

---

# The Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy

## Working Paper Series

---

### **Speechwriting, Speechmaking, and the Press: The Kennedy Administration and the Bay of Pigs**

By Thomas W. Benson  
Shorenstein Fellow, Spring 1999  
Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of Rhetoric  
Pennsylvania State University

**#2000-4**

Copyright © 2000, President and Fellows of Harvard College  
All rights reserved

The Joan Shorenstein Center

**PRESS • POLITICS**



**•PUBLIC POLICY•**

Harvard University  
John F. Kennedy School of Government

This paper is about the construction of presidential leadership through public rhetoric; about the authorship of that rhetoric; and about the mediation of that rhetoric through the press. As our master example, we take the case of John F. Kennedy's speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors on April 20, 1961.

President John F. Kennedy delivered many important speeches; he is especially remembered for the Inaugural Address and his speeches on foreign policy, international crises, and civil rights. Though others might have made the arguments offered in those speeches, only the president could have said the precise words and only the president could have enacted the performances embodied in those speeches. And yet President Kennedy was not the sole author of his speeches, and many of the speeches became known to his audiences through the contexts, interpretations, and mediation of the press. How that process worked--how those utterances came to be made and understood is the subject of this investigation.

My methods in this study are largely historical and critical, but I do hope to suggest something like a grounded theory of one aspect of presidential rhetoric.

At the conceptual level, this research report addresses the relations among presidential speechwriting, presidential speechmaking, and press coverage of presidential rhetoric. Presidential speeches influence political discourse, policy, and public opinion. In an important sense, they may be said to constitute policy not only by influencing through argument but by enacting through performance. The structures of speechwriting influence both speech texts and policy formation. The press mediates and in some ways formulates presidential rhetoric. We need to know more about how these processes work.

As the theoretical context for this report, I draw on two lines of inquiry that I hope to bring into a closer relation to each other. The first

is the study of "agency" and "identity" within the rhetorical tradition. The second line of inquiry is the rapidly expanding body of research on the relations among press, politics, and public policy that has been the focus of the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics, and Public Policy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, which made the present study possible.

Every use of rhetoric immediately raises issues of motive and intention, and at the same time makes those issues nearly impossible to resolve authoritatively. As a practical matter, a persuasive discourse is not merely a collection of arguments or inducements to act in our own best interest, but depends fundamentally on projecting a convincing depiction of the speaker's character, competence, and intentions—what Aristotle called ethos. We cannot, of course, know another's intentions infallibly, but in our relations with other humans we cannot act without some assessment of those intentions.

Following Aristotle, rhetorical theorists have for centuries studied ethos, or character, as one of the primary sources of persuasion. George Kennedy translates the famous passage from Aristotle's Rhetoric as claiming that

[There is persuasion] through character whenever the speech is spoken in such a way as to make the speaker worthy of credence; . . .

character is almost, so to speak, the controlling factor in persuasion.<sup>1</sup>

Twentieth-century rhetorical scholars have developed the study of ethos and have related it to the question of how the speaker depicts not only his or her own character and identity but also those of the listener and other agents in the situation.<sup>2</sup>

Press coverage of presidential speechmaking has long been a controversial issue and continues to interest scholars of press and politics. In his 1993 book, Out of Order, Thomas E. Patterson writes that reporters

covering presidential candidates generally give them more bad press than good. "Reporters have a variety of bad-news messages, but none more prevalent than the suggestion that the candidates cannot be trusted. When candidates speak out on the issues, the press scrutinizes their statements for an ulterior motive. Most bad-news stories criticize candidates for shifting their positions, waffling on tough issues, posturing, or pandering to whichever group they are addressing."<sup>3</sup>

Patterson argues that "the rules of reporting changed with Vietnam and Watergate, when the deceptions perpetrated by the Johnson and Nixon administrations convinced reporters that they had let the nation down by taking political leaders at their word."<sup>4</sup> And so, says Patterson, reporters developed a schema of distrust, typically assuming that a president has ulterior motives. This schema is reinforced by a press that, according to Patterson, is increasingly lazy--and it might be added lacking in resources and time, with shortening news cycles--and so instead of actually comparing a president's statement with the facts of the matter, they "found a substitute for careful investigation. They began to use a president's opponents as the basis for undermining his claims."<sup>5</sup>

Patterson argues that "As late as the 1960s, the news was a forum for the candidates' ideas. Looking back at the election coverage of the 1960s, one is struck by the straightforward reporting of the candidates' arguments. . . . The candidates' statements had significance in their own right--an arrangement that no longer holds." Patterson then develops an extended comparison between coverage of John F. Kennedy in the 1960 campaign and of Bill Clinton in the 1992 campaign. In 1992, in contrast to 1960, writes Patterson, "the message [was] refracted through the press's game schema."<sup>6</sup> Many observers claim that in reporting the investigation and impeachment of President Clinton, the press went still further in its pursuit of the private life of a President and its reports on his thoughts and feelings. Deborah

Mathis, the White House correspondent for Gannett News Service, argues that the press routinely engaged in "hearsay journalism" in reporting the President's thoughts and feelings.<sup>7</sup>

Patterson makes a persuasive, even a compelling case that something happened to press coverage of political rhetoric after Watergate and Vietnam, but there is some evidence that the roots of these developments may be seen in press coverage of earlier presidents.

In this paper I explore from another direction, and mostly from an earlier time, the ways in which the press covers political rhetoric and the ways in which "motive" forms part of the narrative of political speechmaking. I take as the core of my study the administration of John F. Kennedy, and attempt to understand the intersection of three elements that contributed to Kennedy's rhetoric and its reception:

- The production of the speeches, which typically involved the initial drafting of a Kennedy speech by Theodore Sorensen or another speechwriter.
- The texts of the speeches, especially as they imply authorship, intention, and agency.
- The press accounts of the speeches, both in their interpretation of the argument of the speech and in their depiction of the President and his motives, intentions, and inner states.

My investigation is not intended as a test of Patterson's claims about the superiority of press accounts of political argument in the Kennedy era, nor do I claim that Patterson is mistaken in tracing the dominance of the "ulterior motive" schema to the Watergate and Vietnam experiences. The "game schema" described by Patterson, in which "ulterior motives" are ascribed to a presidential candidate, are so effective partly because they appeal to our common sense. My hope is to apply critical methods to understand the

structures of common sense that appear to govern rhetorics of agency and identity, and to apply historical methods to the discovery of how those common-sense structures were produced and disseminated. I argue:

- that the rise of the ghostwritten presidency is one feature of the expanding role and the personalization of the presidency in the modern era;<sup>8</sup>
- that the presidential speeches and the press relations of John F. Kennedy contributed to a personalization of the presidency, elaborating a depiction of Kennedy, his audience, and other rhetorical agents; and
- that the press of the Kennedy period developed a complex rhetoric of subjectivity, attribution, and personification that is a clear foundation for the press practices of the 1990s that attract the complaints of so many journalists, academic critics, and politicians.

To narrow this project to reasonable limits, this case study concentrates on one speech by John F. Kennedy.

In April 1961, Kennedy was approaching the important symbolic marker of 100 days into the presidency, evoking press assessments of his success. Kennedy was scheduled to give speeches to the American Society of Newspaper Editors (April 20) and the American Newspaper Publishers Association (April 27). In the week before the ASNE speech, Cuban exiles invaded the Bay of Pigs. The anti-Castro forces were quickly defeated; most were captured; some were executed. The event was a serious embarrassment for Kennedy and his administration, and brought forth intense scrutiny of his performance. The Cuban invasion also prompted changed plans for what Kennedy said to ASNE and ANPA. For the purposes of this report, because of limitations of space, I report in detail on President Kennedy's address to the American Society of

Newspaper Editors at the Statler Hilton Hotel in Washington, D.C., on April 20, 1961.

In the early 1960s, political journalism was actively re-examining its practices, and showing signs of chafing under old constraints. The inventor of "direct cinema," Robert Drew, with his colleagues Ricky Leacock and Don Pennebaker, went "behind the scenes" of the Democratic primary in Wisconsin to film Hubert Humphrey and John Kennedy as they spoke to small groups, shook hands on the street, met with their advisors, and drove from one small town to another.<sup>9</sup> At about the same time, Theodore White transformed political reporting in The Making of the President 1960, which initiated a long series of behind-the-scenes reports on American politics.<sup>10</sup>

We have some explicit evidence that during the Kennedy presidency the mainstream press was growing restless with the rules of political reporting. In 1960, Joseph Alsop worried that younger political reporters were not doing their homework about history and policy, and were too willing to rely on government press agents, though he did acknowledge that on occasion reporters needed to be prodded by government. In a lecture at the University of Minnesota, Alsop told the story of John Marshall's speech at Harvard, announcing the Marshall Plan.

There was no special announcement . . . that Marshall was going to Harvard to receive a degree and make a key speech. . . . Consequently, Marshall's announcement of his Marshall Plan, which, if anything has changed history in the postwar period, did change history, very nearly went completely unnoticed. Officials had to call up and point out that the speech was of outstanding importance before it received adequate attention in the national press.<sup>11</sup>

Like Patterson in the 1990s, Alsop in 1960 worries that reporters are getting lazy, but instead of making the reporters of 1960 overly suspicious, he argues, it is likely to make them too tame. He warns aspiring political

reporters, "don't be too humble. . . . I don't think it's possible to be both a serious, self-respecting newspaperman and a spaniel."<sup>12</sup> Alsop urges reporters to be adversarial, but sees the solution coming from a return to former standards, in resistance to practices originated in creeping government press-agentry.

Other press critics argued that a robust adversary press could come only from the introduction of new standards and techniques. John Fischer, the editor of Harper's Magazine, speaking at the University of Minnesota in 1962, urged his colleagues to be suspicious of the constraints of objectivity.

Fischer said that when he covered the U.S. Senate for the Associated Press,

I . . . felt myself increasingly hampered by the conventions of objectivity that were standard then—and still are to a large extent—with all newspaper organizations, especially with the press associations. I was constantly reporting what somebody said, even though I knew that it was untrue, misleading, or self-serving. There was no way within the canons of press association work that I could indicate that a senator or witness before a Senate committee was telling a damn lie.<sup>13</sup>

Fischer cites John Hersey's book on Hiroshima and H. L. Mencken's reporting on political conventions as instances of first-person reporting that produced not only good writing but also superior insight, and which might form the basis for new experiments that ventured beyond the constraints of objectivity.

Both Alsop and Fischer appear to be taking a fairly long-term perspective on the interaction of press and politics. During the Kennedy presidency, there were several more immediate developments that prompted reflections about politics and the press. Among the developments often cited as crucial are Kennedy's introduction of live, televised press conferences; administration charges that the press violated national security interests at



the time of the Cuban invasion and on other occasions; a shift in emphasis from the major newspapers to news magazines and television as outlets for administration stories; expressed frustration by Kennedy about press coverage; and charges in the press about administration "news management."<sup>14</sup> Perhaps more telling are the actual practices of reporters covering the major stories of the time, crafting a journalistic language to meet the demands of the facts and the constraints of the multiple, coexisting, and sometimes overlapping genres of journalism—straight news reporting, columns, features, editorials, photojournalism, television documentary, and so on. At the level of actual practice, we discover considerable variation and an evident frustration with the limits of "objective" reporting, especially as news magazines and television introduced practices that in turn influenced newspapers.

A reading of the press in the period immediately before, during, and after the Bay of Pigs invasion and the ASNE and ANPA speeches reveals a press experimenting with a variety of methods to frame attributions of motive, structures of appearance versus reality, and states of mind. Newspapers and news magazines in 1961 display a wide variety of means by which to report on other than the official words and deeds of political figures, to interpret those words and deeds by looking behind them, and to use the president as a personification of the United States.

Press coverage of the president and his family makes it clear that there is not a simple, binary division between public and private. Each of these realms partakes of the other. This becomes important for a series of related reasons, showing as it does the centrality of the President to the news process, the seeming accessibility of the president's life to press inspection, and, as we shall see, the depiction of the president's inner life as a frame for understanding his public actions.

John Kennedy was depicted as living part of his personal life in public. For example, on April 16, 1961, the Boston Globe printed a photograph of "President and Mrs. Kennedy . . . at Glenwood Park, scene of Middleburg Hunt Race" in a society-page item printed in immediate juxtaposition to the day's political news. Here the "social" links the public with the private; the item gains its importance because it is a photograph of a public figure, and yet the idiom of the photograph might class it as a typical high-society-at-leisure image.<sup>15</sup> In retrospect, at least, the photograph's implications about class and gender seem striking. The Virginia hunt country is clearly the domain of the very rich and presumably, as a social occasion, of importance to the women in the family—Jacqueline Kennedy and the president's sister, Mrs. Jean Smith, also seen in the photograph. Presumably because of his more serious obligations, the "President left before first race."

Reinforcing the role of the president as the leader of serious public business are further depictions of Mrs. Kennedy as the representative of the feminine, private, social, artistic side of life in the White House. On 16 April, Mrs. Kennedy is shown opening a flower show in Washington.<sup>16</sup> On 12 April, the Boston Globe printed a photograph of Mrs. Kennedy hosting a luncheon for 200 newspaperwomen. The caption notes that "In TV news report last night, she expressed hope that daughter, Caroline, 3, would receive less publicity."<sup>17</sup> The television report, broadcast by NBC on 11 April, was the second of two documentaries on the Kennedy White House. In one segment of the broadcast, Sander Vanocur interviews Jacqueline Kennedy, who says that she wants to make the White House a more beautiful museum for people to see, and then, turning to her role as a mother, comments that "It is rather hard with children. There's so little privacy." When Vanocur asks about life behind the scenes, Mrs. Kennedy accommodates him with a charming story of Ghanaian president Nkrumah, whom she implicitly depicts as crossing the line between

public official and family friend by speaking some friendly words to her children.<sup>18</sup>

Jacqueline Kennedy's invitation to share her feelings is enthusiastically taken up by the press. In a report on the White House luncheon, Doris Fleeson, otherwise a serious political journalist, writes that "The fact is that the young chatelaine of the White House is in dead earnest about lightening the mood and temper of living in the formal residence where she is bringing up her two young children."<sup>19</sup> Fleeson's observations underscore the role of the feminine as linked to the family at the same time that they assert the reporter's access to Mrs. Kennedy's inner feelings. We are not told, nor do the journalistic conventions apparently require that we be told, how Fleeson knows for a fact that Mrs. Kennedy is "in dead earnest." In the context of this story, there might seem to be a gendered knowledge at work—one woman knowing what another woman is thinking. Another story on the TV broadcast illustrates how Mrs. Kennedy herself is placed in the self-contradictory position of warning the press away from the president's family at the same time that she shares intimate details of the family and of her own private feelings—making them part of the press agenda. Mrs. Kennedy is quoted as saying that "I rather hold my breath" about Caroline's going to school, in an article that describes her depicting herself as "anxious."<sup>20</sup>

Press access to Jacqueline Kennedy's feelings sticks to a feminine framework, but access to the inner thoughts of public figures clearly reaches to President Kennedy as well. In an article on Kennedy's costume, Kate Lang ascribes his serious suits to his sense of public obligation.

President Kennedy clearly feels that being well-dressed is part of the simple good manners of public life, and goes at it with a sense of noblesse oblige. Some public figures are personally concerned with clothes almost to the point of fetish. The President leaves it all to

[his tailor, Sammie] Harris, who just manages to snatch five minutes for a fitting.<sup>21</sup>

What the president "clearly feels" seems to be on the press agenda throughout the Kennedy years. One generic form that consistently depicts presidential feeling is the news photograph. During the Cuban invasion crisis of April 1961, for example, the Boston Globe printed a close-up of Kennedy with the caption, "A worried President Kennedy will confer with former President Eisenhower today."<sup>22</sup> How the Globe knows that the president is "worried," and about what, and how it attaches that worry to the forthcoming meeting with Eisenhower do not need to be stated. On 29 April, the Globe printed side by side two photographs of Kennedy, one smiling, one more serious. We are invited into his feelings with the caption, "Before and After—President Kennedy, at left, is relaxed and smiling as a candidate. On right, he is shown in a recent photo describing the tenseness of the Laos crisis."<sup>23</sup>

Such interpretive captions were the routine, asserting the power of de-contextualized photographs to reveal inner states. In its issue of 8 May 1961, Newsweek printed side by side two photographs of congressional leaders Rayburn, Mansfield, McCormack, Albert, and Humphrey, with Vice President Johnson, with the caption, "Guarded grins, unguarded gloom: Congressional leaders posed consciously (left) then were caught unawares (right)." In the "posed" photograph, the men look cheerful; in the "unguarded" photo their faces are serious and Senator Mansfield is shown with his hand across his brow. In the context of a story about the failure of the Cuban invasion, we are invited to regard the photograph of "gloom" as revealing the real feelings of the group.<sup>24</sup> A photograph of Adlai Stevenson describes him as being "thoughtful" as he listens to a U.N. speech by the ambassador from Iraq.<sup>25</sup>

In the NBC White Paper on JFK, the introductory and most significant section of the program is devoted to a behind the scenes analysis of how the White House decision-making structures worked, with an emphasis on Kennedy's staff. The very structure of a "behind the scenes" account has significance as a rhetorical move. That a mainstream television network was experimenting with the form helps to underscore how widespread was the form was at the time. Seated at the cabinet table, President Kennedy and his interviewer, Ray Scherer, worked their way through a series of photographs of key White House aides, with Kennedy commenting on the role of each. For the purposes of this paper, the most significant moments occur where Scherer apparently expected them to be found when he suggested, "suppose we start with Mr. Sorensen." Kennedy replied that Sorensen was counselor for the White House, with special responsibilities for domestic policies. Sorensen's role as Kennedy's speechwriter was known to all attentive observers of the presidency at the time. Sorensen had been with Kennedy from the start of Kennedy's Senate term in 1953; was involved in a flurry of public charges—later withdrawn—that Sorensen had actually written Kennedy's Pulitzer Prize winning book Profiles in Courage; and had been Kennedy's primary aide and chief speechwriter in the long campaign for the presidency. The role of speechwriter was known, but it was still—and is today—a somewhat embarrassing aspect of the presidency, since it goes to the center of what we take to be presidential character. Presidential character is displayed to us largely through presidential speeches; at a time when the presidency has become increasingly personalized, it is difficult to find ways to take into account the role of the speechwriter. In the NBC broadcast, Kennedy appears to have found a euphemistic way to deal with the problem, by telling Scherer that Sorensen's responsibility included the preparation of "messages." "All the messages we send out go through him," says Kennedy. This is literally true, but deflects attention away the silent inclusion of speeches among the "messages"—we don't

normally think of speeches as messages that are "sent out." There follows some bantering colloquy between Scherer and Kennedy in which Scherer notes Sorensen's role as alter ego and recalls the familiar line that when Kennedy is wounded Sorensen bleeds; Kennedy jokingly replies that Sorensen has even developed a Boston accent, a way of acknowledging their closeness—and the point that Sorensen is clearly subordinate to Kennedy. It is not so much that Kennedy is speaking Sorensen's words as that Sorensen is writing in Kennedy's voice, as an extension and agent of Kennedy.

As the interview continues, Kennedy explains his preference for a spokes-of-the-wheel staff, reporting to him, as it emphasizes his role as a learner and places him at the center of decision making. "The more people I can see, the wider I can expose to different ideas, the more effective I can be as president." Kennedy's self-depiction as the responsible agent of government is elicited by a question about the role of Richard Neustadt's book Presidential Power on the Kennedy White House. Kennedy identifies Neustadt as "an expert on governmental reorganization" and says that the book helps to explain Kennedy's vision of the presidency: "to gather talented people together and constantly stimulate them to action."

President Kennedy spoke before the American Society of Newspaper Editors, therefore, in a context that made press speculation about presidential thoughts and feelings routine. At the same time, according to Theodore Sorensen, it was conceived as a primary and routine practice for every presidential speech to convey the president's thoughts and intentions clearly and convincingly.<sup>26</sup>

President Kennedy spoke to the American Society of Newspaper Editors in the immediate context of the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion. The press carried into its coverage of the speech and the surrounding political events its assurance that it knew what Kennedy was thinking and feeling.

Theodore Sorensen was charged, as was the usual practice, with planning and preparing the ASNE and ANPA speeches. In an undated memorandum that, again following the usual practice, might have been for Kennedy's decision-making and/or used as the agenda for a staff meeting, Sorensen suggested possible topics for both speeches. The memo is undated, but the context seems to make it clear that the speeches were planned together as a pair and that the list of topics was prepared before the Bay of Pigs failure made a re-drafting of the ASNE speech seem necessary. Though events intruded on the planning, the document does suggest several strategies that were employed in the weeks that followed.

POSSIBLE SPEECH TOPICS FOR ASNE - APRIL 20 - AND PUBLISHERS BUREAU OF  
ADVERTISING - APRIL 27

1. Relationship between the government and the press - Problems of secrecy and security, orderly and consistent policy, education and public relations, etc.
2. "The education of John Kennedy" - The lessons learned with interest, pain or amusement in the first 100 days.
3. The relationship between our economy and defense - the effect of disarmament on the economy and the budget.
4. The "military-industrial complex" - (Could be included in No. 3 or treated separately).
5. Education - our greatest need - the Administration program.
6. Federal stimulation of research and development for non-defense industries (the Wiesner-Galbraith memo).
7. The world outlook - the challenge we face - etc.<sup>27</sup>

None of these topics appears to anticipate a "crisis speech," which both of the speeches later became. At the same time, several of the themes on the list were used in the ASNE and ANPA speeches and in the background briefings circulated in the following weeks. In the John F. Kennedy Library

in Boston there exists an undated document that is apparently Theodore Sorensen's first draft for the ASNE speech. The draft opens with a theme drawn from item (1) of the planning memo--the relations between government and press--then devotes the remainder of the text to item (7)--the world outlook. The speech argues that the American press and government must turn the hopes of the revolution of rising expectations toward the free world by transforming it into a "revolution of increasing satisfactions" through international economic assistance and a domestic agenda that makes America a model for the developing world.

The draft issues a personal challenge to the press and invites them to share responsibility.

Many of you have written that the American people are apathetic to the dangers which we face - that they are indifferent to the powerful forces which menace the safety of the Great Republic.

I do not believe it. . . .

This then is our responsibility - mine as President, and yours as the interpreters of events to millions of Americans - the responsibility of increasing public awareness of the fact that our civilization is in mortal danger - that our enemies are strong and implacable - that vast and heroic efforts will be required - in short, the responsibility of explaining just what kind of a world we live in.<sup>28</sup>

Sorensen's draft is notable not only for its bold statement of Kennedy's belief but also for its definition of the world situation as essentially about competing beliefs. Though many of the examples in the speech refer to the importance of material development, the essential point of any such development is to secure the allegiance of the world's population to the West. Belief is both the intended action and the manifest subject of the speech.



The failure of the Cuban invasion prompted a redrafting of the ASNE speech. Several versions of Sorensen's new draft of the speech survive in the archives of the JFK Library. It is not possible to determine, of course, precisely how much Kennedy himself, or others besides Sorensen, contributed to the shaping of the speech, though it is clear that the re-drafting on the eve of the speech would not have been undertaken without Kennedy's direction.

Among the papers on the speech are a handwritten and a typed version of "Introductory Material for ASNE Speech." The separate preparation of a page or two of humorous introductory material was a common practice; such material was usually not included in the advance copy of a speech released to the press, but it typically appeared, if spoken, in the "as actually delivered" press release after the speech, and in the version that appeared in the Public Papers of the President. The introductory material refers to Kennedy's appearance at the ASNE convention a year before, when he was considered a long-shot for the nomination, behind Adlai Stevenson and Hubert Humphrey. The press's coolness toward him a year before is made into a self-deprecating joke, in one of Sorensen's trademark balanced constructions: "Also, following my talk here a year ago, I was surprised to find you had no questions - now that I am in office, I am surprised to find how little I have in the way of answers." The text alludes to Kennedy's golf game, turning an Eisenhower era press complaint about how much time Ike spent on the golf course into a joke on himself: "On the other hand, I realize that your staff and wire service photographers may be complaining that they do not enjoy the same 'green privileges' at the local golf courses, which they once did. It is true that my predecessor did not object, as I do, to pictures of one's golfing skills in action; but neither, on the other hand, did he ever 'bean' a Secret Service man."<sup>29</sup> Given the sobriety of the speech Kennedy gave to ASNE, it seems likely that this material was prepared for the first version of the

speech and was discarded as Sorensen undertook a rewrite on the night of April 19.

The study of speech preparation in the Kennedy administration is often made more difficult by the very process through which the speeches were composed. Sorensen often composed a first draft of the speech only a few days before delivery—and sometimes in even less time. Though Sorensen occasionally requested suggestions for speech drafts from others within and outside the government, few such suggestions have found their way into the archives. Because Sorensen was so close to Kennedy, because he had access to policy formation, and because he wrote so quickly and so well, there are often few drafts of Kennedy speeches. This creates a difficulty for rhetorical research, since when multiple drafts of a speech are available, it is possible to study the evolution of an intention and, often, the contention among various advisors. In the case of the ASNE speech, although time was very short, we do find several versions of the speech in the archives, and they give some clues to how the final speech was shaped.

Apart from the discarded draft already discussed—which exists in both a handwritten and a typed version--there exist nine further versions of the ASNE speech. These are, in apparent chronological order, based on internal evidence:

- (1) A handwritten draft, labeled "1<sup>st</sup> draft." This draft was evidently written on the night of April 19-20, 1961, the night before the speech was to be delivered at 2:00 p.m. on April 20.<sup>30</sup>
- (2) A typed draft, titled "ASNE SPEECH"; this is a typewritten copy of (1).<sup>31</sup>
- (3) A copy of (2) with extensive handwritten additions and corrections.<sup>32</sup>
- (4) A draft titled "2<sup>nd</sup> draft"; this version is typed, and contains numerous handwritten editorial changes.<sup>33</sup>

- (5) A cleanly typed version of (4) with two handwritten inserts.
- (6) A draft titled "3<sup>rd</sup> draft"; this is a typed version, with further handwritten changes.<sup>34</sup>
- (7) An advance press-release copy of the speech based on (6).<sup>35</sup>
- (8) The president's reading copy of the speech, with a few changes in the president's handwriting.<sup>36</sup>
- (9) "Address Before the American Society of Newspaper Editors. April 20, 1961" as printed in the Public Papers of the President (1961).

On the evening of April 19, 1961, the night before the ASNE speech, Theodore Sorensen began a completely new version of the speech. President Kennedy, after having met with Sorensen to discuss the matter, attended a reception at the Greek embassy. Sorensen worked through the night on a series of drafts. After midnight, Kennedy met with Lyndon Johnson, secretaries McNamara and Rusk, Admiral Burke, and General Lemnitzer.<sup>37</sup>

Sorensen's draft makes "identity" a key issue throughout the speech. He begins by identifying the responsibilities of the press with those of the president:

The President of a great democracy such as ours, and the editors of great newspapers such as yours, owe a common obligation to the people: an obligation to present the facts, to present them with candor, and to present them in perspective.

This call upon the loyalty of the press is not, on the other hand, met with much candor about the facts of the Cuban invasion, about which the draft says little except to downplay American involvement.

I have emphasized on many occasions that this was a struggle of Cubans against Cubans, of Cuban patriots against a Cuban dictator. While we did not conceal our sympathies, the armed forces of this country have not been involved or committed in any way; nor has anyone who is fully aware of both the diplomatic and military difficulties ever seriously

urged a unilateral American intervention to either reinforce or rescue this latest attempt of Cuban refugees and exiles to regain their island's freedom.

The theme of identity and division continues in the next paragraph:

But Cuba is not an island unto itself; and our concern is not ended by mere expressions of non-intervention and regret. This is not the first time in either ancient or recent history that a small band of freedom fighters has been crushed by the armed might of totalitarianism, directed and supplied by an alien power.

American support, which is unspecified, is offered because Cuba is not an isolated entity, and in any case our support is offered on behalf of indigenous (though exiled) forces. The current Cuban regime, on the other hand, is de-legitimized since it is "directed and supplied by an alien power."

Could Sorensen and Kennedy reasonably depict the invasion as essentially Cuban? As late as March 15, 1961, McGeorge Bundy advised Kennedy that the CIA had developed a revised plan for the invasion that was "plausibly Cuban in its essentials."<sup>38</sup>

The difficulties of denying American involvement had been predicted at least as early as February 1961 in a memo from Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., to the president. Schlesinger wrote that in light of just such difficulties, "the arguments against this decision begin to gain force."

However well disguised any action might be, it will be ascribed to the United States. . . . Worst of all, this would be your first dramatic foreign policy initiative. At one stroke, it would dissipate all the extraordinary good will which has been rising toward the new Administration in the minds of millions.

Schlesinger argued that in the event Kennedy decided to take on the project, he should consider luring Castro into an apparent aggression to

which the United States could then respond, or taking on the right-wing dictator Trujillo "at the same time," thus demonstrating "a principled concern for human freedom." Schlesinger also urged that Kennedy should create a context that would shift the focus:

Should you not consider at some point addressing a speech to the whole of the hemisphere setting forth in eloquent terms your own conception of inter-American progress toward individual freedom and social justice? Such a speech would identify our Latin American policy with the aspirations of the plain people of the hemisphere. As part of this speech, you could point out the threats raised against the inter-American system by dictatorial states, and especially by dictatorial states under the control of non-hemisphere governments or ideologies. If this were done properly, action against Castro could be seen as in the interests of the hemisphere and not just of American corporations.<sup>39</sup>

In retrospect, it appears that Schlesinger's advice was sound, since the ASNE speech required Kennedy to build a rationale after the fact—a rationale very much along the lines that Schlesinger had suggested in February, emphasizing the illegitimacy of "threats . . . by dictatorial states under the control of non-hemisphere governments."

As events moved toward the invasion, Schlesinger warned again that the United States should prepare its case early—which might have avoided the dramatic, all-night drafting session of April 19-20. In a memo of March 15, Schlesinger advised:

It would seem to me absolutely essential to work out in advance a consistent line which can hold for every conceivable contingency. Otherwise we will find ourselves in a new U-2 imbroglio, with the government either changing its story midstream or else clinging to a position which the rest of the world will regard as a lie.<sup>40</sup>

It is not known whether Sorensen had seen Schlesinger's February memo suggesting the portrayal of the invading forces as loyal Cubans battling a non-hemispheric regime, though the parallels are striking. Sadly, but again perhaps coincidentally, the depictions of the Cuban paramilitary forces for the ASNE speech also echo a more sinister document prepared in the planning phase, a "propaganda action plan" describing possible themes for radio broadcasts and propaganda leaflets to be dropped over Cuba at the time of the invasion. "Annex B" of the "Propaganda Action Plan" suggests:

POSSIBLE THEMES FOR D-DAY PERIOD<sup>41</sup>

Cubans reinforcing  
internal Cuban  
opposition:

-- "We" are non-Batista Cubans. We are not foreigners. . . .

Nucleus of original  
anti-Batista rebels  
now anti-Castro:

We count among us and among those in hills many who were at Castro's side against Batista's tyranny and who are now fighting Castro's tyranny.

Not an invasion:

-- This is not an outside, foreign invasion. We are Cubans. . . .

Earlier martyrs  
paved the way:

-- We are but the final and crowning Cuban force to crush the Communist dictatorship.

Erase scourge of  
Communism:

-- Now that you have felt the heel of a negative Soviet, Asiatic, foreign, Communist regime, you know how necessary it is to erase it forever in Cuba.

Respect for Cuban  
fighters:

-- Don't let the government call us "imperialists" or "mercenaries." . . .

After depicting the invasion as essentially Cuban, Sorensen's draft next turns to "lessons for all of us to learn" from "this tragic chain of events." The introduction of the idea of lessons, the reader will recall, borrows from an idea that had appeared in Sorensen's planning agenda some days before as an idea for the speech to ASNE—but then it was offered, apparently, in more general terms about the education of a president. The notion of lessons in the current draft provides a transition away from an

account of what has happened in Cuba in the past days (with the difficulties of assigning responsibility) and invites the audience to consider problems that constrain planning for the future. The shift is from a forensic to a deliberative mode, from self-defense to policy. The three lessons in this first draft are:

- (1) "that the forces of communism are not to be underestimated";
- (2) that Cuban communism must be contained and not allowed to spread throughout the hemisphere;
- (3) "that the communists have made considerable headway . . . in capturing for themselves the 'revolution of rising expectations,' challenging the U.S. to "offer a better route to economic growth and fulfillment."

The third of Sorensen's lessons is drawn from the draft of the now discarded speech. In this new draft, Sorensen tags it with a reflexive gesture to the emergency by noting that "this is the matter on which I had originally planned to talk" (a gesture that is pencilled out in the next revision). By the third draft, the third lesson has changed to an entirely different point.

The typed third draft is in nearly final form, though it, too, was further revised with handwritten corrections and additions. In this draft, Kennedy's denial of direct American involvement is overshadowed by his threat to intervene under certain circumstances.

While we could not be expected to hide our sympathies, we made it repeatedly clear that the armed forces of this country would not intervene in any way.

Any unilateral American intervention, in the absence of an external attack upon ourselves or an ally, would have been contrary to our traditions and to our international obligations.<sup>42</sup> But let the record show that our restraint is not inexhaustible.<sup>43</sup> Should it ever

appear that the inter-American doctrine of non-interference merely conceals or excuses a policy of non-action—if the nations of this hemisphere should fail to meet their commitments against outside Communist penetration—then I want it clearly understood that this government will not hesitate in meeting its primary obligations which are to the security of our own Nation.

Should that time ever come, we do not intend to be lectured on "intervention" by those whose character was stamped for all time on the bloody streets of Budapest.

The literally accurate but somewhat ambiguous and misleading denial in this passage, claiming in an oddly retrospective hypothetical that "the armed forces of this country would not intervene in any way" is overshadowed by the strong warning about possible future intervention. The threat of future intervention is used to substantiate the denial of our present involvement, since if the United States did intervene, "we would not expect or accept the same outcome which this small band of gallant Cuban refugees must have known they were chancing." What was originally introduced as a response to an "obligation . . . to discuss briefly at this time the recent events in Cuba" avoids even a general description of American involvement.

To bolster claims of the independence of the Cuban exiles, the speech went through several versions of an account of the leader of the invasion. In his first version Sorensen writes:

According to press reports, the final message to be relayed from the refugee forces on the island came from the rebel commander when asked if he wished to be evacuated. His answer was: "I will never leave this country." He now joins in the mountains countless other guerrilla fighters, who are equally determined that the dedication of those who gave their lives shall not be forgotten, and that Cuba must not be abandoned to the communists. And we do not intend to abandon it either.



This account disguises American leadership of the invasion by attributing knowledge of the commander's message to "press reports." A passive construction glides past the issue of who would have evacuated the commander had he chosen to withdraw, and of who issued the invitation. The paragraph survives intact into the second draft. The third draft is edited by hand to sharpen the issues of identity with two insertions:

Mr. Castro has said that these were mercenaries. According to press reports, the final message to be relayed from the refugee forces on the island came from the rebel commander when asked if he wished to be evacuated. His answer was: "I will never leave this country." That is not the reply of a mercenary. He has gone now to join in the mountains countless other guerrilla fighters, who are equally determined that the dedication of those who gave their lives shall not be forgotten, and that Cuba must not be abandoned to the communists. And we do not intend to abandon it either.

The revised paragraph is characteristic of the speech as a whole in the way it assigns agency to the patriotic rebel leader, at the same time that it disguises U.S. responsibility while staking a claim on the intention of the United States not to "abandon" Cuba.

The draft both implicitly accepts and explicitly rejects responsibility or American involvement, sweeping aside the details with a warning about possible future intervention. Cuba is under the domination of a foreign dictatorship. The rebels are autonomous patriots. The United States, reserving the right to intervene, denies that its armed forces directly intervened in this episode. The account crafted by Sorensen depends for its effect of the rhetorical depiction of human agency, while at the same time sketching the grounds for future American action. Whatever one's views of the invasion, which we now know John F. Kennedy by this time regarded as a

dreadful mistake, Sorensen's quickly drafted speech is a subtle work of rhetoric.

Though the denials of American responsibility for the invasion were surely disingenuous, they were, it should be added, used as an implicit explanation for refusing to commit further resources to the battle in such a way as to save face and to avoid an even more dangerous escalation.

The speech may have re-directed press inquiries into Kennedy's and America's involvement in the Bay of Pigs invasion. No causal connection can, of course, be supported, but it does seem that press accounts echo to some degree the themes of identity, responsibility, and lessons that Sorensen crafted in the early hours of April 20, 1961.

Kennedy's ASNE speech was nationally broadcast, widely reprinted, and covered in detail in the press. Coverage quickly coalesced around a series of related themes that placed Kennedy at the center of events.

Time reported on the preparation of the ASNE speech in such a way as to reveal Sorensen's role while emphasizing Kennedy's rhetorical agency. In its April 28 issue, Time describes how, on the very day that the Cuban invasion failed, Sorensen "worked through the night" at Kennedy's instructions to come up with a "totally different speech" than had earlier been planned. Kennedy is depicted as having decided to make this change, after which he "talked over his ideas with Sorensen until it was time to get ready for the week's second white-tie interruption—a reception at the Greek embassy."<sup>44</sup>

Most accounts of the speech implied that the text and its performance provided direct access into Kennedy's state of mind. In a Los Angeles Times column objecting to the speech, Holmes Alexander writes that "President Kennedy, along with his advisors, did not seem to know what kind of policy line the administration was enunciating."<sup>45</sup> Alexander writes that "many of us who listened were disturbed by this 'new' Kennedy—a man visibly feeling the

weight and confusion of the office he sought with such vigor and aplomb."<sup>46</sup> Though Alexander reports Kennedy's state of mind, he bases his remarks on direct observation of the president's performance. Some stories reported the president's views without making it clear whether their information came from the speech, background briefings, or other inside knowledge. Robert Healy of the Globe writes that "President Kennedy is believed determined to crush the dictatorship of Fidel Castro in Cuba. . . . He has always believed that Castro would have to be dealt with."<sup>47</sup>

Though the press clearly reported the Bay of Pigs as an American failure, and a Kennedy failure, most of the mainstream press appeared to rally to Kennedy's support; those who expressed doubts worried that he might not be tough enough on Cuba. How was a story about a failure by Kennedy and the United States turned into a positive story? Two themes from Kennedy's speech, apparently reinforced by White House background briefings, emerged most clearly—these are the themes of Learning and of Responsibility.

Time interpreted the failed Bay of Pigs invasion as a lesson for President Kennedy, who was "learning . . . the facts of cold war life."<sup>48</sup> The Boston Globe's report of the ASNE speech describes the president as "grim and determined," and writes that "The President said that we must learn a lesson from Cuba."<sup>49</sup> Taking up the notion that "we" must learn from Cuba, the Los Angeles Times accepts the president's speech as an invitation to deliberation. "The President, in his speech to the nation's editors on Thursday, promised that the United States would profit from the lessons of Cuba. What are some of those lessons, and what can be learned from them?"<sup>50</sup> In a more general story on the first 100 days of the administration, John Hightower, though critical of Kennedy, depicts him as a learner. "At the heart of all of Kennedy's major problems, of course, was the nature of his relations with Khrushchev. On this point, some of his aides and advisors, if not Kennedy himself, seem to have been surprised, even shocked, at the

violent, uncompromising nature of the cold war seen from inside the government."<sup>51</sup>

The theme of Kennedy as a learner is part of a thread that runs through press coverage not only of the Cuban story but of the administration as a whole, and that depends for its effect on getting inside the president's head. Kennedy is depicted both as a learner and as a uniquely situated observer of events. Inside information about the rising or falling stock of Kennedy's colleagues is fertile ground for confidently retailed gossip about the president's views. Newsweek mentioned, for example, that "President Kennedy is immensely pleased with Vice President Johnson's record as goodwill ambassador and plans to expand these duties."<sup>52</sup> In the wake of the Cuban failure, as blame became attached to Allen Dulles, director of the CIA, Newsweek revealed that "JFK has no idea yet, but wistfully wishes he had another trusted brother like Attorney General Bobby to fill the vital post [of Director of CIA]."<sup>53</sup>

In the days after the Cuban invasion, the issue of who was responsible flashed through the press. Kennedy assumed responsibility both implicitly and explicitly, if somewhat ambiguously, from the outset, in the ASNE speech and in other statements. At his press conference on April 21, Kennedy was asked by Sander Vanocur, "In view of the fact we are taking a propaganda lambasting around the world, why is it not useful, sir, for us to explore with you the real facts behind this, or our motivations?" Curiously, Kennedy turned a question that seemed directed at national purposes into a question about his personal role. Kennedy replied, in part, that "we have to make a judgment as to how much we can usefully say that would aid the interest of the United States. One of the problems of a free society, a problem not met by a dictatorship, is this problem of information. . . . There's an old saying that victory has 100 fathers and defeat is an orphan. . . . I have said as much as I feel can usefully be said by me in regard to the events of the past

few days. Further statements, detailed discussions, are not to conceal responsibility because I'm the responsible officer of the Government—that is quite obvious—but merely because I do not believe that such a discussion would benefit us during the present difficult situation."<sup>54</sup>

Kennedy's direct assumption of responsibility in his reply to Sander Vanocur's question could be construed, in hindsight, as less than entirely satisfactory, since after the ambiguous denials of the ASNE speech it is not entirely clear for what it is that President Kennedy is claiming to be responsible. This problem is met by Kennedy, in part, by his observation that further elaboration would not "benefit us during the present difficult situation," and by his reminder that a democracy faces special difficulties when confronted by an adversary that does not have a free press. From a rhetorical point of view, Kennedy's assumption of responsibility seems to have been a success.

Nevertheless, rumors circulated that Allen Dulles had given bad advice. Interior Secretary Stewart Udall was quoted as saying that the invasion plan was originally Richard Nixon's, agreed to by Eisenhower, and inherited by Kennedy. In the face of an immediate outcry from Republicans, President Kennedy issued a statement personally assuming full responsibility for the failure. Though this story was told by the press, Kennedy was generally given credit for taking the responsibility, even by the opposition. In a story soon after the invasion, the Boston Globe editorialized that "President Kennedy, who has refused to shun the onus, is burdened with an outcome whose chief cause roots in an old source," which it finds in the CIA.<sup>55</sup>

Some of the reports of Kennedy's assumption of responsibility frame it as a story of "ulterior motives." On 25 April, Don Shannon, writing in the Los Angeles Times, writes that "President Kennedy, moving to halt a bipartisan battle over blame for the Cuban disaster, Monday night issued 'sole responsibility for the events of the past days' and ordered officials

not to attempt to implicate the Eisenhower administration."<sup>56</sup> Shannon's story is a switch from his earlier frame for the event; on 22 April he had written that, "Looking worn by the continuous round of high level conferences which followed the rebel defeat, he wryly observed: 'There is an old saying that victory has 100 fathers and defeat is an orphan.'"<sup>57</sup> The Boston Globe, generally a strong Kennedy paper, interpreted the taking of responsibility as sincere on its face. On the front page, the administration press release is interpreted as merely repeating what Kennedy had said from the outset: "President Kennedy, reaffirming his full responsibility for the United States setback on Cuba, tonight ordered members of his official family not to try to shift the blame to anyone else."<sup>58</sup> An unsigned story on the inside pages of the Globe casts the story in the same way: "President Kennedy has again made it clear that he takes full responsibility for whatever part the United States played in the Cuban invasion." The Globe story then quotes the press release:

President Kennedy has stated from the beginning that as President he bears sole responsibility for the events of the past few days. He has stated it on all occasions and he restates it now so that it will be understood by all.

The President is strongly opposed to anyone within or without the administration attempting to shift the responsibility.<sup>59</sup>

Writing in the Los Angeles Times, its Washington bureau chief Robert T. Hartmann links the president's responsibility to his special knowledge. Though a Nixon supporter, Hartmann extends to Kennedy the unique perspective and responsibility of the office. He writes that "the man who lives in the White House is not governed by what he would like to do or by the words that are necessary to win debates or elections. Whoever he is, he is governed by the inexorable facts of the world as it is and by the over-riding national interest, which becomes apparent only to those who sit at the pivot point of

America's destiny."<sup>60</sup> In a later story, Hartmann claims knowledge of what is on Kennedy's mind and avoids choosing between personal and shared responsibility for the Cuban invasion.

The Kennedy administration appears to be taking the position that the Cuban fiasco was a bipartisan blunder initiated under President Eisenhower and endorsed by his top advisers, including intelligence and military chiefs who have continued in their posts.

At the same time President Kennedy is personally accepting full responsibility for the decision to go ahead with the ill-fated rebel reinforcement operation. He is both aware and angry that some subordinate U.S. officials are claiming that they knew nothing of it or counseled against it.<sup>61</sup>

It is difficult to know exactly how to read Hartmann's story. The most plausible interpretation appears to be that Kennedy is sincerely determined to spread bipartisan blame while gaining credit for appearing to accept responsibility. This strategic reading is certainly within the powers of Hartmann, who was later a special counsel to President Gerald Ford, and whose brief included political strategy and final editorial responsibility for speeches. In his later book on the Ford presidency, Hartmann blamed the troubles of the Ford administration on Nixon holdovers, whom he characterized as a "palace guard."<sup>62</sup>

The problem with the responsibility theme, of course, is that those papers most willing to accept Kennedy's claims of responsibility at face value are his supporters, who are most willing also to accept the idea that part of the blame is bipartisan; those opposed to Kennedy are most likely to read his claim of responsibility as true but insincere.

The themes of learning, responsibility, personnel, and surveillance are neatly tied together in a Washington Post column by Carroll Kilpatrick, who writes that Robert Kennedy and Theodore Sorensen have been asked, in the

aftermath of the Cuban invasion, to advise President Kennedy on foreign policy, not because they are foreign policy experts but because "they must help him consider every foreign policy problem in terms of its effect on the President's own authority and prestige—as well as the Nation's." Kilpatrick traces this decision to the doctrines of Richard Neustadt's book Presidential Power. Neustadt, who was then a special assistant to Kennedy, argued that every decision by a president must be considered with an eye on "the importance of success, and the necessity always to think in terms of the effect of actions on the high office he holds."<sup>63</sup>

Kilpatrick takes us behind the scenes of the presidency, but in a way that instead of inducing suspicion at the politics of illusion links the president's success with that of the nation. While there is surely room in the Kilpatrick-Neustadt version of the presidency for suspicion of the president's motives, this is clearly not the interpretation to which Kilpatrick invites his readers. This, it seems to me from reading dozens of press accounts of the failed Cuban invasion and Kennedy's reaction to it, is the burden of depictions both pro and con—that the presidency is a unique resource for the nation, that the character and routines of the president are crucial to his success and to ours, and that all assistance to the president, including ghostwriting, is transformed into the president's personal action when it flows through him.

In its coverage of the Bay of Pigs invasion, the press accepted President Kennedy's assumption of responsibility as a sign of character and it accepted the idea that the invasion had lessons to teach as an indication that, even if Kennedy had made a mistake, he was capable of learning from it. Although the theme of ulterior motives was clearly available to the press in April 1961, it was largely avoided. But the rhetorical foundation of the ulterior motive theme was being laid. The press had a well developed vocabulary of appearance vs. reality, actions vs. motives, words as the sign



of inner states, narrative assumption of the subjective point of view of the president, and the personalization of the presidency. In the case of the Bay of Pigs invasion, this vocabulary was employed largely to support the President as the personification of the interests of the United States. All of these themes, which were employed to convey positive news about President Kennedy, were readily available to have their valence changed from positive to negative when Vietnam and Watergate undermined trust in presidential leadership.

### Notes

---

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, On Rhetoric, trans. George A. Kennedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 38. The brackets in the quoted passage are from Kennedy.

<sup>2</sup> The key texts are Kenneth Burke, A Grammar of Motives (1945; rpt. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969) and A Rhetoric of Motives (1950; rpt. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969). See also Edwin Black, "The Second Persona," Quarterly Journal of Speech 56 (1970): 109-19; Maurice Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the Peuple Quebecois," Quarterly Journal of Speech 73 (1987): 133-50; Walter J. Ong, "The Writer's Audience Is Always a Fiction," in Interfaces of the Word (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 53-81; Thomas W. Benson, "Rhetoric As a Way of Being," in American Rhetoric: Context and Criticism, ed. Thomas W. Benson (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989), 293-322.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas E. Patterson, Out of Order (1993; rpt. New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 7-8. In this passage, Patterson footnotes Michael Robinson, "Improving Election Information in the Media" (Paper presented at the Voting for Democracy Forum, Washington, D.C., September 11, 1983), p. 2. On press

---

attribution of motives, see also Thomas W. Benson, "Implicit Communication Theory in Campaign Coverage," in Television Coverage of the 1980 Presidential Campaign, ed. William C. Adams (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1983), 103-116.

<sup>4</sup> Patterson, Out of Order, 19.

<sup>5</sup> Patterson, Out of Order, 245.

<sup>6</sup> Patterson, Out of Order, 69, 71.

<sup>7</sup> Deborah Mathis, "Public Press, Private Lives," in response to a question after a talk at the Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics, and Public Policy, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, February 16, 1999.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Thomas W. Benson, "Inaugurating Peace: Franklin D. Roosevelt's Last Speech," Speech Monographs 36 (1969): 138-147; Thomas W. Benson, "'To Lend a Hand': Gerald Ford, Watergate, and the White House Speechwriters," Rhetoric and Public Affairs 1 (1998): 201-225; Thomas W. Benson, "FDR at Gettysburg: The New Deal and the Rhetoric of Public Memory," in Rhetoric and Public Memory, ed. Stephen Browne and David Henry (Beverly Hills, Sage, in press).

<sup>9</sup> Robert Drew, Richard Leacock, and Donn Pennebaker, Primary (1960), Motion Picture.

<sup>10</sup> Theodore H. White, The Making of the President, 1960 (New York: Atheneum, 1962); see also Norman Mailer, Miami and the Siege of Chicago (New York: New American Library, 1968); Joe McGinniss, The Selling of the President, 1968 (New York: Trident, 1969); Timothy Crouse, The Boys on the Bus (New York: Random House, 1973); Richard Ben Cramer, What It Takes: The Way to the White House (New York: Random House, 1992); Thomas W. Benson, "Another Shooting in Cowtown," Quarterly Journal of Speech 67 (1981): 347-406. The rhetorical resources for reporting "behind the scenes" and bringing a literary sensibility to the literature of fact had a long development

---

before the 1960s; see, for example Henry Mayhew, London Labour and the London Poor (1861-1862; rpt; New York: Dover, 1968); George Orwell, Down and Out in Paris and London (1933; rpt. New York: Berkley, 1963); James Agee and Walker Evans, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1941); Lillian Ross, Picture (New York: Rinehard, 1952).

<sup>11</sup> Joseph W. Alsop, Jr., Reporting Politics, the Fourteenth Annual Memorial Lecture sponsored by the Twin Cities Local, American Newspaper Guild, AFL-CIO, and the School of Journalism, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, October 17, 1960 (Minneapolis, MN: American Newspaper Guild, 1960), 9.

<sup>12</sup> Alsop, Reporting Politics, 5.

<sup>13</sup> John Fischer, Magazine and Newspaper Journalism: A Comparison, The Sixteenth Annual Memorial Lecture sponsored by the Twin Cities Local, American Newspaper Guild, AFL-CIO, and the School of Journalism, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, October 11, 1962 (Minneapolis: American Newspaper Guild, 1962), n. p.

<sup>14</sup> For general accounts, see James Aronson, The Press and the Cold War (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970); Joseph P. Berry, Jr., John F. Kennedy and the Media: The First Television President (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987); Worth Bingham and Ward S. Just, "The President and the Press," Reporter, April 12 1962, 18-23; Michael Baruch Grossman and Martha Joynt Kumar, Portraying the President : The White House and the News Media (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981); Montague Kern, Patricia W. Levering, and Ralph B. Levering, The Kennedy Crises : The Press, the Presidency, and Foreign Policy (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983); Louis Liebovich, The Press and the Modern Presidency : Myths and Mindsets from Kennedy to Clinton (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1998); James E. Pollard, "The Kennedy Administration and the Press," Journalism Quarterly

---

41 (1964): 3-14; Pierre Salinger, With Kennedy (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966); Harry Sharp, Jr., "Live From Washington: The Telecasting of President Kennedy's News Conferences," Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media 13 (1968): 23-32; John Tebbel and Sarah Miles Watts, The Press and the Presidency: From George Washington to Ronald Reagan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

<sup>15</sup> "The Races," Boston Globe (16 April 1961), 44; the same UPI telephoto was printed in the Washington Post.

<sup>16</sup> Boston Globe (16 April 1961), 3.

<sup>17</sup> "Luncheon at the White House," Boston Globe (12 April 1961), 47.

<sup>18</sup> "JFK: Report #2," NBC White Paper, NBC News, 11 April 1961.

<sup>19</sup> Doris Fleeson, "Lunch with the President's Wife," Boston Globe (13 April 1961), 12.

<sup>20</sup> "Anxious Mrs. Kennedy to Fight for Children's Right of Privacy," Boston Globe (12 April 1961), 1. The story includes a photograph of Caroline Kennedy.

<sup>21</sup> Kate Lang, "Revolution in the White House III: No Longer the Look of a Harvard Soph," Boston Globe (25 April 1961), 14.

<sup>22</sup> "A Worried President Kennedy," Boston Globe (22 April 1961), 5.

<sup>23</sup> "Before and After," Boston Globe (29 April 1961), 1.

<sup>24</sup> "Guarded Grins, Unguarded Gloom," Newsweek (8 May 1961), 24. The same two photographs were printed in the Boston Globe on 26 April with headline, "Take Your Choice"; in the "gloom" photograph we are told that they are "caught in a grim mood" after a breakfast discussion with the president on "world crises." Boston Globe (26 April 1961), 1.

<sup>25</sup> "Thoughtful," Los Angeles Times (20 April 1961), 1.

<sup>26</sup> Theodore C. Sorensen, conversation with the author, Cambridge, MA, 9 March 1999.

---

<sup>27</sup> Memo, "Possible Speech Topics for ASNE - April 20 - and Publishers Bureau of Advertising - April 27," n.d., "American Newspaper Publishers Association, 4/27/61, Draft & Memoranda, 4/7/61-5/2/61 & undated" folder, Box 60, Theodore C. Sorensen Papers, JFK Speech Files, 1961-63, John F. Kennedy Library.

<sup>28</sup> Speech draft, n.d., "Address Before the American Society of Newspaper Editors 4/20/61" folder, Box 34, President's Office Files, Speech Files, John F. Kennedy Library.

<sup>29</sup> Speech draft, "Introductory Material for ASNE Speech," n.d., "American Society of Newspaper Editors 4/20/61 Drafts & Press Release, 4/20/61 & Undated" folder, Box 60, Theodore C. Sorensen Papers, JFK Speech Files 1961-63, John F. Kennedy Library. An earlier, handwritten draft of the introductory material, titled "Introductory Material (Separate)" is also found in the ASNE folder in Box 60 of the Sorensen JFK speech files.

<sup>30</sup> Speech draft, "1<sup>st</sup> Draft," n.d., "American Society of Newspaper Editors 4/20/61 Drafts & Press Release, 4/20/61 & Undated" folder, Box 60, Theodore C. Sorensen Papers, JFK Speech Files 1961-63, John F. Kennedy Library. The draft is on lined, yellow legal paper, handwritten.

<sup>31</sup> Speech draft, "ASNE SPEECH," n.d., "American Society of Newspaper Editors 4/20/61 Drafts & Press Release, 4/20/61 & Undated" folder, Box 60, Theodore C. Sorensen Papers, JFK Speech Files 1961-63, John F. Kennedy Library. Typed draft, 3 pages.

<sup>32</sup> Speech draft, American Society of Newspaper Editors, "American Society of Newspaper Editors 4/20/61 Drafts & Press Release, 4/20/61 & Undated" folder, Box 60, Theodore C. Sorensen Papers, JFK Speech Files 1961-63, John F. Kennedy Library. On this draft, there is a handwritten insert page after page 2, another handwritten insert page after page 3, and a new, typed page 4.

---

<sup>33</sup> Speech draft, "Undated 2<sup>nd</sup> draft," "American Society of Newspaper Editors 4/20/61 Drafts & Press Release, 4/20/61 & Undated" folder, Box 60, Theodore C. Sorensen Papers, JFK Speech Files 1961-63, John F. Kennedy Library.

<sup>34</sup> Speech draft, "3<sup>rd</sup> draft, ASNE Speech, 4/20/61," "American Society of Newspaper Editors 4/20/61 Drafts & Press Release, 4/20/61 & Undated" folder, Box 60, Theodore C. Sorensen Papers, JFK Speech Files 1961-63, John F. Kennedy Library. In the upper left-hand corner of this draft is the notation "2 p.m.," referring not to the time of the draft but to the time at which the speech is to be delivered on April 20.

<sup>35</sup> Speech text, for release at 2:00 P.M., April 20, 1961, "American Society of Newspaper Editors 4/20/61 Drafts & Press Release, 4/20/61 & Undated" folder, Box 60, Theodore C. Sorensen Papers, JFK Speech Files 1961-63, John F. Kennedy Library.

<sup>36</sup> President's Reading Copy, "American Society of Newspaper Editors," 20 April 1961, "American Society of Newspaper Editors 4/20/61" folder, Box 34, President's Office Files, Speech Files, John F. Kennedy Library.

<sup>37</sup> On the White House meeting, and for a general history of the Bay of Pigs invasion, see James G. Blight and Peter Kornbluh, Politics of Illusion: The Bay of Pigs Invasion Reexamined (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998), 168-169. I am grateful to Carl Kaysen, who was deputy to National Security advisor McGeorge Bundy, 1961-63, for bringing this book to my attention—and lending me his personal copy—in an interview on his work in the White House (Cambridge, MA, 26 March 1999).

<sup>38</sup> Memo, McGeorge Bundy to the president, 15 March 1961, in Blight and Kornbluh, eds., Politics of Illusion, 220-221.

---

<sup>39</sup> Memo, Arthur M. Schlesinger to the president, 11 February 1961; in Politics of Illusion, ed. James G. Blight and Peter Kornbluh (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998), 218-219.

<sup>40</sup> Memo, Schlesinger to the president, 15 March 1961, in Blight and Kornbluh, Politics of Illusion, 223.

<sup>41</sup> Annex No. 19, Propaganda Action Plan in Support of Military Forces; Unrestricted; NLK-NSF-CNTRYS-CUBASUBPSRTRANX-4DDDP; Papers of President Kennedy, National Security Files: Countries: Cuba: Subjects, Paramilitary Study Group, Taylor Report, John F. Kennedy Library.

<sup>42</sup> The typed draft reads "to our treaty obligations"; the word "treaty" has been crossed out and the somewhat more ambiguous, less legalistic word "international" has been substituted.

<sup>43</sup> The draft here echoes a phrase used by Schlesinger in a 5 April 1961 memo to Kennedy opposing the invasion. Schlesinger lays out the case against the invasion, despite the fact that it was by then known to be at least in the planning stages. He concludes that "we might be able to make some diplomatic capital out of the abandonment [of the operation]. We might have [Ambassador] Thompson say to Khrushchev, for example, that we have discouraged an invasion of Cuba. That this shows our genuine desire to compose differences; but that K. should tell his friend to behave, because our patience is not inexhaustible and we cannot hope to restrain the Cuban patriots indefinitely." Memo, Schlesinger to Kennedy, 5 April 1961, President's Office Files, Countries Series, Cuba, Security, 1961 (Secret), JFK Library; published in Foreign Relations of the United States 1961-1963, vol. 10, Cuba, 1961-1962 (Washington, DC: Department of State), item 81.

<sup>44</sup> "The Nation," Time (28 April 1961), 12.

<sup>45</sup> Holmes Alexander, "Kennedy Address to the Editors Raises Some Disturbing Questions," Los Angeles Times (27 April 1961), sec. 3, p. 5.

- 
- <sup>46</sup> Alexander, "Kennedy Address to the Editors," 5.
- <sup>47</sup> Robert Healy, "Kennedy Now Determined Castro to Go," Boston Globe (21 April 1961), 1.
- <sup>48</sup> "The Nation," Time (28 April 1961), 11.
- <sup>49</sup> Robert Healy, "Kennedy Draws the Line . . . the Fighting Speech," Boston Globe (21 April 1961), 1.
- <sup>50</sup> "Usefulness of the Cuban Failure," Los Angeles Times (23 April 1961), sec. C, p. 3.
- <sup>51</sup> John Hightower, "Kennedy's New Frontier Has Grim Awakening," Los Angeles Times (30 April 1961), sec. D, p. 1.
- <sup>52</sup> "The Periscope," Newsweek (8 May 1961), 21.
- <sup>53</sup> "The Periscope," Newsweek (1 May 1961), 17.
- <sup>54</sup> John F. Kennedy, "The President's News Conference of April 21, 1961," Public Papers of the Presidents, (1961), 312-313.
- <sup>55</sup> "Lessons to Learn," Boston Globe (22 April 1961), 4.
- <sup>56</sup> Don Shannon, "Kennedy Assumes Full Blame in Cuba Fiasco," Los Angeles Times (25 April 1961), sec. 1, p. 1.
- <sup>57</sup> Don Shannon, "Kennedy and Eisenhower Meet Today," Los Angeles Times (22 April 1961), 1.
- <sup>58</sup> "President on Cuba: I'm Responsible," Boston Globe (25 April 1961), 1.
- <sup>59</sup> "Kennedy Shoulders It All," Boston Globe (25 April 1961), 10.
- <sup>60</sup> Robert T. Hartmann, "The Editors Meet Him Again," Los Angeles Times (21 April 1961), sec. 3, p. 4.
- <sup>61</sup> Robert T. Hartmann, "Cuban Fiasco Viewed as Bipartisan Blunder; But Kennedy Takes Full Responsibility for Plan Initiated Under Eisenhower," Los Angeles Times (23 April 1961), 1.
- <sup>62</sup> Robert T. Hartmann, Palace Politics: An Inside Account (New York: McGraw Hill, 1980).



---

<sup>63</sup> Carroll Kilpatrick, "Kennedy Asks Brother, Sorensen to Help Him Out on Foreign Policy," Washington Post (27 April 1961), A2. See also Richard Neustadt, Presidential Power (New York: Wiley, 1960).