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This journal invites historians to submit essays. They may be original ones written specifically for this journal, or they may be from material that the authors already have (such as classroom lectures, AJHA presidential addresses, etc.).

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To submit an essay for consideration, email a Word file to the editor at wmdsloan@gmail.com

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Bias

By Wm. David Sloan ©

Sloan

Nothing brings out partisanship more than a presidential campaign, and perhaps nothing does more than a presidential campaign to reveal the bias of historians. Bias is one of the greatest dangers historians confront. Because it also is ever-present, historians must make Herculean efforts to recognize it and keep it under control.

Every human is biased on most matters. Fortunately, many of our biases are good. We tend to favor — when we are in our better moments — altruism over avarice, kindness over malevolence, justice over corruption, compassion over cruelty, generosity over stinginess, sevice over selfishness, honesty over deceitfulness, democracy over despotism.... The list could go on and on. They are biases that most people in our time and culture can agree on. They fall within the mainstream of our values.

It is no wrong for the historian to hold such biases. They reflect the best of humanity.

The most dangerous biases are those we hold strongly about things that don't fall so neatly into right and wrong — the ones on which good people honestly disagree, such as whether they are Yankees or Dodgers

Wm. David Sloan, a professor emeritus from the University of Alabama, is the author/editor of a number of books and is a recipient of the American Journalism Historians Association's Kobre Award for lifetime achievement.

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fans, lovers of cats or of dogs, Methodists or Presbyterians, Republicans or Democrats....

Presidential elections, even though in their heat seeming akin to war, provide an example of such disagreement. Since America's first one, in 1788, the winning candidate has received, on average, approximately 53.8% of the popular vote to the loser's 46.2%. Since 1988 the numbers have been similar. The winner has averaged about 52.3%, and the loser about 47.7%. With American voters so evenly divided, a fair historian will not allow bias on such a matter.

Nevertheless, partisan bias is a lurking threat. It may be the most dangerous because it is so widespread and we can so easily adopt it. In fact, partisans who claim to be historians will even offer arguments to justify their bias. The argument typically goes something like this: "I support the side I do because it is the better one." Paraphrased: "My bias is good because it favors my side."

Because people can hold partisan views with unmatched ardor, they find it impossible to admit that people on the opposing side might be reasonable and well intentioned. Zealous Republicans call Democrats demagogues, and zealous Democrats call Republicans racists.

If you want to get a taste of how biased people can be — including some JMC historians — check out Facebook. People whom you may know as reasonable in normal life can be downright rabid when it comes to partisan politics. They could make you think that anyone who favors the other presidential candidate is really Satan disguised as a voter. (Personally, I prefer to remain blissfully ignorant of the rantings of some of my best friends, and so until November 9 I've Facebook-unfriended several of them.)

Avoiding such bias is, most basically, simply a matter of respecting other people and their values. It is an outlook that at one time we held in high regard. Some still do.

Overcoming such bias, though, is not easy. It is difficult for any of

us, when we know we are absolutely right and the other side appallingly wrong, to accept the other side's views and motivations as being just as reasonable and justifiable as our own. So it is hard to imagine that, when partisan zealots take up the mantle of historian, they magically transform into fair-minded observers. Instead, anything they write that even slightly touches on politics becomes suspect.

Perhaps none of you reading these lines is a zealous partisan. As you know, in our partisan culture, it is easy to take sides. When zealots are screaming on each side, remaining unbiased takes self-control. But one must decide whether to be a partisan or a historian.

Since we are nearing the conclusion of another American presidential campaign, this issue of *Historiography* seems a particularly good time for our lead essay. It investigates the role of the media in reflecting and setting our nation's political values. It was originally published in the book *The Significance of the Media in American History* in 1994. The goal of the book was to convince historians that the media have been important to the history of our country and need to be studied. The author of the essay was Hiley Ward. Since he died in 2009 — of leukemia following a long bout with Parkinson's — it can be said truly that his death left a void that has been hard to fill. He had served on the Board of Directors of the American Journalism Historians Association and in 1999 had received the AJHA's Kobre Award for Lifetime Achievement. He taught at Mankato (Minnesota) State and then at Wichita State University before joining the faculty at Temple University, from where he retired and was named an emeritus professor. Before going into the professorate, he had worked as a religion reporter and editor and in 1967 was part of the reporting team at the *Detroit Free Press* that won the Pulitzer Prize for its coverage of riots in the city. During his newspaper career he also had served as national president of the Religion Newswriters Association and reported on religious stories around the world, includ-

ing events in the Middle East and the Vatican Councils in Rome in the 1960s. With his undergraduate and masters studies in philosophy and theology, he was at home in the practical work of journalism as well as areas of study requiring analytical and sometimes abstract thinking. He had received his ph.d. in journalism and history from the University of Minnesota, and once he went into teaching, he became a prolific scholarly author and an energetic advocate of journalism history. He wrote fifteen books, but in JMC history he had his greatest impact with a publication, *Media History Digest*, that emphasized sound scholarship while appealing to working journalists as well as to academicians. He had convinced the professional magazine *Editor & Publisher* to underwrite *Media History Digest.* It published its first issue in 1981, and he served as editor for the entire seven years of its life.

Following Hiley's essay, we are pleased to publish one by Prof. Jean Palmegiano focusing on study in the emerging history field of transnational journalism. She is one of the leading figures in the field, and the AJHA this year offered at its national conference, for the first time, the "Jean Palmegiano Award" for the best research paper on transnational journalism history. For our Kobre Award interview, Prof. David Abrahamson graciously consented to do our Q&A. Adding to the political content of this issue, Mark Feldstein did our interview for his prize-winning book, *Poisoning the Press: Richard Nixon, Jack Anderson, and the Rise of Washington's Scandal Culture*.

As always, we think you will find the articles in this issue of *Historiography* well worth your reading time.

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The Media and Political Values

By Hiley H. Ward ©

Ward

If we try to justify the study of media history, it is important to recognize the media's contributions in a variety of areas. One of them is the role that the media play in helping to determine political values. That role was no less significant in America's past than it has today. If we wish to understand how the media today help to define our nation's political values, we need to understand history.

Daily rituals for political and social life derive from a ranking of values. Whether one goes to a church or a bowling alley or a movie on a certain evening will depend on a ranking of values. For example, entertainment values might win out over religious values or vice versa. Media as sources of information, opinion, and advice contribute to the ranking of values.

The media role in setting — and reflecting — values is never more evident than in the political process, especially during presidential campaigns. In such durations, media attach themselves to certain themes — little or small — and produce variations of their own and repeat them. In fact, the media create their own value system.

Hiley Ward (1929-2009) was a reporter, historian, and book author. For many years, he taught at Temple University, where he was named an emeritus professor upon retirement. He received the Kobre Award for lifetime achievement from the American Journalism Historians Association in 1999.

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Media give life to instrumental and lower intrinsic values that are normally not scaled on a high level in various ordering of values. And these values are interrelated. The media, for instance, pay heed to instrumental values of (1) paucity (poverty, low beginnings, humble origins, deprivation, being an underdog) and (2) alienation (myth of the outsider, the dispossessed, the excluded). Their value comes in an association. The humble, unknown individual is thrown into a society and must struggle. He or she achieves — as a survivor and/or as a deliverer, Moses; avatar or savior, Jesus; one of great political rank, as Napoleon or Abraham Lincoln.

Such achievement out of nowhere involves conflict, the oppression from society (Moses, badgered in Egypt; Jesus in Judaea; emperors and politicians, faced off with political and ideological rivals). The media continue to put value on the role of the humble and the outsider who, in the narrative orientation of media, are tried by conflict. The media are on the side of the underdog. Once the underdog emerges, media are likely to scout out other candidates for underdog status. That is why candidates in recent campaigns and at other times have declined to boast very loudly about wearing the mantle of front-runner, knowing the course in a "bounce" easily shifts to the perceived underdog.

Never more clearly than in the last decade of the twentieth century was the role of outsider paramount, from the entry into the political arena in 1992 of anti-Washington Ross Perot; the emergence of westerner and southerner Bill Clinton, against a besieged, well-born president attempting to come back from somewhere out there where the public had relegated him. Many modern politicians — notably Democrats Harry Truman and Jimmy Carter and Republican Dwight Eisenhower — relished roles of Washington outsiders. Hard-pressed President George Bush sought to compare himself to Truman in an attempt to stay politically alive. Yet the outsider from Arkansas won. The media kindle Horatio Alger, rag-to-riches myths, divine the outsider, and rel-

ish conflict, even violence (demonstrations, riots), the stuff that news stories are made of.

Modern media offer their own classification of values, even turning topsy-turvy some traditional rankings. What are values? To attempt to define them is an invitation to ranking. They also appear in classifications that can also be ranked. Most elementary they suggest a dichotomy — something that has immediate worth, bringing present gratification, and second, something that is a goal to be achieved, or a standard to be replicated, or a principle to be embodied.

Value can be described as anything that has some worth. On the lower level, a bargain sale has its worth. You save money. On the other hand, security and happiness in old age may prove to be of more worth than an immediate comfort; so one invests in pensions, etc. Certainly those who hold to a Deity-directed and God-settled course of history will see assurances of salvation and participation in some unique God-plan as more worth than the present promises.

Archie J. Bahm, professor of philosophy at the University of New Mexico, has cited the classical distinction between "instrumental values" and "intrinsic values." That is, "any fact, whether in my experience or out of it, which tends to produce the experience of intrinsic value" is an instrumental value, while "whatever is desired or enjoyed for its own sake, as an end in 'itself' is an intrinsic value."[1]

While value scholar Milton Rokeach regards values as "multifaceted standards that guide conduct in a variety of ways,"[2] he also stratifies them into two classes. He offers eighteen "instrumental" and eighteen "terminal" values — example: being ambitious (hard-working, aspiring) is an instrumental value, while its coordinate as an intrinsic value is a comfortable life (a "prosperous life").[3] Earlier Edgar Sheffield Brightman separated values into "(1) purely instrumental values — including natural values (forces of nature, life, light, etc.) and economic values; (2) lower intrinsic values — including bodily values (good

health, etc.), recreational values (satisfaction from play, humor, etc.) and work values; and (3) higher intrinsic values — including social values (value experience through sharing, etc.), character values, aesthetic values, intellectual values and religious values (an encompassing, coalescing value)."[4]

Media, preoccupied with processes and techniques, rather than endowing certain ends, invert the instrumental and intrinsic ranking, seemingly putting their own stamp of approval on certain instrumental or lower intrinsic values for their own sake. The humorous article or sidebar or box in newspapers, for instance, exists for no higher reason than to induce an instant laugh and "moment of satisfaction." Some who would construct media codes would posit considerable importance in the idea of humor itself, elevating it to higher intrinsic or near higher intrinsic "status."[5] In a journalistic code it is also possible to coalesce the intrinsic values into one or several axioms, such as "Do that which is human, whether to protect or to expose, never forgetting acts of charity."[6] Some of the great codes come down to this: consider the Golden Rule found in several religions — treat others as you would want to be treated; or consider what Jesus did: summarize all the commandments into two, loving God and fellow "humankind."[7] But implicit even in these high idealistic thematic all-purpose guidelines that elevate the benefit of humanity as primary is the value of compassion for the down-and-outer — the outsider.

The media preoccupation with the underdog and outsider certainly had roots in the colonial press. Consider the Bradfords and Franklins and John Peter Zenger as they challenged authority, or consider the blossoming of full-scale revolution against the British king. The development of party politics assured the perpetuation of the underdog and outsider perspectives, prescribed by perennial conflict. Remember the elections of 1824 — when challenger Andrew Jackson, with a rough frontier reputation (somewhat fictitious), almost won — and of 1828,

when Jackson won and, accompanied by his "frontier" buddies, moved into the seat of power.

The role of the media setting the values through political reporting was certainly evident in the first real clash of political parties, the Democrats and Whigs, in the 1830s and '40s. Established then were symbolic values that persist and shape political activity today. Particularly out of the image-creating campaign of 1840 — with all of its emphasis on posturing candidates in conflict and bestowing mantles on the anointed — came values asserted in future elections.

Image Building in the 1840 Log Cabin Campaign

The media's heightened role in imaging the value or worth of the humble and the outsider — becoming susceptible to the professional mythmakers — came full bloom in the election of 1840. William Henry Harrison, a washed-up general with a somewhat undistinguished record, was presented in the media as coming from humble, "log-cabin" origins and as an outsider to Washington. The media had found two important themes they could "value" and turn to in the ensuing years: The preoccupation with (1) the humble-origin theme, the *underdog*, and (2) the *outsider*, in conflict with the rich and privileged, would provide direction. Even in an aristocratic privileged press, such paradigms by which to gauge crimes, social ills and presidential politics would prevail. Andrew Jackson, with his "common man" theme, and William Henry Harrison, with the log-cabin and hard cider slogans, generated not only a *modus vivendi* of conducting politics but essential themes of value for today's media.

To get elected in 1840, a candidate had to be bigger than life. He still had to run in the image of the great hero, Andrew Jackson, the victor of the War of 1812 and a man identified with the rigor and strength of the frontier.

The new candidate had to be an astute politician with a knack for knowing when to lunge forth or when to lay back and let the people come to him. He would ride in on a wave of discontent, just as Jackson capitalized on the discontent with the unpopular John Quincy Adams, who held the press at bay and was virtually unconcerned with image making.

The new president elected in 1840 would also likely be one who countered the aristocratic, high-handed image of Jackson's hand-picked successor, Democrat Martin Van Buren, who had won in 1836. Van Buren's administration was cursed largely by an economic panic started in 1837. Yet the successful candidate in 1840 would be a frontier hero, a "pseudo-Crockett," as Bernard A. Weisberger put it, filling in for the logical missing frontier candidate (Davy Crockett had failed in a bid for Congress in 1834 and perished at the Alamo in 1836).[8]

William Henry Harrison

The man to fit the bill was near at hand. Aging General William Henry Harrison, largely retired at his farm in North Bend, Ohio, sixteen miles west of Cincinnati, had spent much of his life on the frontier, was a war hero, made friends easily, was identified with the fresh new party, the Whigs, and was free of the accumulated baggage of Jackson and Van Buren.

Harrison came from a rich Virginia family. His father, Benjamin Harrison V, was a signer of the Declaration of Independence. The young Harrison studied medicine with the distinguished Benjamin Rush but soon opted for the glamour of the military, using his connections to be appointed an officer. He served under General Anthony Wayne in the battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794 at Maumee, Ohio, against an Indian confederacy. Then Harrison led troops victoriously against Indians at Tippecanoe Creek near Lafayette, Indiana, in 1811. During the War of

1812, he crushed once and for all Tecumseh's Indian confederacy at the Battle of the Thames (October 5, 1813) in Ontario — a victory over a sizable force of British troops and Indians.

Harrison had a considerable career in government, first as administrator of the Northwest Territory and then as governor of the newly created Indiana Territory for over ten years. Indicative of his personality, Harrison, seeing himself as a kind of benign but stern father-God figure, patronized the Indians. He always referred to them, in communication after communication, as "My Children" — "My Children, what is it you wish for?" he wrote in a message to the chiefs and warriors of the Kickapoo tribe. "Have I not often told you that you should inform me of all your grievances, and that you would never apply to your father in vain? My Children, be wise; do not follow the advice of those who would lead you to destruction...."[9]

And Harrison did not rock the boat on slavery, when a select committee at a convention of the Indiana Territory called for Article Six of a compact between the U.S. government and the Territory be suspended. The article banned slavery from the Territory; its suspension would encourage entrepreneurs with slaves to stay in the Indiana Territory instead of heading south and west. Harrison endorsed the action of the convention which called for the suspension of the ban for ten years, thus "requesting the gates be open for slavery for that period."[10] In fact, in the presidential campaign, some papers regarded Harrison as one who would deny full rights to blacks, even free blacks. One reason given for voting for Harrison by the *Sangamo Journal*, of Springfield, Ill., was Van Buren's "love for Free Negroes." As an example, the paper cited Van Buren's "official sanction to the measure" of letting "two Negroes testify against a white officer in a court martial trial."[11]

Harrison served in the Ohio Senate and the U.S. Senate. As the first U.S. minister to Colombia, under President Jackson, Harrison had foreign experience, but his taking sides — criticizing the Colombian liber-

ator Simón Bolivár for despotic leanings — prompted his recall.

Yet he would need something more than a record to run for president, which he did the first time in 1836 and lost. His chief detractor, former president John Quincy Adams, saw him, as did others, as fluff. In the campaign, Adams observed that, among the challengers, "White [Hugh Lawson White of Tennessee, a disgruntled former Jackson supporter] and Harrison are now the golden calves of the people, and their dull sayings are repeated for wit, and their grave inanity is passed off for wisdom."[12] Adams did not change his mind much in 1840 when he summed up his views of Harrison: "His present popularity is all artificial. There is little confidence in his talents or his firmness."[13]

In 1840, Harrison waited, like the Roman Cincinnatus at his plow, ready to be summoned to lead his nation from suppression. He was now merely a clerk of the Court of Common Pleas in Hamilton County as he enjoyed the good life in the magnificent mansion built around a four-room cabin he had bought from his father-in-law in 1796.[14] He fit the Whig perennial stance of an underdog. "Whig candidates were often underdogs, usually running against Democratic incumbents," said campaign chronicler Keith Melder. "And Whigs tended to nominate leaders not closely identified with partisanship, such as old generals."[15]

Building the Log-Cabin Image

The rural outsider image — out of the loop of Washington and eastern bureaucracy and aristocracy — was cultivated by an "interview" with Harrison, in fact one of the earliest newspaper interviews on record. The lengthy interview, most of it presented indirectly, as it appeared in the *Sangamo Journal*, reprinted from the *New York Express*, reflected the impressions of the unnamed writer. It said in part:

> It has been among the happiest visits of my life.... His rural

> dwelling, the antique sideboard, the Lord's Prayer in its time worn frame, the plain and the home wrought carpet, the spacious fireplace, tended to by himself, and kindled in the morning always by his own hand; the rustic, but generous and abundant face, what a contrast all this with the teeming and advancing luxury of our day![16]

There were still the battles and skirmishes to be fought figuratively with the hordes of editors cultivated by the media-conscious Jackson, who through his spoils system had rewarded editors in virtually all the states. Jackson's devotee Francis Blair was still at *The Globe* (Washington) and Jackson's closest aide, Amos Kendall, was editor of *The Extra Globe* and before the inaugural in 1841 had launched the sixteen-page fortnightly *Kendall's Expositor*. Blair and Kendall together captained Democratic forces to re-elect Van Buren. Being an underdog and outsider forced Harrison into an aggressive mode despite his moderate countenance. Harrison became the first presidential candidate "to go out on the stump in his own behalf," making twenty-three speeches (all in Ohio), according to Melder.[17]

Harrison had the backing of the influential Thurlow Weed and his Whig-bent organ, the Albany (N.Y.) *Journal*. But Harrison also had a youthful, ambitious moon-faced newcomer, Horace Greeley. Fresh out of the print-shop, Greeley, the future founder of the *New York Tribune*, listened to Weed and Weed's ally, Gov. William H. Seward of New York, and launched the *Log Cabin*, a full-size weekly paper devoted unashamedly to fostering the presidential bid of General Harrison in 1840. Much of Greeley's space was given to debunking at length any rumor or criticism belittling the general. For example, in a May 1840 issue, the first item led off with the head, "Slanders of Gen. Harrison Refuted," with the subhead, "No. 1. Gen. Harrison voted to sell white man into slavery for debt."[18] There also were rumors that the general was never much of a soldier, and Greeley had his responses. Greeley

carried splendid woodcuts of the general and detailed narratives of the general's military crusades against the Indians. And Greeley curiously included songs — words with music — praising the general.

Some fifteen songs — with actual musical notes — were printed during the campaign by the *Log Cabin*. Most notable was the one dedicated to the familiar political slogan about the general and his running mate, "Tippecanoe and Tyler, Too."[19]

> What has caused this great
> commotion, motion, motion,
> Our Country through!
> It is the Ball a rolling on,
> For Tippecanoe and Tyler too —
> Tippecanoe and Tyler too,
> And with them we'll beat little Van,
> Van, Van is a used up man,
> And with them we'll beat little Van.

And there are fifteen more stanzas, all printed in Greeley's *Log Cabin*:

> So the marching of mighty waters,
> waters, waters,
> On it will go,
> And of course will clear the way
> For Tippecanoe [etc. etc.].

Tippecanoe was more than a symbol of a battle once fought and won. As a small creek near Lafayette and linked with other creeks in Indiana, it was a symbol of the west and the newness of the frontier. In its hyperbole calling for political battling for Harrison, the *Sangamo Journal* picked up on the freshness and invincibility of the nation's trib-

utaries (creeks, crooks), such as Tippecanoe, resounding: "Brother Whigs! Gird on your armor for the contest! Pass the watch-word to our friends up the crooks, down the ravines, far in the distant prairies, every where! Let there be one universal rising for the country...."[20]

John Tyler, a less pleasant man, was a southerner brought on to give balance to the ticket. Curiously, Van Buren's vice president, Richard Johnson, was a rugged, woodsy war hero whose five scars from bullet wounds and a shattered hand made Harrison look as if he had only been to Sunday school picnics. Johnson, while serving under Harrison, was credited (though incorrectly) with killing the Indian war chief Tecumseh. Nicknamed "Rumpsey Dumpsey," Johnson was conspicuous by his style. He wore bright red vests, and he was a thunderous orator. He once lived with a young black woman.

While some critics called Harrison the "Petticoat General," General Jackson weighed in simply, saying that Harrison never had "the qualities befitting a commander of an army."[21] Yet letters to him from high officials during his tenure on the frontier praised him for his heroism and diligence. A book prepared by a Harrison committee for Cincinnati and Louisville early in the election year of 1840 sought to present him as a man of sacrifice: "Throughout the whole of his military campaigns, he shared with his soldiers in all their fatigues, dangers, and privations. We were lately assured, by a member of his military family in the campaign of 1813, that the table of the commander-in-chief was often not as well supplied with provisions, as those of the common soldiers."[22]

Harrison got some help from a little-known plainsman, Abraham Lincoln. At thirty-one, Lincoln himself, running for the Illinois House of Representatives, stumped the state for the "log cabin" candidate. In one encounter, Lincoln, suspecting his Democrat opponent in a debate of being as vain and pompous as Van Buren, reached over and tore open the Democrat's coat, showing beneath it ruffled silk and velvet vest and a gold watch and chain. Lincoln went on to joke about his own days

growing up in "buckskin."[23]

Harrison's supporters not only knew how to capitalize on the foibles of an opponent, but also how to turn around a nasty comment into a cheerful slogan on the general's behalf.

An Image-Based Campaign

When Harrison began to emerge as a possibility over perennial Whig candidate Henry Clay for the nomination, Clay's followers wondered aloud how could they get rid of Harrison. Jokingly, a reporter, John de Ziska of the *Baltimore Republican*, suggested that the way was to "give him a barrel of hard cider, and settle a pension of two thousand a year on him, and my word for it, he will sit the remainder of his days in his log cabin by the side of a 'sea coal' fire, and study moral philosophy."[24]

A month later the article was remembered when two Harrison men, a banker and a Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, editor, met to create some symbols for the Harrison campaign. One of them suggested that "passion and prejudice, properly aroused and directed, would do about as well as principle and reason in a party contest."[25] They decided that the aristocratic-born Harrison would be a "log-cabin" candidate. They drew up a campaign picture of a log cabin which had a coonskin nailed to the wall and nearby were a woodpile and a cider barrel. Pro-Harrison newspapers alternated different Log Cabin drawings on their front pages. The *Sangamo Journal* ran one with a big flag waving over the log cabin; another, with a free-standing flagpole and a gentleman sitting by a barrel marked "hard cider"; another showed an officer (general) welcoming a distinguished visitor in long coat-tails to a cabin with the "hard cider" barrel by the door.

Log cabins were raised across the country as Harrison headquarters; hard cider flowed at picnics and other occasions, courtesy of the followers of "Old Tip," or "Old Tipler," as some critics now began to call

him.

When Old Tip showed up at Fort Meigs, Ohio, for a rally in a six-city Ohio swing, he faced a tidal wave of 40,000 persons. In his remarks — "Harrison's Great Speech," as the Toledo *Blade* and historical journals called it — the candidate said the office should seek the man, that Republican rule should be restored, and that "our rulers, fellow citizens, must be watched. Power is insinuating...."[26] The report of the Harrison tour tells of the gaiety at one stop:

> At Germantown there were unique preparations for his reception. Among the features were thirteen lads, of whom the writer was one, representing the thirteen original states. These were dressed in blue bunting shirts with coonskin caps, and sang campaign songs from the Log Cabin Song Book.... Another ornamented wagon containing a number of girls dressed in white, and these represented the stars in the Union at that time.[27]

Francis Blair, Jackson's and Van Buren's man at the *Washington Globe*, saw the Whig campaign, particularly as it was wrapped in Harrison's alleged military achievements, as phony. Said the *Globe*: "According to their Jesuitical morality, any means will sanctify a change in the government, and make it meritorious.... The revelations [concerning questions about Harrison's military valor] that have lately appeared have fastened on the Harrison party a premeditated system of political fraud that reaches from Congress to a felon's jail...." And the paper further argued that a policy that embraced both keeping hands off and calling for reform was contradictory.[28]

Because of his age — sixty-seven in 1840 — and his delicate personality, "Old Tip" was also often called "Granny" by his critics. Van Buren, too, picked up a nickname from his followers: "O.K." for Old Kinderhook, in reference to his New York hometown. However, Whig edi-

tors switched this to "K.O.," "Kicked Out."

The Whig strategy was to avoid taking stands on any issue, for to do so would have fractionalized the party. Whigs would rely strictly on image, the compound values of (1) the underdog, the people's choice, and (2) the outsider.

Some characterized "Tip's" running mate "Ty" as a Democrat. The Whig Party with which the two were running from 1836 on was, as historian Thomas Bailey put it, "a hodgepodge of malcontents — 'an organized incompatibility.'" Their guiding star, he said, was opportunism. "Under the same political roof were gathered all kinds of Whigs; protectionists and free-traders, Southern nullifiers and Northern nationalists, rich Southern planters and poor Northern farmers."[29] Despite developing a common-folk campaign, "Whig leaders were, in general," says Weisberger, "traditionalists, tightly tied to the biggest landholders, factory owners, merchants, and bankers of the country. They took a dim view (much like the framers of the Constitution) of the excesses of popular democracy."[30] Norma Lois Peterson notes the Whigs were "fundamentally a party of big business in the North and large plantation owners in the South, a party that did not really believe in popular rule or in extending the suffrage to the 'common man,'" a party which "pitched their appeals in this election mainly to the laborer, the farmer, the frontiersman."[31]

Says Lynn L. Marshall: "Whig birth coincided with the crest of a ground swell of social change that would shortly reorganize American life around a proliferating series of specialized, large-scale organizations, flexible, functional, and impersonal."[32] Whigs favored continuity of public servants in government rather than ever changing with the "spoils" system of Andrew Jackson with every shift of the wind. "The Whiggish view looked back to a society embodying the Lockean liberalism of the eighteenth century. In it, all affairs, political or otherwise, moved under the effective control of sagacious men, each within his

own locality sufficiently pre-eminent economically, intellectually, and socially to transcend immediate popular control.... Greatest emphasis was placed upon the liberty of the individual to express himself, if he were able and sufficiently educated...."[33] Slavery was looming as a big issue, and Harrison walked down the middle. The created image around humble values carried him in despite the more sophisticated views of himself and his party.

Image Without Substance

His inaugural speech, while praised by some and worshipped by Greeley, was also savaged and mocked by others. To many, it seemed, Harrison quickly proved to be an empty vessel despite the hype and trumped up glitter of instrumental values as commoner and outsider. "No other inaugural address has been ridiculed in the way that Harrison's has," noted David Durfee. Harrison had come to power fearful of the excesses of power which he felt were practiced by Jackson, Van Buren, and dictator Bolivár in South America. "The address, therefore, emphasizes what he would refrain from doing as President rather than what he would do. Most notable was his declaration that he would not run for reelection in 1844."[34]

Kendall, tongue in cheek, made Harrison out to be a giddy old "granny" whose inaugural substance could be boiled down to some simple statements. Kendall began his coverage of the inaugural speech: "It was our purpose to lay the Inaugural address of the new President before our readers; but we are prevented by its great length. The substance of the document, however, can be compressed into a very narrow compass.... I have been elected President of the United States. I rely on the Almighty to aid me...." And so on, Kendall went, summarizing what he regarded as a vacuous speech.[35]

In New York, the *Herald* gave the one-hour, 9,000-word address a

few good marks but for the most part found it "trash": "...The address is one of the most unevenly composed and written documents that ever came from the brain of a public functionary. Parts of it are most excellent, and other parts of it are most trashy.... The sentences are involved, complicated, and tortuous; they may be contrived to mean anything or nothing. The balderdash about Oliver Cromwell, Caesar, and Bolivár, will elevate the president in the eyes of no one. He does not understand the character of either...."[36]

In that month of March — in the first month and the only month of the Harrison presidency — the newspapers began to hint of the President's illness from pleurisy. Most brushed it off with a paragraph each day. The President began to sink fast on Saturday, April 3; and at 12:30 a.m. on Sunday, the fourth, he passed away.

Most editors expressed sorrow over his death, running black borders on page two where national news was normally carried. In New York, William Cullen Bryant at the *Post* was alone in his contempt for the President, even in death. Bryant mused that he was sorry about Harrison's death "only because he did not live long enough to prove his incapacity for the office of President."[37]

Over at the *Log Cabin*, Greeley wrote about the "painful tidings" from his heart but used the occasion to wonder about the future with the new president, John Tyler — "He has not that tried and proved popularity and strength with the people — his armor has not been tested against the storm of vindictive hostility.... "[38]

Greeley also took the occasion to turn philosophical: "The toils, the anxiety, the importunities, the pomp and ceremony of exalted station in one brief week are exchanged for the perfect, enduring rest and solitude of the narrow house appointed for all the living. How solemn is the thought! how impressive the lesson!... [O]ne month ago who dreamed that he stood on the brink of the grave!

> "Leaves have their time to fall,
> And flowers to wither at the North wind's breath,
> And stars to set — but all,
> Thou hast all seasons for thine own, O Death."

Conclusion

With the death of the "log cabin" president, it is possible to note — but not with a direct connection — one of the fallouts of candidates running and achieving from a humble "log cabin" stance. There is an equalizing — the outsider is as good as the insider. Never is that equality more evident than in the presence of the great Equalizer itself, Death. That is one of the messages of Greeley's eulogy to his fallen hero.

In the early years of American newspapers, glowing tributes and testimonies appeared in the obituaries, no matter how small or insignificant the person. Then developed the standardized news obituary that gave the particulars and deleted hyperbole and elements of eulogy. No doubt something is owed to the urbanization and growing complexity of society, making it difficult to pay particular tribute to every deceased person. But perhaps it is in line with the discussion here to suggest that the positing of value in humility and the underdog and the outsider contributed to the near uniform policy of treating people generally equally — just the facts — in obituaries. The outsiders, recognized for his or her regular achievements, from school teachers to proprietors — have their day on an equal footing in the news.

Another indirect fall-out of the outsider, humble "log cabin" Harrison mentality is a legacy that begat objectivity. As reporters began covering happenings directly — largely with an initiative from the aggressiveness of James Gordon Bennett's early penny paper, the *Herald*, beginning in the mid-1830s — the reporter showed up at news occasions as an outsider. Readers were interested in the facts, and while lit-

erary interests reigned, now the facts as observed, even with attention to literary-making significant details, prevailed.

While objectivity is never entirely free of individual and class bias, nevertheless the myth prevails akin to the general myth, propagated in media campaigns and nursed by media attention. With the media's passion for conflict reporting, and positing and reflecting special value in rags-to-riches and outsider themes, so observable in the Harrison successful campaign, the rituals, fostering an outsider "objectivity," persist today.

War correspondents relish reporting on the "outsiders." William Randolph Hearst's persistence in seeing the war with Spain prosecuted was at least in his view a rising up in defense of the helpless and abused Cubans. Most U.S. entries into wars have been seen as battling back as an outsider, underdog (after the Pearl Harbor attack), or assisting the underdog, as going to the aid of Panama, Kuwait, and the starving in Somalia and eastern Bosnia.

In writing about the wars, the little man and outsider were themes for the great correspondents and photographers. Ernie Pyle in World War II reported from the trenches the stories of the common soldier. Joe Rosenthal is remembered not by photographing generals but battle-weary foot soldiers raising a flag on Iwo Jima. Richard Ben Kramer of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* won a Pulitzer Prize for his foreign reporting in which he paid most of his attention to the conversations of rank and file people in the Near East. Dave Zucchino of the same paper won a Pulitzer Prize for his reporting of the ordinary lives and deaths of people in South Africa. Richard Harding Davis is perhaps the best known of the twentieth-century foreign reporters. As his most recent biographer noted, "In every war he covered, he sided emotionally with the underdogs."[39]

Presidential primaries, such as those during our lifetime, offer a cast of underdog populist candidates, shades of an influential farm re-

bellion of the 1870s and 1880s, and the development of a political populist party in the early 1890s. The *New York Times*, for instance, during the primaries of the spring of 1992, managed, it seemed, to designate every Democratic party contender as a populist; and the role of focus groups made up of average Americans to determine policy and opinion for candidates and poll takers was largely in play.[40]

But the *Times* did not forget William Henry Harrison in 1992. A discussion headlined "Tips Not Needed if Born in Log Cabin," besides offering strategies for insiders, made points, such as, "Because they have been out, women are in."[41] The media are quick to note the roles of the humble, the outsider, and underdog and draw a page from the image-creating campaign of the otherwise silent William Henry Harrison. From Greeley's bleating excesses in the *Log Cabin* in support of Harrison to other Whig papers, even critical non-Harrison papers, to today, media have helped to elevate certain instrumental values to a higher pedestal, namely the values of log-cabin, humble origins (the common person) and the frontiersperson (or at least an inhabitant of recent frontier territory) who battles with the insider. Such selective values were to go on to play a role in sorting out the news, reporting the news, and formatting and illustrating the news. The sense of drama and conflict — the little person pitted against the bigger person, the disadvantaged against the advantaged, the outsider against the insider — became the basis for a news formula and a validation of a free non-authoritarian press.

NOTES

[1] Archie J. Bahm, "What Is Religion?" unpublished manuscript. See also Archie J. Bahm, "How Intrinsic Values Interdepend," in *Human Values and Natural Science*, eds. Ervin Lazzlo and Wilbur James (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1970), 237.

[2] Milton Rokeach, *The Nature of Human Values* (New York: Free Press, 1973), 13.

[3] Ibid., 8.

[4] Edgar Sheffield Brightman, *A Philosophy of Religion* (c. 1940; reprint ed., New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1947), 94-100.

[5] Hiley H. Ward, *Reporting in Depth* (Mountain View, Calif.: Mayfield, 1991), 412.

[6] Hiley H. Ward, *Professional Newswriting* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 534.

[7] Matthew 22: 37-40.

[8] Bernard A. Weisberger, "Whangdoodling," *American Heritage*, February 1989, 24.

[9] William Henry Harrison, "Governor and Commander in Chief of the Indiana Territory, and Superintendent of Indian Affairs, to his Children, the Chiefs and Warriors of the Kickapoo tribe," message, July 1806, in *Governors Messages and Letters: Messages and Letters of William Henry Harrison*, 2 vols., ed. Logan Esarey (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1922), 1:193.

[10] William Henry Harrison, as "President and Delegate from the County of Knox," reporting the agreement on a "Resolution of Vincennes Convention," 25 December 1802, ibid., 1:61.

[11] "Sketches of the Life of Mr. Van Buren," *Sangamo Journal*, Springfield, Ill., 10 July 1840.

[12] Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1876), 11 November 1836, 9: 312.

[13] Ibid., 2 December 1840, 10: 366.

[14] For Harrison's life story, see Dorothy Goebel, *William Henry Harrison; A Political Biography* (Indianapolis: Historical Bureau of the Indiana Library and Historical Department, 1926), vol. 14; Freeman Cleaves, *Old Tippecanoe* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939).

[15] Keith Melder, *Hail to the Candidate: Presidential Campaigns from Banners to Broadcasts* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 89.

[16] "A Visit to North Bend," reporting from the *New York Express*, in the *Sangamo Journal*, 11 June 1840.

[17] Ibid., 88.

[18] *Log Cabin*, 2 May 1840.

[19] "Tippecanoe and Tyler, Too — The New Whig Song, and Chorus, Arranged for The Log Cabin," in the *Log Cabin*, 26 September 1840.

[20] *Sangamo Journal*, 20 December 1839.

[21] See Robert Gray Gunderson's *The Log Cabin Campaign* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1957), citing various newspapers, among them the *Richmond Enquirer* and the *Logansport* (Ind.)*Herald*.

[22] Charles Stewart Todd, Benjamin Drake, *Sketches of the Civil and Military Services of William Henry Harrison* (Reprint of the 1840 ed. published by U.P. James, Cincinnati; New York: Arno Press, 1975), 161.

[23] Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln — The Prairie Years* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., c. 1958), 1: 236.

[24] *Baltimore Republican*, 11 December 1839.

[25] Gunderson, *The Log Cabin Campaign*, 76.

[26] "Harrison's Great Speech at the Wonderful 'Log Cabin' Campaign Meeting at Ft. Meigs, in 1840," from the *Toledo Blade*, in the *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Quarterly* 17: 2 (April 1908): 206.

[27] Ibid., 207.

[28] *Washington Globe*, 29 October 1840.

[29] Thomas Bailey, *The American Pageant: A History of the Republic* (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1956), 274.

[30] Weisberger, "Whangdoodling," ,24.

[31] Norma Lois Peterson, *The Presidencies of William Henry Harrison and John Tyler* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989), 29.

[32] Lynn L. Marshall, "The Strange Stillbirth of the Whig Party," *American Historical Review* 72 (January 1967): 445.

[33] Ibid., 461.

[34] David A. Durfee, ed., *William Henry Harrison 1773-1841 — John Tyler 1790-1862: Chronology, Documents, Bibliographical Aids* (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Oceana Publications, 1970), William Henry Harrison's "Inaugural Address, March 4, 1841," 35.

[35] *Kendall's Expositor*, 17 March 1841.

[36] *New York Herald*, 5 March 1841.

[37] Gunderson, *The Log Cabin Campaign*, 274, quoting Philip Hone, *Diary*, entry for 6 April 1841, 2: 536.

[38] *Log Cabin*, 10 April 1841.

[39] Arthur Lubow, *The Reporter Who Would Be King: A Biography of Richard Harding Davis* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1992), 144.

[40] See Elizabeth Kolbert, "Test-Marketing a President," *New York Times Magazine*, 30 August 1992, 18.

[41] Sam Roberts, Metro Matters column, "Tips Not Needed if Born in Log Cabin," *New York Times*, 20 April 1992, B3.

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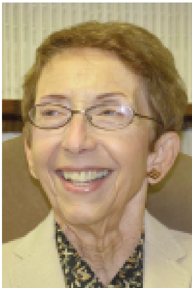
"Doing" Transnational Journalism History

By Eugenia M. Palmegiano ©


Palmegiano

In a 2011 *American Historical Review* (*AHR*) "Conversation: Historical Perspectives on the Circulation of Information," Lisa Gitelman stated that "a lot of scholarly work in media studies … remains profoundly ahistorical." She theorized that this outcome resulted from researchers of media and communication regarding history as but "one item on a menu of possible 'approaches,'" albeit one "welcomed … as an 'empirical' method because of its recourse to archival sources."[1] More recently, David Sloan wrote that "the most effective way to promote the study of history is by historians teaching introductory methodology courses," thereby acquainting students with "the wide range of methods that the mass communication field employs."[2]

These ideas of Gitelman and Sloan got me thinking about "approaches" and "methods," especially transnationalism, a construct particularly helpful in my research on nineteenth-century British journalism at home and abroad. But transnationalism is, of course, applicable to any press as a recent issue of the AJHA *Intelligencer* confirmed. In the summer number, 2016 Blanchard Award winner Vanessa Freije sum-

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marized her investigation of Mexican journalism in the context of Latin American politics and literature. In the same issue, conference reports of the International Association of Literary Journalism (Brazil) and the Communication History Division of the International Communication Association (Japan) also testified to growing interest in transnationalism as another means to understand journalism.[3] Yet for decades historians have struggled to explain its purpose and scope.

In 2000, Mitchell Stephens called for an "international history" of journalism focusing on people or notions that "wander across borders." He argued that journalism was a "cosmopolitan business" but that "narrowly nationalistic journalism histories … obscure crucial connections … and ignore telling comparisons."[4]

In a 2006 *AHR* "Conversation" centering on transnational history, the review's editor acknowledged that it was not new but needed refining. One participant distinguished it from "world" history (a "compendium") and "global" history ("associated with activist scholarship").[5] Echoing Stephens, other contributors depicted transnational study as "inherently comparative," "open to various methodologies" that would lead to extensive analyses of "complex linkages … and actors."[6] Discussants concluded that this mode set its practitioners apart from other social sciences deemed "essentially synchronic," which featured too much talk about framing and not enough empirical probing.[7]

In 2009, Caroline W. Bynum detected an increasing emphasis among historians on "connections and transitions," less on "borders, boundaries and breaks."[8]

In 2012, Lisa A. Lindsay underscored the utility of transnationalism as a comparative tool "putting different spaces in the same chronological frame."[9]

In a 2013 *AHR* Forum on the "Futures of Transnational History" (note the plural), Matthew Pratt Guterl decried the "topical whimsy" of its multiplying digitization projects. Instead, he called for the creation

of “a new set of syntheses” that would produce “new conventions of time and space.”[10]

In 2015, Debra van Tuyll, writing in the AJHA *Intelligencer*, differentiated the transnational approach from the international and described how a transnational focus was useful to deal with specifics in journalism’s past.[11]

In 2016, Lara Putnam reiterated how transnationalism could track the movement of persons, ideas, goods, and technologies as well as the consequences of their interactions, consequences otherwise overlooked. But she shared Guterl’s concern about digitization. Noticing that the press was a “major portion of material digitized,” she conceded that the procedure widened the investigative range permitting “bit players to seize center stage.” Nevertheless, she reminded readers, digitization was only a window to the “why.” If they supposed that digital data substituted for fieldwork, the result would be a “stringing of anecdotes into compelling tales,” the superficial output of scholars who, isolated from reality, would miss the “blind spots” of the intellectual landscape.[12]

All this having been said, let me offer my own take on transnationalism, be it titled methodology, approach, emphasis, frame, construct. I hold that it is essentially comparative but does not neglect the nation. Rather, it prioritizes correlation between states and their inhabitants, correlation that in the case of journalism might include such matters as popular reactions to newspapers, the financial resources to sustain them, equipment transfers, the ambit of press freedom, and the function of the journalist within it. Although the transnational record reveals that journalists frequently adopted each other’s concepts and techniques, it likewise shows that they as readily rejected anything judged unsuitable for their own domain. Yet there is no denying that in their borrowings, journalists provide the historian with ample material on the parallels between themselves and their contemporaries else-

where.

My current research concentrates on British journalists in the long nineteenth century (1815-1914). Chief among their concerns was how the world received their efforts, critical because approval or its opposite influenced status and reward. Hence their primary goal was to define journalism and delineate journalists. Was it a vocation, craft, profession, occupation, or avocation? Was a person born to, apprenticed in, or schooled for this role or was it accidental, incidental? Fortunately for me, in their quest for identity, journalists regularly juxtaposed themselves with colleagues in the Empire, Europe, and the United States. This alignment accommodated numerous subordinate categories, as training, pay, and assignment.

Notwithstanding the worth of such information, transnational comparison of personnel demands more than particulars. It requires familiarity with the environment in which journalists operated. For instance, before 1850 the British routinely tagged as "reporters" men who prefaced successful careers as lawyers and novelists by tedious if well-compensated stints covering Parliament's sessions. By contrast, in the same era, the label in the United States might mean a jack-of-all-trades available for ready cash from any gazette. Milieu was a factor too in British journalists' transnational search for the paradigmatic editor. They examined in person or by post St. Petersburg's puppets and subversives, Sydney's individualists, Rome's religious zealots and republicans, and Cincinnati's secular businessmen. Nonetheless, transnationalism was not invariably so obvious. As Simon J. Potter has pointed out, first generation Australians moving from colony to colony enjoyed geographic mobility. By sending their sons to England to learn "methods of respectable journalism,"[13] fathers subtly confirmed the value of bridging boundaries for the sake of upward social mobility.

As literacy spread and taxes ended after mid-century, British journalists facing an expanding audience looked mainly at their peers in the

United States and France to see how they "instructed and amused," the shorthand phrase for balancing the infamous Victorian press aims of teaching mores to the many and making money for the few. For the most part, the British did not like what they found, either the snappy paragraphs of the American or the romantic *feuilletons* of the Gaul. They deprecated the disengagement of United States' newspapers from partisan politics, considering the shift a threat to sound governance. And they disagreed violently with the French about signature. While Parisians saw it as a road to power and wealth, Londoners believed it undermined the prestige of the editorial "we" with all the persuasiveness the word connoted and created a cult of personality composed of select columnists.

As the century waned, some journalists concluded that with telegraphy's shortened news and steam's accelerated accessibility to it, they could switch from gatherers of information to commentators on it. This utopianism faded quickly once journalists of many breeds realized that the clock, not their endeavors, now drove the successful paper. One thing was clear by 1914; journalists had failed to define the press and identify their place in it. Indeed, as late as 1933 American-born London editor R.D. Blumenfeld was still asking what were journalists and journalism.[14]

The rapidity of this survey surely proves that a sketch is no substitute for an analysis. Although I hope that my synopsis inspires rethinking journalism history more expansively, I recognize that "doing" transnational history has its hazards. In general, applying any construct runs the risk of its being extended too far. In comparative history, the temptation to imagine ties is strong, and in media history, with its breadth, that enticement is even stronger. So I try to base my interpretations on evidence drawn from sundry locales in the same period with differences and resemblances treated equally.

What is the future of transnational history? I contend that the mo-

ment has come to frame journalism horizontally. True, this kind of chronicle is more difficult to write than the linear one our students prefer. However, to my mind, the enterprise is important for two reasons. First, as I have asserted elsewhere, journalism is a major institution in society, one whose history should mirror this station. Further, scrutiny of a variety of communities should expose roots of the transnational terrain of the twenty-first century press — embedded or otherwise.

Ultimately, whatever schematic press historians choose, they must justify why their subject is significant. My response — for the moment — is that journalists have always spread and often shaped ideas for better or worse.

NOTES

[1] Lisa Gitelman, "Conversation: Historical Perspectives on the Circulation of Information," *American Historical Review* 116 (2011): 1402.

[2] Wm. David Sloan "The Only Way to Make History Important," *Historiography in Mass Communication* 2:2 (2016): 2.

[3] Vanessa Freije, *Intelligencer*, Summer 2016: 9, 16-17.

[4] Mitchell Stephens "Great Ideas: A Call for an International History of Journalism," *American Journalism* 17 (2000): 97, 99, 100.

[5] Isabel Hofmeyr, "*AHR* Conversation on Transnational History," *American Historical Review* 111 (2006): 1441, 1443.

[6] Ibid.: Patricia Seed, 1443-44, Hofmeyr, 1443, 1463, and Sven Beckert, 1459.

[7] Ibid.: Beckert, 1446, and Chris Bayly, 1449.

[8] Caroline W. Bynum, "Perspectives, connections, and objects: what's happening in history now?" *Daedalus* 9 (Winter 2009): 80.

[9] Lisa A. Lindsay, "The Appeal of Transnational History," *Perspectives, the American Historical Association Newsmagazine*, December 2012: 49.

[10] Matthew Pratt Guterl, "Futures of Transnational History," *American Historical Review* 118 (2013): 138-39.

[11] Debra van Tuyll, "Scholars focus on journalism that crosses borders," *Intelligencer*, Autumn 2015: 14.

[12] Lara Putnam, "The Transnational and the Text-Searchable: Digitized Sources and the Shadows They Cast," *American Historical Review* 121 (2016): 384, 390-91, 399, 401.

[13] Simon J. Potter, *News and the British World: The Emergence of an Imperial Press System, 1876-1922* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), 16-17, 20.

[14] R.D. Blumenfeld, *The Press in My Time* (London: Rich and Cowan Ltd., 1933), 8.

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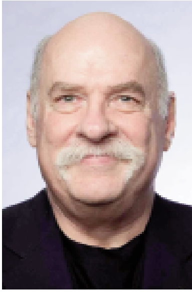
Kobre Award Interview: David Abrahamson


Abrahamson

David Abrahamson received the American Journalism Historians Association's Kobre Award for Lifetime Achievement in 2013. He is the Charles Deering Professor of Teaching Excellence at Northwestern University. He is the author of *Magazine-Made America: The Cultural Transformation of the Postwar Periodical*, editor of *The American Magazine: Research Perspectives and Prospects*, and co-editor of *The Routledge Handbook of Magazine Research*. He is the general editor of the Northwestern University Press "Visions of the American Press" series. Along with the Kobre Award, he has received the AEJMC Magazine Division's Educator of the Year Award (2011).

Q: Tell us a little about your family background — where you were born and grew up, your education, and so forth.

Abrahamson: I was raised in Annapolis, Maryland, by immigrant parents — my father, a Classics professor at St. John's College; my mother, a physician in general practice. It was clear to me, even as a young child, that the household ethos was largely defined by their *Mitteleuropa* (German/Swiss/Austrian/Czech) cultural roots. A key element of this was a profound respect for formal education, and the dinner-table discourse — often enlivened by my parents' colleagues or students — always reinforced the centrality of learning in a life well-lived. As newcomers in an adopted land, however, my parents also realized that they would have to embrace less formal forms of learning, specifically self-

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education through the popular media. As a result, the daily newspaper ceremony (Annapolis's *Evening Capital*, which apocryphally claimed an 18th-Century founding) and the weekend perusal of stacks of popular magazines were treasured family rituals of exploration. With these inferred influences as a starting point, an undergraduate degree in history from Johns Hopkins University, then two years in the service and then a master's degree from the University of California, Berkeley, Graduate School of Journalism led to my career as a magazine editor and writer.

Q: What did you do professionally before going into teaching?

Abrahamson: In the 1970s, I served as the managing editor of *American Boating,* editor of *AutoWeek* and managing editor of *Car and Driver*. Looking to Harold Hayes's *Esquire* for inspiration, *Car and Driver* tried to engage the automobile not as an object of devotion but as a social and cultural phenomenon worthy of serious journalism. After a number of years as an editor, however, the desire to write full-time asserted itself ("Create rather than process," the voice said). For almost two decades thereafter, I contributed articles to a variety of national publications (e.g. *The New York Times Magazine*, *New York, Science*, *Oceans*, etc.). In addition, I had an active editorial consultancy, assisting publications with start-ups and editorial workshops. Clients included many of the major magazine publishing firms, and in some instances, I served as editorial director for substantial new projects.

Q: Where, and what courses, have you taught?

Abrahamson: Though I have always conceived of the role of an editor as teacher, my formal involvement with the academy began in the early 1980s when I was invited to teach writing and editing workshops for an

affiliate of the University of New Hampshire. Subsequent teaching positions included adjunct professorships in the New York University's Departments of Journalism, History and its Center for Publishing, as well as adjunct lectureships at New York's Pratt Institute and the School of Visual Arts. A growing engagement with teaching and research led to a series of career choices. At age 42, I enrolled in the doctoral program in American Civilization at New York University, passed my qualifying exams in Journalism, Culture and Communication and American History, completed my dissertation and was awarded my Ph.D. in 1992. I joined the full-time faculty of Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism in August 1994. I have taught the following courses: Literary Journalism, Magazine Publishing, Magazine Writing, Magazine Editing, Magazine Editing in an International Context, and American History.

Q: Tell us about your background in history — When did you first get interested in historical research? How did your education prepare you to be a historian?

Abrahamson: This may sound terribly pedestrian, but as an adolescent I think it is safe to say that I read at least 50 of the "Landmark" books on American history. I did not, of course, realize how chauvinistic, ethnocentric and incomplete the narratives were; indeed, it is hard to imagine more tainted, bowdlerized versions of American history. But I suppose they were a perfect answer to the historical appetites of a 12-year-old. Becoming a history major as an undergraduate at Johns Hopkins University probably was an important turning point. I am not certain about the institutional background, but in retrospect it is clear that Hopkins in the mid-1960s embarked on a serious effort to establish a prominent history department. The country's best history programs were raided, and the university succeeded in attracting David Herbert

Donald, Alfred Chandler, Stephen Ambrose, Frederick Lane, and Richard Slusser. Similar attention was paid to a History of Science Department that also featured prominent scholars. Now I have to confess that all of this scholarly quality was pretty much lost on me at the time. I took the courses, learned a lot and became curious about the possibility of one day becoming a historian, but I have to admit I could have studied harder and learned more. My undergraduate experience as a history major, however, proved to be a good foundation when in my early forties I enrolled in a doctoral program in American Civilization at New York University. As you know, an Am Civ (American Studies) degree is typically a combination of American history, literature and something else. For me the something else was Neil Postman's program in Culture and Communication, which he always infused with a historical perspective.

Q: Who or what have been the major influences on your historical outlook and work?

Abrahamson: Perhaps the major influence was Paul Baker, a Gilded Age biographical historian, author of the definitive historical biography of Stanford White (*Stanny: The Gilded Life of Stanford White*) and my dissertation director. His outlook, like many involved in American Studies, was explicitly interdisciplinary. As a result, in my own historical work I have always regarded disciplinary boundaries as lightly guarded frontiers. In the same vein, I have always been moved by the work of Vernon Louis Parrington and his foundational American Studies scholarship. I probably ought to also mention Peter Novick's *That Noble Dream*, in my view one of the most insightful books on the challenge of historical objectivity. One last aspect of my historical outlook concerns the importance of economic factors in media history. Though definitive microeconomic data is usually rather hard to obtain,

I think it often influences historical outcomes in ways that are often overlooked.

Q: What are the main areas or ideas on which you concentrate your historical work?

Abrahamson: I have long been most curious about what might be called *sociocultural* history. It might be useful to first declare what this is not: It isn't *socia*l history, which typically focuses on various aspects of class, nor is it *cultural* history, which often is centered on intellectual history or on the arts. Rather, I like to think of the sociocultural as the historical intersection of both institutions and individuals, in both their working life and avocational pursuits. This is admittedly a fairly broad tent, but it allows for a degree of interdisciplinarity that I think is essential. As for my study subject and period, I have always been drawn to the study of the history of the postwar media. An aside: My reference to *postwa*r — that is, World War II — must clearly identify me as an aging Baby Boomer.

Q: Summarize for us the body of work — books, journal articles, and book chapters — that you have done related to history.

Abrahamson: Here's a list of books: editor, *The American Magazine: Research Perspectives and Prospects* (1995); *Magazine-Made America: The Cultural Transformation of the Postwar Periodical* (1996); with Marcia Prior-Miller, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Magazine Research: The Future of the Magazine Form* (2015). I've also done six book chapters and journal articles.

Q: Of the books you have written, from which ones did you get the most satisfaction?

Abrahamson: My most recent book, which I co-edited with Marcia Prior-Miller of Iowa Sate University, was titled the *Routledge Handbook of Magazine Research* and was published in 2015. It is a scholarly anthology of the last two or three decades of scholarly research on magazines, and much of the scholarship was historical in nature. It was quite rewarding to help pull all this material together into a single — and I believe much-needed — single volume. However, if I consider "most satisfaction," it would have to be my *Magazine-Made America: The Cultural Transformation of the Post-War Periodical*. It documents the change in the magazine ecosystem in the middle of the 20th Century when the industry moved from general-interest to special-interest publications. Using the work of Roland Marchand (rather than Frank Luther Mott) as a template, I tried to replace chronicle with a more interpretive approach. I can only hope that others have judged my attempt successful.

Q: We realize that it is difficult to judge one's own work — and that the most accomplished people are often the most modest — but if you had to summarize your most important contributions to the field of JMC history, what would they be?

Abrahamson: In 2003 my institution decided to make a major commitment to its university press, and part of that effort included approaching two of the component schools — the Kellogg School of Management and the Medill School of Journalism — to see if they could come up with series for the press to publish. I had the good fortune to be charged by my dean with the project, and with the help of my late colleague Richard Schwarzlose, we came up with a series titled "Visions of the American Press." It called for 40 to 45 historical volumes, starting with *Aeropagitica* and ending with the rise of the World Wide Web. I believe we are fewer than ten volumes from completing the series, and as its

general editor I've had the great good fortune to be in a position to help empower others; specifically, my fellow media historians. One can never be sure, but I believe the Medill series has made a significant contribution to the history of journalism and mass communication. Further, I must admit that it has been both a labor of love and incredibly satisfying. I do hope that at least some of the series authors would concur.

Q: As you look back over your career, if you could do anything differently, what would it be?

Abrahamson: One of the larger challenges of being a faculty member in the academy is time management. I suspect that I've done at least a passable job of this over the course of my career, but there is this nagging feeling that I could have been more intellectually productive. I doubt this is a unique feeling, but I do wish that, with a bit more rigorous focus, I had been able to write more.

Q: Tell us about your "philosophy of history" (of historical study in general or of JMC history in particular) or what you think are the most important principles for studying history.

Abrahamson: I have often relied on three inter-related avenues of enquiry in my historical work. The first is to always ask what *really* happened. And *why*. Implied in this is a belief that there is a curtain that always must be drawn aside to reveal the wizard. Second, a focus on the history of media *institutions* can reveal much about the nature of the media product. And lastly, I have a certain philosophical comfort in exploring journalism history using an *ethnographic* approach. It can be argued that journalists are hugely tribal, and their rituals and belief systems say much about their values and purposes.

Q: How would you evaluate the quality of work being done today in JMC history — its strengths and weaknesses?

Abrahamson: I am really impressed by the quality of the current scholarship. I have perhaps a skewed perspective as a result of chairing the AJHA Blanchard Prize Committee for the last two decades. Since the vitality of any organism (or institution) can be measured by its reproductive success, seeing the high quality of all these newly minted Ph.D.s should reassure everyone that media history scholarship is enjoying a Golden Age.

Q: What do you think we in JMC history need to be doing to improve the status of JMC history in (1) JMC education and (2) the wider field of history in general?

Abrahamson: I hate to say this, but I often suspect that we may be on the verge of a genuinely *ahistorica*l period. One doesn't need to be dystopian to see evidence of this all around us. We seem to be in an era where the journalism academy — or at least its administrators — are hopelessly enamored with technology and suspicious of any subject not directly related to our students' vocational success. While, for sure, there is an on-going call for historians to mount the barricades, I wonder if we aren't mostly preaching to the choir. I suppose the answer lies in the coming generations of media history scholars. Which means that we seniors must do everything we can to encourage them to find it.

Q: What challenges do you think JMC history faces in the future?

Abrahamson: I suspect that much of the course of any academic discipline is determined by the direction provided by its learned society. In

the case of media history, AJHA is a major actor. The future, therefore, will be determined by the clarity with which professional associations such as AJHA see their role. In a larger frame, the challenges may largely center on the place of the Humanities in the academy. Much of journalism scholarship rushed headlong into what it thought was a safe harbor in social studies. I'm happy to report that media historians have largely avoided the lure of the quantitative paradigms, but if our correct home is the humanities or some version thereof, it would be useful if serious thought were given to the role of humanities, not only in the academy but in society as a whole.

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Book Award Interview: Mark Feldstein

Feldstein

Mark Feldstein won both the American Journalism Historians Association's award for the year's outstanding book and the Frank Luther Mott-Kappa Tau Alpha Research Award for his 2010 book *Poisoning the Press: Richard Nixon, Jack Anderson, and the Rise of Washington's Scandal Culture*. The book was also named one of the best books of the year by the *Washington Post*, *Kansas City Star*, and *Denver Post*. Dr. Feldstein is the Richard Eaton Professor of Broadcast Journalism at the University of Maryland. The following interview has several live links to sources related to his book.

Q: Give us a brief summary of your book.

Feldstein: *Poisoning the Press* recounts the bitter quarter-century battle between Richard Nixon and Jack Anderson, a crusading columnist who was once the nation's most famous and feared investigative reporter — and who had been stalking Nixon long before he entered the White House.

The title has a dual meaning: At its most literal level, it refers to an aborted plot by the Nixon White House to poison Anderson and put a permanent end to his relentless attacks. But it is also a metaphor for the toxic conflict between politicians and the press that the two men symbolized. Both used bribery, blackmail, burglary, forgery, spying and sexual smears in their quest to destroy the other and claim power for themselves.

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Q: How did you get the idea for your book?

Feldstein: During college, I worked in Washington as an intern for Anderson, and then went on to my own career as an investigative reporter, mostly in the nation's capital. So when I left journalism to become a doctoral student, Anderson seemed like a natural topic for my dissertation, and I later expanded it into the book.

Q: Tell us about the research you did for your book — What were your sources, how did you research your book, how long did you spend, and so forth?

Feldstein: I worked on the book off-and-on for ten years, starting in graduate school. At first, I studied secondary sources to learn about the history of investigative journalism and presidential press coverage. Then I dug more deeply into primary source materials.

I reviewed documents in dozens of archives around the country. The most useful proved to be CIA and FBI files (8,000 pages alone from the FBI's dossier on Anderson and his boss, Drew Pearson); Anderson's papers at George Washington University; Pearson's archives at the University of Texas; Stanford's Hoover Institution, which contains papers from several top Nixon advisors; the nonprofit National Security Archive at George Washington University, whose repository of millions of pages of declassified government documents includes transcripts of Henry Kissinger's phone conversations; and the National Archives, which houses Nixon's congressional, vice presidential and presidential records, including the infamous White House tapes that helped topple him from power. These tapes provided the most unvarnished (and incriminating) real-time record of Nixon's battles with Anderson, most of which had never before received attention. (Fewer than 5% of the Nixon tapes have been transcribed, partly because they are so voluminous

— more than 3,000 hours — and partly because of their uneven sound quality, which has frequently produced muffled words and garbled conversations. I tried to minimize this problem by hiring an audio engineer to enhance the acoustics.)

I also conducted more than 200 interviews for my book, including multiple conversations with Anderson and his family and staff, as well as with retired journalists, onetime Nixon aides, and other politicians and government officials.

Q: Besides the sources you used, were there any others you wish you had been able to examine?

Feldstein: You bet. Unfortunately, Nixon's estate and several key federal agencies heavily redacted the records they released, and continue to resist disclosing other documents altogether, citing national security and privacy concerns — despite the fact that virtually all individuals involved died long ago. I filed numerous time-consuming appeals, sometimes with the help of legal counsel, as well as dozens of Freedom of Information Act requests, but many are still wending their way through the federal bureaucracy.

Q. Based on your research for the book, what would you advise other historians in our field about working with sources?

Feldstein: First, don't be shy about reaching out early on to other authors who have already conducted research related to your subject; they often have invaluable knowledge, contacts, advice, and even documents, as I discovered when Prof. Michael Sweeney of Ohio University generously shared 6,000 pages of very useful FBI files, which saved me a significant amount of time and copying fees.

Second, routinely appeal whenever an archive withholds records;

some collections will happily release information to anyone who merely goes to the trouble of filing out the required paperwork.

Third, be both polite and persistent with archivists; they can go out of their way to give you extra help if you spend time cultivating them but you must consistently follow up to make sure your request hasn't fallen through the cracks of their heavy workload.

Finally, prioritize interviews with elderly subjects, something I learned the hard way when people I wanted to interview died before I was able to get to them (or became too forgetful with age to be of much help).

Q: What were the challenges you faced in researching your book?

Feldstein: Besides those mentioned earlier, I encountered a particularly bizarre problem with the Justice Department. A few weeks after Anderson died, during the height of the Bush administration's obsession with government secrecy, two FBI agents came to my house, flashed their badges, and demanded to rifle through the 200 boxes of still-uncatalogued personal papers that I had persuaded Anderson to donate to my university. The FBI said it was investigating classified documents that had been leaked to Anderson years earlier and now wanted to prosecute the leakers under the Espionage Act. Naturally, we resisted this intrusion and made a public fuss about the FBI's heavy-handed move. The story made the front-page of the *New York Times* and led to widespread editorial indignation and Senate hearings at which I testified about the government's overreach. Although I welcomed the attention to my otherwise obscure research in journalism history, the controversy ended my access to Anderson's papers along with the FBI's. All of us had to wait until the archival cataloging was completed several years later, after my book had already been published.

Q: Is it possible to get too close to a research subject? How do historians maintain their neutrality of viewpoint when conducting and interpreting research?

Feldstein: Yes, and this was an issue I had to grapple with because of my previous ties to Anderson and my sympathy for his kind of fearless muckraking, which helped me gain access to my subject in the first place. But I tried to keep an open mind throughout my research and remain receptive to evidence that pointed in different directions than I originally expected. When I uncovered evidence of Anderson's financial corruption and included this in my book, some members of his family felt betrayed. But I like to think that Anderson himself would have understood that a historian's ultimate obligation — like a journalist's — is to the truth.

Q: What new insights does your book provide?

Feldstein: It resurrects Anderson from the dustbin of history and establishes his significance in the evolution of investigative journalism as he upheld an embattled tradition in the lonely years after the muckrakers had vanished, before Watergate helped revive their modern incarnation.

In addition, the blistering battle between Nixon and Anderson symbolized and accelerated the growing conflict between the presidency and the press — one that further intensified in the years afterward — and helps shed light on the rise of Washington's contemporary scandal culture.

Finally, the confrontation between these two ruthlessly driven men is also a fascinating tale in its own right — one that illustrates the true, coarse price of power in politics and journalism alike.

Q: What findings most surprised you?

Feldstein: The pervasiveness of the corruption and abuse of power in postwar Washington — and the fact that I was able to unearth previously hidden scandals decades after the fact in dusty archives and oral history interviews.

Q: What advice would you give to people in our field who are considering doing a book in JMC history?

Feldstein: Choose a subject that has ample yet unexplored primary source material, and that is genuinely interesting and significant; after all, researching and writing a book is an enormous commitment so it had better engage your passion to be worth the effort. Also, in your research if not your writing, pay close attention to chronology because it can often shed light on otherwise seemingly unconnected facts. "When they are arranged in sequence as strictly as possible down to month, week, and even day," writer Barbara Tuchman explained, "cause and effect that may have been previously obscure, will often become clear, like secret ink."

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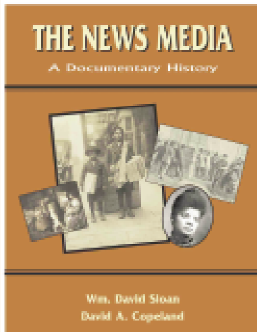

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