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RESISTING A "TREACHEROUS PIETY": ISSUES, IMAGES, AND PUBLIC POLICY DELIBERATION IN PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS

TREVOR PARRY-GILES

In this essay I explore the ways in which the issue/image dichotomy operates as a default criticism of democratic practice by examining its basis in persistent tensions and idealistic theories of democracy. Turning to political practice, I then explore the articulation and value of political image rhetorics offered during the 2008 presidential election, paying particular attention to political advertisements from the Obama and McCain campaigns that appeared after their nominations were assured but before the national nominating conventions. Ultimately, I offer a normative justification of political image rhetorics in campaign discourse as beneficial to deliberation about public policy and political leadership.

On Tuesday, September 2, 2008, at the outset of the hurricane-delayed Republican National Convention, John McCain's campaign manager uttered the equivalent of political blasphemy in a meeting with the editors of the *Washington Post*. "This election is not about issues," Rick Davis

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said, "This election is about a composite view of what people take away from these candidates."¹ Barack Obama's campaign immediately dubbed Davis's comments a gaffe: "We appreciate Senator McCain's campaign manager finally admitting that his campaign is not in fact about the issues the American people care about, which is exactly the kind of cynical old politics people are ready to change."² Of course, as Michael Kinsley once noted, a gaffe is when a politician tells the truth. Davis's comments spoke to a truth about the state of American politics in the early twenty-first century, a politics where images, issues, and public policy deliberation blend and blur often without meaningful or practical distinction.

The reaction that greeted Davis's remarks evidence how uncomfortable contemporary American political culture is about the role and power of political images. Speaking to voters in Pennsylvania, Obama mocked Davis, citing unemployment figures and concluding, "I've got a pretty good personality. But that's not why I'm running for president."³ Former Clinton communications director Howard Wolfson was quoted on Fox News as saying, "The McCain campaign admitted that they don't want to run a campaign on issues. The problem is that voters do want campaigns on issues, and John McCain is on the unpopular side of an awful lot of them."⁴ On CNN, Democratic strategist Donna Brazile attacked Davis's comments, concluding that "I don't think the American people want to see personalities." GOP advertising strategist Alex Castellanos, replying to Brazile, defended Davis: "I think Rick was commenting on what voters are really looking at, and that's the character and strength of a president in uncertain times. I don't think he was trying to say that issues don't count in this election."⁵

Although not the most memorable moment of the 2008 campaign, Davis's comments and the controversy they occasioned nonetheless highlighted a persistent theme in metacampaigning that arises, it seems, every election cycle. The argument is a fairly simple one: American elections, particularly at the presidential level, are dominated by images and personality-based arguments. As a result of this focus, voters are not provided with meaningful public policy discussions upon which they can base their vote. The blame for this debased state of American campaign politics falls on the news media, with its horse race coverage and fixation on polls, or on the campaigns, with their negative commercials and dumbed-down rhetoric, or on the public, which lacks the capacity to digest and process sophisticated discourse about public policy.

This quadrennially recurring argument about the nature of American

politics almost always reaches the normative conclusion that "decisions based on the personality characteristics of Leaders seem wrong." Over thirty years ago, Michael Calvin McGee dubbed this argument a "treacherous piety."⁶ McGee was concerned then, as we should be now, with the consequences of a pious adherence to an exclusive politics of public policy and "issues." As he argued, "'image' politics are inescapable in Anglo-American political controversy and . . . an 'issue' orientation is dubious, perhaps dangerous."⁷ McGee's primary concern in 1978 was to trace the diachronic ideological roots of this "treacherous piety" as located in the eighteenth-century British maxim, "not men, but measures" and expressed in the rhetoric of Sir Robert Walpole.

Like McGee, I am concerned about this "treacherous piety" and am bothered by its regular reappearance as an election cycle staple of commentators and critics. My hope here is to explore how this issue/image dichotomy operates as a default criticism of democratic practice by examining its basis in persistent tensions and idealistic theories of democracy. Turning to political practice, I then explore the articulation and value of political image rhetorics offered during the 2008 presidential election, paying particular attention to political advertisements from the Obama and McCain campaigns that appeared after their nominations were assured but before the national nominating conventions. Ultimately, I offer a normative justification of political image rhetorics in campaign discourse as beneficial to deliberation about public policy and political leadership. As McGee noted, "*Human beings* make up a government, not 'measures' or 'issues.' The quality of a government is thus a function of the quality of leadership, not of the policies advocated by that government."⁸ Moving beyond McGee's diachronic validation of political image rhetorics, this analysis strives to appreciate such rhetorics theoretically, pragmatically, and normatively as necessary and valuable discourse in a democracy's rhetorical repertoire.

UNDERSTANDING POLITICAL IMAGES

I use the term "political image" in much the same way McGee speaks of image politics as concerning rhetorics of leadership and political character. A "political image," is a verbal and/or visual rhetorical marker of public character and individual persona.⁹ Such images are typically offered to voters in a political context to present arguments about leadership and in this way

concretize a relatively abstract construct. Leadership means many things, from vision to charisma, persuasiveness to simple good sense,¹⁰ and political leadership also works as a means of electoral deliberation, given concrete shape by the political images that express it. Similarly, of course, political images are also offered to public audiences for other reasons (to secure votes, to justify public policy, to attack an opponent) and are expressed via an array of media (television advertising, campaign oratory, expert testimony, celebrity endorsement).

This vision of a political image differs somewhat from definitions that locate such images solely in the perceptions of audiences. Kenneth Hacker, for instance, borrows Boulding's view of political images and sees this construct as "closest to what cognitive psychologists describe as cognitive representations." Rejecting a view of images as "what candidates project from themselves to voters," Hacker instead opts to see such images as "a structure of voter perception or cognition in which the voter has organized impressions of the candidate."¹¹ This view of political images, although useful for assessing voter reactions or voting motivations, is meaningfully bankrupt from a critical perspective. Voter perceptions of candidates emanate from somewhere; they do not spring fully formed in the minds of voters from sources like party affiliation or public policy preferences, even as such sources might influence judgments about political images. These perceptions, instead, come from the rhetorics that construct them, the reasons given for a candidate's persona and public character, the evidence provided to justify a particular political image, and the interchange between public figures about public persona.

Indeed, it may be in part because political images have been relegated to the cognitive perceptions of audiences that the construct is so easily and readily denigrated as a subject of political discourse. If a political image is simply and only a cognitive representation or a perception, it becomes something much more subjective and imprecise. Difficult to analyze, hard to criticize, such images reside in the murky depths of individual minds and are subjected to the whims and vagaries of individual opinion. Not only have political images, then, fallen prey to the ideological elevation of rhetorics about "measures" in Anglo-American political culture, but they are subjected to the social scientific operationalization that minimizes their critical relevance and militates against their critical assessment.

Another way to understand the desperate state of the image in political rhetoric is to assess how it is trapped in a series of tensions or dialectics, each of which disadvantages the political image. These include the tension

between images and issues, between images and words, and between images and reality. In each duality, the political image is pitted against an opposite that is valued, possesses greater ideological power, or is simply a preferred mode of communication. Justifying the political image as a meaningful focus of political rhetoric requires freeing the image from its disadvantageous place in these tensions and valuing the image as a focus of political deliberation.

IMAGES VS. ISSUES

As he attempts to wrestle with difficult issues of public subjectivity and citizenship, Robert Asen proposes a discourse theory of citizenship that "shifts our focus from *what* constitutes citizenship to *how* citizenship proceeds" by arguing for a modal approach to citizenship that "denotes a manner of doing something, a method of proceeding in any activity."¹² Part of discerning how citizenship proceeds involves determining not only what constitutes a citizen but also what citizens discuss, the subjects of citizen deliberation. Indeed, Asen recognizes that a discourse approach to understanding citizenship means that when citizens engage, deliberate, discuss, and decide, their discourse may be "unruly" and that "issues that appear initially as unimportant may increase in magnitude," in part because citizenship as discourse "exceeds the control of authorities, institutions, or influential groups."¹³ Asen's welcome reconceptualization of deliberative processes at least holds out the promise of bridging the gap between issues and images in public discussion and deliberation—a promise sorely lacking in so many articulations of deliberative democracy.

Conventional discussions of citizenship, engagement, and deliberation in democratic societies generally suggest that regardless of what constitutes citizenship, or how citizens form their identities, citizens should be deliberating about issues. These discussions suggest that a hallmark of a move toward a more deliberative democracy is a focus on public policy matters of import and consequence. John Gastil's call for a revitalized representative democracy through what he calls "deliberative elections" is typical in this regard. Gastil laments the state of contemporary politics where "public distrust of politicians and elected officials can ultimately erode support for democratic institutions themselves," largely because those officials fail to ratify the public policy preferences of the electorate.¹⁴ The corrective, Gastil suggests, is found in the calls of "civic-minded reformers" who "seek to restore public trust and representative government through renewed community life and citizen

dialogue.”¹⁵ Of course, what citizens deliberate about in this model is public policy. Citizens determine the best course of action about public policy matters and assess candidates based on legislative voting records and stated public policy pronouncements.¹⁶

Concerned with advancing a vision of deliberative democracy “more compatible with poststructuralist notions of subjectivity and discourse,” Noëlle McAfee puts forth a definition of democracy that “takes place in [the] public realm where public meaning and purpose are created, ultimately the meaning and purposes that steer a political community,” and posits three models of democratic deliberation.¹⁷ Each of the models she identifies—a preference-based model, a rational proceduralist model, and an integrative model—posits individuals gathering together to discuss public policy issues to reach a deliberative conclusion.¹⁸ As with Gastil’s perspective, despite a poststructuralist orientation, there still is no focus on candidate virtue, character, or leadership. Indeed, few if any models of deliberative democracy hold out the possibility of citizens deliberating about leadership, about public virtue. These models manifest the tension between issue and image that so often arises in discussions of contemporary politics.

Another dominant concern among deliberative democracy theorists is the capacity of such a democratic model to exclude or to diminish dissent, and specifically dissent about public policy issues. Again, the focus of such critique is less upon what citizens discuss in democratic deliberation and more about how such deliberation occurs. Indeed, such critique assumes, as a default position, that the process of deliberative democracy is exclusively about public policy, even as dissent and opposition might be excluded. James Bohman, for instance, holds out the promise of diversity and heterogeneity for deliberative democracy as such diversity reduces and minimizes error, calling particularly for “epistemic diversity” in the deliberative process.¹⁹ Other proposals for increasing trust in deliberative democracy, finding alternative forums for deliberation, and reinvigorating the undergraduate classroom as a resource for deliberative training, among other ideas, are found in a 2002 special issue of this journal.²⁰ Whether the proposal is for a deliberative democracy premised on conflict or rowdiness²¹ or calls for greater trust and dialogue, it is the nature and kind of deliberation rather than its focus that dominates theories of deliberative democracy.

Public, deliberative discourse about things that are not related to public policy are, in the view of some, more subject to manipulation and control. Such rhetorics, they argue, circumvent reason and bankrupt the public sphere,

such that citizens fall prey to vapid, often televisual, arguments. No less than Al Gore puts forth this argument in his ruminations about the "assault on reason." Even as the former vice president and Nobel laureate argues that the success of nations "depends on the quality of their leadership,"²² his proposals for a well-connected citizenry are all premised upon restoring public reason to the public sphere for the better discussion of public policy issues.²³ Unless politics talks about issues in a reasoned, emotion-free way, Gore suggests, American democracy is seriously imperiled.

Ultimately, theories of deliberative democracy perpetuate a commonplace of democratic discourse—that the focus of democracy is and should be public policy matters.²⁴ Citizens who deliberate well encourage an atmosphere of trust and honesty as they discuss public policy issues. They value diversity of opinion and activate dissent and disagreement, all in the name of a public sphere where public policy matters are debated openly. And from a discursive standpoint, such theories recognize the centrality of rhetoric to the processes of deliberative democracy—as Fontana, Nederman, and Remer suggest, "the long-standing tradition of rhetorical studies seems especially relevant to the study of deliberative democracy."²⁵

Such models of deliberative democracy, while compelling, are often limited as they ignore the realities and demands of contemporary life—a complicated life where citizens do not have the luxury of attending carefully to detailed matters of public policy at issues forums or study circles or community groups. Moreover, some citizens may find such activities alienating or overwhelming and may resist deliberative exercises in public policy decision making. In her study of the performance of apathy in public life, for example, Nina Eliasoph discovered that many of her subjects "avoided public grandstanding. They wanted to be unpretentious and accepting of all, and assumed that if publicly expressing ideas is just dishonest or useless, then political conversation would uselessly scare regular people off."²⁶ Other studies demonstrate that voters/citizens are intimidated by the range of understanding and public policy knowledge required to be a "good citizen." People are not willing or able to become "political backpackers," to quote Michael Schudson—we cannot possess the "omnicompetence and omniscience" that some models of deliberative democracy expect or hope for from citizens.²⁷

The political tension between issues and images ultimately poses a false choice for democracy. A better approach is to recognize the inherent and necessary connections between public policy matters and the quality and persona of leadership that is put in place to form and implement that policy.

Collapsing this artificial distinction recognizes that image rhetorics of public character and persona *are rhetorics of public policy*. Providing citizens with the capacity to engage political image rhetorics enhances their deliberative arsenal and frees citizens from the burden of extensive public policy knowledge and expertise. Citizens will feel empowered to assess character and measure leadership, to debate persona and ethics, to determine the limits of public virtue and the capacity for moral action. Such matters must occupy the public sphere and may very well contribute to its enhancement.

IMAGES VS. WORDS / IMAGES VS. REALITY

When Plato allegorized about people chained in a cave and subjected to the manipulations of flickering images against a dark wall, he put in place a now centuries-old suspicion of images that continues to influence how we see such rhetorics. Because political images are often communicated visually, they too are subjected to the same criticisms and suspicions. Seen as easily manipulated and emotional rather than reasonable, political images also are trapped by the assumed inauthenticity of images in general. Thus, as political images are sometimes visual and always multimodal, they exist in the uneasy spaces between image and words, images and reality.

Mitchell Stephens notes that when Plato put forth his critique of images, he was defending the word because images “inevitably threatened to turn the populace away from the deeper, more cerebral rewards of sacred writings or philosophical discourse.”²⁸ Images are seductive and entrancing. They draw us in and access powerful emotions as well as rationalities. Moreover, they are endless and defy lexicons—there is simply no end to available images and no means of controlling their proliferation. Images, so said Plato, are to be feared and fought. This anxious antipathy remains, as when a tyrant uses metaphorical imagery to stir up anti-Semitic hatreds, or when political cartoons of a revered religious figure elicit jihadish reactions, or when images of a young, charismatic senator captivate an entire nation.

All of the anxieties about images generally are also at the foundation of the critiques of political images, those seductive, entrancing, often visual, rhetorics about personality and character that distract voters and citizens from the more important concerns of public policy.²⁹ Political words and language maintain a rationality, a logographical honesty that images attack, both because they often argue from emotion and because political images fuse together the linguistic and the visual.

These distinctions between image and word are compellingly articulated in the often-repeated myth about the first televised general election presidential debates in 1960 between Richard M. Nixon and John F. Kennedy. The Museum of Broadcast Communications, for instance, features on its website the following:

In substance, the candidates were much more evenly matched. Indeed, those who heard the first debate on the radio pronounced Nixon the winner. But the 70 million who watched television saw a candidate still sickly and obviously discomforted by Kennedy's smooth delivery and charisma. Those television viewers focused on what they saw, not what they heard. Studies of the audience indicated that, among television viewers, Kennedy was perceived the winner of the first debate by a very large margin.³⁰

This story is so commonly repeated that it borders on political cliché. Yet there is a point to its retelling: Republicans particularly use the narrative to speak to the dangers of political images and the sway of superficiality in political debate. Richard Nixon, their argument suggests, was a better candidate because his ideas were better and were believed by more Americans who remained unswayed by television and JFK's powerful televisuality. Of course, the tale of radio and television viewers' different reactions to Kennedy and Nixon has been discredited,³¹ but it does not matter—clichés are clichés for a reason and this cliché continues to serve the larger purpose of discrediting political images in political discourse.

The realities of contemporary political discourse, however, undermine the power of the word to maintain its epistemological and ideological force. Kevin DeLuca and Jennifer Peeples point to the limitations of existing notions of the public sphere "because it holds static notions of the public arena, appropriate political activity, and democratic citizenship, thus ignoring current social and technological conditions."³² They call for a companion approach to public discourse, rooted in a sense of the "public screen," a "necessary supplement to the metaphor of the public sphere for understanding today's political scene."³³ Identifying what they term "iconophobia" and "iconoclasm" in both public sphere theory and rhetorical theory, Cara Finnegan and Jiyeon Kang seek to "bring visuality to bear upon public sphere theory" with their discussion of the public screen, imagining, and image circulation.³⁴ So central has the visual become to contemporary discourse, political and otherwise, that the distinction that advantages the word and disparages the image is becoming

increasingly obsolete. Images in the public media, note Robert Hariman and John Lucaites, “display the public to itself” and “put the state and other institutions on display and valorize some behaviors over others.”³⁵

Related to the logographically rooted anxieties about images is the persistent fear that images are somehow fake or less than fully authentic. To discuss a public policy issue, the argument suggests, is to discuss something real and verifiable, something subjected to evidence and fact. But images are malleable and easily manipulated. They exist in the realm of fantasy and construction, public relations and puffery. The philosophical extreme of this criticism is articulated by Jean Baudrillard, who attempts to understand the “murderous power of images,” particularly in religious iconography where such images are seen as the “murderers of the real” in contrast to “representations as a dialectical power, the visible and intelligible mediation of the Real.”³⁶

Over two hundred years ago, John Adams worried about just this problem in the political realm. Adams was constantly concerned about his own public image and historical legacy. Rooted in this concern, he fretted that the history of the American Revolution “will be one continued lie from one end to the other. The essence of the whole will be that Dr. Franklin’s electrical rod smote the earth and out sprang General Washington,”³⁷ and concluded that George Washington’s public image was largely the result of “puffers” who killed all scandal.³⁸ Fake public virtue was a great worry, Adams concluded, threatening the quality of public leadership and eroding the capacity of government to operate effectively. He feared that the problem would only magnify as the nation expanded.

The fear of fakery and artificiality in the communication of political images persists. In the early 1960s, historian Daniel Boorstin lamented the rise of pseudoevents, occasions that emerge “primarily (not always exclusively) for the immediate purpose of being reported or reproduced.”³⁹ Boorstin also complained that the political context in which he was writing was characterized by the rise of the celebrity and the accompanying decline of the hero whose social source “is in our novel power to make men famous.”⁴⁰ An updated version of this critique comes from Kiku Adatto, who laments the contemporary mass media’s preoccupation with the visual. Such a preoccupation, she believes, leads the news media to forget “about the facts” and infrequent attempts to “correct the distortions they contained.” She concludes, “Alerting the viewer to the construction of television images proved no substitute for fact correction, no way back to reality.”⁴¹

For Adams, the solution to the inherent dangers of artificial political images

was the honest and clear communication of public virtue to a community's population. This answer might have worked in the nineteenth century, but as the nation has expanded and mass media have proliferated, Adams's ideals are unrealistic for a contemporary, media-saturated age. The hyperreality of contemporary political discourse militates against the type of image honesty or authenticity that Adams envisioned. The proliferation of political images creates a context where it is "difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between that which is 'real' and that which is represented or mediated. As such, the distinctions between reality and representation collapse so as to make them meaningless."⁴²

But Adams's experience with the "dangers" of fakery in the articulation of public images reminds us that such concerns are neither new nor dependent upon contemporary, technological media. In the end, each political system where political images of character and persona are communicated to a larger public must embrace the hyperreality of such images, must accept that the images are all that exist in this particular rhetorical scheme, and must understand that the answer becomes not the rejection or degradation of such discourse, but the skilled and careful consumption of such images by a discerning, discriminating, aware public able to assess character and persona as legitimate public matters.

Understanding political images as they exist in contemporary political rhetoric requires a freedom from constraining dichotomous thinking that perpetually minimizes the role and importance of such images. Recognizing the value of visual imagery for political decision making, conceptions of citizenship, and relevance for the public sphere permits a sustained critical engagement with these important political rhetorics. Political images are, by definition, inauthentic, and accepting their hyperreality allows for an honest assessment of how leadership is rhetorically manifested in a mediated political environment. And political images are public policy issues in the sense that they are important rhetorics of governance, making specific and concrete arguments about leadership that make a real difference in the deliberation about political decisions and the exercise of power.

ANALYZING POLITICAL IMAGES AND CAMPAIGN 2008

If the argument of this essay is correct, and there exists a cultural and political imperative to analyze and engage political images as a relevant,

important factor in political discourse, it is necessary to delineate a critical rubric for the sustained engagements with these rhetorics. The demarcation of such a rubric serves two purposes. First, it offers a theoretically relevant, critical template for the analysis of political images, a roadmap of how best to evaluate rhetorics of image and persona. Second, such a rubric serves a pedagogical function, offering to citizens and voters a means to process and engage with political images in a manner that transcends simply emotive first impressions. Our citizenry needs something more than poll judgments about which candidate is more likeable or more “beer worthy.” Whether in the classroom or the public forum, in news media discussions or on public blogs, developing the critical capacity of citizens to engage and evaluate political images enriches the democracy and enhances the quality and performance of citizenship. Toward that end, this essay strives to provide a theoretically significant, critically useful, and pedagogically powerful articulation of how to appreciate and analyze the role of political images in campaign discourse.

In my delineation of the relevant characteristics of political images and how they operate rhetorically in our contemporary political environment, I use by way of illustration political commercials from the 2008 election campaign between Barack Obama and John McCain. Specifically, I focus on advertisements issued by the campaigns in the pre-convention period, after Obama and McCain had effectively secured their party’s nomination but before the national nominating conventions, as such spots tend to offer arguments about character, biography, and persona more overtly than spots later in the campaign cycle.

Political campaigns, particularly at the presidential level, are centrally concerned with issues of leadership and give rise, therefore, to many political image rhetorics. These political images come from a myriad of sources and reach voters via an array of media. In the case of political advertising, a wealth of literature shows that such texts influence voter decision making and increase voter knowledge. Such literature also reveals conflicting findings as to the power of political commercials on voter turnout, political participation, and feelings of apathy.⁴³ Campaigns, and the political advertisements that are so central a part of them, perform specific important functions, despite the clichéd arguments offered every election cycle about the failures of campaign discourse.⁴⁴ Campaigns teach and preach, sensitize and activate, to paraphrase Roderick Hart. Moreover, as Hart notes, campaign commercials “act as a kind of ‘electoral poetry,’ letting candidates imagine an ideal political space,” and although we may dismiss such imaginings, our dismissal is “unwise since

a candidate who cannot imagine something wonderful is also unlikely to produce it once elected."⁴⁵ A central dimension of this "ideal political space" is a vision of leadership and character that is centrally defined in political commercials.

POLITICAL IMAGES ARE MEDIATED AND MULTIMODAL

Political images are communicated to public audiences via mediated channels. Historically, political images have occurred in print and caricature, newsreels and radio programs. Now, citizens encounter such images in increasingly sophisticated and highly technologized ways. Such mediation allows for distortion and manipulation and manifests the hyperreality characteristic of contemporary political images. They emerge from cultural and ideological negotiations between audience members, political actors, professional image crafters, and media establishments. Indeed, absent direct, interpersonal contact with political candidates, voters only learn about leaders and their characters via mediated rhetorics.

Instead of addressing the critical, even constitutive meaning of mediation for political images, the tendency by many political commentators and other political actors is to assess mediation largely for its instrumental impact. As the Internet is increasingly employed for political purposes, for example, the commentary about its impact tends toward the pragmatic—how campaigns use the Internet to raise funds, release more ads, create voter lists, and activate voter involvement. Such commentary is inadequate in explaining the power of mediation on political images. Required instead is a critical apparatus that allows for an engagement with mediated, multimodal political images on their own terms.

In July 2008, the McCain campaign ran an ad called "Love" that aired in 11 critical states. The commercial contrasts the "Summer of Love" with McCain's love of country, highlighting his service in Vietnam and his captivity as a prisoner of war. In addition, the spot transitions from material about McCain's military service ("he said no" to early release as a POW) to his commitment to public service (living out his "philosophy . . . before party, polls, and self, America. A maverick").⁴⁶ Clearly an example of a political image, this commercial offers a rhetorical marker of McCain's personal character and approach to leadership, rooted in experience and biography. McCain is, the ad argued, a leader with a clear understanding of American visions of sacrifice and duty, a leader who is not swayed by the transitory and the

political. Rooted in his heroic personal story, the ad maintains that McCain's virtuous persona is the preferred alternative to an America governed by a "Summer of Love" ethic that did not value personal and political sacrifice.

As relevant as its overt message is the mediation of McCain's political image in "Love." Voters who encountered this commercial probably saw it in one of three ways—either as broadcast over television, via the Internet at either the McCain campaign site or some other site, or as used in news media reports. Of course, each individual mode of mediation would have an impact on the voters' understanding of the commercial's message about McCain's character. Additionally, the commercial itself actually invokes different modes of mediation. The spot begins with color footage of typical hippie imagery from the 1960s and then cuts to black-and-white footage of military images—a fighter jet, a Vietnamese woman holding a rifle, McCain in uniform and as a POW. A caption reads "Military Images and Information Do Not Imply Endorsement by DOD or Service Branch," a message that simultaneously protects the campaign and establishes the credibility of the imagery. The visuals switch to sepia-toned pictures of McCain with governmental officials and with Ronald and Nancy Reagan, and then transition to contemporary color pictures of McCain interacting with voters and working in the Senate. The narration of the commercial is voiced by actor Powers Boothe, a voice that may have been familiar to voters from the actor's various television and film appearances.

As a political image, this commercial is fairly typical in the arguments it makes about McCain's character and capacity for leadership. But the mediation apparent in this commercial is significant to understanding its rhetoric. The historical footage and military visuals add depth and credibility to the narrative. McCain's character is not simply asserted, but demonstrated visually. We see him as a POW, we see him with the Reagans, and the mediation of the message gives its meaning context beyond the campaign and a power beyond the arguments offered. This context and power is enhanced by the familiar actor's voice providing the narration, offering voters a credible source for the informational content of the ad, a known though unnamed articulator of its argumentative claims.

Our understanding of this political image differs from other similar political images from previous presidential campaigns because of divergences in its mediation. Political images of military heroism are not uncommon at the presidential level, but the mediation of those images has changed. Whigs sought in 1840, for example, to convince voters of William Henry Harrison's

heroism in fighting Native Americans, but were only able to provide voters with words accompanied by crude, drawn images of Harrison in military garb on a horse.⁴⁷ The mediation of his image contrasts with Eisenhower's in 1952, where the first televised campaign commercials featured newsreel footage of Ike as a military hero.⁴⁸ These ads convey differently for different generations of voters, not because the messages or claims about character in the ads are all that different, but because of the evolution of mediation from the flier and the banner, to the newsreel, to the sophisticated, multimodal commercial.

One critical dimension of the mediation of political images is how such images work to express their messages through multiple modalities of communication. Such rhetorics work easily in an intertextual environment where messages and meanings circulate within and against one another in a communication context of tremendous variety. Voters encounter political images visually and verbally, on television and in print, over radio airwaves and on jumbotrons, in still pictures and moving ones. All of these discursive modes influence the meanings of political images, creating a complex and often confusing *mélange* of discourse for voters striving to reach a meaningful conclusion about the character and virtue of those vying for leadership.

The complex multimodalities of contemporary political images are illustrated in a series of commercials put forth by the McCain campaign in the summer of 2008 that were designed to combat the rising popularity of Barack Obama as the Democrat finally emerged as the presumptive nominee, journeyed to Europe, and prepared for the Democratic national convention. The McCain spots were broadcast widely: some on television, some on the Internet, and some via both media. They attracted considerable attention, provoked the ire of Democrats and the Obama campaign, and aroused political conversation over cable news networks and, presumably, in other venues throughout the country. In many ways, moreover, the power and meaning of these spots derive from their capacity to operate through multiple modalities of communication and to manipulate skillfully their own intertextualities within a larger political and social context.

Perhaps the most notorious of the spots run during the entire 2008 campaign, the McCain commercial entitled "Celeb" offers as its argument that, although he may be a celebrity of global reach and stature, Barack Obama is not ready to lead. As the ad opens, crowds chant the name "Obama," and the visual imagery, shot during the Democrat's trip to Europe earlier in the summer, displays hundreds of thousands of people in Berlin at an Obama rally.

The shot changes to moving images of Britney Spears and Paris Hilton, and then to ones of Obama preparing to speak in Berlin as an anonymous female narrator asserts, “He’s the biggest celebrity in the world. But is he ready to lead?” The character scrutiny shifts then to more overt public policy matters as the ad argues that Obama will raise taxes on electricity and opposes offshore drilling. These charges are made graphically, as the visuals continue to show Obama speaking at the Berlin rally. Ultimately, the ad’s narrator asserts, as a black-and-white still photo of a smiling Obama is shown, “Higher taxes, more foreign oil—that’s the real Obama.”

This commercial, widely aired and covered extensively by the news media, operates on a number of different levels of meaning, all with considerable consequence for voter understanding of McCain’s arguments about Obama’s political character. What occasioned the most scrutiny about the ad, of course, was its comparison to Spears and Hilton, even though such a comparison is never articulated verbally and exists only in the text of the ad on the level of “celebrity.” But from the standpoint of intertextuality, the ad’s invocation of Spears and Hilton traverses the boundaries of typical political discourse by drawing from popular culture. Voters are expected to understand the connections between Obama and Spears/Hilton at the level of celebrity because they function in an intertextual symbolic context that allows for that understanding. It is enough, in the grammar of the ad, to simply offer the visual association for the point to be clear.

This same link is apparent by the modality of the filming technique used in the ad. There is a seamlessness between the shots of Spears and Hilton and the shots of Obama at the rally in Berlin, so they seem as if they were shot by the same paparazzi. In this way, the cinematographic technique reinforces the message about celebrity offered by the spot. The switch to the still image of Obama as the verbal content of the ad shifts to the final argument about public energy policy establishes implicitly the seriousness of the argument advanced in the piece as it strives to focus the voter’s attention on the public policy message. Yet that same message exists alongside the character dimensions at the outset of the ad, and only makes sense in that context.

Similar strategies of political imaging are evident in the McCain campaign’s webspots that further articulated the “celebrity” attack against Obama, making the ultimate argument that the Democrat is “not ready to lead.” These commercials are more complex than the 30-second “Celeb” spot because they are not constrained by the time limits of television advertising. Called “The One” and “The One II,” these webcasts ridicule the messianic

aspects of the Obama campaign, using Obama's own words against him and drawing humorously from popular culture icons to reinforce the larger message about Obama's character. Using imagery evocative of religious media (swirling clouds illuminated by sunlight, dramatic sunsets, and the like) the ads also feature footage from Cecil B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments* of Charlton Heston depicting Moses parting the Red Sea. Such shots operate intertextually, reinscribing the overall meaning of Obama's celebrity. "The One II" also quotes the Democrat's "disciples," with a still photo of Virginia governor Tim Kaine alongside an icon of the cellphone as Kaine praises Obama's intervention in a foreign policy matter, and with graphic lettering and a narrator's voice quoting Nancy Pelosi as describing Obama as "A leader that God has blessed us with at this time." Immediately after the Pelosi quote, the ad shows Heston as Moses again saying, "So let it be written."

Each of these examples of political imaging speaks to the capacity of such images to operate in a highly mediated environment and to access and utilize multiple modalities of communication where messages and meanings are reiterated through intertextual dynamics and manipulation of mediation. Moreover, these ads do not operate in a vacuum. They work alongside campaign direct mail, radio advertising, news media coverage, stand-up comedy routines, television satire programs, and an entire range of other messages all striving to demarcate the character and persona of these individual candidates. Citizens encountering this array of political images deserve the critical capacity to appreciate how such messages create meaning, how they maneuver through the symbolic environment, what ideologies are exploited via mediation, how they are made to seem naturally self-evident by use of specific modalities, and how they strive to articulate or attack public virtue via intertextual meaning and reference.

POLITICAL IMAGES ARE POLYVALENT

For political images to work at all, they must be significantly polyvalent in the meanings they offer to audiences. The political context, in the United States and elsewhere, is sufficiently diverse in outlook and orientation that polyvalent political images are a necessity for the successful political candidate. Anyone who offers narrowly defined images for a diverse electorate risks obscurity as a fringe candidate with little or no chance of electoral success. The short-lived candidacy of Tom Tancredo, a congressman from Colorado who ran for the Republican nomination in 2008 largely as an anti-immigration

candidate, speaks to the dangers of a political image without the possibility for polyvalent interpretation.

Unlike political rhetorics that are exclusively about public policy issues, where specificity and certitude can constrain the range of possible meaning and interpretation, political images operate in a terrain of uncertainty and contingency, where the polyvalent is valued and the fluidity of cultural meaning is beneficial. Matters of specific public policy, like health care policy or tax policy, are often articulated with reference to empirically derived rhetorics that, although sometimes imprecise and frequently fluid, are still concrete. There may well be identified referents at the basis of public policy. Political images are less precise and often operate at the level of abstraction, invoking values and ideologies, and rooted in distant, impressionistic visions of biography and history. The result is that political images create a range of cognitive frames for assessing political leadership. Such frames intersect with collective memory, subject position, policy and political orientation, and mediated interventions to create a reality of political life and the basis for judgment about political candidates.

An example of political imaging that takes full advantage of the range of meanings that can possibly be evoked by its rhetoric is an introductory commercial released by the Obama campaign in June 2008, entitled “Country I Love.” This spot is an entirely conventional biographical ad that cleaves closely to the constraints of the genre—it features biographical information, vague statements about values, and a sense of the overall theme of a campaign. The visual imagery of the ad is also very conventional (even as it works through different modalities and takes full advantage of its mediation as a television spot). It features childhood pictures of the candidate with family, shots of the candidate as a young man in various settings, footage of Obama with voters, speaking to rallies, engaging with a demographically diverse range of individuals. Indeed, there’s almost nothing about the spot that makes it remarkable or interesting, and its very banality reveals its reliance on polyvalence.

The ad begins with Obama in direct address to the camera asserting that “America is a country of strong families and strong values. My life’s been blessed by both.” Immediately, Obama is fused with the nation—he is a synecdoche of the nation, his family a representation of its values. At the same time, “strong families” and “strong values” are so vague as to defy any fixed meaning. The next portion of the spot fills in some detail, but again the specificity of meaning is left to the viewer. Obama narrates as images

from his childhood and adolescence are shown—he reveals the values that shaped his upbringing and that came “straight from the Kansas heartland where they [his grandparents] grew up”: “accountability and self-reliance, love of country, working hard without making excuses, treating your neighbor as you’d like to be treated.” These values, Obama tells us, are what guided him as he “worked” through college and passed up “Wall Street jobs,” going to Chicago instead to be a community organizer. These values, the ad (in Obama’s voice) continues, are why he “passed laws” to help workers, provide for veterans, and cut taxes for working families. Ultimately, the ad concludes, should he take the oath of office, it will be “with a deep and abiding faith in the country I love.”

What is most compelling about this commercial and so many like it is its lack of specificity, its capacity to exploit a seemingly endless array of possible meanings that its text makes possible. Fusing fully with the life story of Barack Obama, the ad’s vague values allow for many different interpretations, an array of meanings. As such, the ad does not make the specific connection between the values it articulates and the public policies it references because it does not have to—the viewers can fill in the meaning themselves. Coupled with the ad’s values and their limitless hermeneutic range are the visual images it offers, each one positive and endearing. Obama’s mother and grandparents are smiling and appear proud, as if to illustrate a “strong” family. Voters, workers, veterans, and everyone else featured visually in the commercial are representatives of the values articulated, and they can function this way precisely because the meanings of those values are so polyvalent.

POLITICAL IMAGES FUSE THE PERSONAL WITH THE POLITICAL

As the spots from McCain and Obama indicate, one of the central functions of political images with either a positive or a negative purpose is to fuse together the personal with the political. In this sense, a critical dimension of political imagery is to offer for voters a clear sense of how persona and character are important matters of public policy because the understanding of public policy that they offer is so thoroughly joined with the candidates themselves. This function of political images specifically refutes the commonplace that political rhetorics are about either issues or images—indeed, such a dichotomy is increasingly obsolete.

The division that is so common today between issues and images has not been always been a characteristic of American political discourse. Douglass

Adair notes that a preeminent concern for fame and distinction governed political motive for the founders, and pursuing fame “was a way of transforming egotism and self-aggrandizing impulses into public service; they had been taught that public service nobly (and selfishly) performed was the surest way to build ‘lasting monuments’ and earn the perpetual remembrance of posterity.”⁴⁹ This source of political motivation created, for these leaders, a search for what John Adams called a “language of signs,” or markers that communicated fame and renown to a larger public.⁵⁰ Today, this language of signs is found in a range of political rhetorics, from advertisements to speeches to websites, where candidates offer voters a vision of their character that organizes their approach to public service and public policy.

Certainly, the image rhetorics offered in the later summer of 2008 by the presidential campaigns of John McCain and Barack Obama quite clearly fused together their personal characters with the public policies they sought to pursue. In the McCain biographical spot “Love,” it is the candidate’s character as a “maverick” that leads him to pursue “campaign reform, military reform, spending reform.” It is his persona that motivates his service and his political positions, his policy commitments. McCain’s approach is more direct, in some ways, than Obama’s in “Country I Love.” As a “maverick,” McCain offers voters a concrete, albeit metaphoric, vision of his character for their judgment and evaluation. In Obama’s case, the fusion is more indirect. The Democrat pursues policies—like welfare reform, working-class tax relief, and health care for wounded veterans—because of relatively imprecise values that he holds and that were central to his upbringing.

Despite how candidates specifically fuse together their personal character with public policy positions, the simple fact that the fusion occurs is critical to our informed understanding of political rhetoric, particularly in campaign contexts. How we assess this fusion critically must be a dynamic of citizenship for the health of a democracy. Sadly, our political education and socialization processes all too often motivate citizens to ignore their abilities to assess character and persona, to reach valid and informed judgments about virtue and public capability. Citizens come to believe they should only attend to the “issues,” that it’s illegitimate to vote on the basis of personal reaction or characterological reading. Public policy is stronger, governance more successful, and campaigns more illuminating if the relationship between personal character and public policy is acknowledged and embraced in political rhetoric.

From the fusion of the personal with the political in political image rhetorics

comes the establishment of rhetorical trajectories with consequences for electoral success and public policy enactment. Rhetorical trajectories speak to the "progression or curve of development that a speaker establishes as he or she attempts to turn a vision into reality." As George Dioniosopoulos and his colleagues suggest, we can critically appreciate rhetorical trajectories as they are "made evident by projecting forward the implications of the speaker's terms and symbols in order to discover how a particular state of mind is achieved." "In this sense," they continue, "the concept of rhetorical trajectory points our attention to the way in which rhetoric designed to move others *also* works to propel the rhetor along a certain course of symbolic action."⁵¹

A political image may operate to establish specific rhetorical trajectories such that not only does it demarcate the nature of arguments about character and persona, but it may also articulate a curve of development, a symbolic progression as powerful on a speaker or candidate as on the audience to whom the image is addressed. Such trajectories can ensnare a candidate facing attacks from her or his opponent and may influence the way a candidate governs upon election to public office. When Barack Obama predicates his personal and political image on delineated values, as he did in "Country I Love," he is obligated through custom and expectation to manifest those values while in office. President Obama, therefore, has established a rhetorical trajectory that may, upon enacting public policy, create rhetorical collisions and tensions. This trajectory draws as much on his political image, his specific enactment of character and persona, as it draws on his policy positions and issue commitments.

CONCLUSION

Michael Calvin McGee's prescient vision of how American politics evolved from identified Anglo-American commitments to a state of "treacherous piety" that traps U.S. democracy, disadvantages voters and citizens, and truncates the range of democratic deliberation lingers as a reminder of how as rhetorical critics we can challenge and provoke change in democratic practice. I have tried to articulate a justification for viewing political images as legitimate, indeed fundamental, rhetorics in American politics. If I am correct, the political image as a rhetoric of deliberative democracy must be rescued from a set of dichotomous relationships that disadvantage the image and diminish its legitimacy. Political images are visual, hyperreal, complicated rhetorics

that are public policy issues, and to see them as otherwise is to ignore their relevance and to practice an impractical politics.

Campaign commercials function as powerful rhetorics of political image, accessible to large publics striving to make important decisions about the future of their community, the actions it should take, and the leaders it should empower. As with all presidential campaigns since at least 1800, candidates for the presidency in 2008 offered varied articulations of their character and persona, markers of why they should be elected and how they would govern. Based not in specific noncharacter public policy choices, these image rhetorics asked voters to accept a candidate's biography and validate his values, to agree that a candidate should ascend to the highest office in American government because they possess the virtue and the character to succeed. As they offered these image visions on behalf of their candidacies or to attack their opponent, the candidates illustrated how political images function as mediated, multimodal rhetorics that offer polyvalent meanings and fuse the personal with the political to manifest rhetorical trajectories for campaigns and governance.

Unlike other rhetorics emergent from the campaign process (public policy position papers, website issue statements, and even major public policy addresses by the candidate), political images are particularly capable of offering voters arguments about leadership. Arguments about leadership exist on levels different from public policy arguments—they rely on emotions, polyvalent arrays of meaning, and visual rhetorics. Although public policy statements or pronouncements may provide arguments about leadership, they exist alongside political images that offer additional, different, and powerful leadership claims. A political process that often ignores the political image in favor of public policy deliberation risks missing or trivializing important visions of leadership that may be quite critical to electoral decision making and electoral outcomes.

Fundamentally, political images are central to public policy deliberation and democratic life. Rather than dismissing such rhetorics as illegitimate, falling prey to McGee's "treacherous piety," our politics and our discourse must rehabilitate the image, restoring it to a central and valid place in American political practice and in American political rhetoric. Over two hundred years ago, the founders of the American democracy put in place a system that motivated assessments of character that invited reasoned deliberation about persona and virtue. Ronald Beiner, in his considered assessment of political judgment and contemporary political life, recognizes

the importance of character and image. Beiner defines political judgment as "the comprehensive faculty' by which we come to terms with political phenomena" and concludes that this process "can never abstract from the humane dimension of judgment." If judgment is to be truly and normatively political, Beiner suggests, "it must be open to the domain of moral judgment, aesthetic judgment, and so on."⁵²

To comprehend the complete range of human activity and experience necessary to make political judgments, we must resist the restrictions placed on that comprehension, the limits defined for our deliberation that tell us our citizenship is defined solely by our assessment and discussion of non-character-based public policy matters. We are told to "think of judgments of character, judgments of persons and of personal qualities, as a facet of private life, as possessing an intimacy far removed from the abstract impersonality of public life." In fact, Beiner concludes, as should we, that "judgments of persons and of personal character form a large and essential aspect of political judgment, and anyone who is a poor judge of character or whose judgment of persons is deficient will be likewise deficient in matters of political judgment."⁵³ Ultimately, we ignore rhetorics of political image, and advice from Adams, McGee, and Beiner, at our peril and at the peril of our democracy.

NOTES

1. Chris Cillizza, "The Fix: McCain Manager: 'This Election is Not About Issues,'" September 2, 2008, http://voices.washingtonpost.com/thefix/2008/09/mccain_manager_this_election_i.html (accessed October 20, 2009).
2. Cillizza, "The Fix."
3. Philip Elliott, "Obama: McCain Focused on Biography, Not Economy," *Associated Press*, September 5, 2008.
4. "Political Headlines," *Fox Special Report with Brit Hume*, September 3, 2008.
5. "Renewed Ferocity on Convention Stage; Obama Camp's Pushback; Strategy Behind Palin Pick," *The Situation Room*, CNN, September 4, 2008.
6. Michael Calvin McGee, "'Not Men, But Measures': The Origins and Import of an Ideological Principle," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 64 (1978): 142.
7. McGee, "'Not Men, But Measures,'" 142.
8. McGee, "'Not Men, But Measures,'" 154.
9. It is worth noting that this understanding of political image is meaningfully different

- from Hariman's definition of "political style": "a coherent repertoire of rhetorical conventions depending on aesthetic reactions for political effect." See Robert Hariman, *Political Style: The Artistry of Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 4.
10. Leroy Dorsey offers a concise summary of the literature on leadership. See Leroy G. Dorsey, "Introduction: The President as a Rhetorical Leader," in *The Presidency and Rhetorical Leadership*, ed. Leroy G. Dorsey (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 3–5.
 11. Kenneth L. Hacker, "Introduction: The Importance of Candidate Images in Presidential Elections," in *Candidate Images in Presidential Elections*, ed. Kenneth L. Hacker (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995), xiii. Robert Anderson articulates a similar perspective in defining political images as "perceptual phenomena allocated by members of an electorate as a means of assigning order and meaning to a complex and ambiguous political environment." Even as this view takes an audience orientation to understanding political images, Anderson nonetheless maintains this as a useful model for rhetorical criticism. See Robert O. Anderson, "The Characterization Model for Rhetorical Criticism of Political Image Campaigns," *Western Speech* 37 (1973): 75.
 12. Robert Asen, "A Discourse Theory of Citizenship," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90 (2004): 194.
 13. Asen, "A Discourse Theory of Citizenship," 195.
 14. John Gastil, *By Popular Demand: Revitalizing Representative Democracy through Deliberative Elections* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 5. Gastil edits a volume that offers a "handbook" for the achievement of his vision of deliberative democracy. See John Gastil and Peter Levine, eds., *The Deliberative Democracy Handbook: Strategies for Effective Civic Engagement in the 21st Century* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005). J. P. Zompetti, concerned about the decline of civil society, offers civic advocacy as a corrective, even as such advocacy is largely concerned about public issues and public policy matters. See J. P. Zompetti, "The Role of Advocacy in Civil Society," *Argumentation* 20 (2006): 167–83.
 15. Gastil, *By Popular Demand*, 6.
 16. In his proposal for citizen panels, for example, Gastil discusses the implication of his vision of deliberative democracy for elections, noting that the "point of [public] deliberation . . . would be to identify a limited range of concrete issues that voters could then use to compare candidates. To make those comparisons, voters would need to know where candidates stood on the issues chosen by the priority panels." See Gastil, *By Popular Demand*, 146.
 17. Noëlle McAfee, *Democracy and the Political Unconscious* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 157, 108. See also Christian F. Rostbøll, *Deliberative Freedom: Deliberative Democracy as Critical Theory* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008).

18. McAfee, *Democracy and the Political Unconscious*, 159–72. Other templates or models of deliberative democracy are available. See, for instance, Luigi Pellizzoni, "The Myth of the Best Argument: Power, Deliberation, and Reason," *British Journal of Sociology* 52 (2001): 59–86.
19. James Bohman, "Political Communication and the Epistemic Value of Diversity: Deliberation and Legitimation in Media Societies," *Communication Theory* 17 (2007): 348–55.
20. See William Keith, ed., "Special Issue on Deliberative Democracy," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 5 (2002): 219–357.
21. See Scott Welsh, "Deliberative Democracy and the Rhetorical Production of Political Culture," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 5 (2002): 679–708; Robert L. Ivie, "Rhetorical Deliberation and Democratic Politics in the Here and Now," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 5 (2002): 277–85.
22. Al Gore, *The Assault on Reason* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 24.
23. Gore, *The Assault on Reason*, 245–70. This view is echoed by Jay Childers, who wonders if the pertinent question about deliberative democracy "is not whether rhetoric is right for democracy, but how we equip democratic citizens to be better rhetoricians." Jay Childers, "Review Essay: Deliberating Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 94 (2008): 467.
24. This tension or dichotomy between issues and images is often found in research that operationalizes political advertisements as either issue ads or image ads. See, for example, William L. Benoit, *Seeing Spots: A Functional Analysis of Presidential Television Advertisements, 1952–1996* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1999); Gina M. Garramone, "Issue versus Image Orientation and Effects of Political Advertising," *Communication Research* 10 (1983): 59–76; Lynda Lee Kaid, "Political Advertising," in *The Handbook of Political Communication Research*, ed. Lynda Lee Kaid (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2004), 160–63. Jaeho Cho's examination of the relationship between political ads and deliberative democracy is premised on the contributions ads make to the information environment of a campaign, specifically as that environment is characterized by increased issue knowledge and partisan affiliation. See Jaeho Cho, "Political Ads and Citizen Communication," *Communication Research* 35 (2008): 423–51.
25. Benedetto Fontana, Cary J. Nederman, and Gary Remer, "Introduction: Deliberative Democracy and the Rhetorical Turn," in *Talking Democracy: Historical Perspectives on Rhetoric and Democracy*, ed. Benedetto Fontana, Cary J. Nederman, and Gary Remer (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 2.
26. Nina Eliasoph, *Avoiding Politics: How Americans Produce Apathy in Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 245. In a slightly different vein, Diana Mutz highlights how increased political activism and an activist political culture are inversely related to high levels of public deliberation. See Diana C. Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side:*

- Deliberative versus Participatory Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
27. Michael Schudson, *The Good Citizen: A History of American Civic Life* (New York: Martin Kessler, 1998), 310. Schudson makes a similar point and extends his argument in "Click Here for Democracy: A History and Critique of an Information-Based Model of Citizenship," in *Democracy and New Media*, ed. Henry Jenkins and David Thorburn (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2004), 49–60.
 28. Mitchell Stephens, *The Rise of the Image, the Fall of the Word* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 60.
 29. The gendered nature of this dichotomy is explicitly discussed in Leonard Shlain, *The Alphabet versus the Goddess: The Conflict between Word and Image* (New York: Viking, 1998).
 30. Erica Tyner Allen, "The Kennedy-Nixon Presidential Debates, 1960," The Museum of Broadcast Communications, <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/K/htmlK/kennedy-nixon/kennedy-nixon.htm> (accessed January 20, 2009).
 31. See, for example, James N. Druckman, "The Power of Television Images: The First Kennedy-Nixon Debate Revisited," *Journal of Politics* 65 (2003): 559–71; David L. Vancil and Susan D. Pendell, "The Myth of Viewer-Listener Disagreement in the First Kennedy-Nixon Debate," *Central States Speech Journal* 38 (1987): 16–27.
 32. Kevin DeLuca and Jennifer Peeples, "From Public Sphere to Public Screen: Democracy, Activism, and the 'Violence' in Seattle," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19 (2002): 131.
 33. DeLuca and Peeples, "From Public Sphere to Public Screen," 127
 34. Cara A. Finnegan and Jiyeon Kang, "'Sighting' the Public: Iconoclasm and Public Sphere Theory," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90 (2004): 380.
 35. Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 12.
 36. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 5.
 37. Quoted in Zoltan Haraszti, *John Adams & the Prophets of Progress* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952), 3.
 38. John A. Schutz and Douglass Adair, *The Spur of Fame: Dialogues of John Adams and Benjamin Rush, 1805–1813* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1966), 216–17.
 39. Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Vintage, 1961), 11.
 40. Boorstin, *The Image*, 46.
 41. Kiku Adatto, *Picture Perfect: Life in the Age of the Photo Op* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 69.

42. Shawn J. Parry-Giles and Trevor Parry-Giles, *Constructing Clinton: Hyperreality and Presidential Image-Making in Postmodern Politics* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 1.
43. This research is nicely summarized in Cho, "Political Ads and Citizen Communication."
44. These arguments are reviewed in James A. Gardner, *What Are Campaigns For? The Role of Persuasion in Electoral Law and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).
45. Roderick P. Hart, *Campaign Talk: Why Elections Are Good for Us* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 21.
46. All quotations and references to political commercials come from the archive of spots at Stanford University Political Communication Lab, and are available at <http://pcl.stanford.edu/>.
47. Robert Gray Gunderson, *The Log-Cabin Campaign* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1957).
48. Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Packaging the Presidency: A History and Criticism of Presidential Campaign Advertising*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).
49. Douglass Adair, "Fame and the Founding Fathers," in *Fame and the Founding Fathers: Essays by Douglass Adair*, ed. Trevor Colbourn (New York: W.W. Norton, 1974), 10.
50. For a discussion of Adams's approach to fame and political leadership, see Trevor Parry-Giles, "Fame, Celebrity, and the Legacy of John Adams," *Western Journal of Communication* 72 (2008): 83–101. I have also detailed elsewhere my argument that the political system in the United States is largely driven by a characterological motive that derives from a range of sources. See Trevor Parry-Giles, *The Character of Justice: Rhetoric, Law, and Politics in the Supreme Court Confirmation Process* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2006).
51. George N. Dionisopoulos, Victoria J. Gallagher, Steven R. Goldzwig, and David Zarefsky, "Martin Luther King, The American Dream and Vietnam: A Collision of Rhetorical Trajectories," *Western Journal of Communication* 56 (1992), 94–95. See also Leland M. Griffin, "When Dreams Collide: Rhetorical Trajectories in the Assassination of President Kennedy," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70 (1984): 111–31.
52. Ronald Beiner, *Political Judgment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 164.
53. Beiner, *Political Judgment*, 164–65.