. The distinction between text and paratext is blurred as tertiary discourse assumes the role traditionally associated with that of the first-order. This vagueness privileges user-generated messages as it paradoxically gives voice to a "silent majority," who, though no longer mute, speak with the comfort of anonymity. In turn, this contributes to additional uncertainty with regard to the issue of auctorial accountability. Because responsibility for policing reader comments is spread across stakeholders—many of who are shielded by anonymity (commenters), or enjoy the exnomination afforded by corporate "personhood" (*Breitbart, Disqus*)—no one party can be held accountable.

5.3   Conclusions

Much of the ambiguity that arises from *Breitbart's* paratextuality results from contradiction, and this contradiction is reflective of the inconsistencies and tensions that run through Andrew Breitbart's personal history, far-right ideology, and eponymous website. Despite growing up a media-obsessed, child of privilege, Breitbart billed himself as a far-right man of the people, whose demagoguery was based largely in a critique of the culture industries that aped that of the very theorists he sought to discredit. By swapping bogeymen, Breitbart coopted Adorno and Horkheimer's elitist polemic against the capitalist industrialization of cultural production, turning it into a populist critique of cultural Marxism's influence on the so-called mainstream media.

Breitbart envisioned the Internet as a weapon in the war against the "Democrat-Media Complex" and called upon his readers to generate their own narratives to compete with those of legacy media outlets. Instead of generating their own stories, however, Breitbart's readers made their voices heard through commenting, availing themselves of a mechanism for reply that had eluded previous generations of media audiences.

Over time, *Breitbart's* editors embraced this reader feedback and the site's myriad paratextual elements began to work in a layered manner that lifted readers' third-order paratextual discourse to the level of primary text. This promotion in textual status continues to reinforce the website's populist message by privileging the voice of *Breitbart's* readership over that of its editors and professional journalists. The webpage's paratextual layout works in conjunction with Western-style reading gravity in order to position comments, rather than articles, at the center of reader's textual engagement.

The primacy of the site's comment section is further reinforced by its key paratextual characteristics. In considering the "where and when" of readers' comments, we find that close spatial and temporal proximity lend this user-generated content a level of discursive power not typically enjoyed by other paratextual forms. The "how" of the comment section—that is to say, its form—also contributes to its elevation in textual status by mimicking the aesthetics of the "primary text." Together, all of these elements conspire to create a situation of communication in which the tertiary discourse generated by the site's commenters assumes the discursive power and authority of first-order discourse.

This particular form of paratextuality is both novel and uniquely apropos to *Breitbart's* nascent mode of populist conservatism. Unlike the examples of paratext-as-text examined in the previous chapter, reader comments are authored by the audience rather than the socio-cultural

institutions interested in spreading their ideological messages. Despite the fact that comments are clearly written by Breitbart's readership, the anonymity of commenters and the diffusion of accountability surrounding the publication of user-generated content create a situation of ambiguity with regard to issues of authorship and authorial responsibility.

When taken together, this means that *Breitbart* has created a situation in which reader comments appear to operate "in-para," but in practice, function in the role of the primary text. What's more, a general lack of accountability means that readers are free to share messages that fall outside the window of politically acceptable discourse without fear of social retribution, and *Breitbart* is free to disavow or endorse such messages at its convenience.

Such a scenario creates a uniquely complicated political mechanism. Like previous mediated channels of mass communication, *Breitbart's* comment section allows for widespread ideological messaging. Unlike these prior forms, however, user-generated paratexts perform additional functions, serving as a measurement and demonstration of consensus,[222] as well as a controlled site for the negotiation of sub-cultural discourse. Whereas in the past, the efficacy of messaging tasked with the manufacture of consent could only be measured indirectly and in an asynchronous manner, *Breitbart's* comment section provides its publishers and their political allies with easily accessible and nearly instantaneous feedback from a group that has historically remained silent for fear of social disapproval. In addition, because *Breitbart's* editors and commenters regularly test the limits of socially acceptable political discourse, the comment section operates as an ideological proving ground where ever-more radical messages may be focus-grouped in real time without fear of consequence. As a result, the window of conservative discourse has quickly expanded beyond its historical limits and continues to widen.

---

[222] Here, I am using the term "consent" in the Gramscian sense, as one of the two constitutive elements of cultural hegemony.

Unlike the other paratexts I have examined in this work, *Breitbart* readers' comments function as an institutionally sanctioned mechanism for reply, and extend their influence along centrifugal vectors that extend to the site's journalists, editors, and owners. *Breitbart* is, first and foremost, a "partisan media outlet," and, as such, is heavily vested in "delivering messages that confirm the prior inclinations of [its] constituents" (Benkler, et al. 77). By packaging readers' third-order discourse and presenting it as "primary text," the site's overseers are assured that the messages they offer are congruent with the preconceived thoughts and convictions of its readership. This feedback also works to inform the site's future content by providing a clear-cut account of readers' existing interests and beliefs. If an idea requires testing, the editors need only incorporate it into the site's paratextual writing prompts in order to obtain feedback. If it elicits a strong response, be it positive *or* negative, it has already generated content that can be packaged and commodified as primary text. If it fails to generate engagement, it can be discarded.

What ultimately distinguishes *Breitbart's* comment section as a novel paratextual form is that it exerts the majority of its influence not on a text (as Genette proposed), or on its audience (as I have detailed in previous chapters), but on the political and media elites that have, in previous generations, achieved hegemony through the circulation of ideologically charged paratextual messages. This is, of course, the principal contradiction at play in a situation already rife with inconsistencies. In order to perpetuate both their status and the continued relevance of their message, *Breitbart's* overseers must surrender their voice to the very public they hope to influence.

The political ramifications of this reversal of influence merit further investigation. As Benkler, et al. observe:

> Politicians who thrive in this [partisan] media ecosystem will have done so by aligning their positions and narratives with like-minded publics and supportive media sources or by shifting the narrative in a direction that public and media are willing to follow. (79)

The online comment section offers unprecedented access to readers' "tertiary discourse." The meanings expressed therein are, as I have previously suggested, the meanings that matter the most for all stakeholders. For the readership, they offer a unique opportunity for expression, one that has, in the case of *Breitbart's* audience, traditionally been suppressed. For partisan media outlets, they provide feedback and offer a guide and testing ground for the production of future content. And, perhaps most significantly, for the politician, they offer precisely the insight needed to align present and future positions with that of their public.

6   CONCLUSION: "RE-COGNIZING" PARATEXTUALITY

> More than a boundary or a sealed boundary, the paratext is, rather, a threshold… -
> Gerard Genette, *Paratexts*

6.1   Paratextual Ubiquity: Hiding in Plain Sight

Paratexts are constituent components of textuality. There are no texts without

paratexts,[223] and in this regard, they are poorly named. The prefix "para," as it is understood to

originate from the Greek "παρά," suggests that these mechanisms enjoy a discrete existence apart

from, or alongside, other isolated units known as texts. Yet, this is simply not so. Paratexts are

the stuff of texts. Their presence is a necessary condition of textual materiality. A traditional

book, for example, must, at a minimum, contain pages inscribed with writing and/or images and

the physical, aesthetic, and formal qualities of these paratextual elements (e.g. the thickness and

tooth of the book's pages, the style of its fonts, the layout of its copy and images, and the like)

work to shape reader engagement. These ingredients affect the way the book is read, and, in

doing so, also play an obligatory role in the construction of a broader, abstract textuality, which

includes both the book's concrete constituent elements as well as their interpretation.

Paradoxically, however, it is, in part, their constant presence that makes paratexts hard to see.

Writing of textuality, Hugh J. Silverman asserts, "The text is always hiding something:

something of itself, something which it is not" (83). This "something" is meaning. As Silverman

observes, "The text is visible in that it offers a narrative, discloses a world, opens up a clearing in

which sounds, ideas, rhythms, and stories are made evident" (83). Yet, despite all that is on

display, the text is incapable of generating meaning on its own. It is only through interpretation

---

[223] Genette deals with this idea of paratexts as a necessary condition of textuality in the introduction to *Paratexts* where he argues that the transcription or transmission of any message may be understood to "induce paratextual effects" (3). He goes on to add that "one may doubtless assert that a text without a paratext does not exist and never has existed" (Ibid.).

that meaning can be made and textuality, in its broadest sense, be achieved. Again, in

Silverman's words, "Readings only disclose the surfaces; interpretations are required to reveal its

meaning" (83).

Influencing such interpretations is the work of paratexts, and they too are hidden—albeit

in plain sight. Because paratexts are a necessary condition for textuality, their presence has come

to seem both inevitable and unremarkable. They have been our constant companions through the

ages, having been with us far longer than the written word. As far back as the Upper Paleolithic,

artists incorporated paratextual elements, including the contours of cave walls, to heighten the

sense of depth and perspective in their figurative drawings (Bahn 140).[224] For millennia,

paratexts have, in the words of Genette, labored to "ensure the text's presence in the world"

(Paratexts 1).

More recently, the advent of industrial capitalism was accompanied by a bevy of new

mass communication mediums, and, as these platforms multiplied, paratexts became still more

ubiquitous—working their way into our everyday lived experience in powerful, if unassuming,

ways. Today, mass-mediated messages have become so prevalent it has become cliché to say that

we live in a "media saturated" environment. Nevertheless, the hackneyed nature of this

observation does not make it any less true. We are surrounded by texts in a way that is

unprecedented in human history and this multiplication of texts has resulted in a corresponding

logarithmic increase in paratextual messaging. In short, paratextual ubiquity has become a

symptom of our age.

---

[224] Writing of parietal wall paintings, Bahn explains, "[I]t is well known that one of the characteristics of Paleolithic cave art is the frequent utilization of natural shapes in walls and concretions; this has been apparent since the discovery in 1879 of the Altamira bison drawn onto protruding ceiling bosses, and there are countless other examples…" (140).

As with their longevity, the omnipresence of paratextual messages also makes them hard to see. Because they are everywhere, they are easy to overlook. Paratexts have fallen victim to what Victor Shklovsky famously dubbed "automatization" (5).[225] Which is to say, "We do not see them, we merely recognize them by their primary characteristics" (Shklovsky 5). We are, of course, aware of the paratexts that surround us, however, it is precisely this routine awareness that renders them unexceptional, and thus, opaque. Automatization consumes paratexts in the same manner it "eats away at things, at clothes, at furniture, at our wives and at our fear of war" (Shklovsky 5). Rather than breeding contempt, our familiarity with paratextual forms gives rise to apathy, presumption, and a prideful obliviousness regarding the depth and breadth of their functionality—a worrisome trifecta given the prominent role of paratextual messaging in contemporary mass-mediated discourse.

6.2   Paratextual Ostranenie

Throughout this work I have labored to make these quotidian devices strange, to render them unfamiliar in a way that fosters an understanding that goes beyond their surface function of textual framing. My goal has been to recognize paratexts in the most literal sense, in a way that makes one "re-cognize," or rethink, the sundry ways they exert their influence outside the text and across time, people, places, things, and ideas. While I have written it elsewhere in this dissertation, it bears repeating: Paratexts do not frame texts; they frame the creation of meaning.

This is a significant distinction. It explains how, for example, paratextual relativity becomes possible. If the sole function of the paratext were to frame the work it attends, the target of that influence would never change. It would remain forever static. Yet, as I have repeatedly

---

[225] "If we examine the general laws of perception, we see that as it becomes habitual, it also becomes automatic. So eventually all of our skills and experiences function unconsciously—automatically. If someone were to compare the sensation of holding a pen in his hand or speaking a foreign tongue for the very first time with the sensation of performing this same operation for the ten thousandth time, the he would no doubt agree with us" (Shklovsky 4-5).

shown, this is not so. When subjected to the natural forces of time and space, this target often shifts. This is why a poster for Godard's *Contempt* (1963) hanging on the walls of a film studies department today, says more about the aesthetic sensibilities of that department than the film it was designed to market. Likewise, this distinction also explains why the line between text and paratext is so difficult to parse. As I have shown, there are no hard and fast boundaries with regard to textual status. Paratexts, such as Ghiberti's *Gates of Paradise*, slide easily into the role of primary texts. Too, there is no denying that primary texts often assume many of the functions commonly associated with paratexts. Consciously or not, John Wanamaker leveraged the status of *The North American* in order to frame his advertisements in a way that furthered his store's reputation for fair dealing. Because paratexts frame cognitive processes rather than things, textual status, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder.

In laboring to make paratexts strange, I have endeavored to bring new awareness to many functions we already intuit. Without even the slightest conscious consideration, we are aware that messages conveyed "in-para" often tell us more than the content of the messages proper. Social scientists and developmental psychologists have conclusively shown that infants in the pre-linguistic stage of development respond strongly to nonverbal messages including body language, facial expressions, and spoken paralinguistic cues such as the rate, tone, and volume of speech (Halberstadt, et al. 95-97). Similar studies focused on adults have found that subjects exposed to "content-free" speech (electronically altered speech in which the words are unintelligible but paralinguistic cues can still be detected) can routinely identify the emotion being expressed as well as its strength (Knapp & Hall 344-46). Accordingly, it seems that we are "wired" in a way that privileges the interpretation of paratextual messages as principal components in the cognitive process of meaning making.

While the above examples demonstrate our innate appreciation of the centripetal force paratexts exert on the messages they attend, there is also ample evidence that we are instinctively aware of their centrifugal influence. A recent dispute over an American historico-cultural narrative provides a useful example.

This summer, amidst fierce national debate concerning the ongoing display of Confederate memorials in public spaces, protestors in Tennessee doused a Civil War monument with red paint (evoking a mental association with bloodshed) and spray-painted the words "They were racists" over the names of more than 500 Confederate dead (Jorge & McFarland). These 'user-generated' enunciations of later, epitextual discourse were quickly power-washed away, but not before their short-lived presence prompted members of Nashville's Metro Parks Board to vote for the installation of additional signage meant to "add historic context" to the monument (Jorge & McFarland).

Laid in 1907 and dedicated in 1909, Nashville's *Confederate Private Monument* was, like many public works of its kind, erected shortly after Reconstruction as part of what McDonald, *et al*. describe as the "first peak period" of Confederate monument construction[226] (175). This period, which spanned the two decades between 1900 and 1920, was characterized by a reshaping of the "South's memorial landscape" that was meant to "rewrite history into a 'Lost Cause' narrative [by] vindicating the slaveocracy and its defenders, and uniting white southerners across class lines" (McDonald, *et al.* 175). In this regard, the *Confederate Private Monument* was—and continues to be—part of a larger, loosely-organized, didactic, non-literate, top-down mass communication system implemented by recalcitrant "Confederate partisans"

---

[226] Per Mcdonald, et al., "The peaks in construction of Confederate monuments were in two waves, from 1900 to 1920 following Reconstruction, and from 1955 to 1965, responding to demands for racial justice by Civil Rights movements (174).

throughout the American South in order to "ensure white supremacy's past and future" (Dwyer & Alderman).

While the unlawful act of 'vandalizing' the monument, and the government-sanctioned installation of signs around its base, might simply be regarded as attempts to paratextually frame the monument itself, they are not. They are efforts to influence the understanding of our country—the America that was, is, and will be. These are the "second-order," connotative meanings—the "myths," in Barthesian vernacular—that arise as a consequence of our engagement with the *Confederate Private Monument* and others like it. Much of the "first-order," denotative work being performed by the sculpture has been rendered ineffectual by time. It is, for example, highly unlikely that any casual observer would identify the subject of the monument as Sam Davis, the so-called "boy hero of the Confederacy" (Harcourt 30).[227] Moreover, the names of the 540 soldiers carved into the monument's limestone base now carry little significance to anyone other than the direct descendants of the dead. In its capacity as a denotative information delivery platform, the monument has become ostensibly worthless. Yet, as a public symbol with the capacity to shape collective memory and present-day understandings, it is as powerful today as it was 110 years ago. Efforts to paratextually append the monument, sanctioned or otherwise, are attempts to paratextually manage meaning-making at the connotative level and they provide clear evidence that all of the stakeholders involved possess an instinctual understanding of the value and efficacy of paratexts not just as textual frames, but also as lenses capable of facilitating broad "ways of seeing."

---

[227] Davis became a Confederate "folk hero" when he was summarily executed at the age of twenty-one for "scouting behind enemy lines." (Harcourt 30).

6.3 **Looking Past Paratexts as Textual Frames**

Indeed, it is possible that this innate understanding has led us to place too much faith in the power of paratexts. This has always a temptation, as there is no doubt that paratexts hold great power. As I established in my two-fold examination of *The Gates of Paradise* and *The Disneyland Story*, paratexts are capable of performing didactic functions—teaching us about our world and our place in it. Moreover, as I demonstrated in my analyses of *Breitbart's* comment section, paratextual devices can act as staging grounds for ideological metamorphoses and as test sites for political rhetoric and strategies that fall outside the *doxa*. They can be used to facilitate the construction of imagined communities, *à la Captain Midnight*, and, as we observed with advertising of John Wanamaker, they may be harnessed to frame socioeconomic disruption in terms of familiar, if bygone, patterns of social relations. Because paratexts frame cognition, they hold the power to influence the way we make sense of our everyday lived experience. Yet, it is because of this power that we must be wary, lest we attribute them more influence than they truly possess.

Again, a recent controversy provides food for thought. In January of 2016, the Institute of Contemporary History in Munich published an annotated edition of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, marking the book's first German publication in more than seven decades (Eddy). Prior to being banned by the allies in 1945,[228] Hitler's autobiography enjoyed wide circulation, with more than 12 million copies in print (Kulish).[229] After the end of WWII, however, the copyright for *Mein Kampf* was turned over to the Bavarian government, who in keeping with legislation prohibiting

---

[228] It should be noted that the ban pertained to reprinting the autobiography and not the book itself (Faiola).
[229] Speaking to the book's popularity, in 1933, Mein Kampf became "the most published book in the German language (Hauner). In addition, the Bavarian state library reports that prior to the end of war, the cities of Munich and Nuremberg regularly gave free copies of *Mein Kampf* to newly married couples as a wedding gift (Kulish).

the dissemination of Nazi propaganda,[230] steadfastly refused to publish the work (Kulish). As a consequence, while the work was still widely available via the Internet, printed copies dried up. In 2015, the state's copyright expired, and despite objections from a number of Bavarian authorities, Jewish organizations, and Holocaust survivors, the new edition was published a year later. The German taxpayers funded the project's $700,000 cost (Hockenos).

Mein Kampf: Eine kritische Edition runs 2,000 pages and extends across two volumes. With "roughly 4000 annotations and historical notes" (Eddy), it contains more paratext than text.[231] The scholars and historians at the Institute of Contemporary History spent three years preparing the text with their commentary and annotations (Berger). In the first year of its new run, the critical edition became a "surprise bestseller," selling more than 85,000 copies—at a pricey $64 a piece—and reaching the number one spot on *Der Spiegel's* bestseller list (Deutsche Welle). The initial run of 4,000 copies sold out in less than a week (Mortimer).

The popularity of the new annotated edition of Hitler's autobiography and the controversy surrounding its release make fertile ground for further study. As a Text (in the Barthesian sense), the new release tests the limits of paratextual influence and begs a series of questions. Do the comments and analyses exert sufficient centripetal force to fundamentally alter the "primary text," making it a palimpsest of sorts; or, as Florian Sepp, the Bavarian State Library historian suggests, are Hitler's words still "too dangerous for the general public?" (qtd. in Faiola).[232] Do old models of top-down gatekeeping still operate effectively in an age where

---

[230] Section 86(1)4 of the German Criminal Code states: "Whoever domestically disseminates or produces, stocks, imports, or makes publicly accessible through data storage media for dissemination domestically or abroad, means of propaganda, the contents of which are intended to further the aims of a former National Socialist organizations shall be punished with imprisonment of not more than three years or a fine" (German Law Archive).

[231] In its original form, *Mein Kampf* ran approximately 700 pages.

[232] A 2015 article from the *Independent* describes how copies of *Mein Kampf* were maintained prior to the works rerelease: "Old copies of the offending tome are kept in a secure 'poison cabinet,' a literary danger zone in the dark recesses of the vast Bavarian State Library. A team of experts vets every request to see one, keeping the toxic text away from the prying eyes of the idly curious or those who might seek to exalt it" (Faiola).

some of the most powerful ideological work is being performed by user-generated paratexts?

How do the annotated edition's paratexts function centrifugally to situate readers as subjects?

How do these extratextual elements work to frame the readers' understanding of history? How

are they used to naturalize the historical narrative surrounding Hitler's rise and fall? What do

they say about the Germany that was, is, and shall be? What does it say about our faith in

paratexts that we believe their mere presence is sufficient to discharge some of the most

dangerous rhetoric in modern history?[233]

These are, of course, many of the same questions that surround efforts to "contextualize"

the *Confederate Private Monument* and others like it. They are questions that matter right now.

And, as paratextual messaging becomes increasingly prevalent and secondary and tertiary

discourse continues to usurp the authority and position once held by first-order discourse, such

questions will only become increasingly important.

Questions like the ones above call for a nuanced and dynamic mode of paratextual

analysis—one that looks beyond the paratext's centripetal influence on its so-called "primary

text" and considers how, as framers of cognition, these devices extend their influence

centripetally across the realms of time, people, places, things, and ideas. I have offered my vision

of such an analysis in this dissertation.

Certainly, there is still productive work to be done in examining how paratexts influence

the reception of the works they accompany. Yet, it is important to recognize that this is just one

mode of operation in an extensive catalogue of functions. In limiting paratextual studies to the

examination of textual framing, we deny these other functions and render paratexts victims of

---

[233] Levi Solomon, spokesman for the Jewish Forum for Democracy and Against Anti-Semitism, poses this same
query when he asks a reporter: "Can you annotate the Devil?" (qtd. in Faiola)

automatization. Accordingly, returning to Shklovsky, we find that the paratext "passes us as if packaged; we know of its existence because of the space it takes up, but we only see its surface" (161). Thinking about paratexts in terms of their extended influence permits us to see past the surface, thereby allowing for a deeper understanding of the ways they serve as thresholds to both the texts they accompany and the world we occupy.

REFERENCES

Adams, Mike. *Lee De Forest King of Radio, Television, and Film*. Springer New York, 2012.

Adler, Ronald B., and Russell F. Proctor. *Looking out, Looking In*. 15th ed., Cengage Learning, 2015.

Adorno, Theodor, and Max Horkheimer. "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception." *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Verso, 1997, pp. 94–136.

Adorno, Theodor. "A Social Critique of Radio Music." *The Kenyon Review*, vol. 18, no. 3/4, 1996, pp. 229–235.

Alexa Internet, Inc. "Breitbart.com Traffic Statistics." *Breitbart.com Traffic, Demographics and Competitors - Alexa*, Alexa Internet, Inc., 21 Apr. 2017, www.alexa.com/siteinfo/breitbart.com.

Alic, Haris. "Joe Biden's Brother Frank Linked to Projects Receiving $54,000,000 in Taxpayer Loans from the Obama Administration-Despite No Experience." *Breitbart*, 21 Jan. 2020, www.breitbart.com/2020-election/2020/01/20/joe-bidens-brother-frank-linked-to-projects-receiving-54000000-in-taxpayer-loans-from-the-obama-administration-despite-no-experience/.

Allen, David. "Disneyland: Another Kind of Reality." *European Journal of American Culture*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2014, pp. 33–47. *EBSCOhost*, Accessed 10 Apr. 2017.

Allen, Peter. "Everything Old is New Again." All That Jazz. Universal Music, 1974.

Allison, Deborah. "Beyond Saul Bass: A Century of American Film Title Sequences." *Film International*, Film International, 30 Jan. 2011, filmint.nu/?p=202.

Allison, Deborah. "Catch Me If You Can, Auto Focus, Far From Heaven and the Art of Retro

Title Sequences." *Senses of Cinema*, 14 Dec. 2010, sensesofcinema.com/2003/feature-

articles/retro_titles/.

Allison, Deborah. "Title Sequences in the Western Genre: The Iconography of Action."

Quarterly Review of Film and Video, vol. 25, no. 2, 2008, pp. 107–115.

Althusser, Louis. *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State

Apparatuses*. Verso, 2014.

Amazon. "Ad Specs and Policies: Kindle with Special Offers." *Kindle with Special Offers -

Amazon Advertising*, Amazon, advertising.amazon.com/ad-specs/en/kindle.

Amazon.com, Inc. "Reading Enhancements." *Amazon.com Help: Reading Enhancements*,

Amazon.com,

www.amazon.com/gp/help/customer/display.html/ref=hp_left_cn?ie=UTF8&nodeId=200

729910.

Ambrose. *Hexameron, Paradise, and Cain and Abel*. Translated by John J. Savage, vol. 42, The

Catholic University of America Press, 2003.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of

Nationalism*. Verso, 2006.

Andreeva, Nellie, and Ted Johnson. "Cable Ratings 2019: Fox News Tops Total Viewers, ESPN

Wins 18-49 Demo As Entertainment Networks Slide." *Deadline*, 27 Dec. 2019,

deadline.com/2019/12/cable-ratings-2019-list-fox-news-total-viewers-espn-18-49-demo-

1202817561/.

Angiola, Eloise M. "'Gates of Paradise' and the Florentine Baptistery." *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 60,

no. 2, 1978, pp. 242–248., doi:10.1080/00043079.1978.10787550.

Applegate, Edd. *Rise of Advertising in the United States: a History of Innovation to 1960*.

    Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.

Augustine. *Sancti Aurelii Augustini Episcopi De Civitate Dei Libri*. Translated by B. Dombart,

    vol. 2, Teubner, 1905.

Austin, J. L. *How to Do Things with Words*. Harvard University Press, 1962.

"Backbone vs. Wishbone: The Story of E.A. Van Valkenburg." *Pearsons Magazine*, July 1911,

    pp. 123–126.

Bahn, Paul G. *Prehistoric Rock Art: Polemics and Progress*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Bahr, Fax, et al. *Hearts of Darkness--a Filmmaker's Apocalypse*. Triton Pictures, 1991.

Baldasty, Gerald J. *The Commercialization of News in the Nineteenth Century*. Univ. of

    Wisconsin Press, 1992.

Balode, Elina. "STREET ART AND GRAFFITI IN RIGA: MOTIVATION, OPINION AND

    WORK PROCESS OF ARTISTS." *Culture Crossroads*, vol. 13, 2019, pp. 28–37.

Barfield, Ray. *Listening to Radio: 1920-1950*. Praeger, 1996.

Barrier, J. Michael. *The Animated Man: a Life of Walt Disney*. Univ. of California Press, 2008.

Barthes, Roland. "From Work to Text." *Image, Music, Text*, by Roland Barthes, Hill and Wang,

    1977.

Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. Noonday Press, 1972.

Barthes, Roland. "Theory of the Text." *Untying the Text: a Post-Structuralist Reader*, by R.

    Young, Routledge, 1981, pp. 31–47.

Baudrillard, Jean. "Consumer Society." *Consumer Society in American History: a Reader*, edited

    by Lawrence B. Glickman, Cornell University Press, 1999, pp. 33–57.

Baudrillard, Jean. "Simulacra and Simulations." *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, edited by

> Mark Poster, Basil Blackwell, 1988, pp. 166–184.

Beam, Christopher. "A Slate Profile of Andrew Breitbart." *Slate Magazine*, Slate, 22 July 2010,

> slate.com/news-and-politics/2010/07/a-slate-profile-of-andrew-breitbart.html.

Bedford1. "The Left's War on Comment Sections." Breitbart News, 27 October 2015. Breitbart

> News Network, https://www.breitbart.com/tech/2015/10/27/the-lefts-war-on-comment-
>
> sections/

Benjamin, Louise. "Radio Comes of Age, 1900-1945." *The Media in America: a History*, edited

> by W. David Sloan, Vision Press, 2017, pp. 349–373.

Benjamin, Walter, and Harry Zahn. "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire." *Illuminations*, edited by

> Hannah Arendt, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, pp. 155–200.

Benjamin, Walter. *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other*

> *Writings on Media*. Edited by Michael William. Jennings et al., Belknap Press of Harvard
>
> University Press, 2008.

Benkler, Yochai, et al. *Network Propaganda: Manipulation, Disinformation, and Radicalization*

> *in American Politics*. Oxford University Press, 2018.

Benzon, Paul. "Bootleg Paratextuality and Digital Temporality: Towards an Alternate Present of

> the DVD." *Narrative*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2013, pp. 88–104.

Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. British Broadcasting Corportion, 1973.

Berger, Joseph. "The Most Dangerous Book in the World?" *The New York Times Upfront*, 21

> Mar. 2016.

Berger, Peter L., and Thomas Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality a Treatise in the*

> *Sociology of Knowledge*. Open Road Media, 2011.

Bhangu, Gagan. "Top 15 Most Popular News Websites In The World: 2020." *OTechWorld*,

    OTECHWORLD, 21 Jan. 2020, otechworld.com/most-popular-news-websites/.

Billington, Ray A. "Anti-Catholic Propaganda and the Home Missionary Movement, 1800-

    1860." *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, vol. 22, no. 3, 1935, pp. 361–384.,

    doi:10.2307/1892624.

Birke, Dorothee, and Birte Christ. "Paratext and Digitized Narrative: Mapping the Field."

    Narrative, vol. 21, no. 1, 2013, pp. 65–87.

Blackett, Sample, and Hummert. "Fighting With the Commandos." *Captain Midnight*, season 3,

    Blue Network, 24 Nov. 1942.

Blackett, Sample, and Hummert. "Formation of the Secret Squadron." *Captain Midight*, season

    2, episode 1, Mutual, 30 Sept. 1940.

Blackett, Sample, and Hummert. "Hemisphere Defense." *Captain Midnight*, Mutual Network, 9

    June 1941.

Blackett, Sample, and Hummert. "Signal From the Sky." *Captain Midnight*, Blue, 16 Feb. 1943.

Blackett, Sample, and Hummert. "Suicide Squadron: 2." *Captain Midnight*, season 6, Blue

    Network, 20 Jan. 1944.

Blackett, Sample, and Hummert. "Suicide Squadron: 3." *Captain Midnight*, season 6, Blue

    Network, 21 Jan. 1944.

Blackett, Sample, and Hummert. "Suicide Squadron:1." *Captain Midnight*, season 6, Blue

    Network, 17 Jan. 1944.

Blackett, Sample, and Hummert. "The Mysterious Voice." *Captain Midight*, season 1, episode

    60, Mutual Network, 12 Jan. 1940.

Blackett, Sample, and Hummert. "The Perada Treasure: 167." *Captain Midnight*, season 1,

      Mutual Network, 17 Oct. 1939.

Blackett, Sample, and Hummert. "The Perada Treasure: 172." *Captain Midnight*, 24 Oct. 1939,

      Accessed 8 Apr. 2017.

Blackett, Sample, and Hummert. "The Perada Treasure: 173." Episode 173, 25 Oct. 1939.

Blackett, Sample, and Hummert. "The Secret Squadron Strikes." *Captain Midnight*, Blue

      Network, 26 May 1943.

Blackett, Sample, and Hummert. "The Silver Dagger Strikes: 2." *Captain Midnight*, 12 Apr.

      1943, Accessed 10 July 2017.

Bloch, Amy R. *Lorenzo Ghiberti's Gates of Paradise: Humanism, History, and Artistic*

      Philosophy in the Italian Renaissance. Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Bloch, Marc. *Feudal Society: Vol 2: Social Classes and Political Organization*. Routledge, 1989.

Blue, Harold. *World War II Era Radio Drama and the Postwar Broadcasting Industry Blacklist*.

      1st ed., Scarecrow Press, 2002.

Bokhari, Allum. "The Left's War on Comments Sections." *Breitbart*, Breitbart News Network,

      LLC., 27 Oct. 2015, www.breitbart.com/tech/2015/10/27/the-lefts-war-on-comment-

      sections/.

Bolin, Winifred D. Wandersee. "The Economics of Middle-Income Family Life: Working

      Women During the Great Depression." *The Journal of American History*, vol. 65, no. 1,

      June 1978, pp. 60–74., doi:10.2307/1888142.

Bordwell, David. *On the History of Film Style*. Harvard University Press, 1997.

Breitbart News Network. "Breitbart News Media Kit." *Breitbart News Network Media Kit*,

      Breitbart, 1 July 2018, www.breitbart.com/mediakit/.

Brewster, Ben, translator. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes Toward an Investigation." *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, by Louis Althusser, Monthly Review Press, New York, 2001, pp. 127–186.

Brode, Douglas. *Dream West: Politics and Religion in Cowboy Movies*. University of Texas Press, 2013.

Brode, Douglas. "Of Theme Parks and Television: Walt Disney, Rod Serling, and the Politics of Nostalgia." *Disneyland and Culture: Essays on the Parks and Their Influence*, edited by Kathy Merlock Jackson and Mark I. West, McFarland & Company Inc., 2011, pp. 183–194.

Brookey, Robert, and Jonathan Gray. "'Not Merely Para': Continuing Steps in Paratextual Research." *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2017, pp. 101–110., doi:10.1080/15295036.2017.1312472.

Brown, Robert E. "The Propagation of Awe: Public Relations, Art and Belief in Reformation Europe." *Public Relations Review*, vol. 30, no. 4, 2004, pp. 381–389. *Science Direct*, Accessed 27 Apr. 2016.

Cadwalladr, Carole. "Robert Mercer: the Big Data Billionaire Waging War on Mainstream Media ." *The Guardian*, 26 Feb. 2017, www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/feb/26/robert-mercer-breitbart-war-on-media-steve-bannon-donald-trump-nigel-farage. Accessed 24 Apr. 2017.

Caldwell, J. T. "Critical Industrial Practice: Branding, Repurposing, and the Migratory Patterns of Industrial Texts." *Television & New Media*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2006, pp. 99–134. *Film & Television Literature Index*, Accessed 22 Apr. 2016.

Campbell, Richard, et al. *Media & Culture: Mass Communication in a Digital Age*. 12th ed.,

    Bedford/St. Martins, 2019.

Cantril, Hadley, and Gordon W. Allport. *The Psychology of Radio*. Arno Press and the New

    York Tinles, 1971.

Caplan, Joshua. "NBC's NYE Coverage Slammed for Airing Chrissy Teigen Talking About

    'Vaginal Steaming'." *Breitbart*, 1 Jan. 2019,

    www.breitbart.com/entertainment/2019/01/01/nbc-nye-coverage-slammed-chrissy-

    teigen-talking-about-vaginal-steaming/.

Captain, Sean. "Disqus Grapples With Hosting Toxic Comments On Breitbart And Extreme-

    Right Sites." *Fast Company*, Fast Company, 9 Mar. 2017,

    www.fastcompany.com/3068698/disqus-grapples-with-hosting-toxic-comments-on-

    breitbart-and-extreme-right-sites.

Carlyle, Thomas. *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History (1840)*. Chapman & Hall,

    1872.

Carroll, Margaret D. "The Erotics of Absolutism: Rubens and the Mystification of Sexual

    Violence." *Representations*, no. 25, 1989, pp. 3–30., doi:10.2307/2928464.

Cavalcante, Andre. "Centering Transgender Identity via the Textual Periphery:TransAmericaand

    the âœDouble Workâ of Paratexts." *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, vol.

    30, no. 2, 2013, pp. 85–101.

Conick, Hal. "The Art of the Narrative Arc: Why Marketers Must Learn to Be Storytellers."

    American Marketing Association, 5 Dec. 2018, www.ama.org/marketing-news/the-art-of-

    the-narrative-arc-why-marketers-must-learn-to-be-storytellers/.

Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Cooley, Charles Horton. *Social Process*. Charles Scribner & Sons, 1918.

Coppola, Eleanor, director. *Coda*. American Zoetrope, 2007.

Coppola, Francis Ford, director. *Apocalypse Now*. Omni Zoetrope, 1979.

Coppola, Francis Ford, director. *Youth without Youth*. American Zoetrope, 2007.

Cover copy.The Gender Spectrum: A Compendium of All the Known Genders, by That Kid
From Kindergarten Cop, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017.

Cox, Jim. *Sold on Radio Advertisers in the Golden Age of Broadcasting*. McFarland, 2013.

Curcio, Vincent. *Henry Ford*. Oxford University Press, 2013.

"Dancer-Fitzgerald-Sample." *Ad Age*, Crain Communications, 15 Sept. 2003,
adage.com/article/adage-encyclopedia/dancer-fitzgerald-sample/98439/.

Danto, Arthur C. "Seeing and Showing." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 59, no. 1,
2001, pp. 1–9. *J Store Journals*, Accessed 15 Nov. 2016.

Davison, W. Phillips. "The Third-Person Effect in Communication." *Public Opinion Quarterly*,
vol. 47, no. 1, 1983, pp. 1–15., doi:10.1086/268763.

De Certeau, Michel. *The Pracitice of Everday Life*. Univ. of California Press, 1984.

"Death Overtakes John Wanamaker." *Lawrence Daily Journal*, 12 Dec. 1922, p. 1.

Deutsche Welle. "Critical Edition of Hitler's 'Mein Kampf' Set for Sixth Printing: DW:
05.01.2017." *DW.COM*, Deutsche Welle Global, 1 May 2017, www.dw.com/en/critical-
edition-of-hitlers-mein-kampf-set-for-sixth-printing/a-37020456.

"Dies in Paris Hotel." *The Daily Star*, 3 Mar. 1908, p. 1. *Google NEWS*, Accessed 24 May 2017.

DiGirolamo, Vincent. "NewsBoys." *Boyhood in America. an Encyclopedia*, Edited by Priscilla
Ferguson Clement and Jacqueline S. Reinier, vol. 1, ABC-CLIO, 2001, pp. 471–480.

Dilbeck, Gwynne Ann. "Opening the Gates of Paradise: Function and the Iconographical

    Program of Ghiberti's Bronze Door." *University of Iowa*, 2011.

Disney Parks, Experiences and Products, Inc. "The Disney Look." 2014.

"Disney to Use 'Scope Widely on New Films." *Motion Picture Daily*, 23 Nov. 1953, pp. 1–7.

    Internet Archive, archive.org/details/motionpicturedai74unse_0/page/n285.

Disqus. "Basic Rules for Disqus." *Disqus*, help.disqus.com/en/articles/1717116-basic-rules-for-

    disqus.

Disqus. "Create and Enforce Moderation Rules." *Disqus*, Disqus, Inc.,

    help.disqus.com/en/articles/1749913-create-and-enforce-moderation-rules.

Disqus. "The #1 Way to Build Your Audience." *Disqus*, Disqus, Inc., disqus.com/.

Docker, John. *Postmodernism and Popular Culture: a Cultural History*. Cambridge Univ. Press,

    1997.

Doherty, Thomas. "The Paratext's the Thing." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2014.

    MasterFILE Elite [EBSCO], Accessed 13 Feb. 2017.

Douglas, Susan Jeanne. *Listening in: Radio and the American Imagination*. Univ. of Minnesota

    Press, 2005.

Dwyer, Owen J., and Derek H. Alderman. "Memorial Landscapes: Analytic Questions and

    Metaphors." *GeoJournal*, vol. 73, no. 3, 2008, pp. 165–178., doi:10.1007/s10708-008-

    9201-5.

Dykstra, Alan. "Critical Reading of Online News Commentary Headlines: Stylistic and

    Pragmatic Aspects." *Topics in Linguistics*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2019, pp. 90–105.,

    doi:10.2478/topling-2019-0011.

Echols, Katherine Barnes. "The Monster's Transformation on American Radio (1930s-50s)." *University of Toronto Quarterly*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2011, pp. 32–42., doi:10.1111/j.2041-7373.2011.00030.x.

Eco, Umberto. *The Open Work*. Harvard University Press, 1989.

Eco, Umberto. *Travels in Hyper Reality: Essays*. Harcourt, 2002.

Eddy, Melissa. "Annotated Version of Hitler's 'Mein Kampf' to Be Published Next Year." *The New York Times*, 25 Feb. 2015. *Gale in Context*.

Einstein, Albert. *Relativity the Special and General Theory*. Translated by Robert W. Lawson, Henry Holt, 1921.

Ekins, Emily. "Poll: 62% of Americans Say They Have Political Views They're Afraid to Share." *Cato Institute*, Cato Institute, 22 July 2020, www.cato.org/publications/survey-reports/poll-62-americans-say-they-have-political-views-theyre-afraid-share#introduction.

Eliade, Mircea. *Youth without Youth*. Univeristy of Chicago Press, 1976.

Ellefson, Lindsey. "On Twitter, Clinton Shares Breitbart Headlines to Humiliate Trump." *Mediaite*, Mediaite, 25 Aug. 2016, www.mediaite.com/online/on-twitter-clinton-shares-breitbart-headlines-to-humiliate-trump/.

Elliot, Philip, and Zeke J Miller. "Inside Donald Trump's Chaotic Transition." *Time*, 17 Nov. 2016, time.com/4574493/donald-trump-chaotic-transition/. Accessed 24 Apr. 2017.

Ellis, Barbara G. *The Copy-Editing and Headline Handbook*. Perseus Pub., 2001.

Elsner, Jaś. "Iconoclasm as Discourse: From Antiquity to Byzantium." *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 94, no. 3, 2012, pp. 368–394. *EBSCOhost*, Accessed 26 May 2017.

Emig, Elmer. "The Connotation of Newspaper Headlines." *Journalism Bulletin*, vol. 4, no. 4, 1928, pp. 53–59.

Engels, Friedrich, and David McLellan. *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. Oxford University Press, 2009.

Ershkowitz, Herbert. *John Wanamaker: Philadelphia Merchant*. Combined Publishing, 1999. *EBSCOhost*, Accessed 8 Aug. 2017.

Estey, James Arthur. *Business Cycles*. Prentice-Hall, 1950.

Even, Yael. "The Loggia Dei Lanzi: A Showcase of Female Subjugation." *Woman's Art Journal*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1991, pp. 10–14., doi:10.2307/1358184.

Ewen, Stuart. *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture*. BasicBooks, 2001.

Faiola, Anthony. "'Mein Kampf': A Historical Tool, or Hitler's Voice from beyond the Grave?" *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 24 Feb. 2015, www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/mein-kampf-a-historical-tool-or-hitlers-voice-from-beyond-the-grave/2015/02/24/f7a3110e-b950-11e4-bc30-a4e75503948a_story.html.

Farhi, Paul. "Breitbart's Milo Yiannopoulos Resigns Following Outrage over His Past Comments about Pedophilia." *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 21 Feb. 2017, www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/milo-yiannopoulos-resigns-from-breitbart-news/2017/02/21/0217c128-f7cc-11e6-be05-1a3817ac21a5_story.html.

Ferry, John William. *A History of the Department Store*. Macmillan, 1960.

Festinger, Leon. "A Theory of Social Comparison Processes." *Human Relations*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1954, pp. 117–140., doi:10.1177/001872675400700202.

Fiadotau , Mikhail. "Paratext and Meaning-Making in Indie Games." *Journal of Comparative Research in Anthropology & Sociology*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2015, pp. 85–97.

Fiske, John. "Audiencing: A Cultural Studies Approach to Watching Television." *Poetics*, vol. 21, no. 4, 1992, pp. 345–359., doi:10.1016/0304-422x(92)90013-s.

Fiske, John. *Reading the Popular*. Routledge, 2011.

Fiske, John. *Television Culture: Popular Pleasures and Politics*. Methuen, 1987.

FizzFop1, director. *YouTube*, YouTube, 7 Sept. 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=4EOA6b5gInw.

Foucault, Michel. "The Order of Discourse." *Untying the Text: a Post-Structuralist Reader*, edited by Robert Young, Routledge, 1990, pp. 48–78.

Fox, Stephen R. *The Mirror Makers: a History of American Advertising and Its Creators*. University of Illinois Press, 1997.

Frej, Willa. "Breitbart's Greatest Hit (Pieces): Some Of The Website's Most Disgusting Headlines." *HuffPost*, HuffPost, 23 Nov. 2016, www.huffpost.com/entry/breitbart-headlines_n_5829ba13e4b060adb56f1bdb.

Frisby, David. *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer, and Benjamin*. MIT Press, 1986.

Gabrils, Nele, et al. "Beyond the Music-Theoretical Discourse in Franchino Gaffurios Trilogy: The Significance of the Paratexts in Contemplating the Magic Triangle Between Author, Opus, and Audience." *Cui Dono Lepidum Novum Libellum?: Dedicating Latin Works and Motets in the Sixteenth Century*, by Ignace Bossuyt, Leuven University Press, Leuven, 2008, pp. 161–194.

Garrard, Mary D. "The Cloister and the Square: Gender Dynamics in Renaissance Florence."

   Early Modern Women, vol. 11, no. 1, 2016, pp. 5–43., doi:10.1353/emw.2016.0042.

Garst, Robert Edward., and Theodore M. Bernstein. *Headlines and Deadlines*. Columbia

   University Press, 1982.

Genette, GeÌ• rard. *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Gennawey, Sam, and Jeff Kurtti. *The Disneyland Story: the Unofficial Guide to the Evolution of*

   Walt Disney's Dream. Unofficial Guides, 2013.

German Law Archive, germanlawarchive.iuscomp.org/?p=752.

Ghanem, Salma, and Kimberly Selber. "An Analysis of Slogans Used to Sell the News."

   Newspaper Research Journal, vol. 30, no. 2, 2009, pp. 16–29.

Gibbons, Herbert Adams. *John Wanamaker*. Kennikat Press, 1971. 2 vols.

Gibney, E.J. "Flagged Breitbart Comments." Google Sheets, 2018.

Giddings, Robert, and Keith Selby. *The Classic Serial on Television and Radio*. Palgrave, 2001.

Gill, Robert. "Why the PR Strategy of Storytelling Improves Employee Engagement and Adds

   Value to CSR: An Integrated Literature Review." *Public Relations Review*, vol. 41, no. 5,

   2015, pp. 662–674., doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2014.02.012.

Glover, Erin. "All the Disneyland Resort Is a Stage: Live Stage Shows." *Disney Parks Blog*, The

   Walt Disney Company, 26 May 2016, disneyparks.disney.go.com/blog/2016/05/all-the-

   disneyland-resort-is-a-stage-live-stage-shows/.

Goffman, Erving. *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. Northeastern

   University Press, 1974.

Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Anchor Books/Random House,

   2008.

Gold. "'Captain Midnight'." *Variety*, 26 Oct. 1938, p. 28. *ProQuest*, Accessed 6 Apr. 2017.

Goldenson, Leonard H. *Beating the Odds: the Untold Story behind the Rise of ABC: the Stars, Struggles, and Egos That Transformed Network Television by the Man Who Made It Happen*. L. Arbus, 2000.

Gombrich, E H. *The Sense of Order*. Cornell University Press, 1979.

Gramsci, Antonio, and Joseph A. Buttigieg. *Prison Notebooks*. Columbia Univ. Press, 2011.

Gray, Jonathan, and Amanda D. Lotz. *Television Studies*. Polity, 2012.

Gray, Jonathan. "Coming Up Next: Promos in the Future of Television and Television Studies." *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2010, pp. 54–57.

Gray, Jonathan. *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts*. New York University Press, 2010.

Guerini, Marco, and Jacopo Staiano. "Deep Feelings: A Massive Cross-Lingual Study on the Relation between Emotions and Virality." *Proceedings of the 24th International Conference on World Wide Web - WWW '15 Companion*, 2015, doi:10.1145/2740908.2743058.

Halberstadt, Amy G., et al. "Nonverbal Communication: Developmental Perspectives." *Nonverbal Communication*, by Judith A. Hall and Mark L. Knapp, De Gruyter Mouton, 2013, pp. 93–127.

Hall, Stuart. "Encoding, Decoding." *The Cultural Studies Reader*, edited by Simon During, Routledge, 2010, pp. 90–103.

Hand, Richard J., and Mary Traynor. *Title: The Radio Drama Handbook : Audio Drama in Context and Practice*. Continuum, 2011.

Harcourt, Edward John. "'The Boys Will Have to Fight the Battles without Me': The Making of Sam Davis, 'Boy Hero of the Confederacy.".." *Southern Cultures*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2006, pp. 29–54., doi:10.1353/scu.2006.0034.

Harmon, Jim. *Radio & TV Premiums: a Guide to the History and Value of Radio and TV Premiums*. Krause Publications, 1997.

Harmon, Jim. *Radio Mystery and Adventure: and Its Appearances in Film, Television, and Other Media*. McFarland & Co., 2003.

Harris, Neil. *Humbug: the Art of P.T. Barnum*. University of Chicago Press, 1973.

Hartley, John. "Television as Transmodern Teaching." *Television: the Critical View*, edited by Horace Newcomb, 7th ed., Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 595–604.

Hauner, Milan. "Milan Hauner, Adolf Hitler's Mein Kampf: The Critical Edition." *George L. Mosse Program in History*, University of Wisconsin, 19 Apr. 2019, mosseprogram.wisc.edu/2019/04/19/hauner01/.

Hendrickson, Robert. *The Grand Emporiums: the Illustrated History of America's Great Department Stores*. Stein and Day, 1980.

The Herald, 30 Oct. 1835, p. 1.

Herman, Edward S., and Noam Chomsky. *Manufacturing Consent: the Political Economy of the Mass Media*. The Bodley Head, 2008.

Hilmes, Michele. *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting, 1922-1952*. University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

The Himmel Group. "Ovaltine | History ." *Thehimmelgroup-Copy*, www.himmelgroup.com/ovaltine.

"Historical Texts as Literary Artifact." *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, by Hayden White, Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1978, pp. 81–100.

Hockenos, Paul. "Defusing 'Mein Kampf'." *Chronical of Higher Education*, CHE, 22 July 2020, www.chronicle.com/article/defusing-mein-kampf/.

Hodges, E R. *Department Store Advertising*. International Textbook Co., 1948.

Hofstede, Geert H. *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*. McGraw-Hill, 1991.

Holter, Frances. "Radio among the Unemployed." *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 23, no. 1, 1939, pp. 163–169., doi:10.1037/h0057119.

The Holy Bible: Old and New Testaments in the King James Version. T. Nelson, 1972.

Houston, R. A. "The Growth of Literacy in Early Modern Europe from 1500 to 1800." *EGO: Journal of European History Online*, 2014, doi:10.4324/9781315839233.

"How the North American Takes the Lead." *The North American*, 27 Nov. 1899, pp. 1–2. *19th Century U.S. Newspapers*, Accessed 14 Aug. 2017.

Hower, Ralph M. *History of Macy's of New York: 1858-1919 ; Chapters in the Evolution of the Department Store*. Harvard Univ. Press, 1967.

Hurley, Michael. "Born Incorruptibly: The Third Canon Of The Lateran Council (A. D. 649)." *The Heythrop Journal*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1961, pp. 216–236., doi:10.1111/j.1468-2265.1961.tb00263.x.

Huurdeman, Anton A. *The Worldwide History of Telecommunications*. Wiley-Interscience, 2003.

Infidel007. "The Left's War on Comment Sections." Breitbart News, 27 October 2015. Breitbart News Network, https://www.breitbart.com/tech/2015/10/27/the-lefts-war-on-comment-sections/

Innis, Harold A. *Empire and Communications*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2007.

"An Irish Captain." *The Sun*, 2 Sept. 2008, newspaperarchive.com/new-york-sun-sep-03-1833-p-

    1/.

Jameson, Fredric. "Postmodernism and Consumer Society." *The Anti-Aesthetic Essays on*

    Postmodern Culture, edited by Hal Foster, New Press, 2002, pp. 111–126.

Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Duke University

    Press, 1991.

Janson, H.W., and Anthony F. Janson. *History of Art*. 4th ed., Harry N. Abrams, 1991.

Jenkins, Henry, et al. *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*.

    New York Univ. Press, 2013.

Jenkins, Henry. "Star Trek Rerun, Reread, Rewritten: Fan Writing as Textual Poaching." *Critical*

    Studies in Mass Communication, vol. 5, no. 2, 1988, pp. 85–107.

Jenkins, Henry. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. Routledge, 2013.

Jennings, Michael William., and Howard Eiland. *Walter Benjamin: A Critical Life*. Harvard

    University Press, 2014.

Johansson, David. "Homeward Bound: Those Soprano's Titles Come Heavy." *Reading the*

    Sopranos: Hit TV from HBO, edited by David Lavery, I.B. Tauris, London, 2006, pp. 27–

    38.

Jorge, Kaylin, and Justin McFarland. "'Historical Context' Signs Slated for Confederate Statue in

    Centennial Park amid Vandalism." *WZTV*, WZTV, 10 Sept. 2019,

    fox17.com/news/local/historical-context-signs-slated-for-confederate-statue-in-

    centennial-park-amid-vandalism.

Joseph Blough. "The Left's War on Comment Sections." Breitbart News, 27 October 2015.

> Breitbart News Network, https://www.breitbart.com/tech/2015/10/27/the-lefts-war-on-
>
> comment-sections/

Joyella, Mark. "Sean Hannity Leads Fox To Big Cable News Ratings Win In October." *Forbes*,

> Forbes Magazine, 29 Oct. 2019, www.forbes.com/sites/markjoyella/2019/10/29/sean-
>
> hannity-leads-fox-news-to-big-cable-news-ratings-win-in-october/#38724fb269a6.

Jubera, Drew. "KROG STREET TUNNEL: ATLANTA'S GRAFFITI CANVAS: 'It's Got a

> Lotta Soul' - Dynamic Message: Psychedelic Joyride Provides an Urban Shoutout
>
> beneath a Fast-Gentrifying City." *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 2 Dec. 2007, p. A1.

Kael, Pauline. *5001 Nights at the Movies: an A-Z Film Guide for Cinema, TV and Video*

> *Viewers*. Zenith, 1984.

Kael, Pauline. "Dirty Harry: Saint Cop - Review by Pauline Kael." *Scraps from the Loft*, 17 Apr.

> 2019, scrapsfromtheloft.com/2017/12/28/dirty-harry-saint-cop-review-by-pauline-kael/.

Kallis, Stephen A. *Radio's Captain Midnight: the Wartime Biography*. McFarland & Co., 2000.

Karlander, David. "Backjumps: Writing, Watching, Erasing Train Graffiti." *Social Semiotics*,

> vol. 28, no. 1, 2016, pp. 41–59., doi:10.1080/10350330.2016.1200802.

Karpovich, Angelina. "Dissecting the Opening Sequence." ." *Dexter: Investigating Cutting Edge*

> *Television*, edited by Douglas L. Howard, Tauris, London, 2010, pp. 27–42.

Kemp, Simon. "Pastiche, Structuralism and Authorial Intention." *Journal of Romance Studies*,

> vol. 12, no. 2, 2012, pp. 93–105. *Communication and Mass Media Complete [EBSCO]*,
>
> Accessed 7 Feb. 2017.

Kennedy, Pagan. "How to Destroy the Business Model of Breitbart and Fake News." *The New York Times*, 7 Jan. 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/01/07/opinion/sunday/how-to-destroy-the-business-model-of-breitbart-and-fake-news.html.

Kernan, Lisa. *Coming Attractions: Reading American Movie Trailers*. University of Texas Press, 2004.

King, Elliot, and Jane L. Chapman, editors. *Key Readings in Journalism*. Routledge, 2012.

Kingston, Jenga. Comment on "Universal to Use Digital Technology to 'Spellcheck' Scripts to Boost Latinx Representation." Breitbart News, 19 February 2020, https://www.breitbart.com/entertainment/2020/02/19/universal-to-use-digital-technology-to-spellcheck-scripts-to-boost-latinx-representation/

Knapp, Mark L., and Judith A. Hall. *Nonverbal Communication in Human Interaction*. 7th ed., Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2010.

Koffka, Kurt. *Principles of Gestalt Psychology*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1935.

Kulish, Nicholas. "Rebuffing Scholars, Germany Vows to Keep Hitler Out of Print." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 5 Feb. 2010, www.nytimes.com/2010/02/05/world/europe/05germany.html.

Lacey, Kate. *Listening Publics: the Politics of Audiences in the Media Age / Kate Lacey*. Polity Press, 2013.

Langenscheidt. "German-English Translation for 'Sinneswahrnehmung.'" *German-English Dictionary*, PONS, GmbH, en.langenscheidt.com/german-english/sinneswahrnehmung.

Lassiter, Matthew D. "Who Speaks for the Silent Majority?" *The New York Times*, 2 Nov. 2011, www.nytimes.com/2011/11/03/opinion/populism-and-the-silent-majority.html.

Lavin, Marilyn. "Creating Consumers in the 1930s: Irna Phillips and the Radio Soap Opera." *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 22, no. 1, 1995, p. 75. *EBSCOhost*, Accessed 22 Mar. 2017.

Leach, William R. "Transformations in a Culture of Consumption: Women and Department Stores, 1890-1925." *Journal of American History*, vol. 71, no. 2, 1984, pp. 319–342. *EBSCOhost*, Accessed 10 Aug. 2017.

Leach, William. *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture / William Leach*. Vintage Books, 2001.

Lears, Jackson. *Fables of Abundance: a Cultural History of Advertising in America*. Basicbooks., 1994.

Leavenworth, Maria Lindgren. "The Paratext of Fan Fiction." *Narrative*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2015, pp. 40–60.

LeMon, Joel M. "Recasting Genesis in Bronze: Ghiberti's Visual Exegesis in The Gates of Paradise." *Biblical Interpretation*, vol. 20, no. 1-2, 1 Jan. 2012, pp. 126–155., doi:10.1163/156851512x630386.

Lenthall, Bruce. *Radio's America: the Great Depression and the Rise of Modern Mass Culture*. University of Chicago Press, 2007. *EBook Collection (Ebscohost)*, Accessed 8 Feb. 2017.

Lin, Mei-Chen, et al. "Political Party Identification and Intergroup Attitudes: Exploring the Effects of Mediated and Direct Contact With the Opposing Party During a Presidential Campaign." *International Journal of Communication* , 2020, p. 2446., go.gale.com/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=T001&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&hitCount=1&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm¤tPosition=1&docId=GALE%7CA632721048&docType=Article&sort=RELEVANCE&contentSegment=ZLR

C-

MOD1&prodId=LitRC&pageNum=1&contentSet=GALE%7CA632721048&searchId=R

1&userGroupName=gor1&inPS=true.

Lindemann, Bernhard. "What Knowledge Does It Take To Read A Newspaper?" *Journal of*

Literary Semantics, vol. 18, no. 1, 1989, pp. 50–65., doi:10.1515/jlse.1989.18.1.50.

Lippmann, Walter. *Public Opinion*. Greenbook Publications, LLC, 2010.

Lipsky, Mark. "Radio's Top Talkers for 2019: The Radio Agency: Www.radiodirect.com." *The*

Radio Agency | Www.radiodirect.com, 6 June 2019, www.radiodirect.com/radios-top-

talkers-for-2019/.

Liptak, Andrew. "Advertisers Are Pulling Ads from Alex Jones' YouTube Channel." *The Verge*,

Vox Media, Inc., 4 Mar. 2018, www.theverge.com/2018/3/4/17076286/advertisers-alex-

jones-infowars-youtube-channel-conspiracy-theories.

"List of Graffiti and Street Art Injuries and Deaths." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 4 Apr.

2020, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_graffiti_and_street_art_injuries_and_deaths.

Living for Truth. Comment on "The Left's War on Comment Sections. Breitbart News, 27

October 2015, https://www.breitbart.com/tech/2015/10/27/the-lefts-war-on-comment-

sections/

Loon, Joost van. *Media Technology: Critical Perspectives*. McGraw-Hill/Open University Press,

2008.

Loviglio, Jason. *Radio's Intimate Public Network Broadcasting and Mass-Mediated Democracy*.

University of Minnesota Press, 2005.

Malone, Cynthia Northcutt. "Noses in Books: Orientation, Immersion, and Paratext."

Interdisciplinary Science Reviews, vol. 40, no. 1, 2015, pp. 17–28.

Marantz, Andrew. "Who Is Steve Bannon Without Breitbart?" *The New Yorker*, The New
Yorker, 10 Jan. 2018, www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/who-is-steve-bannon-
without-breitbart.

Marcoci, Sanda. "Some Typical Features of English Newspaper Headlines." *Linguistic and
Philosophical Investigations*, vol. 13, 2014, pp. 708–714.

Mari, Elia Margarita Cornelio. "American Animated Cartoons as a Genre: Poetics and Cultural
Dilemmas." *Academia.edu*, *The University of Texas at Austin*, 2004,
www.academia.edu/6834995/American_Animated_Cartoons_as_a_genre_Poetics_and_c
ultural_dilemmas.

Mccaskill, Nolan D. "Bannon Tells Breitbart: 'Hobbits' and 'Deplorables' Were Key to Trump's
Success." *POLITICO*, Politico LLC, 30 Dec. 2016,
www.politico.com/story/2016/12/steve-bannon-breitbart-hobbits-deplorables-donald-
trump-233074.

McChesney, Robert W. *The Problem of the Media: U.S. Communication Politics in the Twenty-
First Century*. Monthly Review Press, 2004.

McChesney, Robert. *The Problem of the Media: U.S. Communication Politics in the Twenty-
First Century*. Monthly Review Press, 2004.

McCornack, Steven. *Reflect & Relate: an Introduction to Interpersonal Communication*.
Bedford/St. Martins, 2018.

Mccracken, Ellen. "Expanding Genette's Epitext/Peritext Model for Transitional Electronic
Literature: Centrifugal and Centripetal Vectors on Kindles and IPads." *Narrative*, vol. 21,
no. 1, 2013, pp. 105–124.

Mcfarland, Stephen, et al. "'Take 'Em Down Hillsborough!": Race, Space, and the 2017 Struggle

    Over Confederate Iconography in Neoliberal Tampa." *Southeastern Geographer*, vol. 59,

    no. 2, 2019, pp. 172–195., doi:10.1353/sgo.2019.0014.

McGrath, Bonnie. "VILLA PARK AND OVALTINE A GOOD MIXTURE TO THE LAST."

    Chicago Tribune, 27 Feb. 1985, www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1985-02-27-

    8501110713-story.html.

Meerbeke, Gabriel Ortiz Van, and Bjørn Sletto. "'Graffiti Takes Its Own Space' Negotiated

    Consent and the Positionings of Street Artists and Graffiti Writers in Bogotá, Colombia."

    City, vol. 23, no. 3, 2019, pp. 366–387., doi:10.1080/13604813.2019.1646030.

Meyers, Cynthia B. *A Word from Our Sponsor: Admen, Advertising, and the Golden Age of*

    Radio. Fordham Univ. Press, 2014.

Miller, Daniel. *Stuff*. Polity Press, 2016.

Mills, Stephen F. "Disney and the Promotions of Synthetic Worlds." *American Studies*

    International, vol. 28, no. 2, 1990, p. 66. *EBSCOhost*, Accessed 20 Apr. 2017.

Moore, Mark. "Readership Plummets for Alt-Right Breitbart Without Bannon." *The New York*

    Post, 21 Mar. 2018, www.politico.com/story/2018/03/20/breitbart-readership-plunge-

    steve-bannon-474801.

Mortimer, Caroline. "New Edition of Hitler's Mein Kampf Sells out in Germany in Less than a

    Week." *The Independent*, Independent Digital News and Media, 10 Jan. 2016,

    www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/mein-kampf-new-edition-hitler-s-book-sells-

    out-germany-despite-eu59-price-tag-a6804801.html.

Mosley, Leonard. *Disney's World: a Biography*. Scarborough House, 1990.

"Most Played by Jockeys." *Billboard*, 28 May 1955, p. 58.

Mulcahy, Kevin V. "The Cultural Policy of the Counter-Reformation: the Case of St. Peter's." *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2011, pp. 131–152. *Academic Search Complete*, Accessed 5 May 2016.

Mullarkey, Maureen. "'The Gates of Paradise: Lorenzo Ghiberti's Renaissance Masterpiece' Metropolitan Museum of Art. October 30, 2007-January 13, 2008." *New Criterion*, vol. 4, 2007, p. 49.

Nanay, Bence. *Aesthetics as Philosophy of Perception*. Oxford University Press, 2016.

Nash, Charlie. "Breitbart News #1 Political Instagram Page." *Breitbart*, 25 Oct. 2017, www.breitbart.com/tech/2017/10/25/breitbart-news-1-political-instagram-page/.

National Bureau of Economic Research. "Unemployment Rate for United States." *FRED*, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, 17 Aug. 2012, fred.stlouisfed.org/series/M0892AUSM156SNBR.

Neuman, Robert. "Disneyland's Main Street, USA, and Its Sources in Hollywood, USA." *The Journal of American Culture*, vol. 31, no. 1, 2008, pp. 83–97. *EBSCOhost*, Accessed 10 Apr. 2017.

Newcomb, Horace, and John Hartley. "Television as Transmodern Teaching." *Television: the Critical View*, 7th ed., Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 595–604.

Nicas, Jack. "Bans Will Make Me Stronger, Infowars Founder Said. No, They Didn't." *The New York Times*, 5 Sept. 2018, p. 2.

Nixon, Richard. "Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam." 3 November 1969, The White House, Washington D.C.. Presidential Address.

Noble, Bonnie. *Lucas Cranach the Elder Art and Devotion of the German Reformation*. University Press of America, 2009.

Norris, James D. *Advertising and the Transformation of American Society: 1865-1920*.

    Greenwood Press, 1990.

The North American, 30 Dec. 1899, p. 1.

"Nothing But Trailers on AXS TV." *AXS TV*, AXS TV, www.axs.tv/programs/nothing-but-

    trailers/.

O'Collins, Gerald. "The Second Adam." *America*, vol. 190, no. 13, 12 Apr. 2004, pp. 10–12.

O'Dell, Cary. "Who Watches These Things?: An Examination of Daytime TV's New Era."

    PopMatters, 7 May 2013, www.popmatters.com/post/170869-daytime-tv/.

Ohmann, Richard M. *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century*.

    Verso, 1998.

Oney, Steve. "Citizen Breitbart." *Time*, Apr. 2010, pp. 34–37.

Ovaltine. "The Housewife - What Are Her War Aims?" *The Advertising Archives | Magazine

    Advert | Ovaltine | 1930s*, Wander Corp.,

    www.advertisingarchives.co.uk/detail/23712/1/Magazine-Advert/Ovaltine/1930s.

Oxford University Press. "Apperception: Definition of Apperception in English by Lexico

    Dictionaries." *Lexico Dictionaries | English*, Lexico Dictionaries,

    www.lexico.com/en/definition/apperception.

Paolucci, Antonio. *The Origins of Renaissance Art: the Baptistery Doors, Florence*. George

    Braziller, 1996.

Patterico. "Breitbart Readership in Free Fall in a World Where 'Relevance' Is Measured by

    Devotion to Trump." *RedState*, RedState, 25 Mar. 2018,

    www.redstate.com/patterico/2018/03/21/breitbart-readership-free-fall-world-relevance-

    measured-devotion-trump/.

Paul , John. "Letter to Artists, (April 4, 1999): John Paul II." *Letter to Artists, (April 4, 1999) |*

    John Paul II, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 22 Apr. 1999, www.vatican.va/content/john-

    paul-ii/en/letters/1999/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_23041999_artists.html.

Perez, Maria. "STEVE BANNON OUT AT BREITBART: SEVEN MOST CONTROVERSIAL

    ARTICLES PUBLISHED BY TRUMP'S FORMER AIDE." *Newsweek*, 9 Jan. 2018,

    www.newsweek.com/steve-bannon-breitbart-trump-controversial-776262.

Perlstein, Rick. *Nixonland: America's Second Civil War and the Divisive Legacy of Richard*

    Nixon, 1965-1972. Simon & Schuster, 2009.

"Philadelphia North American Sold." *The New York Times*, 26 Jan. 1899, Accessed 24 May

    2017.

Philo. *Philo*. Translated by Francis Henry Colson and George Herbert Whitaker, vol. 1, W.

    Heinemann, 1981.

Pius XII. "Ad Caeli Regionam Encyclical of Pope Pius XII on Proclaiming the Queenship of

    Mary to the Venerable Brethren, the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, Bishops, and

    Other Local Ordinaries in Peace and Communion with the Holy See." *Ad Caeli Reginam*,

    Vatican: The Holy See, 11 Oct. 1954,

    web.archive.org/web/20101007103544/www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xii/encyclicals/

    documents/hf_p-xii_enc_11101954_ad-caeli-reginam_en.html.

Pollak, Joel B. "9 Radical Ideas in the Biden-Sanders 'Unity' Platform." *Breitbart*, 9 July 2020,

    www.breitbart.com/podcast/2020/07/09/9-radical-ideas-in-the-biden-sanders-unity-

    platform/.

Powell, Adam Clayton. "You Are What You Hear." *Radio - the Forgotten Medium*, edited by

    Edward C. Pease and Everette E. Dennis, Routledge, 2018, p. NP.

"Price Promotions and Personalities." *Brandweek*, vol. 36, no. 33, Sept. 1995, p. 14.

Prince, Gerald. "Gerard Genette and the Pleasures of Poetics." *Narrative*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2010,
pp. 3–7., Accessed 6 Feb. 2017.

Radke, Gary M. "Lorenzo Ghiberti: Master Collaborator." *The Gates of Paradise: Lorenzo
Ghiberti's Renaissance Masterpiece*, by Lorenzo Ghiberti et al., High Museum of Art,
2007, pp. 50–71.

Radway, Janice A. "Reading Is Not Eating: Mass-Produced Literature and the Theoretical,
Methodological, and Political Consequences of a Metaphor." *Book Research Quarterly*,
vol. 2, no. 3, 1986, pp. 7–29.

Rahner, Hugo. *Our Lady and the Church*. Translated by Sebastian Bullough, Darton, Longman
& Todd, 1961.

"Ring the Christmas Bells." *The North American*, 25 Dec. 1899, p. 8.

Rodríguez-Ferrándiz, Raúl. "Paratextual Activity: Updating The Genettian Approach Within The
Transmedia Turn." *Communication & Society*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2017, pp. 165–182.
Academic Search Complete [EBSCO], Accessed 7 Feb. 2017.

Roj Blake. Comment on ""The Left's War on Comment Sections." Breitbart News, 27 October
2015, https://www.breitbart.com/tech/2015/10/27/the-lefts-war-on-comment-sections/

Rosentiel, Tom, and Jodie T. Allen. "How a Different America Responded to the Great
Depression." *Pew Research Center*, Pew Research Center, 14 Dec. 2010,
www.pewresearch.org/2010/12/14/how-a-different-america-responded-to-the-great-
depression/.

Rossiter, Graham. "Decoding the Mise-En-Scène of Contemporary Secular Spirituality: a
Research Monograph. Parts II and III Contrasting the Mise-En-Scène of Medieval

Christian Spirituality with That of Contemporary Consumerist Lifestyle: Sociological and Educational Implications." *Journal of Religious Education*, vol. 62, no. 3, 2014, pp. 89–119. *Education Source*, Accessed 21 Apr. 2016.

Roth, J.P., and Jim Perry. "Timeline: Commercial Aviation." *The New York Times*, 9 Dec. 2003, www.nytimes.com/2003/12/09/science/sciencespecial2/timeline-commercial-aviation.html.

Rothenbuhler, Eric. "Radio Redefines Itself, 1947-1962." *Radio Reader: Essays in the Cultural History of Radio*, edited by Tom McCourt, Routledge, 2002, pp. 367–388.

Rubin, Jared. "Printing and Protestants: An Empirical Test of the Role of Printing in the Reformation." *Review of Economics and Statistics*, vol. 96, no. 2, 2014, pp. 270–286. *Business Source Complete*, Accessed 14 Apr. 2016.

Rubin, Judith, editor. Themed Entertainment Association (TEA), 2017, pp. 1–75, *TEA/AECOM 2017 Theme Index and Museum Index: The Global Attractions Attendance Report*.

Saenger, Michael. *The Commodification of Textual Engagements in the English Renaissance*. Ashgate Pub., 2006.

Sage, Joe. "The 'Why' of the Creaking Door's Creak." *The New York Times*, 12 Dec. 1948, p. 11.

Sandstedt, Eva, and Sara Westin. "Beyond Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft: Cohousing Life in Contemporary Sweden." *Housing, Theory and Society*, vol. 32, no. 2, June 2015, p. 131., doi:10.1080/14036096.2015.1011687.

Santo, Avi. *Selling the Silver Bullet: the Lone Ranger and Transmedia Brand Licensing*. University of Texas Press, 2015.

Scharf, J Thomas. *History of Philadelphia, 1609-1884*. vol. 3, Forgotten, 2016, *Google Books*, Accessed 9 Aug. 2017.

Schivelbusch, Wolfgang. *The Railway Journey: the Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century*. The University of California Press, 2014.

Scholes, Robert. *English after the Fall: from Literature to Textuality*. University of Iowa Press, 2011.

Schwartz, Jason, and Nancy Scola. "Breitbart's Readership Plunges." *POLITICO*, 21 Mar. 2018, www.politico.com/story/2018/03/20/breitbart-readership-plunge-steve-bannon-474801.

Shaker, Christiane. "Sub Tuum Praesidium: a Reflection on the Protection of Mary, the Blessed Virgin Mother of God." *Magistra*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1 Jan. 2017, pp. 3–25.

Shapiro, Ben. "I Know Trump's New Campaign Chairman, Steve Bannon. Here's What You Need To Know." *Daily Wire*, The Daily Wire, 17 Aug. 2016, www.dailywire.com/news/8441/i-know-trumps-new-campaign-chairman-steve-bannon-ben-shapiro.

Shklovsky, Viktor. *Theory of Prose*. Translated by Benjamin Sher, Dalkey Archive Press, 1990.

Shrock, Joel. *The Gilded Age*. Greenwood Press, 2004.

Sinberg, John H. "Philadelphia Notes." *Printer's Ink*, vol. 36, no. 10, 1901, p. 8.

Sinclair, Upton. *The Brass Check: a Study of American Journalism*. The Author, 1936, *Montclair State University*, www.montclair.edu, Accessed 13 Mar. 2017.

"Skelly Oil Company: America's Legacies Being Assured A Role In America's Future." *Skellyoilcompany*, Nimmons-Joliet Development Corp., www.skellyoilcompany.com/Home_Page.html.

"Skelly Turns to Discs." *Broadcasting, Broadcast Advertising*, 1 Sept. 1938, p. 10. *ProQuest*, Accessed 5 Apr. 2017.

Sloan, William David, editor. "The Press and Industrial America." *The Media in America: A History*, by Paulette D. Kilmer, Seventh ed., Vision Press, Northport, 2008, pp. 203–227.

Smith, Edward J., and Gilbert L. Fowler. "How Comprehensible Are Newspaper Headlines?" *Journalism Quarterly*, vol. 59, no. 2, 1982, pp. 305–308. *EBSCOhost*, Accessed 25 July 2017.

Southern, Pat. *The Roman Empire from Severus to Constantine*. Routledge, 2001.

Spadoni, Robert. *Uncanny Bodies the Coming of Sound Film and the Origins of the Horror Genre*. University of California Press, 2007.

Spolsky, E. "Literacy after Iconoclasm in the English Reformation." *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, vol. 39, no. 2, 2009, pp. 305–330. *Advanced Placement Sourve*, Accessed 14 Apr. 2016.

Squires, David. "The Social Construction of Media: Social Media's Impact on Journalism." *The Social Construction of Media: Social Media, Culture, and Everyday Life*, The Alliance for Networking Visual Culture, 23 Oct. 2016, scalar.usc.edu/works/cultures-of-social-media/journalism.

Stanitzek, Georg. "Reading the Title Sequence." *Cinema Journal*, vol. 48, no. 4, 2009, pp. 44–58. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/25619727?ref=search-gateway:254b02d08f7608f4244a41b28636bd8c. Accessed 12 Dec. 2016.

Stanitzek, Georg. "Texts and Paratexts in Media." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 32, no. 1, 2005, pp. 27–42. *JStore Journals*, Accessed 15 Feb. 2017.

Starr, Paul. *The Creation of the Media: Political Origins of Modern Communications*. Basic Books, 2004.

Steiner, Michael. "Frontierland as Tomorrowland: Walt Disney and the Architectural Packaging of the Mythic West." *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, vol. 48, no. 1, 1998, pp. 2–17.

Sterling, Christopher H., and John M. Kittross. *Stay Tuned: a History of American Broadcasting*. Lawrence Erlbaun Associates, 2002.

Strasser, Susan. *Satisfaction Guaranteed: the Making of the American Mass Market*. Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995.

Strauss, Samuel. "Things Are in the Saddle." *The Atlantic Monthly*, Nov. 1924, pp. 577–588.

Streiff. "Alex Jones's InfoWars Has Been De-Platformed and This Is Just the Beginning." *RedState*, 7 Aug. 2018, www.redstate.com/streiff/2018/08/07/alex-joness-infowars-de-platformed-just-beginning/.

"Suicide Squadron: 3." *Captain Midnight*, Blue Network, 24 Jan. 1944, Accessed 8 Apr. 2017.

The Sun, 24 November 1834, P. 1.

The Sun, 3 Sept. 1833, p. 1.

The Sun, 3 September 1833, p.1.

Sutton, Matthew. "Amplifying the Text: Paratext in Popular Musicians' Autobiographies." *Popular Music and Society*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2015, pp. 208–223.

TARDRE. Comment on "The Left's War on Comment Sections." Breitbart News, 27 October 2015, https://www.breitbart.com/tech/2015/10/27/the-lefts-war-on-comment-sections/

Telotte, J. P. *Disney TV*. Wayne State University Press, 2004.

That Kid From Kindergarten Cop. *The Gender Spectrum: A Compendium of All the Known Genders*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017.

Thomas, Andrew R. *Soft Landing: Airline Industry Strategy, Service, and Safety*. Apress, 2011.

Thompson, E. P. "The Moral Economy Of The English Crowd In The Eighteenth Century." *Past and Present*, vol. 50, no. 1, 1971, pp. 76–136.

Tingle, Elizabeth. "Indulgences in the Catholic Reformation." *Reformation & Renaissance Review*, vol. 16, no. 2, 2014, pp. 181–204. *EBSCOhost*, Accessed 17 May 2017.

Tocqueville, Alexis de. *Democracy in America*. Translated by J. P. Mayer and George Lawrence, Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2006.

Trentmann, Frank. *Empire of Things: How We Became a World of Consumers, from the Fifteenth Century to The*. Harper Collins, 2017.

Tumbusch, Tom. *Tomart's Price Guide to Radio Premium and Cereal Box Collectibles*. Wallace-Homestead, 1991.

Tönnies , Ferdinand. *Community and Society*. Translated by Charles P. Loomis, The Michigan State University Press, 1957.

Uberti, David. "How Breitbart Is Crushing Mainstream Media on Facebook." *Vice*, 23 Dec. 2019, www.vice.com/en_us/article/jgeqe7/how-breitbart-is-crushing-mainstream-media-on-facebook.

United States Census Bureau. "16th Census of the United States: Population. Families: Family Wage or Salary Income in 1939: Regions and Cities of 1,000,000 or More." Washington, 1943.

US Department of Commerce . "Statistics Report." *Popular Aviation*, Sept. 1939, p. 26.

Vancour, Shawn. *Making Radio: Early Radio Production and the Rise of Modern Sound Culture*. Oxford University Press, 2018.

Variety. "'All Time Domestic Champs.'" *Variety*, 6 Jan. 1960, p. 34.

Verma, Neil. *Theater of the Mind: Imagination, Aesthetics, and American Radio Drama*. University of Chicago Press, 2012.

Wallace, Aurora. *Newspapers and the Making of Modern America: a History*. Greenwood Press, 2005.

Walsh, Bill. "The Disneyland Story." *Disneyland*, season 1, episode 1, ABC, 27 Oct. 1954.

Walther, Joseph B. "Group and Interpersonal Effects in International Computer-Mediated Collaboration." *Human Communication Research*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1997, pp. 342–369., doi:10.1111/j.1468-2958.1997.tb00400.x.

"Wanamaker, America's Master Merchant, Never Takes Vacation from Advertising." *Editor & Publisher*, vol. 52, no. 16, 1919, pp. 5–65.

"Wanamaker, John (1838-1922)." *Ad Age*, Crain Communications, 15 Sept. 2003, adage.com/article/adage-encyclopedia/wanamaker-john-1838-1922/98926/.

Wanamaker, John. "Wanamaker Daily Store News." *The North American*, 30 Dec. 1899, p. 8.

Wanamaker. "Clothing for Men." *The North American*, 11 Oct. 1899, p. 8.

Wanamaker. "Dress Goods." *The North American* [Philadelphia], 10 Oct. 1899, p. 8.

Wanamaker. "House Furnishings." *The North American* [Philadelphia], 11 Oct. 1899, p. 8.

Wanamaker. "Important Sales." *The North American* [Philadelphia], 30 Dec. 1899, p. 8.

Wanamaker. "Linen Grenadines." *The North American* [Philadelphia], 9 Feb. 1899, p. 8.

Wanamaker. "Silk Waists." *The North American* [Philadelphia], 17 Nov. 1899, p. 8.

Wanamaker. "Wanamaker Daily Store News." *The North American* [Philadelphia], 21 Dec. 1899, p. 8.

Wanamaker. "Women's Suits." *The North American* [Philadelphia], 17 Nov. 1899, p. 8.

"Wander Shifts'Midnight' to New Spot on the Blue." *Broadcasting, Broadcast Advertising*, 7
Sept. 1942, p. 47. *ProQuest*, Accessed 6 Apr. 2017.

Warzel, Charlie. "How The Alt-Right Manipulates The Internet's Biggest Commenting
Platform." *BuzzFeed News*, BuzzFeed News, 5 June 2018,
www.buzzfeednews.com/article/charliewarzel/how-the-alt-right-manipulates-disqus-
comment-threads.

Watts, Steven. *The Magic Kingdom Walt Disney and the American Way of Life*. University of
Missouri Press, 2013.

Weinberg, Meyer. *A Short History of American Capitalism*. New History Press, 2003.

Whalen, Jill. "Hazleton Native's Radio Premium Collection Makes Smithsonian." *The Citizen's
Voice*, 10 Nov. 2018. *EBSCOhost*.

Wharton, A J. "Relics, Protestants, Things." *Material Religion*, vol. 10, no. 4, 2014, pp. 412–
431. *EBSCOhost*, Accessed 17 May 2017.

"What Is a Department Store?" *The North American*, 10 Feb. 1899, p. 8. *19th Century U.S.
Newspapers*.

"Who Made America?: John Wanamaker." *PBS*, Public Broadcasting Service,
www.pbs.org/wgbh/theymadeamerica/whomade/wanamaker_hi.html.

Widner, James F. "Captain Midnight: The Premiums." *Captain Midnight - Archives*, James F.
Widner, 3 Nov. 1997, otr.com/cm_premiums.shtml.

wikiHow Staff. "How to Contact Rush Limbaugh." *WikiHow*, WikiHow, 10 Feb. 2020,
www.wikihow.com/Contact-Rush-Limbaugh.

Williams, Raymond. "Culture Is Ordinary." *The Everyday Life Reader*, edited by Ben Highmore,
Routledge, London, 2002, pp. 91–100.

Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford University Press, 1977.

Witt, Ronald. "What Did Giovannino Read and Write? Literacy in Early Renaissance Florence."
I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance, vol. 6, 1995, pp. 83–114.,
doi:10.2307/4603692.

Wittkower, Rudolf. *Art and Architecture in Italy, 1600 to 1750*. Penguin Books, 1973.

"The Wonderful World of Disney." *Postwar America: An Encyclopedia of Social, Political,
Cultural, and Economic History*, Edited by James Ciment, vol. 4, Routledge, 2015, pp.
1441–1442.

Wu, Tim. *The Attention Merchants: the Epic Scramble to Get inside Our Heads*. Alfred A.
Knopf, 2017.

Zahn, Harry, translator. "The Storyteller." *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt, by Walter
Benjamin, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, pp. 83–110.

APPENDIX: FRONT PAGE: "WANAMAKER DAILY STORE NEWS."

Figure 3.3 Appendix: "Wanamaker Daily Store News." The North American. 30 Dec 1899.