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PERFORMING POLITICS:
A THEATRE-BASED ANALYSIS OF THE
1996 NATIONAL NOMINATING CONVENTIONS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

by

John Brooks Lawton III, A.B., M.A.

*****

The Ohio State University
1998

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ABSTRACT

In 1996, pundits of every political stripe derided the August political conventions as choreographed and meaningless spectacles. This dissertation argues that such criticism is unjustified. Conventions may not hold the political or electoral significance they once did, but they are anything but meaningless, so long as one is willing to look at them from a different perspective. From the point of view of a theatre scholar, conventions are treasur- troves of meaning. Like court masques of centuries past, conventions are elaborate theatrical performances of political power. They are grand stages on which the nation's myths, dreams, and ideologies are enacted. And they are best understood using a theatrebased approach.

Chapter 1 situates my research within a particular frame of theatre criticism. Following the approaches of Erika Fischer-Lichte, Marco De Marinis, and Marvin Carlson, I examine the characteristics that define a theatrical performance. Chapter 2 offers a narrative history of the political convention, explaining how it has evolved and has become a genre of theatrical performance. Its political functions have been stripped away gradually, leaving only the performative. Chapter 3 begins my examination of the 1996 conventions, looking at the socio-political context in which the conventions were staged in that election year. The differences were striking. Clinton faced no challenges from within his party; Dole suffered through an expensive primary season and made a variety of political missteps over the course of the summer. Chapter 4 looks at another context of the 1996 conventions,
namely the production itself. Comparing and contrasting the two different performance environments, I examine how and why the two conventions differed from each other.

The remaining chapters of this dissertation looks at the convention performances themselves, concentrating on four particular codes which distinguish conventions from other genres of theatrical performance. Chapter 5 examines the televisual code. Using the Republican convention as a case-study, I analyze the ways in which that theatrical performance adapted and incorporated a television aesthetic. Chapter 6 analyzes the mimetic code whereby the convention performance imitated an idealized America. The focus of this chapter is Elizabeth Dole’s “audition” for the role of First Lady. Chapter 7 focuses on the spectacular code, noting how spectacle was used to influence the convention audience. In particular, I focus on the Democrats’ use of their videowall. Chapter 8 looks at the structural code, the ways in which the convention “plot” was crafted to create a dramatic arc to the four days. Special attention is paid to the Democratic convention and its parallel plotlines taking place in the convention hall and on Clinton’s train trip, the “21st Century Express.” Chapter 9 summarizes my analysis by comparing the four performance codes manifested in the acceptance speeches Bob Dole and Bill Clinton.
Dedicated to the memory of Jack and Nancy Lawton
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank my family for all of their help: My parents, Philip and Mary Lawton for their incredible love and support (even when I destroyed their car on the way to the Republican convention!); my brother and sister-in-law for allowing me to appropriate their wedding as an example; and, of course, Nina, who only entered my life in the last year of this project but who has made all the difference in the world during that year.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Every four years the major political parties stage their national nominating conventions to the near-universal derision of the press and media pundits who long for the "good old days" when conventions were the "real" thing. Covering the 1996 conventions, for example, PBS commentators Haynes Johnson and Doris Kearns Goodwin both lamented the absence of "real emotion." In an op-ed piece entitled "The Convention vs. The Reality," David Broder griped that "[t]he convention hall has been taken over by a gang of movie producers who have replaced the politicians with celebrities (in or out of public life) and scripted them to tell moral parables." And Ted Koppel, who took the unprecedented step of pulling his Nightline crew out of the Republican convention after only two nights, complained: "This convention is more of an infomercial than a news event. Nothing surprising has happened. Nothing surprising is anticipated" (13 Aug. 1996).

This dissertation argues that this criticism is misplaced and stems from a fundamental misunderstanding of what conventions have become. No longer are conventions the high-tension, high-stakes political battles of wills they once were (if they ever were). No longer are conventions just party meetings (again, if they ever were), when reporters and members of the media outnumber delegates three-to-one. Instead, conventions are elaborate performances of political ideology crafted for the purpose of electioneering. And as they have become such performances, the task of analysis has
changed. As Chicago Tribune columnist Clarence Page observed about the 1996 conventions: "Increasingly, this is a job not so much for a political commentator as a theater critic" ("Why all the rain"). It is noteworthy, though, that Page was not being pejorative. He was not condoning Koppel's curt dismissal of the conventions as "more of an infomercial than a news event." Rather, Page was advocating for a different journalist approach:

But theater criticism is journalism, too. Maybe the news is the very theater that Koppel ridicules. If political conventions are theater, then the theater is the message. They should be covered the way a theater critic does: What kind of message do they try to present, do they present it, and was it worth presenting it in the first place? (emphasis added)

This dissertation is an attempt to meet Page's challenge. I may formulate the theatre critic's task somewhat differently than Page does, but my overall goal is his. I think that theatre criticism has a great deal to offer anyone trying to understand how and why a modern political convention operates. I also think that a study of conventions from a theatre perspective is valuable to the theatre community. I suspect that few convention scholars and few theatre scholars realize how much they have in common.

This chapter will clarify my terms and approach. The next chapter will make the case as to why a political convention, in particular, should be thought of as a theatrical performance. The rest of this dissertation will be an analysis of the 1996 Republican and Democratic conventions using a theatre-based approach.

**Negotiating the Definitional Territory**

The task of analyzing the theatricality of a political event like a convention is complicated by the fact that the intersection of theatre and politics has been, and continues to be, the site of many disciplinary "turf wars."\(^1\) Battles over the relationship between

---

\(^1\) Admittedly, "turf wars" may be a misnomer. Often the combatants in these wars are unaware that they have encroached onto anyone else's turf. A noteworthy example of
theatre and politics are waged with such frequency and vehemence that there is no room here for a thorough survey. Fortunately, surveys already exist. In general, though, the arguments fall between two poles.

From one perspective, theatre is a good metaphor for politics, but it is only a metaphor, and nothing more. Erving Goffman’s famous reversal at the end of The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life is a good illustration of this perspective. After spending an entire book relating common behavior to theatrical performances, Goffman admits that his “attempt to press a mere analogy so far was in part a rhetoric and a maneuver”:

The claim that all the world’s a stage is sufficiently commonplace for readers to be familiar with its limitations and tolerant of its presentation, knowing that at any time they will easily be able to demonstrate to themselves that it is not to be taken too seriously. An action staged in a theater is a relatively contrived illusion and an admitted one; unlike ordinary life, nothing real or actual can happen to the performed characters.

From another perspective, theatre is not analogous to politics; it is politics. Or rather, politics is theatre. Richard Schechner’s work in performance studies might best characterize this approach, since he argues that human performances of every kind—from ritual to theatre to almost any kind of social interaction—are related and can be placed along

---

2 Marvin Carlson’s Performance: A Critical Introduction offers a comprehensive summary of the issues and approaches surrounding theatre and politics, particularly in terms of “performance.” See also Bert States’ “Performance as Metaphor,” Art Borreca’s “Political Dramaturgy: A Dramaturg’s (Re)View,” Brisset and Edgley’s “The Dramaturgical Perspective” (30-36), and Bruce Wilshire’s Role-Playing and Identity: The Limits of Theatre as Metaphor. Each of these works not only offers overviews of the different perspectives scholars have taken, but also explores the implications of this debate.
a continuum. In “Magnitudes of Performance,” for instance, Schechner devotes six pages
to an elaborate “Performance-Event-Time-Space Chart” (20-25).

Taken to extremes, the two poles can become traps. The argument that theatre is
nothing but metaphor has disturbing implications, for instance. As Marvin Carlson points
out in his critique of Bruce Wilshire’s work (specifically Role-Playing and Identity and
“The Concept of the Paratheatrical”), the effort to delineate the on-stage world of theatre
from offstage reality “would seemingly not only deny the name of theatre to specifically
engaged drama such as that of Karen Finley, or for that matter Brecht, Shaw, or Waiting
for Lefty, but apparently would deny to theatre any power to produce, consciously or
unconsciously, a real effect on the world outside it” (“Theatre History” 95).

If a too-restrictive notion of theatre is unsatisfying, a too-inclusive notion is not
much better. There is something disquieting about a theatrical definition so expansive that
it engulfs every kind of performance. As Carlson says in the concluding chapter of
Performance: “[the] generalizing use of the theatrical metaphor blurs a distinction that still
can and should be made between most cultural and social performance and ‘theatrical’
performance (including traditional ‘theatre’ but perhaps especially in the case of
contemporary ‘performance’)” (196). If everything is theatre, then the term itself becomes
meaningless.

How, then, can one steer a course between this definitional Scylla and Charybdis,
between understandings of theatre which are either too small or too large? One option is to
avoid the dilemma entirely, as both Carlson and Erika Fischer-Lichte suggested at the 1993
Theatre Historiography Symposium in Helsinki. Carlson pointed out that the features and
strategies of theatre history “do not derive from some essence of the discipline, but from a
specific cultural situation and subject always to change. Therefore, if they are to be
discussed meaningfully at all, they must be discovered inductively and not deductively, and
with a recognition that in practice they are constantly open to negotiation” (“Theatre
Theatre is dynamic, not static. Consequently, the field of theatre studies should be dynamic as well, encompassing research into performances that are not part of the traditional theatrical canon:

[Scholars] can, or should, feel free to follow their interests in human performance, into circus, or professional wrestling, or rock concerts, or political meetings without feeling the need to justify to themselves or others, that such activities can fall within the proper boundaries of theatre historiography. (Carlson “Theatre History” 96 emphasis added)

Fischer-Lichte makes a similar argument when she says that theatre “is culturally and historically determined and...within Western culture from the sixteenth century, the concept of theatre has constantly changed” (“Theatricality” 86). Her solution to the definitional dilemma is to avoid the term “theatre” in favor of the more general concept “theatricality.” Rather than setting absolute boundaries on what is and is not theatre, Fischer-Lichte believes in examining individual performances on a case-by-case basis. “Theatricality,” she argues, “depends on the respective discourse as to what kinds of cultural, social, political events and processes are regarded and addressed as theatrical” (88-89).

It is my contention that a political convention is, indeed, a “theatrical performance” in the technical sense that Fischer-Lichte uses the term. It should be noted that in her work and in this dissertation, “theatrical” is not merely a vague adjective for things that are “theatre-like,” but a description of very particular kinds of performances that share specific qualities inherent to theatre. The range of activities sharing these qualities is very broad, encompassing more than what we might traditionally think of as theatre. As Marco De Marinis argues in Semiotics of Performance, these include not only the representational theatre that the layperson understands to be theatre,

but also all theatrical phenomena where the so-called presentational aspect variously prevails over the representational aspect; where turning inward (self-reflexivity or self-referentiality) prevails over turning outward; where production (of meaning, reality, etc.) prevails over reproduction. (48-49)
Among the phenomena De Marinis cites as examples are dance, ballet, celebrations, ceremonies, rituals, happenings, performance art, and even military parades and athletic events. Obviously, I believe that political conventions belong on that list as well. To make the case, it is necessary to examine which particular qualities make a performance theatrical. In the next chapter, I will demonstrate that a contemporary convention, as it has evolved, now shares those theatrical qualities.

**Characteristics of the Theatrical Performance**

A basic characteristic of theatre is that its "material artifact"—the performance—is inextricably linked to the actor(s) who produce it. Theatre—unlike other artistic forms—can exist only in and at the moment of creation. We can look at pictures or read novels that were created centuries ago, but we cannot attend any other theatre performances than those which occur in the present moment. Elements like costumes, props, and sets may survive a performance, but they are only evidence of the past event. Even a videotape is merely a record of the theatre performance, not the performance itself.

If theatre only occurs in an ever-transitory present, then the reception of the theatrical performance must take place in that same present. And for that reception to occur, there must be another person besides the actor in attendance. There must be an audience. Fischer-Lichte declares that the "audience is in fact a constitutive part of theater—without an audience there can be no performance" ([Semiotics of Theater](#7)). Further, she argues that theater "performances are characterized substantively by their public nature. Even if they take place before only one spectator, they nevertheless occur in public, for this one spectator represents the public in his capacity as a spectator. Theater always occurs as a public event" (7).

---

3 See Fischer-Lichte's *Semiotics of Theater* 6-10.
But what distinguishes a theatre performance from another live public performance like a lecture? The difference is in the way in which meaning is communicated: the lecturer tells; the actor shows. The distinction may seem simple, but it is actually quite profound.

The act of showing as part of a theatrical performance is a sophisticated process of communication called ostension. Umberto Eco calls ostension the “most basic” kind of performance:

> You ask me, “How should I be dressed for the party this evening?” If I answer by showing my tie framed by my jacket and say, “Like this, more or less,” I am signifying by ostension. My tie does not mean my actual tie but your possible tie (which can be of a different stuff and color) and I am “performing” by representing to you the you of this evening. (“Semiotics of Theatrical Performance” 110-111)

The difference between the performance Eco describes and a traditional theatre performance is a matter of degree rather than kind. The tie demonstration/performance is momentary (“Like this, more or less”); a theatre actor’s performance goes on for an extended period of time. In either case, though, the same doubling effect takes place. In “reality” Eco’s tie is singular and unique, of a particular color and fabric; in “performance,” however—within the ostensive frame—the singularity of the tie is subsumed. The tie becomes a sign for a generic class of ties appropriate for the evening’s party. By the same token, Eco is himself in reality but a sign for a generic class of party-goers at the moment of his brief performance. An actor is not only himself or herself but also a sign representing some “other” by virtue of appearing on stage. As Veltrusky put it: “All that is on the stage is a sign” (qtd. in Elam, 7).

The generic “other” that is created through ostension is the role. That distinction is important because the role, the actor, and the spectator comprise the three legs of the theatrical stool. As Fischer-Lichte puts it: “the actor is only an actor and not just person A, B, or C to the extent that s/he plays someone else, X, Y or Z, i.e., plays a role. In other
words, the minimum preconditions for theater to be theater are that person A represents [role] X while [spectator] S looks on” (Semiotics of Theater 7).  

This definition seems clear enough. One need only fill in the blanks or plug in the variables. For example, in a 1988 production of Our Town, Spalding Gray (A) represented the Stage Manager (X) while the Lincoln Center spectators (S) looked on. And many years ago, my brother, Kirke (A), played a Siamese prince (X) for the spectators (S) attending a school production of The King and I. Simple. Unfortunately, the realm of theatrical performance is not nearly so black and white. There are many shades of gray, as two other performances illustrate. I saw these two performances a few years ago, within months of each other. One was theatrical and featured Spalding Gray; the other was not theatrical and featured my brother.

Spalding Gray’s performance was his one man show Gray’s Anatomy. Kirke’s was his wedding in a formal church ceremony. Both were thoroughly scripted and rehearsed performances that took place in specially designated spaces designed for such events and decorated for the occasion. Both featured special lighting, costuming, and music. And both met Fischer-Lichte’s minimum preconditions for theatre: in each, actor(s) represented role(s) while spectators looked on. Actually, my brother’s wedding fit the theatrical definition more neatly. Kirke, after all, was playing the role of Bridegroom, a stock character familiar to everyone in the audience, but a part he had never performed before. Spalding Gray, by contrast, was intimately acquainted with his role; it was himself. Nevertheless, Gray’s Anatomy was a theatrical performance, while Kirke’s wedding was not.

Theatrical Performance vs. Cultural Performance

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4 An adaptation of Bentley’s definition in The Life of the Drama: “The theatrical situation, reduced to a minimum, is that A impersonates B while C looks on” (150).
We know intuitively that a theatrical performance is different from a cultural performance like a wedding. But that knowledge leaves us in the same critical morass as Justice Black when he tried to define obscenity and resorted to the subjective, "I know it when I see it." What, then, distinguishes theatrical and cultural performances? If we are to find a solution, we must refine the minimum preconditions for theatre to be theatre.

A theatrical performance not only requires actor(s), role(s), and spectator(s), but a particular interrelationship amongst those three elements. As De Marinis argues, "In order to qualify as a performance text a performance must possess the minimal requirements of completeness and coherence, properties which...involve the interpretive collaboration of the receivers, the audience, or the theoretical analysts" (Semiotics of Performance 3). That collaboration can only take place if the actors and spectators are mutually aware that a theatrical event is taking place. The improvisational comedy *Tony 'n' Tina's Wedding* is theatre precisely because the actors and audience agree that it is. The audience knows that they are interacting with a cast staging a faux wedding for comic effect. If spectators came to the show believing they were watching a real wedding at which Tony and Tina were actually married, the result would not be theatre but a practical joke or social experiment. By the same token, if I had secretly switched the actual dearly beloved audience of relatives and friends at my brother's wedding with an audience of "outsiders" who had come to see

---

5 I am using the term "cultural performance" as Carlson does. He takes MacAlloon’s definition ("More than entertainment, more than didactic or persuasive formulations, and more than cathartic indulgences. They are occasions in which as a culture or society we reflect upon and define ourselves, dramatize our collective myths and histories, present ourselves with alternatives"), but adds additional stipulations:

Cultural performance may indeed function as a kind of metacommentary on its society...but neither performers nor spectators can be primarily characterized as consciously seeking out cultural performance as metacommentary on their culture. In 'theatrical' performance, however, this concern is central. (Performance, 196)

6 An extreme example of this kind of performance is the infamous psychology experiment at Yale in 1963, during which unsuspecting subjects were made to believe they were giving dangerous electric shocks to another person (actually an actor).
the "show," the result would still not have been theatre, but an act of mass voyeurism (and a gross betrayal of my brother's trust in me). Similarly, Spalding Gray can (and probably does) tell amusing personal anecdotes at cocktail parties. But these stories are not theatrical in that setting or context. The same anecdotes--told in exactly the same way--become theatrical only when they are performed in a theatrical setting for an audience that is aware a performance is taking place. Gray's party stories and Gray's Anatomy are substantively different.

Audience members know the difference between the performance of a wedding or a story told at a party and a theatrical performance like Tony 'n' Tina's Wedding or Gray's Anatomy because they are cued to the nature of the event. They may have seen the advertisements and posters, bought tickets, and received programs. The theatrical nature of a theatre performance is always foregrounded in some way, as Martin and Sauter point out:

> The means of marking a theatrical situation for both the performer and the spectator are subject to historical and cultural change, but we will always find a set of conventions, which clearly indicate the "theatre", be it a red curtain, a knocking on the stage floor, the masked face of the performer, a shrill flute, or simply the gathering in a specific (theatre) building. (Understanding Theatre, 10)

We established earlier that the role defines the actor as an actor. In the same way, it is the role that defines the theatrical performance, because it is the role that captures the audience's attention. Those of us assembled in that chapel were there to see Janine and Kirke engage in a public ritual together. We were there to see their "real-life" act of affirming a commitment to each other. By contrast, those of us gathered for Gray's Anatomy were there to see Spalding Gray enact a role. This privileging of the role over the actor is what Fischer-Lichte calls the "fundamental, qualitative difference" between what actor A does as himself or herself and what s/he does when portraying role X. It is the
subtle, but crucial difference between the role-playing all of us engage in during daily life (see the works of Erving Goffman), and the role-playing in a theatre performance:

A can act as A both in the presence of others and on her own. When A, by contrast, acts in order to portray X, then everything she does, the way she does it, and where she does it is related to the presence of spectators, for whom A's external appearance signifies that of X, her actions and behavior that of X, and the space in which she acts the space in which X acts. 

(Semiotics of Theater 9)

Fischer-Lichte is not arguing, of course, that the theatre spectator must only see X instead of A. Watching Gray's Anatomy, for instance, I was free to try to discern where Gray-as-role left off and Gray-as-actor began. Actually, that dual focus is at the heart of the theatrical performance, as Anne Ubersfeld points out: “The pleasure of the audience oscillates between these two attitudes: a fascination with magic recreation and the observation of a practice of imitation” (“Pleasure of the Spectator” 130). Arguably, the audience's oscillation between engagement and detachment is the whole point of a work such as Gray's Anatomy which is all about personal observation and vision, and which intentionally blurs the lines between role and actor. All theatrical performance shares this function to some extent. 

The function of a cultural performance like Kirke’s wedding is very different. As spectators in the chapel, we were not interested in seeing how well Janine and Kirke performed the roles of Bride and Groom. We wanted to see them, not their roles. (They enacted their roles very well, incidentally, but that was ancillary to the event.) And we certainly did not derive our pleasure at the occasion by oscillating between different spectatorial attitudes. The reality of the wedding ceremony was more important to us than the aesthetics. Again, this is in sharp contrast to the function of a theatrical performance.

Although Gray’s monologues are, perhaps, extreme examples of theatrical performances of this kind, there are numerous other examples within the theatre canon. Pirandello’s Enrico IV and Handke’s Offending the Audience, for instance, derive their theatrical power from the fact that the audience is challenged to differentiate the actors from their roles.
The observation by Prague School theorist Karel Brusák bears repeating: “[W]hile in real life the utilitarian function of an object is usually more important than its signification, on a theatrical set the signification is all important” (qtd. in Elam 8).

Applying Brusák’s point to the cultural and theatrical performances I have been citing, we can see that the success of Kirke’s wedding did not depend upon the manner in which he and his bride performed their vows. Had Kirke tripped and fallen on his way up to the altar or dropped the ring before placing it on Janine’s finger, they would have been no less married. But if Spalding Gray had forgotten his lines or in some other way “lost” his character, the performance would have been judged a failure because his was a theatrical performance. As Fischer-Lichte points out, a “shift of the dominance within the semiotic functions” determines whether or not a performance is theatrical: “When the semiotic function of using signs as signs of signs in a behavioural, situational or communication process is perceived as dominant, the...process may be regarded as theatrical. (“Theatricality” 88) Carlson makes a similar argument when he differentiates between theatrical and cultural performances:

[Theatrical performance] is a specific event with its liminoid nature foregrounded, almost invariably clearly separated from the rest of life, presented by performers and attended by audiences both of whom regard the experience as made up of material to be interpreted, to be reflected upon, to be engaged in—emotionally, mentally, and perhaps even physically.

(Theatrical Performance and Spectacle

Carlson’s distinction between different kinds of performances is illuminating, because it relates directly to another distinction that ought to be addressed: how does the theatrical relate to the spectacular? Clearly, the two are related. Spectacle, after all, has been a recognized component of theatre since Aristotle discussed the subject in his Poetics. But while a theatrical performance is often spectacular, a spectacle is not always theatrical.
Word origins and linguistics may offer a clue to better understanding the phenomenon. As John MacAloon points out:

The English word "spectacle" derives from the Latin intensive specere "to look at," and ultimately from an Indo-European root spek "to observe." The dictionary definition echoes this etymology, defining "spectacle" first of all as "something exhibited...a remarkable or noteworthy sight." Spectacles give primacy to visual sensory and symbolic codes; they are sights to be seen. Hence we refer to circuses as "spectacles," but not orchestral performances. ("Olympic Games," 243)

Taking MacAloon's logic a step further, I would argue that if a spectacle is only visual—if it is only a sight to be seen—then it is not theatrical. If, on the other hand, a spectacle transcends the visual—prompting the viewer to speculate about what he or she has seen within a larger context—then it becomes theatrical. I use the verb "speculate" deliberately. It shares the same root as "spectacle," and is therefore concerned with the visual, but it contains an added nuance. The definition of "speculate," after all, is "To observe or view mentally, to consider, examine, or reflect upon with close attention; to contemplate; to theorize upon" (OED). A viewer who speculates is not a passive observer, but an active participant in the process of making meaning from what he or she has seen. And that speculative participation is the essence of the theatrical experience.

To illustrate the distinction between mere spectacle and theatrical spectacle, I will turn to one of the most impressive man-made spectacles I have ever witnessed. A permanent exhibit at the Boston Museum of Science is a gigantic Van de Graaf generator capable of creating electrical sparks akin to lightning strikes. It is an awesome demonstration of power, a spectacular artificial thunderstorm. But it is not theatrical, because the spectacle is complete unto itself. It is an exhibit, not a performance. By contrast, a theatrical artificial thunderstorm is found during Act III of any production of King Lear. It probably won't have the same pyrotechnics as the Van de Graaf generator exhibit, but it is theatrical because the audience subsumes the spectacle within the aesthetic context of the larger play. The storm becomes symbolic of Lear's madness and relates
directly to the social turmoil of Lear's kingdom. As Ubersfeld notes, the process of creating meaning out of mere spectacle is the heart of the theatrical experience:

Theatrical pleasure, properly speaking, is the pleasure of the sign; it is the most semiotic of all pleasures. What is a sign, if not what replaces an object for someone under certain circumstances? Surrogate sign, a presence which stands for an absence: the sign for a god, the spool of thread for the mother, the stage for an absent "reality." Theatre as sign of a gap-being-filled. \textit{It would not be going too far to say that the act of filling the gap is the very source of theatrical pleasure}. ("Pleasure" 129, emphasis added).

\textit{The Function of Theatrical Performance}

Ubersfeld's description speaks to the underlying purpose of theatrical performances within the larger social context. Each audience member "fills the gap" with material drawn from his or her own life experience and world-view. The collective experience of the audience as a whole becomes what Margaret Wilkerson argues is "an opportunity for a community to come together and reflect upon itself....[theatre] is not only the mirror through which a society can reflect upon itself—it also helps to shape the perceptions of the culture through the power of its imaging" (239). According to Fischer-Lichte, theatre "becomes a model of cultural reality in which the spectators confront the meanings of that reality. In this sense, theater can be understood as an act of self-presentation and self-reflection on the part of the culture in question" (\textit{Semiotics} 10). Theatre also "involves the 'doubling up' of the culture in which it is played" (Fischer-Lichte "Theatricality" 88). And Carlson himself states that a "primary function" of theatrical performance is "precisely cultural and social metacommentary" (\textit{Performance} 196).

Of course, it is precisely that metacommenting function that has earned theatrical performance such enmity for millennia, as Jonas Barish details in \textit{The Anti-theatrical Prejudice}. Since Plato's \textit{Republic}, political regimes have feared the subversive power of the theatre, banning or strictly limiting theatrical performance. Societal self-reflection, after all, can present significant challenges to the status quo. An audience looking at itself
through the mirror of the stage may not like what it sees. Theatrical performance can disrupt the social order, a fact that revolutionaries have always tried to exploit. Bertolt Brecht’s Marxist theatre, Augusto Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed, and Luiz Valdez’ El Teatro Campesino are but three examples of work built upon the counter-hegemonic potential of theatre.

But theatre can also reaffirm political hegemony. History is filled with examples of theatrical performances that were used to buttress authority. Traveling medieval monarchs could expect elaborate pageants to be staged in their honor when they arrived in a town under their rule. The pageants were carefully orchestrated as tangible demonstrations of that monarch’s power (see Attreed “The Politics of Welcome”). The elaborate and spectacular court masques of the English Renaissance were the “festal embodiments” of the concept of monarchy, according to Stephen Orgel:

> [T]he court audience saw the masque, with its scenic illusions and spectacular machines...as models of the universe, as science, as assertions of power, as demonstrations of the essential divinity of the human mind. The marvels of stagecraft—the ability to overcome gravity, control the heavenly spheres—are the supreme expressions of Renaissance kingship. (Illusion of Power 58)

And for their part Baroque monarchs presented themselves as “Gods of Play,” overseeing festive performances that “offered the participants and witnesses an imitative assessment (imitative by allegorical means) of the wealth, the education, and the religious devotion of the sponsor-ruler and the polis” (Aercke 20).

I believe that the contemporary political convention functions as a theatrical performance in much the same way that the medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque court performances did. I believe that a convention, like the brothel in Genet’s *Balcony,* can be the site for a theatrical performance affirming, if not instilling, political and social authority. History is full of examples of people who were imbued with presidential timber only as a result of their appearance on the convention stage. After four days of being declared to be
“the next President of the United States,” some men actually have gained the political stature to fulfill the declaration. In 1992, for instance, Bill Clinton was a distant third in the presidential race only weeks before his convention. After his convention, though, he pulled on top and stayed ahead the rest of the way. Similarly, George Bush used his 1988 convention to step out from the shadows of Ronald Reagan and present himself as President.

Methodology for Analyzing the Convention as Theatrical Performance

To summarize, there are three conditions that make a performance theatrical. First, there are the constituent elements: not only an actor and a spectator, but also a role for the actor to play. Second, there is the function: actor and spectator have assembled for the purpose of performing/observing the role. Finally, there is the implicit contract amongst actors and spectators that the role is the function of the event; all participants in the theatrical performance are aware of its theatrical nature. If I am to argue that a convention is a theatrical performance, then I need to demonstrate how a convention satisfies these three conditions.

The best way to demonstrate that is to chronicle the history of the convention, showing how a primarily political event, albeit one with some theatrical and performative characteristics, evolved to become a wholly theatrical performance. Over one hundred and sixty-five years the convention’s political functions were stripped away, and its theatrical functions grew to fill the void. By the 1990s, only the theatrical performance remained. That evolution will be the subject of the next chapter. The remaining chapters of this dissertation will be an analysis of the 1996 conventions as theatrical performances.

Before I go any further, however, I should explain the approach I will take with this analysis. I should also explain what the approaches I will not take. I leave for political scientists the work to be done analyzing the impact the 1996 conventions had upon
individual voters' electoral decisions. Sabato's "Conventions" includes work in this direction. Likewise, I leave for communications scholars the work to be done analyzing the 1996 conventions as television broadcasts. Larry David Smith has blazed that trail with his analyses of the 1988, and 1992 conventions; to the best of my knowledge, no one has followed in his footsteps in any thorough, scholarly fashion. And sociologists can describe better than I how conventions reflect and/or shape American culture. As a theatre scholar, however, I can offer the perspective of a theatre-based critique. And that is what I am attempting in this dissertation by analyzing the 1996 conventions as theatrical performances.

For the sake of clarity, I should explain what my theatre-based critique entails. Theatre studies is not a monolithic field, after all. There are probably as many different approaches as there are kinds of theatrical performances. My approach will be based in semiotics. Semiotic theory is advantageous because of the performative nature of the political convention. Unlike most traditional forms of theatre, conventions do not have a script as such. Although everything is carefully planned, there is no single "playwright" and no definitive script. The printed speeches prepared in advance and given out as press releases are fundamentally different from the speeches as they are delivered. Speakers often change the wording at the last moment, for instance. More significantly, the tempo, pace, and delivery of the speech, along with the audience's reaction/interaction, make the performed speech a wholly different thing than the written speech. Semiotic theory not only accounts for this disjunction between the performance and the written text, but takes it

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8 See also Mayer "Presidential Nominations," and Stanley "Nominations."
9 O'Rourke's Campaign America '96, however, offers a non-academic account of the election as it appeared on television and includes chapters on the conventions.
10 I do not believe such work has been done, although E. Doyle McCarthy apparently agrees with me that it should be done ("Social Construction of Emotions" 273). The closest I can find is Erickson's American Nomad, a personal report on the cultural significance of the 1996 election.
as a given, assuming that the written version of a performance and the performance itself are different texts to be analyzed. As Keir Elam puts it, “Unlike the literary semiotician or the analyst of myth or the plastic arts, the researcher in theatre and drama is faced with two quite dissimilar—although intimately connected—types of textual material: that produced in the theatre and that composed for the theatre” (3). These are labeled the performance text and the dramatic text respectively.11 Just to be clear, this dissertation concentrates primarily on the performance text of the 1996 conventions because, as mentioned above, there is no dramatic text as such for the conventions.12

Conveniently for me, theatre semiotics of the last decade or so has tended to emphasize the performance text over the dramatic. Semiotics may have had an historic verbal or linguistic bias, due to its roots in linguistics, but many theatre semioticians have rebelled against that bias. Patrice Pavis, for instance, has written on the semiotics of the mise-en-scene; Fischer-Lichte and De Marinis on the semiotics of performance.

De Marinis’ arguments for the performance text as a text to be examined in and of itself, rather than as a byproduct of a written (dramatic) text are particularly relevant to this study. The relationship a traditional playscript has to its performance text holds true for a convention as well. The dramatic text prepared a priori (speeches released in advance) is necessarily different from the performance text, even different from the spoken component of that performance text. Similarly, the a posteriori text (the printed proceedings) is merely a version of the performance text. Yet, current convention scholarship—particularly in communications—gives primary consideration to the dramatic text, the rhetoric in isolation.

11 Elam defines “text” broadly as “a network of meanings” (12). Throughout this dissertation I will adopt a similarly expansive notion of the term.

12 Strictly speaking, there are dramatic texts for the 1996 conventions, in the form of the proceedings published by the Republican and Democratic National Committees. But these are a posteriori texts compiled from transcriptions of the live performances. These “residue-texts,” as De Marinis calls them, can be illuminating but are still only documentary records of the performance texts’ verbal component. See De Marinis 23-26.
Communications professor Sonya K. Foss argued in 1992 that many areas within her discipline virtual ignore the way that visual imagery serves to communicate meaning:

Scholars of language, for example, typically do not address the ways in which meaning is constituted in visual images, nor do scholars of persuasion focus on the processes by which visual images persuade. Similarly, rhetorical critics usually do not analyze the operation of visual artifacts, nor do rhetorical theorists propose theories that suggest how visual images function. (85)

Following the semiotic model of Fischer-Lichte and De Marinis, I will analyze the theatrical performances that were the 1996 conventions in a methodical fashion, a process of spiraling focus, moving from the general to specific. This chapter has laid out the theoretical rationale for examining political conventions as theatrical performances. Chapter 2 will have a similarly telescopic focus as I look at the 1996 conventions within the broad context of over 150 years of history. In Chapter 3 and 4, the focus will narrow as I put the 1996 conventions into context. As both Fischer-Lichte and De Marinis argue in their semiotics of theatre and performance, that contextualizing process is vital. Fischer-Lichte points out that the shift from theatre theory to theatre history involves a “normative” level of analysis. She defines that normative process as “looking at a series of historical phenomena and attempting to uncover and explain the specific characteristics which they have in common” (Semiotics of Theater, 12). For his part, De Marinis argues that it is “always preliminary and essential for the proper understanding of a performance text” to explore both its “cultural context” and the “performance context” (Semiotics of Performance 81).

Chapters 3 and 4, therefore, will apply De Marinis’ approach to Fischer-Lichte’s normative goals. In doing so, I will examine key contexts for the 1996 Republican and

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13 I can attest from personal experience that Foss’ observations still hold. At a recent conference I heard a communications scholar analyze Bob Dole’s 1996 acceptance speech. This analysis dealt entirely with the speech text; at no time did the scholar address the larger context within which the speech was delivered.

14 See also 145-7.
Democratic conventions. Chapter 3 will examine the political context in which the conventions were staged.\textsuperscript{15} Chapter 4 will examine the production context under which the conventions were planned and developed as performances.\textsuperscript{16}

Having looked at the performance contexts, I will then look at the convention performances themselves. To do that effectively, it will be necessary to narrow my focus once again, concentrating on specific aspects of each performance through case studies. These four case studies will not offer a comprehensive picture--conventions are too complex and too vast for that--but should provide a broad perspective on the codes that distinguish conventions from other genres of theatrical performance. Chapter 5 will examine the televisual code, with special attention paid to the 1996 Republican convention and its GOP-TV broadcast. Chapter 6 will cover the mimetic code embodied by Elizabeth Dole's speech on the third night of the Republican convention. Chapter 7 will address the spectacular code of the Democrats' videowall. And Chapter 8 will analyze the structural code with which the Democrats created a dramatic arc to their convention. Finally, I will summarize my analysis in Chapter 9 by comparing all four performance codes manifested in the acceptance speeches Bob Dole and Bill Clinton.

\textsuperscript{15} This is akin to De Marinis' "cultural context" which comprises "the relations that can be discerned between the text in question (or one of its components, i.e., a partial text) and other texts, whether performance or not, belonging to the same cultural synchrony" (Semiotics of Performance 3).

\textsuperscript{16} See De Marinis' definition of "performance context" which is "constituted by the conditions of production and reception of the performance text, and by their constitutive elements" (81).
CHAPTER 2

THE EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL CONVENTIONS

Congressional Quarterly may be correct in calling the convention "a uniquely American institution," but the convention has its origins in sixteenth-century Europe. One definition of "convention" in the Oxford English Dictionary is "a meeting of the Estates of the kingdom of Scotland (before the Union), upon any special occasion or emergency, without the formal summons which was required for a regular parliament." A citation for this definition dates back to 1572. In his book Emergence of the Presidential Nominating Convention, James A. Chase points out that

The convention concept derived from the English constitutional struggles of the seventeenth century when two irregularly appointed parliamentary bodies (in 1660 and 1689) settled the government of the kingdom by pretending to express the will of the whole nation. (279, emphasis added)

From the start conventions were inherently performative. As extra-governmental assemblies, they had to "pretend" legitimacy. The delegates were, in effect, actors playing roles for the public at large. Or as Chase phrases it, "Implicit in the convention was the idea that its delegates incarnated the sovereignty of the people; its sessions enacted the social compact" (279, emphasis added). Obviously, the political success of any convention depended upon the delegates' successful enactment. An unconvincing "performance" would cast doubt upon the convention as a whole. Thus, conventions were public spectacles by their very nature.
While the idea of a convention was to enact the “social compact,” thereby expressing “the will of the whole nation,” the reality of a convention was very different. Conventions were almost always means with which to generate national will, rather than follow it. The American Constitutional Convention of 1787, for instance, was a mechanism to replace the old Articles of Confederation with a stronger federal government. That convention succeeded, in part, by convincingly enacting the social will. Not all conventions were that successful, as the Richmond Compiler's 1831 complaint illustrates: “This seems to be the age of Conventions—not for forming Constitutions, but for shaping the measures of the People” (qtd. in Chase 279).

*Nineteenth Century*

1831 may or may not have been the “age of Conventions,” but it certainly was a key year for them. On September 11, 1831, the Antimason party held a convention in Baltimore to nominate William Wirt for the Presidency. It was the first time that the convention structure was used by an American political party to nominate a candidate. Up until that time, Presidential nominees had been selected by Congressional caucus, the Constitutionally-mandated system that proved increasingly inadequate as the United States matured politically. One major difficulty with the system was that political factions without allies in Congress were unable to nominate Presidential candidates. A nominating convention was a way around the system, and was useful as “a device to give at least the semblance of nationwide representation” (David et al., 18).

Although the Antimasons did not survive as a party, their innovation thrived. Within the next year, both the National Republican and Democratic-Republican parties held

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conventions of their own. For both parties, the convention was a useful mechanism.
The National Republicans, like the Antimasons, lacked Congressional allies to nominate a
candidate against the incumbent President, Andrew Jackson. The Democratic-Republicans.
Jackson's own party, convened for a very different purpose. Their convention was a
means by which Jackson and his "kitchen cabinet" could dump Vice-President John C.
Calhoun (who had a great deal of Congressional support) in favor of Martin Van Buren.

Jackson's convention set the standard for subsequent conventions. Although it was
called a "nominating convention," the assembly did not nominate so much as ratify the
party's de facto nominee. As Smith and Nimmo point out, Jackson had already been
"endorsed" or nominated for re-election by some of the state legislatures. The convention
was a national showcase in which earlier endorsements were publicly confirmed in a
performance of party power. The delegates drafted "an address to the people" that
contained a single resolution:

The convention reposes the highest confidence in the purity, patriotism and
talents of Andrew Jackson, and most cordially concurs in the repeated
nominations which he has received in various parts of the Union as a
candidate for reelection to the office he now fills with so much honor to
himself and usefulness to this country. (qtd. in Smith and Nimmo 2)

The Democratic-Republican conclave was not a deliberative body, but a mechanism
for political action, a means to advance its nominee's electoral chances. Intra-party
dissension was played down in favor of public displays of unity. The convention
"address" was one of those displays, but as Chase points out, the convention proceedings
themselves were another: "Party leaders dreaded an eruption into violence and newspaper
accounts of convention proceedings emphasized their "respectable" character. The
delegates were only asked to approve a choice made by the inner circle of party leaders" (289). The convention also served as a way for the party to organize itself. It united the

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18 Only the Democratic-Republican party lasted into future elections, eventually
dropping the latter half of its name to become simply the Democratic party.
delegates, each of whom represented state and local partisans who could be counted on to work on the nominees behalf.19

By 1860, conventions had developed to the point where each had four major functions, according to David et al. These were the nominating function, the platform-drafting function, the campaign-rally function, and the governing-body function (Chase, 6). It is worth examining these functions in terms of early conventions, in order to see how they changed over the years.

Of the four, the nominating function was the most important. After all, that was the reason for the convention in the first place. And in some years, the nominating fights were protracted and remarkable. In the 1844 conventions, for example, the Whigs denied President John Tyler his renomination, and the Democrats chose "dark horse" James K. Polk, a man who had not even been a candidate on the first ballot (Shafer 12). But such conventions were the exception, not the rule. As Smith and Nimmo argue, the nominating function "seldom matches the romantic fantasies of multiple-ballot, heart-wrenching nomination battles. The orchestration of party unity behind a predetermined nominee is, and virtually always has been, the prime activity associated with the nomination function and provides the umbrella under which the other functions operate" (29).

Similarly, the platform-drafting function was more a matter of propaganda than a serious effort to codify party principles. From the beginning, platforms were crafted as campaign literature to be reprinted in partisan newspapers or turned into pamphlets. Thousands of copies would be printed and distributed nationwide, often translated into foreign languages for immigrant voters (see Chase, 284). As a contemporary account of late nineteenth-century conventions observed:

The platform, which is supposed to be the party's profession of faith and its programme of action is only a farce—the biggest farce of all the acts of this great parliament of the party. The platform presents a long list of statements

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19 See Chase, 280-284 regarding the organizational power of the early conventions.
relating to politics, in which everybody can find something to suit him, but in which nothing is considered as of any consequence by the authors of the document, as well as by the whole convention. (Ostrogorski, 138)

The campaign-rally function probably characterizes conventions the most. The loud and colorful processions in the convention hall on behalf of candidate and party have been hallmarks of American conventions since the beginning. The primary audience for those spectacular displays were the delegates and partisans within the hall. The purpose of the “excitement and turmoil” in Pendleton Herring’s estimation was to permit “the rank and file of the party to participate physically and emotionally in a common enterprise....Here they have their chance to meet, to shout together, to act together, to feel together.” (Politics of Democracy 229). They could also be influenced together, particularly if a candidate’s managers had organized supporters well. Abraham Lincoln’s successful nomination over William Henry Seward at the 1860 Republican convention in Chicago is a case in point.

On the final day of the convention, Lincoln’s supporters (many with forged credentials) swarmed the hall, isolating Seward’s delegates. When Lincoln was nominated, his “leather-lungs” followed their cue and deafened the hall with cheers and applause. According to convention historian Ralph Goldman, “The sheer impact of the noise moved Lincoln from dark horse into scoring position” (National Party Chairmen 52). Two ballots later, Lincoln was the Republican nominee.

Although the cheers of and for the delegates in the hall were the most obvious manifestation of the convention’s campaign-rally function, there was another aspect as well. The convention as a whole also served as a rallying point for the party’s nominee, symbolizing him and his party. In Jacksonian America, “when polls of steamboat

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20 Only on rare occasions did the platform-drafting function of nineteenth-century conventions rise above the prosaic tedium Ostrogorski described. Among those occasions were the pre-Civil War and 1880 conventions which included bitter platform battles over slavery and monetary policy, respectively.

21 For a more full account of the 1860 Republican convention, see Sautter and Burke’s Inside the Wigwam: Chicago Presidential Conventions 1860-1996, 3-13.
passengers, grand juries, and militia musters were accepted as indices of public opinion, the ability to stage conventions was the best available evidence that the party's nominee enjoyed wide approval" (Chase, 281 emphasis added). This national aspect of the campaign-rally function was to become more and more important in later conventions, as we shall see.

The governing-body function was one of the most important aspects of early conventions, because conventions were initially the only times a party would meet en masse to elect party leaders and to conduct party business. But this function was the first to slip by the wayside. It became evident quickly that a more formal organizational structure was necessary if a party were to thrive. A quadrennial assembly was too infrequent. During the 1848 Democratic Convention, the first step towards the diminution of the governing-body function was taken with the creation of the Democratic National Committee (DNC). Originally proposed as a committee to oversee the subsequent Convention and/or direct the national election campaign, the DNC became "a permanent interim committee representative of all state parties with power to fill vacancies in its membership" (Goldman, 23). The formal governance of the party began to move outside the Convention walls.

Early Twentieth Century

The changes in the nominating function during the early twentieth century are clearer in hindsight than they were at the time. The first half of the twentieth century saw the first stirrings of political movements that would pick up momentum in subsequent decades. The first was the gradual loosening of the party bosses' iron grip on the political

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22 This attitude is the flip-side to the comment made in response to a disorganized convention: "If they can't run a convention, how can they run the country?"
machinery. Propelled by the Populist and Progressive movements, many states reformed their electoral procedures, most particularly by instituting state primaries. These primaries enabled citizens to vote for convention delegates directly, instead of having delegates chosen through state conventions which invariably were rigged. Although the movement towards direct primaries was short-lived, it paved the way for later years when primaries made a triumphant resurgence.

The other significant development paralleled the slow decline of the party bosses. That development was the rise of the candidate-centered campaign. As the country grew and politics began to be conducted on the national level, Presidential campaigns became more personalized. Candidates became more actively and overtly involved in their campaigns. The old fiction of the candidate remaining aloof from election politics until being called upon by his party to do his patriotic duty and run for office did not survive in the twentieth century. In 1936, for instance, Franklin D. Roosevelt broke tradition by giving the first acceptance speech within the convention hall.

The convention's governing-body function lessened in 1918 and 1932 when the Republican and Democratic parties, respectively, set up permanent organizations and year-round national headquarters in Washington D.C.24 For its part, the platform function of conventions changed little throughout most of the twentieth century. If anything, its place in the convention proceedings sunk even lower in the estimation of critics, as evidenced by Harold R. Bruce's 1932 account:

23 Four years later as one of the first acts of its convention, the brand-new Republican party formalized its existence by similarly appointing a national committee. (See Goldman, 48-50)

24 It is debatable whether the national headquarters held any real power within each party, however. In his 1942 work Party Government, E. E. Schattschneider disputed the power of both the national committee and the convention. According to him, the real governing body was the loose confederation of state and local bosses: "The national convention is the least step that can be taken in the direction of party centralization without refusing to make a presidential nomination at all" (158).
Political party platforms have come to be regarded as necessary nonentities in every campaign. They were undoubtedly instituted as declarations of party principles or purposes. They have, unfortunately, degenerated from this high plane and are formulated today chiefly for the purpose of attracting voters (356).

The most noteworthy change in convention functions during the early twentieth century was the evolution of the convention as campaign-rally. While spectacular demonstrations continued to be staged for the delegates within the hall (see Bruce’s account of the “canned noise” and “synthetic enthusiasm” generated in support of Alfred E. Smith at the 1924 Democratic convention, 362), party leaders increasingly paid attention to the larger national audience experiencing the convention second-hand through the media.

Both Republicans and Democrats learned the hard way that a disorganized and contentious convention could be a disastrous public spectacle ensuring electoral defeat. In 1912, the Republican convention splintered as President William H. Taft and former President Theodore Roosevelt battled for the nomination. The contest continued after the convention closed, as Roosevelt and his supporters bolted the Republican party for the Progressives. The split proved fatal for the Republican party that year. Democratic nominee Woodrow Wilson enjoyed a landslide electoral victory; Taft finished behind Roosevelt and only carried two states.

Twelve years later, the Democrats were to experience their own convention fiasco when they met in Madison Square Garden in New York. That infamous convention dragged on for 17 days before finally choosing John W. Davis as the party’s nominee, a process that took 103 ballots. The Democrats became national laughingstocks as the days wore on and as the national media trumpeted their inability to nominate a candidate. Will Rogers, for instance, complained: “Oh, what a bone-headed move I made by signing up with the papers to write this convention for so much for the whole thing. I have spent

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25 See Sautter and Burke, 120-132.
more in taxi fares and lead pencils than I have been paid. The next one I will be smart enough to get paid by the month" (72-3).26

Compounding the Democrats' problems was the fact that the 1924 conventions were broadcast over the radio. The nationwide audience heard for itself how different the Republican and Democratic conventions were. As Murray put it, "even the most nonpolitical citizen could not fail to take notice. In Cleveland the atmosphere had been efficient and responsible; in New York it was chaotic and emotional" (103rd Ballot 229). The clear contrast between the two conventions cemented Calvin Coolidge's reelection; he was the overwhelming victor the following November. Not surprisingly, subsequent conventions were staged with the radio audience in mind. As Bruce noted, the conventions of 1928 deferred in every possible way to the microphone. The Democratic keynote speech of Mr. Claude Bowers was shunted from its usual program position to an evening hour in order to reach the radio audience. The Republican gavel made such a crash of noise over the radio when first applied to the chairman's table that a piece of soft wallboard was hastily brought in as a covering for the table. (Bruce, 352)

Mid-Twentieth Century

Over the next few decades, conventions continued to evolve. The nominating, platform, and governing body function became less and less important. Probably the best illustration of this evolution can be found by comparing different editions of V.O. Key's textbook Politics, Parties, & Pressure Groups. In 1942, Key closed his section on "National Conventions" with a stirring paean:

It is a great ceremony in which the forms of the expression of the will of the mass of party memberships are followed. It is a miracle play from which the hero emerges triumphant to fight the battles of the party. It is a drama

26 For a book-length account of the 1924 Democratic convention, see Robert K. Murray's The 103rd Ballot: Democrats and the Disaster in Madison Square Garden.
played in terms which the simplest spectator can understand and hiss the villain and applaud the hero. (442)

By the 5th edition, in 1964, Key curtailed his exuberance (if not his rhetoric) significantly:

Despite the inability of the national party, through the convention, to bind all elements of the party all the time, the total performance of the national convention as an instrumentality for weaving together the diverse and geographically scattered elements of each party into a national whole constitutes an impressive political achievement. (433)

The earlier conventions described in the 1st edition were extravaganzas in which those within the hall were participants in the spectacle, if not the process: “The pageantry and the demonstrations give the delegates something to do while their leaders bargain behind the scenes and determine the course of the convention” (432). By 1964, conventions were being planned and packaged so thoroughly that Key had to add a subsequent sentence: “And delegates may be relieved of the chore of parading about the convention hall by the employment of professional demonstrators” (423). What had been a “miracle play” in 1942, was a “chore of parading” by 1964.

What happened in the intervening twenty years to cause such a drastic change in Key’s descriptions of conventions? Clearly, some kind of shift in the nature of conventions took place. Convention historian Byron Shafer offers some clues. He points out that throughout the first half of the twentieth century, “the nomination was at the center of the national party convention....[I]n the mid 1950s, however, the nomination abruptly departed from the convention” (7). Instead of forging nominating majorities within the convention hall over a protracted balloting process, nominees began to compile those majorities in advance of the convention, making the formal roll call vote of the states a mere formality.

Television had an impact also. By broadcasting conventions live, television helped to further nationalize politics, and contributed to the decline of the political parties.
Television exacerbated the disjunction that radio had created between the convention within the hall and the mediated convention broadcast nationwide. This "bifurcated convention," as Shafer calls it, no doubt contributed to the disillusionment found in Key's textbook. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the delegates within the hall had been the primary audience for the campaign rally orchestrators. Once television came to dominate the proceedings, the delegates found that they were a secondary audience. It is perhaps simplistic to credit television for the phenomenon, but it is nevertheless noteworthy that 1952 was both the first year conventions were televised and the last year multiple ballots were required to choose a nominee.

As the nominating function was stripped away from conventions, the vacuum was filled by a new twist on the campaign rally function, something we might call the "springboard function." David et al described this new function in the conclusion of their book *The Politics of National Party Conventions*. Referring to "The Rally Function as a Problem," they argued:

*The convention is clearly taking on increasing importance in each party as the campaign rally that starts the national political campaign.... Political strategists of both parties have thus been compelled to recognize that the campaign begins at the convention, not afterwards, and that it should therefore be conducted as a major segment of the campaign.* (495, emphasis added)

Strategically, the convention became a distinct phase in the overall election cycle, a springboard into the fall campaign. The key to a successful convention under this system was to showcase the party's unity behind its candidate, "to show the convention in the

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27 The 1952 Democratic convention is a case in point. Democratic party leaders gave explicit instructions on how to behave "as actors in a television production," and urged their delegates in advance "to observe how the Republican delegates behave (or misbehave). If you have television available to you, I suggest you watch them with this in mind" (qtd. in Thomson, 35). See Thomson's *Television and Presidential Politics: The Experience in 1952 and the Problems Ahead*, 12-41 for extensive descriptions of the role television played in the 1952 conventions.
guise of the happy family gathering, keeping the less attractive forms of conflict off stage, in the relative privacy of the committees. (David et al., 495)

The conventions of the 1960s demonstrated the significance of the springboard function. Each party learned for itself the political liabilities of not presenting "the guise of the happy family gathering." In 1964, everyone watching television saw the divisions within the Republican Party as Barry Goldwater's conservative supporters shouted down Nelson Rockefeller and the other members of the moderate old guard. As Theodore H. White put it in his *The Making of the President 1964*: "And as the TV cameras translated their wrath and fury to the national audience, they pressed on the viewers that indelible impression of savagery which no Goldwater leader or wordsmith could later erase" (243). The Republican convention reinforced the public impression that Goldwater was an extremist, an impression that the Democrats were happy to exploit on their way to a landslide victory in November. Four years later it was the Democrats' turn to suffer from a failed convention. In 1968, "the whole world was watching" as Eugene McCarthy's supporters battled Hubert Humphrey's forces in the Stockyards International Amphitheatre and the anti-war protesters battled Mayor Daley's cops in the streets. That infamous convention torpedoed Humphrey's presidential bid at the outset, and demonstrated the double-edged nature of the springboard function. A poorly-run convention can be a springboard into defeat rather than victory.

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28 White's account also highlights the bifurcated nature of the 1964 Republican convention: "It was impossible, for example, for TV to show the contrast between organization and movement. The gallery seethed—which was visible. What was invisible was the instant attempt of the Goldwater command to squelch the demonstration" (243). Goldwater's forces, armed with a sophisticated array of radios, telephones, and walkie-talkies, actually controlled the convention very effectively. See White, 242-248.

29 See Norman Mailer's *Miami and the Siege of Chicago; Sautter and Burke Inside the Wigwam* 242-271; and Myrus *Law & Disorder: The Chicago Convention and its Aftermath*.

30 The 1968 convention also savaged Chicago's political reputation. And even though Chicago has hosted more party conventions than any other city, it was not to host another convention until 1996, twenty-eight years later.
Since conventions are pragmatic tools of electioneering, it is not surprising that the political parties proposed major changes after 1968. Neither party wanted to suffer a televised debacle like the Democrats' Chicago convention. The McGovern-Fraser commission advocated reforming and democratizing the delegate selection process. The reforms resulted in conventions that ostensibly maintained continuity with the past. But as Shafer argues, "this continuity was in most respects misleading. For once again the convention was destined to change, to evolve, even to decay, in every facet of its operation" (43).11

1972-1980

The nominating function was the most noticeable casualty of the post-1968 reforms. In reaction to the Commission guidelines, states began instituting more presidential primaries, thereby ensuring that each party's eventual nominee had secured his nomination long before the convention officially opened.32 The last vestige of the nominating function was removed from conventions and became part of the primary season.33 The vacuum was filled by a more sophisticated form of the springboard function. Up through 1968, a candidate could springboard out of his convention only by demonstrating that his party had unified behind him. After 1968, controlling a majority of delegates, a candidate could not only show off his party's unity, but also begin communicating the issues on which he would run. As Shafer points out:

31 See Shafer, 40-76 for an overview of the larger context for convention reforms and the effect those reforms had upon subsequent conventions.

32 While the McGovern-Fraser reforms applied to the Democratic Party only, the Republicans were similarly caught up in the shift towards primaries. By 1976, around 75 percent of each party's delegates were elected directly and came into the convention pledged to particular candidates (Davis, 35).

33 Aspects of the nominating function moved with it. The bandwagon effect, which had been a feature of past Conventions, became a part of the pre-Convention primary season, for example. See Shafer, 63-67, for case-studies of the bandwagons during the 1976 Democratic and the 1980 Republican primaries.
[M]any of the same forces which had helped to remove the nomination from the convention...made the convention ever more critical for the launching of the general election campaign. They made it an obvious place to pull together the diverse elements which would have to work in concert to elect the chosen candidate. They made it the obvious place to introduce that candidate, his party, and their program to the general public, under conditions which could not be recreated subsequently. (Bifurcated Politics 149, emphasis added)

The original convention functions also evolved after 1968. The platform function enjoyed a brief resurgence as the old party stalwarts were replaced by more ideological delegates and platform debates were waged on the convention floor. The governing-body function, by contrast, suffered a precipitous decline with this “changing of the guard.” After 1968, individual candidates’ campaign organizations became more important than their national parties. As Jeane Kirkpatrick put it in her 1978 book Dismantling the Parties:

The rise of multifaceted, multifunctional candidate organizations is a direct consequence of changes in the nominating process that make it necessary for a candidate to win primaries and capture ‘open’ caucuses in many states and do well in the opinion polls to qualify for matching funds. Nomination of presidential candidates by a congressional caucus or by a national convention made up of state and local party bosses neither required nor bred such organizations. (15)

Filling the candidate organizations were a new generation of campaign professionals who took over the roles once played by ward heelers and party machines. Skilled in media and communications, these professionals bifurcated the convention even more. Where old convention kingmakers had been experts in the minutiae of rules and procedures, the new breed were experts in the minutiae of television and performance. They carefully structured conventions for dramatic effect, as reporters discovered at the 1972 Republican convention when a copy of the convention script fell into the hands of a BBC correspondent. Timothy Crouse describes the scene in The Boys on the Bus:

34 At the 1972 Democratic convention, for example, Mayor Daley’s bloc within the Illinois delegation was unseated in favor of liberal McGovern supporters. See Theodore H. White, The Making of the President 1972, 173-176.
The script simply confirmed what everybody already knew, that the Convention was a totally stage-managed coronation of Richard Nixon. But it confirmed it with incredibly damning detail. The script instructed the speakers when to pause, nod, and accept “spontaneous” cheers. It stipulated that at a certain point, a demonstration would interrupt the convention secretary in midsentence. And at 10:33, according to the script, the President would be nominated and there would be a “ten-minute spontaneous demonstration with balloons.” (176-177)

In 1972, the idea that a convention would be staged explicitly for television was considered both newsworthy and vaguely reprehensible. The professional image-makers who orchestrated conventions for television were dismissed as “Madison Avenue types,” contributing to what Judith H. Parris described as The Convention Problem. Ridiculing the “persistent but more trivial criticism” of those who claim that Conventions are not entertaining enough, Parris pointed out that these individuals advocated shortening the sessions, eliminating activities whose principal objective is to create publicity for minor candidates, and generally improving the quality of the show. Their comments recall the annual post-mortems of telecasts of the motion picture industry’s Academy Awards ceremony. The criticism may be valid, but it is certainly of secondary importance. (8, emphasis added)

The criticism may have been of “secondary importance” to academics and outside observers in the early 1970s, but the political parties had different priorities. By the end of the decade the “quality of the show” was of primary importance. Every effort was made to make conventions more telegenic and entertaining. As Thomas R. Marshall’s 1981 Presidential Nominations in a Reform Age illustrates, all of the critics’ recommendations that Parris had discounted were put into practice:

Aside from writing the party platform and conducting other routine party business, the national convention marks the end of the intraparty struggle and opens the fall campaign. Neither the presidential nominee nor the party’s other candidates will want to project a divided image or to lose a

35 Herb Asher notes that in 1976, the Democrats adopted a rule limiting the opportunity of delegates to bring minority reports from the platform, rules, and credentials committee before the full convention. “Certainly this rule change was an attempt to avoid televised divisiveness, to minimize the prominence of fringe elements, and to keep the convention on schedule” (Presidential Elections 287).
well-televised opportunity to denounce their foes and to rally the party faithful. Not surprisingly, both parties seek to provide suspense—or at least to add color and viewer appeal for their conclaves—by adding balloons, bands, streamers, standards, spotlights, a boisterous gallery, celebrity appearances, and other festivities to keep the media fixed on their meetings. In this the party managers will be aided by the media, especially the networks, whose huge outlays for convention coverage cause them to seek out and play up eccentric delegates, minor conspiracies, and platform squabbles in a constant search for excitement. (114)

Parris's sentiments are illustrative of a different kind of convention bifurcation. After each election, academics and journalists meet in conferences to analyze and debate the election just concluded. For their part, the campaign operatives and major officials within each party conduct similar self-examinations. The difference, of course, is that the academic conferences are public events. They provide fodder for a quadrennial round of articles and books (and burn up the C-SPAN airwaves nowadays). The party conferences, however, are strictly for in-house consumption.

Parris wrote as a Brookings Institution scholar. She was interested in the extent to which "a political convention can be termed 'fair' and 'democratic'" (vii). To her mind, conventions were an American institution that "must operate to fulfill the values that they were founded to serve, or they risk perishing in a tide of public disgust. Thus, in large measure, the convention problem symbolizes the problem of politics in a democracy during the final third of the twentieth century" (180).

Parris's contemporaries within each party no doubt saw conventions in a very different way. Had any responded to her critique, they might have argued that their conventions did, indeed, "fulfill the values that they were founded to serve" because they were founded to serve the bottom-line value of electing a candidate to the Presidency. Any "convention problem" only existed inasmuch as the convention failed to help the nominee get elected, or worse, became a liability for the candidate. And as conventions moved into the 1980s, the party professionals did everything possible to remake conventions into better mechanisms for electioneering.
The 1980s

Before discussing the innovations of 1984 and 1988, it is worth taking a benchmark look at the 1980 conventions. Paul David’s analysis of them is illuminating not only because he frames his argument around the same four functions he had labeled in his 1961 study, but also because he falls into the same trap of misunderstanding as Parris. David notes, correctly, that the nominating function of the 1980 conventions had diminished to the point of insignificance while the springboard function (née campaign rally function) had become pre-eminent: “Both political parties planned their 1980 conventions as openers for the 1980 election campaign....Both conventions were designed and scheduled as fully as possible with the television audience in mind” (“National Conventions of 1980” 72). But David also asserts that “the other functions of the conventions remain important,” a dubious argument, given his own evidence. He claims that

With the shrinking of the nominating function, the platform drafting function especially has become more important. It is at least debatable that the Republicans might have improved their image in 1980 if they had been more willing to let the debate on the platform occur in public; most of it took place in closed sessions of the platform committee. (79)

David’s argument about convention functions demonstrates the bifurcation between critics outside the process and party professionals inside the process. A campaign operative looking with a wholly pragmatic point of view would turn David’s point on its head and argue that the platform-drafting function was demonstrably unimportant in 1980. The Republicans, unlike the Democrats, removed the platform-drafting function from the convention almost entirely. While there were apparently some major fights over issues such as the Equal Rights Amendment, all of those were resolved during pre-convention committee hearings.

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36 See also David’s comparison of conventions with the electoral college in terms of being a ratifying, rather than nominating, body (79).
Before the convention even opened, the platform was a finished document, "with no minority reports—a sign of the impressive degree of unity in the committee" (67). This unity was exactly what the convention managers wanted, as David admits himself: "The aim of the convention management to prevent any semblance of conflict or disunity on the floor of the convention had been almost completely successful" (67).

While David may be correct that the "Republicans might have improved their image in 1980 if they had been more willing to let the debate on the platform occur in public," the simple fact is that they did not need to take that gamble. Reagan’s lead over Carter in the Gallup poll increased by 10 percentage points between the beginnings of the Republican and Democratic conventions, despite (or perhaps because of) the absence of any real platform-drafting function. The Democrats, by contrast, retained some aspects of the platform drafting function at their convention—but only to prevent a floor fight that would have disrupted the convention as campaign rally. Ted Kennedy’s forces demanded platform concessions and floor votes during the convention proper (see David, 74-75). The result hurt the Democrats’ electoral chances. During the prime-time debate over the platform, Kennedy delivered one of the finest speeches of his career. He garnered great attention for himself, but in doing so he stole the focus from Jimmy Carter, an incumbent President in desperate need of the concentrated media attention a modern convention is designed to bring.

The 1980 Republican and Democratic conventions set a pattern that would be followed throughout the decade. The Republicans were consistently more conscious of the image they projected through their conventions, sublimating every other convention function to the springboard function. The Democrats seemed to lag behind by a full convention cycle, adopting innovations the Republicans had utilized four years previously.

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37 David points out that Kennedy’s speech “was delivered...to what was probably the biggest audience in the hall during the four days” (75).
But the 1984 and 1988 conventions featured significant evolutionary changes that enabled the conventions of the 1990s to become fully theatrical performances.

Television was at the heart of the post-1980 conventions. Previous conventions had been orchestrated with television in mind, but beginning in 1984 convention managers planned *everything* around television. The nominating and governing-body functions were effectively gone, and the platform-drafting function was barely relevant.\(^{38}\) Conventions were explicitly crafted as televised campaign rallies, organized according to the codes of performance, spectacle, and role-playing.\(^{39}\) 1984 was the beginning of the “Telepolitical Age” according to Smith and Nimmo, an age in which there was “growing emphasis on the spectacle’s visual qualities in staging and context” (42). The architecture, layout, and physical design of the convention halls were crafted for the television cameras. The Republicans were the first to take that step, but by 1988 both parties had hired professional television producers to run their conventions.\(^{40}\) The Democrats hired Smith-Hemion Productions, a Hollywood company specializing in large-scale television spectacles and

\(^{38}\) According to Ed Rollins, one of Reagan’s key strategists in 1984, “the platform was really not relevant. There was a lot of debate, a lot of discussion, but our attitude was no campaign has ever been won or lost based on a platform....if there were going to be some ideological battles fought over the platform, the crucial thing from our perspective was to get them over quick” (Moore *Campaign for President* 157).

\(^{39}\) Conventions adapted and evolved to the television medium in much the same way that other productions did. Bert States’ description of how cooking programs like “Julia Child” and “The Frugal Gourmet” have changed for television could describe a political convention just as easily.

[The shows] have learned to theatricalize their presentations by allowing the personality of the chef to become, as it were, a main ingredient in the stew. Thus (presumably) people might tune in not simply to get new recipes but to watch the performance of the cook who converts them *stilishly* into attractive food before your eyes. (States, *Pleasure of the Text* 36-37)

In the case of conventions, though, audiences tune in less for a new “recipe” for the country or body politic, but to watch the candidate convert himself *presidentially* into an attractive nominee.

\(^{40}\) For a comparison of the orchestration of the 1984 Republican and Democratic conventions, see Smith “National Nominating Conventions as Vehicles for Political Mobilization” 164-177 and 223-235.
variety shows; the Republicans used Mark Goode Enterprises. (see Smith and Nimmo 43). Significantly, neither production company specialized in political events; rather, they were specialists in live television spectacles and variety shows. The political parties hired the production companies to stage their conventions in much the same way that Renaissance and Baroque monarchs hired professional artists and engineers for their masques and celebrations.\(^{41}\)

Production companies produced both of the 1988 conventions, but the functions of the two conventions were fundamentally different. The function of the Republican gathering was all springboard, putting Vice-President Bush in the national spotlight as he took up the Presidential reins from Ronald Reagan. The Democrats’ convention had no such forward focus. Its function was to unify the party factions around Mike Dukakis. As Mike McCurry, the Democrats’ director of communications admitted, “[The Republicans] really used [their convention] to launch their campaign. Dukakis used our convention in Atlanta to conclude the primary campaign. *That was the fatal mistake I think:* we didn’t begin the general election campaign in any sense at that convention” (Smith and Nimmo, 188).\(^{42}\) 1988 was the last year that either political party made that mistake.

*The 1990s*

It is difficult to determine exactly when the political convention became a fully theatrical performance in the technical sense that theatre scholars use the term. Ostrogorski’s description of turn-of-the-century state conventions suggest the shift took place long ago, for example. Conventions, after all, are now “essentially show assemblies” that are

\(^{41}\) See Orgel and Strong’s *Inigo Jones* and Kristiaan Aercke’s *Gods of Play* 20.

\(^{42}\) See Smith and Nimmo, 51-135 for an extended analysis of the 1988 Republican and Democratic conventions.
entirely devoid of the deliberative character which should be their distinctive mark and their *raison d'être*. The absence of genuine activity and of initiative is accentuated by the way in which the proceedings are all settled beforehand....The whole thing goes like clock-work, and the convention presents the spectacle, which rejoices the heart of the party manager, of a "harmonious" convention. (Ostrogorski 125)

But despite the use of many theatrical elements in earlier years, 1992 was a watershed year in convention history. For decades (and with only gradual success), party strategists had advised their candidates and national committees that a convention ought to be a springboard into the general election. The Republican, as we have seen, adopted that approach in the mid-1980s. In 1992, the Democrats followed suit. DNC Chairman Ron Brown's initial instructions to the convention producers were that he wanted it to be "the beginning of a process" towards the general election. "Our job ain't done when this Convention is over," he said, "it's just starting. And everything we do should be geared on launching what is now going to take place" (Smith, interview). In effect, Ron Brown and the Democratic leadership joined the Republicans in jettisoning whatever other convention functions still existed in favor of the springboard function. That is significant because the springboard function is inherently theatrical.

In "Man and Object in the Theatre," Jiri Veltrusky argues that in theatre "the action is an end in itself and it lacks an external practical purpose....The action is here geared towards being understood by the audience as a coherent meaningful series" (83). I won't go so far as to say that the actions in a convention have no external practical purpose--the convention producers hope viewers will cast a vote for their candidate on election day, after all--but under the springboard function, the action at a convention really is an end in itself.

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43 And launch it did. Bill Clinton's post-convention "bounce" in the polls was the highest ever recorded. Credit for that accomplishment went to the Democrats' discipline over and attention to the presentation of their convention. It was Bill Clinton's convention more than it was a party convocation. The only speakers given podium time were those who had already endorsed Clinton. Congressional Democrats and party officials were virtually absent.
an exercise in role-playing performed by and for willing participants. The candidate is provided with a setting in which he can look and act "Presidential," whatever that means.44

The candidate knows the convention is a theatrical performance; he has spent months (sometimes years) practicing and perfecting the necessary demeanor. His acceptance speech, like all of the major speeches, are polished amalgams of pre-tested rhetoric. The delegates in the hall know the convention is a theatrical performance; they, like convention-goers for decades, are coached and instructed thoroughly on how they should comport themselves. The media know the convention is a theatrical performance; they have been both protesting and abetting the process since they first began broadcasting conventions.45 And the audience members certainly know the convention is a theatrical performance. There may not a red velvet curtain to signify the event, but the distinguishing clues are there. The hype, the celebrities, the media, the tickets required for entrance, and the specialized venue decorated for the occasion all set a convention apart from any other political gathering.

Everyone within the hall knows that the performance is the substance, and those at home are reminded by the network reporters at every opportunity. A convention is not a forum at which policy is decided or announced. Instead, it is a place in which existing policies and goals are packaged for a mass audience. In 1996, Bob Dole announced his

44 While all of the convention producers and designers I interviewed stressed their goal of making everything "Presidential," few were able to articulate exactly what that meant, other than to refer to Washington D.C. monuments or favorite emblematic historical Presidents. Peggy Phelan, however, offered the following description in her 1993 TDR article "The Rats and the Democrats":

"Acting presidential" requires that the candidate convey the qualities which we have come to associate with white heterosexual male leadership—a kind of unflappable resolve, a calm and "warm" speaking style, a sense of control. In other words, acting presidential means acting like the traditional Father performed on television sitcoms from "Father Knows Best" to "The Cosby Show" (171).

45 See Shafer, Chapter 7, "The Struggle over the Mediated Convention: Televised Coverage and Public Perception."
economic plan with its 15% tax cut weeks before his convention occurred. Similarly, Bill Clinton’s convention refashioned a myriad of existing separate proposals into a “bridge to the 21st century.” The significance of a convention is not what is new, but how the old is packaged.

The theatre parallels are clear. Audiences do not attend a performance of *Romeo and Juliet* with the hope or expectation that the protagonists might just manage to live happily ever after this time. Rather, audiences go to see how the casting choices work out, how the actors will live up to their roles, and how the director and designers’ concepts play on stage. Theatre critics spend the bulk of their reviews on such matters. Similarly, the convention critics are most concerned in their television, newspaper, and radio reports over which individuals get to speak, how well they perform, and which issues get prominent attention during the convention’s prime time.

In 1992, both the Democrats and Republicans were coy about the theatricality of their conventions. Both convention producers, for instance, went to great pains to differentiate their convention work from their television and entertainment work whenever reporters inquired. David Nash claimed that for the Republican convention,

*My concerns are aesthetic, not political. But we’re not treating this as a show because it’s not—it’s a convention....I know what looks good on camera. In this day and age when people form an impression based on what they see on the small screen, I have an understanding of how it will be received....Choreographed? It really isn’t. Control is a bad word. It’s just tightly organized. We’re trying to create the illusion that it’s moving fast.*

(Fine, “Controlled Convention Isn’t Really Choreographed”)

By 1996, however, the political emperors dropped the pretense that their conventions were clothed in “real” functions. Democratic CEO Debra DeLee called her convention a “miniseries.” Her Republican counterpart, William I. Greener III, said he was staging an “infomercial.” And even David Nash admitted he was working on a show.

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46 See also Hodges “Conventional Wisdom; How to Produce a Spectacle.”
CHAPTER 3

THE POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE 1996 CONVENTIONS

To fully understand the political context of the 1996 conventions, one must go back to the 1994 elections and the Republican takeover of both the House and Senate. Led by Newt Gingrich, the Republican Party was re-energized by its long-dreamed-of return to power, leaving the Democrats dispirited and shell-shocked. As the 104th Congress charged through the Contract With America, the political agenda appeared to be squarely in the hands of the new leaders, Speaker Gingrich and Senate Majority Leader Dole. President Clinton was virtually written off as a lame duck after only two years in office. His hopes for re-election appeared dim. On April 18, during a televised press conference, Clinton even was reduced to defending whether he was “relevant” as President.

In a grim case of irony, however, events the very next day in Oklahoma City demonstrated not only how relevancy of the Presidency, but also the political resiliency of Bill Clinton. Responding to the terrorist bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, Clinton led the nation in mourning. He became the national priest and counselor in the same way that Ronald Reagan did after the Challenger disaster. Even the Republicans lauded him; their official response to Clinton’s radio address that week declared “Our president was swift to act. He sent us the resources to solve this terrible crime. He offered condolences and heartfelt assistance of a grieving nation. Our response

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47 See Hart *The Political Pulpit* 101-102 and Dahl “Big Role Before Clinton,” for more on this Presidential role and its significance in times of national crisis.
today is simple: Amen, Mr. President, and thank you (Keating "Republican Response").

In the process, Clinton's poll numbers began to rise. His approval rating, according to the USA Today/CNN/Gallup Poll, jumped up six points in that week alone. A Dallas Morning News headline "Clinton buoyed by rise in polls as he visits Iowa; Approval rating tied to blast response" offers one illustration (Lewis).

Oklahoma City was not the only factor in Clinton's political turnaround, but it was a catalyst. Newsweek pointed out in its post-election book Back From the Dead, that "the public view of Clinton began to shift after Oklahoma City, where he had exhibited the take-charge determination as well as the on-key rhetoric that Americans expect of a president in times of trouble" (Thomas 22). Congressional Quarterly summarized Clinton's renomination campaign by noting that

Clinton has won high marks for leading a grieving nation through periods of mourning, most notably after the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City in April 1995. And he has shown increasing confidence on the foreign policy front, from brokering peace deals in the Middle East to deploying troops in Bosnia. "He has learned how to play on a big stage," says [University of Akron political scientist John C.] Green. "That's one way to show off the power of the office." (Cook "Clinton Rides Timely Surge to Chicago" 11)

See also Devroy "Clinton Praised for Responding to Disaster Swiftly and Strongly," Kassinord and Page "Clinton's Standing Rises," Matthews "Bill Clinton’s Voice of Authority,"

Part of that showing was calculated, as Clinton "began to behave like a president," according to Tom Rosenstiel:

After the disastrous 1994 elections, political consultant Frank Greer made Clinton review video tapes of how Ronald Reagan comported himself as president, especially on camera. Watch his bearing, Greer advised. Before long, Clinton was no longer seen with a cup of takeout coffee, a sheaf of papers, and surrounded by young aides, as he had been in the early days. Now, Clinton walked to and from helicopters or meetings alone, striding with a purpose, a straight back, often with his eyes set faraway ("The Road to Here" 12).

See also Thomas Back From the Dead 20-21.

48 See also Devroy "Clinton Praised for Responding to Disaster Swiftly and Strongly," Kassinord and Page "Clinton’s Standing Rises," Matthews "Bill Clinton’s Voice of Authority,"

49 Part of that showing was calculated, as Clinton "began to behave like a president," according to Tom Rosenstiel:
As Americans warmed to Clinton, they cooled to the Republicans. Gingrich's revolution was beginning to look too revolutionary to many. The bloom began to fade from the Republican rose, in part, due to Gingrich's misreading of the 1994 election.\(^5^0\) But it was also due to a concerted White House effort to characterize the Republican Congress as extremist. Guided by extensive polling conducted during the summer by Mark Penn and Doug Schoen, the Clinton team took every opportunity to play up the "moral" differences between themselves and the Congressional Republicans. By the fall, those differences were trumpeted in a blitz of television ads that were, in effect, the pre-emptive strike opening the 1996 election campaign. It was a stealth attack. The ads were not run in the media-heavy New York, Washington, or Los Angeles markets where they could attract a political reporter's attention and draw a Republican response. But across the rest of the country, particularly in key political states, the ads had the desired effect. Clinton's poll ratings moved higher with each successive ad. According to *Newsweek* Clinton moved "from 47 percent in August to the mid-50s by December. It was arguably the turning point in Clinton's campaign for reelection" (Thomas Back from the Dead 38).\(^5^1\) When the Republicans twice shut down the government in an attempt to force Clinton to sign their budget, the public sided with the President and further soured on Congress.

Clinton's self-proclaimed position as bulwark against Gingrich's Congress not only positioned him well against a future Republican challenger; it also inoculated him against opponents within the Democratic Party. Terrified of in-fighting that might give the

\(^{50}\) The American people had not given the Republicans a wholesale mandate for change any more than they had given Clinton a wholesale mandate for health-care reform in 1992. See Caesar and Busch *Losing to Win* 3-7 and Thomas "Heroic Failure" for overviews, and Elizabeth Drew's *Showdown* for a thorough account of Gingrich's rise and fall after the 1994 elections.

\(^{51}\) See also Woodward *The Choice* 235-239.
Republicans the White House in 1996, potential Democratic rivals stayed out of the fray.\textsuperscript{52} Clinton became the first Democrat since Franklin D. Roosevelt to run unopposed for his party’s nomination.\textsuperscript{53} This was “one of the most significant happenings in the 1996 election,” according to Dartmouth professor Linda L. Fowler, because of the strategic advantages it brought with it:

First, it enabled Clinton to rise above the political fray and gain maximum advantage from the office of the presidency. Second, it permitted him to reposition himself as a moderate for the fall campaign. As a result, Clinton headed to the Democratic Convention in August with a 12-point to 20-point lead in the polls, an astonishingly strong position for a president who had been all but eclipsed by the Republican congressional leadership just a year previously. (“Where Did All the Candidates Go?” 21)

The clear field also enabled Clinton to adopt the “triangulation” strategy advocated by adviser Dick Morris. As Morris described it in his book \textit{Behind the Oval Office}, triangulation meant taking “a position that not only blended the best of each party’s views but also transcended them to constitute a third force in the debate” (80). In practical terms, this meant running against both the conservative agenda of the Congressional Republicans and the liberal agenda of some of the Congressional Democrats, while embracing the most popular issues on both sides.\textsuperscript{54} Clinton co-opted hitherto Republican issues like a balanced-budget and welfare reform, and stood firm on Democratic issues like education and the environment. Republicans cried foul (for a time during the campaign, the Republican National Committee sent out daily faxes with a “Commander-in-Thief” Update), liberal Democrats quietly (and occasionally not-so-quietly) grumbled, and Clinton watched his poll numbers rise.

\textsuperscript{52} Potential opponents were probably also scared off by Clinton’s sizable campaign war-chest. According to \textit{Congressional Quarterly}, Clinton had raised over $25 million by October 1995. (Gruenwald “Who’s In, Who’s Out?”)

\textsuperscript{53} See Sabato, “ Presidential Nominations” 82-83.

\textsuperscript{54} See also Thomas \textit{Back From the Dead} 12-14, Woodward \textit{The Choice} 25-26, and Balz “Dole Soundly Defeated.”
By the beginning of 1996, it looked like the only significant obstacles to Bill Clinton's renomination were potential crises that might theoretically emerge. The two crises mentioned most often were renewed warfare in Bosnia where American troops were stationed or an indictment by Whitewater independent counsel Kenneth Starr. But these were potential problems. Everything else was under control. The Clinton re-election team followed the strategy they had developed the year before: regardless of the Republicans' official nominee, Clinton was going to run against Gingrich. The electoral debacle in 1994 became just another hurdle that "Comeback Kid" Bill Clinton had overcome. And the political context for the Democratic convention changed only a little, if at all, during 1996.

Bob Dole's story was very different. The conventional wisdom as offered by pundits and Republican insiders had always predicted Dole would be his party's nominee. The Republicans, after all, practically consider their party nomination an inheritance to be bestowed upon whomever is next in line. As Roger Stone, a seasoned Republican operative told *Time*:

> There's a royalist mentality in the Republican Party....Others pop up, and there's always the desire for someone else—in this cycle it was Colin Powell—but in the end, unlike the Democrats, we Republicans invariably reward the guy who's paid his dues. This time, it was Dole's turn. The bucks flowed naturally to him—and froze out others who may have made the race. (Kramer "How He Got There" 20)

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56 As *Time* put it:

> Let Dole have the White House, the Democrats argued, and Newt will be running the country; let us keep it, and Clinton will brake the Gingrich revolution's excesses. Thus were the stakes raised and the race set thematically—a perceptual field stacked hopelessly against Dole. It was the clever definitional stroke from which he would never recover. (Kramer "How He Got There" 23)
Dole won the “invisible primary” that takes place before the formal primary elections begin. He had an unparalleled national organization in place, due in large part to the institutional support of legions of Republican Governors, Senators, and Representatives. That organization, along with the greatly compressed primary season enabled Dole to secure the necessary delegates he needed in record time. But he faced some significant difficulties along the way. The candidacies of publisher Steve Forbes and Pat Buchanan, in particular, had important repercussions upon Dole’s campaign going into the Republican convention.

Forbes, independently wealthy, refrained from accepting federal funding for his campaign and was therefore exempt from the spending limits that funding brought with it. Trying to compete with the barrage of negative advertising that Forbes bought during the early contests of Iowa and New Hampshire, the Dole campaign had to dig deeply into its coffers. By early summer, Dole had all but reached his spending cap and had to run his campaign on the cheap. He had his party’s nomination secured, but he had no money left to refocus his campaign message effectively against Clinton. By contrast, the Democrats had plenty of money to continue buying national advertising against their invented foe, Dolegingrich.

Dole’s financial problems were compounded by the ideological challenge of Pat Buchanan. The one major opponent who remained in the fray throughout the entire primary season, Buchanan was a constant thorn in Dole’s campaign. As a spokesman for

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57 See Arthur Hadley’s 1976 book Invisible Primary and Emmet H. Buell, Jr.’s article of the same title.

58 See Sabato “Presidential Nominations” for a description of the “Front-loaded Frenzy of ’96.”

59 See Thomas, Back From the Dead 62-66 on the Forbes campaign, “an object lesson in the effects of negative campaigning.”
the far right—particularly the pro-life wing—and a protectionist gadfly on trade policy, Buchanan threatened to split the Republican Party into factions.⁶₀

But fundamentally, the biggest problem the Dole campaign faced was Dole himself. He entered the Presidential race carrying some heavy baggage. First of all, there was his age. He was in good physical health, but his critics were quick to point out that, if elected, he would enter office at 74, older than Reagan during Reagan's second term. Dole also had a reputation for being mean. He had been the "hatchet man" in 1976 as Ford's running mate. And during the Republican primaries of 1988, Dole had reaffirmed his acerbic reputation, most famously when he snapped at George Bush on NBC television after the New Hampshire primary.⁶¹

Dole's age and reputation were minor flaws, however. He had more significant problems in terms of his own performance and discipline in the grind of a full-blown television campaign. These problems were acknowledged by the Dole team themselves. In 1994, when he was still trying to decide whether or not to run, Dole's wife, Elizabeth, and an intimate circle of advisers spelled out his shortcomings as a candidate.⁶² The first major problem they identified was focus. The free-wheeling style of consensus-building that served Dole so well in the Senate would be a liability on the campaign trail.⁶³ As adviser William B. Lacy put it in a memo: "Legislative victories are won by adroit maneuvering and by maintaining flexibility. Presidential campaigns are won by designing a plan and sticking to it, except as circumstances dictate change" (qtd. in Thomas Back From the Dead

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⁶⁰ Buchanan's influence was magnified by the fact that he bucked tradition and refused to endorse Dole until days before the convention opened. Even then, his endorsement was lukewarm at best.

⁶¹ See Germond and Witcover Whose Broad Stripes 145-147, and Cramer What It Takes 901-903.

218). Unfortunately, Dole had difficulty sticking to a set plan; his natural style of communication was “undisciplined, chaotic and marked by a tendency to free-associate, often speaking in a series of cryptic sentences,” according to veteran Washington Post reporter Bob Woodward (The Choice 29).

Another serious problem for Dole was his discomfort with campaigning, particularly the openly emotional and personal style of campaigning that television rewards and of which Clinton was a master. A decorated World War II veteran from the midwest, Dole was more accustomed to silently struggling past his hardships rather than trumpeting them. And yet that was exactly what his campaign needed him to do. His advisers saw his personal story—his fight to overcome crippling war injuries—as a compelling indicator of Dole’s character.

Finally, Dole faced the problem of his organizational style. In 1988, Dole’s team had become infamous for its missteps and chaotic structure, often the result of Dole’s own inability to delegate. If he were to win in 1996, he would have to learn to work better with his campaign team. Elizabeth Dole wanted her husband to discipline himself to the needs of the campaign; Lacy wanted to restructure the campaign organization itself. Dole did not necessarily commit himself to one solution or the other, but long before he formally threw his hat in the ring, Dole agreed to work on the problem.

Diagnosing problems and curing them are very different activities, however. As the campaign progressed it became clear that Dole was going to fall victim to every one of the pitfalls his advisers had warned him about months and years before. In his stump speeches

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63 According to Newsweek “As Senate majority leader, [Dole] liked to conduct five meetings at once, moving back and forth between them, looking for a moment when the blathering was done and the dealing had begun” (Thomas Back From the Dead 6).

64 See Cramer What it Takes 553-557, and Thomas Back From the Dead 69-71.

65 One of the first major expenses for the Dole campaign once it officially began was a 13-minute bio movie entitled “Bob Dole: An American Hero,” a quarter of which was devoted to his war injury. (Thomas Back From the Dead 51)
and television appearances, Dole refused to stay "on-message"; he regularly strayed from
his speech-text and failed to push a consistent theme or issue. And on those occasions
when he actually delivered a speech as it was written, his performance was wooden and
uncomfortable.

The clearest example came after the 1996 State of the Union address. Clinton had
surprised everyone by declaring that "the era of big government is over." Dole, delivering
the Republican response himself, surprised everyone with the feebleness of his efforts.
His speech may have been better written than Clinton's, but his delivery could not
compare: "The lighting was terrible, and Dole's face looked wrinkled, crinkly, dark. His
voice was hurried, not steady. His nerves showed. A bit of cotton-mouth struck. Stiff
and ill at ease, he nonetheless forged on. After several minutes he got better, but he was
still shaky" (Woodward The Choice 364). Press coverage the next day was not kind. In
an op-ed piece headlined "A Preview of the 1996 Campaign?" David Broder wrote in the
Washington Post that Clinton's performance "was longer and stronger," while Dole
"sounded flat and unemotional." The San Francisco Chronicle declared that "Dole was
partisan and defensive...looking every bit his 23 years older than the 49-year-old Clinton"
(Sandalow "President Wins Big") Dole's fellow Republicans even gave him a "thumbs-
down." In a cover story entitled "Last Call" and illustrated, incidentally, with a
cadaverous photograph labeled "Doubts About Dole", Newsweek's Howard Fineman
noted that:

58 percent of Republicans who saw the speech thought it was a "weak
response" to Clinton...."It was a debacle, wasn't it?" said Ralph Reed of
the Christian Coalition. "It showed his problems in full relief." Rush
Limbaugh reported that his phone lines were jammed with anti-Dole calls.
He finally had to order his call screener, "Bo Snerdley," to turn them away
so he could move on to another topic. "All they wanted to talk about was
Dole," Limbaugh told NEWSWEEK, "and most of it was negative."

66 See Woodward The Choice 31.
67 See Woodward The Choice 364-366 for other reactions to Dole's speech.

52
Compounding Dole’s problems as a performer, he and his campaign could not find an effective role for him to play. As incumbent, Clinton enjoyed the perks and trappings of his office to burnish his Presidential image. Dole had no such luxury. His initial plan had been to adopt a “Rotunda” strategy (in contrast to the “Rose Garden” strategy used by Presidents since Nixon) and campaign as the Senate Majority Leader, the consummate statesman of maturity. His campaign plane was even named the “Leader’s Ship.” But this approach failed when first his fellow Republicans (most notably Phil Gramm) and then the Democrats began tying up the Senate in procedural knots. Routine business got bogged down with threatened filibusters over the minimum wage and social security. Dole found it increasingly difficult to claim that he was the better man to lead the country, when the nightly news showed he could not keep his own legislative chamber in order. His poll numbers plummeted. In March, Dole was 8 points behind Clinton. By May, he had sunk to a 17-point deficit.

Dole’s campaign team had internal problems as well. In February, after the Delaware primary, the campaign dumped Lacy who had been chief strategist and pollster. Lacy’s replacement, Don Sipple, “couldn’t believe the sorry state of the campaign,” according to Newsweek: “There was no money; it had all been spent on the primaries. There was little useful research on Clinton, and no real plan for taking on the president in November. Then in April, everyone, including the candidate, went on vacation” (Thomas Back From the Dead 73). Dole may have won the battle over his fellow Republicans, but it looked like he would lose the war against Clinton before it ever formally started:

Grand plans were hatched for the months before the August convention. The nominee-presumptive would preside over national-issues forums to

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68 See McGrory “Dole’s Spring Thaw.”

69 See Nagourney “How Dole’s Decision to Resign Was Kept a Secret,” and Thomas Back From the Dead 80-82.

70 See Woodward The Choice 390-399, and Sabato “Presidential Nominations” 76-78.
demonstrate seriousness of purpose. A running mate and some likely Cabinet choices would be selected, a shadow government to telegraph what an Administration of adults— as opposed to baby boomers— would look like. But Dole, broke and exhausted, had the stomach for none of it. And so he watched from the sidelines with scarcely an answering volley as the Clinton machine— flush with funds because no other Democrat had risen to challenge the President in the primaries— filled the airwaves (Kramer “How He Got There” 23).

On May 16th, hoping to jump-start his campaign, Dole recast himself in a new persona. Resigning his office, Senator Dole became Citizen Dole. He gave a valedictory address to his former colleagues in the Capitol and then flew off to America’s heartland aboard his newly-christened “Citizen’s Ship.” To further illustrate his political renascence, Dole underwent a physical transformation mid-flight. Boarding his campaign plane in D.C., Dole wore his Senate uniform: dark blue suit and tie. By the time he stepped off the plane in Chicago, Dole was tie-less in a light blue sport coat, khaki pants, and loafers. As the Washington Post put it, “he was transformed from Senate insider to Bob Dole, casual midwesterner” (Balz “Dole, Untied”).

Citizen Dole played to mixed reviews. Much of the media saw Dole’s resignation as what the Christian Science Monitor called “the move of a shrewd politician who knew he needed to do something dramatic to shake up a faltering candidacy” (Shillinger, “Departure Allows Kansan to Sharpen His Message”). But political experts saw the orchestration of Dole’s resignation as further evidence of his campaign’s misjudgment. As Donald Kaul wrote in the Des Moines Register:

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71 This change was particularly noteworthy given Dole’s physical handicaps. His all-but-useless right arm makes dressing something of a challenge even in the best of circumstances. Dressing in the cramped quarters of a flying plane was no mean feat.

72 It is telling that much of the coverage of Dole’s trip to Chicago emphasized his change of campaign costume. Some of the headlines from across the country included “New Suit, Old Message,” “Dapper Dole Restarts Campaign,” and “Dole Trades in Capitol Ties for Campaign Trail.” For details, see the New York Times (Seelye “A New Dole”) and the Chicago Tribune (Tackett and Hardy “The Candidate as Everyman”).

54
[Dole] is pathetically inept at seeming to be what he is not and, more important, at manipulating visual symbols, the cornerstones of modern political campaigns. Dole just doesn’t get it.

Take, for example, his speech announcing his resignation. The whole point of getting out of the Senate is to establish his independence of congressional Republicans, who are only slightly more popular than ragweed right now. So why invite the whole gang of them to stand around you and make faces while you deliver the speech?

He should have done it in Russell, Kan., his hometown, with a bunch of craggy wheat farmers standing around. If you’re going to campaign as a Man of the People, you don’t want the people to be Newt Gingrich and Dick Armey. ("Citizen Dole’s Idea is Weak")

Citizen Dole’s woes continued in much the same vein as Senator Dole’s had. He still was not able to find and maintain a consistent campaign message. As the New York Times noted in its post-election “Anatomy of a Loss,” Dole all but threw away the attention he had garnered with his Senate resignation by telling a planeload of reporters “We’re trying to get good pictures. Don’t worry very much about what I say” (Nagourney and Kolbert). This campaign misstep was only one of many that haunted Dole during the five month interregnum he should have enjoyed as the de facto Republican nominee. As Ceaser and Busch put it, “Never before had a presumptive nominee had so much time to build up his strength—or lose momentum and sink out of the limelight” (Losing to Win 89). In June, for instance, Dole made an off-the-cuff remark questioning the addictive properties of tobacco. His campaign had to spend the next week defending and clarifying themselves on tobacco as an issue, instead of pursuing their own agenda. Shortly thereafter, Dole equivocated on the issue of banning assault weapons and ran afoul of the National Rifle Association. He was never able to stay focused on his own campaign message.

73 See also Salopek “The Image Game,” and Shogan “Dole’s Senate Exit”

74 See Thomas Back From the Dead 105-107.

75 See Ceaser and Busch Losing to Win 89-118 and Drew Whatever it Takes 89-100 for extended analyses of Dole’s 1996 summer campaign, and the congressional Republican reaction to Dole’s campaign missteps.
team all but silenced him except in carefully scripted circumstances (Harden "Dole Becomes Mr. Mum"). Worse, circumstances prevented Dole from solidifying his power as the Republican standard-bearer. The first of these circumstances was the Olympic Games.

While the Games always constitute an overwhelming media event, the 1996 Olympics had a particular impact upon the United States because they were held here. Virtually every local newspaper and television station could, and did, send reporters to Atlanta to join the networks in CNN’s hometown. The resulting media glut effectively drowned out any political dialogue for the duration of the Games, as both the Clinton and Dole campaigns acknowledged:

“The race basically gets frozen. People are going to be pretty focused on the games,” said Clinton campaign spokesman Joe Lockhart. Dole campaign spokeswoman Christina Martin agreed, saying: “Both campaigns will experience a partial blackout. Both will continue to be active but most television coverage will be geared toward the Olympics.” (Elsner “U.S. presidential race will freeze for Olympics”)

The timing of the Olympics was especially unfortunate for the Dole campaign. In most election years the Summer Olympics falls between the party conventions. In 1996, though, the Olympics were scheduled from July 19 to August 4, leaving no time for a pre-Olympic convention. As the San Diego Union-Tribune put it, “the GOP was crowded off the July calendar. The only week available follows the Fourth of July weekend, putting the pre-convention hoopla in competition with three-day vacations and back-yard barbecues. (Braun “Convention Logistics”). As a result, the Republicans scheduled their convention for August 12-15.

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76 For an examination of how Clinton’s incumbency gave him the opportunity to bask in the Olympic glow where Dole could not, see Walker and Freedland, “Dole Fights Above His Weight.”

77 By tradition, the party challenging the White House stages its convention first. The incumbent party then follows about a month later.

78 The Democrats’ convention was set for August 26-29. It was the first time in twenty-eight years that both parties staged their conventions in the same month.
The net effect was that Dole had to delay the start of his general election campaign, costing him both time and money when he could afford neither. According to the Federal Election Commission, the conventions remain part of the primary season. The FEC funds for the general election are not made available to a party’s candidate, therefore, until after he has been declared the official nominee. Before then, he and his campaign are limited to the spending limits set for the primaries. Federal moneys spent on the conventions can only be spent by the Convention Committees established by each party’s National Committee. By the end of June, the Dole campaign had only about $917,000 to spend through the Republican Convention, and most of that came through creative accounting whereby $600,000 in assets were sold to the general election campaign. The Clinton team, by contrast, had $16.7 million available until their Convention. (Cohen “Campaign Almanac”).

The political climate within the Republican Party also proved problematic for Dole. The abortion issue is a case in point. Long an area of tension, abortion loomed even larger as an issue in 1996 because the two sides represented significant factions within the Republican party. The pro-life religious right was a solid grassroots constituency that had control over the formal party organizations of many states. They saw a Republican victory in 1996 hinging upon a return to bedrock values. On the other side, several key Republican Governors from politically significant states had firmly staked out pro-choice positions. William Weld (MA), Pete Wilson (CA), and Christine Todd Whitman (NJ), in

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79 The Republicans were not the only ones discomfited by the timing of the Olympics and the conventions. As Broadcasting & Cable pointed out, the networks estimated that they would end up spending $10 million to $15 million more for their convention broadcasts because of the limited time between conventions. Instead of re-using the same equipment at both conventions, each network had to build separate coverage facilities for each location. (Dickson “TV networks gear up for Elections ’96”) See also Jones “Conventional Routine.”

80 The religious right never fully trusted Dole, not being absolutely convinced of his conservative credentials. In the months leading up to the Convention, Dole exacerbated
particular, argued that the Republican Party risked alienating women if it didn’t recognize a
greater diversity of opinion.

At the beginning of June, it appeared that Dole had successfully walked the
tightrope within his party. On June 6 he announced that he wanted to include a “declaration
of tolerance for different points of view on issues such as abortion.” The religious right
and pro-life activists were not happy, but they were mollified because the specific wording
was going to appear in a preamble to the platform. Positioned there, the tolerance language
was open to wider interpretation. As Carol Long of the National Right-to-Life committee
told the New York Times: “the diversity of views refers to everything in the platform, not
just abortion” (Seelye “Dole Seeks Words to Broaden Plank”).

On June 10, however, Dole seemed to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory by
insisting that the tolerance language appear within the abortion section of the platform. He
told the CBS Evening News: “Either we’re tolerant or we’re not.” Anti-abortion activists
reballed. In some states Dole’s designated Convention delegates found themselves
displaced by doctrinaire leaders of the Christian right. Other delegates were pressured to
sign pledges that they would not only oppose Dole’s revision of the anti-abortion plank,
but also reject any vice-presidential nominee without a strong anti-abortion record (Edsall
“GOP Convention Delegates Face Abortion Test”).

The crisis came to a head in mid-June at the Texas state convention in San Antonio.
Half of his slate of delegates were defeated. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, who had won
election in 1994 with the largest victory margin of any Republican in Texas’ history,
became a convention delegate only through elaborate deal-making between the Dole
campaign and the pro-life activists. The price for Hutchison’s admission to San Diego was
16 more pro-life delegates at the expense of Dole’s hand-picked people. Congressman

their fears when he not only refused to commit to a pro-life running mate, but openly
courted Colin Powell.
Henry Bonilla was rejected as a delegate, despite being a native San Antonian, a rising star nationally, and a pro-life advocate himself. As one Republican activist put it in a *NewsHour* profile on PBS: "When I was sitting in the caucuses when they were selecting delegates, it wasn’t whether you are pro-life, it was how pro-life you are, and how many years you worked in pro-life organizations" ("Politics of Principle").

When all was said and done, anti-abortion activists replaced half of Dole’s delegates with members of their own cadre. The national convention was only a month away and Dole was facing what Bill Price of Texans for Life called “a rogue elephant on the way from Texas that means business.” And it was not the kind of business that the Dole campaign wanted. The “rogue elephant” had every potential to disrupt the orderly, prescribed convention that had been planned. As the *New York Times* noted:

> While the ferment here pitted Texan against Texan, it offered a preview of what could unfold at the national convention in San Diego in August and what the Dole campaign wants to avoid on the national level at all costs: a bitter floor fight over abortion; adoption of a tougher anti-abortion platform than even the Christian Coalition proposed, and high-profile roles for conservatives who are considered too fervent by many party leaders. (Berke, "Chaotic Message to Dole Over the Abortion Issue")

What is significant about Dole’s problems is how public they were. His campaign’s missteps and shortfalls were fodder for a political press corps starved for stories in the post-primary, pre-convention period that the *New York Times* had called “the black hole of American politics” (Berke “You Have Now Entered”). Lacking both money and discipline, the Dole campaign had no way to fill that black hole with favorable news stories. Instead, the void was filled with stories like the *Washington Post’s* “A Right Jab

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81 See also the *Baltimore Sun* editorial, “Rogue Elephant from Texas;” McNeely “New Guard Shows GOP Who is Boss;” and Guerra “Texas GOP Convention May Preview What’s Ahead.”

82 Press leaks were prevalent. In part, this was because Dole’s own staff were frustrated that he would not follow their advice. Leaking information to the press became an indirect means of getting Dole’s ear. (Nagourney and Kolbert “Anatomy of a Loss”)
to the Dole Campaign,” which chronicled the growing dissatisfaction within Republican circles:

“Republicans are dispirited all over the country,” Fred Barnes, executive editor of the Weekly Standard, said yesterday. “It’s one thing to have criticism from what Dole has pilloried as the liberal media. It’s another when the conservatives from Bill Kristol to me to Paul Gigot to Bob Novak say it’s the most miserable campaign for the presidency they’ve ever seen. Dole’s in a state of denial. (Kurtz)"

Things were so bad that some prominent Republicans spoke the unthinkable and openly called for Dole to drop out of the race. Arianna Huffington bluntly told a radio interviewer, ““For the sake of our party, for the sake of our majorities in the House and Senate, we need to find an excuse, health, whatever, and bring somebody else on” (“Desperate to Pull the Plug”). Conservative syndicated columnist Cal Thomas declared “Such an act would forever enshrine Dole as a man who put his party and his prospects, along with his principles, ahead of his own interests” (“Dole Would Serve GOP Best By Dropping Out”). More importantly, Thomas added, such an act would generate intense media interest: “An open convention would energize the press so the Republican nominee would seem electable.” The mere possibility energized the “Dreamy Dreams For an August Morning” in Wesley Pruden’s Washington Times column:

The country would be electrified, and here, finally, is the place to use that cliche. Direct current at 240 volts. The reporters and commentators would go bonkers, finally getting to cover a nominating convention like they had in those old black-and-white newsreels. The good, gray Republican Party, where a simple disagreement over where to go for dinner is considered gauche, finally giving lessons to the Democrats, who can start a floor fight over a resolution commending Mother Teresa for giving milk to starving babies, about how to conduct a free for all.

83 See also the New York Times (Nagourney “Republican Allies Express Worries on Dole Campaign”), Investor’s Business Daily (“GOP Gut Check”), and the Financial Times of London (“Desperate to Pull the Plug”). The last article, in particular, offers an excellent summary of the Dole campaign in late July. The most vivid description, however, goes to George Will who described the Dole campaign “as an alley down which ideas are led and then strangled” (“Dole, GOP Struggle to Shake Off Identity Crisis”).
There was never any serious possibility that Dole would open the convention by dropping out of the race. But as the Guardian put it at the time, "the mere fact that Republicans are fantasizing about dropping Mr. Dole shows the depth of despair felt by his campaign" (Freedland "'Dump Dole' Revolt Spreads ").

Amidst the doldrums of the Dole campaign, three political opportunities offered hope. As John Buckley, Dole's communication chief, put it: "There is nothing wrong with Bob Dole's campaign that a good economic plan, a good Veep choice, a good convention speech and $74 million won't cure" ("A Funny Thing Happened "). Most important, of course, was the Republican National Convention. That week of non-stop media attention—along with the much-needed infusion of FEC cash—was absolutely vital if Dole were to have a chance to win the Presidency. But leading up to the convention, Dole had two other important chances to capture the media spotlight and demonstrate his political acumen. The first was the unveiling of his economic plan; the other was his announcement of a running mate.

The process of crafting the economic plan had been problematic at best. Politically, Dole's advisers were split as to whether it would be better strategy to announce the plan early in the summer, building momentum up to the convention, or hold off until the convention itself. Practically, their choice was all but made for them, as the campaign's economic team was unable to pin Dole down on exactly what he wanted. As a result, Dole did not release his plan until the beginning of August. The Republican National Convention was only a week away. And Bob Dole lagged behind Bill Clinton by about 20 points. The highlight of the economic plan was a 15% tax cut. Given Dole's legislative history, this represented yet another political makeover; Dole was now casting himself as a Reaganesque supply-sider. The immediate public response was skepticism. As Newsweek put it:
Reporters asked what had happened to the old Dole. Even The Wall Street Journal editorial page, a cathedral of supply-side faith, wondered whether Dole was being overly optimistic in his assumptions. The early opinion polls registered disbelief. Most people dismissed the plan as pure politics. (Thomas Back From the Dead 115)

Dole’s announcement of his Vice-Presidential choice later that week was more successful politically. On Saturday, August 10 the eve of his convention, Dole held a press conference to introduce Jack Kemp as his running mate. Kemp was an unlikely choice given that he’d endorsed Steve Forbes rather than Dole during the primaries, but he lent credibility to Dole’s new image as a tax-cutting supply-sider. Kemp’s moderate positions on social issues and his record as the head of HUD also helped position the Republican ticket towards the political center, and offered the hope that they could pick up votes in otherwise Democratic cities. And, of course, Kemp provided a much-need infusion of charisma to the ticket. A former football quarterback, Kemp was renowned for his energy and his passion as a public speaker. He was as talkative as Dole was laconic.

The Republicans gathering in San Diego were heartened by Dole’s economic plan and his Vice-Presidential pick. But the Republican enthusiasm was mixed with more than a little desperation. Dole’s tax-cut proposal and his new running mate were, as Larry Sabato notes, “the first pieces of good news that Republicans had received in months, and euphoria was thereby generated in delegates who feared they were slated to attend a funeral in San Diego” (“Conventions” 94). Underneath that euphoria, Republicans still had serious doubts. As the Los Angeles Times put it:

Even for GOP loyalists, optimism about what can be accomplished in San Diego is tempered with realism. “I think we can get a jump-start out of the convention,” said Clarke Reed, a longtime Mississippi GOP leader. “Though actually what we need is more of a pole vault.” (Shogan “Kemp on Ticket Could Be Boon, Bane for GOP)

This, then, was the political context for the 1996 conventions. Bob Dole, the Republican heir presumptive, survived a bruising primary campaign only to come under a steady drumbeat of criticism from political pundits and his fellow Republicans, while
facing a double-digit deficit in the polls. Bill Clinton, who had appeared to be in deep
trouble the year before, enjoyed a free-ride to his renomination by the Democratic Party.
CHAPTER 4

THE PRODUCTION CONTEXT OF THE 1996 CONVENTIONS

While Clinton and Dole went through the political process of getting their parties’
nominations, a parallel process was taking place. This was the production process of
staging the conventions themselves. To understand how the 1996 conventions functioned
as theatrical performances, it is necessary to examine the context of that production
process, with particular attention to how the planning and collaboration of each convention
was unique.

The process of staging a convention is complicated. The logistics of such a
mammoth operation are considerable, as Smith and Nimmo detail. Negotiating all of the
contracts and meeting all of the individual deadlines requires remarkable planning. And, of
course, the sheer number of personalities involved can be staggering. Dole’s chief pollster,
Tony Fabrizio, described the complexity of running a convention in an interview with the
National Journal:

Imagine for a moment trying to work with the party apparatus, the
campaign, bringing together thousands of delegates, thousands of
alternates, thousands of party supporters, thousands of party volunteers,
thousands of press, thousands of individual groups that are supporters of
the campaign and supporters of the party and making it all work for five
days. I mean that is a huge logistical nightmare. (Moses “Scripting an
‘Infomercial’ Convention”)

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84 See Cordial Concurrence 51-79 for descriptions of the range of people involved
in the 1988 conventions, and 81-103 for a description of the staging process.
But beyond the scale of the operation, a convention is difficult to stage because of the evolving collaboration required of the participants. The organizational structure behind a convention is initially small and focused, with only a handful of people making plans. This operation quickly expands as the months tick by towards the opening gavel until it becomes, literally, a three-ring circus. A Chicago Tribune article from July 1995 offers one illustration of this growth. The story was a profile of the lone woman working in the Democrats' convention office in Chicago: “By the end of the year, about 50 Democratic Party convention workers will be based at the Traffic Court offices...and next summer some 200 workers will occupy 60,000 feet on the sixth and seventh floors” (Locin “Convention Planners Set First Stage”).

**Performance Planning and Personnel**

In the first ring of the convention circus is the Convention Committee itself, answerable to the National Committee and the head of the Party (the President or Chairman of the National Committee). They are appointed as soon as the host city is selected, at least a year and a half to two years prior to the convention. In 1996 the key figures within the Republican and Democratic National Convention Committees (hereafter, RNCC and DNCC) were William I. Greener III for the Republicans and Debra DeLee for the Democrats, and their lieutenants. Their responsibility was to keep everything on track. They negotiated the myriad contracts that were part and parcel of an event of such magnitude. And it was difficult work. As former RNC Chairman Frank Fahrenkopf, noted “There are few jobs that require attention to as many details and as many egos” (Bayer “GOP Show’s Headaches His Specialty”). Fortunately, both parties maintained a

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85 While Greener's official title was Convention Manager, he served the same function as DeLee, the DNCC CEO. See Bayer “GOP Show’s Headaches His Specialty,” and Locin “Convention Script.” Also see Appendix A for a list of the key personnel for each convention.
stable of resident experts who had worked on past conventions and were available to help. Those experts are necessary, because convention planning is a complicated process, during which time crises always erupt. For example, in San Diego the RNCC had to deal with potential budget shortfalls while fighting an ACLU lawsuit over the designated protest space. The Democrats faced similar difficulties including a threatened cabbie strike and disputes with the host committee.

The second ring of the convention circus is filled with production professionals, the experts in large-scale events like televised awards shows or Olympic opening ceremonies. Some of them have prior experience with political events, although not always for the same party, surprisingly enough. The key production personnel for each party’s 1996 convention were the producer and designer: David Nash and Imero Fiorentino for the Republicans; Gary Smith and Rene Lagler for the Democrats. They and their staffs came on board approximately nine months to a year in advance of the conventions. That timing is significant given the nature of the last ring of the convention circus.

The third ring is made up of people from the presumptive nominee’s political campaign. They represent the person for whom the convention will be staged, and as such they are responsible for crafting the program and determining the “message” of the

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86 Those experts are not necessarily major players within their party during non-convention years. Debra DeLee admitted to me that “some of them I can’t even tell you what they do in the three years in between [but they] sort of surface every four years and participate in conventions. As soon as I was named, I sought them out” (interview).

87 For articles on the budget crisis see Braun “Host committee to raise more for RNC,” Sweet “GOP convention host panel struggles to raise cash” and Keen “GOP convention: 5 weeks, millions of dollars to go.” For information on the ACLU lawsuit see Rahman “ACLU Sues City.”

88 See McCarron “Coming Soon: Nightmare on Madison Street” and Kass “Cabbies Latest to Use Convention” on the threatened strike, and Kass and Locin “Convention Politics a Battle” on the tension with the host committee, Chicago ‘96.

89 For instance, the designer for the 1996 Republican convention had designed the lighting for the 1992 Democratic convention. Similarly, the producer of the 1988, 1992, and 1996 Democratic conventions cut his political teeth with Ronald Reagan’s Inaugural Ball. And the same design firm handled both convention podiums in 1984.
convention. While the other rings look at the convention as an end unto itself (the Republican convention manager told the San Diego Union-Tribune, for instance, that his job was "to make sure the sound and lights go on"), the political ring looks at the convention much more as a phase within a larger campaign structure.

Of course, the campaign staff cannot officially participate in any convention planning until after their candidate has been formally recognized by the party's national committee. As a result, the process of convention planning differs somewhat depending upon whether the party holds the White House or not. Except in rare cases, an incumbent President is all but assured of renomination, allowing his campaign to participate in convention decision-making from the very beginning. Certainly, this was the case for Bill Clinton in 1996. As the Chicago Tribune put it, "While the convention is legally the responsibility of the Democratic National Committee, [DNC Chairman Donald] Fowler said he expected the White House to dominate decisions about the 'style and appearance and the agenda of the convention'" (Locin "Convention Script—Lights, Camera, Clinton"). Harold Ickes was the White House liaison to the DNCC from day one; he and DeLee held regular weekly meetings, beginning in 1995. Also meeting regularly was the White House "Creative Committee," consisting of people from the White House, the re-election campaign, the DNC, and the DNCC (Sweet "Democrats May Keep Clinton Away From Most of Convention").

The Republicans had no such luxury. Dole's liaisons, Paul Manafort, Rick Davis and Tom Korologos did not get involved with the RNCC until mid-April, long after the convention planning process had begun. As a result, the Republican convention in 1996, like the Democratic convention in 1992, was less the product of the candidate's team than

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90 Bayer "GOP Show's Headaches His Specialty"
91 See Denton and Stuckey "Communication Model" 9-15.
92 Manafort was Dole's Convention Manager; Davis was Manafort's Deputy; and Korologos was Senior Convention Advisor. See Appendix A.
the party's national chairman. Republican convention manager Greener put it this way:

"[Haley Barbour] should be thought of as not just the primary client for the product, but he should be thought of as the visionary, and the leader" (personal interview).

Barbour envisioned a strictly controlled convention with every element contributing to the party line and highlighting the candidate. In particular, Barbour wanted to be clear whose convention it was. Greener recalled Barbour telling him:

We shouldn't put faces and voices up there that don't comport with what it is we're trying to accomplish....There aren't any other presidential candidates besides Bob Dole. There are former presidential candidates. And they're going to be treated that way. Not disrespectfully, and not without recognition of the contributions they've made to the Party, but by God it's not going to be a situation where people can legitimately, logically conclude that the people that lost the nomination called the tune. (personal interview, emphasis added)

Further, Barbour wanted to build upon the extensive television operation that the RNC had developed under his watch. GOP-TV, as it was called, consisted of a weekly syndicated program entitled "Rising Tide." Barbour wanted the convention to follow and expand the "Rising Tide" format so that it became a unified television program, a political infomercial. "It is not wrong to think of it mostly as a TV show," Barbour told the Washington Times (Kellman "GOP Convention Planners Hope").

Barbour was not alone in reimagining his convention. Both parties considered changing the structure of their events to make them better suited for television. The Republicans opted to drop one of their sessions, trimming down the overall time to five sessions over four days rather than their usual six. There was talk in Democratic circles

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93 The context for Barbour's instructions was, no doubt, the widely-held perception that the 1992 Republican convention had been hijacked by Pat Buchanan and the right wing of the Republican Party. As a senior Dole aide told the New York Times, "Every meeting in planning this convention begins with what went wrong in 1992 (Berke "Republicans Strive to Keep Buchanan Out of Spotlight"). See also Wattenberg, "Coverage of '92 Convention Still Haunting Republicans" and Barnes "New Hype and Hoorah for Conventions."

94 The Republican Party traditionally staged two afternoon sessions on Monday and Tuesday in addition to their evening sessions. See "Republicans Drop Session."
of dropping an entire day of their convention, but in the end the Democrats stuck with the traditional four-day format.\textsuperscript{95}

To help determine how they would fill those four days, both parties conducted extensive polling and focus-group research as part of their campaigns. And they arrived at similar conclusions about the thinking of the American people about politicians, campaigns, and political conventions.\textsuperscript{96} As Steve Lombardo of the Republican polling firm Market Strategies Inc. told the \textit{National Review}:

\begin{quote}
It's a television show, and as a television show, it's a pretty boring one. What we learned more than anything else is that people don't find them very interesting, compelling or informative. In the past, the pace of these things has been way too slow. The pacing needs to improve, it needs to be informational, and it probably could do to be a little less red-meat partisan. (Barnes "New Hype and Hoorah")
\end{quote}

Actually, as the convention programs were set in the spring and summer of 1996, they were structurally identical. The keynote addresses were scheduled for the Tuesday night of each convention.\textsuperscript{97} Wednesday nights would feature the traditional roll call vote of the states; the nominees' speeches would then provide the climax for conventions on Thursday.\textsuperscript{98} Both parties wanted short speeches grouped thematically around key messages. Both parties wanted to incorporate "real people," meaning non-politicians, into their convention programs. And both wanted their convention to be "high-tech," with web-

\textsuperscript{95} As is always the case with conventions, the major factor in that decision was television. As DeLee explained it to me: "A party, a candidate, could not afford to buy two hours of prime-time TV, or even one hour of prime-time TV, on all networks. To voluntarily give that up, because you don't think you're good enough to get viewers to watch you, as opposed to saying 'My God, we've got an hour of prime-time, we're going to make this the best we possibly can,' is crazy" (interview).

\textsuperscript{96} See \textit{Back From the Dead} 103-104.

\textsuperscript{97} 1996 was the first year in which the Democrats followed the decade-long Republican practice of scheduling the keynote address on Tuesday night in order to attract attention to what would otherwise be a lackluster session without important business.

\textsuperscript{98} See Appendices B-E for the highlights and full schedules of the two conventions.
sites, digital communications systems, and cutting-edge computer facilities. As Roger Schneider, the executive producer of the Democratic convention web-site, put it: "Both parties are looking over their shoulders at the Olympics, which will be incredibly high-tech this time. We don't dare look horse-and-buggy compared to that," said (Weiss "Party conventions to attract interest"). The other advantage to incorporating the latest technology was the sheer symbolism, as an RNC press release made clear:

One of the goals of the 1996 Republican Convention is to demonstrate to the American people that the Republican Party and our presidential nominee have the ideas and vision to lead this nation into the 21st century. Our emphasis on the use of cutting-edge telecommunications equipment is no coincidence. (Gavin "Republican Convention Goes Hi-Tech In 1996")

Not all of the similarities between the two conventions were a function of aesthetic or symbolic choice, however. A major factor in the planning of both conventions, and every other modern convention for that matter, was the need for security. As both political and media events of the highest order, conventions are always prime targets for potential terrorists. In 1996, in the wake of the Centennial Park bombing at the Olympics and the suspected terrorist attack on TWA flight 800, security was taken even more seriously.100

Consequently, convention plans suffered from a kind of split personality. As Chicago Tribune columnist Bob Greene observed, the conventions, like the Olympic Games earlier that summer, were "designed as symbols of freedom and fellowship. And all--willingly, with the gratitude of those in attendance--turned themselves over to armed and uniformed forces with the authority to do just about anything they pleased" ("Land of the free? Not America, not in 1996").

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99 For other stories on the technological side of the conventions see Yanity "GOP’s Web Site Writes a New Page in Convention History," Gavin "GOP and AT&T to Create On-Line Convention," Wolinksy "Unconventional Communications; Dems to Give New Tools a Workout."

Simultaneously carnivalesque and paranoid, the conventions were designed to be parties in a panopticon. Everything had to be festive for the delegates and attendees, but also absolutely secure for the Secret Service. The signs used for the floor demonstrations are a case in point. Thousands were created, but none were fastened to sticks or poles. Instead, they were mounted on cardboard tubes because sticks and poles were not allowed inside the convention facilities. The only flags on flagpoles were the ones already in the hall and already cleared by the Secret Service.

There were differences in the two conventions, of course. For one thing, the parties had different expectations. The Republicans were counting on their convention to resuscitate the Dole campaign, while the Democrats were just as happy for their convention to be boring: “Controversy brings attention,” said DNC Co-Chair Chris Dodd. “I’m willing to take less attention for no controversy” (Frandsen “Chris Dodd: Democratic Savior?”). The other major difference was media-related. The Republicans, unlike the Democrats, had their own broadcast system in place. Building upon the GOP-TV operation, they had purchased television time on the Family Channel and the USA Network to air their “Unconventional Convention” coverage. The Democrats had no such operation in place and had to find ways to make their spectacle engaging for the major television networks who limited their coverage to approximately one hour per night.

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101 The reference may seem forced if one has not attended a political convention, but the omnipresent surveillance, display of authority, and categorization in that environment is akin to the nineteenth-century prison systems Foucault describes in Discipline and Punish. Inside the convention perimeter, everyone must wear proper credentials at all times. These credentials are inspected every time anyone moves from one area within the site to another. To enter the venue itself, one must submit to a security regimen more thorough than an airport’s during the Gulf War. Magnetometers and x-ray machines check everyone individually. Every piece of electronic equipment—from a beeper to a lap-top computer—had to be activated so that security could confirm it was not a bomb.

102 See “GOP-TV’s Unconventional Convention Coverage.”

103 C-SPAN and CNN broadcast gavel-to-gavel coverage, while PBS broadcast three hours a night in partnership with NBC. See Kurtz “That’s the Ticket.”
Performance Spaces

The planning and personnel of the two conventions were important parts of each performance. But arguably the most significant aspects of the 1996 conventions were the performance spaces themselves. They shaped the performances to a remarkable degree. Of course, as Carlson points out in Places of Performance, space is always a major factor:

The way an audience experiences and interprets a play...is by no means governed solely by what happens on the stage. The entire theatre, its audience arrangements, its other public spaces, its physical appearance, even its location within a city, are all important elements of the process by which an audience makes meaning of its experience. (2)

San Diego and Chicago

In analyzing political conventions as theatrical performances, it is necessary to expand the views even further. Each convention host city, after all, is a performance space unto itself. Certainly the cities competing to host a political convention see themselves in those terms. A spokeswoman for the Chicago host committee told Advertising Age, “This is not about party politics as much as it is about showing off our city to the world....It’s all about brand awareness...and we must sell the city as if it were a brand” (Rappoport and Bosch “Breaking Conventions”).

While other conventions can bring in more money and visitors, a political convention offers a city an unparalleled opportunity to showcase itself for the media and the nation at large. For instance, the Los Angeles Times noted that even though San Diego would be hosting a Baptist convention twice the size of the Republican convention, “the Republicans can give San Diego something that the Baptists and others cannot, something that San Diego craves: international media coverage to tout its weather, desirability as a tourist destination and business-friendly political climate” (Stall and Perry “GOP Proposes San Diego”).104

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The host city is as important for the convention as the convention is important to the city. The two can come to symbolize each other. 1992 offers two good examples of this process in action. That year, the Democratic convention was held in New York City. Some Republicans attacked the Democrats by associating them with the negative stereotypes of the Big Apple. The “New York Democrats,” so the argument went, were obviously dirty, violent liberals out of touch with the rest of the country. The city’s reputation was conflated with the convention. The Democrats may have had the last laugh, however, when the perceived failure of the 1992 Republican convention tarnished the connotations of the host city, Houston. In that case, the convention became a signifier for the city as Bill Clinton and the Democrats used the term “Houston Republicans” to tar George Bush with the politics of Pat Buchanan and Pat Robertson. The term stuck and in 1996 “Houston” was a codeword for media and political figures alike, as this front page New York Times story illustrates:

For the men and women who face the uphill task of defeating President Clinton...the first order of business is to make San Diego the non-Houston. They are not shy about admitting it. For example, Nelson Warfield, Mr. Dole’s press secretary volunteered this during an interview today: “There’s a story to be written here, and the story is, this is not Houston.” (Apple “Running From the Past”) 105

In 1994, the Republican and Democratic National Committees each announced their convention cities. The Republicans chose San Diego; the Democrats chose Chicago. The practical and political reasons for these choices were clear. Both cities put together impressive bids featuring multi-million dollar financing plans, state-of-the-art facilities, and extensive operational support. Both cities were in politically valuable locations. San Diego is in California, the electoral motherlode holding one-fifth of the votes needed to win the White House. Chicago is in the heart of the midwestern battleground states that are key to

105 The New York Times was not alone in featuring front-page stories comparing San Diego to Houston. The Washington Post (Balz “San Diego Message”) and the National Journal (Barnes “Avoiding Another Houston”) ran similar stories.
any presidential election. Both were headed by mayors with solid credentials within their political parties. San Diego’s Susan Golding was seen as a rising star within Republican circles; Chicago’s Richard Daley was heir to the famous Democratic Party dynasty. And the two cities represented core constituencies within each party. San Diego, besides being a Republican bastion in southern California, embodies the strong military that is a party lodestone. It is a home to many active and retired military, including more sailors and Marines “than anywhere else in the world,” according to the Republicans’ Official Delegate and Media Guide (48). Similarly, Chicago is an exemplar of the Democratic Party. It is a diverse city with a history of political activism, and the home to one of the last surviving Democratic “machines.” The “city of the big shoulders” also befits the Democrats’ image as the party of working people.

But what were San Diego and Chicago like as performance sites? How did each city affect the experience of those attending or watching the conventions? A key aspect is that both cities tried very hard to be liked, not only because they were showcasing themselves, but also because they were struggling to overcome an underdog status, compounded by the circumstances of convention history. In terms of their national reputations, both cities are generally overshadowed by their larger rivals Los Angeles and New York. San Diegans make every effort to distinguish their city from Los Angeles; former mayor Pete Wilson dubbed San Diego “America’s Finest City”. Chicagoans cling, with equal vigor, to their anachronistic “Second City” label.

Both San Diego and Chicago had prior claims to convention history, too. Each had its own historical demons to exorcise. San Diego was to have been Nixon’s convention site in 1972 until the disclosure of a corporate sponsor’s financial improprieties led the Republicans to switch to Miami at the last moment. And Chicago, of course, is the ultimate convention city; books have been written about its role in convention history.106 It has not

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106 See Sautter and Burke Inside the Wigwam, Farber Chicago ’68, and Mailer
only been the host city for more conventions than any other (25), but is infamous for the Democrats’ disastrous convention of 1968. In fact, a major challenge the Democrats faced in 1996 was to change the negative connotations Chicago had for their party. In a story entitled “City, Democrats Brace for Unwelcome ‘68 Flashbacks” the Chicago Tribune called the 1968 convention “the 500-pound gorilla that no one invited to the party and that the hosts wish everyone would ignore” (Locin).¹⁰⁷

San Diego Convention Center and the United Center

But beyond the general context of the two cities, it is worth examining the specific context of the two convention venues within each city. These venues were the San Diego Convention Center and the United Center. In San Diego the Convention Center is part of the downtown area. Embarcadero Park and the Gaslamp District lead into the Convention Center and the harbor. This is a civic environment featuring myriad small shops, restaurants, and parks, along with hotels and corporate offices. It is as much a pedestrian space as an automotive one. During the Republican convention the area around the Convention Center was the political nexus as well. The Dole campaign, the convention management, and media logistics operations were all headquartered in the Marriott and nearby hotels.

The Convention Center itself is a whimsical building, long and low with tubelike windows, triangular gables, and a tentlike canopy over one end that is reminiscent of a sailboat. The architect described the goals behind his design in a 1989 Los Angeles Times story on the opening of the Convention Center:

Miami and the Siege of Chicago.

¹⁰⁷Naturally, the 1968 Convention was not ignored. Every network and newspaper included some feature on the subject in their coverage. A sampling of stories include Newsweek’s “Driving Out Old Demons” (McCormick); Time’s “The Whole World Was Watching” (Morrow); the Chicago Sun-Times’ “The whole world was watching” (Drell); and the Washington Times’ “Chicago get shot to shine; ‘68 still on many minds” (Murray).
I think right from the beginning the attempt was not an architectural statement as much as a real embellishment for the city, something that fit the setting. That's why we picked the nautical theme, the tents as sails, the big gangways, the decks, the openness, the marvelous views. (Acuna "Convention Center to Open")

The Convention Center was designed to be a public space. The managers of the facility have said that their philosophy “is to welcome San Diegans to the building” (Wilkie "Center’s boss called ‘can-do guy’"). A fact sheet for the Convention Center states that it was designed, in part, to “provide a positive community asset.” The architecture and location of the Convention Center make the task of welcoming easier. To the north it connects to the Marriott Hotel; to the east, the pedestrian and trolley traffic of the Embarcadero. South is a large parking lot for cars and buses, and the harbor to the west even allows access to the Convention Center by boat.

The Democrats’ convention venue, the United Center, is a different beast entirely. First of all, it is an island in the middle of Chicago, an isolated complex out in the projects, more than a mile from the downtown Loop. Physically it stands out because nothing else around is as tall and imposing. Rather than being an integrated part of the larger environment, the United Center—permanently surrounded as it is by parking lots and security fences—looks like a fortress amidst the urban equivalent of clear cutting. It is wholly unlike the San Diego Convention Center. It is not a place to wander around outside. Not only is the neighborhood questionable, but there is nothing to see nor do. Local beautification projects by the Mayor’s office in preparation for the Democrats’ arrival improved the area somewhat, but still left a lot to be desired.

The differences between the two venues is reflected in their architecture. The San Diego Convention Center is, by design, a civic space providing a neutral environment for whatever group chooses to convene there. It hosted a comic book convention immediately before the Republicans took possession on July 8, and eleven days after the Republican convention gaveled to a close, it hosted a meeting of the pharmacy division of the National
Association of Chain Drug Stores (Braun "Center is GOP Turf"). The United Center, by contrast, has a clear identity of its own. And that identity is clearly corporate. The name was bought by United Airlines, whose logo covers the entire roof. From overhead, the United Center is a gigantic billboard. And, of course, the United Center is a sports arena built specifically for the Chicago Bulls and Chicago Blackhawks. The team logos adorn prominently every face of the Center and every entrance. Advertisements and memorabilia featuring Bulls and Blackhawks' players are everywhere. The giant bronze statue of Michael Jordan—the statue that is a mecca for Bulls fans—is outside one of the primary entrances.

Neither venue was suited ideally to the special needs of a convention. The open accessibility of the San Diego Convention Center was a nightmare for the Secret Service and security personnel who insisted upon the imposition of a network of security fences and checkpoints. Needless to say, the result was completely at odds with the urban aesthetic. The Martin Luther King Promenade, directly opposite the San Diego Convention Center, was a particularly glaring illustration of this disjunction. Commemorating the slain civil-rights leader, the Promenade is a testament to freedom; quotations on the subject are inscribed along the walkway. In the center of the Promenade is the Melvin Edwards' sculpture "Breaking the Chains." Ironically, only months after the sculpture's installation, the entire area was fenced off as part of the convention security measures. Only properly-credentialed convention-goers had the freedom to walk the freedom path. The security requirements also grated upon the owners of the boats anchored in the marina, many of whom objected strenuously to initial plans which would have forced them to abandon their boats during convention week (Ladd "Secret Service plan makes waves").

Security was less of a concern in Chicago, since the United Center complex includes security fences as part of its design. The isolation of the United Center presented its own problems for the convention committee, however. There was no nearby space to
house the management, media, and campaign command posts necessary for the infrastructure of the convention. The Republicans had been able to house everything in the Marriott Hotel facility adjacent to the San Diego Convention Center. The Democrats had to make do with the downtown hotels that were clustered miles away from the United Center. As a result, an extensive network of buses had to be created. These buses were of little use to the working press and members of the media who needed to be in proximity to the venue itself, so gigantic temporary tents were set up in one of the United Center parking lots.

*Convention Hall Interiors*

The halls within each convention venue present a study in contrasts. They were opposites architecturally. They were opposites in terms of how each related to their parties’ traditional convention halls. And while each reflected a similar social hierarchy, they were opposite kinds of performance spaces.

Physically, the San Diego and Chicago convention halls could not have been more different. The hall within the San Diego Convention Center is a long, low room. Five football fields could be laid out on the floor, but it would only take five football players to touch the ceiling. It is 840’ long, 300’ wide, and 27’ high. By contrast, the main hall within the United Center is expansive. It is 493’ long, 378’ wide, and 133’ high.

The functions of the two halls were different as well. The space used by the Republicans was the main exhibit hall within the San Diego Convention Center complex. This hall, with its low ceiling, is a horizontal environment best suited for conventioneers strolling around from tradeshow booth to tradeshow booth. It is designed as a large neutral

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108 See Hanna “Getting Around Convention.”

109 Those working inside these tents, incidentally, were none too pleased with their accommodations, which were a far cry from the luxurious workspaces they had enjoyed in San Diego. The Democrats fell short of the Republicans in catering to the media. See Victor “In the Media Tent, Plenty of Leaks.”

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space in which smaller spaces can be created with maximum flexibility. Twelve wide, squat support pillars subdivide the room naturally into smaller physical areas. Or the divisions can be absolute, since the room includes two movable walls that can be brought in to create three different spaces.

The Democratic convention space, by contrast, was an arena. Architecturally, the hall is not merely another room within the larger structure; it is the heart of the United Center. Arguably, it is the United Center. It is a vertical environment designed specifically for spectators. The height, along with the limited floor space (25,000 sq. ft., or one-tenth the size of the San Diego Convention Center floor), makes it a poor exhibit hall, but an excellent place in which to watch a performance. Like the San Diego Convention Center, the United Center is a flexible space, but in a very different way. The San Diego Convention Center brochure lists seating capacities according to “Theater,” “Schoolroom,” “Banquet,” and “Reception” configurations. Depending upon the configuration, the maximum occupancy of the hall is 11,941 to 20,100. (See Figure 4.1) The equivalent brochure on the United Center lists seating capacities according to “Hockey/Circus/Ice Show,” “Basketball,” “Center Stage/Wrestling/Boxing,” and “Concert” configurations, with maximum occupancy ranges from 14,142 to 20,605. (See Figure 4.2)

The 1996 convention halls were also different in terms of how each related to previous party convention halls. The San Diego Convention Center is unlike any other Republican venue in recent history, particularly the gigantic domes that housed the
## Exhibit Hall - Ground Level

![Ground Level Floor Plan](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Room</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Area (Sq. Ft.)</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Seating Capacities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exhibit Hall A</td>
<td>167' x 399'</td>
<td>83,560</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Theater: 800, Schoolroom: 1,200, Banquet: 1,100, Reception: 1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibit Hall B</td>
<td>167' x 399'</td>
<td>31,370</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Theater: 800, Schoolroom: 1,200, Banquet: 1,100, Reception: 1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibit Hall C</td>
<td>167' x 399'</td>
<td>12,680</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Theater: 800, Schoolroom: 1,200, Banquet: 1,100, Reception: 1,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Floor Loads - Exhibit Hall**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Load (lbs per sq ft)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Floor (main)</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loading dock</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lobby</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Distance between columns 10' x 10'
*1B does not stand alone.

Figure 4.1: San Diego Convention Center floorplan.
(from San Diego Convention Center brochure)
Figure 4.2: United Center seating capacities.
(from United Center Services Guide)
conventions of 1992 and 1988. The Houston Astrodome, site of the 1992 convention, has a ceiling 208' high. The 1988 venue, the New Orleans Superdome, was even larger; at 273', its ceiling was almost ten times higher than the one in San Diego. The disparity between the 1996 Republican convention hall and previous halls was much remarked upon in the press. The Los Angeles Times even featured a graphic comparing the cross-sections of the San Diego Convention Center and the Astrodome ("San Diego Squeeze"). (See Figure 4.3 for a copy of this illustration with the United Center cross-section added.)

Republican convention officials tried to spin away the shortcomings of their space. Much to the bemusement of the press, convention managers insisted on describing the San Diego Convention Center as "intimate." Historical precedent was also cited. "It is radically different in terms of what we've had in the Republican party for the last two cycles" one prominent Republican consultant told me, "But it's sort of akin to the Dallas Convention Center in '84" (Harris interview). Of course, the 1984 hall was a much larger space, and had only one support pillar obstructing views. According to a 1984 press release, the Dallas Convention Center was the third largest facility of its kind in the country, providing more than enough room for the Republican Party (qtd. in Smith "National Nominating Conventions as Vehicles" 178). The same could not be said of the San Diego Convention Center. Joseph Martinez, the official architect, admitted as much to the San Diego Union-Tribune a month before the convention began:

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110 And much complained about, particularly by the television networks. Lane Venardos, the CBS News vice president in charge of news and special events pointed out that "it's the smallest hall that has hosted a convention since the advent of television;" his counterpart at ABC, Jeff Gralnick, called it "the worst hall I have seen in my life" (Perry and Randolph "Convention Organizers Refuse"). See also Dickson "TV networks gear up for Election '96," Laurence "Media moan venue here cramps their style," and Lafayette "Networks Most Excellent Adventure."

111 See Perry and Randolph "Convention Organizers Refuse to Say the S-Word" and Victor "Intimacy Matters to These Republicans."
Comparative Cross-Sections of Astrodome and 1996 Convention Sites

Figure 4.3: Comparative cross-sections of Astrodome and 1996 convention sites.
Just last week, I was told that we needed 500 more seats....What we did is
took the drawing and tried to find some space. I have almost gone through
the whole thing with a magnifying glass trying to look for spaces. It's like
a needle in a haystack trying to find a seat. (Webb “When Republicans
arrive, he’ll squeeze ‘em in”)

Democratic conventions, by contrast, have traditionally been held in smaller-sized
halls. In 1984, the Democrats convened in San Francisco’s Moscone Center; in 1988, the
Atlanta Omni Arena; and in 1992, Madison Square Garden. 1996’s United Center fit this
pattern perfectly. In fact, the size of the United Center was one of the key selling points as
far back as 1991, when Illinois Democratic Party Chairman Gary LaPaille was proposing
that Chicago make a bid for the 1996 convention (Locin “Quakes, Both Real and Political,
Enabled City to Win Convention”). The comparable sizes of Madison Square Garden and
the United Center made planning the 1996 convention easier. Blueprints from 1992 were
used as starting points for designing the layout of the hall. And, as will be discussed later,
the podiums were virtually the same.

The San Diego Convention Center and the United Center may have been different in
many ways, but they share at least one important similarity for a theatre scholar: they were
theatre venues for mass performances. Consequently, they were reflective of their society
and particular social hierarchies. Spatial divisions within a theatre are signifiers. As Erika
Fischer-Lichte argues: “[the] entire underlying use of space in a theater...can be understood
as a sign for the social function of theater” (100). Fischer-Lichte is referring primarily to
the two-part division of space between actor and spectator; Marvin Carlson extends the
argument by looking at the divisions within spectator spaces. “Audience spaces,” he
points out, “have always reflected with great accuracy the class preoccupations of their
society” (Places 135).

A convention hall may be a different kind of theatre than the Renaissance, Baroque,
and Victorian halls that Carlson examines, but the same social divisions can be found
therein. In fact, the social divisions within a convention cannot be avoided. They are clear
to all convention goers from the press corps to the partisans. “A person can learn a lot
about GOP politics by strolling the floor and seeing who sits where,” David Von Drehle
pointed out in the Washington Post ("A Gathering Hall Perfectly Designed for the GOP’s
New Purpose"). “It’s location, location, location,” an anonymous political fundraiser was
quoted as saying in another article, “There’s stature attached to where you are” (Marcus
“Sailing Room Only”). And where you are—or rather where you can go—was strictly
regulated at both conventions by means of credentials. Everyone attending either
convention had to wear credentials at all times. These were color-coded and labeled to
clarify exactly where the wearer was permitted to go.\footnote{Incidentally, although credentials appeared to ensure that convention spaces
were segregated into strict hierarchies, the reality is that convention spaces were somewhat
fluid. Credentials were loaned and traded constantly. This practice was even
institutionalized by the press corps which kept a stack of “floating floor passes” to be
borrowed for 20 or 30 minutes at a time by those members of the press who wanted
temporary access to the convention floor. Similarly, the convention hall was a very fluid
performance space, despite the clear divisions within spaces. The ever-present television
cameras ensured that every space within the hall was a potential stage space in which an
ostensible spectator to the event became an active performer within it. See Chapter 7.}

The architectural differences between the San Diego Convention Center and the
United Center placed different demands upon the parties as they divided their halls. In San
Diego, the Republicans had to create and designate all of the separate areas for convention-
goers. Temporary walls and dividers were constructed. Elaborate perimeters of stanchions
and velvet ropes were put in place, imposing order upon an otherwise-neutral space. And
the separation between areas was enforced by an army of security guards.\footnote{Incidentally, although credentials appeared to ensure that convention spaces
were segregated into strict hierarchies, the reality is that convention spaces were somewhat
fluid. Credentials were loaned and traded constantly. This practice was even
institutionalized by the press corps which kept a stack of “floating floor passes” to be
borrowed for 20 or 30 minutes at a time by those members of the press who wanted
temporary access to the convention floor. Similarly, the convention hall was a very fluid
performance space, despite the clear divisions within spaces. The ever-present television
cameras ensured that every space within the hall was a potential stage space in which an
ostensible spectator to the event became an active performer within it. See Chapter 7.}

The Democrats had a much easier time in their convention hall. The United Center
was designed with security built in. Secure areas are part of the architecture of the
building; entrance into any one area can be controlled by virtue of a security guard at a
door. The net effect was that, although the United Center was the more secure and delineated space, the security and delineation between areas was practically invisible once one was inside. The architecture itself camouflaged the fact that access from one area to another was virtually impossible without exiting back into the outside shell of the United Center and progressing through a maze of stairs and/or elevators. In that respect, the United Center was very similar to the eighteenth-century theatres Carlson describes as being “so arranged that although all spectators shared the same auditorium, there was little or no actual overlapping of social spaces” (Places 149).

Regardless of whether the divisions were architecturally part of the hall or created especially for the convention, though, the divisions within each hall broke down into essentially five areas: Skyboxes, Media, Audience, Floor, and Podium. (See Figures 4.4 and 4.5) I will discuss each of these areas in turn.

**Skyboxes**

The skyboxes of any convention hall—and 1996 presented no exceptions—are exactly like the private boxes of a Baroque theatre or opera house. They are suites consisting of at least two different areas: a private enclave isolated from the rest of the hall, and a viewing area looking out upon the convention floor. Within the Chicago skyboxes, the private area was behind the viewing area. In San Diego, the skyboxes were built like split-level “townhomes” in which the first level was a lounge, “a comfortable living room-type setting” according to the architect, and the second level provided a view of the hall (Victor “For an Architect, Mission Impossible”). Marvin Carlson’s description of a theatre box could apply to the San Diego Convention Center or the United Center:

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113 The artificiality of the Republicans’ spatial divisions within the San Diego Convention Center hall became clear at the end of their convention. After the convention was gaveled to a close, and the security guards no longer bothered to check credentials, one could wander the hall at will, unhampered.
Figure 4.4: 1996 Republican convention floorplan.
Figure 4.5: 1996 Democratic convention delegation seating chart.
[A]n independent box might have several adjacent rooms that converted it into a small private suite, furnished with the owner's personal belongings. A private sitting room often extended behind the actual box, and in Italian opera houses of the later eighteenth century there was usually a supplementary dressing room across the internal passageway from the box where servants could prepare food, drink, and ices for the patrons watching the play or socializing in the box itself. (Places 143)

Like this historical box, the convention skyboxes were decorated and equipped. All included television monitors, audio feeds, and telephones. Some of the skyboxes were even set up as television or radio studios.

Convention skyboxes are not all alike. And that is their value for the researcher. If theatre boxes are important "in clarifying the social semiotics of the auditorium" (Carlson, Places 142), skyboxes help clarify the convention hall. The finest skyboxes, both for their view of the proceedings and their prominence within the hall belonged to the major players in the conventions: the networks and nominees. In both San Diego and Chicago, the ABC, CBS, CNN, and NBC skyboxes dominated the halls and visually defined the boundaries of the floor. They were designed and built by the networks themselves as showcases. In fact, the networks competed with each other in designing and outfitting their skyboxes, an exercise the Washington Post called "anchor-booth envy" (Gerhart and Groer. "First on the Bill"). With the best seats in each convention hall, and fronted by large glass windows, the skyboxes were the 20th century equivalent to the royal boxes of a Baroque theatre. The Washington Post called them "privileged elevated fishbowls from which the network anchors watch the podium as the conventioneers watch the network anchors" (Von Drehle "Gathering Hall"). Of course, the Post was mistaken in one respect: most of the time the anchors were not watching the podium behind them at all. Their attention was riveted upon their cameras. Like their Baroque predecessors, the network elite used the official performance as a backdrop for their own self-aggrandizement.

114 See also Kamin "Ready for liftoff," and McRoberts "Everyone's aiming."
Those seated in the boxes designated for the presidential and vice-presidential nominees’ family and guests had a different agenda than the networks. While they, too, were on display in their boxes, their task was to complement the action on the podium, rather than be removed from it. This task was reflected in the design of each box. While the nominees’ skyboxes were excellent seats from which one could see and be seen, their design was fairly subdued, following the same architectural scheme as the rest of the hall. The Republicans used boxes raised up from the rest of the floor and situated directly in front of the network skyboxes. The front of each box was painted in the same red, white, and blue as the podium. The Democratic nominees’ skyboxes were located on either side of the central camera platform, next to the network skyboxes.

It is worth examining the skyboxes of the Republican and Democratic conventions separately. The preliminary seating plan published in the Republicans’ “Media Logistics Handbook for Fall Media Walk-Through” designated five areas within the hall for skyboxes. On paper, these were evenly distributed spaces throughout the hall: double-decker skyboxes flanking the podium on either side, a bank of large skyboxes directly opposite the podium, and a row of skyboxes at the far sides of the hall behind the audience seating. A closer examination of these spaces is very telling, however, particularly in terms of the dynamics within the hall. All of the skyboxes on the stage-left side of the podium were assigned to the second-tier television and radio media as studios. The skyboxes directly in front and to the right of the podium were allocated by the Committee on Arrangements to Republican Party officials and special guests. As a result, the media were separated physically from the party faithful. The kinds of skyboxes were also different. The media skyboxes on the left end of the hall were small 10’ by 20’ cubicles, each with a

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115 Strictly speaking, the seats of honor for the Dole and Kemp families were not skyboxes, in that they were only slightly raised above the floor and did not include private suites. This was another illustration of the San Diego Convention Center’s limited size.
maximum capacity of 20 people. The Committee on Arrangements skyboxes on the right end were two-storey 28' by 26' affairs with a capacity of 100 people.

In terms of the skyboxes, if the San Diego Convention Center was problematic because there were no pre-existing structures, the United Center was problematic because there were too many. Like virtually every other modern sports arena in the United States, the United Center has a great number of luxury skyboxes nestled between each of the banks of general seating. Each of these skyboxes is the property of the corporations and individuals who purchased it when the United Center was constructed. (Much like the private boxes of opera houses and European theatres.) This property was appropriated by the Democrats during the weeks that they had control of the United Center, under the condition that the original fixtures, artwork, and decorations for each skybox had to be removed and stored during the convention itself, and restored once the convention closed. Obviously, this was a significant logistical challenge. As Michael Lufrano, the convention Hall Director, explained it to me: “While we have two months to essentially build it, we’ve got eleven days to get it back to what it was.”

The specific layout of the Democrats’ skyboxes in Chicago was similar to that employed by the Republicans in San Diego. Some skyboxes were reserved for Democratic Party officials and donors; the rest were allocated to the second-tier broadcasters. Unlike San Diego, virtually all of the skyboxes had excellent sightlines of the podium, even those skyboxes located high up in the rafters. Also unlike San Diego, the skyboxes were very private. Given the configuration of the hall—the United Center skyboxes are nestled between general seating levels—it was difficult for those convention attendees sitting outside a skybox to see those inside. And it was even more difficult for regular attendees to enter, given that the skyboxes were each on their own levels of the United Center.
Media

The network elite may have had their skyboxes at each convention, but they represented only a fraction of the media present. There was actually a broad range of media representatives at each convention, arranged spatially within each according to a strict "pecking order." At the top, as we have discussed, were the major networks. Next in importance were the camera stands, one of which—the head-on camera stand positioned directly opposite each podium—was fairly prominent in its own right. Both in San Diego and Chicago, that particular stand filled in the gap between the network skyboxes. Television cameras filled most of each stand, but press photographers had a couple tiers of their own. And, at least in Chicago, the stand was also used by the convention production team. The producer, sound engineer, lighting designer, and their staffs ran the show from up there. Other television camera and press photographer positions were arranged throughout each convention hall, in order to obtain a variety of visually appealing shots. They were next in the pecking order, followed by the second tier of broadcasters, both in television and radio. The spatial positions that all of these broadcasters enjoyed within the hall were significant because they were the positions from which the television audience experienced the convention.

The writing press had very different accommodations than their network television counterparts. While their position was as public—at both conventions the writing press stands were located on either side of the podium—the view of the convention performance was very different. At the Republican convention, in particular, the writing press stands were some of the worst seats in the hall. Support columns and camera platforms obscured the view of the speaker at the lectern for all but a handful of seats on the writing press stands. As the Washington Post observed: "None of the big-screen televisions is in sight from the press seats; instead, there are audio feeds on each desk, a little bigger than the speakers that attached to your car at an old-time drive-in movie" (Von Drehle "A Gathering
Many of the newspaper reporters brought in their own television sets in order to watch events unfolding within yards of them! The Democratic convention was not nearly as bad; the press seats next to the podium had unobstructed views of the stage, although they were hard-pressed to see the videowall at the back. The members of the press corps unable to garner a seat in one of the podium press stands had a less fortunate view, however, as they were ensconced with the talk radio contingent high in the uppermost balcony behind the podium. This location offered an excellent view of the orchestra and little else. A televised projection of the action on the podium was visible, however, because one could watch the screens built into the DNC "ribbon" above the stage.

Audience

Within a performance site, the space designated for the audience always reveals a great deal about the nature of the performance itself. This is especially true for political conventions because of what is not designated audience space. The area in front of the podium, the area to which only convention delegates and alternates have access is not an audience space. Instead, this area, the "floor," is a special environment which, as we shall see, is and is not a space for the convention performers themselves. The formal audience space in a convention hall is situated off the floor and is reserved for convention attendees who are party members or guests, but who are not elected members of the convention delegations. They, like a traditional theatre audience, are observers to the live performance taking place in their presence.

The audience, or guest, space at the San Diego Convention Center became infamous during convention week. All of the media commented on the poor sightlines and

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116 1996 was not the first year for this phenomenon. Ever since the political parties realized that television was the dominant news medium, print journalists have been second-class convention citizens. At the 1984 Democratic convention, for example, they had similarly awful seats with no view of the podium. See Reinsch Getting Elected (263).
cramped conditions. For example, the Los Angeles Times reported that “about 10% of the attendees will not be able to see the podium. Their views will be blocked by pillars, photo stands, and the massive skyboxes for the television networks” (Perry and Randolph “Convention Organizers Refuse”). Several media outlets ran stories on the worst seat in the hall. But the negative reporting actually missed the mark to some extent. The convention organizers did a good job of downplaying the number of seats with obstructed views. The 10% claim by the Los Angeles Times and others was an undercount. The number of obstructed view seats was significantly higher than 10%, depending upon where one was sitting. As Figures 4.6 and 4.7 illustrate, spatial conditions mirrored convention hierarchies. The delegates, alternates, and major networks had perfect views of the podium. Of the remaining convention goers, however, more than a fifth had no view of the podium whatsoever.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Seats</th>
<th>Obstructed View</th>
<th>% Obstructed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guest</td>
<td>11,098</td>
<td>1295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegate/Alternate</td>
<td>4842</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skyboxes</td>
<td>2480</td>
<td>640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C.O.A.--1820)</td>
<td>(Media--660)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elevated Lounges</td>
<td>1221</td>
<td>1221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press</td>
<td>1168</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>20,809</td>
<td>3469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL (non-Delegate/Alternate)</td>
<td>15,967</td>
<td>3469</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.6: 1996 Republican convention seating breakdown.
(The raw numbers are taken from a seating chart prepared by Martinez, Cutri & McArdle, the Republican Convention architects.)

117 The National Journal Convention Daily, for instance, awarded that dubious honor to Seat 11, Row J, Section 506E.

118 "C.O.A." stands for "Committee on Arrangements." These were the skyboxes designated for guests of the RNC and the RNCC. These skyboxes, in the main, enjoyed unobstructed views. Note that of the skybox seats, there were 640 with obscured views 660 for the media. The similarity of numbers is not coincidental. The major television networks had unobstructed views that the minor television and radio networks did not.
1996 Republican Convention Floorplan
(obstructed views marked)

Figure 4.7: 1996 Republican convention floorplan (obstructed views marked)
The *Washington Post* described the seating arrangement within the San Diego Convention Center in the following way:

[Non-delegates have] seats ranging from lame to ridiculous. Banks of bleachers stretch far, far, far into the opposite reaches at the end of the room. Other seats face ceiling support pylons and a wall of network television booths. About a dozen big-screen television sets are scattered throughout the hall—and even then, in the cheap seats a person can wind up 65 yards from the nearest TV. (Von Drehle "Gathering Hall")

The necessity for significant numbers of the audience to watch television monitors meant that there was no central focus. Many members of the audience directed their attention not at the podium, the nominal site of the performance, but at whichever television monitor was nearby. The oddity of this was most evident in the two elevated lounges placed behind and to the side of the podium. Many of the seats in those spaces faced directly opposite the podium and towards a television monitor. Even for those within the hall, this was a television convention.

For someone sitting in the audience space, there was a sense of disconnectedness. Criticizing the choreographed nature of the convention, the *Chicago Tribune* said that “Mr. and Mrs. America are not being invited to participate. They are being invited to watch” (Margolis, “Props replace politics”). This same invitation to watch, rather than participate extended to those convention-goers seated in the audience section, thanks to their environment. The floor area, the center half of the hall space may have been brightly lit, but the same was not true of the audience space. The lights in the audience area were at very low levels, like the darkened auditorium of a movie theatre. The floor and the podium were bright like a movie image. The ceiling and support pillars even framed the action on the floor with the low, wide dimensions of a movie screen. And the skyboxes behind, particularly the media skyboxes which were studios crammed full of their own

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119 According the Media Logistics Handbook, the lighting specifications for the audience floor area (one segment of the larger audience area) was 75 footcandles, as compared with 90-100 footcandles for the delegate floor area, 200 footcandles for the
lights, were reminiscent of the projection booth in a movie theatre. The audience space was also very cold. The risers placed the audience up near the ceiling, far closer to the gigantic air-conditioning vents than the hall was designed for. Unlike the central part of the hall, well-lit for television cameras, there were no banks of spotlights to provide warmth.

The United Center in Chicago lived up to the first half of its name. The audience space was configured to unite the masses seated there. It was the antithesis of the San Diego Convention Center. Filling the top two banks of seats in the bowl of the hall (the first bank was part of the delegates’ floor area), the audience within the United Center surrounded and peered down upon the floor and the podium. Everyone’s attention was directed towards the same spot. Seated in the same configuration as the delegates below, the audience was visually and physically linked to the central performers of the convention. In San Diego, by contrast, the audience was perpendicular to the delegates and the podium.

The height of the two halls had a profound impact upon the audience. The Republican convention architect designed the audience seating area with “a nice soft rake that would allow more people to sit and view down onto the hall and the platform” (Victor “For an Architect, Mission Impossible”). Those people who sat in that area might argue they had more of a view “across” than a view “down.” The rake was only 10'; looking at the distant action on the floor and the podium, one also saw the back of many heads. The United Center, by contrast, has a permanent rake roughly parabolic in shape. The lowest bank of seats has a rake of 20°; the middle bank 30°, and the upper bank 35°. Every seat offers a good view of the floor. Every seat also offers a good view of the other seats. Given the verticality of the United Center, more of each individual was visible than in San Diego. The oval shape of the hall also ensured that everyone could see the entire space filled with people. This arena seating created a sense of community. No matter where any

podium away from the lectern, and 250 footcandles for the lectern itself (17).
member of the audience looked, he or she saw rows upon rows of fellow audience
members observing the same spectacle.

Floor

The environment of the convention floor may be disorienting to the spectator or
even the participant, but the structure of the floor is well-defined and carefully designed.
The seating arrangements for delegates and alternates is particularly illustrative. In 1996,
the Republican convention floor was subdivided between the delegates and the alternates.
The delegates, organized by state, sat in a semicircle around the podium. All of these were
excellent seats. There were only 1,900 delegates at the Republican convention, every one
of whom was, at worst, only 128' away from the speaker's podium. Six main aisles
divided the delegate seating area, but the net effect was as "intimate" a setting as the
convention organizers had promised. The delegates were closer to the podium than at any
previous Republican convention.

Each delegation's area was marked by a large triangular red, white, and blue
stanchion mounted on top of a podium with a built-in multimedia workstation. The
workstation, designed by AT&T and Lucent Technologies, featured an intranet connection
to the official convention website, and were designed to allow electronic voting. Nearby
were two phones for use by the delegation's chair and floor whip. The first, labeled "Ring
down from Crow's Nest" was connected directly to the production center; the second
phone was for more general use.

Surrounding the delegates' area was an outer aisle; past that, the alternates were
arranged in two rough arcs on either side of the central camera platform and Committee on
Arrangements skyboxes. These were not especially good seats from which to view the
podium, since they were not raked or raised up on platforms from the rest of the floor. But
they were in the thick of the political action. The presidential and vice-presidential
nominees' skyboxes were right in their midst, and those seated on the ends of the two arcs
were situated along the major convention thoroughfares: the aisle parallel to the press boxes running directly to the speaker’s lectern.

The Democratic convention made no such distinction between delegates and alternates. Each state’s entire delegation sat together. However, the sheer number of Democratic delegates and alternates (over 4,700), meant that the convention floor in Chicago was by no means as intimate as the floor in San Diego. Nonetheless, sightlines were uniformly good; those delegations seated farthest away from the podium were up in the first set of risers that constituted the bowl’s first tier. As in San Diego, each delegation was marked with a stanchion atop a computerized workstation (also designed by AT&T and Lucent Technologies, but here called “Delegate Communications System stations”). Unlike the Republican workstations, these had touch-screens, and were fully connected into the internet at large. Ironically, while both conventions featured the latest in cutting-edge electronics (and publicized this fact in numerous press releases), none of the voting stations was actually used. When it came down to the actual voting on the platform and nominations, the traditional roll call procedure prevailed.¹²⁰

Seen as political signifiers, the two conventions’ seating arrangements were surprisingly similar. The nominees’ home state was dead center, directly in front of the podium.¹²¹ The host-state’s delegation was positioned just right of the podium, perhaps a graphic illustration of being at the nominee’s right hand. The delegations from the states with large electoral votes had the remaining prime seats, as Figures 4.9 and 4.10 show.

¹²⁰ An AT&T/Lucent Technologies press release claimed that “electronic voting is expected to shorten the average time per vote to 15 minutes, compared to the hour typically required” (“Electronic Voting”). Needless to say, these expectations were not met. At both conventions, the voting process for the nominees took well over an hour.

¹²¹ The seating arrangement of the two conventions was also similar to that of Renaissance and Baroque court theatres, in which the monarch had the centermost seat (for maximum display), and other audience members were seated according to the rank in court. The Margravine’s Opera House in Bayreuth, Germany and the Court Theatre in Drottningholm, Sweden are two particularly good examples. See Leacroft Theatre and Playhouse 77-84.
Figure 4.8: 1996 Republican convention delegation seating chart.
1996 Democratic Convention Delegation Seating Chart

Figure 4.9: 1996 Democratic convention delegation seating chart.
But while some states were rewarded for their electoral opportunities, others were penalized for their partisan shortcomings. Regarding the Republican convention, the Washington Post observed: “Alternate delegates from Arkansas, home to this convention’s designated Satan, President Clinton, have seats facing the wall of a network TV booth. Alternates from Hawaii, where Republicans barely outnumber Whigs, are stuck in a distant corner. Ditto for the District of Columbia” (Von Drehle “A Gathering Hall”). In Chicago, the Democrats returned the favor. The Kansas delegation was punished with seats on the periphery amongst delegates from Alaska and Guam. All things considered, these were worse seats than Republican delegates from Arkansas got at their convention. Having a Republican governor and being located in the conservative south no doubt helped the Arkansans. Of course, congressional clout can have as much to do with a delegation’s location as its state’s electoral count. South Dakota, for example, would hardly have warranted its prime location in the center of the Democratic floor if it were not home to Tom Daschle, the Senate Minority Leader.

Regardless of their specific spot on the floor, though, all of the delegations held a position much like that enjoyed by court and aristocratic audiences attending pre-nineteenth century theatre. Well-illuminated and thoroughly on display, they were performers in their own right who often commanded more attention than the actors on-stage. And in the same way that courtiers or audiences to historical performances dressed in elaborate finery to show themselves to best advantage, so too did convention delegates apparel themselves in patriotic and partisan plumage that would have been the height of gaudy excess in any other environment.

**Podium**

Within each convention hall, the podium structure was the primary performance space. It was what Fischer-Lichte would define as the “stage space,” and by this definition had both a practical and a symbolic function (Semiotics 101). It was not only the space
upon which the convention speakers performed, but also the space representing the
Presidential roles they played. It is worth briefly clarifying these two functions. To talk
about the practical function is to talk about the actor's environment in which physical
characteristics and properties of that space affect his or her possible movements. The
environment may be limiting. A low ceiling or a narrow stage-width, for instance,
prescribe the practical boundaries of an actor's movements. Alternately, the environment
may allow greater flexibility and more options for the actor in performance: stairs leading
out into the audience space enable the actor to engage more directly if he or she chooses.
But whether the actor chooses those options or not, the space still signifies them. As
Fischer-Lichte puts it:

[T]o the extent that a certain movement can be performed in a stage space, the
stage space can also be regarded and interpreted as a sign for the
possibility of this movement. The stage space thus becomes a sign for the
possibility of implementing certain proxemic signs which, produced by A,
are meant to signify X. (Semiotics 101)

The practical function of the stage space, therefore, concerns the performer and
how he or she utilizes the physical environment. The symbolic function of the stage space
concerns the performer's role. In this regard, the decorations, props, and lighting all
signify who the character is supposed to be, what the character represents, and what mood
or theme that character should be associated with. Again, Fischer-Lichte:

Since the sign for space can generally be interpreted in relation to
individuals and groups of individuals as a sign for their status in society and
the values and ideas accepted and propagated by them in each case (in other
words, for their attitudes, systems of value, views of the world), the
decoration can also perform a corresponding function. The books and
apparatuses in Faust's study, for example, indicate that the person who
lives there is a bookish man devoted to science, whereas the furnishings in
Gretchen's room are to be understood both as a sign of the rather more
modest social status of the person who lives there and of her high regard for
the values of order and cleanliness. (Semiotics 105)

How does all this relate to a convention? What does Faust's study have to do with
a podium at a political rally? Quite a lot, actually. A stage space retains both practical and
symbolic functions for the performance staged upon it whether the performance is Goethe's *Faust* or a national nominating convention. As Blair Kamin, the *Chicago Tribune*’s architecture critic put it:

Podiums are more than just, well, podiums. They combine aspects of a Broadway stage set, a Hollywood television studio and a stately White House setting, with some of the same high-level security measures built in. They are an essential part of the imagery the political parties use to sway voters watching the conventions on the tube. (“Convention’s Podium”)

In effect, the podiums at the 1996 political conventions were the center-point of each party’s efforts to project an image to the American electorate. They were the sets within which each party crafted its Presidential mise-en-scene. As a longtime Republican convention insider explained it to me: “[an effective podium should] emphasize the party’s forward-looking operation....It’s the engineering and coloring that make the difference” (Baker interview). Therefore, the practical and symbolic functions of the podiums were integral to the overall convention performance.

To discuss properly how the 1996 convention podiums functioned, it is necessary to provide some perspective. The podiums in San Diego and Chicago, after all, did not spring fully-formed from the minds of their designers. They reflected the same evolutionary trends in convention history detailed earlier in Chapter 2. As the Republican and Democratic parties came to treat their conventions as theatrical performances, so too did the parties’ designers treat the convention podiums as theatrical stages. And instead of being static lecterns for orators, podiums became increasingly flexible environments for televisual communicators.

The breakthrough year for podium design was 1984 when the Republican convention in Dallas demonstrated the power of a televisual stage space. This, of course, should be no surprise given the Reagan White House’s attention to, and mastery of, visual messages. Under the watchful eye of Michael Deaver, everything related to Ronald Reagan was planned for television. For the 1984 re-election convention, the podium was designed
to exacting specifications in order to ensure that there were no hard edges and straight lines (Smith *Power Game* 410-411). The designers also included a video projection system within the podium space. This innovation resulted in what is arguably one of the most enduring convention images: Ronald Reagan's appearance via projection screen at the end of his wife's speech. Larry David Smith's account of the incident illustrates its impact:

In closing, Mrs. Reagan urged the delegates to "Make it one more for the Gipper" and then, in an amazing display of modern communications technology, proceeded to wave to her husband whose image appeared on the huge television screen behind her. Once the president returned the gesture, the crowd erupted in an emotional display which would continue throughout his nomination later in the session. ("National Nominating Conventions as Vehicles" 202)\(^{122}\)

Reagan's "surprise" appearance at the convention demonstrated the powerful impact of the dramatic image. It was possible because the podium had been designed to be more than a mere set. The two rear-screen projection units positioned high up on either side of the central platform enabled the speaker at the podium to become, literally, larger than life as his or her image was projected. More significantly, the screens enabled the podium to be a dynamic tool in the creation of convention images.

Four years later, in 1988, with both political parties hiring professional television producers to run their conventions, both podiums were designed as dynamic scenic elements within the overall performance. The parallels with theatre history are striking. The political parties' embrace of scenic technology in the late twentieth century is exactly akin to the embrace of technology by the theatres of the Renaissance and Baroque. The Hollywood designers working on conventions were, and are, much like the Italian designers who changed theatrical performances centuries before. While both production companies strove to make the 1988 conventions more telegenic and fast-paced, it was the

\(^{122}\) This "amazing display of modern communications technology" was not unprecedented. Theatre history is filled with accounts of equally amazing displays of technology that was cutting-edge at the time. Louis XIV's appearance above the stage as
Democrats who were more innovative, at least in terms of the podium design. Their podium in Atlanta's Omni Arena included features that became staples of later podiums.

The designer for the 1988 Democratic convention was Rene Lagler, the designer responsible for the opening ceremonies of the 1984 Olympics. Some of his design ideas for the convention were unsuccessful. Most particularly, Lagler's choice to go with more television-friendly pastel shades rather than bright red, white, and blue, was criticized. But two innovations were successful enough in the eyes of the production team that they were continued in later conventions. First, the entire podium was built to resemble a staircase. Like the Teatro Scientifico in Mantua, Italy, and the Festival Auditorium at Hellerau, Germany, steps from the speakers' lectern led down to the convention floor, visually linking the podium with the rest of the hall. The other innovation was the flexibility of the podium space itself. And that came out of a very practical concern.

The TelePrompTer is a mainstay of contemporary speechmaking. Ronald Reagan demonstrated how much more effective a speaker could be when he was freed from having to look down at a typed page at a lectern. Instead, by reading the text of the speech as it was projected onto clear plastic screens on either side of the lectern, a speaker could appear more conversational and engaged with the audience. For a TelePrompTer to work properly, however, the projection screens must be placed at the speaker's eye level. This is necessary because the screens are angled so that the projected text is invisible to the outside audience looking straight on. Setting the correct height of the TelePrompTer is not difficult if a single speaker is using the system. Problems arise, though, in situations like a convention, where many different speakers of different heights use the TelePrompTer.

Jupiter emerging out of a cloud is a case in point. See Orgel Illusion of Power for more on the ways that rulers were incorporated into performances using theatrical technology.

Sharpest criticism came at the Republican Convention where Tom Kean, the keynote speaker, derided the "pastel patriotism" of the Democrats.
This was certainly the case for the Democrats in 1988 who were nominating a very short Michael Dukakis and a very tall Lloyd Bentsen.

The initial solution was to have a pneumatic platform behind the lectern that could be adjusted to suit each speaker's height. Lagler proposed an alternate approach. He designed a system whereby the lectern itself was a pneumatic platform. Rather than adjusting the speaker, Lagler adjusted the TelePrompTer. Further, he designed the lectern so it could sink down to the level of the podium platform itself, and made the walls on either side of the lectern adjustable as well. When desired, the walls could slide off into the wings of the podium as the lectern disappeared into the floor, leaving a large bare stage. This technological innovation offered the convention producers tremendous flexibility, since the podium was no longer a static unit. Large-scale entertainment production numbers could be staged on the podium. It was even possible for Michael Dukakis to walk up the stairs to the podium from the convention floor, a highlight of the final night that was meant to signify his connection with the audience at large.

Four years later, Bill Clinton made a similar entrance from the floor of the Democratic convention up onto the podium, but his appearance within the hall was much more dramatic in part because the podium itself was more dynamic. Virtually the same production team that had worked together in Atlanta reassembled in 1992 in New York City. They applied their experience with the Omni Arena to Madison Square Garden. Again, the podium was designed with a cascade of steps, only now everything was curved to resemble a waving American flag. There were few straight lines and hard edges. The lectern was hydraulic, but so were the walls around the lectern. The entire front of the podium structure could sink down into the floor. And the red, white, and blue color scheme was rich and vibrant. No more pastels.

But the important step taken in 1992 was the use of videowalls. Videowalls consist of banks of high-quality television monitors mounted together, and represent a
technological leap above the rear-screen projection units used in the 1988 conventions. Videowalls can be much larger, and the images are sharper. The Democratic designers were the first to consider using one. Scrapping their original plans for a large waving flag as a podium backdrop, they chose to use a videowall instead in order to open up the performance possibilities of their podium. When word got out, the Republican designers quickly followed suit and included videowalls in their podium plans.

There were differences between the two parties' podiums. The Republicans actually had two videowalls built into their podium. But the Democrats placed their videowall directly behind the speaker's lectern. In such a position it became the dominant design feature, appearing in virtually every camera shot of the podium, and was the center of the audience's focus. The convention producers used the videowall as a major element in communicating their message. According to Millimeter, a television industry magazine, the videowall was meant to be "a living-set background that had to communicate a lot of emotion and keep the storyline going. It was not for filler or 'eye-candy'" (Solman 46).

The Republicans used their videowalls much as they had used the projection screens at previous conventions. Flanking the podium and virtually unnoticed by the television cameras, the videowalls primarily conveyed images for those within the hall. This image magnification was particularly necessary given the size of the venue. Any individual speaker tended to be dwarfed by the Astrodome. The designers tried to compensate by creating a monolithic podium including a 50' wall as a backdrop. True to the trend, however, the 1992 Republicans' podium was also a flexible and dynamic space, albeit not to the same degree as the Democrats'. Built into the back wall were baffled panels concealing banks of lighting fixtures. The color behind the speaker could be

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124 There are other advantages that videowalls provide over rear-screen projection systems. I will discuss them in detail in Chapter 7 when I examine the Democrats' 1996 videowall as an element of convention spectacle.
changed to suit whatever dramatic effect was required. And during the final celebration on the last night of the convention a gigantic American flag was unfurled, filling the back wall.

The 1996 podiums reflected the lessons learned from the 1992 conventions. In previous years, the convention podiums and physical structures within each hall were constructed as if they were permanent structures. Air-conditioned offices, greenrooms, and rehearsal rooms were built inside each podium. The result, not surprisingly, was a mammoth construction expense. In 1996, however, the production personnel for each convention convinced their respective convention committees to approach the task in a different way. As Gary Smith put it, “These podiums didn’t have to be built like homes. In fact, they were settings and could be approached that way. We’re only there for four days; it’s like a limited run. Why shouldn’t this thing be built like a set?” (personal interview). In 1996, it was. The Republican and Democratic podiums and other major set-pieces were constructed off-site by theatrical construction firms and assembled as temporary structures within the halls. Carrie Freeman, president of the firm that constructed all of the recent Republican conventions observed: “In the past we have had large, wooden edifices that were much more structural—this is more theatrical” (Victor “Intimacy Matters”) The change in approach was not only more theatrical; it was also a huge savings in time and money.

Although the construction process was different, the Democrats saw no reason to change the podium design that had worked for them so well in 1992, so their United Center podium looked remarkably like their Madison Square Garden podium. It included all of the features from 1992. In fact, the videowall was the same one used before. The 1996 podium was tweaked a little to better reflect Bill Clinton’s status as the incumbent President, but otherwise it was the same. The Republicans’ San Diego podium,

125 See Chapter 7 for more on the podium as a space for an incumbent President.
In terms of its practical function, the Republican podium was a stage space like no other in the party's history. For one thing, it was much smaller and more integrated into the audience's space. Gone was the gigantic structure that Paul Manafort, Dole's Convention Manager, called "the traditional Fortress America look" (Broder "GOP Convention Script")\(^\text{126}\). Instead, the speaker's lectern was only 6' above the convention floor, and set atop graceful, curved tiers like layers of a wedding cake (See Figure 4.10).

\[\text{Figure 4.10: 1996 Republican convention podium.} \]
\[\text{(© 1996, GOP-TV)} \]

\(^{126}\) Not surprisingly, Democrats characterized past Republican podiums somewhat differently. Gary Smith described the Houston podium as a "Leni Riefenstahl kind of Convention style;" others have made references to the podiums' "Nazi" architecture.
According to podium designer Tom Schwinn, he wanted "to thrust out a little bit and get our podium out into the audience.... our speakers will be closer to the audience in the hall—it will appear on TV as if there is a more intimate relationship to the people they are speaking to" (Victor "Intimacy Matters"). That intimacy was highlighted by staircases on either side of the lectern, providing access to the convention floor itself. Ensuring that overeager delegates kept their distance, the podium was ringed at floor level by a semicircular 3' high wall and a cordon of red ropes. Michael Deaver described the purpose behind the overall design to the Chicago Tribune: "There's a reason the speaker's podium is so small. The theme here is openness. The traditional, high podium says, 'There's an important man up there.' This one says, 'Come on up.' This one is an invitation to a conversation" (Margolis "Props replace politics").

The clearest illustration of the conversational potential of the podium came on the third night. In what was, arguably, the most memorable moment of the entire convention, Elizabeth Dole availed herself of the unique podium architecture, descended down the stairs, and delivered her speech from the floor of the convention using a hand-held microphone. (I will discuss the "Dole Stroll" in more detail in Chapter 6.)

There were other practical elements of significance built into the podium. As was the case in 1992, the Republicans flanked the stage with two videowalls. Unlike 1992, however, these were angled towards the center of the hall and were used to expand the convention space, rather than simply magnify the speaker. Videotaped segments and satellite hookups brought people from the rest of the country into the San Diego convention Space. One of the seconding speeches for Dole's nomination, for instance, was given by the valedictorians of Russell High School in Kansas, live via satellite.

Enlarging the space was actually a major goal for the Republican planners. In his July 31 news conference at the Press Club in Washington D.C., Dole's convention
Manager, Paul Manafort, explained how the podium was intended to be “the means by which the campaign can talk to America”:

"Connectivity is very important. Our program format...where we’re bringing real Americans, as opposed to just elected officials into the program itself...in many respects...is what President Reagan used to do when he was giving a State of the Union Address. He’d point to the gallery and somebody who was a guest of his sitting in the gallery would be the symbol of what he was trying to communicate in his speech. We’re bringing that gallery into our podium, putting that gallery on our podium as part of our message delivery system.

Much of the message that Manafort and the Republicans were trying to communicate through their convention was symbolic. And that, of course, is the other aspect of a stage space. But it was not a theatrical character that the Republicans wanted to signify with their podium, but an abstract concept: the Presidency of the United States.

One of the convention designers told me in an interview that he had tried to make the podium “Presidential.” The gray walls, painted to resemble marble, and the deep blue carpeting with large white stars, were all meant to suggest an environment fit for “the next President of the United States” (Fiorentino).

Interestingly, the office of the President was signified differently in 1996 than it had been during conventions with Republican incumbents. In 1984 and 1992, for instance, the podiums had been more monumental and conservative. But in 1996, as a challenging party, the Republicans wanted to emphasize change and openness through their podium design. These same themes were incorporated into the lighting design for the convention, which was a quantum leap above the comparable efforts in 1992.

In Houston, the Republicans had been able to change the color of the back wall. In San Diego, lighting could change the environment entirely. 1,800 lighting instruments connected to a state-of-the-art system, could bathe the podium in dramatic swaths of any color desired. Computer-controlled gobos enabled the lighting designer to paint the podium with rich stripes and accents. During particularly festive moments, such as the
floor rallies or musical interludes, the lights would even move like floodlights at a film premiere. On cue, red, white, and blue strobing stars could chase each other around the hall, while artificial fireworks cascaded on the rear scrim of the podium.

Not everyone was enthralled with the Republicans’ technical accomplishments, however, as the following account from USA Today columnist Walter Shapiro illustrates:

[One] bit of artifice caught my eye: The backdrop behind the podium was a picture of a blue summer sky filled with fluffy white clouds. Who was the imagemaker who thought that this indoor event need its own ersatz weather? Did they test the number of clouds in a focus group? Would the sky miraculously clear the moment that Bob Dole was nominated?

An hour later, I wandered back to the convention floor to check a few details. As I gazed up at the podium, I felt like I had stumbled into one of those what’s-wrong-with-this-picture children’s puzzles. The powder-blue podium was now white, as it had always been, since my senses had been completely hoodwinked by the artistry of lighting. And that summer sky was even more fake than I had imagined, for it had not been a painted backdrop at all but just another projected image. (Shapiro “Convention Access Limited”)

Walter Shapiro may have found himself “hoodwinked” by the artifice of the Republicans’ podium, but if he had thought about it, he would have realized that it was not the only “projected image” in that hall. In fact, the entire hall was constructed and designed in order to project images. Just like the Democratic convention hall, and just like every other space designated for a theatrical performance, the Republican convention hall was meant to situate its audience and its performers in a very particular and very artificial environment. Rather than dismissing that environment as “fake,” Shapiro might have better served his readers if he had discussed how the environment provided a context for the overall convention performance that took place there. That is what I have tried to do in this chapter. And having done so, now I will look at the performances themselves.
Television’s impact upon political conventions cannot be discounted. Television, after all, changed completely the nature of conventions, and played a large role in making them the theatrical performances they now are. Given the significance of television, therefore, it makes sense to begin analyzing the 1996 political convention performances in terms of what I will call the televisual code. By this term, I mean the ways in which the convention performance was shaped by the medium and aesthetics of television. For this analysis, I will focus on the 1996 Republican convention as a case study. That convention is ideal not only because the San Diego Convention Center was, of necessity, a televisual space (architecturally it was more like a television studio than a convention hall), but also because the Republicans were more advanced than the Democrats in terms of their televisuality. They had their own television “network” in place, the cable program GOP-TV that broadcast the “Unconventional Convention” on Pat Robertson’s Family Channel.

Television may be a twentieth-century medium, and the Republican convention may have relied on cutting-edge technology to create an effective performance, but the roots of the convention’s televisual code stretch back to encompass an ancient tradition. In *The Art of Poetry*, Horace instructed aspiring playwrights to “blend together the delightful and the useful.” Theatrical performances were meant to entertain and instruct. Millennia later, the Republicans followed the ancient Roman’s advice with their 1996 convention. Their own
descriptions of what they were trying to accomplish echoed Horace, even insofar as mentioning first the entertaining aspects of the convention and then the useful aspects.

“This is going to be a great experience for people to watch,” Republican key-note speaker, Susan Molinari told Charlie Rose on his PBS interview show. “They're going to feel entertained. They're going to feel informed” (emphasis added). Similarly, the official program of the convention noted that the event had been designed to “entertain, inform and challenge those attending the Convention” (Order of Business 2, emphasis added).

Molinari and the official program both downplayed the Republican convention as merely a means to “inform” the audience. It is important to note, however, that the convention performance was always meant to be much more. It was a didactic piece of propaganda meant to persuade the audience. Convention manager Paul Manafort and RNC Chairman Haley Barbour admitted as much during pre-convention press conferences. In his July 31, 1996 news conference at the National Press Club, Paul Manafort explained the four goals of the convention. They were: to define “Bob Dole, the man,” to define the Dole agenda, to point out the shortcomings in the Clinton record, and finally, “to make our convention look as if we understand what's going on in the country.”

To achieve those goals the RNCC adopted the theme of “Restoring the American Dream” for the convention as a whole, with the sub-themes of “better opportunities, smaller government, and stronger and safer communities.” Explaining how the different goals and themes translated into the actual programming of the convention, Manafort was quick to point out that

127 Manafort’s phrasing of the last goal highlighted the performative nature of the convention. His summation of the third goal was also very telling in terms of how sensitive the Republicans were to their convention being seen as negative. The other goals were described in single paragraphs. It took Manafort four paragraphs to explain that the convention would be getting “the Clinton record back into the public consciousness and to clear the rhetoric away.” He was careful not to sound too inflammatory, and even more careful to clarify that “We won’t spend a whole lot time in San Diego on this third point. There’ll be some of it in the platform, obviously. There’ll be a little bit of it in the convention programming.”

128 See also Barnes “Turnaround Time.”
over the course of the four nights our goal is not to do something each night on one of those themes, but to do all of these things each night. So by the end of the four-day process we'll have told our story, told the Dole story, talked about the Dole agenda on every one of the nights through a variety of different means.

Barbour’s news conference later the same week gave an even clearer picture of what the Republicans intended their convention to accomplish. Each night was going to emphasize one of the convention goals. Monday night was the “celebration of Republican ideals and accomplishments that contributed to restoring the American dream.” Tuesday night was meant to compare Republican achievements with the record of Bill Clinton and the Democrats. Wednesday night spotlighted “the agenda Bob Dole and the Republican Party offer our nation,” and the “heartland values” Dole grew up with. Thursday night was the culmination of the four days. It was supposed to be the showcase for Bob Dole himself, convincing voters that Dole was “The Better Man for a Better America.”

If the Republican convention only “informed” its audience about the overall campaign message, it would not be enough. The convention needed to follow the Horatian model of being instructional as well as entertaining. The parallels between Horace and the Republican convention should not be surprising. Ancient Greek and Roman thinkers saw theatrical performance as a means to prescribe and reinforce particular modes of behavior and thought. Plato banned poets from the Republic precisely because of this power. Horace’s admonition to make theatre “instructive” is part and parcel of this same tradition. And so is the political convention. As we have already seen, political conventions are merely the latest manifestations of didactic performances that have buttressed countless regimes throughout history.

Of course, Horace’s specific suggestions as to how to entertain an audience hardly apply to a contemporary audience, but his principle that an audience is more receptive to

\[129\] See the RNC news release “GOP’s Convention to Feature ‘Real People.’”
information that is presented in an entertaining fashion still rings true. Where the heart leads, the mind follows. The key for anyone hoping to instruct or persuade an audience is to first know what that audience will find entertaining. The Republicans began that process years before their convention opened. Developing “Rising Tide” for the syndicated GOP-TV, the RNC had done extensive analysis of audiences. That analysis was invaluable to the convention planners. As Paul Manafort told the New York Times: “We’ve looked at modern television, and we’ve looked at what keeps people’s attention….And we’ve tried to create a program which is exactly that — a television program that has a political message” (Bennet “G.O.P. Seeks to Entertain”).

This chapter is an examination of how the Republicans created that “television program that has a political message.” As I intend to show, the convention planners wedded the aesthetics of a televisual age to ancient theatrical principles and created a performance we might call a Horatian telethon. The convention used televisual tricks to both entertain its audience and to instruct them.

Entertaining the Audience

If the first task of a political convention is to be entertaining enough that a television audience bothers to tune in and stayed tuned in, how does one do it? What keeps an audience entertained enough to watch a political convention? One way is to make the audience comfortable. In a mid-July interview, RNC Chairman Haley Barbour provided a two-part answer. “Well, one thing is you don’t have a bunch of long speeches. Secondly, you do let people try to connect with people so that people can connect these problems and solutions with their own lives” (Raasch “Republicans plan”).

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117 See also Blumenfield “Arianna Huffington” (which includes Mike Deaver’s comment, “You basically produce a convention like an hour of prime time”), Gilbert “GOP convention planners aim for viewer-friendliness.”
Putting these dicta into practice, the Republicans modeled their live convention on a telethon or a television news magazine. They found a telegenic man and woman to serve as convention hosts, anchoring the overall performance in much the same way that Hugh Downs and Barbara Walters anchor the ABC program 20/20. At the 1996 Republican National Convention, Downs and Walters' counterparts were two prominent governors regarded as rising stars in the party: Christine Todd Whitman of New Jersey and George W. Bush of Texas. Just like hosts for a regular television program, their task was to introduce the theme and concepts that would be developed over the course of the evening, and then provide segues between issue-segments.

The official program for Tuesday, August 13, illustrates how this worked (see Figure 5.1). The session opened with Bush's opening remarks on the subject "Listening to America." The next set of speakers each contributed their thoughts on specific aspects of this umbrella topic, such as "'Listening to America' on Small Business," or "'Listening to America' on Welfare."

The distinction between these two genres has become increasingly blurred over the years as television news programs have remade themselves in order to be more palatable to their audience.

Obviously, a parliamentary purist might take exception to my description of Whitman and Bush as convention "hosts." After all, they were the convention co-chairs, and in a political proceeding someone must chair the meeting and keep it running smoothly. But it is worth noting that neither Whitman nor Bush was that person. When last-minute changes to the program had to be made (as, for example, happened on Wednesday when one of the speakers missed his flight into San Diego and was unable to speak during his originally scheduled slot), neither Whitman nor Bush made those changes. Those decisions fell to the convention managers in the "crow's nest" in consultation with Haley Barbour at the podium. Whitman and Bush were figureheads.

Within this chapter, I will refer to the official program and the production program. The former was the general overview of the session. Like a vaudeville-era playbill, it listed the major "acts." It was provided to everyone within the hall, including the media, and was posted to the official convention website. I have included a copy in this dissertation as Appendix D. The official program was intended for general consumption. The production program, by contrast, was akin to a stage manager's prompt book, with every unit for every act notated. The television media were given copies, but only as an aid to their broadcasts. The official program for Tuesday fit on a small page of paper. The production program was four pages long.
**TUESDAY, AUGUST 13: 4:15 P.M.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opening Remarks:</th>
<th>Gov. George W. Bush (Texas)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Listening to America” on Small Business</td>
<td>Gov. Jim Edgar (Ill.) Main Street American * (in person and on videotape)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Listening to America” on Healthcare</td>
<td>U.S. Sen. Bill Frist (Tenn.) Main Street American * (via satellite)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Listening to America” on Welfare</td>
<td>Gov. Tommy Thompson (Wisc.) Eloise Anderson * Gov. Marc Racicot (Mont.) * Main Street American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Listening to America” on Crime</td>
<td>Gov. Tom Ridge (Penn.) Main Street American U.S. Rep. Deborah Price (Ohio)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Listening to America” on Education</td>
<td>Gov. John Engler (Mich.) Lamar Alexander * Gov. Arne Carlson (Minn.) * Main Street American</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remarks
Newt Gingrich, Permanent Chairman

Remarks
Gov. Christine Todd Whitman (N.J.)

The Clinton Record
U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (Texas)
on Welfare Reform
U.S. Rep. J.C. Watts (Okla.) Main Street American * (via satellite)
on Taxes
Gov. John Rowland (Conn.) Steve Forbes * Main Street American
on Balancing the Budget

Keynote

Figure 5.1: Excerpt from the 1996 Republican convention official program.

(The asterisks indicated “appearance by videotape or live via satellite.”)
Following this series of speeches, Whitman took the podium as convention host. Her remarks prefaced a series of speeches on “The Clinton Record,” culminating with the keynote address by Rep. Susan Molinari.

Although the official program does not differentiate by hour, it is clear that the daily program was designed in hour increments. In many ways, the convention followed the same model as the nineteenth century “well-made plays,” complete with a three-act structure. Here, though, the three acts were differentiated according to the dominant television medium. As Greener explained it to me: “When we built the program we thought of it as the network hour, the Family Channel hour, and then the CNN/C-SPAN hour” (personal interview).

Greener’s reverse chronological order reflects the importance of each hour’s “act.” The network hour was the most important; it offered the climax of each evening. 7:00 - 8:00 PDT, primetime for the east coast, was the only hour each night that the three major networks broadcast, and therefore represented the Republicans’ major “window of opportunity.” On Tuesday, this was the hour featuring Molinari’s keynote address. Next in importance was the Family Channel hour. That hour, 6:00- 7:00 PDT, was the first hour of the GOP-TV broadcast and the first opportunity to address the core Republican base. Not surprisingly, this was the hour on Tuesday when the main partisan attack on Clinton was scheduled. Least important was the CNN/C-SPAN hour, 5:00 - 6:00 PDT, the first hour of the convention session and the hour watched only by true junkies of gavel-

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134 Thursday night, however, was the exception that proves the rule. ABC and CBS extended their broadcasts by an hour on Thursday night to accommodate Dole’s acceptance speech. (NBC opted to broadcast only an additional half-hour on Thursday, in order to show Seinfeld. Not even the Republican convention could stand in the way of “Must See TV.”) All of the networks kept to their master schedule religiously. On Wednesday night, for example, none of the major networks bothered to broadcast any of the roll call vote, despite the fact that it was, ostensibly, the point of the entire convention. As Tom Brokaw told his NBC viewers, “They’ll be doing the roll call momentarily. I’ve read the final chapter, trust me on this one, folks. Bob Dole does get the nomination tonight.”
to-gavel coverage. This hour on Tuesday featured the “Listening to America” issue-
segments.

In effect, the first two hours of the convention functioned as a warm-up for the all-
important prime-time hour. Beginning slowly, each session opened with the routine
business of the convention, such as the presentation of the flag, the pledge of allegiance,
and the national anthem. Shortly thereafter, however, the tempo quickened as the issue-
segments began. Like “warm-up” acts in vaudeville, the partisan messages communicated
by those issue-segments raised the energy of the crowd within the hall. By the time the
networks were ready to begin their broadcasts, all of the convention performers—the
scheduled speakers and the delegates themselves—were primed for the full media spotlight.

The issue-segments were the building blocks of the convention performance. These
“vignettes,” as deputy convention manager Richard H. Davis Jr. called them were designed
to, “introduce an idea, flesh it out, put meat on it and summarize it in about 10-15 minutes”
(Moses “Scripting an ‘Infomercial’ Convention”). The idea was to catch the attention of an
audience more accustomed to the “shorter bursts” of information that television provides.
Everything was geared to be “fast-paced, brief, to the point,” as the official program
phrased it (2). Figure 5.2, an excerpt from the production program, illustrates exactly
how fast-paced the convention was. The longest segment, Event 3-30, was only eleven
minutes long and included three different speakers: Tom Ridge, the governor of
Pennsylvania; Jan License, a rape survivor and victims-rights advocate; and Deborah
Pryce, Representative from Ohio.

Close analysis of the Tuesday session program reveals several important items.
First, it is worth noting the aesthetic coherence of the session. The structure within all the
issue-segments was not only consistent, but also similar to the structure of the session as a
whole. Bush or Whitman emceed the overall session by introducing each particular issue-
segment. Each issue-segment then had its own emcee, a prominent Republican who
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start</th>
<th>Finish</th>
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<tr>
<td>05:32 - 05:33</td>
<td>05:33 - 05:41</td>
<td>01 3 - 19</td>
<td>Introduction of Senator Bill Frist (TN)</td>
<td>G.W. Bush</td>
<td>VMOS</td>
<td>OT-2260</td>
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<td>05:41 - 05:42</td>
<td>05:43 - 05:43</td>
<td>01 3 - 21</td>
<td>Ending Applause and Segue to &quot;Listening to America&quot; on Welfare</td>
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<td>VSOT</td>
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<tr>
<td>05:43 - 05:52</td>
<td>05:52 - 05:55</td>
<td>09 3 - 23</td>
<td>Remarks Including Video of Gov. Mark Racicot (MT) Followed by Remarks on Welfare Concerns with Eloise Anderson (CA) and Videotape of Nicole Smith</td>
<td>Thompson Anderson</td>
<td>VSOT (2)</td>
<td>SP-2300</td>
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<td>05:56 - 05:57</td>
<td>01 3 - 25</td>
<td>Ending Applause and Segue to &quot;Listening to America&quot; on Education</td>
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<td>VSOT</td>
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<td>05:56 - 05:57</td>
<td>05:57 - 06:06</td>
<td>01 3 - 26</td>
<td>Introduction of Karla Gray-Boynton</td>
<td>Offstage</td>
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<td>05:57 - 06:06</td>
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<td>09 3 - 27</td>
<td>Remarks on Education Reform and Introduction of John Engler Gray-Boynt VSOT (2)</td>
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<td>06:06 - 06:07</td>
<td>06:07 - 06:08</td>
<td>01 3 - 28</td>
<td>Ending Applause and Segue to &quot;Listening to America&quot; on Crime</td>
<td>G.W. Bush</td>
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<td>06:07 - 06:08</td>
<td>06:08 - 06:09</td>
<td>01 3 - 29</td>
<td>Introduction of Governor Tom Ridge (PA)</td>
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<td>VSOT (2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>06:08 - 06:09</td>
<td>06:19 - 06:25</td>
<td>11 3 - 30</td>
<td>Remarks on Violent Crime and Drugs Followed by Remarks by Ridge / Victims Rights Leader Jan Licence (PA) and Introduction of Rep. Deborah Pryce (OH) for Remarks</td>
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<td>VSOT</td>
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<tr>
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<td>06:25 - 06:26</td>
<td>06 3 - 31</td>
<td>Ending Applause and Musical Interlude with Convention Photo</td>
<td>G.W. Bush</td>
<td>Whitman</td>
<td>PL-2360</td>
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<tr>
<td>06:25 - 06:26</td>
<td>06:26 - 06:29</td>
<td>01 3 - 32</td>
<td>Introduction of Film on the Permanent Chairman</td>
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<td>VSOT</td>
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<td>06:26 - 06:29</td>
<td>06:30 - 06:30</td>
<td>03 3 - 33</td>
<td>Film</td>
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<td>VSOT</td>
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Figure 5.2: Excerpt from the 1996 Republican convention production program. (Third Session, Aug. 13, 1996)
highlighted the specific theme of the issue-segment and provided a segue between the illustrative statements made live and on videotape by other spokespersons.

It is also noteworthy how virtually every issue-segment featured non-politicians. These “Main Street Americans” were meant to broaden the appeal of the convention and also to avoid the old model of conventions “where a politician is introducing a politician, introducing a politician, introducing a politician,” as Mike Grebe told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (Gilbert “GOP convention planners aim for viewer-friendliness”). Thus, the 1996 Republican convention featured politicians introducing “unsung heroes” who were, according to an RNC news release, “heretofore uncelebrated Americans -- ‘ordinary’ Americans who have turned Republican ideas into extraordinary accomplishments” (“GOP’s Convention to Feature”). As David Broder observed, this approach was a direct by-product of the Republicans’ efforts to model their convention on television programs, moving “from speech-making to story-telling formats, using live cutaways, taped segments and interviews to illustrate -- repeatedly, for a surfing TV audience -- how Republicans are trying to change America” (“GOP Convention Script”).

The welfare reform segment hosted by Gov. Thompson is a particularly good example of the issue-segment system in practice. Thompson opened the segment with a short speech heralding “the greatest change in social policy in the last 60 years -- the dismantling of the welfare state by Bob Dole and the Republican Congress” (Official Report 473 ). To bolster his point, and to demonstrate that Dole could expect support from Republican “governors who understand what’s wrong with the old system -- governors like Montana’s Marc Racicot,” Thompson drew the convention’s attention to the videowalls which broadcast a brief statement from Racicot. At the end of the video,

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135 Hereafter in this dissertation, any quotations from the 1996 Republican convention speeches are cited with page numbers from the Official Report, unless otherwise indicated.
Thompson introduced Eloise Anderson, the director of California's Department of Social Services, who came to the podium to offer her own insights into the "great American tragedy" of welfare. After Anderson's remarks, Thompson reappeared to introduce another video segment featuring, "another remarkable woman knows what it is to reach for the American dream. Nicole Smith -- she not only pulled herself off welfare she's now helping others do the same" (475 ). The video segment ran, Thompson acknowledged Nicole Smith as a delegate amidst the Wisconsin delegation, and then concluded his hosting duties by offering a few brief remarks as a coda to the welfare issue-segment:

Ronald Reagan -- the man to whom America owes so much -- wisely observed that government should do only those things the people cannot do for themselves.

The liberals talk about protecting our children and lifting them from poverty -- about caring and helping...

But how can anybody look at 60 years of this system and call it caring?

And how can anybody look at generations crushed by welfare and call it helping?

In the war on poverty, the Clinton administration has dodged the draft.

Bill Clinton said he would end welfare as we know it.

But it took Bob Dole and the Republican Congress to do it.

But I say to America, "Let us end the Clinton presidency as we know it." ("Remarks")

I include that extended quotation from the end of Thompson's remarks as it appeared in the Tuesday session press release. The spacing of the short sentences--separated so that the speech looks more like a poem than political oratory--is a textual illustration of the clipped televisual rhetoric that all of the convention speakers adopted.\(^{136}\)

\(^{136}\) That spacing arrangement, incidentally, was limited to the press releases distributed during the convention proper. In the Official Report, Thompson's sentences appear in normal paragraphs.
Actually, these punchy soundbite lines are common in American political discourse. The proof of that was demonstrated on the Tuesday session of the Republican convention when a video tribute to the 104th Congress was played in the convention hall. Gingrich's speeches from the opening day of the 104th Congress were incorporated into the convention video seamlessly.

The welfare issue-segment also demonstrates another way that the Republicans staged their convention to be like a television program. Virtually all of the issue-segments over the week incorporated videos, both live and taped, as part of their pitch. This was a practice familiar to anyone who has ever watched a TV telethon, awards broadcast, or similar live media event. The Jerry Lewis Labor Day Telethon for the Muscular Dystrophy Association, for example, cuts away to local studios every hour and regularly takes a video feed from a performance venue elsewhere in the country. Similarly, the Tony Awards often include satellite links to theatres in Los Angeles and London. And every news program covering a breaking story cuts to live "stand-ups" from reporters on the scene whenever possible. These different kinds of television programs include videos as a way to add variety to their broadcasts. The Republican convention was no different.

How? Numbers give one indication of the significant role that video segments played in the convention performance. The average evening session featured more than fifteen video segments of one kind or another.\(^{137}\) In the main, those segments came in two forms, both of which have their analogues in other telethons and television shows employing video segments. The first were what might be labeled "testimonials": short, emotion-racked moments backed with stirring music and almost always featuring

\(^{137}\) The specific number of video segments for each evening session was 12, 21, 15, and 13. This does not include three instances in which the videowalls were used as glorified slide projectors showing still images of Dole and past Republican presidents. The figure does, however, include the two films honoring Reagan and Dole. It is also worth noting that the general program did not provide a complete list of video segments. The numbers above are drawn from the production program.
prominently children or references to children. The best example of this came early on the Monday evening session during a segment that the convention program officially called “Youth and the American Dream.” This segment featured San Francisco 49ers quarterback Steve Young having what the master production schedule called, with somewhat more clarity, “Remarks Via Satellite Including Discussion w/ Kids about Their Future.” The designation “discussion” was fairly dubious, however. Young only spoke to three kids and all were obviously rehearsed; their answers sounded thoroughly scripted. When asked why he wanted to be a teacher, Christopher, the youngest of the three children replied in a parroted monotone: “Because I want to teach kids how to live correctly but not wrong” (439). Nevertheless, the wholesome, “real-life” nature of the event made it as effective as the comparable testimonials that are a staple of charity telethons and infomercials.

The second kind of video segment, which can be labeled “endorsements,” consisted of videotaped remarks by prominent Republicans. These were not blanket endorsements of Bob Dole and the Republican Party, however; each segment was included within a vignette relating to each speaker’s core issue. Ralph Reed and William Bennett, for example, appeared via video within the “Strong Families/Values” vignette. The effect was to create a dramatic narrative featuring established “stars” of the Party. But, whereas appearing live would privilege those “star” speakers, appearing on videotape subsumed them within the official convention narrative. It is not surprising, therefore, that these video segments were the only times during the convention in which the defeated candidates for the Republican nomination appeared in any form on the podium. The planners had learned

\[^{138}\text{The power of a strong speech to galvanize a convention and catapult a speaker to prominence is well-established. Convention history is filled with such speeches. But such virtuosic performances have often raised the political profile of the speaker at the expense of the convention’s nominee.}

\[^{139}\text{There were two exceptions to this rule. As governor of the host state, Pete Wilson, appeared in person to introduce Elizabeth Dole on Wednesday night. The other exception, Pat Buchanan, refused to endorse Bob Dole until just before the San Diego convention, and did not appear on the podium in any form, live or televised.}

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their lesson from 1992 and took no chances that an ex-candidate might steal the spotlight through a live speech. Dole’s challengers were safely edited into the individual vignettes so as to ensure that their issues were consonant with the official convention themes.\textsuperscript{140}

\textit{Instructing the Audience}

Successfully controlling the audience’s interpretation of a theatrical performance is always a challenge if that performance is meant to be didactic of propagandistic. Such performances, after all, strive to be “closed” to alternate or counter-readings.\textsuperscript{141} Theatrical practices include numerous means for ensuring a performance is closed. The example cited above, with the Republicans limiting the role ex-candidates played in the 1996 conventions, is one of those means. After all, if the only messages presented on-stage are those which comport with the preferred interpretation, it is that much more difficult for an audience to “mis-read” the performance. This is why didactic plays like \textit{Uncle Tom’s Cabin} or William H. Smith’s \textit{The Drunkard} are deliberately one-sided. A closed performance does not intend to provide equal time to the other side(s).

\textit{Subsuming Opposing Viewpoints}

If competing points of view are offered, they are presented in the worst possible light, in order to advance the preferred message. For example, the character Hiram Keebler

\textsuperscript{140} The print media, in particular, repeatedly compared the convention to the Olympic coverage. The \textit{Christian Science Monitor}’s description of the convention videowalls is a case in point: “[T]heir purpose is thoroughly modern: to project film and video cutaways and make the convention feel like fast-paced Olympic coverage to viewers who tune in from home” (Grier “How Political Conventions Evolved Into TV Theater”).

\textsuperscript{141} See De Marinis \textit{Semiotics of Performance} in which he adapts Eco’s notion of “closed” and “open” texts, applying it to performances. A closed performance, like “psychodrama, propaganda theater, feminist theater, gay theater, religious theater,” and, I believe, a political convention, tries to “prevent a theoretically infinite proliferation of readings through the conditioning exercised by its codes and by the textual structure of the performance in which those codes are organized” (168).
in Larry Kramer’s play The Normal Heart is a straw man; his arguments are meant to show
Mayor Koch’s indifference to the AIDS crisis that is the subject of the play:

HIRAM: Now listen: don’t you think I want to help you? (confidentially) I have a friend who’s dying from this in VA Hospital right this very minute.

NED: Then why...?

HIRAM: Because it’s tricky, can’t you see that? It’s very tricky.

NED: Tricky, shit! There are a million gay people in New York. A million and one counting you. That’s a lot of votes. Our organization started with six men. We now have over six hundred active volunteers and a mailing list of of ten thousand.

HIRAM: Six hundred? You think the mayor worries about six hundred? A fire goes out in a school furnace on the West Side between Seventy-second and Ninety-sixth streets, I get three thousand phone calls. In one day! You know what I’m talking about?

NED: Yes.

HIRAM: If so many of you are so upset about what’s happening, why do I only hear from this loudmouth?

NED: That’s a very good question.

HIRAM: Okay—there are half a million gay men in our area. Five hundred and nine cases doesn’t seem so high, considering how many of us—I mean, of you!—there are. (71)

The 1996 Republican convention adopted the same tactic in terms of Bill Clinton. Throughout their convention, the Republicans incorporated video footage of Clinton. The most prominent use of this footage came during Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison’s speech on Tuesday night, when she “asked” Clinton to explain his “real position on a balanced budget.” The videowalls answered Hutchison’s rhetorical question with a carefully edited montage of Clinton’s different statements over the years, prompting a humorous “dialogue” between a live performer and a series of videotaped images:

CLINTON [on video]: I would present a five-year plan to balance the budget.

We should balance the budget.

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We could do it in seven years.

I do not believe it is good policy based on my understanding of this budget, which is pretty good now, to do it in seven years.

I think we could reach it in nine years.

Balance the budget in ten years.

I think we could reach it in eight years.

I have proposed a balanced budget that balances the budget in nine years.

The seven-year period is an arbitrary period.

We are between seven and nine years.

HUTCHISON: Well, thanks for clearing that up. I think to understand what Bill Clinton's going to do you have to know the code. His own aide, George Stephanopoulos explained it. "The president will keep the promises he meant to keep." Now, Mr. President, what kind of lesson is that for America?

CLINTON [on video]: Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me. (491)

The attack on Clinton was not merely a matter of using his own words against him. By using his own images against him the Republicans were able to update Harry Truman's dictum for the televisual age: "I never gave anybody hell. I just told them the truth and they thought it was hell" (qtd. in McCullough Truman 664). Of course, theirs was a carefully edited and crafted truth. The images of Clinton were grainy, washed-out, and of noticeably poorer quality than the other video images projected on the videowall, especially those of Bob Dole.

Reinforcing the Preferred Message

Another tactic that didactic theatrical productions employ is to make sure that audiences are bombarded with the preferred message. Renaissance masques, for example, missed no opportunity to glorify the monarch being honored. The script, plot, costumes,
scenery, music, and spectacle were all part of a united effort to project royal power. The Normal Heart offers a more contemporary example. The acting script includes the following staging suggestion based upon the original production at the New York Shakespeare Festival:

The walls of the set, made of construction-site plywood were whitewashed. Everywhere possible, on this set and upon the theatre walls too, facts and figures and names were painted, in black, simple lettering. Here are some of the things we painted on our walls:

1. Principal place was given to the latest total number of AIDS cases nationally: AND COUNTING. (For example, on August 1, 1985, the figure read 12,062.)

As the Centers for Disease Control revise all figures regularly, so did we, crossing out old numbers and placing the new figure just beneath it. (13)

By printing this information on the set, Kramer's message was literally part of the performance environment. It was impossible for the audience to avoid. The 1996 Republican convention employed much the same approach. Their themes were repeated ad nauseam. Even the most casual convention observer encountered the Republican message. The daily themes were constantly reiterated throughout each session. All of the podium speakers had been pre-screened and advised on the message each was to present, as the New York Times reported:

Serenity was no small order. Each speaker, it turns out, had to submit a kind of audition videotape of his or her speechifying. "Not for editing or censorship," Charles Black, one of the party's image-making moguls assured a breakfast gathering of delegates, insisting the preview was merely to make sure that speeches were tight and to the agenda's point. (Clines "San Diego Diary")

The effort to get everyone acting in accord with the same script did not stop at the podium. Delegates and convention attendees were also cued on how to behave and what to

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say to any reporter in order to make sure the daily message was communicated.\textsuperscript{143} Some of these cues were explicit. Prior to attending the convention, all delegates and guests received reminders about the dress code and decorum expected. An RNC letter explained that “business attire is requested during the Convention sessions;” the Ohio delegation received a memorandum from the state party clarifying this point: “coats and ties appropriate for men, suits, pant suits or dresses for women.”\textsuperscript{144}

The cues and suggestions continued during the convention itself. Members of every delegation received a copy of the official “Daily Convention Backgrounder” first thing in the morning. Each issue opened with headlines trumpeting the message(s) of the day. On August 13, for example, the banner headline read “PARTY UNITES BEHIND DOLE!” Underneath, in smaller type, a second headline added, “Tonight: The Liberal Clinton Record” (see Figure 5.3). The body of each “Backgrounder” contained four elements. First, there were a handful of well-honed quotes summarizing the party line. These quotes were intended as “talking points [that would be] helpful when talking to your local media” (Davidson “Memorandum to Ohio Delegation”). A sample: “Working Americans are tired of Clinton’s broken promises and know that Bob Dole and Jack Kemp will deliver the lower taxes, better jobs, and higher wages that all Americans need.” Next, the “Backgrounder” offered a description of the key “Events” taking place during the daily session, followed by selective “Facts” for partisans to incorporate into their own remarks to the media. Finally, each day’s issue concluded with a “Heads Up” providing a not-so-subtle cue as to what the climax of each evening was going to be.

\textsuperscript{143} See Randolph “Frustrated Networks,” which includes the following example of the convention’s orchestration: “Republican delegates have been asked to participate in the script....Sam Donaldson, in an impromptu floor interview Tuesday night, asked one delegate wearing antiabortion pins what she thought about the moderate views being proclaimed from the platform. ‘Great,’ she said, beaming into the camera. Donaldson turned to Jennings in the anchor booth and said: ‘If I had a real story, I’d let you know.’”

\textsuperscript{144} See also Starobin “Turning Delegates Into Props.”
PARTY UNITES BEHIND DOLE!

Tonight: The Liberal Clinton Record

"Colin Powell's speech last night proved that a big, diverse Republican party has enthusiastically united behind Bob Dole for President. The values of mainstream America are the values of the Republican party.

"Liberal values of higher taxes, more wasteful Washington spending and excessive regulation have failed the American people, but Bill Clinton and the Democrats still cling to them.

"Working Americans are tired of Clinton's broken promises and know that Bob Dole and Jack Kemp will deliver the lower taxes, better jobs, and higher wages that all Americans need."

Events: Tonight's program will feature Hutchison, Watts, Rowland, Kasich, Molinari—and a host of citizens who will speak about the real stakes in this election. Also, GOP governors today join Jack Kemp and working families for a picnic discussion of the Dole economic plan.

Facts: Every year Bill Clinton has been in office, taxes have been higher and family income has been lower than when he got elected. Under Ronald Reagan, growth averaged 3.9% from 1983-89, and when George Bush left office economic growth was 4.7%. But under Clinton economic growth is anemic 2.4%.

Heads Up: Bill Clinton hopes Americans will forget his broken promises. If anyone asks if you've forgotten (and someone might tonight), tell her NO!
The Tuesday morning “Backgrounder” went further; it featured instructions on how to behave at the climactic moment: “Bill Clinton hopes Americans will forget his broken promises. If anyone asks if you’ve forgotten (and someone might tonight), tell her NO!” That unnamed speaker, of course, was keynoter Susan Molinari whose speech included a key passage in which she engaged in a “call-and-response” with the audience:

Now...think about Bill Clinton. He promises ONE thing and DOES another.

He hope we will FORGET his broken promises. But I ask you:

Have YOU forgotten that Bill Clinton promised a middle-class tax cut and then passed the LARGEST tax increase in American History?

Have YOU forgotten that Bill Clinton promised common-sense health care reform, only to impose a huge Washington-run health care system on all of us?

And have YOU forgotten that Bill Clinton promised to balance the budget first in five years, THEN TEN, then nine, THEN SEVEN--only to veto the first balanced budget in 25 years. (“Remarks”)\textsuperscript{145}

Not surprisingly, each of Molinari’s questions was greeted with a loud chorus of “No!” from the floor. The delegates had not forgotten what Bill Clinton had promised, because the “Backgrounder” had reminded them and told them what to do about it.

The convention managers’ efforts to control the delegates and attendees extended inside the convention hall as well. These efforts were most obvious each afternoon before the session began. While the evening’s speakers conducted soundchecks and rehearsed their entrances and exits, the floor would swarm with convention pages placing the requisite signs, banners, flags, confetti, and noisemakers that were going to be needed. Small items were placed under or on each seat; larger signs were placed between the seats, making the room look like a hive of office cubicles. The sight of the pages, young

\textsuperscript{145} The above quotation is spaced, punctuated, and capitalized exactly as it appeared in the official convention press release of Molinari’s speech. That passage also illustrates the repetitive nature of the convention performance. Molinari’s recounting of Clinton’s
Republican clones in identical blue blazers and khaki slacks or skirts, methodically wending their way through rows of chairs in a kind of corporate manual labor was a fascinating spectacle in and of itself, and a good indicator of the behind-the-scenes work that went into the convention.146

The convention pages helped prepare the hall in advance; during the actual sessions themselves, control over the delegates and attendees was maintained by the legions of “floor whips,” designated by their color-coded, day-glo hats. Bright pink hats marked the handful of individual in charge of the floor whip operation. Orange-hatted whips roamed the floor, while the green-hats were the whips assigned to each delegation. As the San Diego Union-Tribune explained, the floor whips’ job was to “orchestrate crowd reaction to speakers, carrying out edicts from above like, “Get the governor a two-minute standing ovation” (Meyer “Cheerleaders keep it peppy”).147 The New York Times offered another example of the floor whip operation:

“Leading up to Senator McCain we want just normal applause,” a hall supervisor instructed a crowd of about 350 young Republicans assigned to jump-start the planned spontaneous eruptions of applause and cheering. “Last night the longest rally was two-and-a-half minutes,” the supervisor said, ordering more for the nomination of Mr. Dole. “Let’s try to double that tonight.” (Clines “Haves and Have-Nots”)

As tempting as it may be to dismiss the floor whips as mere cheerleaders, their work played an important function in terms of closing the convention performance. The varied track record on balancing the budget was a repetition of the same points made earlier in the evening during Kay Bailey Hutchison’s speech and throughout the convention.

146 The Democrats employed a very different approach for distributing their signs to the convention attendees. As I will discuss in a subsequent chapter, the Democrats’ aesthetic sense leaned more towards the spectacular than the strictly communicative. They wanted their signs to be more of a visual surprise, and opted to distribute the signs while their convention was in session.

147 Incidentally, the floor whips’ hats were a good indicator of how unimportant the first session of the Republican convention was. That afternoon session, ignored by all of the networks except C-SPAN, was the only one during which the floor whip operation was invisible. None of the day-glo hats were out. Obviously, there was no need to control the crowd when the session was not televised.
Tuesday evening session was a case in point, illustrating how the floor whips were used to protect the televised image coming out of the San Diego Convention Center. As noted above, the climax of the night was scheduled to be the keynote address by Rep. Susan Molinari. The conservative wing of the Republican party had long objected to her being given such a plum spot. Some saw it as an affront to have a moderate pro-choice woman playing such a prominent role in the convention. In the days leading up to the keynote address there had been rampant rumors of a walk-out by Buchanan's supporters during the speech. By Tuesday afternoon, however, the threatened protest appeared to have been scotched. Buchanan himself had urged his delegates to remain in the hall. They did so, opting to make a visual statement for the cameras by wearing white cowboy hats replete with hatbands declaring the wearer, “The LIFE of the Party.”

Nevertheless, not wanting to take any chances that pro-Buchanan delegates would steal the media spotlight, the convention organizers flooded the aisles and space immediately in front of the podium with young people just before Molinari spoke. The youthful look was emphasized by the signs they held and waved during key moments mid-speech. Eschewing the formal look of the official Dole/Kemp campaign logo, these signs were hand-painted in red, blue, and black on white cardboard, and featured hip slogans like “Bob ROCKS the House” and “Bob ‘96.” Close inspection of the signs, however, betrayed the considerable planning behind this effort; many of the signs were not hand-made at all, but rather were printed to look like they had been painted. It is also worth

\[148\] See “Whatever Happened to the ‘Big Tent’?” and Robison “Conservative react cautiously.”

\[149\] See the New York Times’ story “Image as Washington Insider Is Played Down in Speech,” for more on the orchestrations intended to play down Dole’s age and “to help erase the ingrained image of the retired majority leader standing in the well of the Senate. Each delegate found on his or her seat tonight a hand-painted placards [sic] proclaiming their fondness for Mr. Dole with colorful phrases like ‘Bob is cool,’ ‘Team Bob’ and ‘Oh Bob!’” (Berke).
noting that these signs, like all political signs, were printed on both sides of the cardboard for better televisual effect.

Controlling the Mediated Message

Obviously, traditional theatrical practice offers a variety of techniques for shaping an audience’s interpretation. But those techniques are not infallible. Audiences can be stubborn, as Brecht found out when his Berliner Ensemble performed Mother Courage. Despite his best efforts to make the title character a despicable war profiteer, audiences kept sympathizing with her. The 1996 convention producers, however, had a easier time with this problem thanks to the special circumstances they enjoyed vis-à-vis their television audience. Because of television, convention producers could enforce their wishes in some direct ways that Brecht might have envied. They could not prevent an audience for making a counter-reading, but by limiting the kind of performance that was available to the broadcasters, the convention producers could make a counter-reading surprisingly difficult.  

The Republicans coordinated everything with the networks as the convention performance went on. All of the television producers were a phone call away from the “crow’s nest.” In many respects, the convention organizers worked with the networks, assisting them with their broadcast. This was in sharp contrast to convention practices twenty years before. In 1972 the television networks regaled their viewers with the then-titillating news that the convention schedule is programmed down to the minute. 151 By 1996, however, they not only knew there was a schedule, they were given copies in

150 For more on the live television broadcast as an open or closed work, see Eco Open Work 107-8.
151 See Crouse Boys on the Bus 175-177.
advance. As Greener explained it: "they’ve got decisions to make about who they’re going to cover at the podium, what they’re going to do with various storylines they’ve got going....And so they want to know what you’re doing” (personal interview).

Of course, knowing what the convention organizers were doing did not prevent the networks from falling into some carefully-laid traps. “Television news met its enemy this week, and it was television,” the New York Times declared:

Everyone understood from the start that the Republican convention would produce little news and that its producers would be poaching on the human-interest appeals of commercial television. But no one foresaw how effectively they would do it. The networks were trapped by the tricks they had perfected and exploited over many years. (Goodman “Hoist With Their Own Petard”)

The convention was pre-formatted for television consumption during the hour each night that the major networks broadcast. The tempo and pace of that hour was structured according to the networks’ own aesthetic rules. As Greener noted in an interview with me, those aesthetic rules apply to all live network programming, from political conventions to sports broadcasts:

They treat you just like they treat the NCAA basketball tournament. First they establish Dan Rather as the anchor. Then they establish the story of the night. Then they establish their floor anchors. Then they go back to Dan Rather. Then they go to a commercial break. Then they come back to Dan Rather, and if you’re lucky they go to the podium. That’s what reality is. And the fact [is] we recognized that and tried to have something that fit into all of that, as opposed to just hoping for the best.

According to CBS vice president Lane Venardos, Greener and the Republicans succeeded in their efforts. As he told the Washington Post, “In retrospect, what they’re doing seems obvious, but nobody’s done it before. They studied how we construct our hour and they have created a TV program” (Fisher “Managing the Message”). The fast, telegenic pace that made the convention so entertaining to the audience, was irresistible to the networks. Also, by strategically organizing their speakers, the Republicans gave the networks natural “windows” for commercial breaks or interviews. Second-tier speakers
were often sandwiched between primary speakers so that the networks could cut away from the podium. The audience within the hall heard Oklahoma Representative J.C. Watts speak, but only the C-SPAN or GOP-TV audience saw him on television.

By controlling events on the podium platform, the convention producers controlled the network broadcasts. Networks, after all, aspire for smooth transitions into and out of different broadcast segments, whether they are commercial breaks or shots of a news-anchor in the booth. Networks also try to avoid interrupting someone in mid-speech. By making last-minute changes and hastening speakers’ entrances and exits on-stage (ostensibly in order to end the session in time for local news broadcasts), the Republicans circumvented the television networks’ autonomy. Television producers found themselves hamstrung by their own television aesthetic. As one anonymous executive told the Washington Post “They were trying to force us to carry their videos and speeches by cutting out the breaks between them and having one speaker walk on immediately after the last one finished. And the worst thing is, it worked” (Fisher “Managing the Message”).

It worked because the convention organizers maintained fanatical attention to time and tempo. Extraneous dead time was squeezed out of the convention as much as possible. The themed issue-segments discussed above, with their integrated video segments and emcees, were an integral part of that effort. All speeches, with the exception of Dole’s and a handful of others, were limited to five minutes. As Greener told the Boston Globe, “Television is a business. If there was a lot of money to be made by having people stand at podiums and talk for elongated periods of time we’d have a lot more of it. When was the last time you turned on the TV and saw someone talking for more than three minutes?” (Zuckman “GOP convention to be made-for-TV special”). And the restrictions were enforced. The Daily Standard noted that the podium was equipped with warning lights for the speakers:

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152 See Bennet “G.O.P. Seeks to Entertain With TV-Savvy Convention.”
The first light is timed to go off when a speaker is 30 seconds from the end of his time. The second goes off when 20 seconds remain. By the time the third light brightens, the speaker has ten seconds to shut up. After that, the microphone goes dead—it's the electronic-age version of the old vaudeville hook. Nor is ad libbing encouraged; the convention staff controls the TelePrompTer. ("Lights Out")

Individual speakers often reflected the convention producers' concern with time in their performances. Colin Powell's speech during prime-time Monday night is a particularly good illustration. A relatively inexperienced political speaker (Powell had only admitted he was a Republican a month previously), Powell was clearly surprised, if not uncomfortable, with the extended ovation he received as he stepped up to the podium. It was not that he was uncomfortable with public adulation, however. It was the time that the applause was taking that seemed to concern him; taking the podium at 7:37 PDT, Powell was very aware that the prime-time network window would close in 23 minutes. Instead of waiting out the applause—as a veteran speaker accustomed to the dynamics of a convention audience might have done—Powell kept trying to quiet the crowd so that he could begin his speech. His pre-speech behavior betrayed his coaching: he gave the audience a "time-out" sign at one point. Shortly thereafter, Powell held up his wrist and pointed to his watch as if to remind the cheering delegates that they were under time pressures.

Watch-pointing was a gesture that was repeated throughout the convention. Powell himself did it at the end of his speech as convention manager William Greener fondly recounted: "Colin Powell got to the podium and did the job that he did. And he turned to me and pointed to his watch. We finished at 59'16". We had 44 seconds to spare, to

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153 The Republicans were not alone in their attention to time, of course. On the second night of the Democratic convention, the applause greeting Hillary Rodham Clinton was so extended that producer Gary Smith kept trying to quiet the crowd by dimming the lights until only the podium was lit. (See Chapter 7 for more on this.)
burn. And I knew that Monday was great.”

And Elizabeth Dole made the same triumphant watch-pointing gesture at the end of her speech to show the officials on the podium that she had met her 20-minute deadline exactly (Figure 5.4).

Figure 5.4: Elizabeth Dole points to her watch at the conclusion of her speech.  
(© 1996, ABC-TV)

154 Greener’s concern with time was evident throughout my interview with him. At one point he noted with pride: “We ran over a total of two minutes in four nights, all on Tuesday.”
While the convention producers savored the fast-tempo of their convention, not everyone in the hall shared those sentiments. They may have been told about the importance of time, but the die-hard partisans who had come to their party's convention were not entirely comfortable with following the dictates of an imposed timetable. On Monday night, for instance, a sizable number of delegates were disappointed that there had not been sufficient time after Nancy Reagan's speech to recover emotionally. Of course, as far as the convention organizers were concerned, the dismay of a few delegates in the hall was a small price to pay to keep the networks and the television audience happy. As a convention floor guide told a San Diego Union-Tribune columnist, "We need the media more than we need the delegates" (Morgan "Is San Diego in this over its head?"). They needed the media to carry the convention speeches in a way that would convey the convention message. They did so by careful planning.

The speeches, for example, were crafted in the television-friendly, imagistic style that Ronald Reagan and his speechwriters had perfected. Written less as oratory and more as voice-overs, the convention speeches invited the television cameras to provide the appropriate pictures. And invariably the networks accepted the invitation. Keynote speaker Susan Molinari offers a case in point. She framed much of her speech around her baby daughter: "At the end of the day when I'm rocking my daughter, Susan Ruby, to sleep, I look down and I wonder what her life is going to be like..." (501). The network cameras, obligingly, cut to shots of baby Susan Ruby throughout the speech. Nestled in her grandfather's arms, the baby was absolutely adorable and absolutely oblivious to her new-found status as poster-child for the Republican Party. Molinari's speech got

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155 That may have contributed to the extended applause Colin Powell received when he took that stage following Nancy Reagan. A similar situation took place during the Democratic convention when Hillary Rodham Clinton took the podium. See Chapter 8.

156 See Jamieson Eloquence 118-164 for extensive analysis of Reagan's methods.

157 See Cohen "Political Theme Park."
lukewarm reviews, but her daughter got raves. And that was fine for the convention producers who had chosen Molinari because she presented the kind of image the Republicans wanted to highlight: female, moderate, young, and family-oriented.\footnote{See Ball “Molinari to Keynote for Dole,” Bayer and Barabak “Dole picks young GOP star,” Hicks “Designated Keynoter,” and Nagourney “Woman in the News.”}

Colin Powell’s speech offers the best example of how the networks were complicit in furthering the convention message. As Powell (a Jamaican-American) spoke, the cameras of every network made a point of featuring African-American and ethnic delegates extensively in their reaction shots. A television viewer would have assumed that the percentage of minority delegates to the Republican convention was significantly more than the actual total, less than three percent. Ironically, the next night CNN’s Bernard Shaw pointed this fact out, even as his network continued to prove his point. “Following the audience with our CNN cameras, it’s a classic example of what television can do to exaggerate,” he said in a voice-over. “With the camera you get the impression, my goodness there are a lot of black people in this hall, and there are not.”

It may have been twenty years since Lesley Stahl learned from a Reagan Administration how easily television can be manipulated to broadcast politically-crafted images, but the networks still had not really learned.\footnote{Stahl’s conversation and other illustrations of media manipulation are recounted in Haynes Johnson’s The Power Game (388-417):}

\begin{quote}
He said, “Lesley, when you’re showing four and a half minutes of great pictures of Ronald Reagan, no one listens to what you say. Don’t you know that the pictures are overriding your message because they conflict with your message? The public sees those pictures and they block your message. They didn’t even hear what you said.” (409)
\end{quote}
insistent as they always are for a coherent narrative—did the Republicans’ work for them and found images that were coherent with the speakers and the speakers’ messages.

The same phenomenon occurred at the Democratic convention. In fact, afterwards, one convention organizer whose job had been to design and distribute the variety of issues-signs amongst the crowd, admitted how surprised he had been at the networks’ behavior. He and his fellow organizers realized quickly that they did not need to coordinate getting signs in front of cameras in conjunction with particular speakers. If a gun-control advocate was speaking on podium, the television cameras found someone holding a “Brady Bill” sign. And when an education activist spoke, the cameras would shift to a sign related to that issue.

The most significant method that the Republicans employed to close their convention was the performance of transparency. Everything was couched in order to make the convention performance correspond to the rest of network fare. The Republicans not only worked hard to make their convention match the networks’ tempo, but they also worked hard to make it match the network’s image. The hall itself looked like a studio set; the slate-blue coloring of the walls, seats, and pillar accents, was the television-friendly shade common to soundstage and studio backdrop curtains. The close-knit arrangement of the delegates and alternates around the podium made them look like a studio audience. The size of the hall and the larger audience sitting past the networks’ skyboxes were never really apparent on television because those other areas were underlit in comparison to the main performance area.

And, of course, the Republicans made sure that their “studio audience” stayed in their places and did not disrupt the all-important television images. As Greener admitted with pride: “We had secured the center. You couldn’t get from one side of the hall to the other side of the hall in front of the podium....I wanted that for the [camera] shot” (personal interview). On one rare occasion, early one evening before the networks had
begun broadcasting, people tried moving around across the center of the hall, spoiling the
look Greener and the other producers had worked so hard to create. Reacting to the
incident like it was a military incursion, Greener dispatched an aide to “secure the perimeter
down there.” Image was awfully close to being everything at the convention.

The videowalls also helped the convention look like traditional network fare.\textsuperscript{160}
The transition graphics played on the videowalls were akin to the logos and graphics on a
network newscast. But where a regular newscast features graphics related to upcoming
stories or to the broadcast network itself, the convention graphics reiterated the campaign
themes. The three graphics used most regularly were “Restoring the American Dream”,
“1996 Republican National Convention,” and a stylized close-up of the stripes of the
American flag. These were all computer-enhanced dynamic 3-D images.

The arrangement of the videowalls on either side of the podium made it possible for
the television camera to replicate the look of a network news broadcast even more exactly.
During Ford’s speech, for instance, (and also Robin Dole’s) the videowalls were used like
slide projectors to show enlarged still photographic images. When the cameras were
positioned at a slight angle to the speaker so that he or she appeared to the side of the
camera frame, the videowall in the background looked remarkably like the inset shot that is
iconographic of the American news broadcast. (See Figures 5.5 and 5.6)

GOP-TV, the Republican’s “unconventional convention” coverage might be
considered the acme of the Horatian Telethon. It was a simulacrum of a network newscast.
And it was a well-crafted simulacrum. As the \textit{Washington Post} noted,

\begin{quote}
[T]his was no Soviet-style presentation of droning speakers praising the
party. It was, instead, slickly produced propaganda in the guise of news, a
sort of conservative fantasy of what television would be like without pushy
journalists. What viewers saw...was the purest expression of the message
the Republicans are trying to sell the country this week. (Kurtz “Television
With a Partisan View”)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{160} Chapter 6 will look at the use of convention videowalls in more detail.

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The Republicans claimed that their GOP-TV broadcast was the closest thing to the “truth.” *Rising Tide*, the official RNC magazine announced “GOP-TV offers the next best thing to being there: 13 1/2 hours of convention coverage, unbiased and unfiltered through the media elite” (“GOP-TV’s Unconventional Convention Coverage”). RNC Chairman Haley Barbour told a press conference that “For viewers who want it ‘straight from the horse’s mouth’ rather than interpreted and analyzed for them, our convention coverage is the answer” (“1996 Republican National Convention to Televise Coverage”).

Figure 5.5: Traditional network news broadcast format. (© 1998, CNN)
On the one hand it is patently ludicrous to think that the Republican's own coverage of their event was objective "truth." GOP-TV may have been "unmediated and unfiltered through the media elite," as Rising Tide claimed, but instead it was mediated and filtered through the Republican Party elite. GOP-TV was complicit with the convention itself in airbrushing the dissension within the Republican ranks and ignoring the ideological battles behind the scenes. But on the other hand, GOP-TV was the most truthful in terms of presenting the Republicans' own performance. Working in tandem with the convention producers, GOP-TV was the television distillation of the Republican convention-as-planned. As the Los Angeles Times observed:
The regular news coverage offered conflicting views but was generally positive. In comparison, the Republicans' TV show was upbeat, happy, cheery, teary, bursting with pride and full of support for the Republicans and their ideas and their efforts. It was even a long way from C-SPAN, which is supposed to give the viewer a window on the event at hand—a plain, clear glass, not the rosy version of GOPTV. For the convention, GOPTV has a full coterie of 26 cameras and 210 people putting on the show. (Randolph "GOP Reporters")

The fascinating thing about the way that the Republicans incorporated video into their convention is that they consciously blurred the line between television and reality. In many ways, it was the logical extension of what NBC had done in its broadcast of the Olympic Games the month before. NBC's "plausibly live" coverage had made no distinction between taped events and live events. By the same token, the Republican convention made no distinction between videotaped performances, live performances via remote video, and live performances in the hall. As Paul Manafort told the New York Times: "The decision was made to treat them all the same" (Bennet, "Media's Most Wanted"). Even a videotaped speaker was thanked by the segment host as if he or she had been at the podium live.

The clearest illustration of how the Republicans blurred the distinction between the video and live performances came on Monday night. The emotional highlight of the night was a tribute film to Ronald Reagan featuring prominent Republicans addressing Reagan directly even though they were separated by time (their comments were, of course, taped) and space (Reagan was not in attendance at the San Diego convention). Afterwards, Nancy Reagan spoke on behalf of her husband. As Mrs. Reagan exited the stage, the videowalls replayed the last few minutes of the tribute film, ending with a still image of Ronald Reagan's face. This was the image flanking Colin Powell as he made his entrance onto the dais. Upon reaching the podium, Powell then turned to his right and gave a crisp salute to the image of his former Commander-in-Chief (see Figure 5.7).

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161 See Sandomir "Olympic Guessing Game" and Zipay "Is it Live, Or is it NBC's Olympics."
Powell’s salute is noteworthy for several reasons. First of all, it is very clear that this was a staged moment. GOP-TV, which worked hand in glove with the convention producers, deliberately cut to a camera angle showing both Powell and the stage-right videowall moments before he actually snapped the salute. The other networks missed the full visual impact of the moment either because they were locked in a close-up of Powell at the podium, or held a wide-shot of the entire podium structure which had the effect of Powell turning his back to one Reagan image so as to salute the other. The salute is also significant because it reinforced the implicit message of the convention that the televisual image was reality. By saluting a portrait of a healthy and vibrant Ronald Reagan, Powell
was, in effect, privileging the image of the man over the man himself. This was important because in the theatrical performance that was the convention, Ronald Reagan was constantly invoked as the exemplar of the Republican Party. The necessary dramatic conceit was that the Party was as vital as Reagan in his prime. Obviously the Republican cause was not served if the Party was equated with the contemporary Reagan suffering from Alzheimer's Disease. It was a reversal of Oscar Wilde's "Portrait of Dorian Gray." Gray retained his own vitality at the expense of his image; Reagan retained his vitality by substituting the image for his own reality.\(^{162}\)

**Conclusion**

One of the characteristics of an aesthetic text is the dialectical tension that is created between its openness and its closedness.\(^{163}\) As a performance text, a political convention embodies this dialectic. In attendance are a small army of reporters, commentators, camera crews, special-interests, and various outsiders, each of whom is looking to impose his or her own "spin" or interpretation upon the event, even as an equally determined army of partisans are trying to close off any interpretation at odds with the party line.

At the 1996 Republican convention, the partisans clearly won the dialectical battle. The media, in particular, found themselves unable to break the Republicans' control over the convention message. CNN President Tom Johnson called it "the most controlled convention of my career. The party has been able to control their message; they have been able to control their audience; they have been able to control the media" (Randolph "Frustrated Networks"). The convention was so resistant to alternate interpretations that many of the news media dismissed it as an "infomercial." The *Los Angeles Times* compared the convention to the staged theatrics of "pro wrestling matches" (King

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\(^{162}\) A similar process of substituting the performed image of Dole for Dole himself also took place at the Republican convention, as I will explain in the next chapter.
"Wrasslin' With the Republicans"). NBC anchor Tom Brokaw wrote a piece for Newsweek entitled "Why you didn’t watch." And Ted Koppel abandoned the convention altogether, storming out of San Diego with his Nightline crew on Tuesday night.

Others were not so critical. Koppel’s ABC News compatriot Jim Wooten, for example, observed that "we’re all in the same business: television. And I have to give them high marks as producers. They’ve got high-tech video, they’re getting to say and show exactly what they want to the people at home, and they’ve got a wildly enthusiastic studio audience as it were.” And referring to the Monday night broadcasts, the Washington Post noted:

For most of the evening, the television networks refused to follow the tightly choreographed script for the Republican convention....But in the convention’s final 40 minutes, the Republicans seized the initiative with a series of emotionally charged moments that no amount of network commentary could neutralize. If television is about indelible images, the GOP had stamped its message on the viewing public. (Kurtz “Indelible Images at Evening’s End”)

Of course, when one remembers that the major networks were only broadcasting for one hour that night, it becomes clear that the convention organizers stamped their message even more forcefully than the article suggests. If the Republicans “seized the initiative” for the final 40 minutes, that only left the networks 20 minutes of their own initiative. Whether the reporting was negative or positive is fairly irrelevant, however, in light of how much reporting addressed the Republicans’ control over their convention. Unlike 1992 when the convention became an “open” performance as the news media highlighted Pat Buchanan’s role, in 1996 the Republicans closed their performance so much that the closedness was the only thing left to report.

\[163\] See Winfried Nöth’s *Handbook of Semiotics* 427.
CHAPTER 6

THE DOLE STROLL:
THE MIMETIC CODE OF THE 1996 CONVENTIONS

Imitation and role-play are fundamental elements of theatre. They are found in all theatrical performances, from the simplest gesture of a friend demonstrating the proper dress code for a party (see Eco’s example quoted in Chapter 1 of this dissertation) to a Shakespearean performance. And, of course, they can be found in political conventions as well. In fact, imitation and role-play are vital elements for political conventions and other didactic performances because, as Eco notes, they are essentially prescriptive. “Theatre at its best,” Eco writes, not only tells the audience something, but offers a “model, giving you an order or a suggestion, outlining a utopia or a feasible project. I am not only picturing a given behavior, I am in fact eliciting a behavior, emphasizing a duty, mirroring your future. (“Semiotics of Theatrical Performance” 111)

Act I, scene ii of Julius Caesar offers a dramatic example of prescriptive role-playing. In this scene, the “lean and hungry” Cassius tries to convince Brutus to join the conspirators who are plotting to kill Caesar. The method he adopts features all of the attributes described by Eco. Cassius elicits a behavior from Brutus and emphasizes Brutus’s duty, by literally mirroring Brutus’s future:

And, since you know you cannot see yourself 
So well as by reflection, I, your glass, 
Will modestly discover to yourself 
That of yourself which you yet know not of. (Julius Caesar I, ii)

151
Cassius goes on to describe a fictive world in which Brutus is the embodiment of Roman virtue and Julius Caesar is the embodiment of Roman vice. The 1996 political conventions used role-playing in much the same way that Cassius does. Each convention performance represented itself as a reflection of an idealized America, an America that would only be realized if onlookers were to support the party’s cause. The Republican convention offers a particularly good example of how this imitative process operated. That example, Elizabeth Dole’s performance on Wednesday night of her convention, will be the case study for this chapter.

The “Dole Stroll,” as it was dubbed by convention producers, was probably the highlight of the convention. Certainly, it was the most memorable part of the Republican convention. CNN commentator Bill Schneider named it his political “Play of the Week.” Two years after the Republican convention, Elizabeth Dole’s “show-stopping” performance was still being mentioned by political pundits. Elizabeth Dole’s performance is worth examining also because it was what Kenneth Burke termed, a “representative anecdote.” It was a moment within the convention that contained in miniature all of the elements of the whole convention. As Prof. Alan Brinkley of Columbia University put it, “[Elizabeth Dole’s performance is] a symbol of what this convention (and presumably all conventions) has now become. Not just an infomercial, a description virtually everyone now uses, but a Potemkin village” (“Committees of Correspondence”).

The Dole Stroll Itself

Before analyzing how and why Elizabeth Dole’s performance worked as it did, it is necessary to review first exactly what it was. Her presentation began traditionally enough. Elizabeth Dole stepped to the podium after being introduced by Gov. Pete Wilson of

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164 See the 10 May, 1998 Associated Press story “Elizabeth Dole rising GOP star.”
165 See Burke A Grammar of Motives 59-61.
California. It quickly became apparent, though, that this would be no ordinary speech. After thanking Gov. Wilson, and quieting the cheering crowd, Dole began her speech proper by observing that the “tradition is that speakers at the Republican National Convention remain at this very imposing podium. But tonight I’d like to break with tradition, for two reasons” (535).  

As she began to articulate those reasons, Elizabeth Dole stepped away from the podium. To the astonishment of the delegates who had not been warned what would happen, Mrs. Dole could still be heard. This neat feat—more spectacular in reality than the written description might suggest—was courtesy of the tiny radio mic clipped to her lapel. Sidling down the stage-left stairs, she continued to explain why she was going abandon the podium and the TelePrompTer: “One, I’m going to be speaking to friends; and secondly, I’m going to be speaking about the man I love. And it’s just a lot more comfortable for me to be doing that down here with you” (535).

The crowd loved it. Thunderous applause greeted Elizabeth Dole as she slipped past the low semi-circular wall dividing the floor from the podium space. And she seemed to enjoy the novelty of the situation as well, personally greeting delegates as she walked by them. Finally, she ended up in front of the Ohio and Kansas delegations. There she began “to put the finishing brush strokes on the portrait” of her husband that the other convention speakers had been “painting” for the previous three days. Before she could do that,  

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166 The fact that the podium was designed deliberately not to be imposing may be one indication that Mrs. Dole’s speech was written long before the podium was even built. See Appendix F for the complete text of the speech.

167 There were a surprising number of delegates who were unprepared for the “Dole Stroll.” The number is surprising only because there were plenty of warnings of what would happen. The “Daily Convention Backgrounder” talking points for the day, for example, offered the following “Heads Up: The podium here in San Diego is close to the audience, but look for the future first lady of the United States to be even closer to the audience tonight.” And, of course, Mrs. Dole had spoken in this fashion many times before. Referring to Elizabeth Dole’s penchant for going out into the crowd, fellow North Carolinian Al Johnson told the San Diego Union-Tribune: “She does that everywhere she speaks. She thinks better on her feet” (White “Liddy joins (and wows)”).
though, she was briefly interrupted by a “nice surprise.” The videowalls stopped broadcasting her image and instead carried a live feed of Bob Dole, watching the convention proceedings from his hotel suite (See Figure 6.1). The crowd went into a tizzy, husband and wife shared televised waves, and then the videowall returned to its regularly scheduled programming of Elizabeth Dole’s performance.

Figure 6.1: Bob Dole’s “surprise appearance” during his wife’s speech. (© 1996, GOP-TV)

The first section of the speech was a summary of the hardships that Bob Dole had faced and the challenges he had overcome with the help of bedrock values like “honesty, decency, respect, personal responsibility, hard work, love of God, love of family,
patriotism” (536). The emphasis was upon Dole’s years of hospitalization and therapy after he was wounded in Italy during World War II. These experiences showed that Bob Dole had “been through adversity. He’s known pain and suffering” (536).

To put human faces on the stories she told as she strolled around the floor, Elizabeth Dole introduced key people from her husband’s life who were in attendance at the convention. Walking over to the edge of the Ohio delegation, for instance, she invited one of Bob Dole’s nurses to stand up with her as she described his hospitalization: “Now, I didn’t know Bob back then but Pat Lynch did. Pat, stand a moment if you would. Come right up here with me” (536). With Pat Lynch at her side, Elizabeth Dole told the convention “about Bob’s good humor and how they used to wheel him from ward to ward to cheer up the other wounded soldiers.” She told how “he literally willed himself to walk,” through his “perseverance and determination and drive.” And she explained how pivotal that experience had been: “But during that period of time, I think Bob’s sensitivity to the problems of others certainly was deepened as well, because he’s been there.”

Leaving Pat Lynch, Elizabeth Dole walked down the aisle into heart of the convention floor. Surrounded by the Ohio, Iowa, and Wisconsin delegations, she continued the chronology of Bob Dole’s life with the story of Hampar Kalikian, the surgeon who had operated on his arm and shoulder. She explained how Dr. Kalikian had come to the United States and how Bob Dole had come to him, looking for a miracle because he wanted to be the person he had been before the war, a great athlete, a person who was on his way to study medicine. Dr. Kalikian performed a number of operations and then he had to administer some tough love. He had to say to Bob, you’re not going to find the miracle. Now, the choice is up to you, Bob. You can continue to feel sorry for yourself or you can get on with your life and work to make the most of what you do have. (537)

The crowd rose to applaud this story as Elizabeth Dole introduced Dr. Kalikian’s widow and daughter seated at the edge of the Wisconsin delegation. She thanked them, and crossed back out to the open area between the front of the podium and the Kansas
delegation. From there, she summarized Bob Dole’s “struggle to make ends meet,” concluded the section of her speech on his hardships, and shifted into the next section of her speech featuring illustrations of how “he’s dedicated his life to making a difference, a positive difference for others” (537). The illustrations consisted of three anecdotes.

The first anecdote described how then-Senator Dole was inspired by two of his Kansas constituents, Tim and Carla Steininger, to create a foundation to help the disabled. By no coincidence, Tim Steininger—his wheelchair bedecked with Dole bumper stickers—was in attendance with the Kansas delegation to provide a focal point for Elizabeth Dole’s remarks. (Figure 6.2 shows Steininger’s position on the convention floor.) Once she finished telling his story, Mrs. Dole walked up to Steininger and thanked him “for your courage and your spirit. Thank you, Tim, for inspiring Bob Dole to start the Dole Foundation for people with disabilities. We love you, thank you, bless you” (537).

The other two testimonials to Bob Dole’s generosity came without human illustrations. One was the story of the “reverse birthday” parties that Bob and Elizabeth Dole throw to celebrate their birthdays at the end of July. As she told the convention audience:

He said, “Elizabeth, let’s go to Sara’s Circle, which is a very special place in inner-city Washington that houses and ministers to elderly poor.” And he said, “Let’s find out what the 35 or 40 residents most need and want and we’ll give them the gifts, give them the party.” And so that’s what he did. And we’ve had many wonderful visits there since, with cherished friends. And our most recent reverse birthday was just three weeks ago at Sara’s Circle. (537-8)

The other testimonial featured a different holiday that Bob Dole chose to celebrate with inner-city Washingtonians. This time, however, the occasion was a Thanksgiving that the Doles shared with “35 young people from some pretty tough parts of Washington and their church sponsors.” Bob Dole not only booked the restaurant and provided the meal, but also arranged to have some televisions set up so everyone could watch the Redskins game.
Media Advisory

To: All News Media

From: Mike Miller
Director of RNC Media Operations

Wednesday, August 14, 1996

Aisles in a front portion of the delegate floor will be cleared at 6:45 PM tonight. All news media personnel with floor credentials will be directed to positions beyond this area until after the address by Mrs. Dole, scheduled to end at about 7:30 PM.

The area to be cleared is shown (aisles darkened) on the attached diagram. Thank you for this cooperation.

Figure 6.2: 1996 Republican convention media alert diagramming “Dole Stroll.” (Annotations regarding individuals have been added. Note the markings on the original diagram indicating the locations of Lynch, the Kalikians, and Parker. These, along with the media alert itself, give a good indication of the orchestration behind Elizabeth Dole’s performance.)
By this time in her performance, Elizabeth Dole had crossed stage-right of the podium, around the Mississippi delegation and down the aisle between the Virginia and Wyoming delegations. Continuing down that aisle, she shifted into the last main point of the speech. Instead of talking about her husband as a private philanthropist, Elizabeth Dole closed her speech by talking about him as the Majority Leader of the United States Senate. She gave particular attention to his last day holding that office:

I was seated up in the balcony, you know, and I was watching as senator after senator, Democrats and Republicans, stood and paid tribute to my husband on the Senate floor. They talked about his countless legislative achievements, how he had led the United States Senate to successfully pass the largest tax cut in the history of the United States of America. (538)

Quoting her husband’s fellow senators, including Claude Pepper, Pete Domenici, and Dianne Feinstein, Elizabeth Dole summarized not only his legislative accomplishments, but also the high esteem with which he was held by his peers in Congress: “they know he’s honest, trustworthy, a man of his word--his word is his bond--and they know he has exceptional leadership skills.” And she explained exactly what conclusions she expected her audience to draw. “Think about this,” she told the convention attendees, “these are the people who know him so well, have worked with him day after day, year after year. They know what his judgment is like under pressure. And that’s why they continue to put their faith in him, making him the longest-serving Republican leader in Senate history” (539).

To close out this section of testimonials attesting to Bob Dole’s stature as Senator, Elizabeth chose to cite someone other than Dole’s fellow politicians. Trudy Parker, a Capitol police officer seated with the North Carolina delegation, was asked to stand as an example of how Bob Dole was loved and admired by everybody on the Hill, even the employees. “Trudy was the first person that Bob saw on the way to work every morning while he was in the Senate,” Elizabeth Dole told the audience. Addressing Parker directly, and returning to the memories of her husband’s exit from the Senate, Mrs. Dole continued: “And also that final day I can still see you--I will remember it forever. You threw your
arms around my husband and tears were streaming down your face, and you said,

'Elizabeth, everywhere you go people tell you they love Bob Dole because he always has a
kind word for everyone'” (539).

Having completed her husband’s biography from his childhood in Russell, Kansas
to his exit from the Senate earlier that year, Elizabeth Dole concluded her speech with one
last anecdote that led into a final call-to-arms. Walking back towards the podium proper,
but remaining at floor level with the delegates, she noted:

I could go on and on sharing stories about this loving husband and father,
this caring friend, but please indulge a very proud wife just one final story
which neither I nor my 95-year-old mother will ever forget. When Bob was
dating me he used to go to North Carolina a lot to visit my parents.

And one morning, one morning, unbeknownst to me, he left his bedroom
and went down where mother was fixing breakfast in the kitchen. And he
had a towel over his arm and shoulder that had been disabled in the war.
And he said, “Mrs. Hanford, I think you ought to see my problem.”
Mother said, “Bob, that is not a problem. It’s a badge of honor.”

My fellow Americans, my fellow Americans, I believe that in the years to
come, future generations will look back to this November and say here is
where Americans earned a badge of honor. Here is where we elected the
President who gave us more opportunities and smaller and more efficient
government and stronger and safer families. Here is where we elected
the better man who led us to a better America because here is where we elected
Bob Dole. God bless you all. Thank you. (540)

And with those final words. Elizabeth Dole concluded her speech. She crossed
back up onto the podium via the stage-right stairs, and exited the convention hall amidst a
thunderous ovation. The response was phenomenal. The television network pundits
heaped praise upon her performance. ABC News commentator Jim Wooten called it “an
unquestionably brilliant piece of stagecraft.” NBC anchor Tom Brokaw deemed it “a gold
medal performance in any political arena. Dan Rather told his CBS viewers that “Liddy
Dole delivered big time for the Republicans tonight.” The newspaper and magazine press
were similarly complimentary. The next day’s Hotline, a daily summary of political news,
compiled a list of descriptions. By this account, Elizabeth Dole was: “great,” “warm,”
“poised,” “unique,” “human,” “bravura,” “friendly,” “flawless,” “four star,” “fabulous,”
“amazing,” “masterful,” “confident,” “emotional,” “remarkable,” “electrifying,”
“extraordinary,” “transformative,” “unprecedented,” “literally captivating,” “enormously
powerful,” “unquestionably brilliant,” and “unbelievably spectacular” (“Can Bob Dole”).

But what made Elizabeth Dole’s performance such a success? Her rhetoric and her
performance were structured carefully in order to communicate a very particular set of
messages to her audience. The sum total was a powerful piece of theatre. As the
conservative Daily Standard noted:

As performance art, Mrs. Dole’s speech was transformative. No
convention will ever be the same, and we would go so far as to say that our
political discourse will never be quite the same either….No one’s ever
going to need a podium again, and he might be foolish even to try to stand
at one when he can deliver the kind of emotional wallop Mrs. Dole delivered
last night. (“What Has She Done?”)

The Power of the Word

The rhetorical purpose of Elizabeth Dole’s speech was made clear early on by Dole
herself. Immediately after stepping down from the podium, she told the crowd: “This is a
defining moment, ladies and gentlemen, in our nation’s history. This election is about the
vision and values that will shape America as we move into the next century. And it’s about
the character of the man who will lead us there.”

The reference to a “defining moment” of history was noteworthy. No doubt she
intended to convey the sense that this would be a moment of defining: the delegates in the
hall and all Americans would be defined by future generations according to the outcome of
the election in November. But in a punning sense, Elizabeth Dole was also describing
exactly the function of her speech: it was a moment for defining. As she spoke, she would
essentially make Bob Dole the President of the United States by definition. She selectively
described his life so that he became the embodiment of the American Dream, in much the
same way that Cassius described Brutus as the embodiment of the Roman Dream. 168

Ostensibly, Elizabeth Dole’s speech was the biography of Bob Dole that would not be broadcast the next night because the networks had a policy of ignoring the party-produced film biographies. But it was more than Bob Dole’s life story told in chronological order. The rhetoric of Elizabeth Dole’s speech was crafted in order to create a dramatic narrative in which her husband’s life and the life of an idealized America were one and the same. 169 Bob Dole was the poor young man from the heartland who fought and was wounded in defense of his country. Overcoming physical hardship by dint of his personal work ethic and good upbringing, he rose to become a leader of the country. And all that was needed for this American saga to end in prescribed fashion were the voters to live up to their duty on election day. Then, truly, the promise of the American Dream that anyone could grow up to become President would be fulfilled.

The American Dream suffused the entirety of Elizabeth Dole’s speech, replete with homey American settings like “a small town in Kansas” and a mother’s kitchen in North Carolina. It included birthday and Thanksgiving vignettes. But two anecdotes from the speech are worth examining, in particular, for how they put the Republican spin on that American Dream. The first was the story of Dr. Kalikian. Before outlining how Kalikian had helped her husband, Elizabeth Dole summarized Kalikian’s own life:

Dr. Kalikian had fled Armenia, war-torn Armenia, as a young man. Three of his sisters were not so fortunate. But he came to the United States with only $2 and a rug from his homeland under his arm. And Dr. Kalikian, at that point a young boy, worked on a farm. And the owner of the farm was so impressed with him that he paid his way through college. And then he

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168 Elizabeth Dole left it to other speakers at the Republican convention to present Bill Clinton as the antithesis of the American Dream in the way that Cassius presented Caesar as the antithesis of the Roman Dream.

169 This, incidentally, is one of the key communicative functions of a convention according to Trent and Friedenberg (43-45).
went on to medical school and he became a great surgeon, a master in bone and joint surgery. (536)

As retold by Elizabeth Dole, Kalikian’s life became the Horatio Alger story of the immigrant coming to America. Leaving the “war-torn” old country, and bereft of family and possessions (except for that “rug from his homeland”), Kalikian was able to become a success by dint of his own hard work. No government program was necessary for Kalikian to become a surgeon; he succeeded because a private individual “was so impressed with him that he paid his way through college.” And, of course, as is entirely appropriate in the America portrayed here, Kalikian repaid this act of generosity with his own: “Dr. Kalikian would not take a penny of money for those operations,” Elizabeth Dole told her audience, “And he did the same for many other young veterans coming back from the war who were not able to afford the medical care that they needed.” Bob Dole’s America is a country in which selflessness and private charity provide all the social safety net that is required. Government’s role in such matters is virtually irrelevant.

The next example in the speech made this same point in a modern context. Tim Steininger’s story—like that of Dr. Kalikian—was cast to show a specific version of the American Dream. Despite running late for a meeting, Bob Dole found the time to talk to two young people waiting outside the door to talk to him. Mrs. Dole remembered her husband’s description of the experience:

“And they were severely disabled. And they were there with their parents. Tim and Carla were their names. And Tim said to me, ‘Senator Dole, we’ve found a source of help for people who have a disability such as ours in another state. Can you help us get there?’” And as Bob was telling me about it, he said, “I can’t stop thinking about Tim and Carla. Elizabeth, I have been meaning to start a foundation for people with disabilities for years. And I haven’t done it yet.” Well, very soon thereafter the Dole Foundation was up and running. And Bob has raised millions of dollars to help people with disabilities. (537)

As in the Kalikian anecdote, private charity coupled with personal initiative was all that was required in Bob Dole’s America. Tim and Carla did not need the government to
take care of them; by the time they encountered Dole they had already “found a source of help for people who have disabilities.” They simply needed assistance getting there. How simple that assistance could be was emphasized later during the Thanksgiving anecdote. After eating the meal and watching the Washington Redskins play on television, the children “began talking about their life stories. And the common thread that ran through so many of those stories was that these kids, until very recently, had never heard anyone say ‘I care about you,’ ‘I care about you.’”

The performance of that moment was very telling. Knitting her forehead in concern, repeating the phrase “I care about you” for emphasis, Elizabeth Dole cut a stern moral figure. In words and demeanor, she invited the audience to compare the isolation and abandonment experienced by the inner-city Washington youths with the community values enjoyed by Bob Dole and the his fellow Kansans. The key point, of course, was that in Bob Dole’s America, charity was an individual’s responsibility, arising out of personal commitment, rather than public mandate.

Elizabeth Dole’s speech was not only remarkable for what she said about her husband, but also for she left unsaid. In particular, two aspects of Bob Dole’s life were ignored or even camouflaged. The first was the fact that he had been married before; Elizabeth was the second Mrs. Dole, although one would never know that from her speech. Elizabeth Dole’s performance was constructed in such a way as to imply that she was Bob’s only wife. The final anecdote of the speech suggested this in particular. The description of Bob Dole wandering into the Hanford kitchen resonated with earlier descriptions of Dole comforting his fellow veterans in the hospital and his treatment by Dr. Kalikian. The homey North Carolina setting in which Mrs. Hanford “was fixing breakfast in the kitchen”—so much like the hometown Kansas described earlier—glossed over the fact that the man covering his war wounds with a towel was a very different man than the
young soldier returning from the war. By the time Bob Dole was dating Elizabeth Hanford, he was already a United States Senator who had divorced his first wife.

The other important aspect of Bob Dole’s life that was invisible in his wife’s performance was his extensive experience as a political campaigner. In one respect, this omission should surprise no one. The Dole campaign was not eager to remind voters that their man had been the other half of Gerald Ford’s losing ticket in 1976 (and blamed by some with that loss), and had failed in his own Presidential bids in 1980 and 1988. And given the public’s distaste for entrenched politicians in Congress, it was probably a savvy move to ignore Dole’s tenure as Chairman of the Republican National Committee, as well as his dedication to campaigning for fellow Republicans.\textsuperscript{170}

But Elizabeth Dole’s performance also left out any mention of Bob Dole’s successful election campaigns for himself. Entirely absent was the amusing story of his pragmatic first run at elected office, a staple of the campaign stump speech, as the \textit{Washington Post} noted:

"I had both the Republican and Democratic chairmen come to me and say that I would be a great candidate for the state legislature—not because I knew anything or understood politics—but because I was wounded. And in those days wounded veterans made good candidates," Dole said in a recent retelling of the story.

Dole went to the Russell County courthouse and toted up which party had the most registered voters. "I became a committed Republican," he said. (Harden "Wisecracks Reveal Candidate’s Core")

And in the performed chronology of Bob Dole’s life, Elizabeth skipped from Dr. Kalikian’s free operations for the war wounded to the creation of the Dole Foundation long after Bob was already Senator. Nowhere in the entire speech was there any hint that elections are won through campaigns of any kind. There were only four times that Elizabeth Dole mentioned an election of some kind; in each instance, the mention connoted

\textsuperscript{170} See Cramer \textit{What It Takes}, 603-608 for an account of Dole’s diligence to his Party duties and the impact it had on his first marriage.

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the mythical American conceit that leaders are passive recipients of the offices bestowed upon them by a grateful, heartfelt people.¹⁷¹

Half of Elizabeth Dole’s election references had nothing to do with public elections. Talking about her husband’s career in the Senate, she noted that “Bob Dole’s fellow Senators elected him six times to be their leader. Because they know he’s honest, trustworthy, a man of his word—his word is his bond—and they know he has exceptional leadership skills.” Shortly thereafter in the speech, Elizabeth Dole made a similar statement about another private election: “Now, I’m also very proud of the fact that the employees of the United States Senate, the waiters, waitresses, others who worked there, voted Bob twice, four years apart in two surveys, as the nicest, friendliest of all 100 Senators.”

The other two election references did concern the Presidential election, but in both cases, Elizabeth Dole sidestepped her husband’s active participation as a campaigner. More to the point, both references were pitched as definitive statements on what would happen, rather than descriptions of what might happen. The first of these references came in the opening of the speech, where Mrs. Dole declared that “This election is about the vision and values that will shape America as we move into the next century.” The other reference was the concluding paragraph, a prediction of what would inevitably happen when future Americans assessed the 1996 election: “Here is where we elected the President who gave

¹⁷¹ This image of the reluctant Presidential nominee remaining above the campaign fray has a long and hallowed tradition. (See Troy See How They Ran 61-107.) Up until the early twentieth century, it was considered unseemly for a candidate to go out on the stump. It was not until the 1908 campaign, for instance, that both major party candidates actively campaigned. And within the convention hall, Franklin D. Roosevelt was the first to actually appear and accept his party’s nomination in person, thereby breaking what he called “the absurd traditions that the candidate should remain in professed ignorance of what has happened for weeks until he is formally notified of that event” (Condon “Accepting the challenge”). (See also Wilkens “Dole won’t be first candidate”.) Prior to 1932, one of the tasks of the convention was to select a committee to go and inform the nominee of his victory. This archaic tradition still exists, incidentally. During the final session of the Republican convention, Gov. Bush, acting in his capacity as Deputy Permanent Chair announced that he appointed a group of “distinguished Republicans to officially notify Bob Dole that he has been nominated by this convention as its candidate for President of the United States and to escort him at the appropriate time” (579).
us more opportunities and smaller and more efficient government and stronger and safer families. Here is where we elected the better man who led us to a better America because here is where we elected Bob Dole."

The power of Elizabeth Dole’s speech was not merely a function of her rhetoric and story-telling. She also had human illustrations. Elizabeth Dole’s biography of her husband was similar in many ways to Cassius’s speech to Brutus. But she went Cassius one better. Cassius’s anecdotes—for all of their dramatic images of Caesar swimming a torrential river or standing like a colossus—remain isolated verbal descriptions. Cassius can only paint word pictures. Elizabeth Dole, however, supplemented her anecdotes with living illustrations. Borrowing a tack from Reagan’s State of the Union addresses, the Republicans had particular individuals pre-set in the hall. As Paul Manafort told the Washington Press Club during his July 31 appearance, these people were all part of the effort at greater “connectivity” between the convention and the larger audience:

We’re using them to symbolize what we’re trying to communicate, [which] is what President Reagan used to do when he was giving a State of the Union Address. He’d point to the gallery and somebody who was a guest of his sitting in the gallery would be the symbol of what he was trying to communicate in his speech. We’re bringing that gallery into our podium, putting that gallery on our podium as part of our message delivery system.

But Elizabeth Dole’s performance took Reagan’s “hero-in-the-gallery” one step further. In Reagan’s speeches, his heroes were isolated symbols of his points. There was nothing linking their individual acts of heroism together other than Reagan’s speech. In Elizabeth Dole’s speech, the heroes’ stories were woven together into a human testimonial to Bob Dole’s character. Pat Lynch could report first-hand on Bob Dole’s strength and “good humor.” Hampar Kalikian’s widow and daughter could demonstrate Dole’s courage and fortitude. Tim Steininger could speak to Dole’s generosity. Trent Lott could testify to Dole’s leadership, and Trudy Parker could bear witness to Dole’s humanity and common
touch. Each of these individuals were linked by their connection to Dole; together they fleshed out the dramatic narrative his wife told about his life.

Significantly, though, while each individual could have spoken about Bob Dole, none of them did. Or rather, none of them spoke directly. All of the testimonials were filtered and mediated by the speaker herself. “Pat has told me about Bob’s good humor.” Elizabeth Dole told the audience, as Pat herself stood by beaming.

*She’s also told me* that Bob was very patient and that he tapped his inner resources so that he could endure not just day after day but month after month in the hospital. *Also, Pat’s told me* that when Bob was totally paralyzed and people thought he wouldn’t walk again, he literally willed himself to walk. (emphasis added)

Similar second-hand reports were made throughout the speech. And in each case, the person being quoted remained a mute bystander to his or her own words, as passive as Eco’s jacket and tie in his ostension illustration. They became human props serving Elizabeth Dole’s theatrical ends.172 Of course, Elizabeth Dole herself turned out to be the best human prop of all. As CNN commentator Bill Schneider pointed out, while the Dole Stroll looked and sounded like an infomercial,

it worked politically, not because of what Mrs. Dole said but what she did not say. She left viewers to conclude for themselves that any man married to a strong, accomplished woman who projects such great love for him cannot be insensitive or uncaring. She also left viewers to draw their own comparisons with another accomplished professional woman who is far more controversial.

Schneider’s allusion to Hillary Clinton is significant, because it highlights another important aspect to Elizabeth Dole’s speech. Her rhetoric defined her husband as the President-to-be; her performance, however, showcased her as the First-Lady-to-be. The

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172 As the Daily Standard noted, these individuals were able to serve “as props because such people know from years of watching TV what they’re supposed to do when the camera hits them” (“What Has She Done?”). It is also worth noting that the profiled individuals served Elizabeth Dole’s political ends even as they served her theatrical ends (as if there were a difference). As Tim Russert noted for NBC, Elizabeth Dole “mentioned six states. I counted 121 electoral votes—key swing states.”
Dole Stroll was, in effect, an extended audition for Hillary Clinton's part. And in this audition, what she did and how she did it mattered more than what she said. As Dan Rather put it during the CBS broadcast, "Whatever one thinks of what was said, this was, by anyone's standards, a tremendous performance."

The Power of the Performance

Elizabeth Dole had her work cut out for her when she took to the convention floor. For one thing, she was the first non-incumbent's wife to speak at a convention. Hillary Clinton had not spoken at her husband's convention in 1992. Nor had Kitty Dukakis spoken in Atlanta in 1988. Nancy Reagan and Barbara Bush had spoken at previous Republican conventions, but only after they were already First Ladies. Elizabeth Dole had to play the role without the safety of incumbency. That she succeeded as brilliantly as she did is a tribute to her skills as a performer. It is those skills that I will examine in detail, first by examining the role Mrs. Dole created for herself, and then by examining here technique for performing that role.

Convention performances are always auditions to some extent. They always create a fictive reality in which the party's candidate is presented as not merely a nominee but the de facto President. ("The Ohio team is proud to cast its 67 votes for the next President of the United States, Bob Dole.") And certainly the candidate himself always strives to "act Presidential" when he delivers his acceptance speech. But Elizabeth Dole had a special challenge with her performance. To act "First Ladylike" is a difficult task because the role is so paradoxical. As historian Carl Sperazza Anthony notes in the conclusion of his comprehensive 2-volume chronicle First Ladies:

The Ladyship intertwines with history. Public crises are part of the First Lady's personal life; her personal life sometimes becomes a public crisis. She's come from Main Street and plantation, been a business manager and "farmeress," with varying degrees of education. Her shortcomings are malign, her strengths dismissed as privilege. Singularly herself, she is
merely a link in a chain. She must contribute but not meddle, be progressive but radical, political but social, loyal, not blind, civically international, but uniquely American. She is a partner but an individual. A lady but a woman. A queen, and a commoner. (2: 450)

The First Lady must be both the subservient First Wife and the influential First Woman. She holds an entirely unofficial position—no mention of the office appears anywhere in any of this country’s founding documents and no one was ever elected to it, after all—but her words and deeds are “always scrutinized, usually criticized, and perpetually debated” (Anthony First Ladies 1: 8). The office has always reflected American attitudes about women’s roles and has evolved as those attitudes have evolved.

How did Elizabeth Dole present herself as First Lady? What did her version of the First Lady look like? In many respects, Elizabeth Dole’s performance was a careful balancing act between the roles of First Wife and First Woman. She was guided by the precedents set by other First Ladies. Like Nancy Reagan and Barbara Bush, Elizabeth Dole presented herself, first and foremost, as a supportive wife to her husband. The music greeting Elizabeth Dole’s arrival and departure was “My Girl,” situating her in a diminutive, feminine, and submissive role. Her rhetoric throughout the speech was always deferential to her husband. She was not marching down into the hall to show herself off; rather she was “speaking to friends” about the man she loved, “the strongest and most compassionate, most tender person that I have ever known; the man who quite simply is my own personal Rock of Gibraltar” (535).

And, of course, Elizabeth Dole dressed as a non-politician. Unlike practically every other woman in the hall, she did not wear the red, white, or blue uniform that is the fashion descendant of Pat Nixon’s “Republican cloth coat.” She was dressed in neither the Nancy Reagan red dress nor the Barbara Bush blue dress. Instead, she wore a yellow dress, solid in order to be properly teleogenic. The yellow dress also made her stand out in another way. Since everyone else in the hall was wearing some variation on red, white, and blue, she stood out that much more when she was amongst the crowd during the Dole Stroll.

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Elizabeth Dole's positioning of herself as subordinate was calculated. It was not only in keeping with the example set by Mrs. Reagan and Mrs. Bush. It was also in sharp contrast to the Republican caricature of Hillary Clinton as an extreme liberal feminist, i.e. an independent hellion dominating her husband. Hillary Clinton, it is worth noting, had a powerful influence upon the Republican convention in general and Elizabeth Dole's performance in particular. Hillary Clinton may have been the greater overall target of the convention than her husband. She was attacked by convention speakers almost as much as Bill Clinton was. In his acceptance speech, for example, Bob Dole criticized Mrs. Clinton's book *It Takes a Village* when he remarked

> And after the virtual devastation of the American family, the rock upon which this country was founded, we are told that it takes a village, that is collective, and thus the state to raise a child....And with all due respect, I am here to tell you it does not take a village to raise a child, it takes a family to raise a child. (606)

In a similar vein, George Bush made a point of praising his wife for being "a woman who unquestionably upheld the honor of the White House" (455). Left unsaid by him, but understood by everyone in attendance, was the "fact" that Hillary Clinton had not upheld that honor. And one of the most popular political buttons of the convention featured a digitally-altered photograph of a bald "Hillary Rodman Clinton" captioned "Bad as she wants to be."  

Elizabeth Dole presented herself as a kind of anti-Hillary. She was the accomplished professional who knew her place and knew the unwritten protocol of the First Lady's office. For instance, she knew how to show off her considerable political experience indirectly, by piggybacking on a story ostensibly about her husband. In the context of talking about "Bob's incredible ability to bring people together and his

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173 That button, incidentally, offered a fascinating example of how the same object can signify two entirely different things, depending upon the audience. The button was a best seller at both conventions. The Republicans saw it as a scathing attack, equating
tremendous sense of humor," Elizabeth Dole reminded her rapt audience that she had been a Cabinet Secretary in the Reagan and Bush Administrations:

And you know, that reminds me of the time that I was up for confirmation hearings before one of the committees of the Senate for Secretary of Transportation. And my husband introduced me. And you know what he did to me, he sort of did a takeoff on Nathan Hale. He said, "I regret that I have but one wife to give for my country's infrastructure." That's Bob Dole. (539)

That one-liner may have been an illustration of Bob Dole's humor; the anecdote as a whole was an illustration of Elizabeth Dole's performance of herself as First Lady. She was simultaneously the dutiful First Wife and the accomplished First Woman. She was, as one profile labeled her in its headline, "A Southern Blend of Sugar and Steel," a woman who hid her brains and ambitions,

by nature or design, under a pastel-colored cloak of Southern charm. While [Hillary] Clinton displays an edge, Dole exudes a well-bred but down-home comfort. It is telling that the young Elizabeth Hanford was both May Queen and president of the student body at Duke while also making Phi Beta Kappa and the rounds of the debutante balls. (Anderson)

It is illuminating how often media descriptions of Elizabeth Dole emphasized her duality. In a piece headlined "More Than Supportive Spouse" Newsday's Charles V. Zehren kept returning to the complementary aspects of Elizabeth Dole's persona, quoting political experts like Anthony ("She seems to wear [her southernness] like a suit of armor") and Howard H. Baker Jr. ("She is a strong, independent person...She's also extremely supportive of her husband"). The Boston Globe noted that "Elizabeth Dole deftly walks a delicate line" (Vennochi). For its part, the Houston Chronicle highlighted Elizabeth Dole's complementary traits when it noted that "audiences react favorably to a combination of vulnerability and confidence" (Dyer "Now, the rub is to sell Dole on 'warm fuzzies'").

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Hillary Rodham Clinton with flamboyant basketball bad-boy, Dennis Rodman; the Democrats saw it as a humorous tribute.
That combination of vulnerability and confidence was a hallmark of Elizabeth Dole’s performance. Throughout the entire speech, after all, she walked a fine line between an ostensibly private conversation and a grand testimonial in the most public of forums. It was a challenge she acknowledged from the very start:

Bob Dole, if you are watching, let me just warn you, I may be saying some things that you in your modesty would never be willing to talk about. But I think that the people you have been serving all these years in America deserve to know, they have the right to know, this is not a time to be silent.

Another clear example of Elizabeth Dole’s balancing act came when she retold the story of the Thanksgiving dinner that she and her husband had sponsored for a group of inner-city children. Here too, Mrs. Dole lauded her husband’s privacy and modesty in a way that was public and decidedly immodest. “Ladies and gentlemen,” she told her audience, “you didn’t read about that Thanksgiving dinner in the newspaper or hear about it in the media because Bob Dole never told anybody about it. He did it from his heart.” Elizabeth Dole was able to pull off this rhetorical paradox by virtue of her role-playing. Playing the part of the devoted dutiful wife, Elizabeth Dole could make statements that would sound ironic and contradictory if they were said by someone else. The fictive reality of a private conversation with her husband (“Bob Dole, if you are watching...”) and her “close friends” in the convention hall, gave Elizabeth Dole the performance of intimacy necessary to make her public and political pronouncements more palatable. The Dole Stroll enabled her to become Everywife.

The Dole Stroll was a carefully crafted performance of “naturalness.” It was couched as a non-political moment of being “real,” but it was arguably the most contrived moment in the entire convention. Planned for months, the Dole Stroll was thoroughly orchestrated. As Newsweek recounted, “Her plan...had all the spontaneity of a sorority tea dance. She had spoken with a lapel mike hundreds of times at local Red Cross chapters, as
well as on the campaign trail. She actually felt more comfortable without a podium
separating her from the audience" ("Victory March" 88).

Elizabeth Dole’s performance at the Republican convention appeared to be so
spontaneous and natural precisely because it was neither. It was a timed and
choreographed performance that had been rehearsed so thoroughly that it became
comfortable and natural for her. It was a perfect example of the phenomenon Roger Simon
documents throughout Show Time. "On a presidential campaign, natural doesn’t just
happen. Natural is planned" (262). Of course, that same dictum holds true for the
theatrical stage. Theatre history and the literature of acting and performance theory is filled
with similar accounts of this paradox. Countless theatre historians, theorists, and
practitioners have described the craft and effort required to make a performance seem
“natural” even when it is repeated night after night. It was the mark of the ideal actor who,
according to Diderot,

will always be the same, unchanged from one performance to the next,
always with the same degree of perfection: everything has been measured,
thought out, learnt and organized in his head; there’s no monotony, nothing
out of place in his delivery. The warmth of his performance has its
development, its leaps forward, its moments of calm, its beginning, its
mean and its extreme. It’s always the same accents, the same poses, the
same movements: if there is any difference between one performance and
the next it’s usually to the advantage of the later one. He won’t vary from
day to day: he’s a mirror, always ready to picture things and to picture them
with the same accuracy, the same power and the same truth ("The Paradox
of the Actor" 104).174

Of course, the hardest part of a theatrical performance appearing natural is the need
to be able to repeat it day after day. One brilliant performance is not sufficient for the
professional actor doing eight shows a week. Nor is it sufficient for the political actor

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174 That same paradox exists for other performances. In college, for example, I
sang in a glee club. One particular piece we sang was an emotionally wrenching
Renaissance lament that included a musical wail of abject sorrow. To communicate that
sorrow to the audience effectively, we had to rehearse that passage until we were inured to
its emotional power. Until we had achieved that distance from our own performance we
could not maintain the vocal discipline necessary to hit the notes precisely.
delivering his or her stump speech every day. And yet that repetition is absolutely necessary. As one Democratic operative described it: “You sell the image by repetition...Here is the rule we follow with our clients: When the campaign staff and the reporters become physically ill over the repetition of the message, only then have you begun to penetrate the public consciousness” (Simon Show Time 123).

Elizabeth Dole is famous for having such discipline. A Newsweek profile called her “The Woman Behind That Unwavering Smile,” and pointed out that “In her world, nothing is ever unscripted.... She even rehearses her lines before important phone calls” (Sedgwick). Her husband’s biographer, Richard Ben Cramer, described her as “programed for control,” and noted that her fundraising speeches during Bob Dole’s 1988 campaign were absolutely consistent performances:

The lines were always the same. Solutions were “hammered out,” and coalitions were “all-important.” Once she got a line right, she could chuckle in the same place, smile to the front row with the same sudden pleasure, stress a key word with the same rise of voice...you could just about see the key words on an outline somewhere. (What it Takes 551)

With such skills, it is no wonder that by 1996 Elizabeth Dole was commanding speaker’s fees of $20,000 per appearance.

At the 1996 Republican convention, Elizabeth Dole’s own rehearsing and practice was matched by the behind-the-scenes planning and preparation. Earlier that day workers installed banisters on the stairs flanking the podium; no one wanted to risk her slipping or losing her footing as she walked down to the convention floor. That floor itself had also been prepared. The aisles along her route were cleared well in advance of her speech. Floor whips kept the delegates in line; the media had been notified earlier. A memo from Mike Miller, the Director of RNC Media Operations read: “Aisles in a front portion of the

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175 See also Anderson “Elizabeth Dole.”

176 Compare this description of Elizabeth Dole with Diderot’s description of the ideal actor. They are remarkably similar.
delegate floor will be cleared at 6:45 PM tonight. All news media personnel with floor credentials will be directed to positions beyond this area until after the address by Mrs. Dole, scheduled to end at about 7:30 PM* (see Figure 6.2).

And, of course, Elizabeth Dole's props and essentials were in place. The human props were seated in their designated spots. (Incidentally, those spots were marked on the floor diagram included with the media advisory, although none of us recognized the significance of those dots at the time. See Figure 6.2.) Claude Pepper's letter was in the care of a young Republican designated to provide it to Mrs. Dole at the appropriate point in her speech. And a back-up radio microphone was on-hand in case the lapel mic failed to survive the electronic interference that bedeviled the hall.* That radio mic turned out to be necessary when the lapel mic did, indeed, give out with a squeal, much to the delight of the Los Angeles Times reporter sitting in front of me in the press box. The reporter may have been happy that he had a hook for his story, but the convention producers were even happier when Elizabeth Dole dismissed the snaps, crackles, and pops of static with the comment, "I think we're having a little technical difficulty," and carried on without missing a beat.178

177 The amount of electromagnetic activity within the convention hall was infamous. Six television networks-worth of broadcasting equipment, scores of cameras, hundreds of radios, and thousands of cellular telephones combined to create an electronic din unequaled (at least until the Democratic convention a few weeks later). The low ceiling, wide pillars, and hangar-like length of the room did not help matters any.

178 Elizabeth Dole was so self-assured during her performance that some pundits wondered whether the microphone glitch had been staged as well. (It had not.) Perhaps in an effort to achieve perfection through rewriting history, however, no mention of the malfunctioning microphone appears in the Official Proceedings. Despite the fact that the document is supposed to be a transcript of the convention—including examples like "Hey, Bob, I'll be darned. (Whereupon Bob Dole appeared on the video screen via satellite.)"—Elizabeth Dole's off-the-cuff comment "I think we're having a little technical difficulty," clearly audible over the microphone, is noticeably absent.
The paradox of Elizabeth Dole's performance, just like the classic paradox of the actor that Diderot described, is that the Dole Stroll could be interpreted on two different levels. (And by all accounts it was interpreted and appreciated on those levels.) On the one hand, there was the "naturalness" of the performance. An audience willing to accept the fictive reality Elizabeth Dole created enjoyed the performance because she was so "real" and "genuine." Like Brutus listening to Cassius, this audience accepted the performance at face value. They accepted the dramatic conceits of Elizabeth Dole's performance. Like Republican delegate Cecilia Haynes, this audience thought Mrs. Dole was "fabulous, she is lovely, articulate and dignified....The fact that she comes down to the aisle indicates that she has enough self-esteem not to be on the podium. Her love for him shines through—it is not just a campaign speech" (Fisher "Elizabeth Dole Takes Talk-Show Theatrics").

The conceit of naturalness was a constant aspect of the Dole Stroll. Elizabeth Dole herself played up that conceit. For example, shortly before her convention appearance, she claimed, "My style of speaking is just kind of spontaneous. I do whatever the occasion calls for" (Zehren "More Than Supportive Spouse"). And the responses from the Republican delegates and attendees suggest that they believed her performance.179

Lee Ellen Wigley, a member of the Texas Young Republicans, told the Houston Chronicle, "Everybody loved it. It was more personal. Instead of talking at you, she was talking to you" (Dyer "Now, the rub"). Terry Pearce, an expert on effective speechmaking, made much the same point later in the same story. He pointed out that Elizabeth Dole seemed more real by virtue of stepping away from the podium: "With so much glitz, so much handling, so much virtual reality, people are longing for something human that they can trust. And you have to get close, whether rhetorically or physically, to find out what's real."

179 Or, at least, that they knew enough about the levels of performance necessary for an event of this kind to play the role of "ideal spectator" themselves and claim to have bought into Elizabeth Dole's fictive reality.
“It was absolutely amazing,” Maryland delegate Chris McCabe told the Associated Press, “It was unparalleled in national convention history” (Anderson “No Podium”). Massachusetts delegate Dot Early told the Boston Herald that Elizabeth Dole was “Unbelievable. Every word came out of her heart. If anybody knows Bob Dole, it’s Elizabeth. She has class and charm” (Miga “Look Out, Hillary”).\footnote{\textit{It was an inspiration to modern women,” and}} Cathie Bennet Warner, keeping a “Delegate diary” for the San Francisco Examiner said that she and her fellow California delegates “were struck by Elizabeth Dole’s excellent delivery (without teleprompter) and her ability to remember every name, city and state in the individuals in her stories were recalled.”\footnote{Ms. Early apparently did not intend the contradiction between the first word of her comment and the rest. Ms. Warner might have been less impressed with Elizabeth Dole’s memory if she had known that “the individuals in her stories” had been placed specifically. None of them was actually a member of the delegation with which each was seated.}

Elizabeth Dole’s performance resonated with television viewers as well as those present in the hall with her. Among the calls one newspaper received: “It was an inspiration to modern women,” and

\begin{quote}
I thought Mrs. Dole last night was absolutely superb. It was wonderful to hear a woman speak her mind, speak from her heart and speak from her soul and one who loves her husband. It was just such a pleasure to see her, to look at her face and to know what she was saying was so genuine. ("Liddy’s Walk; A galvanizing moment for TV-convention debate")
\end{quote}

Obviously, these last two statements are not representative of all viewers’ responses. They appeared, after all, as part of an editorial in a conservative newspaper. Nevertheless, they are informative. Both women quoted made a personal connection with Elizabeth Dole based upon her performance of naturalness (“what she was saying was so genuine”).

Remarkably, a number of commentators and pundits were apparently taken in by the apparent naturalness of Elizabeth Dole’s performance. The San Diego Union-Tribune,
for example, noted: “In a rigidly scripted convention, Elizabeth Dole spoke
*extemporaneously*” (Marelius “Hour of triumph” emphasis added). The *Houston
Chronicle* claimed the performance was “unscripted” and that Elizabeth Dole “was *winging
it*, without text or TelePrompTer” (Cobb “Mrs. Dole shines” emphasis added).
Contributing to the online magazine *Slate*, Nelson W. Polsby, a political science professor
at UC Berkeley, called it “Mrs. Dole’s tour de force. A really great performance, especially
in the context of *everything else* being so controlled and buttoned up” (“Committees of
Correspondence” emphasis added).

For its part, the *Washington Times* claimed that her performance “provided a
counterpoint to media complaints of the convention being too staged” (Myers “Mrs. Dole’s
story needs no script”). This, despite the fact that a number of media critics noted not only
how staged the Dole Stroll was, but also how the networks fell into line covering
everything.182 Tom Shales, the *Washington Post* television critic observed:

> As the spotlight followed her, so too did the television cameras. With Mrs.
> Dole moving around, networks apparently felt obliged to keep cameras
> trained on her, not wander around the hall or do the usual over-indulgence
> in reaction shots of people in the crowd. Mrs. Dole’s was a literally
> captivating performance” (“Mrs. Dole’s Political Oprah”)

The *San Francisco Examiner*’s media critic made a similar observation: “It was a
smartly choreographed move, and it mesmerized the networks. ABC, NBC, CNN, PBS
and CBS, all of which have grumbled about being manipulated by Republican image-
makers, showed the whole thing, and pronounced it masterful” (Armstrong “Dole’s walk
into TV history”).183 And ABC’s Jeff Greenfield noted on-air that the “political people
have figured out a way to end run the networks. We would never take what Elizabeth Dole

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182 Ironically, the network shots may have looked genuine for the simple reason that
most of them looked pretty bad. Often, Elizabeth’s Dole was lost amidst the crowd or
obscured by the signs marking each delegation. The exception to this rule was, of course,
GOP-TV whose producers knew exactly where Elizabeth Dole would walk.

183 This article also includes a useful summary of the television pundits’ reactions.
See also Carman “Liddy Dole’s Star Turn.”
did as a campaign video. But in this Oprah-like campaign audio, she held us for twenty
minutes and did a brilliant job.”

The Dole Stroll was frequently described as “new” and “unprecedented.” Yet there
was next to nothing in Elizabeth Dole’s performance that had not been done before. As
discussed above, the use of human beings as representative “props” had its roots in
Reagan’s presidential speeches. The “surprise” appearance of Bob Dole on the videogwalls
during his wife’s speech was a repeat of Ronald Reagan’s video appearance at the 1984
convention. The Oprah-style “conversation” amongst the audience had not only been a
staple of Bill Clinton’s 1992 campaign (although it had been called “Donahue-style” then),
but was a regular part of Elizabeth Dole’s own stump appearances during the 1996 primary
campaign. In fact, large portions of her convention performance were taken verbatim from
her standard stump speech. The combination of these separate elements within a convention
performance may have been unprecedented, but it was hardly the novelty that the media
made it out to be.

Why then did the Dole Stroll receive such universal praise from the media? A
theatrical perspective may provide the answer. As has been discussed previously, the
audience is inherently part of any theatrical performance. Audience members are more than
passive observers; they are participants in the theatrical process, and they bring their own
knowledge, skills, and background with them to that process. An audience
unexperienced or unaware of the craft that underlies an actor’s performance will probably
not recognize that craft for what it is. To such an audience, the performance is “natural;”
they are unaware that “naturalness” is a construct. Theatre, by its very nature, is an
artificial imitation of reality. Throughout history, playgoers have praised actors for the
“naturalness” or “verisimilitude” of performances that were actually highly stylized, shaped
by the aesthetic standards of that time and culture. David Garrick, Eleanora Duse, and

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184 See Ubersfeld “The Pleasure of the Spectator” and Bennett Theatre Audiences.
Marlon Brando, are three such actors who immediately come to mind. Those standards were generally transparent to the contemporary audience, just as our own standards are generally transparent to us.

An audience with some experience in performance technique, however, will likely notice the performer’s craft. They will applaud the virtuoso’s skill and technique that has made the performance appear “natural.” And Elizabeth Dole’s performance was indeed virtuosic, as the media professionals were quick to point out. Newspapers’ media and television critics reviewed her telegenic style. The Chicago Tribune noted that she eschewed the use of an electronic prompter, or even notes, and yet flawlessly delivered a speech that seemed more like a spontaneous conversation” (Hardy “Elizabeth Dole speaks”). Newsday described her as “Polished as an orator, buttoned up like a CEO—power suits and power hair—and more earnest than a public television fundraiser, she moves from well-honed stock line to stock line with an apparent effortless grace” (Zehren “More Than Supportive Spouse”).

Television and radio pundits, seasoned performers themselves, were equally effusive. On CNN’s Inside Politics, Bill Schneider noted that “she did it with no text, no notes, no teleprompter. She handled the potentially awkward moments like a real pro” (“Elizabeth Dole Gets Schneider’s Play of the Week”). NPR’s “Morning Edition” commentators Cokie Roberts and Kevin Phillips practically tripped over their own tongues as they described Elizabeth Dole’s performance:

COKIE ROBERTS: It was phenomenal. I — I’ve never seen anything like it. She came down on the floor -- and I understand that she’s done this before, that she does this on campaign tours, et cetera. That was really something -- wandering around the floor....It was something we’ve never seen the likes of and, again, I was on the floor throughout, and there was — there was not a sound for the entire time she was doing it.

This phenomenon explains why theatre professionals tend to admire the work of a Bill Irwin, an Anne Bogart, or a Stephen Sondheim more than the general public does. Each of those artists is a technician so gifted in his or her craft that the technique is not always obvious to the layperson.
KEVIN PHILLIPS: Well, another dimension of that -- now, Cokie, you're saying you saw that from the floor. I was up in the CBS booth and we were looking out, and what struck me -- which I thought that the picture was even more striking than from the floor, was to see this woman going through the crowd and doing all this so well, and just not missing a beat. I agree with you. I've almost never seen a performance to match that. ("Impressions of Bob Dole's Speech and the GOP Convention")

But arguably the most telling comment regarding Elizabeth Dole's mastery of performance technique came during the CBS broadcast of the Republican convention. Immediately after Elizabeth Dole concluded her speech, Dan Rather pronounced it an "absolutely powerful performance." He then added: "And I'll tell you something, folks, I expect that plenty of television anchors, hosts, and performers watching tonight are silently thanking destiny that Elizabeth Dole went into politics and not television. She would be what's known in the industry as blow-away competition."

Conclusion

The tension running throughout Elizabeth Dole's speech was the same tension that ran throughout the convention. The American Dream—one of the central tropes of the entire convention—is supposed to be self-evident by its very nature. The Republicans faced the difficult task of trumpeting loudly something that was supposed to be a quiet truth. The medium was at odds with the message. The Dole Stroll succeeded in large part because the faux intimacy of the performance matched the faux modesty of Elizabeth Dole's remarks. Other Republican speakers had no such luxury. They could not address their audience within the protective costume of the candidate's wife, the next First Lady of the United States.

181
A modern political convention offers two performances in one. The audience within the convention hall and the audience without experience significantly different performances. This phenomenon was remarked upon by a number of different reporters covering the 1996 conventions. National Public Radio’s Neal Conan, for example, marveled at the fact that his own network’s broadcast of the Democratic convention differed so markedly from the convention as he remembered it. “One of the things that really surprised me listening to our tape [is that] it sounded so much louder in the hall,” he told his listeners during a post-convention wrap-up. “The cheers were so much louder, and it was so much more vibrant, particularly that moment when Hillary Clinton came in and the place was rocking. I’ve never been there when Michael Jordan was there but I can’t imagine it’s any louder than that” (“Covering Convention”).

Why was the in-house performance “so much more vibrant” than the televised performance? How did the convention create a level of excitement worthy of a sports superstar like Michael Jordan? The short answer to these questions is spectacle; the convention performances in the halls were more spectacular than the convention performances on television. And that phenomenon of spectacle is the subject of this chapter. My case study this time will be the Democratic convention. While spectacle played a significant part in both parties’ conventions, the audience within Chicago’s United
Center experienced a substantially more spectacular performance than their counterparts in San Diego's Convention Center. As will become clear, the architecture of the United Center was more conducive to theatrical spectacle. Also, the producers of the Democratic convention paid greater attention than their Republican counterparts did to the audience within the hall and to the spectacle that audience experienced.

Where the Republicans concentrated on the television audience served by GOP-TV, the Democrats—who, of course, had no fully-realized television broadcast of their own—concentrated on energizing and influencing the audience within the hall. It was an article of faith amongst the Democratic producers that the media would capture and convey the crowds' enthusiasm in their reporting so long as that enthusiasm was real. The nature of spectacle allowed the producers to foment that enthusiasm. After all, as MacAloon notes, spectacle evinces a profound effect upon its participants. Performers and spectators often find themselves drawn together by the experience into a newly-born community:

Those who have come to watch and to be watched, to enjoy the spectacle or to profit from it, may find themselves suddenly caught up in actions of a different sort at levels of intensity and involvement they could not have foreseen and from which they would have retreated had such participation been directly required or requested of them....[Spectacle] gives the metamessage “all you have to do is watch,” thus liberating individuals to want to, to be free to do more than watch. (“Olympic Games” 268-9)

The unifying effect that is inherent to the spectacle helps account for the reactions quoted at the top of this chapter. The spectacular aspect of the 1996 political conventions made them “rituals of bonding,” in the words of the British newsweekly Economist, “something not to be sniffed at in a continent-sized country. They were a triumph of the art of association” (“No suspense but the event still relevant”).

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Democratic convention producer Gary Smith made much the same observation as MacAloon based upon his own experience over decades of television production. “I think the key is stimulation, not acceptance,” he told me in a phone interview. “They don’t have to always agree. I’d rather stimulate a million people than get a hundred thousand just simply to agree with me.” That stimulation invites agreement subtly and is more effective than an explicit plea.
The Nature of the Space

The Democrats' venue played a major part in fostering this "art of association."

Unlike the San Diego Convention Center, the United Center was suited to hosting a communal performance, having been designed as a sports arena rather than a tradeshow hall. Robert Doepel, president of Chicago Scenic Studios, the company constructing the podium for the Democrats, compared the United Center with the San Diego Convention Center. "We have a completely different space," he told the Chicago Sun-Times. "The ceilings are much higher, the space is much larger, and the videowall is much bigger. The ambience is totally different" (Rossi "United Center decor"). My transcribed notes from the final night of the Democratic convention offer a more personal perspective on the differences between the two spaces:

As a festival space, the United Center beat the SDCC hands down. While both were probably equally exciting for the delegates on the floor, they conveyed very different feelings for the onlookers and guests. I remember, in particular, the remarkable sense of community I felt as I looked around the United Center on the final night. Wherever I looked, I saw people participating in the Convention by their sheer presence. Below were the delegates on the floor; above were the rows upon rows of people filling the triple balconies. It's taken me until now to recognize what that sight reminded me of, but it looked like a huge opera hall, the Metropolitan Opera, or similar grand performance space in which throngs of people are arranged in concentric tiers on top of each other. Filled to near-capacity, it is an awesome sight. And during the balloon and confetti drop it was remarkable because the empty space was now filled with a coruscating curtain.

At the San Diego Convention Center, however, I was very conscious of the ceiling and the compressed confines. From my position on the writing press stand I saw the wall of network skyboxes in front of me. A camera platform and support pillar blocked my view of the podium and the left side of the hall. To my right, I could see an expanse of people seated out into the darkness, but everything was horizontal. No vertical space was possible because of the low ceiling.

For all that the architecture of the United Center helped unify the crowd assembled within it, however, the nature of the convention itself sometimes worked against the unity to which the producers aspired. Every person at a convention, after all, is there with an
agenda to promote, even as he or she toes the party line and dutifully supports the official nominee. Some agendas are national; many activists, for instance make their presence known and present a unified front by coordinating their costumes and signs. (In 1996, for instance, pro-life Republicans wore distinctive white cowboy hats; gay-rights supporters at the Democratic convention carried gay-pride flags or wore pink triangle buttons.) Other agendas are local. Every delegation can be counted on to promote its home state and candidates. At every convention, regardless of party, the Hawaiian delegation festoons its state standard with flower leis. Similarly, buckeye hats, necklaces, and pins are de rigeur for Ohio delegations. This is no mere coincidence. A pre-convention memorandum from the Ohio Republican Party, for example, included the pointed admonition to its delegates, alternates, and guests that the official suggestions regarding appropriate attire “should not discourage you from wearing any paraphernalia which will attract TV cameras to let the folks back home know Ohio’s there!”

And, naturally, agendas are also personal. All attendees want to renew conversations with old friends and schmooze with new friends (or those they hope will become new friends). They are there to see and be seen. The convention floor becomes a place of barely controlled chaos, a teeming sea of people. Delegates and alternates may have assigned seats, but still the aisles are packed with people shuffling from one part of the floor to another. Throughout it all, trolling amongst the delegates like whales, are the ubiquitous network and local camera crews yoked together by electrical cables: the on-air talent juggling microphone and clipboard while wearing a headset that seems out of place on the well-coiffed head; the camera and sound operators, each intent upon pictures and levels; and bringing up the rear of the entourage is the grip, wielding the transmitter as if it were a battle flag, and always carefully aiming it at the microwave receiver nestled somewhere in the rafters. Swarming around the camera crews like pilot fish are the activists brandishing signs, the delegates trying to be caught on-camera, and the party go-
fers setting up the next interview. Often, there is so much activity happening on the floor that it can be difficult to hear the speaker at the podium. Sometimes it is even difficult to tell what is going on at all, as Peggy Phelan found out at the 1992 Democratic convention:

A Hungarian journalist told me that the first night of the convention she kept waiting for it to begin. It wasn't until she got home and saw bits of it on the news that she realized that what she thought were noisy and distracted preparations actually was the event itself. ("Rats and the Democrats" 172)

If the nature of the crowd and the proceedings do not make a convention chaotic enough, producers also have to deal with the challenge of a split focus on the convention floor itself. Any modern political convention hall, after all, is dominated by two gigantic structures. The first is the podium, the "mainstage" of the hall where, ideally, everyone's attention is concentrated. However, directly opposite is always another structure that is almost as big as the podium. This second structure houses the production team and is the stand for the battery of television and still cameras capturing the "head-on" shot of the podium. It is the main vantage point from which the audience outside the hall experiences the convention.

By virtue of its size and placement, the camera stand also can have a profound impact on the experience of the audience within the hall. In San Diego, for example, the stand was a physical barrier within the hall, an impediment to traffic that made it virtually impossible to cross from one side of the floor to the other. It encompassed a major portion of the delegates' space, and split the alternates' space in half. And rising as high as the ceiling, the stand was as massive and noticeable as the network skyboxes.

By contrast, the central stand in Chicago was much less noticeable. For one thing, the United Center was larger; the stand was set into the bowl of the delegates' space so that it did not intrude or block the view from the audience tiers. In point of fact, the production team who oversaw the Democratic convention from their position atop the stand, were level with the lowest tier of skyboxes. But even on the floor, the stand almost disappeared. The
Democrats’ designer, René Lagler, downplayed it visually so that it would not steal focus from the podium. He mirrored the outside of the stand with mylar. The stand resembled, at least in the eyes of some of the production team, the chrome bumper of a Cadillac. By the time the convention opened, the stand was nicknamed the “Cadillac.” The effect of the mirroring was profound. When the floor was full, the Cadillac, camouflaged by the reflected red, white, and blue images of delegates and signs all but disappeared.

Lagler designed the Cadillac to be subdued. He designed the podium and lectern to catch everyone’s eye. (See Figures 7.1-7.3) Above the podium, an undulating red, white, and blue ribbon not only had the practical function of housing projection screens for delegates to watch, but also made the podium “vast but intimate,” according to Blair Kamin, the Chicago Tribune architecture critic: “The ribbon appears to elongate the stage while visually capping it. Like a curtain draped from the ceiling, the ribbon seems to reduce the size of the arena and helps focus attention on the lectern” (“Podium provides Clinton more than just a platform”).

Kamin’s article on the podium is well worth examining. Annotating a photograph of the podium, Kamin notes exactly how the physical space became “a high-voltage piece of stagecraft...at once evoking the dignity of the White House and the dynamism of a flag-waving, foot-stomping political conclave.” He shows how the podium was a study in contrasts. Classical elements including flattened columns, molding, and a traditional typeface, framed the videowall “endow[ing] the temporary construction with the permanence and monumentality of official Washington.” The lectern and front wall, both of which were capable of being raised and lowered, made the podium “individual but communal.” The stairs flanking the lectern were “open but secure;” to an onlooker the four 2-foot high steps looked like they were of normal height and appeared “to break down the traditional wall between speaker and audience...but, in reality, serve[d] as a barrier to protect the president.”
Figure 7.1: 1996 Democratic convention podium with lectern and walls lowered.

Figure 7.2: 1996 Democratic convention podium with lectern and walls raised. (Note the Escher-like effect created when the videowall broadcast a shot of the podium itself.)
The steps in front of the podium pulled the viewer's eye towards the lectern, while linking the podium spatially with the rest of the hall. Like the ribbon above, the steps rippled and curved across the front of the podium, making it festive and ornamental instead of imposing and monumental. Behind the lectern, the main wall was flanked by curved, pillar-like walls, each larger than the one before. The stage-right walls were painted with stars; the stage-left walls were striped. This, as Kamin noted, was a "traditional but progressive" use of the flag that helped focus the onlooker's gaze: "The design transforms Old Glory into a fluid, dynamic backdrop. Growing larger as the four walls go backward,
the stars and stripes suggest movement and practically pop out of the TV set." The false perspective created by the painted flag drew the onlooker's eyes to the lectern.

The lectern itself, situated just behind a large gold-painted cylindrical seal, was fairly understated. This followed a pattern that Lagler had established in his previous convention podium designs:

The lectern itself is left very clean without a lot of decoration, without a lot of molding of red, white, and blue, if you will. But everything else focuses to it. There's always been a red, white, and blue-motif stripe that comes towards the center. And then by leaving the center clean, it puts focus to that. And you can see it. Because let's face it, if you've been to one of these things, it's a very busy place by the time everyone brings their own paraphernalia and the stanchions and the lights, and just the human beings that are all colors in themselves. So it's nice to see something that's rather clean and simple in the center. (Lagler interview)

The podium obviously was more than a mere platform. It was a carefully designed performance space that virtually demanded the audience's attention through architectural and design devices. However, we have not yet discussed the one device that, arguably, had a bigger impact upon the podium than any other. I refer, of course, to the gigantic videowall that stood directly behind the lectern. It will be the subject of the rest of this chapter because it proved to be central to the Democratic convention as spectacle. It was, in fact, "the focal point of visual message for the convention," according to the Democrats themselves (Jackson "Videowall press release").

The Nature of the Videowall

Before discussing the videowall and its use in the 1996 convention, however, some context is necessary. What exactly is a videowall? Why did it play such a pivotal role in the Democratic convention? The answer to the former question is technical. The answer to the latter is historical. I'll address each in turn.

A videowall is neither a movie screen nor a giant television set, although it can function much like either one. It is a grid of large cubes, each of which is a rear-screen
video projection unit. The cubes can operate independently or synchronized with each other. As a result, a videowall is an incredibly flexible broadcast medium. An image on the Democrats' 56-cube videowall, for example, could range from about 5 1/2 sq. ft. (the area of a single 40" monitor) to over 3,400 sq. ft. No matter the size, the images on a videowall remain crisp and sharp, visible even within a brightly-lit hall. By contrast, a film projection requires a darkened auditorium or the image washes out. And a television image becomes blurry and indistinct as it is projected onto a big screen.

The Democrats' decision to feature the videowall so prominently in their 1996 convention was, in large part, a result of a successful experiment in 1992. The videowall was something of an afterthought to the planning for the New York convention in Madison Square Garden. The Democrats had already designed their podium when Garth Ancier, a former television executive advising the DNC suggested that a videowall would make a more dynamic backdrop than a static painted flag. Taking a gamble, DNC Chairman Ron Brown and the planning committee followed Ancier's advice and opted for the videowall. They made this decision only months before the convention opened, leaving the production team with little time to plan how to utilize the videowall that was suddenly available. Neither the DNC nor the Clinton campaign offered much guidance. Gary Smith, Joseph Finneran, Dann Netter, and the others responsible for the videowall relied on their own best judgment and, in large part, learned what worked by simply doing it as the convention unfolded. The producers' problems were compounded by the fact that a number of political operatives mistrusted the videowall as a gimmick; they did not want the videowall used for anything more sophisticated than image magnification. According to their line of thinking, the convention would be lucky if the videowall worked well enough to help attendees see the podium speakers better.

The ultimate success of the videowall at the 1992 convention makes it easy to forget what a gamble it was at the time. But it was a gigantic gamble. After all, going into the
Democratic convention, Bill Clinton was running a distant third in the polls to George Bush and Ross Perot. He desperately needed a successful convention to give him a bounce in the polls. Any mishap would have been a disaster. Had the videowall malfunctioned during the prime-time broadcast it would have been a huge embarrassment with possible political consequences. Teams of technicians practiced replacing a cube of the videowall in case something went wrong, but in the end the convention producers had to cross their fingers and hope for the best.

None of their fears was realized. Far from it. The videowall proved to be a smashing success. The Wednesday night roll call vote offers a case in point of the videowall’s impact. Originally, the videowall was simply meant to spruce up and speed up the roll call vote for the audience. As the convention manager said in an interview:

"[Based on] the polling they did for '88, the thing that people said they liked the most were the roll-call votes, except they were getting to be too long, and so that was problematical. So...we had written away to each state and asked them to send us some video of their state, so we were able to put up a scene from their state and flash the name of it as it was being read as well, which made it more visually pleasing and hopefully didn’t take as long..." (Cooper)

Actually, the individual state graphics were only part of the show. They may have made it more televisual, but by keeping “Unofficial Totals” (a rather incongruous phrase given that the Democrats were televising these totals) in between votes, the videowall kept track of the “horse race” as Clinton edged towards the magical 2145 votes. By no coincidence, the graphics were designed to resemble those that the networks themselves use regularly. As a result, the image crafted by the Democrats was picked up and transmitted wholesale by the networks, unadulterated by their own graphics. Millimeter, a television industry magazine, called the videowall "by far the most effective strategy" employed by the Democrats to craft their convention (Solman 42).

The most theatrical use of the videowall came after the roll call vote made Clinton’s nomination official. Clinton and his family made their now-famous walk from Macy’s
down 34th Street into Madison Square Garden itself, and all of it was broadcast on the videowall. As theatrical spectacle, Clinton's walk was the highlight of the four days, as the New York Times made clear:

By the time [Clinton had the votes to clinch the nomination], it did not seem to matter that the results of the convention had been a foregone conclusion for more than a month. And when one watched Mr. Clinton, in a blue suit, hug his daughter, Chelsea, dressed in white, and his wife, Hillary, wearing red, and the three then made their tricolor way onto the streets of Manhattan, one could not help thinking that there was something stirring about the American political process after all. (Kolbert "Convention Can Still Work")

What helped to make that political process so stirring was the videowall itself. Periodically throughout the roll call vote, it televised the Clinton family watching the event from Macy's. The result was a show that even the designers had not anticipated. As Finneran himself explained to me, "we knew it would be cool, but once we started putting Clinton up on the wall during the voting process, we started to pick up on the fact that just the single act of his image being up there... sent the crowd into a tizzy" (4 Aug. 1993 interview). The crowd's reaction was a result not only of the sheer excitement that the man most of them had campaigned for was about to become the party's representative, but also the fact that—through the medium of the videowall—that man and his family were able to share that moment of triumph with them.

Roland Barthes has written that the more duplicative an advertisement is, "the more multiple it is, the better it fulfills its function as a connoted message" ("Advertising" 177). If Barthes is correct then the videowall helped the Democrats set a new standard for advertising excellence. The levels of multiplicity were remarkable. Like a hall of mirrors, the images reflected upon each other and multiplied. At one point, for example, watching my living room television, I watched another television—the videowall—broadcast Chelsea Clinton's gasp of surprise as she saw herself on that same videowall as it was shown on the televisions at Macy's that were tuned to the same network I was watching. At that point, I, the other viewers across the country, the delegates in the hall, and the Clintons at
Macy's were all linked together by the commonality of our viewing of this self-referential event. And Bill Clinton became, literally, "one of us" even as he was being celebrated as the embodiment of an entire political party. The connotations made for dramatic television and great politics.

Once Clinton left that television in Macy's to begin his walk to the Garden, the audience was caught up in the spectacle. Those at home, still linked to the delegates in the hall by virtue of the fact that they were watching the same video image, became spectators to Clinton's coronation. The effect was "totally hypnotic," to quote Finneran: "Once he started walking and you had this head-to-toe shot of the guy walking down the hall at Macy's right toward the camera, and it goes up on the wall...bigger-than-life, walking, in essence, right toward the audience almost like he's on the stage right there" (4 Aug. 1993 interview). And as Clinton progressed, the cameras caught him in the back hallways of Madison Square Garden. We, like the delegates in the hall, had no idea where he really was, nor any idea when he would finally appear in the hall itself. All we saw was this man walking towards us. At a certain point, though, the camera let him walk past; we saw him pass us by and turn towards an open door.

As Clinton walked through that door into the main hall of Madison Square Garden, the focus became split as both man and image contributed to the spectacle. Cascades of red, white, and blue balloons, released in time to Clinton's movement, clearly indicated where Clinton the man was at any given time, even though he could not be seen in the throng of delegates who rushed to surround him. Meanwhile, of course, Clinton's image was doubled and magnified by the videowall directly behind him, broadcasting his every move. The net effect was everything the Democrats could have hoped for. As the New York Times put it:

When Mr. Clinton finally emerged onto the podium under a blizzard of red, white and blue confetti and took the microphone, he seemed to have finally acquired the aura of a potential President, an aura that comes from having
millions of people watching thousands of people watch just one man. (Kolbert “Convention Can Still Work”)

The rhapsodic descriptions in the newspaper provide one measure of the videowall’s success. The raw facts of the television broadcasts offer another. By creating the mini-drama of the walk from Macy’s, the Democrats managed to hold the attention of the networks for some 25 minutes past the moment the votes gave Clinton the nomination. And 25 prime-time commercial-free minutes on every network simultaneously is an incalculable political gift. The placement of the videowall played a significant part in its effectiveness. Directly behind the speaker’s lectern, the videowall became the dominant design feature, appearing in virtually every camera shot of the podium, and was the center of the audience’s focus. As Millimeter noted, the videowall became “a living-set background that had to communicate a lot of emotion and keep the storyline going. It was not for filler or ‘eye-candy’” (Solman 46).

Given their success in 1992, it is not surprising that the Democrats opted to continue using the videowall in 1996. Once again, they placed it center stage on the podium. This time, however, the producers planned to use the videowall’s capabilities much more. What had been a haphazard experiment in 1992 was a major communicative tool in 1996. Dann Netter, one of the senior producers, explained to me the Democrats’ attitude about videowalls this way:

Marshall McLuhan was right, the medium is the message. It’s not so much what we say here, we could say anything, we could sell any point of view, not that I would—I wouldn’t sell the Republican point of view—I’m saying I could. The important thing is not what you’re saying, it’s how you say it.

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187 Taken as a whole, the 1992 Democratic convention was an enormous success. Bill Clinton’s 29-point lead in the ABC/Washington Post poll was the biggest post-convention bounce ever recorded.

188 Actually, it was the very same videowall that had been used in 1992.
And this videowall enables you to say something in a very, very powerful fashion that normal image magnification doesn’t allow you to say.\(^{189}\)

Netter’s claims echo those made by others. Temple University professor Matthew Lombard notes that during his 1995 experiments, “subjects watching large television screens reported more positive emotional responses to the people on the screen and the viewing environment” (Lombard 288). While Lombard did not include a projection television nor videowall in his experiments, it is reasonable to assume that an audience’s positive reaction to a 42-inch screen would be magnified to some degree when the screen is 700% larger. Further research on the subject appears to bear out Lombard’s conclusions. According to a paper summarizing the latest research, there is “substantial evidence for the idea that larger screens promote perceived realism of media content and perceptions of presence” (Grabe 6). Furthermore, “studies provide support for the idea that viewers are more aroused watching media content on a large screen than on a small screen” (10), and “research on screen size generally suggests that large screens increase the intensity of viewer responses” (12).

\(^{189}\) Of course, the videowall’s spectacular capabilities were worthless when things went wrong. The entire podium space looked empty and sinister for several minutes on Monday evening when the videowall stopped working. And until the producers adjusted the standard format they used for image magnification (IMAG), the videowall looked “messy and amateurish” for the television audience, at least as far as the Washington Post was concerned (Shales “It Took Superman”). For the first two nights of the convention, Gary Smith and the production team opted to use the twenty-five monitors in the upper right corner of the video wall as a 5 by 5 video close-up of the speaker, while the remaining monitors featured neutral blue video “wallpaper” incorporating the official Convention logo. The drawback to this arrangement is that the lowest monitors used for IMAG were picked up by the television camera providing the video wall feed. As a result, the top of the lectern and part of each speaker’s chest were visible, far larger than life, behind the speaker’s head. The bigger distraction came when a speaker made any kind of upward hand gesture. The gesture would creep within the camera’s field and appear up on the videowall as well. The television audience, already watching a closely cropped shot of the speaker, would suddenly see a gigantic hand appear. This “King Kong Effect,” as the production team dubbed it, was rectified during the Tuesday night session when they went to a 4 row by 5 column monitor image. It is worth remembering that the “King Kong effect” only distracted the television audience. Those of us within the hall did not find it distracting because we tended to be watching the videowall image in the first place. Often, the speakers’ televised images held our attention more than they themselves did.
Certainly, major corporations like Nike and Disney large-scale video images have a significant impact upon viewers; all of their chain stores are designed around videowalls.\(^{190}\) *Retail Store Image*, a sales-industry magazine, claims that "Viewers retain information they obtain from a videowall display better than with other advertising media" (Barr "Retailing in the Age of Video"). Broadway theatre has had great success with videowalls. Two recent musicals won rave reviews for using videowalls to spectacular effect.\(^{191}\) And, of course, anyone who has attended an arena rock concert in the last decade or so can attest to the effect of a videowall firsthand. Often concertgoers find themselves watching the video image of the performer rather than the performer on the concert stage. That, at least, was my experience last year during concerts by U2 and the Rolling Stones, both of which utilized enormous videowalls extensively.

Size, no doubt, explains some of the spectacular impact the Democrats' videowall had upon the convention audience. After all, the videowall privileged the podium speakers, making them literally "larger than life," as their images were magnified and projected for all to see. As Netter described the effect to me:

> When we did put somebody's picture pounding the podium, a tight shot, right behind them...it's symbolic. I mean here's the person that you're listening to-this tiny little guy is now this huge King Kong image, and you have to pay attention to that. How can you get away from that? It's the single most striking feature in the entire Convention hall. (interview)

The sheer size of the images appearing on the videowall had a powerful effect even when they were not images of the podium speaker. Sen. Kerrey's speech on Monday afternoon, for example, was all the more effective because the videowall offered gigantic mug shots of the Republicans he was castigating in his speech. The images of Jesse

\(^{190}\) See also Irvine "Videowalls Successfully Vie," and Broder "If you're in Manhattan."

\(^{191}\) In *Tommy*, the videowall made it possible to stage an explosive RAF fighter mission live on-stage; in *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, the videowall provided a graphic depiction of the protagonist's rise up the corporate ladder.

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Helms, Orrin Hatch, Strom Thurmond, and Al D'Amato each looking over the podium in turn gave visual weight to Kerrey's argument that "We need to change the face of the United States Senate" (Official Proceedings 105). This, incidentally, was the same tactic the Republicans had used periodically during their convention, most notably during Sen. Hutchison's speech incorporating video footage of Clinton. But the Democrats' placement of the videowall image directly behind the speaker, and the fact that the Democrats had the single videowall capturing all of the focus may explain why their images were more visually arresting.

But size was not everything. The videowall was spectacular as much for its flexibility and dynamism. It was not limited to a single image at a time; in fact, the Democrats' videowall could take four different video feeds simultaneously. During the formal roll call vote of the states, for instance, the videowall subdivided into four quarters carrying footage of each live speaker, a graphic denoting his or her state, a running tally of the overall vote, and a shot of the convention logo superimposed on the Chicago skyline.

Another option for the videowall producers was to repeat the same shot on multiple monitors simultaneously. During one of the performances of the national anthem, for instance, the monitors forming the outer ring of the videowall each carried a separate image of a waving flag, while the singer's image filled the rest of the wall. The effect was quite stunning. Even the most static shot became dynamic and engaging when it appeared on multiple monitors. The phenomenon was akin to Andy Warhol's pop art. A print of a Campbell's soup can or Marilyn Monroe has limited visual appeal in and of itself as a single image. But the total effect of dozens of those images laid out in an extended grid becomes much more than the sum of its constituent parts. A videowall, of course, takes the effect a step further by multiplying and repeating moving images. The closest parallel

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192 Hereafter in this dissertation, any quotations from the 1996 Democratic convention speeches are cited with page numbers from the Official Proceedings, unless otherwise indicated.
for someone who has never experienced a videowall used in this manner is probably the effect found in a television store when every set is tuned to the same station. There's something very spectacular about simultaneous multiplicity.193

The best illustration of the videowall's flexibility and dynamism was a segment with which the Democrats opened the evening session for each night of their convention. Entitled the "Chicago Suite," it was a tour-de-force of the videowall as spectacle. The five-minute performance was a highly elaborate, fast-paced multimedia montage designed to spotlight the host city. As a DNCC press release put it: "Sweeping panoramic vistas of the city, its real people, audio of well known local personalities, historic political convention footage, sights and sounds, landmarks and skyscrapers which are quintessentially Chicago, create excitement and generate enthusiasm during the opening session of the convention" (Jackson "Videowall").194

To the ear, the Chicago Suite was a little old fashioned, with a score that could have been commissioned by the Chamber of Commerce for a patriotic industrial film. The live convention orchestra played an irrepressibly upbeat melodic line integrated with the recorded Chicago soundbites. To the eye, though, the Chicago Suite was absolutely contemporary. Its aesthetic owed a great deal to MTV and cutting-edge television commercials. Quick cuts and constant movement bombarded the spectator with visual messages. Remarkably, the piece only used three different source feeds; no more than three different images could appear on the wall at any given moment. But only a careful observer would have noticed that limitation. The source images often appeared more than once on the videowall, usually in different sizes for visual variety.

193 See Dayan and Katz' chapter "Celebrating Media Events" (119-146) for more on the festive experience effected by simultaneous multiple televised images.

194 Actually, the Chicago Suite was not played during the opening session. Due to technical difficulties, it was postponed until the next day, whereupon it was repeated each of the other nights and became an ongoing segment of each night.
During a section paying tribute to Chicago's political heritage, for example, the videowall was split up into thirteen separate parts (see Figure 7.4). A 4x4 grid top center ran footage of John F. Kennedy nominating Adlai Stevenson at the 1956 convention. That same footage appeared on six individual monitors elsewhere on the videowall. Meanwhile, one 3x3 and two 2x2 grids of monitors projected a still image of Jefferson (synched to appear with the reference to Jefferson during Kennedy's speech). The remaining monitors, in similar 3x3 and two 2x2 configurations, projected a shot of an old convention poster.

Figure 7.4: Frame from the 1996 Democratic convention "Chicago Suite." (© 1996, C-SPAN)
The visual heterogeneity was compounded by the fact that the average shot appeared on the videowall for only a matter of seconds before being replaced. Also, the arrangement of grids within the videowall was constantly changing. At one point, the entire videowall carried a single image of the Chicago skyline. But almost immediately, groups of monitors erupted with inset shots of Chicago street scenes. Shortly thereafter, the videowall fragmented into fifty-six images of the same small landscape. Spectators were dazzled with a visual rollercoaster ride.

The Chicago Suite was a showcase for the technical wizardry behind the videowall. But that dazzling display was only one of many different ways that the convention producers arranged the videowall for spectacular ends. They also used it to expand the boundaries of the convention hall, for example. Remote satellite feeds connected the delegates in Chicago with scenic locales across the midwest as Clinton’s “21st Century Express” train brought him to the convention.\(^{195}\) Time was expanded as well. Thanks to archival newsreel footage projected on the videowall, Democratic icon Franklin D. Roosevelt appeared—albeit in a virtual form—on the 1996 convention podium. And, of course, the videowall enabled the attendees to revisit their own past as they watched video highlights from the 1992 campaign and performances from Clinton’s Inaugural Gala.\(^{196}\)

The videowall also further blurred the line between live and videotaped performances. As discussed in Chapter 5, the Republicans had done some of this at their convention when they incorporated video segments into their speeches. The Democrats took it a step further, however, combining live and video performances simultaneously in a spectacular fashion. Phil Driscoll’s performance of the national anthem and “America the Beautiful” offers a good illustration of how the Democrats united live performers with the

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\(^{195}\) See next chapter for an extended analysis of the train trip and the journey motif throughout the 1996 Democratic convention.

\(^{196}\) These highlights were liberally sprinkled throughout the four days. Producer Gary Smith used them to fill time as needed to keep the proceedings on schedule.
videowall. As Driscoll sang and played his trumpet, the videowall featured a montage of American scenes choreographed with the song. Further blurring things, shots of Driscoll performing live were intercut or superimposed with the videotaped images. All of the visual tricks we are accustomed to seeing at home on our television screens were incorporated into the live convention performance.

One of the television tricks that appeared with some frequency on the videowall was the audience "reaction shot." Gary Smith, the executive producer of the Convention and an old hand at producing live television events, knew the power of augmenting a speaker's point with live illustrations, courtesy of the in-house audience. The networks covering the Convention speeches relied on such shots in their broadcasts. Smith did the same with the videowall, cutting from IMAG (image magnification of the speaker) to close-up shots of audience members watching the speech. Not surprisingly, the individuals appearing on the videowall were selected because they visually reinforced the particular speaker's message. If the speaker was talking about child-care, for instance, the videowall was sure to show an appropriately adorable infant in its parent's arms.

Tellingly, people's images would remain on the videowall for only as long as they were ignorant of their own appearance on the wall. As soon as they realized—that look of surprise is unmistakable and remarkably consistent—the shot would change. Smith wanted to craft a Convention narrative using the camera images he had at his disposal at any given moment of time. But he needed to be in control of the narrative, and that depended upon the passivity or anonymity of whomever was featured in the image. An African-American woman nodding in agreement with Jesse Jackson was emblematic of a wide range of people by virtue of her anonymity. Once she saw herself on the screen she became self-conscious and the viewing audience saw her as an individual woman emblematic of herself.

The Democrats used the videowall to tie disparate convention elements into an aesthetic whole. The Tuesday afternoon session devoted to the platform issues was a case
in point. Party platforms are always hybrid beasts at best, with countless separate political positions shoehorned into one document. Presenting some version of that document to the convention delegates and attendees is, therefore, problematic. One solution is to try to organize the platform speakers thematically. Both parties took this approach during the 1996 conventions. But there were differences. In San Diego, the Republicans printed their themes explicitly in their program, and featured an “emcee” for each set of speakers on each theme. For their part, the Democrats did not announce the themes in advance, but used the videowall to make each theme clear for the audience in the moment.

Before each speaker was introduced, a transition graphic featuring his or her home state appeared on the videowall. These state graphics appeared throughout the convention, visually linking speakers from the same state. Each graphic featured a picturesque scene emblematic of the state. As Figure 7.5 shows, the top left corner of the graphic featured all or some significant part of the state flag. Filling the rest of the upper quarter of the screen was the name of the state in bold white letters superimposed over the name in larger, lighter letters. The look was reminiscent of the postmodern video style of ESPN2, MTV, and Wired magazine.

After each speaker was introduced, the orchestra played a short musical motif usually related to his or her home state (e.g. “California, Here I Come”) as the videowall featured a montage of images relating to the speaker’s topic. The images within the montage were fast-paced and graphically active, with several appearing at once in different portions of the screen, and fading out at different times as other images cut in. A timing sheet used by the videowall producers to create the montage gives a good idea of the complexity involved. One segment incorporated thirteen different images over the course of a 10-second segment.197 Over the swirl of images, one of the three convention theme words (“OPPORTUNITY,” “COMMUNITY,” “RESPONSIBILITY”) scrolled across the

197 See Appendix F for a copy of the production break-down of this segment.
screen in large letters. Suddenly the images would freeze as a theme word or phrase specific to the upcoming speech appeared—smaller this time—center right of the screen. The effect was one of sudden stability; the lettering resolving the disparate moving images into a unified thematic mural. The words were treated as graphic elements in and of themselves, reinforcing and punctuating the images that surrounded them.

For the first thirty seconds or so of each speaker's address, the video mural was the backdrop. Rather than maintain that look, however, the producers chose to switch to a more traditional IMAG shot for the remainder of each speech. The twenty-five monitors in the upper right corner of the videowall provided video close-up of the speaker, while the
remaining monitors featured neutral blue video “wallpaper” incorporating the official convention logo.

The platform presentation was only one example of the fact that consistent video backdrops reinforced overall themes, defining and uniting a set of speakers. Other segments within the convention schedule had their own aesthetic format. The House Democrats’ “Families First Agenda” segment on Wednesday, for instance, prominently featured the “Families First” logo in the upper left corner of the videowall and the Congressional seal lower left.

The videowall was a powerful communicative device enabling the producers to manipulate the performance space, tie individual performances together, and augment the speakers’ words with images. It was cutting-edge technology. But before we get too carried away with the high-tech glitz, it is worth remembering that the videowall was merely the latest in a long line of cutting-edge technologies that theatre producers have utilized in their performances. Kristiaan Aercke’s description of the Baroque stage could apply to the contemporary convention stage:

>The stage became a flexible geographical metaphor with, at least in theory, endless possibilities. A painted set was like a topos or commonplace, fixed in usage by certain conditions of decorum, determined by allegorical and mythological connotations, adding the power of the image to the power of the words. The task of the stage designer was to manipulate these topoi eloquently and efficiently, according to the required decorum of the context, and in order to affect the emotions and ethos of the audience. (Aercke 77)

We have already seen above how the videowall became a “flexible geographical metaphor.” An infinitely changeable set rather than a painted one, the videowall could turn the podium into a virtual anyplace, limited only by the producers’ “conditions of decorum,” namely their aesthetic sense of what was appropriately “Presidential.” The videowall’s “allegorical and mythological connotations” were derived from American traditions rather than Classical Greek or Roman traditions, but the effect was the same as Aercke’s description. And, certainly, the task of the convention producers was exactly as Aercke
describes. Gary Smith and his team manipulated the videowall “eloquently and efficiently, according to the required decorum of the context...in order to affect the emotions and ethos of the audience.” They did so because that was their job as they admitted repeatedly. As Gary Smith told Nightline on the opening night of the Democratic convention:

I’ve been hired over the last eight years to try to focus the limited amount of time, make the most emotional or most interesting or the most visually stimulating event possible, and then the networks cover it or don’t cover it. I really believe that good television or good things start here [indicating heart], as opposed to here [indicating head]. If it’s not here [indicating heart], it is not that important. (“Democratic National Convention Opens”)

As far as Smith was concerned, the best way to touch the hearts of the television spectators is to touch the hearts of the spectators within the hall. In an interview he told me that the people observing and participating in the live event as it happens are the “energy source that comes through.” Television cameras, network pundits, and print reporters pick up on that energy and convey it to their viewers and readers even if they do not intend to do so. “Even though the networks don’t cover a lot of things that happen on the convention floor, somehow it all comes through anyway. Somehow people sense it” Smith said. He offered sports as an example. A baseball game on television is not as exciting for the viewer at home if the fans in the stadium are bored. Fill the stadium with cheering fans, though, and the game will suddenly improve, both for the players on the field and for the viewer watching television. Audience energy is palpable Smith believes. “You can feel it,” he told me. Consequently, as a producer, his job is to keep the in-house audience involved, keep them emotionally involved and keep their attention span...that’s a big thing” that will carry over into the televised broadcast.

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See also the Los Angeles Times (Lamb “Producer Puts Glitz in Democrats’ ‘Infomercial’”) and the Washington Post (Gowen “Pomp and the President”).

I should mention that Smith was not alone in making this sports analogy. Virtually all of the production personnel I interview used similar examples. This connection between the energy of audiences in and out of the hall was an article of faith.

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Smith employed a variety of methods for affecting the audience's energy levels. One relied on the fact that he was not only the producer, but also the announcer. ("I do have a hot mic that I can turn on to the whole place whenever I want--boy, what a feeling!") From previous experience, Smith had learned the subtle power he could wield as announcer. During the first night of the 1992 Democratic convention, for example, the National Anthem was to be sung a cappella by a twelve-year-old boy. Unfortunately, the crowd within Madison Square Garden was milling around making so much noise that the boy would not have been heard. The stage manager asked whether he should send the boy out onto the podium.

I said, "Yeah. But, oh my God, this kid will never be heard. What'll we do?" I mean he's just a tiny little thing. The podium was down so at least you could see him, but he walked out and he stood there, and I just opened the mic, and I [whispered] "Shhhhhhhhhhhh Shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh." And the whole place quieted down. It was mind-boggling. (interview)

The power of an amplified whisper was mind-boggling in large part because Smith had never experienced this phenomenon at any of the other events he had ever worked on. The in-house audiences for the television variety or awards shows that Smith had produced before had never needed that kind of subtle coaching; they knew how to behave for a television production. Few of the delegates and attendees in the convention hall, however, were accustomed to that kind of environment. They needed the subtle cues that Smith provided as announcer. Of course, sometimes Smith's cues were decidedly un-subtle. At times he was a performer in his own right, carrying on a conversation with the audience, particularly during the lighter moments. During one of Wednesday's Macarena breaks, for example, Smith urged Senator Mosely-Braun to show off more. Thursday, after "Shout" he congratulated the sign-language interpreters cum dancers and urged the audience to applaud them.

Lighting is also a tool in Smith's repertoire. He is a die-hard believer that light levels can control an audience. During the 1996 convention, one could probably have
monitored how much energy Smith wanted his audience to have by using a photometer. Smith's faith in lighting stems from a discovery he made during a previous convention. He and his crew had started "playing with the lights a little bit," and realized that the audience responded to the light levels in the hall:

If you brought the lights up, they start talking louder, or cheer louder, or their reaction at the end of the paragraph when a politician was saying, "And I firmly believe that THIS campaign WILL BE THE..." And you start raising the lights as he's going and the audience gets louder and they start cheering. It's amazing.

Sound and lighting were part of the 1996 convention, but the most powerful tool Smith had for influenceing the convention audience was the videowall. It enabled him to enliven and energize the proceedings virtually at will, merely by resorting to the visual equivalent of microphone feedback: he projected shots of the audience up on the videowall for the audience themselves to see. Between speeches when he needed to keep the audience's attention, and just before the networks signed on at 10:00 EDT when he wanted an appropriately excited crowd for the television cameras, Smith projected shots of delegates on the videowall. At those times, he kept the image up until the people saw themselves. Their dawn of realization and self-conscious smiles or waves became part of the celebratory quality of those moments.

The best illustration of this phenomenon is probably also one of the most inane: the Macarena. This dance fad was a surprising hit at the Democratic Convention. The production personnel—all professionals with extensive experience at such live events—were surprised at its popularity. A number of them attributed its success less to the song itself than to the videowall's effect on the crowd. Gary Smith thought it was one of the most memorable aspects of the Convention. Joseph Finneran called the Macarena segments one of the "most dramatic" examples of the videowall's ability to excite a crowd:

The first time we did it we were all taken aback by how much the audience got into it and similar to a scoreboard camera at a baseball game, they just really got off on seeing themselves and their fellow delegates having fun.
And as sort of mindless as people regard the Macarena, that ability to generate energy in the room for a live event was really critical, I think, to keeping the delegates up and generating a level of excitement so that by the time the major speakers came up you had people's hearts pumping. (17 Sept. 1996 interview)

Concert promoters have known of this phenomenon for years. One can go to any major rock concert and see the change in crowd dynamics when the audience sees itself magnified on the videowall on-stage. Figures 7.6 and 7.7 show this process in action.

Figure 7.6: Democratic convention delegates before seeing themselves on the videowall. (© 1996, C-SPAN)
The illustrations above are taken from the C-SPAN footage of the convention. That footage is particularly valuable because that network provided the feed that the convention producers had at their disposal. If they chose to project that footage up onto the videowall, the net effect was that the C-SPAN audience had the chance to see exactly what the crowd within the hall saw on the videowall. Both illustrations came on the final evening of the convention. Figure 7.6 shows the initial moment when this particular camera shot appeared on the videowall. As the picture makes clear, none of the handful of people within the frame of the shot was aware that he or she was on display. And none of them
looked particular excited by the convention proceedings. The older gentleman in the center of the frame was noticeably bored. Within the next two seconds he appeared to make some desultory comment to the woman next to him (his wife?), and scratched himself.

The second illustration is a mere fifteen seconds after the first. Within the short period of time, the entire configuration of the shot changed. The older gentleman was suddenly active and excited, waving. Instead of a scattered handful of people, the shot was filled with a crowd of delegates, many of whom had deliberately moved into the camera’s frame. Signs, banners, and assorted red, white, and blue paraphernalia came out of nowhere. Most importantly, the shot was suddenly much more political. The presumably non-partisan television cameraman and reporter who had been so prominent in the lower right quadrant of the frame before, scurried away when they found themselves on camera are were replaced by cheering partisans.

Figure 7.7 reflects an interesting compositional change as well. Before, the people within the frame had no real composition at all. They were random individuals who happened to be in a camera shot. Each was looking in a different direction; there was no focus. However, as soon as they all realized their images were appearing on the videowall, and as soon as they looked to see themselves, the composition of the shot suddenly clicked into focus. All were looking up and off to the right. What had been a chaotic scene was suddenly ordered, thanks to the power of the videowall. In a kind of living proof of the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle, the act of [self] observation changed the nature of the objects observed.

I can attest personally to the powerful effect the videowall had upon the people whose images appeared on it. On the third night of the convention I was observing with my binoculars the production team at work on their platform. As I lowered my binoculars, I caught the sight of a simultaneous movement on the videowall. In that moment I realized that a camera pan of my section of the balcony was being fed to the wall. Even though I
was only part of a large crowd shot, the sensation was electrifying. It is one thing to see all
the television cameras around everywhere and know that, theoretically, you can be
appearing on network television at any given time. It is a different thing to have theory
become reality, to actually see yourself projected on a gigantic videowall in front of
thousands of people. It is also disconcerting (especially if one is trying to be a non-partisan
academic observer) to be suddenly “on-stage,” both because of the location of the
videowall itself and because the videowall is part of the “official” narrative of the
Convention. I don’t know what other audience members thought, but I became very self-
conscious. I didn’t want to “perform” incorrectly.\textsuperscript{200}

The convention producers may not have intended the videowall to enforce a
particular type of behavior in the kind of “Big Brother” mode I have described above. But
the effect was very real. The two or three seconds in which I realized I was on display
stayed with me for the rest of the convention. Thereafter, I behaved under the assumption
that a camera could be on me at any given time. I felt a little like the inmates of the
Panopticon whom Michel Foucault describes in \textit{Discipline and Punish} as being in “a state
of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power”
(201). Aercke describes a similar phenomenon in his analysis of Baroque festive
performances, pointing out that “the entire program and all those involved in its execution
seem to have worked together to prevent the spectator from forgetting even for a moment
that a politically inspired, rhetorically constructed performance was in the making” (79).

The Democrats’ videowall proved to be a highly effective means of not only
representing but also prescribing an audience’s behavior. It was a mechanism for creating

\textsuperscript{200}At the Republican Convention in San Diego this had not been a problem, because
I sat in the press stand; I was surrounded by ostensibly non-partisan reporters in a
designated area. In Chicago, however, I sat amongst the partisan Democrats in the first
balcony tier, in order to get a better view of the videowall and the production platform.
Fortunately for me, the camera projecting to the videowall moved on quickly to another part
of the crowd, and I never had to make a decision regarding my performance.
what De Marinis calls the "Model Spectator." For the delegates watching within the hall, those images of their fellow audience members demonstrated—perhaps only subliminally—what was the model behavior expected of them. The network cameras may have tried to undercut the convention message by searching for delegates who were sleeping, but the videowall only projected images that reinforced the official party line on decorum and behavior. The videowall portrayed a hall filled with active participants in the convention process, their attention rapt. Anyone wondering how he or she was supposed to behave had only to keep watching the wall.

Conclusion

Spectacle is a critical part of the political convention performance. As we have seen, carefully managed spectacle can have a profound impact on audience behavior. Spectacle can go a long way towards creating the appearance of unity that is an important part of a convention. But I would conclude that spectacle can, and in 1996 did, do even more. At the moment of performance, a convention is a spectacular celebration, a moment of communion. Those of us in the hall certainly felt it. I felt it at both conventions, so it is not an experience limited to those of a particular political persuasion. Chicago Sun-Times reporter Hedy Weiss felt it even as she admitted that it was "easy to be cynical" about choreographed performances like the 1996 conventions. But she made an important distinction between the performance on television and the performance in the hall:

[C]ynicism, oddly enough, seems to flourish when "the show" is watched from the cool distance of a TV set. But standing on the convention floor, amidst a sea of delegates swaying to a deconstructed version of "America the Beautiful," it's more difficult to dismiss this oddly sentimental, heartfelt exercise in audience participation that is a cross between a middle American happening, a scene from "Our Town," a socially engaged soap opera, a sing-along and voluble, old-fashioned Yiddish theater. A bit of a hodge-podge? Absolutely. But amazingly, there also was a sense of controlled improvisation. ("Simple spoken word")

See Semiotics of Performance 165-171.
The "controlled improvisation" came from the fact that all of the spectacle, even the most calculated and pre-planned, took place in a transitory moment. As a result, the spectacle had an impact upon the audience that may have been felt long after the convention closed. In her essay "The Pleasure of the Spectator," Anne Ubersfeld reminds us that the "passion proper" of theatre resides in its transitory enticement:

[T]he object flies from the eye and the touch of the one who desires it: not only the actor flees from us, but all the beauty shimmering on the surface of the stage. Like water held in our cupped hands, it trickles away and evaporates, unable to satisfy the demands we make on it. The relationship between the spectator’s desire and the stage is one of endless wandering but also one of permanent frustration. (138)

That frustration may be the key to a convention, just as it is the key to any political theatre trying to effect social change. Ultimately, the convention ends, the moment of communion is over, and the performance exposes its own inadequacies and artificiality. The spectator is left to take the experience of the performance out into the world outside the convention hall where "the next President of the United States" is still just a candidate for that august office. The Mounted Messenger may bring reprieve to Mäckie Messer in Brecht’s Threepenny Opera prompting a celebration, but the audience is told explicitly that this ending is artificial; a real celebration can only take place when the Messenger is no longer needed because the situation has changed. Similarly, every political convention ends with a celebratory finale featuring balloons and confetti and emblematic music. But this merely signifies the real celebration the party hopes to stage the following January at the Inauguration of its candidate as President. And that can only take place if everyone participating in the spectacle of a convention supports the candidate when the convention has closed and the general election begins.
CHAPTER 8

THE 21ST CENTURY EXPRESS:
THE STRUCTURAL CODE OF THE 1996 CONVENTIONS:

One of the traditional elements of the theatrical performance is plot or structure. Aristotle considered it the pre-eminent element: "The structure of events, the plot, is the goal of tragedy, and the goal is the greatest thing of all" (Poetics). Indeed, throughout the history of theatre, plot has been one of the defining characteristics of a theatrical genre. An astute reader, familiar with the structural conventions of particular genres, can usually determine from a detailed plot summary alone whether a given script is a French neoclassical drama, a 19th-century "well-made play," or an American Broadway musical.

Beyond such simple pigeonholing, a theatre critic can tease out the subtleties of a play by examining how the plot works within the conventions of a particular genre. One can illuminate Hamlet, for example, by comparing its structure with other Elizabethan and Jacobean revenge tragedies. See the work of Northrup Frye for this approach.

Plot or structure is also a significant element within a political convention. Ironically, though, for such a young genre of theatrical performance, modern political conventions follow a very strict structure that is fairly old-fashioned in its dramaturgy. Events are structured in a clear-cut fashion that Aristotle would have recognized. See Aristotle's Poetics: "A whole is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end. A beginning is that which does not itself follow anything by causal necessity, but after which something naturally is or comes to be. An end, on the contrary, is that which

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203 See Aristotle's Poetics: "A whole is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end. A beginning is that which does not itself follow anything by causal necessity, but after which something naturally is or comes to be. An end, on the contrary, is that which
first day begins the performance, introducing the characters and themes through the now-symbolic process of ratifying the party platform. The second and third days feature the dramatic conflict, what little there may be. (In past decades, the conflict was waged between different factions and candidates within the party; now the conflict is between parties. At least one night of a convention is given over to contrasting the presumptive nominee’s record to his opponents.) The contest culminates in the traditional roll call vote of the states, during which the presumptive nominee makes official what has been known for months. The fourth day of the convention provides the denouement, of sorts. The candidate makes his triumphant appearance in the hall to deliver his acceptance speech and close the convention.

The four-day structure sketched above is, of course, only the rough template that political conventions follow. There are wide variations possible for any particular convention performance. And how that template is filled in can reveal a great deal about the planning and thinking behind the convention. In this chapter I will analyze a particular convention, concentrating on the Democrats’ event, because structure played such a significant role in it. Where the Republicans choreographed their convention for the televised moment, the Democrats choreographed their convention for the week as a whole.

_Dramatic Arc of Speakers_

Like the Republican convention before it, the Democratic convention featured a number of themes, each of which was the focus for a particular night. Monday’s theme was “Responsibility,” Tuesday’s was “Opportunity,” and Wednesday’s was
“Community.” Those broad themes helped provide some structure to the convention. But the themes were only part of the story.

“We will have a star each night,” a campaign strategist told the Washington Post (Balz “Democrats Stress Unity”). The choice of “star” for each night illustrates the overall convention structure. Each speaker, and each convention session, became part of a dramatic arc leading up to the climax that was Clinton’s speech. Each addressed the day’s theme, embodying it to some extent, and paved the way for the next night’s speaker in progression.

Monday, the first part of the convention’s dramatic arc, featured non-politicians. The prime-time speakers included disabled Chicago policeman Mike Robbins, gun-control advocates Jim and Sarah Brady, and actor Christopher Reeve. The reasons behind this decision were not immediately clear to everyone. CBS News’ chief Washington correspondent Bob Schieffer, for example, was mystified by the Democrats’ opening night line-up. Offering commentary from the floor at the opening of CBS’ “Campaign ‘96” broadcast of the convention, Schieffer remarked:

> It’s going to be different from any political convention that I can remember, because in the prime time hour while all the networks are televising, you will not see one elected official. Not one single one. I’ve been trying to figure out what the Democrats are up to. I think maybe they’re trying to trick channel surfers into flipping to this channel and say, “Well, that’s not a convention, I’ll watch that for a while.” You’re going to see movie stars. You’ll even see the cast from the Broadway play “Rent,” but not a single elected official tonight. Very odd, I think, Dan.204

The choice may have been “very odd” to Schieffer, but there was a method to the Democrats’ madness. Robbins and the Bradys were living testimonials for crime prevention and gun control, the specific issues the Democrats linked to the day’s theme of “Responsibility.” Reeve’s appearance was a function of celebrity and public interest; he

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204 Throughout the convention, Schieffer fixated on the paucity of politicians during prime time. Wednesday night, for example, he joked, “I think we should issue a warning:
had scored at the top of polls conducted in mid-June by the Democratic polling firm Penn+Schoen. But more significantly, by virtue of being non-politicians, the Monday night speakers sent a message: Chicago in 1996 was not going to be a typical convention. The Democrats were going to do things differently. The Republicans had talked about the number of “real people” speaking at their convention, but their Monday night line-up featured the cream of Republican aristocracy: two former Presidents, a former First Lady, and a former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Democrats, by contrast, gave their coveted podium time to members of the opposing party and a disabled actor, the latter delivering a speech that was almost entirely non-partisan. Right from the start, the Democratic convention presented itself as a different kind of political event in an effort to set the tone for the remainder of the convention.

The reaction to Monday night was generally positive. Viewership, while lower than the Democrats’ Monday in 1992, was higher than the Republicans’ Monday in San Diego (Goodman “Blending Disability”). And for all of the critics like the Washington Post’s Tom Shales who roundly denounced the Democrats’ show as “a series of gaping lulls occasionally interrupted by lulling gaps” (“It Took Superman”), there were others like the New York Times’ Francis X. Clines who argued that:

The opening hours of the convention suggested that the Democrats might prove no match for the Republicans in staging a show....But as soon as prime time arrived, an entirely different level of showmanship was

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Some of the scenes you’ll see in prime time tonight will contain elected officials and officeholders....We may be setting a trend here: politicians in prime time.”

205 See Sweet “Reeve high, Streisand low in podium power.”

206 Whether the Democratic convention was actually significantly different is debatable, of course, but such was the message conveyed.

207 The closest Reeve came to a partisan line was his broadened definition of the Republican catch-phrase “family values”: “I think it means that we are all family, and that we all have value” (138).
unwrapped, carefully designed, it turned out, to tap into the nation’s emotional well. ("60’s Political Lesson")

The structure of Monday night also enabled the Democrats to co-opt the television networks to some extent. Not every gimmick worked as planned, of course; Hillary Clinton’s televised greeting to the convention from outside the United Center bombed on CBS when that network highlighted the technical glitches, for instance. And none of the networks took the bait to give Christopher Reeve the entrance that had been planned. But the Democrats succeeded in one important regard: they squeezed more time out of the networks than the Republicans had. Immediately after Reeve’s speech, the convention videowall and the other monitors cut to a live video greeting from Clinton’s campaign rally in Toledo. The networks had no easy way to end their broadcasts—no one wanted to cut the President off in mid-address, after all—so they simply carried Clinton’s remarks and ran late. USA Today described the net effect of the Monday night session:

The Democrats, like the GOP, succeeded in keeping cameras on the podium most of the evening, with quick segues from Hillary Clinton to the Bradys to paralyzed actor Christopher Reeve. But for better or worse, the Democratic show seemed more leisurely, partly because of the slower pace of Jim Brady and Reeve, who both speak with difficulty and who took a few minutes to get on and off stage. Even the network signoffs, which came at nearly 11:15 p.m. ET, seemed more relaxed than the quick getaways after Colin Powell wrapped up at 10:59 p.m. on the first night of the Republican convention. (Nichols “A night of emotion”)

See also NPR’s Elizabeth Arnold who noted the difference between the showmanship before and during the prime time television broadcast: “But as prime-time television viewing neared, the traditional pols and stock convention speeches gave way to a new format — saxophonist Kenny G, a laser light show, a video hookup between former Chicago Cubs player Ernie Banks and baseball fan Hillary Clinton provided the segue between the conventional and the unconventional, the elected and the unelected” (“Democratic National Convention Opens”).

Convention producer Gary Smith had planned the moment to be sudden and dramatic, an entrance appropriate to Superman. The audience’s attention was supposed to be upon Nancy Pelosi, introducing Reeve from the convention floor. Once she was done, the spotlights lit up the podium to reveal the wheelchair-ridden Reeve already in place on stage. The network cameras, however, ignored the introduction and showed the slowed process of Reeve being wheeled out and positioned in darkness.

The sudden cut to Clinton was no mean feat. See Simon Show Time 241-243 for more on the behind-the-scenes maneuvering this stunt required.

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The “leisurely” pace of the first night quickened on the second night, when the Democrats threw their convention into a higher gear. The non-politicians of Monday were succeeded by quasi-politicians on Tuesday as the candidates’ wives took the limelight. Originally, Tuesday night was to have been Evan Bayh’s night. The Indiana governor, a rising star in the Democratic Party, had been granted the coveted keynote address slot, and Tuesday night had been penciled in as his night to take the national stage. But Elizabeth Dole’s rave performance at the Republican national convention changed the situation. A Newsweek poll after the Republican convention had 42 percent of respondents rating Dole as best suited to be First Lady; Clinton only received 28 percent. As a result of those polls, Hillary Clinton’s speech became priority number one for Tuesday night. The schedule had to be rearranged at the last minute, but it was a small price to pay for Hillary Clinton to appear as the incumbent First Lady.\textsuperscript{211}

The price was worth it. Hillary Clinton’s appearance on the podium stage was a remarkable moment. She received a thunderous standing ovation. Reports differ as to the exact duration of the applause—anywhere from 3 to 5 minutes—but all agree that it was an enthusiastic welcome. The applause came in waves so strong that even producer Gary Smith’s vaunted lighting control over the audience broke down. All too aware of the networks’ limited broadcast window, Smith kept lowering the lights in an effort to quiet the crowd. But even when the houselights were brought down to near-darkness, the

\textsuperscript{211} As Pittsburgh Post-Gazette TV editor Robert Bianco noted: “The convention’s big star last night was first lady Hillary Clinton, and the Democrats made sure she got a prime time chance to shine. They gave her the night’s best spot right in the middle of the three network’s [sic] 10 p.m. broadcasts, shunting aside all other speakers, including Mario Cuomo, Jesse Jackson and keynote speaker Evan Bayh” (“Delegates Show Love”). Originally, Mrs. Clinton had been scheduled to speak last on Tuesday. But Bayh was bumped to that spot, and almost bumped out of primetime entirely. He did not begin his speech until 10:58 (EDT) and concluded well after the networks’ scheduled cutoff at 11:00. Fortunately for him and the Democrats, the networks carried his remarks anyway. It was the second night in a row that the Democrats ran late, to television executives’ chagrin.
conventioneers still clapped and cheered. As the *Washington Post* noted, it was an "emotional outpouring among the faithful who embraced their embattled first lady with the kind of reception usually reserved for presidents":

> When she started to speak, delegates in the hall refused to be stilled. The lights dimmed, but the applause continued. "We are gathered here together," she began, but then came the foot-stomping that drowned her out. She took a deep breath. "I am overwhelmed and very grateful to all of you," she said -- and once again the roars of the crowd built up to envelop her.

Two weeks after Elizabeth Hanford Dole's captivating walk-on-the-floor at the Republican National Convention in San Diego, it was Hillary Clinton's moment in the prime-time spotlight. But there was nothing Oprah-like about her performance. This was not Hillary in-the-round, it was Hillary surrounded. (Balz "It Takes a Family")

The delegates' sympathy and kinship for Hillary Clinton certainly appeared genuine. As I spoke to delegates and attendees within the hall I was struck by the personal connection they said they felt for this woman. In many respects, they seemed to have more fondness for her than for her husband. Nevertheless, the delegates' individual feelings do not entirely account for the spectacle that was Hillary Clinton's appearance. Some of that spectacle was structured in. Careful planning ensured that the delegates' enthusiasm manifested itself for television, thereby projecting Hillary Clinton's positive persona to the country as a whole.

Some of the structure came from the speakers earlier in the evening, who set the tone by casting the Tuesday night session as a triumphant homecoming for a native Chicagoan. Leading up to Mrs. Clinton's appearance, speaker after speaker reminded the

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212 Knowing Smith's belief in the power of lighting to influence a crowd's dynamics, I was very attentive to his use of light levels throughout the convention. I am confident in saying, therefore, that Hillary Clinton's arrival at the podium generated the most sudden and dramatic drop in light levels during the entire four days of the convention.

213 This may have been a function of Bill Clinton's decision to sign the Republican Congress' welfare reform bill into law the week before the convention opened. That decision had been decried by the Democrats' liberals, a wing of the party well represented amongst the delegates.
audience that she had been the subject of repeated attacks at the Republican convention, including a jab from Dole himself during his acceptance speech. Rev. Jesse Jackson reminded the delegates that “We must maintain with integrity the force, on the defense, as they attack the integrity of the First Lady” (182). Tipper Gore introduced Mrs. Clinton by calling her “a woman who always maintains her grace, dignity and humor, even while being subjected to the most unimaginable incivility” (197). And everywhere, signs and buttons proclaimed “It DOES take a village,” in reference to Mrs. Clinton’s best-selling book.

Hillary Clinton’s entrance into the hall was orchestrated for maximum effect as well. Democratic planners printed up a special set of signs to complement Mrs. Clinton’s entrance. Affixed to cardboard tubes, the 1’ x 2’ white signs were printed with blue stars and writing proclaiming “Chicago Welcomes Hillary” or “Welcome Home Hillary.” These signs were collected into large garbage bags and kept backstage at the United Center. Just before Mrs. Clinton entered the hall, convention gofers scurried around the hall, distributing the signs in a mad rush so that none would appear in advance on network cameras. Delegates and attendees were instructed to refrain from waving their signs until Mrs. Clinton appeared on the podium. They did so, and the net effect was electric: the entire convention floor suddenly turned white. The sea of heads that had been visible moments before disappeared in a flash to become a dynamic white mosaic consisting of thousands of bobbing signs. The convention hall space itself changed for Hillary Clinton that Tuesday night, as it would again for her husband two nights later (see below).

214 The relatively small size of the signs—approximately half the size of a normal political sign—and their handles contributed to the total effect. A larger sign is only stable when held aloft with two hands. In that position, the sign-waver’s hands and arms are visible as the sign is waved in an awkward side-to-side motion. A smaller sign on a pole, by contrast, can be held up with only one hand. One person can therefore hold up two signs, both of which are higher and more prominent than the aforementioned larger sign. The poles also enable each sign to be waved with much more range and freedom. These details may seem a tad picayune at first, but the simple fact is that the human eye responds
Hillary Clinton's speech was as crafted and structured as her entrance. Like the other convention speeches, it hammered home particular core issues that related to the convention themes. Monday's theme had been "Responsibility;" Tuesday's theme was "Opportunity." Mrs. Clinton weaved both of these themes into a speech emphasizing family responsibility and educational opportunity, and did so in very personal terms. As the New York Times commented, the speech marked the first time that she "thrust her 16-year-old daughter, Chelsea, onto the political stage, referring to her six times as the cameras captured her beaming from the VIP box" (Berke "Democrats Lay Claim").

Those were not merely the network cameras capturing Chelsea Clinton, of course. Gary Smith and the convention producers who knew that while it takes a village to raise a child, it takes an image to raise a point. And Chelsea Clinton offered the best image to remind spectators that Hillary Clinton was a mother. Earlier in the evening the videowall was used mainly to show a close-up of the podium speakers, with only occasional reaction shots of delegates. During the prime-time session, however, the videowall was much more dynamic. Tipper Gore would mention her husband and a live shot of him would appear on the videowall. During Hillary Clinton's speech, Chelsea was practically ubiquitous.

John King, the key political reporter for the Associated Press, noted in his coverage of Hillary Clinton's speech, that Tuesday night was part of the four-day convention structure that was itself part of the larger campaign structure: "The first lady's appearance was the stirring highlight of a boisterous night that set the stage for Wednesday's vote to renominate Clinton and Vice President Gore for a 10-week campaign" ("Day Two: Hillary Ignites" emphasis added). King was almost right; according to traditional convention movement. The different mobility of different-sized signs is visually significant, which means it is also politically significant to the convention organizer obsessed with image.

215 Bob Schieffer had a different count. During the next day's CBS Evening News, he remarked that Hillary Clinton "mentioned her own daughter 10 times in one speech as she managed to work in the words 'family' and 'children' and their synonyms 79 times"
structure, Wednesday night is constructed around the roll call vote. But according to the Democrats’ 1996 convention structure, Wednesday night was constructed around Al Gore.

The afternoon and evening sessions on Wednesday once again featured a broad array of Democratic officeholders and candidates, culminating in a set-piece featuring the Democrats’ five women Senators. But once the network cameras signed on at 10:00 EDT, the convention was Al Gore’s. A film biography chronicled the highlights of his term of office, including the NAFTA debate with Ross Perot on “Larry King Live” and his appearance on Letterman. Following the film, Gore appeared on-stage, breaking tradition by delivering his convention speech before he had been formally nominated or elected as the Democrats’ vice-presidential candidate.

The major reason for Gore’s high-profile appearance on Wednesday, as the media repeatedly observed, was his position as heir-apparent to the Clinton Presidency. Wednesday night, in that respect, was the opening of the Democratic primary campaign of 2000. But there was another reason to feature Gore. He continued the dramatic pattern that had been established the previous nights. After non-politicians on Monday, the First Lady on Tuesday, and the President coming up on Thursday, who else could have filled the Wednesday night of the convention but the Vice President?

Gore’s performance was structured to build to its own dramatic climax. Following the pattern he often employed in stump speeches, Gore began with self-deprecating jabs at his reputation for stiffness. “Tradition holds that this speech be delivered tomorrow night,” he reminded everyone, “But President Clinton asked me to speak tonight, and you can

(“Hillary Rodham Clinton’s speech”). One may quibble over the specific numbers, but the family-centric emphasis of the speech was clear.

216 As NPR’s Mara Liasson observed, the film “looked like a campaign commercial for the year 2000. There was Gore with Gorbachev, Gore with Olympic athletes, Gore with his attractive family and, above all, Gore with President Clinton at his side in every situation” (“Vice President Al Gore Steals Delegates’ Hearts”).

217 See Barnes “For Gore, a Head Start on 2000,” Broder “President Gore?” and Rosenbaum “Four (12?) More Years.”

224
probably guess the reason why: my reputation for excitement" (260-261). He followed up this one-liner with “the Al Gore version of the Macarena”: standing stock still. Having downplayed himself with these icebreakers, Gore proceeded to his speech proper. It was, essentially, a two-part affair. In the first part of the speech, Gore played the role of cheerleader for the Clinton administration. He cited the accomplishments of the administration, detailed the shortcomings of Bob Dole (even while praising him as “a good and decent man”), and lambasted the Republican Party. In short, he followed the traditional convention script of red-meat rhetoric, replete with a tagline for his audience to shout with him (“But we won’t let them!”). But in the second part of the speech Gore shifted rhetorical modes, returning to the confessional tone that had been so successful during his 1992 convention address. In Madison Square Garden, Gore had brought the house down with the tale of his son’s recovery from a car accident. In the United Center, Gore told the story of his sister’s death due to lung cancer. In so doing, he personalized the issue. He also gave himself a segue to laud his running mate:

Tomorrow morning, another 13-year-old girl will start smoking. I love her too. 3,000 young people will start smoking tomorrow. 1,000 of them will die a death not unlike my sister’s. And that is why until I draw my last breath, I will pour, pour my heart and soul into the cause of protecting our children from the dangers of smoking.

And that is also why I was intensely proud last week when President Clinton stood up for American families by standing up to tobacco advertising aimed at getting our children addicted. He proposed, he proposed the first ever comprehensive plan to protect children from smoking, to ban tobacco advertising aimed at our children, and to ban it for good. (264)

Critical reaction to Gore’s address was positive. NewsHour commentator William Kristol told the PBS audience it was “a good speech, very strong speech.” CBS

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218 See also Toedtman “Gore Burns Tobacco,” and Walsh “Again, Al Gore.”

219 The Dole campaign, along with a handful of reporters, took a more critical stance towards Gore’s speech. James Toedtman, for instance, reminded his Newsday readers that Gore
reporter Bob Schieffer called it “a barnburner....a very effective political speech.” And the Los Angeles Times called the speech “the prime-time show-stopper” (Fritz “Poignant”).

Gore really did stop the Wednesday night show. Fulfilling the same structural function that Clinton’s walk from Macy’s had in 1992, and Elizabeth Dole’s star turn amongst the delegates had at the Republican convention two weeks before, Gore’s speech became the dramatic moment of the night. By the time he was finished, the roll call vote of the states—the nominal purpose of the evening—was an afterthought. Gore set the stage for Clinton’s appearance the following night. He introduced the major themes and issues Clinton would address, including a metaphor that would become a touchstone for the convention: “In his speech from San Diego, Senator Dole offered himself as a bridge to the past. Tonight, Bill Clinton and I offer ourselves as a bridge to the future” (261).

The San Francisco Examiner may have been right in describing Gore’s “bridge” soundbite as “a deadly shot for which the Republicans have neither a shield nor a rejoinder” (Matthews “Christopher Matthews Rates”). Using Dole’s own words against him, Gore tarred the Republican nominee as a nostalgic old man, and positioned the Democratic ticket as agents of progress. But Gore’s shot was “deadly” not only because it articulated the Democrats’ 1996 campaign message better than any other line delivered inside the

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220 Perhaps learning a lesson from the ponderous amount of time the Republicans had taken to put Dole “over the top” as the official party nominee, the Democrats tweaked their roll call vote in order to speed everything up. Eschewing straight alphabetical order, the Democrats arranged for Alabama to defer to Arkansas so that Clinton’s home state could cast the first votes. Similarly, Alaska deferred to Gore’s Tennessee. The hope, obviously, was to ensure that two of the high points of any roll call vote would fall within
convention hall. The line also resonated with a message the Democrats had been cultivating outside the hall, a message that was all about traveling into the future. The dramatic arc of speakers within the United Center was only half the story leading up to Clinton’s triumphant appearance at the United Center. The other half was Clinton’s actual journey to the convention site aboard his “21st Century Express” train.

The 21st Century Express

Early on in their planning, the Clinton-Gore campaign and the convention producers looked for ways to energize what they feared could be a ho-hum event. Clinton had faced no primary challenge, after all; the outcome of the convention had been known for months. What would add interest? In 1992, the post-convention Clinton-Gore bus tour had garnered rave reviews. But no one wanted to repeat that gimmick, and besides, a bus does not suit the image of an incumbent President.

A train, however, opened up all kinds of opportunities. As the Chicago Sun-Times noted in June, “A rail trip to Chicago will give Democrats an additional story to sell” (Sweet “Clinton says”). And finding that additional story was important, especially after the media began criticizing the convention as over-produced television programs. “The convention was such a TV show, it was a problem,” observed presidential adviser Rahm Emanuel. “It was a political event that we needed to depoliticize. So we decided to put the podium in America. That was the idea behind the train trip” (Simon Show Time 228-229). Naturally, though, the train trip had political ramifications itself. The route chosen ran right through critically important midwestern states accounting for a total of 64 electoral votes, almost a quarter of the 270 needed.221 (See Figure 8.1) The route was also “politically

the networks’ prime time window. They did not. Only CNN, C-SPAN and PBS bothered to broadcast any of the roll call vote.

221 West Virginia, 5; Kentucky, 8; Ohio, 21; Michigan, 18; and Indiana, 12. Incidentally, in the final tally, Clinton won all of these states except for Indiana.
interesting," as the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette observed, because of "the 11 congressional
districts that Clinton will visit in Kentucky, Ohio and Michigan...eight are represented by
Republicans. But Clinton won six of them last time, and he hopes to equal or better that
feat in November" (Kiely "Guest of Honor").

Figure 8.1: Map of "21st Century Express" route.

The trip also translated easily into the dramatic soundbites that are the bread and
butter of a modern political campaign, as deputy campaign manager Ann Lewis
demonstrated during a CNN interview: “[The train] really enables us to open up the walls of the convention. There are tens of thousands of people who are going to be able to be part of this wonderful process, making history, re-electing a president, as he travels through Ohio and Michigan” (“Clinton’s Train Trip Opens Election to All”).

The spin and soundbites worked because they were grounded in almost mythic imagery. Harry Thomason and Mort Engleberg, the producers who dreamed up the train trip in the first place, knew that trains are potent symbols, conjuring up images of romance and freedom. In the American psyche, trains resonate as symbols of power, expansion, and American manifest destiny. Only Superman is “more powerful than a locomotive,” after all. “There is something about a train that seems to represent a better time in our lives,” Thomason told one reporter (Simon Show Time 229).

Planning Clinton’s train trip, Thomason’s goal was to elide the train’s virtues onto the Presidency, so that the “better time in our lives” the train represented would be the present. Reagan ran for re-election as a sunrise (“It’s morning again in America”). Why couldn’t Bill Clinton run as a train? Polls showed a majority of the voters thought America was “on the right track,” and a train could reinforce that idea. It was also the perfect way to embody the messages that the Clinton-Gore campaign had been inculcating for months. Naming the train the “21st Century Express” was part of that effort, as Clinton’s speech in Ashland, Kentucky illustrates:

Now, the most important thing is, shall we keep going on the right track, or turn around? Would you take a U-turn if you were going in the right direction? Now, you look at that train there. If you were on that train going to your destination, which is the 21st century, the last thing in the wide world you’d want to do is to make a U-turn, just because you heard a pretty song [Dole’s 15% tax cut proposal] somewhere along the way.

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222 For more stories on how White House planned the train trip to be part of the effort to make the convention more “presidential,” see Harris “Clinton Plans Events for Chicago Rail Trip,” and Hunt “Clinton Uses Presidential Trapping.”
The metaphor worked because, obviously, a U-turn is all-but-impossible for a train. The train also worked as a metaphor for the kind of campaign Clinton was running in 1996. The 1992 campaign had been like the Indy 500, a car race won by constantly shifting and adjusting, responding to circumstances and opportunities as they presented themselves. Clinton's racing team had fought to get out from the pack of other Democrats during the primary season, jostled with Bush and Perot in the general election, and finally pulled away in the last month or so, cruising to victory.223 The 1996 campaign, by contrast, was a train. Clinton's re-election team had begun in 1995 with their November 1996 destination set and their strategy in place. They had started out slowly, but having picked up speed, nothing was going to stop them as from railroading Dole and the Republicans.224

223 A car metaphor was even on the minds of Clinton's campaign staff that year. The official "War Room" t-shirt had a logo on the back showing tire treads and the phrase "Speed kills...Bush."

224 Ironically, one of the best summations of the political mileage to be gained by a train trip comes from a memo that Dole staffer Mike Murphy proposed in July. He proposed a Bob Dole "Tax Cut Express" that would have begun after the Republican convention and proceeded eastward, passing through Chicago during the Democratic convention. The brain reels at the logistical nightmare that would have ensued had Dole adopted Murphy's proposal, since the dueling whistlestop campaign trains would have had to pass each other on Wednesday. Nevertheless, some of Murphy's bullet points about the advantages of a train trip are noteworthy because they describe so well the success Clinton's "21st Century Express" enjoyed:

• Train idea is a good message bubble for Sen. Dole to travel in. Comfortable. One stump speech given over and over again. Tele-prompter stage on rear of train. Lots of local news, color.

• The "rolling train" toward Illinois creates a wonderful day by day "countdown" story. Clinton campaign has to deal with daily countdown reaction as Dole, unstoppable, rolls toward big showdown in Chicago. (This is really a big bracketing operation. Gov. Edgar can plan "welcome party.")

• Good pictures for us to use in fall TV ads.

(qtd. in Sabato "November Vote" 157-158)
The symbolism that Thomason and the other producers wanted to convey with Clinton's "21st Century Express" is best illustrated by the logo they designed for the trip.²²⁵ Seemingly simple, it was a rich and complex advertising image that bears examining. As can be seen in Figure 8.2, the "21st Century Express" logo is rectangular; thick black lines frame the image. The dominant part of the logo is a stylized train in shades of gray. A puff of smoke trails its length. The train is highly foreshortened, appearing to emerge from a vanishing point at the left-hand margin. The horizon line is even with the center of the train's wheels, so that the image of the train appears to loom above the viewer. The logo's background is the stars and stripes of an American flag converging to the same vanishing point as the train itself. The lines of the stars and stripes are absolutely straight. They are linear elements aligned perfectly with the train, connoting not a flag rippling in a breeze, but a speeding train of which the flag is a part.

The logo also includes text at the bottom and top. Under the train and overlapping part of the stylized track, the words "the 21st CENTURY EXPRESS" appear in tightly compressed red and blue letters. Above the train, and running across the uppermost margin in small white letters is the word "PRESIDENT." Immediately below, within the frame of the logo and overlapping the stars and stripes, the name "CLINTON" appears. This word is much larger than the others that appear on the logo; its size ensures that it is as visually prominent as the train itself. In fact, in its position at the top of the framed image, Clinton's name is redolent of a magazine's title banner or a corporate brand-name on a poster. The brand-name in this case, however, is the incumbent President.

The poster-like look of the "21st Century Express" logo is no coincidence. From its overall proportions, the typeface chosen for the writing, and the stylized imagery of the

²²⁵ Everything must have a logo now to ensure brand identification. That was axiomatic for the convention producers. Gary Smith, for example, rejected the first logo designed for the Democratic convention, and commissioned another from the Hollywood artist who created the look for Jurassic Park.
train and flag, the logo emulates art deco advertising posters of the 1930s. In particular, it bears a striking similarity to the classic "Nord Express" by A.M. Cassandre (Figure 8.3).

Figure 8.2: "21st Century Express" logo.
Art historian Henri Mouron’s description of Cassandre’s poster could almost describe the “21st Century Express” logo also:

"The viewpoint is level with the track (which is also the horizon and the base of the illustration). Thus the viewer looks up at the overwhelming bulk of the locomotive. This is a convenient way for the artist to express the engine’s tremendous power by amplifying its driving wheels and connecting rods. Finally, the unusual position of the vanishing point in the lower right-hand corner of the illustration—where it is easy to identify—further stresses the dramatically converging lines of perspective, from the sides of the engine to the sheaf of almost vertical telegraph wires standing out, light on dark, against the sky. This graphically constructed images thus generates its own dynamic meaning. The locomotive’s rudimentary modeling (which is merely an evocation of shading) gives it a sufficient degree of reality to sustain the illusion that the express train is plunging into bottomless space. (A.M. Cassandre 38-39)"

Figure 8.3: “Nord Express” poster by A. M. Cassandre
(© 1998 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris)
There are differences, of course. Clinton’s train does not appear as “overwhelming” as Cassandre’s, for example, because the horizon line on the “21st Century Express” logo is not as stark as that of the “Nord Express.” Also, the “21st Century Express” does not plunge into “bottomless space” like the “Nord Express,” because the perspective is reversed in the two posters. Cassandre’s train hurtles away from the viewer down towards the lower right corner of the poster; Clinton’s approaches and rises towards the upper right. To the western eye accustomed to reading left to right and top to bottom, a line drawn from lower left to upper right connotes upward movement and progress. Therefore, Clinton’s train, augmented by the sharp linearity of the stars and stripes in the background, appears to be emerging with a new sunrise, while Cassandre’s appears to be heading off into the sunset.

The “21st Century Express” logo, like the train trip itself, was designed to convey specific visual messages. A train is an archaic but evocative mode of transportation. As semiotician Marshall Blonsky explained to the Chicago Tribune: “A train is redolent with meaning and nostalgia....Ours is a culture awash in nostalgia, with a desperate attempt to appropriate a missing past, sometimes with enormous success. In this case, it’s what appears to us to be mesmerizing, the lost reality of the Truman-and-Eisenhower years” (Warren “All A-Bored”). But the “21st Century Express” not only evoked the post-World War II vision that Blonsky described. The art deco style of the logo, reminiscent of W.P.A. projects, also evoked the post-Depression vision of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Clinton’s train trip created an optimistic symbol of America’s future by using visual elements of America’s past.

Of course, the train trip producers did not rely on only symbolism and nostalgia to convey their campaign message. The symbolic power of Clinton’s train was bolstered and complemented by the very real power of Clinton’s office. It became a concrete embodiment of the Presidency. Roger Simon’s description is a case in point:
Trains are noisy, dirty, and have washrooms that were last cleaned when Ulysses S. Grant was a boy. Trains rattle, rock, roll, and sway. Their windows bear the greasy imprint of a thousand bored heads, and their seats the indentations of a thousand weary butts. Train food? Train food is to food what military music is to music.

Except when the president takes a train.

The president’s train, the *21st Century Express*, is a magnificent gleaming silver stream that is 1,330 feet long and weighs 1,339 tons. There are three 4,000-horsepower locomotives pulling 11 double-decker Superline cars and two refurbished antique cars, one used by Harry Truman and the other used by Jimmy Carter. This train is a happy train. As the reporters climb aboard in Huntington, West Virginia, they find clean, spacious cars filled with plush reclining seats that have leg and foot rests. There are electrical outlets for our laptop computers and banks of telephones so we can file our stories from the moving train. The washrooms are clean and smell of lilacs and hand lotion. The windows sparkle. (Show Time 235-236)

Simon’s description of the train is more colorful than most that appeared in print and on television, but it shares some important features. Almost all of the descriptions included a similar recitation of the train’s numbers (“1,330 feet long and weighs 1,339 tons”) and history (“used by Harry Truman and Jimmy Carter”). This was no accident. The White House press office besieged reporters with factoids of that sort. In much the same way that a Hollywood epic is puffed up by releasing the mind-boggling numbers of extras, costumes, and meals required to complete the film (Elizabeth Taylor’s classic *Cleopatra*, obviously, being the case in point for this practice), so the train trip was puffed up by the accretion of its minutiae. Quantity became a quality all its own.

Of course, the logistics behind the “21st Century Express” were monumental. Only an incumbent President backed by the resources of the White House could have shut down or re-routed shipping lines in the midwest for a week in order to accommodate a three-train entourage. And that was precisely what the Clinton-Gore campaign wanted to remind

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226 See Raby “Clinton Train,” Dahl “Clinton gets on track,” Harris “President on a Roll,” and Kasindorf “On Track to Chicago.”

227 The “21st Century Express,” the train in which Clinton actually traveled, was preceded and followed by other trains at the Secret Service’s behest. As the *Los Angeles*
American voters: Bob Dole could make speeches all he wanted; Bill Clinton made news. He was the President. "The Republicans ran a great convention," a senior member of the administration told the Washington Post: "But they did not take full advantage of the evening news. We want to use the train to make news every day -- crime on Monday, education on Tuesday, environment on Wednesday....The train's the focal point during the day, and the convention's the focal point during the night" (Balz "Democrats Stress").

And when the Democrats talked about making news, they meant it. Each day of his train trip, Clinton unveiled another set of proposals until by week's end he had announced nearly forty. Often, these were small-scale initiatives that the White House could implement through executive orders. Some had been announced before, but it did not matter. They were newsworthy by virtue of the fact that the President announced them to a horde of reporters and camera crews hungry for any morsel of anything resembling information. And it did not matter whether the reporters were on the train or in the convention hall (actually they crowded both locations), because the speakers in the United Center had been selected with each day's initiative in mind.

It was no coincidence that gun-control advocates Jim and Sarah Brady spoke on the same day that Clinton, speaking at a police academy in Columbus, Ohio, announced a ban on cop-killer bullets and an expansion of the Brady Law. Nor was it coincidental that Hillary Clinton spoke about children on the day that literacy standards were the issue, or that environmentalist Al Gore spoke after Clinton unveiled a series of "green" initiatives.

*The Times* put it: The lead train is supposed to spot danger and act as a decoy, while the train in the rear can couple to the president's train and pull it to safety in the event of a mishap" (Richter "Riding the Rails"). For more on the measures required when an incumbent President travels, see Simon Show Time 231-233 and Cramer What it Takes 4-11.

See Hunt "President Plans On-The-Train Video Show."

The Chicago Tribune called the train trip "the most effective bit of stagecraft at this convention, and while it's taking place across a great lake, it is carefully choreographed to echo the words and images resonating from the stage in Chicago. See also Lemons "Vanquishing the Ghost of '68" and Malone "Clinton trains sights on Chicago."
The overall effort, as aides explained to the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, was to make “the Democratic convention more like a running news conference than the carefully programmed ‘infomercial’ broadcast by the GOP” (Condon “And now it’s the Democrats’ turn”).

Having a “running news conference” on a rolling train proved to be a masterstroke for the Democrats. Stories about Clinton’s “21st Century Express” dominated the media. With convention business taking place on board Clinton’s train as well as in the United Center, the networks had to have reporters at both locations. The Democrats successfully played those reporters against each other during the evening news broadcasts and the convention coverage. As Thomason explained it,

> The person on the train would want the most airtime and the person in Chicago would want the most airtime, and somewhere there would be a news editor going crazy trying to make a decision. He had a star in each place. So what could he do? He had to *expand* the time of each one to satisfy them. And I figured we got at least a third more time for our story that way. (Simon *Show Time* 229)

The Democrats also picked up coverage from local media who could not get enough of Clinton’s train trip through their home turf. As the *New York Times* noted, with some amusement, one station in Columbus, Ohio, not only showed Clinton’s entire speech live, but also spent more than half of its afternoon news broadcast on follow-up coverage of the speech: and at “another television station, one reporter, in a breathless live report on Sunday night, mentioned three times in 90 seconds that she had been on the train with the President (She did not see him, though)” (Bennet “All Aboard”). The anonymous TV reporter did not need to see Clinton; she saw the train and that was enough because by then the train embodied Clinton.

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230 There was also a pragmatic reason for having the train become a “running news conference,” as White House spokesman Joe Lockhart admitted: “If we didn’t give the reporters on the train some substantive news, the networks would do a story on the extra security costs of the train trip or something like that. The train trip would have been on NBC’s ‘Fleecing of America’” (*Show Time* 233).
If the local media were caught up in the allure of the train, so were the locals themselves. The communities on the route reacted to Clinton's appearance amongst them much like Renaissance towns and villages reacted to their monarch's arrival during cross-country processionals. They made welcome signs, prepared gifts, and waited for hours just to catch a glimpse. Even the White House staff was surprised at how well everything went:

The staff has arranged to have crowds in and near the towns—virtually all crowds are "advanced" in presidential campaigns, and great effort is expended making sure people show up for speeches—but nobody expected this. Nobody expected people to stand beside the railroad tracks for mile after mile far away from the towns. Nobody expected ordinary citizens to stand at crossroads and bridge, at overpasses and tunnels, for a chance to see a silver train carrying their golden boy. (Simon Show Time 225)

But the people did stand and wait. "I've never seen a president live before. It's so close, it's hard to pass by," one West Virginian told the St. Petersburg Times at the beginning of Clinton's train trip (Dahl "Clinton gets on track"). He spoke to a crowd of 15,000 in Bowling Green, Ohio, a town historically more inclined toward Republicans (Baker "Tracks Into GOP Territory"). And as NPR's Mara Liasson observed,

"We're so thrilled. I -- my mother took me to the airport when Lyndon Johnson came to town, when he went to Martin County, Kentucky. My father's from Martin County, Kentucky, and I can remember the thrill of it all -- standing on the fence at the airport. When he waved to the crowd I was just thrilled, and I hope my children feel the same way when they see President Clinton. ("President Clinton Whistle- Stops")

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231 A few towns were rewarded for their efforts with a particularly grand entrance by Clinton and his retinue. Those towns scheduled to be the final stop of each day got to see the "21st Century Express" arrive in the majestic light before sunset that photographers call the "golden hour." This picture-perfect entrance was no accident, of course. Each evening, the train was stopped outside the arrival site until the natural light was just right.
Clinton was helped by the fact that he was on a train. Had he traveled in a highway motorcade, no one could have approached. Highways, after all, are physically separated from the surrounding community by noise-baffling walls and concrete pylons. Train tracks, though, wend their way along as part of the countryside. The “21st Century Express” had a “comfortable, intimate feel,” according to the Washington Post: “The rail line went through backyards where families had gathered and children played in plastic swimming pools” (Harris “Next Stop”). The campaign anticipated the opportunity this mode of transportation afforded. With the aid of loudspeakers built into the last train-car, Bill Clinton could—and did—carry on conversations with the people he passed: “Hi, how are you? Nice garden. I like your dog.”

The “21st Century Express” was Bill Clinton’s vehicle in two different ways. It was a literal vehicle, conveying him to Chicago. It was also a communicative vehicle, conveying his message and virtual presence. It performed that latter function remarkably well, as even the convention’s critics had to admit. Republican convention planner and Reagan image-meister Michael Deaver said the train “was a stroke of genius, a very good move on their part...[it] created news and played great on TV” (Mercer “Bridge to the Future”). New York Times columnist (and former theatre critic) Frank Rich gave a poor review to the Democratic convention overall, but acknowledged the effective central role played by Clinton’s train:

Where the G.O.P. gave viewers a slick miniseries, the Democrats offer a double feature. The train ride—more picturesque, more upbeat, and more easily packaged in eye-catching video bites than the Chicago festivities—may actually be the more widely seen and therefore more politically significant half of the bill. You have to laugh at the spectacle of 15,000 journalists spending millions to cover a convention that not only lacks any news but may in fact be a sideshow. (“New Deal Lite”)

As a communicative vehicle, the “21st Century Express” was second to none in the technology at its disposal. Its train cars had practically been gutted by the Clinton campaign and reconfigured as a state-of-the-art media facility. “It’s loaded with enough
high-tech equipment to make a Star Trek movie,” Sen. Carl Levin told the Los Angeles Times (Richter “Riding the Rails”). And all of the cutting-edge gadgetry had one end: to enable Bill Clinton to play a major role in his convention even before he got there. As Susan Page put it in the pages of USA Today: “Think Mission Impossible: A helicopter, equipped with a tracking dish that can send signals to a satellite, hovers over the train that is carrying the president across the Midwest. That’s how President Clinton will manage to be in two places at once next week” (“Clinton plans”).

Clinton’s train trip was a major aspect of the convention in Chicago. It provided a structural motif within the convention hall. Throughout each day, the convention orchestra would play a distinctive tune reminiscent of a railroad song, and it would be time for another “21st Century Express Update.” The videowall and monitors would show a special graphic: a sepia-toned map showing the day’s route in white and the train’s current location in blue.* The map would sometimes cut away to a live aerial shot of the train, live or taped footage of Clinton delivering a speech, or even a live greeting to the delegates in the hall. These periodic updates were significant. As convention producer Gary Smith told the Washington Post, the updates gave the delegates “a feeling of excitement and anticipation” (Farris “In Clinton-Gore Sequel”). In so doing, the updates became the underlying rhythm of the convention. They marked the passage of time within each session and in the convention overall. No matter how interminable a session might have been (and some of them were endless; the Democrats are not kind to their delegates), the updates were clear markers of where Clinton was and therefore where the convention was in its proceedings. They literally mapped out the convention. The train itinerary printed

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* The antique-like graphics included in an electronic display were yet another way that the convention designers conjoined apparently disparate images into synergistic complements.

** And it did not take long before all of us in the convention hall had a kind of Pavlovian response to the updates. By the second day we recognized the update music and knew to turn our attention to the monitors or videowall.
below as Figure 8.4 illustrates how much the train and its video link-ups via satellite suffused the convention schedule. Every day of the convention featured at least two stops with satellite links.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday, Aug. 25</th>
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<td>*Huntington, W. Virginia</td>
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<td>Ashland, Kentucky</td>
<td>Arlington, Ohio</td>
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<td>Chillicothe, Ohio</td>
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<td>Columbus, Ohio</td>
<td>*Toledo, Ohio</td>
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<th>Tuesday, Aug. 27</th>
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<td>Royal Oak, Michigan</td>
<td>*Michigan City, Indiana</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pontiac, Michigan</td>
<td>Chicago, Illinois (via helicopter)(^{24})</td>
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<tr>
<td>*East Lansing, Michigan</td>
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Figure 8.4: "21st Century Express" itinerary
(*—locations with video link-ups via satellite)

Clinton's physical presence outside the hall was complemented by his virtual presence within the hall. He was, literally, everywhere, as the Orange County Register was quick to point out before the convention even opened:

Long before he takes the podium Thursday night to make his case for leading the nation into the next century, Clinton will be a constant presence at the proceedings....A giant video wall at the convention will beam images of cheering crowds lining the railroad tracks and of Clinton stumping, Truman-like, from the train. With satellite technology, the president will be

\(^{24}\) Clinton's helicopter arrival in Chicago was also televised within the convention hall. No satellite was needed, of course. In-city microwave transmitters sufficed to beam the television signal from the University of Chicago baseball field where Clinton disembarked to the United Center.
able to burst into the convention for “spontaneous” screen appearances at almost any moment. (Malone “Clinton trains sights on Chicago”)\(^2\)

That Clinton’s “21st Century Express” played such a big part in the convention was, of course, completely intentional. As a senior campaign official told the \textit{Washington Post}: “the convention is going to be about Bill Clinton. Our objectives are not Democratic Party objectives. Our objectives are to talk about this president and what he’s done and where he’s going” (Balz “Democrats Stress Unity”).

\textit{Clinton’s Convention}

The gathering in Chicago was built around Clinton. Everything was planned with him in mind.\(^2\) The visual imagery, in particular, was intended to emphasize Clinton. As Dann Netter, one of the producers, noted in a letter to Don Foley: “Given the desire to make this ‘the president’s Convention,’ strong and properly placed footage of Clinton’s presidency is essential.” This footage not only appeared in the form of “21st Century Express” updates. They also appeared in virtually every convention context. Highlights from the 1993 Inaugural Gala were shown periodically throughout the convention week. Each time, the clip would include dramatic cutaway close-up shots of Clinton himself. For instance, a clip on Wednesday featuring a performance of “Amazing Grace” was particularly memorable as it showed Clinton tearing up as he sang along. And video introductions of podium speakers also regularly incorporated Clinton as well. Special Olympian Loretta Clayborne’s introduction on Wednesday, for example, included shots of her introducing Clinton at the 1995 Special Olympics games.

\(^2\) Of course, the technology came with some risks. Maintaining the feed from train to helicopter to satellite was no mean feat. Moreover, because the train trip was so visible (it was, after all, the packed with reporters and television crews all day), any glitches were especially obvious. The convention planners were under strict orders to avoid any problems. “We don’t want that to be the story, that we tried to get too fancy,” convention manager Don Foley told the \textit{Washington Post} (Balz “Democrats Stress”).

\(^2\) See Tackett “At Clinton’s show personality is all; Party relegated to a back seat.”

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Bill Clinton was the star of the show and everything revolved around him. The Ron Brown tribute video that was shown on Monday night is a case in point. Ron Brown may have been the ostensible subject of the video tribute, but Bill Clinton became both a subject of the tribute and a central participant. In an August 16 memo, Joseph Finneran, the tribute producer, notes that “The DNCC celebratory tribute to Ronald H. Brown will tell the simple and elegant story of a man with three primary passions -- family, politics, and President Clinton....it is essential that the President have a central role in telling this story” (“Taping," emphasis added).

That central role is also reflected later on in that same memo when Finneran lists the individuals whom he intends to interview for the tribute. That list includes a synopsis of “the specific contribution that we expect from each person” and the order in which each will appear on the video when it is completed. The conclusion of the memo shows how prescriptive the convention planners could be:

**President Clinton** -- Following a final personal reflection by Mrs. Brown, the President should close the film with the following:

1) A marvelous story, that clearly captures and illustrates Ron Brown’s life force. This very particular and personal memory will start to tie together the many images of the man that we have heard discussed throughout the film. To achieve the greatest sense of meaning for the film, this story should lead into:

2) A summary thought in the spirit of the thoughts below:

‘Optimism and confidence are the core aspects of Ron Brown as they are the core aspects of our country. His grand optimism is the core of everyone’s memory of him. We understand this better now, after he’s gone, than we did when he was alive.

But most surprisingly, when he was gone, when we saw a full city block of people waiting at midnight to pay tribute to him, we realized that something bigger was missing -- a piece of our nation’s character, a piece of our identity.
There was a difference with Ron, he became the embodiment of our dreams, he captured the charged image of the American ideal. He was an emblem of America.

It needs to be mentioned that the final version of the tribute video did not follow completely the plan outlined in the memo. Interestingly enough, Sen. Ted Kennedy was the final speaker in the tribute, rather than Clinton. But Kennedy’s remarks were a short coda to Clinton’s final summary thoughts which followed the model described in the memo very closely, even down to using the phrase “life force.” Compare the following with the description above:

He just kept inspiring everyone with his enthusiasm, his confidence and his belief that because we were right we would prevail. I think when we look back on his life, it will be that elemental life force, that sort of all-consuming determination he had to bring out the best in other people, to bring out the best in himself, to make something good happen, and the absolute confidence that it would occur. (128)

An Aug. 19 fax offers another illustration of the prescriptive planning that went into this video. The fax provided a “Proposed script” for the interview with Brown’s widow, complete with sample answers for her. The first set of questions and sample answers is particularly interesting in light of the earlier memo:

1. In your opinion, what were the Secretary’s greatest passions.

As I reflect upon our life together, Ron was most passionate about his family, his politics, and his President. (Finneran “Taping”)

This formulation, of course, was mentioned explicitly in the earlier memo. Incidentally, in the final version of the tribute video, Mrs. Brown’s first words were: “Ron’s passions were his family, his politics, and his President” (127). Even during a memorial to his dead friend, Clinton played a central role.

Monday’s tribute to Ron Brown offers a snapshot of Clinton’s place in the convention, but his biggest impact upon the convention’s structure came on Thursday. The Washington Post noted how different the final day of the convention was from the days
that had preceded it: “What had looked like a Hollywood set most of the week gave way to an old-fashioned convention atmosphere, festooned with American flags, balloons and banners. The cheering began with Clinton’s entrance and built throughout the speech” (Balz “Clinton Sounds”).

The Post’s description is accurate, but superficial. The “old-fashioned convention atmosphere,” was a result of more than the addition of a few flags and banners. It had been structured into the convention very deliberately in a variety of ways. When Clinton finally entered the United Center, he united the two different conventions that had been intertwined but separated for three days. In doing so, he changed the convention hall was changed by his presence. The space was reconfigured to signify that the climactic moment had arrived.

The podium offered the most obvious changes to the convention space. In particular, the large white and gold decorative seal directly in front of the lectern was altered. For the first three days, it had been the DNC seal. On Thursday, with Clinton’s arrival, that party seal was replaced with the Presidential Seal. Also the front step of the podium unit was removed and replaced with banks of lighting instruments bathing the podium in dramatic uplight. According to the designer René Lagler, this removal had been insisted upon by the White House from the beginning of the design process, so as to make the podium appear more “presidential.”

Throughout the hall the visual emphasis shifted to reflect the primacy of Bill Clinton. The video “wallpaper” on the videowall was the Clinton-Gore ‘96 logo rather

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237 The 1996 Democratic convention was not the first time that a podium decoration changed from a party logo to the Presidential Seal. The 1984 Republican convention podium had featured such a transformation. But that arrangement was far less dramatic; it was a fairly small seal that flipped around to reveal the Presidential Seal on the obverse when Reagan took the stage.

238 Personally, I did not find the lighting change all the significant. I suspect that security concerns may have played a bigger role in this design choice. With the lower set
than the DNC logo that had run on the other days. Also, transition slide shots that had hitherto featured the DNC logo against a Chicago skyline (the logo had blurry lines extending out from it to suggest energy and movement) were gone. In their place were graphics of the Clinton Gore '96 logo against a '92 convention crowd shot. This same logo (also surrounded with blurry lines) was used against a flag backrop. The word “CLINTON” was in blue; “GORE” was in red; two “96”s (one after the two names, the other much larger in the background) were white. What had been, ostensibly, the Democratic convention for three days was now, officially, Bill Clinton’s coronation. It was the kick-off to his re-election.

Conclusion

The outcomes of the 1996 conventions were never in doubt. For virtually all of 1996 both parties knew whom they would nominate for President. With the final acts of the convention performances known that far in advance, the plotting and scripting of the conventions became problematic. How could they remain interesting? As Roger Simon notes, the two parties tackled this problem in two different ways, and those differences were striking. It was like two nineteenth-century inventors, both deciding how to come up with a brighter method of illumination. The Republicans came up with a 10,000-pound candle. The Democrats came up with the lightbulb” (Show Time 228). The Republicans adopted the traditional party script, added their cameras, and broadcast the performance on GOP-TV. The Democrats took a different tack. They gave lip service to the old convention script being staged within the hall, but dedicated most of their time, effort, and money to an entirely different production: a solo roadshow starring Bill Clinton as the President of the United States.

of stairs unavailable, anyone up on the podium was even further removed from any unwelcome trespasser from the floor.
It was a role he had played four years previously, but the 1996 revival had some significantly different twists. In 1992, the convention Clinton had been inspired by John F. Kennedy. In a kind of Camelot redux, Clinton was presented as the family man from a new political generation. He was youth and change challenging the status quo. Like Kennedy, Clinton broke with tradition and appeared in his convention hall after officially winning the nomination during the Wednesday night roll call vote. The Kennedy link between past and present was sealed with a handshake on the final night of the 1992 convention, when archival footage of Clinton's boyhood meeting with Kennedy at the White House capped off the biography movie "The Man From Hope."

The 1996 convention Clinton was modeled on other Democratic Presidents, however. Significantly, these were incumbents, not challengers. Clinton's train trip, for example, was in the mold of Truman's barnstorming campaign. But Clinton was presented primarily along the lines of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the last Democrat to be elected President twice. Allusions to FDR were almost constant. Periodically throughout the convention, much like the "21st Century Express" updates, video segments labeled "FDR's Vision of America" were broadcast on the videowall. These consisted of newsreel footage like the "Fala" or the "New Deal" speeches. Of course, the most surreal of these FDR moments came when he appeared in person on the convention stage, courtesy of an actor in costume. Odder still, he did not perform an historical speech, but spoke in the present tense: "The last time I was in Chicago for a Democratic Convention was 1932, and I promised a new deal for the American people. When I look around today, I would never have imagined the deal was going to be this good" (225).

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239 See Doyle "Clinton Convention Train" and Raby "Clinton Train."

240 The actor's costume, incidentally, did not include a wheelchair. This FDR walked with the aid of a cane. He did have a cigarette-holder clenched in his teeth, however. A few personal details were left intact.

241 Of course, the most bizarre part of the faux FDR speech was his revelation, on behalf of "Eleanor and Fala and myself, we shall be watching. We have C-SPAN" (226).
The FDR parallels did not end with speeches and tributes to the former President. Clinton's own convention persona was crafted to emulate. Clinton, too, was presented as a President so busy with the duties of his office as to be removed even from his own family. Clinton journeyed to Chicago apart from his family (although, admittedly, his daughter Chelsea traveled along for the first day of the train trip). On Wednesday night, at the moment Clinton went "over the top" during the roll call vote of the states, he was also alone. In 1992, the roll call vote had been an exuberant celebration featuring the videowall spectacle of Clinton and his family enjoying the moment together and walking a few blocks to the convention hall. He was the challenger, sharing the excitement with his family and friends.

1996, however was an incumbent's convention. The videowall showed Clinton alone in his room. The image conveyed was of a man above the fray, graciously allowing his family, his running mate, and his party to enjoy his moment for him. He could afford to let them have their fun because he was the President of the United States, set apart from the rest of the world by virtue of his position. He had won his party's nomination a second time without even formally announcing that he would run again. And with the help of some careful convention structuring, he was positioned to remain in the White House.
CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation I have tried to demonstrate that political conventions are the latest version of an old genre of theatrical performances designed to buttress political power. Like other genres of performance, political conventions utilize specific codes for theatrical effect. In previous chapters I have examined four of these codes separately, showing how each code offers a different perspective on how a convention operates as a performance. To conclude this work, I will bring all four of these perspectives to bear on the performances of Bob Dole and Bill Clinton as each delivered his acceptance speech. In doing so, I hope to demonstrate the potential that a theatre-based critique can offer.

Televisually, the acceptance speech performances were very similar. Both speeches were preceded by highly-produced biographical movies. While both addresses were long by television standards (54 minutes for Dole and 67 minutes for Clinton), the rhetoric of each followed the televisual mode described by Jamieson. Sentences tended to be short and visual. Clinton’s speech was more effective televisually than Dole’s, however, because it was more consistent. Dole’s speech sounded like the patchwork amalgam that it was. Elegiac descriptions from Mark Helprin’s original draft were intercut with workmanlike rhetoric needed to patch a political hole. And none of it seemed to ring true to Dole’s

\footnote{The two most jarring of these patches were Dole’s attacks on teachers unions ("If education were a war you would be losing it"), and the United Nations ("And when I am President, every man and woman in our armed forces will know the President is Commander in Chief, not Boutros Boutros-Ghali or any other U.N. Secretary General").}
own natural speech patterns. Clinton’s speech, by contrast, was built along consistent nuggets. The speech was constructed in such a way that soundbite segments could be pulled out and turned into campaign commercials and issues videos. This was a calculated move, based upon extensive polling, focus groups, and pre-convention test-runs. As NBC’s White House correspondent Brian Williams noted after Clinton’s speech,

> A lot of expressions in this speech were test-driven on the train ride here. The part about Special Forces in Fort Bragg was delivered about three times on the way to Chicago—delivered to huge applause in this gathering tonight. A lot of recycled material from stump speeches tonight, everything that has gone over well to sample audiences over the past couple of months we heard here tonight.

It is a measure of both Clinton’s skills as a performer and his familiarity with his material that his speech was as fluid and unified as it eventually was. Unlike Dole, Clinton was able to stitch together the different elements and make them his own. As Clinton adviser Harold Ickes said of his boss: “He’s not a great speaker. And you can’t find a memorable line in his speeches. But there is a plainness of speaking that is hard to describe. You come away thinking you’ve understood what the president has said, and you think he has spoken to you personally” (Simon Show Time 245).

The mimetic code of the two speeches differed. While both Dole and Clinton performed the Presidency throughout their speeches, their conceptions of that role were very different. Dole presented himself as an emissary from the past, a war hero from another generation. Dole’s vision of the American Presidency was that of the stern father figure who would “restore the American Dream.” An example from early in the speech illustrates this point:

> Age has its advantages. Let me be the bridge to an America that only the unknowing call myth. Let me be the bridge to a time of tranquility, faith, and confidence in action. And to those who say it was never so, that America’s not been better, I say you’re wrong. And I know because I was there and I have seen it and I remember. (606)
Dole’s speech became a lecture to a recalcitrant nation: “It is demeaning to the nation that within the Clinton administration a core of the elite who never grew up, never did anything real, never sacrificed, never suffered, and never learned, should have the power to fund with your earnings their dubious and self-serving schemes” (608).  

Clinton, by contrast, positioned his vision of the Presidency towards the future. He and his advisers had realized that Dole’s conjuration of the past was out of step with the sentiments of 1996 voters. As a result, Clinton’s speech was a continuous evocation of the future. The most obvious example of this was the phrase “building a bridge to the 21st century.” Repeated in some form seventeen times throughout the speech, the phrase linked every initiative and every policy statement in Clinton’s speech. There was nothing in Clinton’s presidency that he did not make part of his rhetorical journey into the future. And this was a journey he invited the rest of America to share with him. Where President Dole was the numinous leader elevated above the common throng by virtue of his age, experience, and war-time suffering, President Clinton was the familial leader who was “one of us.”

Clinton who captured the music of his time. Dole by contrast seemed unplugged, an artifact from another era in a nation whose statistically average citizen was a woman in her middle 30s. He promised a return to a golden age that most of America knew, if at all, from K-Tel nostalgia albums and Norman Rockwell paintings....For a newer, younger America, Simon Rosenberg of the centrist New Democrat Network said, “Bob Dole was always a black-and-white movie in a color age.” (Thomas “Victory March” 126-7)

The spectacular aspect of Dole’s speech was diminished by his environment. The low ceiling of the San Diego Convention Center limited the effect of the traditional balloon

243 Unfortunately, Dole’s lecture became a “study in paradox,” according to Time magazine. Dole began by telling voters that they had been insulted four years previously when the Clinton campaign had claimed that “it is the economy, stupid,” as if material wealth was the only thing that mattered. “But by Verse 43, Dole was putting money on the table himself. If necessary, this father will pay his children to be good. And if necessary, he will risk using his grandchildren’s money to do it” (Gibbs and Duffy “Spoonful”).

244 See Bailey Humbuggery 83-99 for more on the numinous and familial styles.
While the moving spotlights, confetti, balloons, and artificial fireworks display projected on the back wall of the podium set were spectacular, they couldn’t compete with the 13-minute long balloon-and-confetti drop the Democrats enjoyed in Chicago. As CBS’s Bob Schieffer reported, “It is one of the most spectacular balloon drops, I must say, Dan, that I’ve ever seen. There are literally thousands of balloons. [In point of fact, there were 150,000 balloons.] And they have such a long distance to drop is really what makes it so spectacular.” The 100-ft ceiling of the United Center provided a vast open expanse that was filled with a corruscating curtain of red, white, and blue. The height also enabled the television cameras to pan across the whole hall of delegates in a way they could not in San Diego.

Finally, the structural nature of Dole’s address could not meet Clinton’s. The fragmented rhetoric meant that there was little if any dramatic arc to his speech. The flow and structure that existed, no doubt, in Helprin’s original draft was lost by the time the Dole team finished editing and adding. Worse, the speech failed to adequately sum up and cap Dole’s convention. Or, rather, it summed up the convention all too well. The fragmented nature of the speech, its hodge-podge of tones and arguments, was actually in keeping with a convention that was itself a hodge-podge of campaign messages. The Dole campaign never found the “silver bullet” for their campaign message and the convention reflected that. The best illustration of this incoherence was probably the campaign music that played immediately after Dole’s address. Country music star Travis Tritt began by singing “Sign of the Time,” a song that might have been the musical version of Carter’s

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245 The sheer spectacle of the Democrats’ balloon drop was aided by the fact that it included two days’ worth of stuff. Original plans had called for a thousand pounds of mylar confetti to drop on Wednesday night. Those plans, however, were scotched by the Chicago fire marshal (apparently at the behest of Mayor Daley who wished to make a political point, see Sabato “Conventions” 110-111). As a result, Thursday night became doubly spectacular. The Wednesday night confetti became part of the Thursday night balloon drop.
“malaise” speech. Immediately after, the band played an upbeat jazz number followed by a Sousa march and a medley of patriotic songs. There was nothing to unify the music.

Clinton’s speech, by contrast, was structured to be part and parcel of his convention. It was not a rhetorical gem of a speech, but it fulfilled the small goals that the Democrats had set for themselves. The “bridge to the 21st century” theme, for instance, was utterly consonant with the train journey motif that had characterized the rest of the four days. Clinton’s speech also provided an appropriate cap for the convention as a whole. In 1992, Clinton had constructed his acceptance speech around his personal journey from his birthplace of Hope, Arkansas. That speech had concluded: “I end tonight where it all began for me: I still believe in a place called Hope.” In 1996, Clinton returned to his earlier speech and updated it: “My fellow Americans, after these four good, hard years, I still believe in a place called Hope, a place called America” (341). That final line, echoing Clinton’s 1992 convention address, was a reminder of how far Clinton and the country had traveled during the four years of his presidency.

The music following the speech was similarly structured to suit the moment. Instead of a patchwork of musical styles, the Democrats opted to follow the pattern they had established in 1992. They found a single piece of music that suited their communicative needs and kept repeating it. In 1992, the “theme song” of the convention finale was Fleetwood Mac’s “Don’t Stop (Thinking About Tomorrow);” in 1996, it was Chicago’s “Only the Beginning,” a tune that both continued the 21st century theme and offered a tribute to the convention home city. Of course, to be strictly accurate, the entire song did not become the theme music of that moment. Rather, it was the chorus of “Only the Beginning.” That refrain was repeated over and over again as the balloons and confetti...

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246 Incidentally, one indication of how much the campaign liked that phrase is the fact that the biography film shown immediately before the speech ended with Clinton delivering virtually the same line in voiceover: “I still believe in the promise of tomorrow. And I still believe in a place called America” (332).
continued to fall and the podium became packed with Democratic leaders jockeying for the limelight.

As performances, the two conventions were barometers of the campaigns run by each party. Dole failed to capitalize on his convention. The issues trumpeted in San Diego never materialized into a coherent campaign message. The 15% tax cut and supply-side economic plan was met with skepticism by the voters. The moral failings of Clinton were overlooked or ignored. And the core theme in San Diego, “Restoring the American Dream,” became a campaign footnote, rather than the central focus. Clinton’s convention, by contrast, reflected the same attention to the details of theatrical performance that marked his campaign throughout 1996 (and, arguably, throughout his Presidency). His campaign staff had scripted a re-election strategy in 1995. The 1996 Democratic convention became another stage in that strategy; it was a performance space designed to showcase Bill Clinton as the star of a production known as the Presidency.

During the 1996 conventions I was fortunate enough to have been granted media credentials. These gave me access not only to the convention hall, but also to the media work areas. I had the opportunity to eat and talk with a number of print and television journalists about their experiences at the convention. And, invariably, the subject of my own research would come up. I was not a journalist, after all; what was I doing in San Diego and Chicago? My explanation often elicited a response like “Oh, of course the conventions are theatre. Bad theatre.” Statements like this were usually accompanied by a knowing chuckle or a dismissive nod; it was not hard to tell the speaker’s opinion of the conventions he or she was covering.

The cynicism I encountered first-hand amongst convention reporters was echoed in press coverage. Before the conventions even opened, historian Michael Beschloss opined that “the conventions promise...to win awards for artificiality” (“Let’s Have Conventions With Cliffhangers”). Newsweek announced that 1996 “was the year that both parties made
the final leap into Oprahland, where the convention was drained of conflict and content and transformed into talk TV" (Thomas “Victory March” 98). And Roll Call complained that, “this year politics has crossed the line of the absurd”:

Forget all that talk during the 1960s and 1970s about how candidates were packaged by media consultants. That was all minor league stuff that relied on television ads with high production values. We are now in a more advanced “Image Age,” where candidates and political parties orchestrate events and mold their position and rhetoric to define and redefine themselves. (Rothenberg “Presidential Conventions”)

Ironically, though, the authors of these attacks refused to admit to their own cynicism. Rather, in a tone of moral indignation, the convention critics would fault the Republican and Democratic parties. On Tuesday night of the Republican convention, for instance, NBC anchor Tom Brokaw seemed to take it as a personal affront that his cameras were not permitted “to show you the command center, but, of course, this has been carefully orchestrated as well.” Veteran political reporter Elizabeth Drew was in particularly high dudgeon in her book Whatever it Takes:

Both parties were playing cynical games with what have been our few common institutions, and destroying them. In their cynicism they were breeding more cynicism by putting on a “show” and masking reality. How could the public not conclude that politics is phony? (146-147).

What is evident from all of these example is that the anti-theatrical prejudice described by Jonas Barish in his book of the same title is still alive and well. The conventions were bad because they were “putting on a ‘show.’” Drew’s use of quotation marks around “show” are particularly telling. The term seems so distasteful to her that it has to be quarantined from the rest of the sentence. The medical analogy is appropriate because Drew describes conventions as if they were viruses infecting the body politic: they

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247 Of course, “show” was only one of many words from the theatrical lexicon that were used as negative descriptors. There was no more damning attack than to say that conventions were “scripted,” “choreographed,” or (shudder) “staged.” As Barish notes in the introduction to The Anti-theatrical Prejudice: “terms borrowed from the theater—theatrical, operatic, melodramatic, stagey, etc.—tend to be hostile or belittling” (1).
were "masking reality. How could the public not conclude that politics is phony?" Drew's implication is that if the public were to draw such conclusions, the roots of our democracy would crumble. Drew would, apparently, join Plato in throwing those who would "mask reality" out of the Republic. 248

Not surprisingly, the political parties held a different opinion as to the value of what they were doing. They may have waged an electoral war against each other, but they were united behind the notion that their conventions were communication, pure and simple. 249 Nowhere was this more true than with the Hollywood professionals hired to design and produce the conventions. As Harry Thomason told Roger Simon: "TV shows and movies and political events are all the same. They are all designed to move people. People in Washington try to make politics some sort of deep secret, like a Masonic handshake. It's not" (Show Time 237).

I can attest to the attitudes of the behind-the-scenes professionals. On the whole, the people I interviewed about their work were a surprisingly uncynical lot. Some who had partisan leanings were downright idealistic. The woman who produced GOP-TV for the Republican convention, for example, was proud to use her talents to communicate her party's message. Similarly, the Democrats' videowall producer was delighted to do the same for his party. The conventions were fortunate instances when professional expertise and personal politics could co-exist.

Regardless of their own levels of commitment to the political aims of the conventions, though, the professionals all dismissed the criticism that their work made the conventions less significant. As Republican convention producer David Nash told me, his

248 See Barish 5-37 for an examination of the "Platonic Foundation" of the anti-theatrical prejudice.

249 Elizabeth Drew discovered this for herself, and found the idea appalling: "A leading Democratic politician said to me, 'The Republicans put on a show in San Diego, so we're putting on a show.' To him, the issue was which was the better show" (Whatever it Takes 146).
job was to run as smooth a ship as possible. He didn’t write the speeches but offered ways to make them communicate better and be more entertaining. And criticizing conventions for taking such things into account is short-sighted. Gary Smith, Nash’s Democratic convention counterpart made a similar observation to the Los Angeles Times:

> Everything we do is a TV special. But this is a genuine event, not just a show, because what happens here has significance. You’re walking a line between show business and history, and you can’t cross over that line. Obviously we want to appeal to a prime-time market. But when the media complain that we’re producing an infomercial, I’m not sure there’s anything wrong with that. I think the Democrats and Republicans may even have a responsibility to do an infomercial, to tell the American people what their policies are and what their future actions are going to be. (Lamb “Producer Puts Glitz”)

The 1996 conventions were not the most profound theatrical performances. The messages they conveyed were often trite and oversentimental. Instead of a high-minded political debate about the future of the United States, the conventions were feel-good representations of an impossible idealized America. The conventions offered little insight into the human condition. They will never be included in the list of canonical theatre works, their scripts will probably not appear in any future anthology, and they will certainly never be revived. But despite all these faults, the 1996 conventions are worth examining because they, like countless other theatrical productions throughout history, encapsulate and mirror the society of their time. We can catch a glimpse of Charles I’s England by examining his court masques. And we can catch a glimpse of Bob Dole’s and Bill Clinton’s Americas by examining their conventions.
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APPENDIX A
KEY 1996 CONVENTION PERSONNEL

Republican National Committee

Haley Barbour -- Chairman
Michael W. Grebe -- Chairman, Comm.
on Arrangements


William I. Greener III -- Convention
Manager
Maxene Femstrom -- Deputy Con. Mgr.
Richard Roll -- Asst. Con. Mgr. for
Critical Path
James ("Chip") DiPaula -- Asst. Con.
Mgr. for Logistics & Operation
Michael Hook -- Asst. Con. Mgr. for
Political & Public Liaison
Patrick Garahan -- Asst. Con. Mgr. and
Chief Administrative Officer
William Buccella -- Asst. Con. Mgr. and
Chief Legal Counsel
Michael Deaver -- Convention Adviser

Democratic National Committee

Donald L. Fowler -- National Chairman
Christopher Dodd -- General Chairman


Debra DeLee -- CEO
Janet Green -- Deputy CEO
Alfonso McMillan -- Dep. CEO/Counsel
Don Foley -- Convention Manager
Michael Lufrano -- Con. Hall Manager
Mark Bilsky -- Director, Con. Planning
Brad Kiley -- Director, Administration
Brad Marshall -- CFO

Production

David Nash -- Producer
Imero Fiorentino -- Designer

Campaign

Paul Manafort -- Convention Manager
Rick Davis -- Deputy Convention Mgr.
Tom Korologos -- Senior Convention
Adviser

Production

Gary Smith -- Producer
Rene Lagler -- Designer
Bob Dickinson -- Lighting Designer
Ricky Kirshner -- Director
Dann Netter -- Segment Producer
Joseph Finneran -- Videowall Producer

Campaign

Harold Ickes -- White House liaison
Harry Thomason -- Events Liaison
Producer
APPENDIX B

1996 REPUBLICAN CONVENTION PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday, August 12</th>
<th>Tuesday, August 13</th>
<th>Wednesday, August 14</th>
<th>Thursday, August 15</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Session 1 (10:00-1:00 PDT)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Session 3 (5:00-8:00 PDT)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Session 4 (5:00-8:00 PDT)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Session 5 (5:00-8:00 PDT)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Opening business</td>
<td>&quot;Listening to America&quot; Issue Segments</td>
<td>Issue Segments</td>
<td>Issue Segments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Election of committees</td>
<td>&quot;The Clinton Record&quot; Issue Segments</td>
<td>*Elizabeth Dole</td>
<td>*Jack Kemp (Vice-Presidential Nominee Acceptance Speech)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Session 2 (5:00-8:00 PDT)</strong></td>
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<td>Roll Call of the States</td>
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<tr>
<td>Committee Reports</td>
<td>Welcoming Remarks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Issue Segments</td>
<td>*Pres. Gerald Ford</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Pres. George Bush</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tribute to Pres. Reagan</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Nancy Reagan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*Gen. Colin Powell</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX C

1996 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS
## APPENDIX C: 1996 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS
(* FEATURED PRIME TIME SPEAKERS*)

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<th>Wednesday, August 28</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Aft. Session <em>(4:00-7:00 CDT)</em></td>
<td>Aft. Session <em>(4:00-7:00 CDT)</em></td>
<td>Aft. Session <em>(4:00-7:00 CDT)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Committee Reports</td>
<td>Platform Presentations</td>
<td>Democratic Candidates’ Remarks</td>
<td>Democratic Women of the House</td>
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<td><strong>Eve. Session (7:00-9:00 CDT)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Eve. Session (7:00-9:00 CDT)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Eve. Session (7:00-9:09 CDT)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Eve. Session (7:00-9:00 CDT)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ron Brown Tribute</td>
<td>Farewell to Democratic Friends</td>
<td>Issue Segments</td>
<td>Sen. Ted Kennedy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mario Cuomo</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>(Nomination of Al Gore)</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Families First Agenda” Presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Night Session (9:00-10:00 CDT)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Night Session (9:00-10:00 CDT)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Night Session (9:00-10:00 CDT)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Night Session (9:00-10:00 CDT)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>*Sarah and Jim Brady</td>
<td>*Hillary Rodham Clinton</td>
<td>*Vice-Pres. Al Gore</td>
<td>*Pres. Bill Clinton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Christopher Reeve</td>
<td>*Gov. Evan Bayh (Keynote Speaker)</td>
<td>Sen. Christopher Dodd <em>(Nomination of Bill Clinton)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Roll Call of the States</td>
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APPENDIX D

1996 REPUBLICAN CONVENTION OFFICIAL PROGRAM

1996 REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION
August 12-15 • San Diego, California
Official Program

Introduction

The 1996 Republican National Convention will make political history with a bold effort to reach out to Convention delegates and guests and to the American people in a unique conversation about the issues and ideas that will determine how the American people are governed, how much they pay to be governed, and who is best equipped to lead them into the next century.

For nearly a year, we have been listening to America in order to assemble a Convention program that includes the best ideas about the important issues of our day. We have listened. We have learned. And, we have thought long and hard about the best way to present our program and embrace the views and experiences of the people beyond our nation's capitol — Main Street Americans.

Program segments are fast-paced, brief, to the point and designed to entertain, inform and challenge those attending the Convention — and the tens of millions of viewers who will be joining worldwide by print media, television, radio, and the Internet. Dozens of Main Street Americans will be playing a significant role in our convention program, either in person, via satellite hookup or videotape, as the convention launches Bob Dole on his path to becoming the next President of the United States.
### 1996 REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION

**Temporary Officers and**

**Temporary Convention Committee Chairs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>State</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Permanent Chair</strong></td>
<td>Newt Gingrich, GA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Temporary Chairmen and</strong></td>
<td>George W. Bush, TX</td>
<td>TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deputy Permanent Chairmen</strong></td>
<td>Christine Todd Whitman, NJ</td>
<td>NJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Keynote Speaker</strong></td>
<td>Susan Molinari, NY</td>
<td>NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Secretary</strong></td>
<td>Kay Cole James, VA</td>
<td>VA</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Secretary</strong></td>
<td>Julie Finley, DC</td>
<td>DC</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentarian</strong></td>
<td>Gerald Solomon, NY</td>
<td>NY</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Parliamentarian</strong></td>
<td>Don Wolfensberger, IL</td>
<td>IL</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Chief Sergeant-at-Arms</strong></td>
<td>Jo McKenzie, CT</td>
<td>CT</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Deputy Chief Sergeant-at-Arms</strong></td>
<td>Lynn Windel, OK</td>
<td>OK</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms</strong></td>
<td>Laurie Michel, NJ</td>
<td>NJ</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms</strong></td>
<td>Mary Alice Lair, KS</td>
<td>KS</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Chief Reading Clerk</strong></td>
<td>Jack Ranson, KS</td>
<td>KS</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Chief Page</strong></td>
<td>Jeannie Rhoads, CA</td>
<td>CA</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tally Clerks</strong></td>
<td>Michele Davis, OR</td>
<td>OR</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Credentials Committee Chair</strong></td>
<td>Blake Hall, ID</td>
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<td><strong>Permanent Organization</strong></td>
<td>Mary Ann Baron, KY</td>
<td>KY</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Committee Chair</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Rules and Order of Business</strong></td>
<td>Spencer Abraham, MI</td>
<td>MI</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Committee Chair</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resolutions Committee Chair</strong></td>
<td>Henry Hyde, IL</td>
<td>IL</td>
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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Presenter/Officer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convention Called to Order</td>
<td>The Honorable Haley Barbour</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chairman, Republican National Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation of Colors</td>
<td>Joint Armed Services Color Guard of San Diego</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pledge of Allegiance</td>
<td>Mary Eckert Columbus, OH</td>
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<tr>
<td>The National Anthem</td>
<td>Quinn Hyrup, Summer Mouland and Kristy Kimberlin Colorado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invocation</td>
<td>Dr. Allen Kolkman, Pastor, Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church of San Diego</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call to the Convention</td>
<td>Nelda Barton Collings</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Secretary, Republican National Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Announcement of Temporary Rules</td>
<td>Michael W. Grebe, Chairman, Committee on Arrangements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election of Temporary Officers</td>
<td>The Honorable David Dreier, U.S. House of Representatives, CA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Committee Meeting Notices</td>
<td>Gerry Parsky, Chairman, San Diego Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>Welcome</td>
<td>The Honorable Haley Barbour, Chairman, Republican National Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greetings on Behalf of California</td>
<td>The Honorable Susan Golding, Mayor of San Diego</td>
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<tr>
<td>Republican Congressional Delegation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greetings</td>
<td>The Honorable Haley Barbour, Chairman, Republican National Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution of Appreciation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acceptance of Resolution of Appreciation</td>
<td>The Honorable Susan Golding, Mayor of San Diego</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of Convention Officials</td>
<td>The Honorable Haley Barbour, Chairman, Republican National Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgment</td>
<td>William L. Greener III, Convention Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Tributes</td>
<td>The Honorable Haley Barbour, Chairman, Republican National Committee</td>
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</table>
Republican Congressional Candidate Presentations
The Honorable William Paxon
Chairman, National Republican Congressional Committee
Remarks
Marilyn Thayer President, National Federation of Republican Women
Remarks
Dr. Ted Perros Chairman, National Republican Heritage Groups Council
Remarks
The Honorable Rebecca Jackson
Chairman, National Association of Republican County Officials
Remarks
Antonio Monroig Chairman, Republican National Hispanic Assembly
Remarks
Joseph Galli Chairman, College Republican National Committee
Republican Senatorial Candidate Presentations
The Honorable Alfonse D'Amato
Chairman, National Republican Senatorial Committee
Remarks
The Honorable Hal Daub
President, Republican Mayors and Local Officials
Remarks
Larry Kidwell Chairman, Young Republican National Federation
Remarks
Barbara Hayward Chairman, Republicans Abroad International
Republican Gubernatorial Candidate Presentations
The Honorable John Engler
Chairman, Republican Governors Association
Reports of the Committees on Credentials, Permanent Organization, Rules and Order of Business, and Resolutions
Congressional and Senatorial Candidate Presentations
Benediction
John Hanford III Executive Director, International Freedom Foundation, NC

Recess until 5:00 p.m. (PDT)
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<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Speaker/Group</th>
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<tr>
<td>Convention Called to Order</td>
<td>The Honorable Haley Barbour</td>
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<td>Chairman, Republican National Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation of Colors</td>
<td>San Diego Joint Scouting Color Guard</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pledge of Allegiance</td>
<td>Orian Box, Southern Ute Indian Tribe</td>
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<tr>
<td>The National Anthem</td>
<td>George Wesley, Jr., Oklahoma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invocation</td>
<td>Bishop Dayne Gardner, Church of Jesus, Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Vista, CA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Remarks</td>
<td>The Honorable Haley Barbour</td>
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<td>Chairman, Republican National Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Remarks</td>
<td>Evelyn W. McPhail, Co-Chairman, Republican National Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome</td>
<td>Jack Ford, Chairman, San Diego Host Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Republican Congressional Committee</td>
<td>The Honorable William Paxon</td>
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<td>Chairman, National Republican Congressional Committee</td>
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<td>National Republican Senatorial Committee</td>
<td>The Honorable Alfonse D'Amato</td>
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<td>Chairman, National Republican Senatorial Committee</td>
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<td>Republican Governors Association Report</td>
<td>The Honorable John Engler, Chairman, Republican Governors Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>Welcoming Remarks and Introductions</td>
<td>The Honorable George W. Bush</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Governor of Texas</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Honorable Christine Todd Whitman, Governor of New Jersey</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Meet Your Delegates&quot;</td>
<td>Mary Fisher, New York</td>
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<tr>
<td>Segment on Involvement</td>
<td>Main Street American</td>
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</table>
| Segment on Anti-Drug Efforts | The Honorable George Voinovich  
Governor of Ohio |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Segment on Youth and Dreams for the Future | The Honorable Rob Portman  
U.S. House of Representatives, OH |
| Segment of Community Involvement and Self-Reliance | Main Street Americans |
| Segment on Crime | Susan Golding Mayor of San Diego  
Main Street Americans |
| “Meet Your Delegates” | Main Street Americans |
| Segment on Honor and Commitment | The Honorable John McCain  
United States Senator, AZ |
| Entertainment | Capt. Scott O’Grady Salt City, UT |
| Remarks | The Winans |
| Remarks | The Honorable Haley Barbour  
Chairman, Republican National Committee |
| Remarks | The Honorable George W. Bush  
Governor of Texas |
| Segment on Community Involvement/Literacy | Laura Bush |
| Remarks | President Gerald R. Ford |
| Remarks | President George Bush |
| Remarks | Nancy Reagan |
| Remarks | General Colin L. Powell (USA, Ret.) |
| Benediction | Archebmandite Meletios Webber  
San Francisco, CA |

*Adjournment until 5:00 p.m. (PDT) Tuesday, August 13, 1996*
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>The Honorable George W. Bush (Deputy Permanent Chairman)</td>
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<td>Presentation of Colors</td>
<td>Veterans Organizations Color Guard</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pledge of Allegiance</td>
<td>Nate Horn, San Diego, CA</td>
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<tr>
<td>The National Anthem</td>
<td>Patty Cabrera, Riverside, CA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invocation</td>
<td>Father Arthur Holquin, Orange County, CA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Remarks</td>
<td>The Honorable George W. Bush (Deputy Permanent Chairman)</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Listening to America on Small Business&quot;</td>
<td>The Honorable Jim Edgar, Governor of Illinois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Listening to America on Health Care&quot;</td>
<td>The Honorable Bill Frist, United States Senator, TN</td>
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<td>&quot;Listening to America on Welfare&quot;</td>
<td>The Honorable Tommy Thompson, Governor of Wisconsin</td>
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<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>Patty Cabrera, Riverside, CA</td>
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<td>&quot;Listening to America on Crime&quot;</td>
<td>The Honorable Tom Ridge, Governor of Pennsylvania</td>
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<td>&quot;Listening to America on Education&quot;</td>
<td>The Honorable John Engler, Governor of Michigan</td>
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<td>Main Street Americans</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Honorable Deborah Pryce, United States House of Representatives, OH</td>
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<td>Main Street Americans</td>
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| Remarks | The Honorable Newt Gingrich  
Permanent Chairman |
| Remarks | The Honorable Christine Todd Whitman  
Deputy Permanent Chairman |
| The Clinton Record | The Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchison  
United States Senator, TX |
| • on Welfare Reform | The Honorable J.C. Watts  
U.S. House of Representatives, OK |
| • on Taxes and Small Business | Main Street American (via satellite) |
| • on Balancing the Budget | The Honorable John Rowland  
Governor of Connecticut |
| Keynote Address | Main Street American |
| Benediction | The Honorable Susan Molinari  
U.S. House of Representatives, NY |
| Rabbi Daniel Lapin | Mercer Island, WA |

Adjournment until 5:00 p.m. (PDT) Wednesday, August 14, 1996
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<td>The Honorable George W. Bush</td>
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<td>Deputy Permanent Chairman</td>
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<td>Presentation of Colors</td>
<td>Tenth Mountain Division Veterans</td>
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<td>Color Guard New Hampshire</td>
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<td>Pledge of Allegiance</td>
<td>Dev Jennings Tenth Mountain Division, New Hampshire</td>
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<td>The National Anthem</td>
<td>Robbie Britt California</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invocation</td>
<td>Beverly and Mickey Kalman, Rescue Mission, Oklahoma City, OK</td>
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<tr>
<td>Remarks</td>
<td>The Honorable George W. Bush</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deputy Permanent Chairman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Segment on the Common Sense Republican Congress</td>
<td>The Honorable George Radanovich</td>
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<tr>
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<td>U.S. House of Representatives, CA</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Honorable Sue Myrick, U.S. House of Representatives, NC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Segment on Party Switchers</td>
<td>The Honorable Ben Nighthorse Campbell, United States Senator, CO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Union Members’ Perspective</td>
<td>Chris DePino, Connecticut</td>
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<tr>
<td>Segment on Government Waste</td>
<td>The Honorable Matt Fong, California State Treasurer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Segment on the Dole Economic Agenda</td>
<td>The Honorable Carroll Campbell, Former Governor of South Carolina</td>
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<td>Main Street Americans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Segment on Immigration</td>
<td>The Honorable Carole Keeton Rylander, Texas Railroad Commissioner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salute to Olympians</td>
<td>The Vocal Majority</td>
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<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>Kim Alexis, California</td>
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<tr>
<td>Segment on Strong Families/Values</td>
<td>The Honorable Steve Largent, U.S. Representative, OK</td>
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Segment on Strong Families/Values
(Continued)

Segment on Foreign Affairs/
National Security

Segment on Bob Dole

Nomination of the Candidate
for President of the United States

Seconding for Presidential
Nomination

Roll Call of the States

Announcement of Presidential Nominee

Nomination of the Candidate
for Vice President of the United States

Announcement of Vice Presidential Nominee

Benediction

Vice President Dan Quayle

Main Street Americans

The Honorable George W. Bush
Governor of Texas

Main Street Americans

The Honorable Jeannie Kirkpatrick

The Honorable James A. Baker III

The Honorable Nancy Kassebaum
United States Senator, KS

Main Street Americans

The Honorable Fred Thompson
United States Senator, TN

Robin Dole

The Honorable Elizabeth Dole

The Honorable Kay Cole James
Secretary of the Convention, VA

Julie Finley Assistant Secretary of the Convention, DC

Reverend Jerry Falwell
Lynchburg, VA

Adjournment until 5:00 p.m. (PDT) Thursday, August 15, 1996
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<th>Speaker/Chairman</th>
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<tr>
<td>Convention Called to Order</td>
<td>The Honorable George W. Bush</td>
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<td>Deputy Permanent Chairman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation of Colors</td>
<td>Future Farmers of America/4-H</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Color Guard San Diego, CA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pledge of Allegiance</td>
<td>Clayton Turner Fresno, CA</td>
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<tr>
<td>The National Anthem</td>
<td>Travis Tritt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invocation</td>
<td>Bishop Robert Bross San Diego, CA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Remarks</td>
<td>The Honorable George W. Bush and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Honorable Christine Todd Whitman</td>
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<td>Deputy Permanent Chairmen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Segment on Women and Health Care</td>
<td>The Honorable Nancy Johnson</td>
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<td>U.S. House of Representatives, CT</td>
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<td>Main Street Americans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Segment on 10th Amendment</td>
<td>The Honorable Steve Goldsmith</td>
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<td>Mayor of Indianapolis</td>
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<td>The Honorable Mike Leavitt</td>
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<td>Governor of Utah</td>
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<tr>
<td>Segment on the Dole Economic Agenda</td>
<td>The Honorable Steve Merrill</td>
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<td>Governor of New Hampshire</td>
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<td>Main Street Americans</td>
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<td>Remarks</td>
<td>The Honorable Trent Lott</td>
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<td>United States Senator, MS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vice Presidential Nominee</td>
<td>Acceptance Speech</td>
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</table>
Introduction of the Nominee
for President of the United States

Presidential Nominee
Acceptance Speech

Finale Song

Benediction

Main Street American

Travis Tritt

Reverend Franklin Graham
North Carolina

Adjournment Sine Die
APPENDIX E

1996 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION PROGRAM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 25, 1996
Contact: DNCC Communications
312/233-5479 Hyatt
312/332-7094 Media Pavilion

DNCC RELEASES
1996 DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION PROGRAM

(Chicago, IL) A preliminary listing of the Democratic National Convention program is outlined below. Media should be advised that the program is subject to changes including the naming of additional speakers and the order of their appearances. All times listed are central daylight time (CDT).

MONDAY, AUGUST 26
Afternoon Program
4:00 pm
Geval Down—Convention Opens
Call to Order by Temporary Chair
Don Fowler, National Chair
Democratic National Committee

Invocation
Father Jack Wall, Old St. Patrick’s
Chicago

Remarks by Party Officials

Remarks by Chair, Democratic County Officials
Dana Ward, San Francisco Assessor

Remarks by Chair, Democratic Municipal Officials
Myron Lowery, Memphis City Council

Remarks by Chair, Democratic State Legislative Leaders
Bill Frist, Majority Leader, TN House of Representatives

Remarks by DNC Vice Chair
Martha Love

Remarks by DNC Vice Chair
Jim Brady, President, Association of State Democratic Chairs

Remarks by Convention Parliamentarians
Congressman Steny Hoyer (MD)

P.O. BOX 641194, CHICAGO, IL 60684-1196 312-336-1996 FAX 312-832-2315 TDD 312-336-5688

306
Presentation and Adoption of the
Credentials Committee Report by Co-Chairs
Mayor Martin Chavez, Albuquerque, NM and
Debrah Abbott, Superintendent, California Department of
Education

Presentation and Adoption of the
Rules Committee Report by Co-Chairs
Anita Manzanas, Florida State Representative and
Mayor Ed Rendell, Philadelphia

Nomination and Election of
Convention Officers

Mrs. Ronald H. Brown, Honorary Chair

Senator Tom Daschle (SD), Permanent Chair
Congressman Richard Gephardt (MO), Permanent Chair

Senator Carol Moseley-Braun, (IL) Vice-Chair
Senator John Stennis (MS), Vice-Chair
Mayor Martin Chavez, Albuquerque, NM, Vice-Chair
Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi (CA), Vice-Chair

Kathy Vick, Secretary

Remarks by Chair, National Conference of Democratic
Mayors
Mayor Jerry Abramson, Louisville, KY

Remarks by Chair, Democratic Governor's Association
Governor Gaston Caperton, WV

Remarks by Chair, Democratic Congressional Campaign
Committee
Congressman Martin Frost (TX)

Remarks by Chair, Democratic Senatorial Campaign
Committee
Senator Bob Kerry (NE)

Remarks by DNC Vice-Chair
Lottie Sheatthfield (AR)

Remarks by DNC Treasurer
Scott Patinkin
Remarks by DNC National Finance Chair
Marvin Rosen

Remarks by Convention Secretary
Kathy Vick

Roll Call of the States

Welcome to Chicago
Remarks by John Stroger, President, Cook County Board

**Evening Program**

7:00 pm

Presentation by
Edward Jones Olmos, Actor & Activist

Remarks by
Bobby Zirkin and Tracy Turnoff, Co-Chairs
Democratic Youth Voter Registration Bus Tour

Welcome to Illinois
Remarks by Senator Carol Mosley Braun (IL)

Remarks by
Debra DeLee, CEO
Democratic National Convention

Remarks by
Senator Tom Daschle (SD)
Democratic Leader of the US Senate and
Co-Chair, Democratic National Convention

Remarks by
Congressman Richard A. Gephardt (MO)
Democratic Leader of the US House of Representatives
and Co-Chair, Democratic National Convention

Remarks by
William Daley, Co-Chair
Chicago '96
Tribute to Secretary Ronald H. Brown  
(video presentation)

Remarks by  
Mrs. Ronald H. Brown, Honorary Chair  
Democratic National Convention

Remarks by  
David Wilmot, Former Chair  
Democratic National Committee

Welcome to Convention Delegates and Participants  
Mayor Richard M. Daley  
Chicago

Remarks by  
Mike Robbins  
Chicago Police Officer

Todd Clancy  
Aviation, Toledo, OH

Marilyn Conception  
Former AmeriCorps Participant, Providence, RI

Remarks by  
Sarah Brady, Chairwoman  
Handgun Control, Inc.  
Accompanied by Jim Brady

Remarks by  
John Stanford  
Superintendent of Seattle Public Schools

Remarks by  
Christopher Reeve  
Actor and Activist

10:00 pm  Daily Program Concludes
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
August 27, 1996  
Contact: DNCC Communications  
312/336-1479 Hyatt  
312/336-1094 Media Pavilion  

DNCC RELEASES  
1996 DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION PROGRAM  

(Chicago, IL) A preliminary listing of the Democratic National Convention program is outlined below. Media should be advised that the program is subject to changes including the naming of additional speakers and the order of their appearances. All times listed are central daylight time (CDT).  

TUESDAY, AUGUST 27  
Afternoon Program  
3:30 pm  

Gavel Down – Convention Opens  
Call to Order  
Invocation  
Performance by  
Rachel Barton, violinist  
Remarks by  
Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi (CA)  
Presentation of the 1996 Democratic Platform  
Remarks by  
Congresswoman Barbara Kennelly (CT)  
Platform Committee Co-Chair  
Remarks by  
Georgia Governor Zell Miller  
Drafting Committee Chair  
Remarks by  
Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY)  
Senator Byron Dorgan (ND)  
Remarks by  
Governor Gaston Caperton (WV)  
Congressman Xavier Becerra (CA)
Remarks by
Senator Jay Rockefeller (WV)
Governor Pedro Rosello (PR)

Remarks by
Carolyn Stradley,
founder and owner of C&S Paving, Marietta (GA)
Mayor Kurt Schmoke, Baltimore (MD)

Remarks by
Evette Del Prado, Silicon Graphics (CA)
Congresswoman Anna Eshoo (CA)

Remarks by
Phil Wilson, AIDS activist (CA)
Debbie Runions (TN)

Remarks by
Mark Klaas, father of Polly Klaas (CA)
Congressman Charles Schumer (NY)

Remarks by
Mayor Susan Hammer, San Jose (CA)

Remarks by
Gloria Molina, Los Angeles (CA) Supervisor
Mayor Emanuel Cleaver, Kansas City (MO)
Congresswoman Nita Lowey (NY)

Remarks by
Kate Michelman, NARAL
Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney (GA)

Remarks by
Mayor Ed Rendell, Philadelphia (PA)
John Sharp, Comptroller of Public Accounts, Austin (TX)

Remarks by
Congressman John Spratt (SC)

Remarks by
Bruce Spaulding,
Boeing Co. employee, Seattle (WA)
Remarks by
Secretary Jesse Brown
Department of Veterans’ Affairs
General Evelyn Pat Foote, MD
United States Army (retired)

Remarks by
Carmen and Kent Amos (DC)
parents of several adopted children
Congressman Tony Hall (OH)

Remarks by
Congressman Richard Durbin (IL)

Remarks by
Mayor Tom Murphy, Pittsburgh (PA)

Remarks by
Congressman Charles Stenholm (TX)

Remarks by
Rev. Jesse Jackson, Sr. (IL)
Justin Dart, San Francisco (CA)

Remarks by
Congressman Ed Pastor (AZ)

Remarks by
Congressman Robert Matsui (CA)

Remarks by
Linda Crawford (MD)
wife of the late Victor Crawford, former tobacco lobbyist

Remarks by
Senator George Mitchell (ME)
former Senate Majority Leader

Remarks by
Secretary Henry Cisneros
Department of Housing and Urban Development

Adoption of the 1996 Democratic Platform

Closing Remarks by
Congresswoman Barbara Kennelly (CT)
Platform Committee Co-Chair
Closing Remarks by
Georgia Governor Zell Miller
Drafting Committee Chair

Performance by
Soul Children of Chicago

Evening Program
8:00 pm

Farewell to Democratic Friends
(video presentation)

Senator Edmund Muskie (ME)
Congresswoman Barbara Jordan (TX)
John White, former DNC Chair and Secretary of Agriculture
Defense Secretary Les Aspin (WI)
Congressman Mike Synar (OK)
Mollie Beatty, Assistant Secretary, Department of Interior

Presentation of the Congressional Families First Agenda

Congressman Richard Gephardt (MO)
Democratic Leader of the US House

Congressman John Lewis (GA)

Senator Joseph Biden (DE)

Congresswoman Lynn Rivers (MI)

Senator John Kerry (MA)

Senator Tom Daschle (SD)
Democratic Leader of the US Senate

Performance by
Aretha Franklin

Keynote Address
The Honorable Evan Bayh
Governor of Indiana

Remarks by Democratic Candidates

Carolyn McCarthy
Candidate for the US House from District 4, New York
Victor Morales  
Candidate for the US Senate from Texas

Harvey Gantt  
Candidate for the US Senate from North Carolina

Remarks by  
Tipper Gore

Remarks by  
Hillary Rodham Clinton

Performance by  
Soul Children of Chicago

Benediction  
10:00 pm  
Daily Program Concludes

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 28  
Afternoon Program  
3:30 pm  
Gavel Down – Convention Opens

Call to Order  
Invocation

Performance by  
Leslie Celinez, singer

Remarks by Candidates for Governor, US Senate, and US House

Governor Tom Carper (DE)  
Tom Bruggere, candidate for Senate (OR)  
Governor Mel Carnahan (MO)  
State Senator Charlotte Pritt, candidate for Governor (WV)  
State Representative Lee Kaldor, candidate for Governor (ND)  
Congressman Bob Torricelli, candidate for Senate (NJ)  
Former Governor Joe Brennan, candidate for Senate (ME)  
Congressman Jack Reed, candidate for Senate (RI)  
Attorney General Winston Bryant, candidate for Senate (AR)  
Tom Allen, candidate for 1st Congressional District (ME)  
Tom Fricano, candidate for 27th Congressional District (NY)  
Bob Pascrell, candidate for 8th Congressional District (NJ)  
Steve Rothman, candidate for 9th Congressional District (NJ)  
Joe Hoeffel, candidate for 13th Congressional District (PA)  
Joe Keefe, candidate for 1st Congressional District (NH)
Debbie Stabenow, candidate for 8th Congressional District (MI)
Marion Berry, candidate for 1st Congressional District (AR)
Judy Hancock, candidate for 3rd Congressional District (KS)
Jay Hoffman, candidate for 20th Congressional District (IL)
Rick Wieland, candidate for At-Large Congressional District (SD)
Danny Davis, candidate for 7th Congressional District (IL)
Julia Carson, candidate for 10th Congressional District (IN)
Rod Blagojevich, candidate for 5th Congressional District (IL)
Nick Lampson, candidate for 9th Congressional District (TX)
Steve Owens, candidate for 6th Congressional District (AZ)
Brad Sherman, candidate for 24th Congressional District (CA)
Congressman Tim Johnson, candidate for Senate (SD)
Senator Tom Harkin (IA)
Walter Capps, candidate for 22nd Congressional District (CA)
Rick Zbur, candidate for 38th Congressional District (CA)
Ellen Tauscher, candidate for 10th Congressional District (CA)
Senator Carl Levin (MI)

Remarks by
State Treasurer Katherine Baker Knowles (PA)
Congressman Charles Rangel (NY)
Congressman Barney Frank (MA)
Joe Byrd, member, Cherokee Nation
Cynthia Hammer-Portugal,
President, UC-Davis College Democrats

Evening Program
7:00 pm

Remarks on the Environment by
Senator Frank Lautenberg (NJ)

Remarks on Health Care by
Governor Howard Dean (VT)

Remarks on Women’s Issues by
Ellen Malcolm, Emily’s List (DC)

Remarks on Workers by
John Sweeney, AFL-CIO

Remarks on the Budget by
Senator Kent Conrad (ND)

Remarks on the Budget and Tax Cuts by
Congressman Vic Fazio (CA)
Remarks on Work by
Congresswoman Maxine Waters (CA)

Remarks on Crime by
Governor Bob Miller (NV)

Remarks on Defense and Security by
Senator Joseph Lieberman

Remarks on Families by
Lois DeBerry (TN)

Remarks on Education by
Governor Roy Romer (CO)

Performance by
Billy Ray Cyrus

Presentation by the Democratic Women
of the US Senate

Senator Barbara Mikulski (MD)
Senator Carol Moseley-Braun (IL)
Senator Diane Feinstein (CA)
Senator Patty Murray (WA)
Senator Barbara Boxer (CA)

Address by
The Vice President of the United States

Remarks by
Congressman Bill Richardson (NM)

Nomination of President Clinton by
Senator Christopher J. Dodd (CT)
General Chair, Democratic National Committee

Seconding Nomination of President Clinton by
The Honorable Dennis Archer
Mayor of Detroit and
Platform Committee Co-Chair

Traditional Roll Call of the States

Benediction

10:00 pm Daily Program Concludes
**THURSDAY, AUGUST 29**

*Afternoon Program*

3:30 pm  
Presentation by the Democratic Women of the US House of Representatives  
Congresswoman Nita Lowey (NY)  
Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (CT)  
Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (DC)  
Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder (CO)

Remarks by  
Congressman David Bonior (MI)  
Democratic Whip of the US House of Representatives

*Evening Program*

7:00 pm  
Remarks by  
Senator Edward M. Kennedy (MA)

Nomination of Vice President Gore  
Congressman Joe Kennedy (MA)

The Honorable Bill Campbell  
Mayor of Atlanta

Michela Alioto  
Candidate for the US House from District 1, California

Remarks by  
Vice President Gore

Address by  
The President of the United States

10:00 pm  
Gavel Down - Convention Concludes

NOTE: This Information is updated as of Tuesday, August 27, 1996, 10:00 AM

-30-
ELIZABETH DOLE: Thank you so much.
(APPLAUSE)
Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.
(APPLAUSE)
Thank you very much.
(APPLAUSE)
Thank you. Thank you so much.
(APPLAUSE)
Oh, my.
(APPLAUSE)
Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.
(APPLAUSE)
Thank you so much, ladies and gentlemen for that wonderful, warm welcome.
And thank you, Governor Wilson, for your very kind words of introduction.

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250 This transcript is taken from the file of Presidential Campaign Press Materials, provided by the Federal Document Clearing House through the Nexis online database. Misspelled names have been corrected to conform with the RNC's Official Report.
Now, you know, tradition is that speakers at the Republican National Convention remain at this very imposing podium. But tonight I'd like to break with tradition for two reasons. One, I'm going to be speaking to friends, and secondly, I'm going to be speaking about the man I love. And it's just a lot more comfortable for me to do that down here with you.

(APPLAUSE)

Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

Governor, how are you doing tonight?

(APPLAUSE)


(APPLAUSE)

ELIZABETH DOLE: Now for the last several days, a number of men and women have been painting a remarkable portrait of a remarkable man, a man who is the strongest and the most compassionate, most tender person that I've ever known -- the man who, quite simply, is my own personal Rock of Gibraltar.

And tonight, I want to put the finishing brush strokes on that portrait, if you will. And Bob Dole, if you're watching, let me just warn you...

(LAUGHTER)

I may be saying some things that you in your modesty would never be willing to talk about.

But I think that the people you've been serving all these years in America deserve to know -- they have the right to know. This is not a time to be silent.

This is a defining moment, ladies and gentlemen, in our nation's history. This election is about the vision and the values that will shape America as we move into the next century, and it's about the character of the man who will lead us there.

Now...

(APPLAUSE)

Thanks.

(APPLAUSE)

Bob Dole, as you know, was born in Kansas in a small town...

---

251 Elizabeth Dole left the podium at this point and began walking down the stairs to the convention floor.
And his family...²⁵²

Hey, Bob. What are we doing?²⁵³

Is he going to speak or am I going to speak? I'm not sure.

That was a nice surprise.

But let me say that, yes, he was born in a small town in Kansas. His parents were poor. In fact, at one point, when Bob was a boy, they had to move their family — parents and four children — into the basement and rent out their small home, the upstairs, just to make ends meet.

But while they were perhaps poor in material things, they were rich in values — values like honesty, decency, respect, personal responsibility, hard work, love of God, love of family, patriotism.

These were the values that led Bob to risk his life on the battlefields of Italy. And these were the values that enabled him to sustain over three years in the hospital.

Now, I didn't know Bob back then. But Pat Lynch did. Pat, stand a moment if you would.

Come right up here with me.

Pat Lynch is from Boone, Iowa. And she was...

Pat was one of Bob's nurses at Percy Jones Hospital in Battle Creek, Michigan.

²⁵² At this point, a live feed of Bob Dole appeared on the videowalls up on the podium. The applause was in response to his sudden appearance.

²⁵³ The “Official Proceedings” transcribed this remark as “I'll be darned.”
Pat has told me about Bob's good humor and how they used to wheel him from ward to ward to cheer up the other wounded soldiers. I think we're having a little technical difficulty.

(LAUGHTER)

She's also told me that Bob was very patient and that he tapped his inner resources so that he endured, not just day after day, but month after month -- I think we're, yes -- also -- there we are.254

(APPLAUSE)

Pat's told me that when Bob was totally paralyzed and people thought he wouldn't walk again, he literally willed himself to walk. He was a person of great perseverance and determination and drive. And he recovered fully except for the use of his right arm in the three years over at the hospital.

But during that period of time, I think that Bob's sensitivity to the problems of others certainly was deepened as well -- because he's been there. He's known pain and suffering.

It was at this time in his life that he got to know Dr. Hampar Kelikian. Now, Hampar Kelikian was a great surgeon, Chicago -- Chicago, Illinois.

(APPLAUSE)

And Dr. Kelikian had fled Armenia, war-torn Armenia, as a young man. Three of his sisters were not so fortunate. But he came to the United States with only $2 and a rug from his homeland under his arm.

And Dr. Kelikian, at that point a young boy, worked on a farm. And the owner of the farm was so impressed with him that he paid his way through college. And then he went on to medical school, and he became a great surgeon, a master in bone and joint surgery.

And so Bob Dole went to Dr. Kelikian looking for a miracle because he wanted to be the person he had been before the war, a great athlete, a person who was on his way to study medicine.

Dr. Kelikian performed a number of operations. And then he had to administer some tough love. He had to say to Bob, "You're not going to find the miracle. Now, the choice is up to you, Bob. You can continue to feel sorry for yourself, and you can get on with your life and work to make the most of what you do have."

(APPLAUSE)

Dr. Kelikian would not take a penny of money for those operations.

254 For the previous minute, the lapel microphone had been malfunctioning, causing intermittent bursts of static and feedback. At this point, Elizabeth Dole switched to a handheld wireless microphone.
And he did the same for many other young veterans coming back from the war who were not able to afford the medical care that they needed. So you can imagine how much we cherished the friendships of Dr. Kelikian's widow, Ofsana Kelikian, and her daughter, Alice.

(APPLAUSE)

And certainly Bob has known the struggle to make ends meet. In fact, he couldn't have had a college education if it were not for the GI Bill. And so, he's going to protect and preserve and strengthen that safety net for those who need it.

Also, he's dedicated his life to making a difference -- a positive difference -- for others because of his own experiences. Whether it's on the battlefield, on the Senate floor, or whether it's in his personal life, he's going to be making that difference for others.

And you know, it was only...

(APPLAUSE)

It was about 12 years ago that I recall so well Bob coming home from a trip to Kansas. We were sitting in the bedroom talking, and he said, "Elizabeth, my plane was late, and they were trying to rush me into a meeting out there. And there were these two young people who were waiting outside the door to talk with me, and they were severely disabled. And they were there with their parents. Tim and Carla were their names."

And he said, "Tim said to me, Senator Dole, we found a source of help for people who have a disability such as ours in another state. Can you help us get there?"

And as Bob was telling me about it, he said, "I can't stop thinking about Tim and Carla. Elizabeth, I've been meaning to start a foundation for people with disabilities for years, and I haven't done it yet."

Well, very soon thereafter, the Dole Foundation was up and running, and Bob's raised millions of dollars to help people with disabilities.

(APPLAUSE)

Tim -- Tim, I want to thank you for your courage and your spirit. Thank you, Tim, for inspiring Bob Dole to start the Dole Foundation for people with disabilities. We love you. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

And I remember about 10 years ago, Bob and I were about to celebrate our birthdays, which are seven days apart in late July, and Bob suggested a reverse birthday. He said, "Elizabeth, let's go to Sara's Circle," which is a very special place in inner city Washington that houses and ministers to elderly poor. And he said, "Let's find out what the 35 or 40 residents most need and want and we'll give them the gifts, give them the party."

And so, that's what we did, and we've had many wonderful visits there since with cherished friends.
And our most recent reverse birthday was just three weeks ago at Sara's Circle.

And I remember a Thanksgiving, oh, probably three or four years ago when Bob called up and he said, "you know, Elizabeth," he said, "I'd like to do something a little different this Thanksgiving." And he sounded kind of sheepish because you see he'd already put the plans in motion.

(LAUGHTER)

And I said, Bob, what would you like to do. And he said, "Well, I've invited 35 young people from some pretty tough parts of Washington and their church sponsors to have Thanksgiving dinner with us."

Well, he had already reserved some places for us at a restaurant. He'd had them put in some television so the kids could watch the Redskins game.

(APPLAUSE)

What touched us so deeply was that after they finished the Thanksgiving meal, they'd finished watching the game, they began to talk about their life stories. And the common thread that ran through so many of those stories was that these kids, until very recently, had never heard anyone say, "I care about you, I care about you."

Ladies and gentlemen, you didn't read about that Thanksgiving dinner in the newspaper or hear about it in the media because Bob Dole never told anybody about it. He did it from his heart.

(APPLAUSE)

He wants to make a difference -- a positive difference -- for others because he cares, because that's who he is. And I certainly will never forget his last day as majority leader of the United States Senate. I was seated up in the balcony, you know, and I was watching as senator after senator, Democrats and Republicans, stood and paid tribute to my husband on the Senate floor.

They talked about his countless legislative achievements, how he had lead the United States Senate to successfully pass the largest tax cut in the history of the United States of America.

(APPLAUSE)

They talked about how he had saved Social Security and I just want to quote from a letter -- this is Claude Pepper. As you know he was the champion of seniors. And he wrote to Bob May 11, 1983. He thanked Bob for his extraordinary contributions saying, and I quote "You never lost hope and faith in our accomplishing the immeasurable task of saving Social Security. We could never have produced this result without your skill and sincerest desire to make a meaningful contribution."

That's leadership ladies and gentlemen.

(APPLAUSE)
They also talked about how...

(APPLAUSE)

... OK, folks. They also talked about how Bob had lead the Senate just last year to save Medicare, increasing spending 62 percent, only to have the White House veto the legislation, provide no other alternative for saving the system except a multi-million dollar ad campaign to scare our senior citizens.

(APPLAUSE)

(BOOS)

They talked about Bob's incredible ability to bring people together and his tremendous sense of humor. And you know that reminds me of the time that I was up for confirmation hearings before the -- one of the committees of the Senate for secretary of transportation.

And my husband introduced me. And you know what he did to me? He sort of did a take off on Nathan Hale, he said, "I regret that I have but one wife to give for my country's infrastructure."

(LAUGHTER)

That's Bob Dole.

But above all, these senators, Democrats and Republicans, talked about Bob's character, his honesty, his integrity. And I remember Senator Pete Domenici, beautiful speech that you gave, and when you concluded your speech, you said, "The next majority leader of the United States Senate better know that he better be honest. He better tell the Senate the truth because Bob Dole knew no other way."

(APPLAUSE)

Remember that Pete?

(APPLAUSE)

And Dianne Feinstein, Democrat of California said, "Bob Dole's word" -- listen to this now -- "Bob Dole's word is his commitment. And his commitment is a matter of honor. We often disagree on issues," she said, "but even when we disagree, I know where I stand with Bob Dole, and I know I can trust his word."

(APPLAUSE)

I can trust his word.

(APPLAUSE)

And that's why, ladies and gentlemen, that's why Bob Dole's fellow senators elected him six times to be their leader -- because they know he's honest, trustworthy, a man of his word, his word is his bond, and they know he has exceptional leadership skills. And isn't that exactly what we want in the president of the United States!
And you see these...

Thank you. These are the people, think about this. These are the people who know him so well, have worked with him, day after day, year after year. They know what his judgment is like under pressure. And that's why they continue to put their faith and trust in him, making him the longest serving Republican leader in Senate history -- 11 years. Now...

Now, I'm also very proud of the fact that the employees of the United States Senate, the waiters, waitresses, others who work there voted Bob twice, four years apart in two surveys, as the nicest, friendliest of all 100 senators.

DOLE: I'm sorry about that, Pete, but...

DOLE: These are employees like Trudy Parker, who is a member of the United States Capitol Police, and Trudy, bless your heart. Trude was the first person that Bob saw on the way to work every morning while he was in the Senate, and also that final day, I can still see you. I'll remember it forever. You threw your arms around my husband and tears were streaming down your face, and you said, "Elizabeth, everywhere you go, people tell you they love Bob Dole because he always has a kind word for everyone." Bless you, Trudy.

Now, let me just say I could go on and on sharing stories about this loving husband and father, this caring friend, but please indulge a very proud wife just one final story which neither I nor my 95-year-old mother will ever forget.

When Bob was dating me, he used to go to North Carolina a lot to visit my parents.

And...

... one morning -- one morning unbeknownst to me, he left his bedroom and went down where mother was fixing breakfast in the kitchen. And he had a towel over his arm and shoulder that had been disabled in the war.

And he said, "Mrs. Hanford, I think you ought to see my problem."

Mother said, "Bob, that is not a problem. It's a badge of honor."
My fellow Americans — my fellow Americans, I believe that in the years to come, future generations will look back to this November and say, "Here is where Americans earned a badge of honor."

(APPLAUSE)

"Here is where we elected the president who gave us more opportunities and smaller and more efficient government, and stronger and safer families. Here is where we elected the better man who led us to a better America because here is where we elected Bob Dole."

(APPLAUSE)

God bless you all. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)
APPENDIX G

TIMING SHEETS FOR "OPPORTUNITY" VIDEOWALL SEGMENT
Joseph, when Mario built this project he started with the girl as his bare level...she's on top here...he then added the other levels as shown.

As I understand it, his last level was the American flag.

Opportunity / Growth Lo-Resolution Time Sheet 90-10-94

Frames

0 30 60 90 120 150 180 210 240 270 300
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| First Image | close up of girl / vhs tape dated 7-26-96
- Start Point/Length: Start at 0 - Length: 112 frames
- TimeCode In: 00:08:53:08
- Description: 30 frame fade up to 90% opacity...
  It stays at 90% for 87 frames and begins a 45 frame fade out.
- Edge Softness: FULL FRAME IMAGE |
| Second Image | hi tech footage / vhs tape self 01-96
- Start Point/Length: Start at frame 76 - Length: 117 frames
- TimeCode In: 01:05:09:16
- Description: 30 frame fade up to 60% opacity...
  It changes from 60% to 80% in 52 frames and begins a 35 frame fade out.
- Edge Softness: 12% |
| Third Image | boy raising his hand / vhs tape dated 7-26-96
- Length: Start at frame 60 - Length: 65 frames
- TimeCode In: NOT AVAILABLE
- Description: 30 frame fade up to 60% opacity...
  It changes from 60% to 70% in 25 frames and begins a 11 frame fade out.
- Edge Softness: 13% - vertical wipe from bottom to top |
| Fourth Image | clinton / vhs tape dated 7-26-96
- Start Point/Length: Start at frame 104 - Length: 102 frames
- TimeCode In: 00:27:49:23
- Description: 40 frame fade up to 70% opacity...
  Hold for 32 frames at 70%...
  and begins a 30 frame fade out.
- Edge Softness: 5% - positioned at right |
Opportunity Version One / Page 2

Fifth Image:  Fram Machinery / 1/15 Time Dated 7-31-96
Start Point/Length: Start At Frame 105 - Length 109 Frames
Time Code In: 00:02:04.06
Description: 4/6 Frame fade up to 60% opacity...
Change from 60% to 70% in 23 frames
45/54/64 4/6 Frame fade out.
Edge Softness: 40% full frame wipe from left to right

Sixth Image: School Teacher / Time Dated 7-26-96
Start Point/Length: Start At Frame 205 - Length 65 Frames
Time Code In: No Time Code Shown
Description: 17 Frame fade up to 70% opacity...
30 Frames held at 70% until
17 Frames fade out.
Edge Softness: 12% vertical wipe bottom to top

Seventh Image: School Bus / Time Dated 7-24-96
Start Point/Length: Start At Frame 240 - Still Hold
Time Code In: 05:39:20:10
Description: Fade up in 35 Frames to 50%
Opacity - Hold
16 Frames to reveal vertical wipe
Edge Softness: 27%

Eighth Image: Factory Worker / Time Dated 7-20-96
Start Point/Length: Start At Frame 240 - Still Hold
Time Code In: 05:31:21:14
Description: Fade up in 45 Frames to 50%
Opacity - Hold
5% Frame reveal/vertical wipe from
bottom to top

*Note: He is positioned on the bottom of the frame... refer to lo ref. for reveal matching
### Motion Image 1:
**Description:**
Start at frame 2 and still hold.

**Time Code:**
TIME CODE NOT SHOWN

**Edge Softness:**
10%

### Motion Image 2:
**Description:**
Start at frame 5 - exits at frame 255

**Type:**
OCCASIONAL - CRACKLING FROM RIGHT TO LEFT

**Time Code:**
Quality 10%

**Edge Softness:**
THE MOTION SHIFTS AT 185 FRAMES (1.5s/sl)

### Motion Image 3:
**Type:**
OCCASIONAL - ZOOM

**Start Point/Length:**
Start at frame 5

**Description:**
It is 10%质量... 126 frames it is 100% quality... it holds for 82 frames.

**Edge Softness:**

### Motion Image 4:
**Type:**
BLUE EFFECT

**Start Point/Length:**
Start at 75% ... 125 frames

**Description:**
60 frames fade up to 100% quality.

**Edge Softness:**
IT SCALS UP TO 100% IN 60 FRAMES

### Motion Image 5:
**Type:**
BLACK BACKGROUND FRAME

**Start Point/Length:**
Start at frame 255

**Description:**
30 frame fade up - no motion.

**Edge Softness:**