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John M. Staudenmaier S.J.
University of Detroit

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THE INFLUENCE OF COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES ON MODERN AMERICAN CULTURE: A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

John M. Staudenmaier, S.J.

Introduction: Media Technology and Media Discourse

> The Lord has given me a disciple's tongue. So that I may know how to reply to the wearied he provides me with speech. Each morning he wakes me to hear, to listen like a disciple. The Lord has opened my ear. (Isaiah 50:4)

This passage seems a fitting frontispiece for this essay, since Isaiah's Servant of God reminds us that communicating involves listening as well as speaking. I take this to mean that those of us concerned with religious telecommunications ought not begin our endeavors with activist tactics, planning how church resources of technical talent, political clout, and money might secure a place in the swirling array of media hype, catching windows of opportunity in the fast-paced, hi-tech world of public discourse. Like Jesus in his first thirty years, we are called to stillness and attentive leisure, to take our culture seriously and learn what it has to teach us even as we speak to it.

Speed-of-light transmission of information has revolutionized society. I suspect that we all treasure the immeasurably broader and more richly varied consciousness that the media make possible and admire the magnificent human creativity so evident in their technical elegances. For the most part, I will assume these well-celebrated media contributions and concentrate instead on the challenges they present to us. As Isaiah reminds us, we are called not simply to use the media but also to learn how to speak to those places in the heart where late twentieth century citizens need encouragement, where imaginations have grown weary with the pace and complexities of the electronic media. How then, can we help one another during these days to contemplate our culture and to grow in our capacity to respond?

My own task is to provide a historical framework for analysis of influence of communications technologies on modern American culture. This task begins to get complicated almost immediately because of a development within my own discipline. Historians of technology have begun to talk in recent years about "technological style," a concept rooted in the conviction that a culture shapes technologies even as the technologies shape the culture. From this perspective, analysis of how communications technologies influence modern culture must be balanced by consideration

of how modern culture influences these technologies. Let us begin, then, by clarifying this notion of technological style.

Strictly speaking, "technologies" are the artifacts that human beings create to solve the problems they face. They can be as simple as a hoe or a hammer or as complex as a global telecommunications network. Technologies shape the essentially human component of society. How we build our shelters, provide for transportation, for making goods, for communication and our other chosen activities determines the substructures on which our cultures stand. As technologies differ from muscle, wind, and water power to electronic speed-of-light power and communication systems, so will their cultures differ. This insight, common to Karl Marx and a host of other observers of the human condition, explains one dimension of technological style. Different technological designs create different cultural environments.

On the other hand, however, we face a thorny question: How do new technologies take the design-shape they do? It is a key question. If, for example, the often invoked myth of autonomous progress is to be believed, then new technologies happen because of a god-like dynamic over which human beings have little influence. "Progress" creates new technologies and human beings must conform to their dictates. Historians of technology challenge this naive and ahistorical notion by studying the biases, motives, and world views of technical designers, asking how it was that specific technologies attracted inventive attention and venture capital and studying the historically specific reasons why a particular technology turned out the way it did. Just as important, historians of technology ask why a given technology became successful within a given society.[1]

To be successful, a technology must be more than functionally efficient. Technologies are successful only to the extent that their host society would have difficulty doing without them. Thus, in the United States the electronic media are much more "successful" than dental floss. Our society, as it is presently constituted, would collapse in chaos should the media disappear but the loss of flossing would disturb most of us only a little.

We can, therefore, ask two key questions about those technologies that become successful within a given cultural situation. First, how do their particular designs influence the social order? Second, what prior cultural factors influenced the design process by which they were created in the first place? In this paper I will discuss both questions but in reverse order. I will begin by asking what it was about eighteenth and nineteenth century America that created the conditions in which the electronic media achieved such phenomenal popularity?[2] To summarize my answer, the electronic media are one among a number of very successful twentieth century technologies (others being, for example, mass production, the automobile, electric light & power systems, nuclear weapons, etc.) whose technical and economic designs originated in and continue to reinforce a particular worldview and value system that became central to Western culture during the rise of industrial capitalism.

The capitalist values of individualism and scientific-technological rationality can be traced through the history of the West back to the Greeks. I find it helpful, however, to emphasize the ways in which capitalism represents something radically new under the historical sun. The question is too complex to be completely treated here

but, what I will call attention to are three novel tendencies that fall under the heading of "the fragmentation of human discourse." Capitalist consciousness tends to split the private inner self from the public exterior persona, news item from its context, and those who shape public messages from their audience. These three splits become more understandable, in turn, when we see them as part of a more inclusive cultural climate which came to value conformity to large-scale standardized systems over the less efficient but more inclusive process of multi-party negotiation as the preferred means of solving problems or, as we put it in my profession, of doing technology.[3]

I will begin by illustrating the fragmented discourse by looking at several remarkable social patterns that emerged in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, namely: etiquette book literature, the asylum model for social control, and the gradual disciplining of audience behavior. After situating these developments as part of the larger cultural trend toward standardization, I will look at the telegraph wire service, radio, and television and show how these media embody that cultural trend while radically enhancing its impact through the power of speed-of-light broadcast transmission. Twentieth-century advertising will require special attention. It epitomizes the trend toward fragmented discourse but the peculiarities of its economic structure further explain why the media developed these stylistic traits. Finally, to summarize and focus these socio-technological patterns, I will describe our experience of televised discourse and offer a few suggestions about how media professionals might respond to those patterns.

Etiquette and Asylums: the Scrutinized Self

How did the fragmentation of discourse happen? Three intriguing trends shed light on this question of origins. One of them, etiquette literature, began its remarkable rise to popularity in the United States around 1830. Etiquette books taught those who aspired to the middle class how to avoid misbehaving in public, a skill that historian John Kasson and others call "impression management."

> The basis of "impression management" lies in an individual's awareness that fellow participants in social encounters draw inferences about one's general character, actions, background, and so on from the interchanges of the moment.[4]

As a necessary skill for impression management, the books inculcated the habit of strict self control when in public.

> Never look behind you in the street, or behave in any way so as to attract attention. Do not talk or laugh loudly out of doors, or swing your arms as you walk. If you should happen to meet someone you know, take care not to utter their names loudly.[5]

The books taught avoidance of staring, shouting, singing, or humming out loud, in short, the masking of deep emotions. The civilized adult locked unruly passions—sexual feelings, anger, grief and joy—inside so that no one would suspect their existence. One neither wept nor exulted in the streets.

Impression management derives from the assumption that I walk the city as a stranger subject to scrutiny by other strangers. It represented, for the middle class at least, a new self-awareness, a dramatic heightening of the difference between one's private and public behavior that defined public life as a series of discrete events requiring constant self control. Earlier village life—for all its gossip and the long, sometimes unforgiving, memories that such an enclosed society fostered—rooted public identity in storytelling. People were known, not on the basis of the moment's immediate behavior, but rather in a context of the stories that recollected a life-time of events. One learned proper behavior gradually, by watching and imitating one's elders, enjoying their praise and enduring their corrections.

Etiquette books entered the social vacuum created by America's anonymous and culturally polyglot cities by training readers to make a good first impression. They were only one symptom of a sea change in the culture's definition of the public order. The etiquette assumption of constant scrutiny participated in a more widespread social trend that by the turn of the nineteenth century began to see surveillance as the preferred means for social control. Long before George Orwell's omnipresent telescreens ("Big Brother is always watching.") many policy makers favored the asylum model to control the behavior not only of the insane and criminals, but also of students in school, workers in factories, and patients in hospitals.[6]

Jeremy Bentham's "Panopticon" was, perhaps, the most famous of all. The British utilitarian philosopher adopted his brother Samuel's factory design and related industrial ideology to plan a model prison which he extolled as "a mill for grinding rogues honest and idle men industrious."[7] Bentham proposed that prisons be constructed with a central surveillance tower looking out at a surrounding ring of cells. Each cell, with large windows on the outside and inside walls, provided light behind the solitary prisoner and an open view from the tower. Tower observers, on the other hand, were rendered invisible so that the prisoner would never know when he was under observation. In the words of philosopher Michel Foucault,

> Bentham laid down the principle that power should be visible and unverifiable. *Visible*: the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon. *Unverifiable*: the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so. . . . The Panopticon is a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad: in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen.[8] (my emphasis)

Far from diminishing over time, the constant scrutiny model has become even more pervasive in contemporary society. Thus, Shoshanah Zuboff of the Harvard Business School and others have begun to document the new capacity of computers to provide second-by-second observation of worker behavior on the production line and in the white collar office.[9] Fashion magazines such as *Vogue or Gentleman's Quarterly* continue the etiquette-manual tradition of presumed scrutiny and impression management by training their readers in the ever-changing arts of applying

makeup and dressing "for success." The result of these parallel developments tends to be life in a societal fishbowl.

Audience Control and the Passive Public Self:

In Western society the asylum and etiquette's impression management exemplify the first great fragmentation of public discourse. Insofar as we experience others as strangers who judge our external behavior we learn to split our life stories into the separate domains of public image and inner secrets. Abstractly considered, this division into private and public personalities runs only skin deep. Theoretically at least, our *capacity* to tell our personal stories—to intimate friends or at least to ourselves—remains intact. Another dimension of the changing nineteenth century social order suggests, however, that the heart of storytelling, individual self-expression, was, in some arenas at least, being curbed in the interest of a more standardized behavior. As we shall shortly see, the movement toward standardized conformity pervaded the second half of the century but our focus on media makes the changing character of audience behavior a particularly illuminating example of the pattern.

Imagine, for example, going to the music hall or theatre about 1840 in New York. All classes of society attended, dressed in their diverse styles. More important, interaction with the performers was expected behavior. Audiences interrupted the musicians—cheering, shouting and pounding the floor with their feet—sometimes demanding repetition of an especially-liked passage of the music. Patrons booed, hissed, and even threw fruit or eggs at the play's villain. Public performance, in short, sometimes approached the chaotic. By about 1865, however, we find a new mentality beginning to take hold. Noted conductor Theodore Thomas regularly disciplined his audiences, sometimes turning to stare them into silence before continuing the performance. He and others like him conducted stern lessons in conformity and audience passivity.[10]

Standardization as the American Cultural Ideal

Their tendency to replace spontaneity with conformity marks these social trends as part of the most significant cultural change in 19th century America, the gradual but pervasive adoption of standardization as our ideal of how to solve technological problems.

Until 1870 or so the challenge of conquering the wilderness shaped the dominant technological style in the United States. As generations of men and women from Europe or the more settled eastern United States headed west, their longing for a "middle landscape," a livable place carved out of the wild, grew to be a central element of the American character. The land itself—Fifteen hundred miles of virgin forest, another one thousand of prairie, the Rocky Mountains, the Sierra Nevadas, and the intervening deserts—inspired an American dream. To non-Indian eyes it was empty of history but full of both promise and danger, a manifest destiny challenging the best people had in them. Building a human place, clearing fields and rivers, constructing homes, roads, canals, bridges, tunnels, and cities preoccupied the technological

imagination. Americans honored technical expertise as "know-how," a blend of often crude rules of thumb and occasional engineering elegance, together with an intimate knowledge of local terrain as the context whose constraints defined the limits of every project. Technological style, then, demanded a continual negotiation between the skills, tools, and plans of white Americans and the godlike wilderness they sought to conquer.[11] Despite their passion for freedom and individualism, Americans found negotiation a basic necessity in human interaction as well. People needed one another in an empty land.[12]

Long before this technological style fell from preeminence, however, a successor began to exert its influence. Beginning in 1815 with the U.S. Ordnance Department's commitment to standardized uniformity in weapons production, a new technical ideal gathered momentum in the land.[13] It embodied a radical shift in values. The older style's negotiation with nature and with co-workers shifted toward standardization's precision design and centralized authority. The resulting American factory system turned out a host of new products, and in the process transformed the relationship betwen manager and worker from the sometimes respectful and sometimes tumultuous interaction of the early American small shop to heavy-handed enforcement of work rules coupled with the de-skilling of workers through increasingly automated machines.[14] The transformation was hardly limited to the factory. Throughout the century the nation's elites pioneered a host of technical and social initiatives resulting, by century's end, in a broad-based tendency to see the individual citizen as potentially chaotic, requiring sometimes stern and sometimes subtle forms of social control.

Guilded-age America, for all its enchantment with protean technological triumphs, was racked with urban violence. Bloody confrontations between workers and management police—from the Molly Maguires of 1876 through the railway strikes of 1894—were covered in lurid, and generally anti-worker, detail in the national media.[15] Millions of immigrants from the hitherto unfamiliar countries of Eastern and Southern Europe flooded the nation with what seemed to many to be hoards of frighteningly unAmerican strangers.[16] At the same time, American inventiveness in the area of standardized system design (rails, telegraph, telephone, and electric utilities in particular) offered the promise of technological progress as a solution for the nation's ills.

Consider, for instance, the railroad. In its first half-century of existence the typical railroad evolved from the turnpike model (state-owned and state-supported roadbed) to a private enterprise that owed roadbed and most system components. In the process, the relationship of railroads to their surroundings changed dramatically. Historian J. L. Larson provides an example by contrasting the design of grain-shipping facilities in St. Louis and Chicago in 1860. The St. Louis design demanded bagging the grain, loading it onto train cars, off-loading it at the outer edge of town where the tracks ended, teamstering it across the city and loading it again onto river boats. The Chicago design permitted bulk loading onto grain cars because the company-owned track ran all the way to the docks, where it was off-loaded onto grain boats. Larson concludes his description with the following provocative sentence:

> If the Chicago system was a model of integration, speed, and efficiency, the St. Louis market preserved the integrity of each man's transaction and employed a host of small entrepreneurs at every turn—real virtues in ante-bellum America.[17]

The St. Louis setup required negotiation as a part of the shipping process while the more complex and capital-intensive Chicago design achieved greater efficiency and permitted railroad management to ship grain without needing to negotiate with that "host of small entrepreneurs at every turn."

The negotiations—highly skilled workers with owners or local businessmen with national rail lines—preempted by rationalized systems were messy, unpredictable affairs, often calling for high levels of political skill to achieve technical results. The new standardized systems modeled the ability to exert control of unruly variables through elegant system design for a nation beset with troublesome signs of impending social chaos. It is not surprising that those Americans concerned about social order would look to the same scientific and technological prowess for an answer. Thus in 1898 sociologist Edward Alsworth Ross urged:

> "the right persons," (i.e. social scientists) to undertake "the study of moral influences . . . in the right spirit as a basis for *the scientific control of the individual.*"[18] (My italics)

Ross warned against revealing these scientific secrets for "to betray the secrets of social ascendancy is to forearm the individual in his struggle with society."

Seen from this perspective, Progressive-era reformers take on a new significance. Their commitment to "rationality" and "science" as the chief means for attaining a new social order marks the demise of an earlier era's assumption that political negotiation lay at the heart of the American dream. Robert Bellah and his co-authors of the recent *Habits of the Heart* describe the change in striking terms.

> This desire for a more "rational" politics, standing above interest but based on *expertise rather than wisdom and virtue*, moved American political discourse away from concern with *justice*, with its civic republican echoes, toward a focus on *progress*—a progress defined primarily as material abundance.[19] (My italics)

We see in these examples the gradual abandonment of trust in the interactive creativity of human beings as the source of political cohesion and national self-identity. At the turn of the century that confidence began to be replaced by trust in elite experts who either design or manage the standardized systems that have come to structure most aspects of the twentieth century's life.

Standardization admittedly yields substantial benefits. Standardized mass production permits a much larger segment of the population to own relatively high-quality manufactured goods, improving the standard of living for poor as well as rich. Even more important, standardization fosters and rewards the virtue of precision. Living as we do in an age where sophisticated systems such as telephone networks, electric utilities and computers are commonplace, we find it hard to imagine the

world of 1840 where the art of making steel seemed almost magical. Precision design has joined the family of the elegant arts even as it makes possible the systems on which our communication, our health, and our productivity depend.

Still, the ideal of standardization carries significant liabilities as well. The most important for our purposes here is the atrophy of the ability to negotiate. Negotiation is inherently unpredictable; when mutually interdependent actors, representing differing values and perspectives, "have a say" in the way a given problem will be defined and solved, the outcome of their decision-making process is fraught with uncertainty. In the quest for some common good no one negotiator's version of the best solution will be adopted. Despite its inefficiencies, the interdependence inherent in negotiation requires and therefore fosters a capacity for engagement with others not like myself and an abiding sense of the value of agenda other than my own.[20] When, on the other hand, some elite group succeeds in designing a system that will automatically solve a particular problem, the finished system demands conformity as the price of participation. Individual creativity tends to disrupt the smooth functioning of the system. From this perspective, then, societal institutions such as Bentham's asylum or etiquette's impression management serve to train people in the habits of conformity. The ideal citizen learns to maintain a constantly alert inner scrutiny and behavioral self control.[21]

Electric Immediacy: Standardized News Fragments and Passive Readers

It was in this context of capitalism's tendency to fragmented discourse and the nation's gradual adoption of the standardization ideal that the electronic media slowly took the shape they have today. Not surprisingly, the media share both the strengths and the liabilities of their culture of origin. It is hard to imagine any technology that has raised the virtues of precision design to a higher level of achievement than our global, speed-of-light information networks. These networks provide the technical basis for a radically new mode of global consciousness. More than ever before, citizens of the twentieth century have the capacity to live as citizens of the entire planet. On the other hand, we must face the fact that these same systems foster those habits of passivity, conformity, and fragmented discourse that we saw in rudimentary form in etiquette literature, asylum designs, and passive audiences. Let us, then, consider some of the societal implications of electronic communication technologies as they have envolved within our increasingly standardized culture.

Samuel Morse's invention of a telegraphic code in 1844 marks one of the relatively rare break-points in human history. Until that year, information traveled no faster than physical bodies, a few miles per hour at best. Telegraphic signals, traveling electrically at the speed of light, created the possibility for communicating almost instantaneously across enormous distances. In the process, they revolutionized the ancient human activities of storytelling and reporting the news by simultaneously producing a system of standardized newstext and passive readership while stripping news items of their contexts. Thus as reader and newscaster divided into discrete geographical domains, so also newstext was disconnected from its context of origin: two geographical divisions with extraordinary consequences for the body politic.[22]

"News from abroad is seldom sooth," the saying went. But even when accurate,

accounts arriving after weeks or months in transit lacked the immediacy of contemporary events. Apart from such exotic and outdated fare, the news was reported by town criers or local newspaper writers who operated within physical reach of their listeners and were subject to much the same interactive intervention found in the theatrical performances of the period. Indeed, their version could well be preempted by another citizen who seized the spotlight and retold the tale from another perspective: "It wasn't like that at all!"[23]

By the 1870's however, the telegraph-based wire services began to provide local papers with national and even international news one day after the event; it was, to put it mildly, an extraordinary broadening of human consciousness as local readers began to be transformed into citizens of the wide world.[24] Still, the transition carried a high price tag. The audience, no longer able to interact with the now-distant storyteller or to critique the public version of events, had been rendered totally passive.

Just as significant, the news format tended to be transformed from what had been essentially a storytelling motif to a parade of disconnected items. The very fact that a newspaper could print items from anywhere on the telegraph and transoceanic cable network meant that such items were wrenched from their contexts of origin, encapsulated in brief, electronically-transportable form, and re-assembled for newspaper distribution side by side with similar items from totally different contexts. In the earlier, geographically-constricted news style readers situated each news item within its larger context. Having lived for a long time in the area covered by the news, the subscribers could supply a whole host of nuances that the printed account could only suggest. Correspondence from far away places, traveling over land or sea by the leisurely transportation systems of the time, took the form of longer reflective essays that were designed to create a context of interpretation rather than the up-to-the-minute breathlessness so valued in the wire service style. Increasingly, as the century aged, newspapers and even magazines competed with one another more by the immediacy and relevance of their news flashes than by the thoughtfulness of their interpretations.[25]

Live radio news beginning in the 1920s and more recent television coverage took instantaneous news one step farther than the wire services. Instead of reading about news one day late, the audience could now "participate" in events as they happened.[26] Despite this dramatic intensification of audience involvement, however, the listeners or viewers gained not one whit of active engagement in public discourse and, if anything, the fragmentation of one story-item from the next was enhanced by the demands of "live" media. Even more than newspapers, television stations must compete for viewers who can switch channels after an instant's boredom. It has become a commonplace to observe that the television attention span is measured in seconds and some critics argue that televised news programming has been transformed into pure entertainment.[27]

It would be hard to overestimate the importance of electronic discourse as a social force. The very fact that electronic media permits a single message, broadcast from some central point and free from countervailing argument, to reach innumerable recipients creates, by the very nature of its technological design, an extraordinary

and radically new concentration of economic and political power at that broadcast point of origin. It is no surprise, then, that a single minute of prime television time costs advertisers hundreds of thousands of dollars and access to media coverage has become the primary tool for wielding political power. As electronic media mature in their technical sophistication they envelop us all in a major social revolution.[28]

Advertising: the Programmed Self

Twentieth century advertising, the most important single offspring of mass media, demands special attention. The first three decades of this century saw a revolution in US advertising style that originated in, reinforced, and eventually restructured the patterns we have been considering. Mid-nineteenth-century advertisements tended to take the form of a dialogue that assumed a basic equality between advertiser and reader. With the noteworthy exceptions of patent medicine, and P.T. Barnum's fantastic entertainments, sales were thought to result from a rational description of product qualities or a simple announcement of available merchandise. By the early twentieth century, however, gradual changes in strategy began to coalesce in a new style focusing, not on the product, but on what the product could do for the consumer. Emotion began to replace reason as the preferred rhetorical style, aimed as it was at a consumer who was now presumed to be irrational and inept. Advertising historian Roland Marchand describes the basic mentality.

> In viewing the urban masses, advertisers associated consumer lethargy as much with weak-kneed conformity as with cultural backwardness. . . . Emotional appeals succeeded because only by seeking this lowest common human denominator could the advertiser shake the masses from their lethargy without taxing their limited intelligence.[29]

General Motors exemplifies the new style's underlying rationale. Beginning in 1923 with the arrival of Alfred P. Sloan as president, marketing cars shifted from Ford's appraoch—stressing the economy and technical competence of an unchanging Model T—to fostering cyclic dissatisfaction with one's present car, the basis of "turnover buying." GM was responding to a crisis of mass production. Ford sold the Model T to first-time car owners, still 85% of the market in 1919. One decade later, however, 90% of car buyers already owned an automobile. Continued expansion of the mass-production system required turnover buying; when owners hold on to their cars for too long, the new-car market stagnates.

GM combined two related strategies: annual model changes and advertising automobiles less as tools for transportation than as enhancements of sexuality, social-status, and individualistic "freedom of choice." Taken together, these tactics fostered desire for a *new car* while severing the bond of affection between owner and *present* vehicle. By conveying the two messages, "new means better" and "the car enhances sexual and social status," simultaneously, the new advertising style taught a powerful lesson about the nature of personal identity. In an earlier village culture, individuals learned who they were, in great part, by a lifetime of stories that their community told about them. In the more individualistic culture of the early industrial period people might find their identities reflected in their personal achievements.

Craftsmen, artists, inventors, and housewives tended to see themselves according to the ideal of personal creativity. But as the culture shifted toward the ideal of consumerism, one's experience of identity began to take on a radically passive character. We might put it in the form of a psychologically logical argument. "I am what I own. But what I currently own is inadequate. Therefore, twitch and buy."[30]

Consumerist advertising, then, marks the epitome of the separation of private and public life. Whereas etiquette books and electronic media foster the suppression of emotions, consumerist advertisers, recognizing perhaps the affective starvation inherent in standardized conformity, search out those same hidden feelings. They do not probe our emotions to restore our access to them, however, but to program them so that we will behave in a fashion that conforms to the requirements of the larger economic system. Insofar as consumerist advertising succeeds, my experience of my inner self—with its integrity, passion, violence, and nobility—remains inaccessible to me even as it is manipulated by the ads.[31]

The new advertising style also played a significant role in a second trend we have been following. As we have seen, electronic transmission fostered a fragmentation of media discourse that split storyteller from audience and news item from its context of origin. In the same decade that consumerist advertising matured, the modernist movement raised these disjunctions to the realm of fine art. As Marchand observes, advertisers adapted the new idiom to their own purposes.

> . . . modernism found a new aesthetic in fragmentation—"in the broken torso, the isolated hand, the primitive grimace, the figure cut by the frame." In the service of high art, modern artists employed such discontinuities to make the work of art "difficult"—to shock the audience into fresh perceptions, and to insist, through a refusal to resolve tensions and ambiguities or provide catharsis, that the work of art be "completed by the audience." But the same techniques, advertising artists discovered, could also serve commerce . . . . *Advertisers, too, often wished to lift a mundane product out of the familiar, to reshape perceptions of it, to "put some soul into the commodity." They also found discontinuities useful in seizing the attention of the audience, in associating a product with the excitement of modern, urban diversities and tempos, and in inducing new perceptions, particularly those of self-scrutiny.*[32]

Advertisers forged consumer-product bond by deliberately disrupting the fabric of ordinary life. Unresolved images and visual distortions were employed to "seize the attention of the audience" and, having engaged them on the affective level, to refocus their attention on consumer goods that promised to resolve the tensions of high pressure modern life and provide a temporary fix for personal inadequacy.[33]

While it is true that twentieth century advertising was born of electronic media parentage, its extraordinary economic power has gradually reversed the relationship so that it can be argued that advertising shapes contemporary media as much as the media shape advertising. The influence of advertising upon media discourse

becomes clear when we consider its standard mode of operation in the world of network television. The multiple economic pressures that influence television content stem from four basic transactions at work every time an advertisement appears on screen. Consider a recent Pontiac ad, based on now familiar musical theme ("We build excitement, Pontiac!") and an array of rapidly-changing visual images. Who, we might ask, sells what to whom?

Most obviously, the advertisement sells the product to the viewer. The brief film is designed to forge an intense affective bond—in this case sexual ("get on your Pontiac and ride her")—between viewer and product. However, well before the ad can woo the viewer another transaction is required. Some advertising agency, in competition with others, sold the ad-concept to the client. Pontiac had to be convinced that this ad, as one component of a major campaign strategy, was worth General Motors' money. The remaining two acts of selling are situated in the networks or local stations. The networks sell—"deliver" is the term most common in the trade—a contracted number of specified viewers to Pontiac. Currently, the Neilson ratings are designated as the legal arbiters of such contracts. Neilson's surveys provide continually updated figures that measure the audience for each program. Thus, if the network agreed to deliver 30,000,000 viewers to Pontiac for a given sum and a particular slot on some program has been estimated in advance to yield that number of viewers, a lower Neilson rating, say 25,000,000 viewers, creates a legal obligation for the network to run the ad somewhere else to make up the missing 5,000,000.

The pressure inherent in the Neilson system creates the fourth sell. High ratings are a matter of economic life and death. Consequently, program content decisions are dominated, not by questions of the common good such as "How will the program influence the body politic?" but by the pressure for sales that leads to a culturally-cautious, sensationalistic, and often mind-numbing, least-common-denominator style of public discourse. Advertising, then, operates within the media more as the driver than as a passenger on the media express.

The Influence of the Media on American Culture: Television as Teacher

While the telegraph and radio share the characteristics of electronic discourse, television provides us with the most technically complex as well as the most popular example. To focus the patterns we have seen, let us turn from the question of how the ideological and economic values of industrial capitalism have shaped the media to the issue announced in the title of this paper. How do the electronic media—let us simplify by concentrating on television—influence our contemporary cultural experience? Thus far we have considered the technological capacities of speed-of-light information transmission and the peculiar economic structures that developed in the nineteenth and twentieth century market-capitalist social order. I have argued that, for both technical and ideological reasons, the media tend to fragment public discourse by severing the connection between news items and their contexts and between one news item and the next. These same factors have fostered a style of entertainment whose primary characteristic appears to be audience passivity in the face of bland, titillating, and episodic fare. Subtle and challenging programs, documentary or fictional, sometimes bless our TV screens but they tend to be avoided as exercises in high-risk marketing.

To limit our consideration to the effects of the media on *public* discourse, however, would be to underestimate their influence on the structure of individual personalities. When we consider TV in another of its major social roles, that of teacher to the nation's children, we find significant patterns that go far beyond the widely-debated impact of Saturday morning cartoons and their aggressive advertisements. When television serves as a baby sitter for small children in their most formative years, three lessons about human discourse are repeatedly inculcated, each one troubling in its implications for society as a whole.

In the first place, children gradually acquire a habit of passivity so that they can watch television without intolerable confusion. At some point they must learn that talking back to the TV is fruitless; that the human beings who seem to be conversing *with* them are in fact only speaking *at* them; that no one in TV's universe wants to be interrupted by their creative responses. As they cope with this unsettling reality, children learn a deep-seated ambivalence about their capacity for intimacy, the inner ability to create talk that matters. Intimacy requires a capacity for mystery, a willingness to engage in relationships where participants can surprise one another precisely because each one is capable of being moved and significantly changed by the others. The rhythm of intimate interaction demands an alternation between receptive stillness—listening and absorbing what others say—and response. TV's one-way relationship often masquerades as intimacy by adopting a warm and personal tone but the very heart of standardized broadcast discourse lies in its requirement that viewers never surprise or interrupt on-screen speakers. Surprise and mystery are the antithesis of the spectator passivity required by the system.

Such diminishment of the personal and the intimate stems not only from the inherent passivity of TV viewers but also from the highly-crafted character of TV discourse. We have already observed that the broadcast system protects the speaker from unpredictable audience interventions. This hot-house environment results in television talk that is seldom spontaneous or messy. On the rare occasions when anger or grief catches a newscaster in the act of announcing, many viewers are deeply moved. The veneer of professional competence has been broken and a hint of human passion shows through. Before long, however, the system recovers and we once again witness men and women who, whether they read the news, live out the melodramas of the soap operas, or lure us with the wonders of a brand of toilet paper, play their assigned roles with practiced ease.

Finally, children must learn a third lesson. For the reasons already explained above, television breaks up the narrative and contextualized sequences of human events into an avalanche of atomized information fragments. How, after all, does the Pontiac ad relate to the tale, following it with no perceptible interval, of two women squeezing Charmin tissue? How does Tom Brokow's account of a train derailment in Kansas help explain his subsequent announcement of bloody riots in Israel? The only sensible response, another requirement for TV-viewing sanity, is to learn that sequence does not make sense, that one event does not contextualize or influence the next.

These three lessons would not be particularly disturbing were they limited to media viewing. Unfortunately, however, the habits learned in our formative years do not

remain within tidy boundaries. Indeed, the example of a child's experience of TV highlights adults experience as well. Our interaction with electronic media operates, as advertisers recognized sixty years ago or more, on an emotional level where rationality does not hold sway. So essential is communication to the human experience that our style of talking and listening influences us at the affective core of our being. Thus, to learn from TV, radio, and standardized newstext, that our point of view makes no difference engenders a habit of passivity that can foster doubt about our creativity in other interactions as well. Doubting our capacity for meaningful talk is no small matter. Lacking such conviction, we tend to ignore our inner life and to treat our creative potential with contempt.

Then too, TV's highly-crafted, non-spontaneous style exerts pressure on us to compete with it. What does it mean to live in a society whose public voices and stories sound so unlike most of our own? It is not as if human beings never before longed to present a refined image of themselves! The long history of theatre, oratory, cosmetics, and fashion proclaim our desire to dress up for special occasions. Still, we know that our truest story runs much deeper and more mysteriously than our occasional highly-crafted moments can suggest. We live a rhythm of mystery and clarity, of ambivalence and coherence. At our best, we understand that we will not endure without the compassion it takes to embrace the unexpected and ambiguous in ourselves and those with whom we live. Still, the courage, hope, and sense of humor needed to tell our true stories often withers in the presence of the media's implacably well-crafted voice.

Finally, not expecting sequence to make sense, a habit fostered by the host of social and technological trends we have observed above, spills over into the interpretation of our personal history. How, for example, can I be expected to live out the day-to-day demands of my adult commitments without a durable confidence that past events in my life are intimately related to the present? Marriage comes immediately to mind. The doubling of the divorce rate in the early seventies can be interpreted in a host of ways, not all of them negative to be sure. But we may well ask whether one strand in the causal fabric of divorce may nto be a profound doubt, learned at the feet of our media, that the series of events that led me to make such a commitment cannot help me meet the challenges of the present. Insofar as we have learned to experience life in the media's atomistic fashion, every day's burdens must be met afresh without much help from our memories of what came before.[34]

These three influences of television on our personalities combine with the institutional and cultural patterns already discussed and constitute what might be called a two-century-long erosion of narrative discourse. Story-telling, the art of interpreting human events by situating them in their contemporary and chronological contexts, has been a central component of the public and personal life in every culture except the relatively recent capitalist West. Its pervasive presence throughout history and around the globe suggest that narrative may be essential for all healthy cultures. Its atrophy in our own time may well signal a crisis to which we must respond.[35]

Conclusion

If the foregoing interpretation is correct, we citizens of the West, and communications professionals in particular, face a serious challenge. How is our society to take advantage of the extraordinary capabilities provided for us by our global electronic information networks and at the same time work to restore the balance between standardized conformity and human creativity? Unless we address the challenge, the prospects of global citizenship and transnational cooperation that the media make possible will be betrayed by habits of personal passivity and contempt for the inner life.

In the brief space remaining, let me tentatively suggest four ways in which media professionals might use their professional expertise to communicate religious belief in today's technological world. First, religious media professionals could work to develop a broadcast style that avoids the ordinary pattern of masking the structural components of media presentations behind a slick and disarmingly personal tone. This is a difficult matter. It is not easy to imagine how such a style might be achieved without lapsing into the hopelessly dull format of the emotionless "talking heads" seen on Soviet news programs. How, I wonder, might the presentation of news and entertainment communicate its modes of production—its technical and economic constraints—while remaining news and entertainment? Religious programming might run some risks in this area and, just possibly, exert some small influence on the high-pressure world of market TV.

The second suggestion is less radical and much more realizable. Religious media professionals could take it as one of their highest priorities to develop lessons, for religious education series in parishes and schools, that teach media literacy. Imagine video and text packages—one beginning at age ten, perhaps, and concluding with college seniors and another for adult education— that gradually introduced students to the historical and contemporary, the technological, economic, and ideological substructure of the media that shapes so much of their experience of public discourse. Some modest beginnings in this area have already appeared but the church stands in need of a much more substantial commitment if we are to help overcome the passivity and fragmentation that the present system fosters.

Third, media professionals might work, perhaps through parish renewal programs and adult education, to develop adults who regularly talk about media influences and who become literate enough in media systems technology to exert market pressures on existing media practice. Imagine, for example, what might happen if the networks were persuaded to cooperate in the production of regular, prime-time programs aimed at promoting serious debate about issues facing the body politic. To overcome fear of ratings losses, the programs could be simultaneously broadcast on all three networks after the fashion of presidential news conferences. Finding ways to convince the networks to run such risks may not be as far-fetched as it sounds. Boycotts represent just this sort of public pressure on public institutions and some have shown surprising effectiveness in recent situtations; they work when enough people coalesce around an issue to get the attention of corporate policy makers. Surely one role of the church might be just this sort of formation of publicly active citizens of the body politic.

These three suggestions have one thing in common. They are based on a commitment to contemplate and pay attention to how the media work as well as to their ideological influence on present culture. This may be the most important service that media professionals can offer the church today. By using their expertise to raise consciousness they may well foster the kind of media literacy required for the church to communicate religious belief, first by adult contemplation and then by decisive action, in today's society.

Finally, let me conclude with a suggestion on a more personal and less professional level. In non-capitalist cultures—the West roughly before the seventeenth century and a host of other cultures even to this day—story-telling comes naturally. For us, however, the habits of speaking and listening on which the art of story-telling depends have tended to atrophy. We cannot expect, therefore, to achieve maturity in this domain of life without explicit efforts. Awkward as it may at first appear, we must learn to "make appointments" with one another for times when we deliberately disengage from our electronic context and, just as deliberately, honor the telling of our stories. We might, for example, decide to "fast from electricity" one night a week as a contemporary form of that ancient Christian discipline. We would commit ourselves to staying home—electronics are unavoidable in the public arena—and disconnect our telephones, radios, televisions, electric lights and computers. Very likely we would discover a time, each week, when the play of storytelling could flourish. Undistracted by competing systems and increasingly unintimidated by our doubts that no one wants to hear, we might learn to tell the stories of our week, our victories and defeats, delights and griefs. Gradually, the fabric of our communal lives would reveal the subtleties that often escape notice. We would, in short, grow in our capacity for intimacy with those closest to us.

Such a practice is an exceedingly modest beginning for addressing a major societal problem, and it is counter-cultural in the bargain. Who can say, however, what such a simple practice might foster in the larger civic arenas of our lives? Schooled in intimacy's virtues, we might find new ways to engage in public discourse, to overcome passive conformity and redefine ourselves as active citizens in the shaping of the public order. For Christians, the incarnate Jesus stands as a model and a hope. Intimately and accessibly human, at the same time Lord of history, Jesus reveals God as committed to a salvation at once personal and societal. Our attempts at storytelling may help us to renew our intimate lives while they teach us the essential virtues of public citizenry.

University of Detroit

NOTES

1 The argument is complex. For a full elaboration see my "The Politics of Successful Technologies," in *In Context: History and the History of Technology—Essays in Honor of Melvin Kranzberg*, Stephen H. Cutcliffe and Robert C. Post eds. (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press 1988). For a more detailed critique of the rhetoric of inevitable technological progress, its cultural and philosophical origins and its destructive social consequences, see my "Perils of Progress Talk," in *Science, Technology and Social Progress*, ed. Steven Goldman, (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, in press).

2 For simplicity's sake, I will limit myself primarily to my own area of expertise, United States history, with only occasional reference to Western Europe. I will, reluctantly, adopt the commonplace use of "America" to designate the United States. Although I am aware of the implicit insult, for citizens of Latin America, involved in this parochial terminology, I have yet to find an alternative that is not inordinately clumsy.

3 For a more complete treatment of capitalist fragmentation, see my "Advent for Capitalists: Grief, Joy, and Gender in Contemporary Society," *The Peter Nash Lecture* (Regina, Canada: Campion College, University of Regina, 1987).

4 John F. Kasson, "Civility and Rudeness: Urban Etiquette and the Bourgeois Social Order in Nineteenth-Centery America," *Prospects* 9 (1984): 161. Kasson's conservative estimate (p. 146) indicates that new etiquette books were published on an average of three per year before the Civil War and rose to an average of five or six per year from 1870 through World War I. For an often-cited treatment of impression. management, see Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday-Anchor, 1959), Chapter VI.

5 Lydia E. White, *Success in Society* (Boston: James H. Earle, 1889), p. 188, cited by John F. Kasson, "Civility and Rudeness: Urban Etiquette and the Bourgeois Social Order in Nineteenth-Century America," *Prospects* 9 (1984): 156.

6 On the asylum model in the United States see John Kasson, *Civilizing the Machine: Technology and Republican Values in America. 1776 - 1900* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), Chapter 1; David J. Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic*, (Boston: 1971); and Erving Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*, (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1961). On the same pattern in France see Michel Foucault *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* trs. Alan Sheridan, (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1979) pp. 195 - 228.

7 John Bowring, *The Works of Jeremy Bentham* (Edinburgh, 1843), 10: 226. Cited in Carolyn C. Cooper, "The Portsmouth System of Manufacture," *Technology and Culture* 25, 2 (April 1984): 193. On the origins of Bentham's Panopticon model in his brother Samuel's 1787 factory design for Prince Potemkin's Critchoff estate, a model aimed at increasing supervision of peasant workers, see Maria Sophia Bentham, "Memoir Late Brigadier General Siramuel Bentham," *Papers and Practical Illustrations of Public Works of Recent Construction* (London, 1856), pp. 46, 78, also in Cooper, p. 193.

8 Foucault, *Discipline*, pp. 201-202.

9 Shoshanah Zuboff, *In the Age of the Smart Machine*, (New York: Basic Books, 1988), Chapters 9 and 10.

10 John F. Kasson, "Urban Audiences and the Organization of Entertainment in the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries," *Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village Herald*, 14: 1, (1985): 3 - 14.

[11] Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980) traces the gradual shift in western Europe from "Nature" defined as the goddess who sets the rules and boundaries for human enterprise to a still feminine but newly passive entity destined for exploitation and conquest. Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), studies the complementary theme of "wilderness." He finds its earliest meaning—wild, chaotic and often evil darkness—shifting in nineteenth century America to a romantic and nostalgic source of regeneration. As early Americans encountered the virgin wilderness they found their dreams of conquest tempered as much by nature's raw power as by the crudity of their tools. For other discussions of the middle landscape see Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, Kasson, *Civilizing the Machine*, and Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (New York: Doubleday, Image Books, 1968), 33-39.

[12] Lest we idealize the American conquest of nature we should note that the myth of the middle landscape had a special place for native Americans and blacks. Native Americans were seen as part of the wilderness, godlike in their ability to live in the forbidding terrain and subhuman at the same time, lacking both culture and history. Blacks, on the other hand, were part of the "tools" that white Europeans used to conquer the wilderness. Neither image, of course, is even close to the self-image of these two peoples.

[13] On the drive toward standardization in the Ordnance Department see Merritt Roe Smith, "Military Enterprise and Innovative Process" in *Military Enterprise and Technological Change: Perspectives on the American Experience*, ed. M. R. Smith (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1985).

[14] The most helpful single source on nineteenth century labor-management tensions over work rules remains Herbert Gutman's "Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America," in his *Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America* (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1966).

[15] For an excellent overview of scholarship on the topic, see Paul Boyer's " 'The Ragged Edge of Anarchy' The Emotional Context of Urban Social Control in the Gilded Age," in his *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820 - 1920*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978).

[16] See John Higham, *Send These to Me: Jews and Other Immigrants in Urban America*, (New York: Atheneum, 1975) for a broad overview of legal and social resistance to immigration from 1870 through the draconian 1924 immigration act that marked the definitive end of the earlier open-door policy. On the origin and later history of the popular image of "The Melting Pot," see Philip Gleason, "The Melting Pot: Symbol of Fusion or Confusion?" *American Quarterly* XVI, 1 (Spring 1964): 20 - 46.

[17] J. L. Larson, "A Systems Approach to the History of Technology: An American Railroad Example," a paper read at the annual meeting of the Society for the History of Technology, 1982, p. 17.

[18] The text, with what immediately follows, are from A. Michael McMahon, "An American Courtship: Psychologists and Advertising Theory in the Progressive Era," *American Studies*, 13 (1972): 6.

[19] Robert Bellah, et. al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 261.

[20] For an interpretation of contemporary U.S. society that exactly matches these observations see Parker J. Palmer *The Company of Strangers: Christians and the Renewal of America's Public Life* (New York: Crossroad, 1981).

21 To be sure, negotiation should not replace all systematic conformity. In the form of simple good manners, civic duty, and a host of other pragmatic arrangements, conformity makes ordinary life possible and bearable. If we tried to negotiate each aspect of life at every turn, we would wear ourselves out with endless wrangling. The two societal virtues, standardization's precision and negotiation's uncertainty, seem to work best in creative tension with one another.

22 I disagree with William Leiss, Stephen Kline, and Sut Jhally (*Social Communication in Advertising: Persons, Products and Images of Well-being* [NY: Methuen 1986]) when they suggest (Chapter 5) that the electronic trends noted here begin with radio. Their division of print media from radio and television overlooks the significance of the wire services which share their speed-of-light transmission style.

23 The cultural value given to this kind of interactive relationship between storyteller and listeners continues to significantly qualify the place of mass media in some non-Western societies today. Thus Armand Mattelart, Xavier Delcourt, and Michele Mattelart observe: "The experience of African countries, for instance, helps us to reassess the information-giving role of the journalist. There, t*he journalist has very little credibility among rural populations*: a piece of news must be supported, discussed and evaluated in *terms of what is known about the informer*. This social habit obviously runs contrary to the functioning of the media, particularly the radio, where the informer (interchangeable if not anonymous) obtains credibility from the institution, and where univocal, factual messages have supposedly eliminated ambiguity." in *International Image Markets: In Search of an Alternative Perspective*, trs. David Buxton, (London: Comedia Publishing Group, Marion Boyars, 1984), p. 77. (my emphasis)

24 On the early history of the wire news services see Daniel J. Czitrom, *Media and the American Mind: From Morse to McLuhan* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1982), especially Chapter 1; Richard Schwarzlose, "Harbor News Association: The Formal Origins of the AP," *Journalism Quarterly* 45 (Summer 1968): 253-60; Robert L. Thompson, *Wiring a Continent: The History of the Telegraph Industry in the United States, 1832-1866* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947); and Richard B. Kielbowicz, "News Gathering by Mail in the Age of the Telegraph: Adapting to a New Technology," *Technology and Culture 28*, 1 (January 1987): 26-41.

25 The newspaper trend began with the appearance, after 1830, of the penny press which, unlike its more expensive predecessors, aimed at mass circulation with stories from police blotters and elsewhere that tended toward the sensational. Michael Schudson interprets the penny press as a "revolution" that "led to the triumph of 'news' over the editorial and 'facts' over opinion, a change which was shaped by the expansion of democracy and the market, and which would lead, in time, to the journalist's uneasy allegiance to objectivity." (*Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers*, (New York: Basic Books, 1978) p. 14. For a perceptive analysis of the same shift in periodicals much later in the century, see Christopher P. Wilson, "The Rhetoric of Consumption: Mass-market Magazines and the Demise of the Gentle Reader, 1880-1920," in *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983): 39-64.

26 Two well-known early radio news events were the 1924 broadcast of the Democratic convention (disastrous for public relations since it required 102 ballots to elect a candidate) and the October 19, 1929 reenactment of the invention of the incandescent light bulb by the aged Thomas Edison. Edison, accompanied by President Hoover and Henry Ford, formally opened the latter's Greenfield Village with the celebration.

[27] See, for example, Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves To Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Viking Penguin Inc. 1985).

[28] Walter Ong, S.J. rightly notes that the much earlier technology of writing initiated the process of separating the source of communication from the recipient. See, for example, "Writing is a Technology that Restructures Thought," in Gerd Baumann, ed., *The Written Word: Literacy in Transition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) pp. 37-45. Electronic communication, however, dramatically enhances the process by inserting the disjunction into present-tense discourse. For some of the implications see Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death* and Joshua Meyrowitz, *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior* (New York: Oxford U. Press, 1985).

[29] Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 68-69 and passim. See also Daniel Pope, *The Making of Modern Advertising*, (New York: Basic Books, 1983), Leiss, Kline and Jhally, *Social Communication in Advertising*, and T. J. Jackson Lears, "From Salvation to Self-Realization: Advertising and the Therapeutic Roots of the Consumer Culture, 1880-1930," in *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980*, Richard Wightman Fox and T.J. Jackson Lears, eds., (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983): 1-38. I am also deeply indebted to many conversations with Pamela Walker Lurito for my understanding of changing advertising trends.

[30] For a particularly compelling argument in favor of advertising's role in the shift of American self-identification from the ideal of productivity to that of consumption, see T. J. Jackson Lears, "From Salvation to Self-Realization: Advertising and the Therapeutic Roots of the Consumer Culture, 1880-1930," in *Culture of Consumption*, pp. 1-38. The GM strategy was, in fact, more complex than we have time to discuss. For a more complete presentation see Emma Rothschild, *Paradise Lost: The Decline of the Auto-Industrial Age* (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1973), chapter 2.

[31] Debates about the effectiveness of advertisements in programming consumer motivation are commonplace in recent studies. Michael Schudson, *Advertising, the Uneasy Persuasion: Its Dubious Impact on American Society*, (New York: Basic Books, 1984) argues the case against it. Leiss, Kline, and Jhally, (*Social Communication in Advertising*, Chapters 2, 3) discuss the pros and cons of both sides, citing Schudson, Stuart Ewen, Christopher Lasch, and others; their own position tends to favor Schudson's.

[32] Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, p. 145. (My emphasis)

[33] Tony Schwartz, perhaps the premier political advertiser of the past several decades, makes the same point. "The role of a commercial is not to educate the voter. . . . The voter knows how he feels. Our job is to *connect* the candidate *as deeply as we can* to the concerns of the public." Successful ads, according to Schwartz, do not create completely new concepts. They evoke affective response by hinting at deeply felt audience values and then connecting them to the product being advertised. Jonathan Rowe, "Media Wizard Makes Waves with Words," *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 18, 1988, p. 8. See also Bill Moyer's "The Thirty Second President" in his public television series, "A Walk Through the Twentieth Century," where he interviews Schwartz at length.

[34] This argument is much more complex than these few lines can indicate. For a more detailed discussion see my "United States Technology and Adult Commitment" in the series *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 19, 1 (January 1987).

[35] One indication of the importance of storytelling is the number of contemporary theologians who have begun to call attention to the key role of narrative in the Christian tradition. For an overview of recent work in the area see Terrence Tilley, *Story Theology*, (Wilmington, Delaware, 1985).