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Speechwriting in Rhetorical Criticism: an Extension of Theory as Applied to the Johnson Administration.

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SPEECHWRITING IN RHETORICAL CRITICISM: AN EXTENSION OF THEORY AS APPLIED TO THE JOHNSON ADMINISTRATION

The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical Col.  PH.D.  1980

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SPEECHWRITING IN RHETORICAL CRITICISM
AN EXTENSION OF THEORY
AS APPLIED TO THE JOHNSON ADMINISTRATION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Speech

by

Suzanne Elizabeth Condray
B.A., East Texas Baptist College, 1975
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ABSTRACT

Speechwriting practices have long been associated with rhetorical history. American presidents have employed the speechwriter's assistance since the beginning of this nation. From the dawn of radio, presidential speechwriting practices have grown to the extent that most presidents rely heavily on the writer to prepare the bulk of their messages.

While many political speakers have grown to depend on the speechwriter to assist him in preparing the ideas or language of his message, rhetorical critics have largely ignored the writer's influence on the message and his impact on the preparation process. The purpose of this study is fourfold. First of all, this critic examines the speechwriter's role in the preparation process and his contributions to presidential discourse since the days of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Secondly, she attempts to point out the strengths and weaknesses of present rhetorical theory and criticism in considering speechwriting practices. Thirdly, the critic proposes her own theoretical postulates for extending critical methodologies, and finally, she applies her postulates to two speeches in Lyndon B. Johnson's administration.
The writer discusses how speechwriters have played various roles in preparing presidential discourse. Some participants are responsible for preparing only the language of the address, while others assist in policy decision-making which results in the speechwriter playing a significant role in preparing the ideas of the speech. The organization of writers vary, with some presidents relying primarily on individual efforts and others preferring committee writing efforts.

Regardless of their roles and organization, the speechwriter's presence proposes an interactional setting, in which the speaker and his writer or writers participate. The critic must examine the speechwriting effort as an interactional process and therefore consider the effect of the interaction between writers and the speaker on the drafting process and final product. This writer suggests guidelines whereby the critic may explore the triadic relationship between the speaker, the writers, and the ideas of the message; the triadic relationship between the speaker, the writers, and the language of the discourse; and the triadic relationship between the speaker, the writers, and the perception and response to a rhetorical situation.

The critic then examines the 1964 State of the Union speech and Johnson's March 31, 1968 speech, to determine
the speechwriter's role in the drafting process and their effect on the final product. She describes the interaction between the participants in each drafting process and then examines each of the triadic relationships in both speeches. Finally, the critic evaluates the writer's contribution and interaction in each situation. She evaluates the writer's ability to assist the speaker in realizing his fullest potential inventionally, linguistically, and in response to the rhetorical situation; to assist in producing a superior text technically as well as artistically; and to assist in producing a desired response by making the speech a persuasive instrument.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

In July of 1976, James Earl Carter stood before an ecstatic crowd at the Democratic National Convention to deliver his first speech as the party's nominee. The now famous phrase, "Hello, I'm Jimmy Carter, and I'm running for President of the United States," brought the crowd to its feet. Amid the gaiety of balloons and confetti, few members of the audience knew they had just heard their candidate deliver a carefully staged introduction. In reality, Jack Kaplan and John Barrett, two Hollywood comedy writers, had handprinted the following words on a yellow legal pad, complete with stage directions:

(After thank yous Jimmy turns to audience and says:) Hello, I'm Jimmy Carter, (laugh) and I'm running for President of the United States. (Applause).¹

While the candidate had worked extensively on drafts which reflected his own language and ideas, he had depended on others to assist him in preparing and polishing his rhetoric.

The preceding example is truly not an atypical situation; speechwriters have been actively involved in political speechmaking for years. In fact, in recent years, speechwriting has been largely a delegated responsibility. In this writer's view, rhetorical scholars have ignored an important aspect of speech preparation, for the most part. In addition, rhetoricians have failed to extend the boundaries of rhetorical criticism to determine the speechwriter's role and influence in the process of drafting a speech. Critics have been hampered by inadequate research methodologies and tools for examining the ghostwriting practices and the speeches written by presidential ghostwriters.

Statement of the Problem

When a public address student knows that the speaker is the prime source of the ideas, organization, and style of the speech, he can use a variety of methods to analyze the speaker's rhetoric. He may depend on neo-Aristotelian forms of criticism as well as those methods proposed by Burke, Black, Hillbruner, and other rhetorical theorists.

However, the student may have difficulties applying these same methods to ghostwritten speeches. While many theorists acknowledge the speechwriter's presence, none
suggests an approach for determining the speechwriter's influence on the invention, disposition, or style of the speech. As a result, the novice critic, often limited in his knowledge of speechwriting practices, has no way of ascertaining the speechwriter's influence on the preparation of a draft.

Statement of the Purpose

The following study seeks to determine how critics can extend present methodologies to encompass the presidential speechwriter and to discern his influence on speech preparation. This researcher's task is:

1. To acknowledge the significance of speechwriting practices in the contemporary presidency and its impact on rhetorical studies.

2. To establish the strengths and weaknesses of existing rhetorical theories in examining and evaluating ghostwriting practices.

3. To propose a methodological approach which would supplement and extend present rhetorical theories in examining the ghostwritten speech.

4. To apply the proposed methodology to the ghostwritten speeches of a contemporary president.

5. To evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the approach in the chosen situation.

Through such a study, the writer seeks to explore the
influence and implications of speechwriting on rhetorical criticism and to extend theoretical approaches in examining ghostwritten speeches.

Related Research

A growing number of studies recognize the presence and contributions of speechwriters in the process of speech preparation. Journals, magazines, and books contain articles and interviews pertaining to the speechwriting practices. (These articles are cited in the bibliography of the dissertation.) Among speech journals, the following articles are exemplary of the research on speechwriting: James Golden's "John F. Kennedy and the 'Ghosts'," 2 Craig Smith's "Contemporary Political Speechwriting," 3 Robert N. Hall's "Lyndon Johnson's Speech Preparation," 4 Gage William Chapel's "Speechwriting in the Ford Administration," 5 and his article, "Speechwriting in the Nixon


Methodology

While considerable literature has been generated on speechwriting, little research has been devoted to providing a suitable methodology for analyzing the speechwriter's presence. Most studies on speechwriting merely suggest guidelines for analysis and do not develop any methodology for analyzing ghostwritten speeches. Of particular assistance are the studies of Starr, Curtis,


Each writer presents guidelines to be followed in methodological design, but does not develop any of these guidelines into a framework for accomplishing the task.

In present critical methodologies, rhetoricians examine the speaker's relationship to the ideas and language of the discourse as well as his response to the rhetorical situation. This writer proposes that critics supplement and extend their methodologies to consider the speechwriter's presence and influence in the speechmaking process. Four areas of discussion serve as the basis of this author's methodological design:

1. The interaction between the speaker and his speechwriters and the impact of the relationship on the speech process.

2. The speaker and speechwriter's influence on the ideas of the message.

3. The speaker and speechwriter's influence on the language of the discourse.

4. The relationship of the speaker and speechwriters in response to the rhetoric situation.


The researcher describes the speechwriter's contributions in each of these areas and, then, evaluates their influence on the drafting process and the final text. The writer proposes that critics adopt any of these applicable postulates in their own particular critical methodologies.

In order to evaluate the methodological design, the writer applies the principles to two ghostwritten speeches in the Johnson administration. Speeches are examined which represent committee and individual speechwriting efforts. Hence, the researcher shows how her methodology is useful in understanding and assessing both individual efforts and committee efforts in presidential speechwriting.

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Significance of the Study

Through the design and application of a supplemental approach to speech preparation, the researcher hopes to extend the scope of rhetorical studies to include a means of evaluating the role of the speechwriter in a given speech. By proposing some theoretical alternatives for examining ghostwritten speeches, the writer will attempt to show how critics can integrate methodologies considering the speechwriter into traditional forms of criticism, including neo-Aristotlean approaches, Burkean analyses, and other critical forms.
Throughout the years of rhetorical history, ghostwriting had been associated with political oratory. According to W. Norwood Brigance, ghostwriting practices originated in the cradle of Greek civilization as early as 411 B.C., when Antiphon wrote speeches for others to deliver.\(^1\) However, over the years rhetorical critics have largely ignored the influence of the speechwriter in political oratory.

In America's own political history, several presidents employed speechwriters. Washington, Madison, Hamilton, Jackson, Lincoln, and Buchanan were among those presidents who relied on speechwriters. However, rhetorical scholars paid little attention to speechwriting practices until the advent of radio. Once presidential candidates began to use the media more extensively in the 1930's and 1940's,

speechmaking demands increased and speechwriters were more widely utilized in the presidency. Rhetorical critics became more sensitive to the "ghost" in the White House during Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration and maintained that interest throughout the following years.

In 1955, at the annual Speech Association of America Convention, three papers were presented on political ghostwriting by Brigance, Robert F. Ray, and Ernest G. Bormann. Bormann set the stage for the discussion by defining "ghostwriting" as, "the practice of using collaboration to deceive the audience and make the speaker appear better than he is (or at least different)."² Later in 1963, Marie H. Nichols suggested a less judgmental definition, stating that the ghostwritten speech is one in which an assistant or speechwriter supplies either the form or the ideas of a given text.³ Finally in 1973, Alan M. Curtis proposed in his dissertation that the rhetorical critic substitute the word "speechwriter" for "ghostwriter," since the latter term was no longer employed in most governmental circles.⁴ In less than twenty years,


speechwriting had become an integral part of presidential rhetoric and criticism.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Although Franklin D. Roosevelt "found ghostwriters almost indispensable," before the 1930's, it was during the 1932 presidential campaign that the first extensive speechwriting network was established. The "Brain Trust," as Roosevelt's writers were called, played a dominant role in the 1932 campaign and became a model for following speechwriting practices. Among the participants were Samuel Rosenman, Rexford Tugwell, Raymond Moley, Harry Hopkins, Robert Sherwood, Tommy Corcoran, Stanley High, Ben Cohen, William Ballitt, and others.

Corcoran, Cohen, Moley, and High formed the initial presidential eloquence. For example, Corcoran suggested the famous phrase "rendezvous with destiny" while High contributed "economic royalist" in the draft for the Philadelphia convention speech in 1936. These writers had a significant influence on Roosevelt's rhetoric. Interestingly, Corcoran's departure stemmed from accusations that he had been too influential in his role. According to Rosenman, political leaders were antagonized

repeatedly by Corcoran's aggressiveness and resented his influence on the President. After tempers began to boil, Roosevelt stepped in and suggested that Corcoran work for the Citizens Committee in New York City, which ended his participation in presidential speechwriting. Nevertheless, the event posed an interesting question in the 1940's about a speechwriter's influence in administrative matters.

Rosenman, Hopkins, and Sherwood were probably the most influential individuals in the Roosevelt administration. This trio worked collectively on the bulk of presidential addresses. Fuess humorously notes that the three formed a "Society for Prevention of Ad-Libbing." Of this trio, Rosenman had been with Roosevelt the longest, since the fall of 1928. Although Rosenman had no prior experience in presidential speech preparation, he became known as the "Chief Ghost".

Hopkins arranged for playwright Robert Sherwood to join the staff in the 1930's. Sherwood quickly discovered that playwriting and ghostwriting were extremely different vocations. He humorously notes his first reflections on his role, in saying:


7 Fuess, p. 99.
I...found out what an unsubstantial wraith a ghost writer really is; when working for Franklin D. Roosevelt, his purpose was to haunt the White House, day and night, until a speech by Franklin D. Roosevelt (and nobody else) had been produced.8

One underlying thought in Sherwood’s remarks is that no matter who contributed to the drafting of a speech, the text belonged to Roosevelt. Regardless of the number of sources consulted, it appears that the ghost never became so strong as to threaten Roosevelt’s own role in the process. Indeed, Rosenman states:

> When in these chapters of my book I say that this person or that one worked on a particular speech or message, I mean that—and that only. No matter how frequently the speech assistants were changed through the years, the speeches were always Roosevelt’s. They all expressed the personality, the convictions, the spirit, the mood of Roosevelt. No matter who worked with him in the preparation, the finished product was always the same—it was Roosevelt himself.9

While Roosevelt wanted the draft to reflect his thoughts and policies, he often accepted his writers’ criticism of these ideas. Both Rosenman and Sherwood suggest that the President encouraged them to be critical


9 Rosenman, p. 227.
participants in the process. In fact, they noted that the writer's most effective tool in the process was consensus. When all the writers agreed that changes should be made in the language or content of an address, the President often yielded to their suggestions.\(^{10}\)

These remarks by Sherwood and Rosenman and the events surrounding Corcoran's departure provide valuable insights into contemporary speechwriting. First of all, it is apparent that Roosevelt encouraged his writers to take an active, critical role in speechwriting. At the same time, the President was eager to take a similar role in the process and serve as the final editor of the speeches he chose to deliver. Altogether, speechwriters formed a detailed network in the Roosevelt administration and were active participants in speech preparation.

Harry S. Truman

Harry S. Truman, whose personality was characterized in his famous desk plaque, "The Buck Stops Here," had the same kind of philosophy about the speechwriting practice. In an interview with Eugene E. White and Clair R. Henderlider, he gave the following response to

\(^{10}\) Rosenman, p. 10.
a question concerning his role in speech preparation:

Recently a prominent person in the government was asked why he stumbled in reading a particular speech. He replied that since he hadn't written the talk, he did not know what was in it. Can you imagine anyone giving a speech and not knowing what he was going to say on the next page? I have always taken great personal pains with every formal address. Each of my speeches goes through from three to ten drafts and occasionally more.\textsuperscript{11}

While Truman took a personal interest in preparing his speeches, he, like Roosevelt, had an elaborate system of speechwriters. Among those writers were Clark Clifford, Charles Murphy, Charles Ross, Matt Connelly, and George Elsey. During the campaign of 1948, Jay Franklin, pen name for John Franklin Carter, described the eight to ten individuals as Truman's "composite human brain."\textsuperscript{12}

During the "Whistle Stop Campaign," which required a continual flow of speeches, Truman relied on Murphy, Elsey, and Franklin to prepare initial drafts and Clifford, Ross, Connelly, Murphy, and family members to make revisions. There was never time for pride of authorship.


The President developed a more systematic speechwriting organization in the White House than he had used in the "Whistle Stop Campaign." Charles Murphy's office was given primary responsibility for the initial steps in preparation. Truman made recommendations to Murphy and assisted him in preparing rough outlines. It was then Murphy's obligation to contact departmental agencies for data and figures related to the speech topic. Once the drafts were prepared, Truman assisted Murphy's office with revisions.

While Roosevelt's "Brain Trust" greatly influenced the President's language and ideas, the Truman writers softened the President's rhetoric. Truman's writers were apparently successful in doing so as a U.S. News and World Report article noted:

One net effect of the new speech-writing system is that sly, provocative digs that once found their way into the Truman addresses and made enemies for the President have been largely eliminated. Mr. Murphy keeps the speeches as nearly as possible to a factual basis and avoids unduly antagonizing any group. 13

In the Truman presidency, thus, writers softened the President's language and played a strategic political role in polishing his rhetorical style as well.

Dwight D. Eisenhower

Harry S. Truman was not the only President whose personality was reflected in his speechwriting organization. Dwight D. Eisenhower's character was also evident in the speechwriting of his own administration. Probably no one but the former general could have ever produced such a regimented staff. Eisenhower expected presidential aides to exhibit the same precision and skill of a military guard, as Sherman Adams writes:

I found out early in the game that Eisenhower expected anyone who proposed a speech to him to have reasons for making it thoroughly thought out, a draft on paper, and the trip phased into the calendar. ...We had to have a finished draft in shape and into the President's hands at least two weeks before it was to be delivered so that he could put it into his desk drawer and brood over it at his leisure. The preparation usually meant days, sometimes weeks, of staff work.¹⁴

Various critics, however, speculate that the reason for such regimentation was not limited strictly to Eisenhower's military background, but was a reflection of his preference for conversational remarks rather than prepared drafts. From this writer's reading, it appears

that Eisenhower was uncomfortable with highly stylized eloquence and insecure in preparing and presenting major presidential addresses. Hence, the general surrounded himself with an elite group of writers including Emmet Hughes, a senior editor of Life; Arthur Larson, a former professor of law at Cornell; Kevin McCann, President of Defiance College; Malcolm Moos, a political scientist; and Gabriel Hauge, an advisor to Governor Thomas Dewey in 1948. Eisenhower took a secondary role in the drafting process, giving only general instructions and delegating the "details" to others. Anderson cites an example of the practice in the following manner:

Secretary of Agriculture Benson wanted the President to address the Future Farmers of America. Republican National Chairman Len Hall agreed that the speech would be useful politically. They went to Adams, who called in speechwriter Gabriel Hauge and Agriculture Department experts to determine what the President might say. Hauge wrote a first draft, discussed it with Adams, and wrote a second draft. All this time, nothing had been said to Eisenhower about the proposed speech.15

From this example, we see that Eisenhower relied on the speechwriter much more heavily than had his predecessors.

15 Anderson, p. 135.
John F. Kennedy

What Roosevelt depended on a trio of speechwriters to produce, Kennedy found in working with an individual writer.

Kennedy became convinced that a large group of advisors could submit ideas, propose outlines and suggest revisions, but they could not produce a finished speech exemplifying continuity of thought and precision of style.\textsuperscript{16}

Kennedy discovered a master of stylistic oratory in speechwriter Theodore Sorensen and relied on Sorensen’s contributions in the Senate, on the campaign trail, and throughout the presidency. Of their relationship Kennedy said to Nixon:

\begin{quote}
In the end I found myself relying more and more on Sorensen, who was with me on the campaign tour and who therefore could react to and reflect up-to-the-minute tactical shifts in our basic policy.\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}

While Kennedy maintained this close relationship with Sorensen, he had other equally capable writers in Richard


\textsuperscript{17} Sorensen, p. 331.
Goodwin, a Harvard law graduate; historian Arthur Schlesinger; Myer Feldman; and Lee C. White. White House reporter Alan Otten noted in 1961 that Goodwin had "already mastered the Kennedy style almost as thoroughly as Ted Sorensen himself."\(^{18}\)

What made the Kennedy administration unique in the area of presidential speechwriting? The answer to that question lies not only in the writers chosen but in the process as well. Prior to the Kennedy administration most speechwriting efforts were the work of a committee, but Kennedy relied primarily on individual efforts. This practice allowed Kennedy to work more individually with a writer than had his predecessors. It also made it easier for two individuals to diminish stylistic differences than for four or five contributors to agree upon the language in which to couch those ideas. This situation allowed one or two individuals to exert great influence on the President, as Otten recognizes:

> After the President himself, he [Sorensen] is the White House official most directly concerned with formulating administration policy, particularly in the domestic field. He provides a constant cushion of advice for presidential actions. 'What do you think, Ted?' is the President's

most frequent question at staff meetings.\textsuperscript{19}

During the Kennedy presidency, individual speech-writing efforts were emphasized. As a result, individual writers took a significant part in the drafting process and the President played a more active role as creator, outriner, and editor-collaborator than had many of his predecessors.

Lyndon B. Johnson

On November 22, 1963, Lyndon B. Johnson inherited not only the presidency but a complete presidential staff as well. Initially, Johnson decided to continue to use the services of Kennedy's aides and writers, but he quickly discovered that maintaining two staffs and coordinating their personnel could be a difficult task. Kennedy had relied on aides like Sorensen and Goodwin to produce highly stylized eloquence on an individual basis. It became a problem early in 1964, though, for these Kennedy writers to fit into the collaborative environment of the Johnson staff. During these first months of 1964, Johnson attempted a juggling act between individual and committee speechwriting efforts. At the same time, former Kennedy

\textsuperscript{19} Otten, p. 4.
writers tried with little success to adapt to Johnson's rambling, Texas drawl. By the summer of 1964, a majority of the Kennedy staff personnel departed and Johnson's aides were left to confront the presidential campaign.

Speechwriting practices in the Johnson administration produced some interesting characteristics, unique from other presidencies. For example, Robert Hardesty contends, "Everybody on the staff, practically, did some speechwriting."\(^{20}\) Although Hardesty's statement is perhaps an exaggeration, Johnson used three levels of participants: contributors, who directly or indirectly assisted; the writers, who prepared drafts; and editors who revised drafts. Among the writers were Horace Busby, Douglass Cater, Harry McPherson, Harry Middleton, and Hardesty. The editors included Jack Valenti, Bill Moyers, Lee C. White, John Roche, and George Christian.

Johnson developed a "wheel-like" organizational structure, with these three levels of participants exemplifying gradations in the wheel.\(^{21}\) This particular system allowed Johnson to be involved in various phases of the organization and yet remain in control of the

\(^{20}\) Personal interview with Robert Hardesty, 11 August 1976.

\(^{21}\) Personal interview with Bill D. Moyers, 10 July 1976.
process. However, the "wheel" produced disadvantages as well. Because of the intricacies and detail in the organizational structure, Johnson was unable to be intimately involved in speechwriting. In addition, the number of participants involved in speechwriting created havoc at times.

The increased participation produced a mixture of advantages and disadvantages. In all, speechwriters formed an intricate network in the Johnson administration and were responsible for the collaborative committee efforts, which characterized the Johnson rhetoric.

Richard M. Nixon

While presumably Johnson's "wheel-like" structure was one of the most complex organizations in use during the 1960's, speechwriting in the Nixon presidency was almost as complex in another way. As Craig R. Smith notes, "Not only were there specific writers and researchers to enhance the appearance of expertise, others were assigned to draft speeches into effective rhetorical display." Nixon mastered his speechwriting as a skillful politician. It was the writer's task to find issues salient to public

22 Craig R. Smith, "Contemporary Political Speechwriting," Southern Speech Communication Journal, 42 (Fall 1976), 54.
interest and then determine public opinion on these issues. In *The Selling of the President*, Joe McGinnis claims that Nixon aides even used semantic differentials to analyze positions taken on various issues. From this information Nixon could determine whether to speak about the problems in vague terms or more specifically, depending on audience consensus. Nixon's speechwriters, as a result, became intensively involved in research and audience analysis.

Perhaps Nixon's desire to have control of the speech preparation process could be traced to his authoritative personality. He preferred extemporaneous speaking and never allowed the individual ghostwriter to take a major role in speech preparation. In his dissertation, Curtis suggests that Nixon expected speechwriters to contribute only fact sheets and lists of suggested remarks for extemporaneous speeches. Nixon would then take those contributions and add supporting evidence as he extemporized.

Although the President maintained an authoritative role, he employed specialists in particular areas as speechwriters. Within the staff, Nixon looked to William Safire in preparing economic addresses, John J. McLaughlin in


24 Curtis, p. 188.
structuring rational arguments, and Patrick Buchanan in preparing political rhetoric. Nixon also received assistance from the Central Intelligence Agency and Henry Kissinger's Special Action Group in speeches on foreign affairs. The President then attempted to synthesize these various contributions into a workable draft, primarily with the assistance of a single writer.

In the Nixon presidency, speechwriters had little influence on the ideas and language of the speech. However, the writer did take an active part in research and in determining public opinion. This role seems to be the most significant contribution made by writers within the rather authoritative context of the Nixon administration.

Gerald Ford

Gerald Ford was the first administrator to serve without having been elected by the people or without having run previously for the Office of President. Therefore, Ford's staff was not really prepared to make the transition created by Nixon's resignation, since they had to assume the presidency with little foreknowledge or preparation. In spite of these circumstances, Ford inherited an existing speechwriting operation which provided the basis for his own administration's system.
Three major differences appeared between the speech-writing practices in the Ford and Nixon administrations. Smith notes that the Ford staff did not make as extensive use of the "audience profile" system which Nixon's researchers had developed and, secondly, they did little "to develop expertise among speechwriters." Ford relied primarily on his aide Bob Hartmann to coordinate the speech-writing staff and activities. While he often participated in speech preparation, Ford assumed a less authoritative role than Nixon.

This final distinction most readily characterized the speechwriter's influence in the administration. First of all, Ford's writers played a significant role in the invention process, contributing to the ideas and policies of the administration. One example of the contributions is found in the campaign speeches. Former Press Secretary Ron Nessen suggested to this writer that the President sometimes only read through a draft prior to delivering it on the campaign trail. On other occasions writers simply handed drafts to Ford en route to the podium. It is possible that some speeches written on the campaign


26 Personal interview with Ron Nessen, July 1977.
trail reflected the speechwriters' ideas and not necessarily those of the President.

While Ford would not have delivered a speech he deemed politically or philosophically objectionable, Nessen's comments suggest that writers played a significant role in speech preparation. John Casserly, a former Ford writer, also felt that the writer took an influential role in preparing some policy speeches. Casserly relates one occasion in which he says that the speech mandated administrative economic policy. He notes that speechwriters were given no guidance for a speech to the Business Council until after first drafts appeared. Apparently, Treasury Secretary Simon, economic advisor Paul McCraker, and Detroit industrialist Max Fisher, met with presidential aides to determine what policies and ideas were to be proposed in the speech, before previous direction was given by Ford or Hartmann.27

Eventhough this example may be an isolated case, it is interesting to note Hartmann's response to the situation. In a speechwriter's meeting, Hartmann later remarked:

A speechwriter may sometimes find himself in a role for which he was never intended. He may be caught in the midst of an unresolved

policy dispute. Therefore, what he writes may affect or constitute policy.28

If Hartmann's statement is accurate, perhaps the speechwriter was much more influential in making policy in the Ford presidency than he had been in previous administrations. But regardless of the statement's accuracy, it is apparent that speechwriters assumed more assertive roles in the Ford White House than they had in the Nixon White House and possibly in other contemporary presidencies.

James E. Carter

When James E. (Jimmy) Carter assumed the presidency in 1977, he was not only a novice in the workings of the federal government, but he was also an amateur in the use of speechwriters. Carl Kell notes that during Carter's term as Governor of Georgia, he never had a speechwriting staff, which seems an oddity in twentieth century politics.29 In fact, it was not until November 2, 1972, that any mention was made of hiring a writer for the presidential campaign. In a memo on that date, Hamilton Jordan suggested:

28 Casserly, p. 31.

Hire a professional, first-class speechwriter, researcher. When you go out of state you need to have something of substance to say. The same thing applies when you address national conventions in Atlanta. This should be a full-time position.30

It was not until March 24, 1976, that Carter's assistant, Pat Caddell, contacted Robert Schrum about writing for Carter. Schrum accused Carter of being deliberately fuzzy on issues, so it was not surprising to see Schrum's departure after only nine days.31 Finally, on May 11, 1976, Patrick Anderson joined the campaign staff as a speechwriter. Jim Fallows was added in July of 1976. Carter, who insisted on contributing to his own speeches, said of Anderson, "Pat's the only writer I've ever used who didn't get his feelings hurt when I changed things."32

Probably no other president since the 1940's has been so intent on writing his own speeches as Carter. While the lack of time has prevented Carter from preparing his own speeches, he has managed to write the bulk of a few major addresses. For example, he took the major writing role in the energy address on July 16, 1979. In each case,

30 Schram, p. 65.
31 Schram, p. 149.
32 Schram, p. 177.
he requested contributions from former presidential
writers, departmental agencies, and individuals whose
expertise and interest he valued highly. Nevertheless,
the former governor has taken a primary role in speech
preparation even from the initial drafts of many speeches.
Of Carter's skills, Fallows remarks:

He is supremely confident of his
extemporaneous abilities to ex­
press his views. Thus, his
disinclination for conventional,
major manuscript speeches has
brought a change from previous
administrations. . . . Finally,
the President likes to prepare
his own speeches, and, with
adequate time, would himself
write and revise all of his
informal talks. His personal
touch, born of his days as
Governor, when he had little if
any help, has become an ensign
of his political existence. 33

Three unique characteristics distinguish the speech­
writing of the Carter presidency from that of other
contemporary presidencies. First of all, Carter is
taking a more prominent role in speechwriting than did
many of his predecessors. Secondly, speechwriting is not
as major a function for aides as it had been, for example,
in the Ford administration. Finally, speechwriters have
had to be willing to accept more criticism and changes

33 James Fallows,
in their drafts than they did in some other administra-
tions.

Conclusions

In examining each of the presidential administrations
from Roosevelt to Carter, one finds that "ghosts" or
"speechwriters" have been associated with past and present
administrations. Since the development of radio and
television, speechwriters have played an even more
prevalent role in the governmental circles than they were
required to play in the pre-radio era. The following
observations can be made about presidential speechwriting
since the beginning of the radio era.

First, speechwriters are presently being used to
prepare presidential addresses. They have been used
extensively since Roosevelt established his "Brain Trust"
in the 1930's.

Secondly, speechwriters have served in various
capacities in contemporary presidencies. They have served
as researchers or contributors, writers, editors, and in
some cases as critics. For instance, Nixon relied on
individuals to provide research and audience analysis while
Johnson used the contributive efforts of many individuals
in preparing speeches. Several presidents have employed
writers and editors in speech preparation, but only
Roosevelt encouraged his writers to serve in critical roles as well.

Thirdly, speechwriters have contributed the language of presidential rhetoric as well as the ideas forming presidential policy. Truman's writers, for example, primarily made stylistic contributions while the Eisenhower and Ford writers influenced policy as well. Speechwriters influenced both the language and the ideas of the president's oratory.

Fourthly, speechwriting practices followed no standard method or rules. Carter and Nixon used writers sparingly, although Eisenhower and Ford relied heavily on their speechwriting staffs.

Recent presidents have utilized both individual and committee speechwriting efforts in preparing their discourse. Kennedy relied on such individuals as Sorensen and Goodwin to prepare speech drafts. Johnson worked with an intricate network of contributors, writers, and editors on a collaborative basis.

Finally, presidents accepted varying participative roles in speechwriting practices. Some presidents worked closely with their writers, as did Roosevelt with his "Brain Trust" and Kennedy with Sorensen. Others largely removed themselves from the preparation process as did Eisenhower on occasion.
From these observations, the critic may draw a number of conclusions. To begin with, the critic must recognize that the President is not solely responsible, in most cases, for his own speech preparation. Secondly, a critic cannot look at presidential oratory as being the product of one individual, whether he is examining the language and form of the ideas or the ideas themselves. Thirdly, critics cannot use uniform standards in making comparisons between various speechwriting practices since a variety of methods are used in preparing presidential rhetoric.
CHAPTER THREE
THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES
OF PRESENT METHODOLOGIES

The rhetorical critic has long been enamored with a speaker's eloquence in times of great decision making. As Nichols suggests, "We have long turned to the individual in what we thought to be his great moments of decision in order to discover in him the marks of humanity."¹ Nevertheless, critics have been blinded from the realization that perhaps the individual is not solely responsible for the language or ideas represented in the speech.

The previous chapter recognized the speechwriter's presence and influence in presidential rhetoric. The purpose of this chapter is to focus on the role of the speechwriter in contemporary rhetorical theory and to suggest the strengths and weaknesses of present methodologies in examining ghostwritten speeches. The chapter does not explore individual methodologies in depth but categorizes common theoretical postulates related to speechwriting. Five major areas are discussed:

1. The non-existent or limited view of the speechwriter's presence.

2. Speechwriting practices as an extended form of ideas and language.

3. Speechwriting as a delegative, interactional situation.

4. The limitations of existing methodological tools for analysis.

5. The preparation process as a research interest.

These areas serve as the organizational framework through which the methodologies are examined and their limitations recognized.

The Speechwriter's Presence

Despite the fact that Nichols, Brigance,² and other leading rhetoricians have documented the ghostwriter's presence as far back as 411 B.C., critics have not yet discovered any ancient theorists who discussed the ghostwriter's influence in their treatises. Even in the theories of Campbell, Blair, and Whately, no mention was made of the speechwriter's presence or influence. In fact, rhetoricians have not found any theorists who

discussed the speechwriter's influence in their pedagogy prior to the twentieth century.

In the twentieth century, public address students have virtually ignored the speechwriter in their theses and dissertations. While it is true that many orators in the beginning of our nation's history did not rely on others to prepare their speeches, one discovers daily that an increasing number of individuals did have such assistance. In 1963, Nichols brought up a somewhat controversial question: "What happens to the approach to individual speakers that we as rhetorical critics have superabundantly taken?"\(^3\) In an attempt to respond to this question as well as others voiced by critics, rhetorical scholars began in the late 1950's and early 1960's to discuss the speechwriter's presence and influence on discourse.

Ernest G. Bormann\(^4\) and Donald K. Smith\(^5\) were the first to exchange views on ghostwriting practices. Their initial interest in ghostwriting centered around an ethics controversy. The ethics question became much less of an issue in later years. Nevertheless, Bormann and

\(^3\) Nichols, p. 44.


Smith's exchange set the stage for discussions related to the ghost's presence and influence in speech preparation.

Nichols' essay, "Ghostwriting: Implications for Public Address," which appeared in 1963, is the most articulate position to date on the practice. Nichols provided historical documentation of the roots of ghostwriting. While she acknowledged her concern that there is "hardly...a redeeming feature in the matter of ghostwriting," she insisted that public address students strive to understand the practice. Said Nichols:

> There is no gainsaying the fact that for historical understanding correct attribution of authorship is imperative. Unless the origin of thought is ascribed to its originator, accurate assessment of a speech from a rhetorical point of view is difficult, to say the least.\(^6\)

Thonssen, Baird, and Braden upheld Nichols' concern in their revision of Speech Criticism in 1970, suggesting that "The speechwriter presents...the critic with a problem he cannot ignore."\(^9\) These authors revitalized the

\(^6\) Nichols, p. 35.

\(^7\) Nichols, p. 47.

\(^8\) Nichols, p. 43.

Bormann and Smith controversy. They proposed that critics judge the morality of a speaker by determining whether or not the speaker is deceitful in his use of speechwriters. Thonssen, Baird, and Braden reached the following conclusion about the ghostwriter's presence in rhetorical criticism:

In the field of speech writing, the critic needs to look behind the derogatory label to discover the actual relationship between speech writer and speaker; he needs a much more precise view of the practice.¹⁰

In the history of neo-Aristotelian rhetoric, two schools of thought arose. The first school ignored largely the speechwriter's presence. Although Brigance suggests that the ghost was an active participant, he described these early ghostwriters as:

scribes for the illiterate... organizers and coordinators of ideas for great men who had all kinds of talents, except for words, but who had not the time under the pressure of other work for the drudgery of writing.¹¹

While ancient, medieval, and renaissance rhetoricians may

¹⁰ Thonssen, Baird, and Braden, p. 333.

¹¹ Brigance, p. 10.
have been aware of the ghostwriter, they did not acknowledge
his role in speech preparation in their manuscripts.

The second school of thought has evolved since the 1950's and has accepted the role of the speechwriter in contemporary rhetorical circles. Even though the second viewpoint is more widely supported today, critics still have not examined speechwriting practices to any great extent in their rhetorical studies.

An Extended Form of Ideas and Language

In addition to having a limited view of speechwriting practices, rhetoricians have often disregarded the philosophy that these practices are an extended form of the speaker's ideas and language. Although contemporary theorists make no direct statements to the effect that the practices are an extension of the speaker, their philosophies of language and rhetoric often indicate that their thinking is closely aligned to that position. Kenneth Burke's theories are representative of this philosophy.

Kenneth Burke, in *A Grammar of Motives*, introduces two terms in his dramatistic pentad which can be applied indirectly to speechwriting practices.\(^{12}\) Burke describes

the agent as "The person or kind of person [who] performed the act."\textsuperscript{13} He says, however, that the categorization of agents might "require further subdivision, as an agent might have his act modified...by friends (co-agents) or enemies (counter-agents)."\textsuperscript{14} Although Burke does not use the term "speechwriter" here, his language, by definition, does not refute the possibility that a writer serves as a co-agent in a rhetorical situation. Burke's pentad also includes the term "agency" which can categorically encompass the speechwriter. Strictly speaking, Burke defines the agency as the "means or instrument he [the agent] used."\textsuperscript{15} While any critic might reject the idea that a writer was an instrument through which the agent acted, that critic would not be guilty of misinterpreting Burke, this author feels, in reaching such a conclusion. The speechwriter is employed to assist the speaker in preparing his rhetoric. In this capacity, the speechwriter allows the speaker to be more accessible to his audience. The writer may serve as a gatekeeper, making the speaker more aware of public opinion. The writer may also help to broaden the speaker's own way of thinking.

\textsuperscript{13} Burke, A Grammar of Motives, xv.

\textsuperscript{14} Burke, A Grammar of Motives, xix-xx.

\textsuperscript{15} Burke, A Grammar of Motives, xv.
and his expression of those thoughts.

Whether critics readily identify the speechwriter with Burke's concept of "agent" or "agency" should not be the controversial issue. In fact, Burke, himself, suggests the transformational nature of his pentad in the following manner:

> Certain formal interrelationships prevail among these terms, by reason of their role as attributes of a common ground or substance. Their participation in a common ground makes for transformability. At every point where the field covered by any one of these terms overlaps upon the field covered by any other, there is an alchemic opportunity, whereby we can put one philosophy or doctrine of motivation into the alembic, make the appropriate passes, and take out another.¹⁵

It seems apparent to this writer that one can apply Burke's concepts of "agent" or "agency" to the speechwriter. This writer also believes that speechwriting can be examined within the context of Burke's notion of "terministic screens." In *Language as Symbolic Action*, Burke suggests that terministic screens direct attention, by saying that "any nomenclature necessarily directs the attention into some channels rather than others."¹⁶

He provides the analogy of viewing several different photographs of the same object. The only difference between the photographs is that of color filtration. Thus, the terministic screen directs our attention, expanding our view of the phenomena, by making slight alterations in that attention. What this concept means is that as the individual views an object, his perceptions may be controlled by an outside source. Although the image will remain virtually the same, the individual's view of that image may be altered slightly by gradual filtration.

In terms of speechwriting, the ghost may function as a terministic screen, directing attention in a given situation. The speechwriter, for example, by enlarging upon the ideas of a speaker or his policies, may alter the audience's perceptions of the speaker without their being completely aware of this change. Even when the writer produces only the language of a speech, his language, in essence, may become the structure through which the speaker's ideas are expressed. As the audience listens to a speaker's language they may be unconsciously affected by the speechwriter's frame of reference, in spite of the speechwriter's intentions or choice in the given situation. Therefore, the writer may serve as a terministic screen, cognizantly or non-cognizantly directing the audience's attention. By merely serving as an assistant in the speechwriting practice, he may be the
medium through which the speaker's ideas and language are filtered to a public. He is therefore a screen through which an audience focuses upon the image or, in this case, the speaker.

Perhaps the following example will indicate how the writer may function as a terministic screen, directing attention in a given situation. In an essay entitled, "The Intellectual Gigolo Strikes Back," a former speechwriter shares an example from his experiences as a writer at a Republican convention.

I felt that the candidates really were the expression of me. They were vehicles by which I expressed my art....Far from feeling inferior to the men whose ideas I assembled for communication to the people of the United States--or jealous of them--I regarded them as a means by which I might communicate as an individual, to the people.17

In this example, the writer acts as an agent or as an agency through which the candidate speaks. In addition, the writer makes an intentional move to direct the attention of the audience toward his own rhetorical goals. The "intellectual gigolo" goes on to suggest, however, that the speechwriter is an employee and only an extension of the speaker, not his equal. In this situation, the writer

may continue to function as a terministic screen only so long as the photographer, or in this case, the speaker allows him to make changes in the filtration or to continue to direct the audience's attention.

In applying Burkean theory to the speechwriting practice, critics may discover an individual or individuals who may act as agents or agencies creating their own language and ideas or extend the speaker's language and ideas. Regardless of his role, the speechwriter will perform the intricate task of meshing ideas and expressing them in language representative of the speaker. Therefore, in the case of presidential rhetoric, a writer becomes the form through which the ideas and language are filtered, directing the attention of the mass public.

In the realm of contemporary theory, some principles seem to be applicable to the speechwriting situation. In Burke's theory, rhetoricians can find a conceptual foundation on which to begin their study of speechwriting practices. In addition, they can discover patterns which illustrate how a speechwriter may extend the thoughts and language of a speaker.

A Delegative, Interactional Situation

Not only are critics broadening their views on speechwriting, they are beginning to recognize the inter-
actional context in which the phenomenon takes place. An increasing number of critics now perceive the speaker and his speechwriters as participants in a specialized network. Herbert Simons defines such a network as "delegative communication." According to Simons, delegative communication results when "two or more sources serve as communicators of the same message whereby a message is conceived by one person and encoded by another." Simons recognizes this process as an interactional one in which the speechwriter may have a reciprocal influence as well as his own personal persuasive goals. In this reciprocal role, the writer may participate in an exchange between other writers as well as be involved in a transactional dialogue with the speaker.

Simons is joined by other theorists who propose that speechwriting must be examined within the context of an interactional process. Wayne Brockreide, in an article, "Dimensions of the Concept of Rhetoric," submits that rhetoric may be transmitted indirectly through a channel. Says Brockreide, "The oral interpretation act, the speaker

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19 Simons, p. 72.

who reaches the newspaper reader via a reporter, the tape recording, television, the two-step flow of communication all illustrate the indirect channel through which the speaker transmits his message."\(^{21}\) Unlike the tape recorder or other strictly technical sources, the speechwriter may well be an active participant, filtering and producing signals which may in turn be transmitted as part of the message. Brockreide's interpretation, therefore, parallels Simon's concept of delegative communication and supports the idea that speechwriting is an interactional communication process, in its own right.

The interactional nature of the process may also be identified with the basic theories of "group mind." Nichols perceptively relates this concept to ghostwriting saying, "What we thought to be the most individual thing of all--a man's thought--is giving way to the group mind."\(^{22}\) The term, group mind, refers to the participants in a group forming one personality or mode of behavior in order to function on a group level. The term implies that the group may take precedence over the individual. According to McDougall, five criteria are necessary for group mind; at least three of these criteria seem, to this

\(^{21}\) Brockreide, p. 321.

\(^{22}\) Nichols, p. 46.
writer, to be applicable to the speechwriting practice.\textsuperscript{23} First, McDougall believes that any concept of group mind must have continuity for existence. Within the speechwriting situation there must be some continuity, organizationally as well as philosophically, in order for the group to function effectively in its task. Secondly, interaction between members of the group is necessary. Interaction between the speechwriting staff or between the writers and the speaker is essential in determining what the speaker says and the language with which he says it. Finally, groups have specialized functions. For example, individuals may serve as contributors, researchers, writers, or editors in any given situation. The critic must view speechwriting practices, not only as a technological extension of the speaker, but as an active indirect channel through which the writer transmits his message. As speechwriters interact among themselves or with the speaker, a sense of group mind develops which is based upon that interaction, individual functions, and the overall continuity demanded for their existence.

When rhetorical critics fail to recognize speechwriting practices as an interactional process, they ignore a significant aspect of the rhetorical situation. Samuel

Becker considers this problem in his essay, "Rhetorical Studies for the Contemporary World":

As scholars of rhetoric and public address, we...need to give more serious thought and study to the impact of the corporate communicator or source in the communication environment.24

Becker is joined by two scholars, Martin J. Medhurst and Gary C. Dreibelbis, who recommend that rhetorical guidelines be extended, when examining speechwriting practices, to include elements of small group and interpersonal research.25 Medhurst and Dreibelbis agree that the critic must determine, "What the differences are, if any, between invention in political settings and invention in other small group situations?"26 The contemporary theorists, as well as others, propose that the bounds of rhetorical analysis be applied to delegative, interactional situations which encompass the speechwriter.


26 Medhurst and Dreibelbis, p. 42.
Limitations of Existing Methodologies

In 1975, when this writer began her study of ghostwriting, she discovered no specific methodological system for examining speechwriting practices. Most public address studies rarely even mentioned the speechwriter's presence. Most studies were not uniform in their methodologies. The following pages provide a review of the major studies on speechwriting and identify their limitations.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, six theses and dissertations in the field of speech focus on political speechwriting. Even though these studies focus on speechwriting, they present few new methodological tools for analyzing ghostwritten speeches and practices. Both Starr and Curtis gathered principal data from personal interviews with former speechwriters. Starr, who served as a speechwriter for several years in state government, uses an interview format similar to a questionnaire developed by Dwight Freshley for his study, "Gubernatorial Ghostwriting."

Freshley's questionnaires cover the speechwriter's age, sex, educational level, length of acquaintance with the governor, academic majors and minors, academic courses of value, professional background,

methods of speech preparation, criteria for evaluating a speech, and factors influencing their present theory of speechmaking. Curtis does not attempt to make as extensive a biographical sketch of speechwriters as does Freshley, but limits his discussion to the organization of writers and practices associated with speechwriting. While this writer believes that the interview is an excellent primary source, its value as a research tool is hampered by practical barriers. Few students have the opportunity to interview former writers; so, the interview serves as a limited and partially biased source in speechwriting research.

In his dissertation, Starr presents another possible tool for the critic—the content analysis. While content analysis studies are growing in popularity, the study completed by Starr is so questionable statistically that one cannot make a fair assessment of its value for speechwriting studies. Starr's two basic flaws concern sampling errors. First, Starr chooses two different speechwriters, one who wrote for the public official when he was Secretary of State and the other writer who wrote for him as Lieutenant Governor. Merely the diversity represented by these two situations suggests that Starr cannot offer any sound conclusions from which to generalize. In addition, Starr takes the mean scores of lexical analysis tests,
conducted on twenty ghostwritten speeches, and compares those means with the scores on a single speech, delivered extemporaneously by the speaker. The reader cannot help but wonder how the researcher can generate nearly two pages of hypotheses on nine lexical measures from this kind of "comparative" data. While it may be that content analysis studies are a viable tool for studying ghostwritten speeches, Starr's study leaves the reader with some unsolved questions and doubts.

While Curtis relies on the interview as a primary source, he provides critics with some concrete guidelines for developing a methodology. Curtis proposes four guidelines which he says the critic must observe in studying the speechwriting situation:

1. The rhetorical critic must view presidential speechwriting in the context of the totality of presidential responsibilities and workload.

2. The rhetorical critic should evaluate speechwriting in the context of the composition and duties of a given president's staff.

3. The rhetorical critic should evaluate speechwriting in the context of a staff's contributions to the different types of presidential speaking.

4. The rhetorical critic should evaluate speechwriting in the context of the presidency as an "institution." Curtis maintains that any critic must account for these areas of inquiry in examining ghostwritten speeches.

In her own thesis, this critic applied neo-Aristotelian principles to the study of speech preparation. She adapted the rhetorical canons--invention, disposition, and style--to the speechwriting situation, delineated the steps followed in processing the ideas, determined the organizational patterns used, and examined the language of the speech. She reached the following conclusions:

Rhetorical canons...served only partially as guidelines in which to explore the ghosting process. I found that these canons are insufficient in covering staff involvement. So while the canons are useful aids in critiquing the final product, they do not offer a method for analyzing the entire practice. The canons, in short, do not provide an efficient methodology to examine the organizational staff and processes through which a draft evolved.


The critic found herself in agreement with Anthony Hillbruner, who feels that the rhetorical canons hamper "the latent creativity and diversity of approaches to criticism." 31

In summary, no critic has been able to propose a methodological framework extensive enough to examine all the aspects of speechwriting. Interviews provide excellent information but are limited by barriers of accessibility. Content analyses may offer a great deal of information about a ghostwriter's influence on the speaker's language, but no studies to date have been statistically reliable. Even studies in traditional veins have not provided an efficient methodology for examining the entire process or product. This writer is convinced that new methodological frameworks must be developed and adapted to existing theories.

The Preparation Process as a Research Interest

If one considers the overall strengths and weaknesses of present methodologies, he will discover a crucial aspect of criticism which rhetoricians have failed to examine. Many critics virtually have ignored a factual

premise--that a speechwriter functions within a process. Herein lies the real argument that speechwriting is a "form" which must be studied as an integral part of an overall process. Simons contends that speechwriting involves "reciprocal influence through delegative channels."32 The writers, acting as agents or agencies or channels, are participants in an interactional process whereby they may be seen as "bargaining negotiators" with their own personal performative roles and goals. Consequently, it becomes imperative for the critic to examine the speechwriting process in order to determine variables inherent in that process which may affect the final product.

With perhaps the exception of Curtis' dissertation, no previous studies have focused on the drafting process. Curtis discusses the ghosting process in terms of the organization of writers and their participation in the process. Craig R. Smith, in "Contemporary Political Speech Writing," stresses the importance of knowing "how the speech writing process works."33 The problem with Smith's goal is that he never develops any system for the critic to determine how the process works.

32 Simons, p. 73.


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L. Patrick Devlin joins Smith in recognizing the importance of the process by saying:

A rhetorical critic analyzing and evaluating a delivered speech may be aided if he can uncover and understand the process by which the speech was composed. . . . The input of the speechwriter can be as important as the situation, speaker, or audience.34

Although Devlin offers no detailed method for studying the process, he suggests three investigative areas for rhetorical critics. These are knowing the politician and his writers, knowing the circumstances under which a speech is composed, and knowing who worked on a speech.

In yet another article, Medhurst and Dreibelbis suggest that the critic consider the relevant aspects of political invention in much more depth. The authors propose that critics attempt to discover how the speechwriter functions in the creation of ideas, policies, and rationales. Medhurst and Dreibelbis conclude:

The importance of understanding the genesis of ideas, both in terms of scholarly research and national well-being, can hardly be over-emphasized. . . . In short, what we need are specific case studies which focus on

relevant aspects of political invention. By first focusing on the genesis of these ideas with reference to people, dates, and documents, the scholar can advance knowledge in the area of policy evolution and its public expression.35

From the positions taken by Curtis, Smith, Devlin, and Medhurst and Dreibelbis, one senses avid support for new methodologies or the expansion of traditional methods. Although these positions are taken by contemporary figures in rhetorical theory, they seem to have the support of some traditional theorists. For example, Donald C. Bryant, in Rhetorical Dimensions in Criticism, describes goals of criticism in the following manner:

Rhetorical criticism is systematically getting inside transactions of communication to discover and describe their elements, their form, and their dynamics and to explore the situations, past or present, which generates them and in which they are essential constituents, to be comprehended and judged.36

If the critic is going to explore the speech process in detail, this writer feels it will be necessary for him or her to examine the speechwriter's role. In 1970,

35 Medhurst and Dreibelbis, p. 42.
members of the Committee on the Advancement and Refinement of Rhetorical Criticism, at the Wingspread Conference, made the same kind of recommendation to rhetorical scholars, concerned with future studies in public address:

More than ever before, the rhetorical critic must enrich his perspective and analytical approach, with the full range of insights, conceptualizations and methodologies being developed by his own and other disciplines. We also realize that the constituent element which we take to comprise the rhetorical transaction occur in more numerous behavior contexts than we have heretofore studied systematically.37

Critics should be assured that the speechwriting process is a viable research interest which should be pursued. They can also be assured that any attempt to extend present methodologies, to consider this phenomena, will probably meet more acceptance today than it has met in past rhetorical circles.

CHAPTER FOUR
EXTENDING THEORETICAL POSTULATES
TO CONSIDER SPEECHWRITING

For centuries rhetoricians following in the Cicero-nian tradition, established a strong case that a man's words are a reflection of his logical, emotional, and ethical frame of reference. These rhetoricians assumed virtually that the individual's speech is a product of his language and ideas and his interpretations and response to a rhetorical situation. The purpose of this chapter is to indicate how this assumption may be only partially valid in contemporary presidential speechmaking.

Since the days of Aristotle, critics have agreed that the primary components in the speech process are the speaker, his message and the audience. The speaker's ideas and language comprise the message. Aristotelian critics examined the immediate audience and the historical perspective as a part of the situational environment. When a rhetorician defined the term "speech," he referred to a process in which an individual responded intellectually and linguistically to a situation. To this basic rationale, the critic added his own assumption that the speaker
interpreted a given situation and prepared his own response accordingly. Hence, the critic examined the speech text to learn more about the speaker, his ideas, language, and evaluation of the situation.

Rhetoricians developed various methodologies for studying the speech process. They perfected their canonical system and developed other approaches which allowed them to examine one or more facets of the speech process. As Lawrence Rosenfield contends, critics proposed two approaches to the study of a speaker-message relationship, a S→M or the S«M dyadic relationship. Both approaches focus on the discourse as an expression of the speaker:

One (which actually concentrates on the S→M relationship) seeks to account for the rhetor's behavior as a function of the factors which influenced him: his education, the books he read, the persons who inspired him, and the like. The other variation of the S-M focus, S→M is best typified by neo-Freudian critics who treat the aesthetic event as symptomatic of the artist's personal life and psychodynamics.1

Critics who practice a S«M approach view the speech process initially as a biographer, uncovering circumstances and events in the speaker's background which might

influence his rhetoric. Of the case studies this writer has already seen, a majority take the S→M approach to criticism. Other critics prefer to examine the S→M relationship. In these cases, the critic examines the speaker's rhetoric and makes inferences about his psychological character manifested through his language. In many instances, the rhetorician develops a structural understanding of the speaker's message. Regardless of the perspective, the critic contends that the message is an extension of the speaker.

The second relationship is the dyadic one between the speaker and the rhetorical situation. According to Bitzer, the rhetorical situation involves the complex of people, events, objects, and relations presenting a potential exigence or modifying an existing exigence through rhetorical discourse. The speaker's relationship to the rhetorical situation may be on a historical-transcending level or on an immediate-reactionary level. Patton suggests that exigence may function on a causal or creative level. The historical or causal level may set the stage for the speaker's rhetoric. Says Patton:

\[\text{The distinguishing feature is that if and when rhetorical discourse develops, it can be said to do so}\]

in relation to some set of events
or experiences capable of positive
modification through the assistance
of discourse.\(^3\)

The speaker's rhetoric develops as a response to the
situation, an S*R relationship, and is given rhetorical
significance by the situation. Furthermore, the relation­
ship of the speaker to the rhetorical situation, S\*R, may
be viewed on a creative basis in which the speaker reacts
to his immediate audience. Patton addresses this duality
as follows:

This means that while rhetors
cannot respond without perceiving
an exigence or constraint, their
response, when produced, is an
encounter with the events and
experiences which form part of
their objective world.\(^4\)

In examining the S-R or S\*R relationship, the critic
examines the rhetorical environment and the speaker's
response to and within that environment.

In discussing the concept of "delegative communica­
tion" Simons suggests that ghostwritten speeches evolve
from a process through which writers and speakers

\(^3\) John H. Patton, "Causation and Creativity in
Rhetorical Situations: Distinctions and Implications,"
Quarterly Journal of Speech, 45 (February 1979), 44.

\(^4\) Patton, p. 49.
The ghostwritten speech is not the product of a single individual although he alone may have written the drafts. Regardless of his degree of involvement in the process, the speaker must be viewed as an entity separate from the writer. Speechwriting involves a delegative situation and can never be seen as anything but an interactional exchange between the writers and the speaker despite their various degrees of participation in the process. When a President relies on an individual or a committee of speechwriters to prepare his rhetoric, he forces the critic to consider the speechwriter as another variable in the drafting process. Hence, the critic must take an interactional view of the relationships.

The relationship between the speaker and his writers interests critics because it thrusts the study of speech preparation into an interactional framework. The speechwriter has his own frame of reference, as does the speaker, from which he constructs his ideas and language. As each individual perceives the stimuli around him he cognitively acts in response to those stimuli, projecting his ideas through language, as the following diagram illustrates:

When the speaker and speechwriter interact, they confront one another's ideas and language, which they may incorporate into their own frames of reference. Moreover, the speaker's ideas and language may now act as a stimulus to which the writer can respond and vice versa. The exchange of ideas and language are visually represented in the diagram on the following page.  

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6 Adapted from a proposed model of interpersonal communication discussed in Suzanne E. Condray and David M. Klein, "On a Theory of Language," unpublished paper, Louisiana State University, December 1978.
Through such an interactional process, the speaker may intentionally or unintentionally alter the writer's perceptions, ideas, and language or the writer may intentionally or unintentionally alter the speaker's perceptions, ideas, or language.
The first inquiry a critic must make is to determine who is involved in the speechwriting process. The critic may find that a single writer was responsible in drafting a committee effort. If an individual writer was primarily responsible, then the critic would be concerned with the interaction between the speaker and the writer. However, if the speechwriting process reflects a committee effort, then the critic would want to examine both the interaction between the writers and the interaction between the writers and the speaker. The critic would seek essentially to discover what the relationship was among the writers as well as the relationship between the writers and the speaker. He would try to determine what effect these relationships had on the speechwriting process.

As was suggested in an earlier chapter, the committee effort is subject to the characteristics of small group communication. In examining the relationship among writers, the critic may discover that individuals take distinctive roles in preparing the draft of a speech. The critic would want to look at these roles and determine if the individuals had participative goals which differed from those collective goals of the group. For example, the critic might find that individual goals ran contrary to the group mind and jeopardized the group's efficiency. Also, the product might reflect the individual writer at
times and the committee effort on other occasions. In a similar manner, the critic could examine the interaction between the writers and the speaker to determine if the speaker's goals differed from those of the writers.

By examining these roles, the critic may perhaps be able to discern the effect of the group's interaction on the speechwriting process, the effect of the speaker and writer's interaction on the speechwriting process, and the overall effect of interaction on the process. In addition, the critic might be better prepared to discuss the organization of participants and their responsibilities in speech preparation.

The critic may gather information concerning the interaction through interviews in which participants are requested to describe this relationship. (As any researcher, the critic would have to carefully guard against the individual's bias and attempt to verify responses.) Secondly, he would want to examine any biographical and autobiographical accounts which might be applicable. Probably the most reliable information would be primary sources which either provided a transcript of such interaction or correspondence referring to the situation.

Of all questions facing the critic, this one of interaction and relationships is probably the most difficult one to research without primary source material.
The critic must acknowledge that speechwriting is a process and does not occur within a vacuum. Speech drafts often are continually revised as a result of the interaction between writers and the speaker. Thus, the critic might be able to see the direct effects of this interaction through the evolution of drafts.

A critic who examines a speech which is written solely by the speaker need not consider this interactional phase. However, any critic who evaluates a ghostwritten speech, must include the speechwriter's influence in his analysis. Instead of analyzing the dyadic relationships between the speaker and his message, the critic should consider a triadic relationship between the speaker, the speechwriter, and the message. The critic should also examine the speechwriter's influence in the relationship between the speaker and the rhetorical situation. This writer's purpose in the remainder of the chapter is to show how a critic may adapt his methodologies to the study of these triadic relationships.

First of all, the critic may consider the speechwriter's influence on the message of the speech. He may discover that the message is not completely a function of the factors which influenced the speaker, but it is the product of those factors plus the ones which influenced the speechwriter. In addition, he may find that the message is symptomatic of both the speaker's and
writer's psychological character. Marie Hochmuth Nichols states, "The reality of the character of the speaker passes into the pen of the ghost writer." This writer amends Nichols' position slightly, proposing that the character of the speaker passes through the pen of the ghost writer, in that the ghost may alter his perception, intentionally or unintentionally.

Through interaction, a speechwriter may influence the speaker's invention process or the language he uses to express those ideas. Ultimately, the speechwriter may contribute to the ideas or language of the message. The critic might examine either or both triadic relationships formed. One includes the speaker, the speechwriter, and the ideas of the message, while another encompasses the speaker, the speechwriter, and the language of the discourse. The following figure diagrams this critical perspective:

In the Speaker-Speechwriter-Message (Ideas) triad, the critic is concerned with the invention process of the speech. Since there are at least two contributors in this process, the critic may want to determine whose ideas are presented. He may not be interested in naming the participants, but he might want to know whose ideas are chosen and why. Rosenman makes this argument in discussing the Roosevelt writers:

Nearly every major speech of a President is, in one way or another, a policy-making speech and those who are around when it is being prepared and while it is going through its many drafts, with numerous changes and insertions and deletions, are in a peculiarly strategic position to help shape that policy. Very often they may have prepared the first draft themselves...which... may contain an important statement of policy... Those who have helped prepare it have the great advantage of being right at his [the President's] elbow ready to argue their point of view.

In the descriptive segment of his analysis, the critic may want to acknowledge the speaker's intentions throughout the drafting process. He may wish to indicate what revisions were made as the speech developed. The critic's primary task is to determine what influence the writer

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had in the invention process and the projection of the speaker's ideas in the text.

The critic may examine any remarks made in correspondence which directly state the speaker's intentions, or he may simply find this information discussed in secondary sources, like the remarks made by Rosenman. By examining all available drafts of the speech, the critic may be able to disclose if and how ideas change through the preparation process. Finally, the critic would want to compare the final written drafts with an oral transcription to find out if any significant changes were made by the speaker in the presentation of the message.

In addition, the critic should examine the contributions of the speaker and the speechwriter to the language of the message. Language has always been important to the rhetorician because it reflects the speaker's personality and the way in which he structures his world. If the language is to play such an essential part of our understanding of the discourse and of the speaker, then it must be thoroughly examined. The speechwriter and the speaker's styles may appear to overlap in the text of an address, but when they are considered in detail the critic may find several differences between the two styles. This critic does not feel that texts should be examined in order to point out minute differences. On the contrary, she believes that this would be a useless task. However,
she thinks that any major differences in a writer's and speaker's language should be noted because they may reveal a great deal about the effectiveness of the rhetoric. For example, a writer whose own language is rather ornate and grand might lead us to believe that the speaker's natural language is similar, when that is not the case. Also, a researcher doing a content analysis of a speech might incorrectly use a language sample from a text to make observations about the speaker's linguistic behavior. In both cases, the critic might be guilty of attributing the writer's language to the speaker.

The critic would naturally be concerned with the writer's ability or inability to capture the natural style of the speaker and recreate that in the prepared discourse. Perhaps by comparing the speaker's oral style in extemporaneous and impromptu speeches with the style of prepared rhetoric, the critic will be able to see some differences which might affect the language of the discourse.

Again, by looking at the drafting process, the critic can note any changes in the language of the speech over time. The critic might notice particular changes which he can attribute to stylistic differences between the writer and speaker by closely examining the speaker's own editing. He may also be able to see changes in language which reflect the speaker's personality or the differences
Finally, the critic may want to compare the language of the last prepared draft with the speaker's language in the presentation of the message. The critic might not only find out how the speaker adapted his language to that particular audience, but he might also discover extemporaneous remarks which reveal more discrepancies between the speaker's natural style and the prepared rhetoric.

Critics also adapt their theoretical constructs to include the speechwriter in their evaluation of the speaker's relationship to the rhetorical situation. In their research, the critic must consider two principles. The writer extends the speaker's awareness of the rhetorical situation and may assist the speaker in identifying the causal forces within the situation. In addition, the writer may allow the speaker to be more accessible to public opinion and may extend the speaker's creative faculties in responding to his audience. The following figure diagrams this perspective:
The critic explores the speaker and speechwriter's relationship to the rhetorical situation to determine the significance of the situation. He examines the historical perspective in terms of the speaker's and speechwriter's backgrounds and ability to respond to this situation. The critic needs to examine the writer's background and preparation to deal with this situation, as well as his ability to determine the speaker's intentions in the given rhetorical situation. He attempts to monitor their sensitivity to the environment and the factors which causally necessitate a response. The speechwriter's and speaker's knowledge of historical precedents and experiences in responding to similar circumstances is a valuable asset to the critic.

The relationship between participants and the immediate reaction to the situation is also of prime importance to the critic. He may discover that it is necessary to look at how the writer as well as the speaker creates discourse. The speechwriter may make his own persuasive appeals to the audience. He may create rhetoric which he feels is warranted by the immediate situation. In addition, the speechwriter may influence the speaker's accessibility to his audience. He may act as a "palace guard," insulating the President from public opinion, or he might work as an informer, keeping him
 abreast on public polls and opinions, as Reedy suggests.\(^9\)

A speechwriter may even create discourse which responds to a particular audience, thereby extending the speaker's creative faculties. The critic examines these contributions and determines their value in the preparation process.

The critic's primary aim when evaluating a ghostwritten speech is to explain the triadic relationships which evolve from the writer's presence. While he may only choose to describe and evaluate one aspect of the speech process, the critic acknowledges that aspect as only one entity in the overall process. The critic views each relationship in terms of the speaker and speechwriter's influence on the message or rhetorical situation.

Donald C. Bryant contends that any critical perspective must go beyond the descriptive phase. Bryant proposes the following phases in rhetorical criticism:

1. To discovering and explicating the elements and form of particular discourses;

2. To generalizing particular discourses, or their informative-suasory dimensions, into the wider phenomena of the rhetorical, especially public address;

3. To showing how particular discourses participate in families of didactic and suasory discourse to which they may be related;

4. To supporting value judgments.\textsuperscript{10}

This writer proposes that the critic, who examines a text prepared by a speaker and writer, must consider each of these phases. His criticism should contain three steps: description of the speechwriting process; analysis of the speechwriter's influence in the effort; and an evaluation of the speech in terms of the triadic relationships cited above.

The critic describes the speech process by recognizing the participants, noting their roles in the speech process, and outlining the steps in the drafting of the speech. Then he explains the speechwriter's influence in each relationship. In this step he analyzes the speechwriter's contributions in the process. Finally, the critic evaluates the speechwriter's ability or inability to influence the speaker's rhetoric, according to a proposed set of criterion.

The writer suggests four standards for judging a ghostwritten speech. The purpose of each standard is to determine the effect of the speechwriter on the process and the final product. These criteria are:

1. Did the speechwriter's presence enable the speaker to realize his fullest potentials inventively, linguistically, and in response to the rhetorical situation?

2. Did the speechwriter help to produce a superior text technically as well as artistically?

3. Did the speechwriter's presence and contributions contribute to producing the desired response?

4. Did the speech function as an instrument for social change?

These criteria parallel those standards proposed by Thonssen, Baird, and Braden in their evaluation of a speech. This writer's main concern is to extend traditional standards to account for the speechwriter's influence on the text and drafting process. By using these criteria, the writer hopes to provide the critic with a methodological system which may be easily applied to speechwriting cases.

In the first chapter, this writer acknowledged the fact that rhetorical critics have no methodology for examining a ghostwritten speech. Although a few scholars have proposed questions for investigative research on speechwriting, none have developed any systematic approach for that research. This writer suggests that rhetorical critics examine the ghostwritten speech largely within

the realm of traditional standards with one exception. Rather than look at the dyadic relationships between the speaker and his ideas, language, or response to the rhetorical situation, this writer recommends that the critic consider a triadic relationship between the speaker and speechwriter and the ideas, the language, or the response to the rhetorical situation. By examining the discourse triadically, this critic hopes to account for the speechwriter's influence on the drafting process and the final text.

While this critic focuses on presidential speechwriting, she contends that similar standards might be applied to other circumstances in which a writer participates in speech preparation and contributes to the ideas and language of the discourse or to the speaker's response to the rhetorical situation. She believes that by proposing such an open-ended approach, she can prevent critics from limiting their criticism into a restricted theoretical framework. The writer suggests that critics use as much or as little of her theoretical postulates as may apply to their particular critical endeavors. In addition, she advises critics to use her postulates simply to supplement and extend their existing critical methodologies. Ultimately, she believes that rhetoricians can enhance their knowledge of speechwriting practices and the influence of
the speechwriter on the speaker's message by applying this basic methodology to present theories of rhetorical criticism.
CHAPTER FIVE
AN APPLICATION OF THEORY:
LYNDON JOHNSON'S STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS
JANUARY 7, 1964

In January, 1964, Lyndon Johnson faced one of the first greatest challenges of his administration. Not only did he have to present his own legislative program for the coming year, he had to articulate his proposals to the Congress, the nation, and the world in his State of the Union message. One of the most significant features of this address is that it was prepared by members of both the Kennedy and Johnson staff. Critics can learn a great deal about speechwriting practices by examining the participant's role in this speech, his contributions to Johnson's ideas and language, his interaction with the President, and his ability to influence the speaker's response to the rhetorical situation.

The Speaker and His Writers

In order to understand the speechwriter's influence on the 1964 State of the Union address, one must first
identify the participants and discuss the interaction between them. Critics can begin their inquiry by studying the interaction between the speaker and the speechwriter and by determining the affect of that interaction on the drafting process and the final text.

This writer discovered that two groups participated in the preparation of the 1964 State of the Union address—former Kennedy aides and the Johnson staff. The interaction between the two divergent groups interests critics because it reveals differences in the writer's backgrounds and experiences. The interaction between the participants and Johnson also provides insight about how Johnson assembled writers and coordinated their activities in the early months of his presidency.

On December 2, 1963, President Lyndon B. Johnson asked several members of the late President John F. Kennedy's staff to continue to fulfill their responsibilities on his own staff.¹ Theodore Sorensen was among those who agreed to accept a similar role in the Johnson White

¹ Draft, White House Statement to the Press, December 2, 1963. The White House: Papers of LBJ, Ex & Gen FG 11-8-1/S, Box 112. All memoranda, speech texts, information packets, fact sheets, drafts, and letters noted herein are available at the Lyndon B. Johnson Library, Austin, Texas. All interviews not conducted by the author are deposited also in the LBJ Library.
House. Sorensen had been a primary advisor and speechwriter for Kennedy. His role in the Johnson administration was not nearly so encompassing as it had been with Kennedy. He was responsible primarily for preparing major addresses and outlining the legislative program for 1964. Sorensen's background and experience in this area made him a valuable asset to Johnson. He had worked closely with Kennedy in the previous three years and had experience in preparing such formal addresses. During December and early January, Sorensen served as the principal writer for the State of the Union address. He compiled the comments and contributions of several individuals into a polished draft. During the preparation process, Sorensen wrote at least seven drafts of the speech before Johnson approved the final text.

Other Kennedy aides participated in varying degrees. McGeorge Bundy, Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, attended some of the earliest planning meetings for the speech. Budget Bureau Director Kermit Gordon and Walter Heller of the Council of Economic Advisors assisted Johnson in planning an economic strategy for the policies presented in the speech. Although they played more significant roles in preparing the Budget Message, their contributions were an essential part of the State of the Union address.
Johnson relied on members of the Kennedy cabinet as well. On December 23, 1963, the President held an "Off Record Meeting" with several of his aides and cabinet members. Among the participants were Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman, Secretary of Labor Willard W. Wirtz, Secretary of Interior Stewart L. Udall, Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric, and Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach. The purpose of the meeting was to go over a proposed agenda for the January speech and to discuss the policies to be included in the address.

Jack Valenti and Bill Moyers of the Johnson staff coordinated the drafting process and helped develop the legislative platform for 1964. Both men were young Texans and close confidants of Johnson during the early days of his presidency. They had worked for Johnson since his senatorial and vice-presidential days and knew the man, his style, and his ideology.

Horace Busby was "the oldest aide in tenure" and Johnson's "first-ranking speechwriter," wrote Valenti.


Although Bushy did not take a major role in preparing the State of the Union in 1964, he contributed one of the initial drafts of the speech. Walter Jenkins, a former senatorial aide, along with George Reedy, attended the planning meetings with Busby, although they did not play significant roles in the writing process. Three seasoned campaigners, Clark Clifford, James Rowe, and Abe Fortas worked along with the Kennedy and Johnson men. Johnson valued the opinions of each of these men greatly and relied upon them to assist in the editing process.

Dick Nelson, an assistant to Moyers, was responsible for coordinating meetings between the Johnson aides and Eric Goldman, the Princeton historian. Goldman enlisted the support of about a dozen intellectuals across the country. The "Quiet Brain Trust" provided Johnson with his own council of scholars who could enhance his credibility with academicians, offer critical insight, and assist in polishing the President's rhetoric. Goldman contacted the following men and incorporated their suggestions for the address into a composite draft: Dean Fedele F. Fauri, School of Social Work, University of Michigan; Dr. Edwin H. Land, President of the Polaroid Corporation; Dean George P. Schultz, School of Business Administration, University of Chicago; President William C. Friday, University of North Carolina; Professor John C. Coleman, Carnegie Institute of Technology; Bruce Catton, American Heritage; Professor
Clinton Rossiter, Cornell University; Mr. C. McKim Norton, Executive Vice President, Regional Planning Association; John Fischer, Editor, **Harper's Magazine**; and Professor David Riesman, Department of Social Relations, Harvard University.⁴

The Kennedy and Johnson personnel jointly prepared the State of the Union address in 1964. Although some individuals had specifically delegated responsibilities, they were all participants in a committee effort with Johnson. Each contributor, in some manner, influenced the President's message to the nation and the world.

The initial preparation began in early December. Johnson assured former Kennedy aides that he needed their assistance. Moyers recalls that these aides responded favorably:

> They [the Kennedy men] were well intentioned. They wanted to help him [Johnson] in that time of transition and he wanted them to help. As a political move he wanted the Kennedy people to remain identified with Johnson so that all of the devoted Kennedy constituency in the country would not withdraw their support rapidly. And secondly, personally, he knew how hurt and wounded these people were and what a loss they had experienced, and he felt he could help them go.

through this transition by having them stay on the White House staff. 5

Sorensen began to meet with Johnson to discuss the speech and legislative policies. During the first week of December, they contacted one another constantly. Johnson gave Sorensen two directives about the speech. First of all, the speech was to be short and, secondly, domestic policies were to take priority over foreign affairs. 6 Moyers had already researched the history of the State of the Union messages and found the percentages of time spent on foreign and domestic issues. Johnson was convinced that the draft should be less than 3,000 words and focus on domestic legislation.

In the following weeks before Christmas, the participants met several times. On December 4, Johnson met with Goldman and suggested he coordinate the activities of the "Quiet Brain Trust." 7 Goldman, in turn, contacted these individuals. He requested that each respond to two questions within forty-eight hours:

5 Personal interview with Bill Moyers, July 10, 1976.


What should be the general theme of the State of the Union message?

What specific new programs, particularly in domestic affairs, should it recommend?

On Monday, December 9, the President requested that Goldman meet with members of his staff to "examine and search out new ideas, new proposals, for the State of the Union message." On December 12, Professor Goldman met with Abe Fortas, Horace Busby, George Reedy, Bill Moyers, and Dick Nelson to discuss the speech. Goldman and the staff members used the opportunity to get acquainted and to establish some guidelines for soliciting ideas and drafts from the academicians. Nine days later, Goldman submitted a report to the President which reflected the ideas proposed by trust members. On December 24, he sent his own draft to the White House.

During the second and third weeks of December, Johnson received a number of drafts and comments from government officials and friends. For example, on December 19, 1963, George Meany, of the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organization (AFL/CIO), sent his

suggestions to the President. Before the end of the year, Johnson received the remarks of Meany, Roy Wilkins of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Walter Heller, Arthur Goldschmidt, and Eugene P. Foley, Administrator of the Small Business Association along with the suggestions from Goldman's proteges. Sorensen continually revised his notes and explored new suggestions.

On December 23, at three o'clock in the afternoon, the President met in the Cabinet Room with Secretaries Rusk, "Freeman, Wirtz, Udall, Gilpatric and Katzenbach, as well as Clifford, Rowe, Portas, Reedy, Busby, Valenti, Jenkins, Bundy, and Sorensen. The purpose of the meeting was to begin preliminary discussion on three specific topics for the State of the Union message. These topics were domestic issues, international issues, and possible political position. The agenda was printed as follows:

A. DOMESTIC ISSUES
1. Pending Measures: Civil Rights, Tax Bill, etc.
2. New Measures: Poverty, Housing, etc.
3. State of the National Economy
4. Economy and efficiency in government.

5. Budget totals?

B. INTERNATIONAL ISSUES
1. Peace—East/West relations
2. Strength—National defense and alliance
3. Points of Danger—South Vietnam and Caribbean
4. Inter-American relations
5. Foreign Aid and Food for Peace renewals
6. Other?

C. POSSIBLE POLITICAL POSITIONS
1. Non-partisanship in foreign affairs
2. Challenge to Congress to act (reform of Congress?)
3. President for the Whole Nation
4. President for the Whole World

The "Off Record Meeting" served as a two hour work session for the participants. The meeting allowed Johnson the opportunity to interact directly with those individuals who were contributing information and drafts for the occasion.

For the next twelve days, Johnson spent more time interacting with individuals on the drafts rather than with a group. On December 24, the Johnson family and several aides went to Texas to the ranch for the holidays. At the ranch, the President frequently met with Valenti, Moyers, and Sorensen to discuss the speech. Sorensen prepared and revised a number of drafts while Valenti

and Moyers assisted in editing. On January 4, Sorensen met the President in his office at the ranch to work on the latest draft. Altogether, Sorensen prepared at least seven drafts of the speech between January 1 and January 7.

By Monday, January 6, Johnson and his staff returned to the White House. At 10:15 that morning, Moyers and Valenti met with Secretary McNamara, Secretary Rusk, Bundy, Sorensen, and CIA Director John McCone in the Cabinet Room to discuss the international issues in more detail. That meeting was followed the next day by a gathering of the National Security Council and members of the White House staff. Johnson wanted to polish the foreign policy section of the speech and discuss any questions or remarks with the National Security Council staff.

On January 7, the President previewed major portions of the address with legislative leaders. In addition, he presented his plans for stricter budget control and new domestic programs. Johnson continued to promote his policies the next morning in the "Off Record Meeting" with the press. By noon, on Wednesday, January 8, Johnson was ready to announce his goals to the American public.

The preparation process gave Johnson an opportunity to develop personal relationships with many of the participants. Writers also developed personal relationships among themselves. This critic believes that this interaction had an influence on the speechwriting process and
final product. It appears to this critic that two
variables affected these relationships—the differences
between the Kennedy and Johnson personnel and the contrasts
between Kennedy and Johnson.

Surely, it would have been easier for any speechwriter
to adapt to the man he had written for than to adapt to a
new speaker. To begin with, the Kennedy men were used
to a more literary style of language than the short, direct
phrases of this Texan. Sorensen had always worked indivi-
dually with Kennedy on drafts rather than collectively with
a committee of participants. He had much more personal
ties to the former President. Even though Sorensen was
experienced in presidential speechwriting and policy-making,
his could not adapt easily to Johnson's rhetorical or
presidential style. No one was very surprised therefore
to see him resign early in 1964. He submitted his resig-
nation one week after the State of the Union address. In
his letter of resignation, Sorensen wrote:

Having largely completed my work for
you on the 1964 legislative program
and messages, and with increased
confidence in both your dedication
to the policies of the late President
Kennedy and your election next Novem-
ber, I feel an obligation to devote
next several months to writing a
book about the late President and my
eleven years of service with him. 12

12 Letter, Theodore Sorensen to Lyndon B. Johnson,
January 14, 1964. The White House: Central Files, Box 452.
While Sorensen apparently had some difficulties adapting to Johnson and his style, it does not appear from this letter that he admitted having any intense personal problems with Johnson. In fact, in *The Vantage Point*, Johnson wrote, "It was obvious to me that he [Sorensen] was not going to remain on the White House staff indefinitely, but while he was there...he served with ability, working almost around the clock in an effort to smooth the transition and benefit the country."\(^{13}\)

Johnson also maintained a pretty good working relationship with other former Kennedy aides. Despite their differences in background, style, and humor, Valenti says that Johnson and McGeorge Bundy were well suited to each other. Said Valenti, "LBJ admired Bundy's thinking, always aiming at the essential, and uncomfortable with the trivial."\(^{14}\) Walter Heller and Kermit Gordon, two urbane scholars and unlikely Johnson staffers, worked with the President at the ranch that Christmas on the speech and proposed budget. However, both men and Johnson tried hard to maintain a spirit of comradery despite their academic differences. In recalling those days, Johnson wrote:


\(^{14}\) Valenti, p. 80.
Perhaps the setting, with scholars and government officials sitting around a kitchen table on a ranch far from an urban center, was not inappropriate for the drafting of a new program that would touch the lives of city and country dwellers alike.15

The President not only attempted to maintain a good working relationship with the Kennedy personnel, he also tried to improve his relationship with the academic community. Although Eric Goldman only met once with the President and once with the staff, he singlehandedly coordinated the ideas of trust members. Goldman's relationship with Johnson deteriorated in later years but seemingly was good in 1963 and January 1964. Nelson observed the meeting between Johnson and Goldman and made this statement to the President:

Your own eloquence and the willingness and humbleness of Professor Goldman indicated that the final result of this meeting would be of infinite value to you, the Administration, and the Nation.16

Johnson had a very congenial relationship with members of his own staff. Moyers said, "Johnson had a game, an

15 Johnson, p. 73.

uncanny ability to make everybody who worked for him at a time feel close to him. Also, he had a gift for bringing out a particular talent of a person around him." Valenti admitted that Johnson could be very brutal and demanding of his people, but he enjoyed his staff and treated them like family.

Most of the Johnson staff had worked many years with him. His aides, primarily Texans, came from lower-middle class America, unlike the Ivy League men on the Kennedy staff. The Johnson people were former journalists, business men, and one even was a former Baptist preacher. While they seemed individually gifted, on the whole, they were probably younger and less experienced than the Kennedy men. Johnson adopted a fatherly approach, advising, educating, and molding these men into politically perceptive young entrepreneurs. As a father, he demanded a great deal of discipline and perseverance from his White House sons and daughters.

Not only was the interaction between Johnson and the writers significant, the interaction between writers had a definite influence on the process. Although many of the Kennedy staff stayed on at the White House, Goldman felt they lived in a "sharply divided house." He said, "There

were 'Kennedy men' and 'Johnson men' and in a number of cases they worked in awkward, wary apartness. Johnson's staff had been subject to heckling from the Kennedy people after Johnson lost the Democratic nomination and went on to accept the Vice Presidency. Potential problem areas thus existed before the assassination. Many political critics felt that the Kennedy people would like to have dropped Johnson from the ticket in 1964. Goldman wrote, "To most LBJ men, JFK and his group were a band of clever, opportunistic sophmores who had taken on a man's job and settled for a patina of style."  

The animosity between members of the Johnson and Kennedy staffs could have been reflected in the preparation process of the speech. However, some things helped to prevent this situation. Sorensen was given the major writing role and Moyers assisted in a large amount of the editing. Goldman notes that Moyers bridged the gap between the JFK and LBJ men. Moyers had served in a "New Frontier" agency—the Peace Corps—and worn the respect of many more Kennedy personnel than other Johnson aides. He was also enamored with the "liberal intellectualism" which

19 Goldman, p. 19.  
20 Goldman, p. 111.
characterized many of the Kennedy men. So, Moyers, unlike other Johnson aides had few problems with the Kennedy men and helped to minimize the differences between the two staffs.

Of all the presidential speeches, the 1964 State of the Union message is significant because it incorporates two very opposing groups of writers with different backgrounds and personalities. The speech also is distinctive in that it forced Lyndon Johnson, who was unexperienced in delivering presidential discourse, to interact with those writers on the Kennedy staff who had previously worked on a State of the Union message. The speech offered Johnson an opportunity to hear differing thoughts from the individuals around him, to discuss his own views and intentions with participants, and to prepare a legislative program which would encompass the tenets of the 1960 Democratic platform and further the policies adopted by John Kennedy's administration. The speech also created a setting in which the critic can observe the interaction between the contributors and see what effects the differences in backgrounds and in philosophy played on the drafting process and the final text. By identifying the participant's role in the preparation process, the critic can determine how the writer influenced the speaker's ideas and language. By examining the interaction between
participants, critics can discover how contributors viewed the situation rhetorically and how they assisted Johnson in creating his own response to the situation.

The Rhetorical Situation

Having examined interaction between the participants, the next step is to consider the speechwriter's influence in responding to the rhetorical situation. The critic must determine Johnson's and his writer's ability to recognize the historical significance of the situation. Then, he must examine the writer's assistance in creating Johnson's response to that situation.

Shocked by the death of Kennedy, Americans needed a leader who could provide reassurance and direction to the nation. Congress wanted a President who could continue the Kennedy policies as well as propose new administrative policies. Johnson, in turn, wanted to present his own agenda of legislation and lay the foundations for an ensuing political campaign. He recognized the occasion as an opportunity to gain the support of congressional members and former aides on Kennedy's proposed legislation. The State of the Union address was to be his stage as he prepared to win public and congressional acceptance for his administration and its policies in these transitional
months and in the political year ahead.

Johnson recognized the constraints of the situation as well as the opportunities for his activist programs:

As a new president with no electoral mandate and with barely a full month of preparation available before it would be necessary to face the reconvening Congress, I knew the effort to break the legislative logjam might be foredoomed. ... If any sense were to come of the senseless event which had brought me to the Office of the Presidency, it would come only from my using the experience I had gained as a legislator to encourage the legislative process to function as the modern era required. As I said...on December 3: 'I don't anticipate a very long honeymoon--especially with a Presidential election only a few months away.'

What I wanted to do...was to try to unify leaders in the administration, the leaders in the two parties, and the leaders in the Congress.21

In order to succeed, Johnson had to begin by unifying the members of his own staff and making his intentions known to them.

It seems to this writer that Johnson succeeded in the first step. In a number of instances, Johnson verbalized his intentions to various staff personnel and writers. For example, he and Goldman talked about the problem of unity. Goldman encouraged Johnson to appeal to active liberals and conservatives to minimize their differences

21 Johnson, p. 35.
and strive together to reach common national goals. In Goldman's draft of the speech, he wrote:

Today, in a very real sense, we are all liberals, we are all conservatives—and we are all moving toward a new American consensus.22

Although these exact words did not appear in the final text, they do indicate the participant's awareness of a need for unity.

While other staff personnel understood the significance of this occasion, only Sorensen had any experience writing a State of the Union address. Sorensen also was probably the best prepared to discuss the Kennedy legislative policy and incorporate it into the speech. As the critic mentioned previously, Sorensen's responsibilities under Kennedy were all encompassing. Not only did he write virtually all major speeches for Kennedy, he greatly influenced administrative policy decision-making. Sorensen's familiarity with both the writing and the decision-making processes made him a valuable asset.

In contrast, Moyers, Valenti, and other Johnson men were ill prepared to draft a State of the Union message. They had worked closely with Johnson throughout his senatorial and vice-presidential years and knew the Johnson

22 Goldman, p. 51.
ideology. However, these men had been thrown into the whirlwind of the Presidency a little more than one month before the scheduled address. The task would have been great for any staff, but particularly one with little experience. The political implications of the transitional months and the importance of this message further intensified the pressures on the Johnson staff.

Not only were the Johnson men novices in addressing this rhetorical situation, their President was a novice as well. Critics should not overlook the fact that despite his legislative background and vice-presidential experiences, Johnson was delivering his first State of the Union speech. The prospect must have been somewhat frightening to Johnson, who was traditionally a "cloak-room speaker," avoiding major addresses. The occasion mandated a response from Johnson, but it did not guarantee that the speaker or his staff had the necessary experience to prepare his response.

Perhaps critics can only be assured of one thing--the occasion was a rhetorically significant one for the administration. The State of the Union address set the stage for presidential action in response to a torn and grieving nation. The rhetorical timing demanded that Johnson take decisive steps forward in order to lead the nation into a new phase in its history. In addition, the situation
created an opportunity for Johnson to review the accomplishments of his predecessor and to announce his own goals for domestic reforms. In many ways, Johnson used the occasion to make his debut as a political contender as well. Finally, the speech allowed Johnson to step forward as the new crusader, leading his people forward in an active legislative war on poverty, and helping heal the wounds suffered from the loss of their fallen leader.

The speech required that Johnson's staff work especially hard in accepting new responsibilities and adapt rapidly to these new demands. Throughout the process, the situation demanded that staff, Congress, political parties, and the American people join together for the sake of national unity and help make this transition as effortless as possible.

The Ideas of the Message

When a critic examines a speech, he usually is concerned with how the content of the text reflects the speaker's thoughts. In a ghostwritten speech, however, the critic must consider how the text reflects both the speaker's and the writer(s)'s thoughts. This section examines the speaker and speechwriter(s)'s influence on the ideas contained in the message of the speech. Particular
attention is given to the drafting process and the participant's role in determining what ideas are projected in the text.

Many aides and officials participated in the preparation of the 1964 State of the Union message. Of this group, some individuals contributed to the content of the speech as well as to its form. Collectively, the writers and editors played significant roles in determining the ideology of the speech.

The process of drafting the speech began in early December following Sorensen's acknowledgment that he would continue his speechwriting responsibilities. His first step was to secure the necessary background information for the speech. Johnson decided that the speech should have two purposes. First, the speech was to publicize the achievements that had been made under Kennedy and, secondly, the speech was to present Johnson's goals for his own administration which would further the 1960 campaign platform.

On December 11, 1964, presidential aide Paul Southwick sent Moyers a file on the 1960 platform with remarks on "all significant progress and achievements." During the next week, staff members reviewed the file and started

gathering additional information from government officials and agencies. The aides contacted all departments and agencies within the federal government and asked them to submit any reports or proposals to be considered for the address. A significant amount of the text was composed from these contributions. On some occasions, agencies even submitted paragraphs, prepared by their staff personnel, to be incorporated into the speech. On December 31, 1963, Eugene P. Foley, the administrator of the Small Business Administration, sent the following paragraph to presidential aide Walter Jenkins:

The small business investment company shows great promise of filling this financing gap at a minimal cost to the taxpayers. To date, almost half a billion dollars has been invested in nearly 10,000 small businesses by small business investment companies, and about 70% of that money came from private sources.24

Moyers forwarded this particular paragraph to Sorensen on January 2, 1964, for his consideration.

On other occasions, the President suggested that the writer send his latest draft to a departmental secretary or agency for review. For example, in 1963, Kermit Gordon, of the Bureau of the Budget, submitted a revision of

Sorensen's first draft and a proposed statement on federal pay for the State of the Union message. Such practices as these were adopted in many major addresses. They allowed the President and his writers to have a great deal of specialized assistance in preparing the content of a speech.

After Goldman consulted the group of intellectuals, he submitted their suggestions to the President. On December 21, 1963, Goldman wrote his report in which he stressed the need for action on domestic policies. Among the proposals were:

Recommend the establishment of a United State Reconstruction Agency—
to clean up trouble areas. . . .
Encourage work being done by private groups in the field of unemployment and civil rights. . . . Establish a Presidential Commission on Human Equality. . . . and . . . Establish an organization to attack poverty—such as a Domestic Peace Corps or a new kind of NYA or CCC.25

Many of these ideas found their way into the Sorensen drafts.

Finally, two agendas were prepared for the speech. The first of the agendas, discussed earlier in the chapter, included domestic, international, and possible political

issues and positions. Another agenda was prepared later which dealt with budgeted and non-budgeted items. Among the non-budgeted items were:

2. Determination under Foreign Assistance Act to allow continued construction of Children's Hospital in Poland.
3. Determination under Foreign Assistance Act to allow an assistance program for Indonesia.

Although Johnson did not cite any of these individual items in the address, he spoke generally about hospital expansion and independence for new nations. In the message he emphasized general rather than specific issues.

Once the agendas were prepared, Johnson spent a good portion of time discussing the proposals. Throughout the Christmas holidays in 1963, Johnson met with aides and friends and considered his policies and goals for the upcoming year, which were to be included in the speech. He reflected on those days at the ranch in his presidential diary saying:

I spent many long hours with them [Heller and Gordon], discussing, planning, and evolving the outlines

of a poverty program. Occasionally, staff members sat in on those sessions and made valuable contributions. . . . The challenge I presented to my advisers was the development of a new concept. I didn't want to paste together a lot of existing approaches. I wanted original, inspiring ideas.27

As a result of these conversations the theme of the address and administrative policies was born: "A War on Poverty." The theme was not a new one for Johnson. He had suggested similar campaigns both as a newspaper editor at Southwest Texas State College and as the Texas Director of the National Youth Administration. However, he was now promoting his ideas in a concerted program for the American people. Throughout the speech, Johnson built his case for a domestic equivalent of war which must be waged by each American.

The first drafts were reflective of this philosophy. Horace Busby wrote:

Our purpose is not to level our society but to permit all men to rise to the full potential within them, through doors of opportunity which open at all times to all men without regard to race or religion or region.28

27 Johnson, pp. 72-74.

Although the language did not become a part of any other draft, it echoed the Johnson sentiments. As the Goldman draft, Busby's rhetoric struck a note of optimism and idealism which was not as prominent in the Sorensen draft. Busby spoke of Americans as being strong, responsible, and courageous. Goldman took the same perspective saying, "The genius of the American people has been that they recognized when opportunity was knocking--and they threw open the door." Neither of these drafts, submitted early in the preparational process, really exhibits the same themes and qualities of the final draft.

It seems to this writer that the individuals who worked on the draft at the ranch were primarily responsible for the ideas presented in the speech. As they worked with Johnson around the kitchen table or in his small office, they placed less emphasis on America's past strengths and more on the need for action today.

On January 1, 1964, Sorensen submitted his first draft of the speech. The draft fulfilled Johnson's request in that it was a concise statement of the administration's proposed policies and it emphasized domestic


legislation. Sorensen's first draft was the skeleton for all future drafts, with one exception. Sorensen only loosely outlined the President's goals for foreign policy, in Section V, so he had to revise a great deal in this particular area. Otherwise, the content of the speech changed very little through the drafting process.

On January 2, 1964, Section V was revised. The differences between the January 1 and January 2 drafts seemed to be more in terms of organization than content. Sorensen divided the last section into categories which fulfilled the administration's requirements for a policy of peace. It seems to this critic that these categories made the organization of Section V much stronger than before.

During the writing process Sorensen prepared at least six drafts of the speech. Johnson and his aides revised the content of the speech in two ways. First of all, they were increasingly more specific about the administrative policies and actions as drafts were revised. Secondly, they reorganized the speech into nine parts rather than the original five parts and developed the ideas in each of these divisions.

One change was made in regard to the federal budget. Johnson had been working with Gordon and Heller on his proposed budget and wanted to use this speech to announce
his overall budgetary goals for the nation. The Budget Message was scheduled for January 21, 1964, and would provide fiscal details. On January 6, however, Johnson added the following comments to a draft for the State of the Union address:

The Budget to be submitted shortly is in full accord with this pledge.

It will cut our deficit in half, from $10 billion to $4.9 billion.

It will be, in proportion to our national output, the smallest budget since 1951.

It will call for a substantial reduction in Federal employment, a feat accomplished only once in the last ten years.

While maintaining the full strength of our defenses, it will call for the lowest number of civilian personnel in the Department of Defense since 1950.

It will call for total expenditures of $97.9 billion--compared to $98.4 for the current year, a reduction of more than $500 million.31

The only other change in the content of the speech was in the peroration, which was completely revised after the third draft. In the peroration, Johnson spoke of

Kennedy as a "builder of faith."^2 In the paragraphs which followed, Johnson once again attempted to identify himself as a President who could lead the nation in "expressing and fulfilling that faith" which Kennedy had built.

It seems apparent that Johnson wanted to be regarded as a man of action. "From the first planning meeting for the State of the Union message," wrote Goldman, "President Johnson had seized upon anti-poverty."^3 The mere phrase, "War on Poverty," suggested action. The Kennedy administration had begun to take legislative steps, but it had not threatened an attack on the problems as would the Johnson administration. From November 23, 1963, Walter Heller, Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors, had urged Johnson to confront the problems of poverty. Finally, two staff members from the Bureau of the Budget, Bill Cannon and Sam Hughes, suggested in a memo that an attack be made on the local level:

Basiclly, the idea was this: local organizations would be formed in the neighborhoods and communities where the poor people themselves lived.


^3 Goldman, p. 42.
and programs to help the poor would be channeled through organizations on the scene.\textsuperscript{34}

Throughout the drafting of the speech, Johnson was receptive to contributions like this one which promoted action. As he interacted with participants in the speechwriting process, Johnson accepted those individuals who fostered a desire for action. In overview, the State of the Union in 1964, seems to have been created out of desire for legislative action to combat the domestic ills of a nation. The speech was created by a President and group of individuals who shared that desire and longed to see it fulfilled.

The Language of the Discourse

One of the most visible influences of a writer's presence might be seen in the language of the discourse. The purpose of this part of the chapter is to examine the writer's role, as well as the speaker's participation, in preparing the language of the speech. It also considers the impact of differences in the participant's style on the drafting process.

\textsuperscript{34} Johnson, p. 74.
While several individuals were responsible for the content of the speech, the language of the 1964 State of the Union was mainly the product of Theodore Sorensen. Johnson admired Sorensen's ability as a writer and even urged his own writers to contribute drafts as polished as Sorensen's drafts. Johnson was particularly self-conscious of his inadequacies as a speaker and thought that Sorensen's writing could improve his rhetoric.

Sorensen was given the primary writing responsibilities for the speech. Throughout the process, Sorensen's drafts were the ones which contained not only the ideas of the speech but the language as well. He wrote the first draft and many of the revised drafts of the address.

In the Johnson White House, senior staff members usually assisted in the editing process. On this particular occasion, Valenti and Moyers were chiefly involved with the editing because of their presence at the ranch. They worked on the speech together with Sorensen and Johnson through January 4, 1964, at the ranch. Valenti and Moyers were valuable editors since they had assisted Johnson for several years and were familiar with his style. For instance, they knew that Johnson preferred that paragraphs be divided into groups of phrases rather than have lengthy sentences. They knew too that Johnson preferred short sentences and short paragraphs. 35

35 Moyers interview, July 10, 1976.
Valenti and Moyers also tried to look at a sentence, as Johnson would for political impact. The third from the last draft, included a statement on national defense which read:

We must take new steps toward the control and eventual abolition of arms. We must not stockpile arms beyond our needs or seek an excess of military power that is provocative as well as wasteful. It is in this spirit that we are cutting back our production of uranium and plutonium for nuclear weapons and closing many non-essential installations. And it is in this spirit that we call on our adversaries to do the same. Specifically, this nation is ready to meet, with proper and adequate safeguards, any verifiable arms reduction made by the Soviet Union.36

Valenti made two alterations which could have been a political deficit in an election year. He suggested that the stockpile of excess military power "could be" not "is" provocative. He also suggested that the final sentence about an arms reduction be omitted because it was politically detrimental language.37

Moyers insists that Johnson had even more political insight than others in editing a speech. Says Moyers:

He \(\text{Johnson}\) always read a speech better than anybody for its political impact. He was a politician, and he knew how different constituencies would see--would interpret a word or even an idea. He had an uncanny mastery of the symbolism of a speech and of how different groups would invest that speech with different symbols. He would say very concretely that you can't use that phrase...because of the way he saw that it would be perceived by somebody whom the speechwriter was not aware of. None of the speechwriters were politicians. Johnson used to say, 'You boys, writing these speeches, have never run for sheriff. You don't really know how really to write a speech, and if you'd go out and run for sheriff, you'd have more experience, and you'd know better how to relate this speech to an audience.'

This story not only serves to show the type of language Johnson wanted in a speech, but it further supports a comment, made earlier, that Johnson understood political action.

Perhaps Moyers' story also sheds light on differences between Johnson's and Kennedy's style. Johnson's language was typically concise and, although choppy at times, carried political punch. Sorensen's language was more embellished, as Moyers wrote, which created some problems:

\[38\] Moyers interview, July 10, 1976.
It was a more literary, alliterative, form of speechwriting, geared so uniquely to John F. Kennedy's own personal literary style...that it just didn't work. . . . It was like trying to wed Carlyle to Napoleon, and it just didn't work. Johnson was terribly uncomfortable; the audience was uncomfortable; the critics were uncomfortable.39

While the State of the Union message required a formal address, it is evident from Moyers' comments that Johnson was not totally comfortable with the style of language for this formal event.

Another source of dissatisfaction, however, could have been related to the fact that these drafts were committee efforts to some extent. Although Sorensen had been the primary author, many participants contributed drafts, suggested language, and assisted with the editing of the speech. This critic feels that the number of participants, the formality of the occasion, and the "laundry list" effect of such a speech would have presented some potential stylistic problems, despite these differences in style. While the language of the speech was probably not truly reflective of his natural style, Johnson was able to maintain a politically safe posture and still encourage national action and support.

An Evaluation

Speechwriters worked diligently with Johnson throughout the drafting phase for the 1964 State of the Union speech. They influenced the ideas and the language of the message as well as Johnson's response to the rhetorical situation. In the following pages this critic evaluates the speechwriter's presence and assistance in the overall process.

In the previous chapter, the writer proposes that the participants in the process may enable a speaker to realize his fullest potentials inventionally, linguistically, and in response to the situation. It seems to this critic that the speechwriter's contributions to the content of the message may be limited by situational aspects. For example, in this particular speech, Johnson needed to propose legislation which largely reflected the Kennedy policies and platform. Therefore, Johnson had to temper his own ideas within the context of Kennedy's previous policies. Because of his experiences in the previous administration, Sorensen was able to help Johnson adapt his ideas to those of Kennedy.

However, Sorensen alone could not enable Johnson to realize his fullest potentials inventionally. Johnson needed to promote fresh ideas and new programs rather than
only maintain Kennedy's programs. It seems to this critic, that the combination of the two staffs provided Johnson with an opportunity to examine the largest number of alternatives. The White House meetings and days at the ranch allowed the President to interact with individuals and carefully consider their ideas. As a result, this writer believes that Johnson's "War on Poverty" encompassed much more than it could have contained had it only reflected Johnson's ideas.

Nevertheless, the committee effort produced some negative results. As with most State of the Union speeches, the 1964 address became a "laundry list" of proposals. Consequently, the critic believes that the speech suffered stylistically. The format of the speech suppressed Sorensen's creative abilities as a writer. The formality of the address did not reflect Johnson's natural style. Sorensen could not elevate the rhetoric of this speech as he could with other formal addresses nor could he adapt to Johnson's natural language patterns. Linguistically, the speech did not reflect the individual. On the contrary, the speech reflected the committee of writers. However, while the speechwriters did not appropriately adapt to the speaker's natural language, they did adapt stylistically to the formality of the occasion. This critic finds that the language is "presidential" but not
"Lyndonese." The speechwriter enabled Johnson to adapt to the requirements of the occasion but not to realize his fullest potential as a speaker.

Possibly the speechwriter's greatest contributions were in their response to the rhetorical situation. This critic discovered that the participants sensed the historical significance of the situation and assisted Johnson in his response. They also recognized the necessity for Johnson to create his own rhetorical platform on which to articulate his administrative policies. Perhaps the Johnson men, Valenti and Moyers assisted the President most in preparing his own legislative platform. They eventually worked as congressional liaisons articulating Johnson's position.

While Goldman and members of his "Quiet Brain Trust" were not actively involved in the drafting process, they did aid Johnson in understanding the mood of the country and the significance of his response. In the beginning of the preparation process, the President relied on these individuals to evaluate major issues and propose an overall posture for his administration. Johnson also relied on such former friends as Clifford and Fortas to examine the political barometer and suggest a plan of action accordingly.

The presence of former Kennedy aides reinforced the
necessity for Johnson to use this speech as transitional leverage. They reminded him of the country's grief. The aides also influenced him in taking direct action to lead the nation forward in the footsteps of their former commander.

Altogether, the participants enabled Johnson to realize his potential in response to the situation. However, these contributors only partially helped the President to realize his potential inventionally or linguistically in the 1964 State of the Union address.

This critic believes that the speechwriters produced a superior text technically as well as artistically within the limitations of any State of the Union message. Sorensen created a speech which artistically excelled Johnson's former addresses although he was unable to adapt to the President's natural style. Sorensen was unable to produce a text as artistic as some of the addresses he had previously prepared for Kennedy. This writer believes that Sorensen was unable to work as well in a committee effort as he previously had worked alone. Perhaps Sorensen's work reflected his restricted environment. Technically, the writers outlined a superior plan of action for the administration. The speech projected Johnson's "War on Poverty" in terms of specific legislative programs.
Originally, Johnson wanted to use this speech as a means of proposing a new course of action. He also wanted to use the speech as transitional leverage for extending the Kennedy policies, gaining acceptance among members of the Kennedy staff, and enlisting the support of an intellectual clientele which his predecessor maintained. The speechwriter's presence and contributions were only partially successful in aiding Johnson in the endeavor. Through the preparation process, Johnson enlisted the help of twelve intellectuals in a "Quiet Brain Trust"; yet, of those twelve, several mentioned to Goldman their lack of support for Johnson. They perceived Johnson's motives and did not wish their contributions to be read as an endorsement. The Kennedy men had mixed emotions about working for Johnson. Although they offered to assist in preparing the speech, Sorensen and others reminded Johnson that they would leave his staff early in January, which they later did. However, the President, with his writer's assistance, seemingly achieved his desired response in terms of a long-range continuum. This critic believes that history will show that Johnson was able to gain more congressional support in the beginning of his Presidency than any other President has gained. Part of this success must be traced back to this speech, its ideas and its response to the historical situation and circumstances.
Johnson not only gained immediate support for proposed legislation, but he maintained that support for a period. He mounted one of the most successful presidential campaigns in the nation's history partially based on some of the programs advocated in this speech. Without the expertise of his speechwriters and their ability to enhance the President's rhetoric, perhaps Johnson would not have enjoyed such unlimited success.

The speechwriter's contributions helped Johnson to realize a great amount of his success. Moreover, their contributions helped the speech to function as an instrument of social change. The participants effectively outlined a message of transition. During the preparation process, the participants' interaction with Johnson made him more aware of differing viewpoints, the mood of the country, and possible alternatives. The speech became an instrument for articulating Johnson's "War on Poverty" and later his "Great Society." In the speech, Johnson expressed his basic philosophy and outlined his own thoughts for a new era of social legislation. He shared not only his own ideas but presented the ideas of those who had worked with him during his first days in the White House and those he conversed with at the ranch that Christmas in 1963.
CHAPTER SIX
AN APPLICATION OF THEORY:
LYNDON JOHNSON'S MARCH 31, 1968 SPEECH

On March 31, 1968, Lyndon Johnson delivered one of the most significant addresses of his presidency to the nation. In the speech, Johnson not only presented a major policy statement on Vietnam, but he also announced that he would not seek the Democratic nomination in 1968. While many historians and critics have examined the speech from various perspectives, none has considered, in depth, the speechwriter's role and influence. This writer believes that such a study can extend our knowledge of presidential speechwriting. Moreover, by examining the March 31 speech, critics can discover how committee and individual speechwriting efforts may differ.

The Speaker and His Writers

This chapter explores the relationship between the speaker and his writers and the impact of that relationship on the drafting process and text of the speech. It also identifies the participants and their roles in the
preparation process, discusses the writer's influence, and evaluates his contributions.

If one views the March 31 speech as a play he discovers two scenarios with two casts of characters. The first cast is large, including specialists in foreign affairs, staff personnel, and the principal figure—Lyndon B. Johnson. This part of the play is largely the product of a committee. The cast of the second scenario is small and intimate. This act represents an individual speech-writing effort. So one finds that the speech unites two casts of participants.

Johnson wanted one group of participants to prepare his policy remarks and other individuals to draft his personal statement. Harry Middleton, a speechwriter in the White House in 1968, recalls:

Before he announced that he was not going to run again, he [Johnson] made a major policy statement on Vietnam. Everything that he had to say before getting up to that final point would have itself characterized a major speech, had he not added this last business about not running. Now, the last five minutes of the speech, in which he said that he was not going to run again, were a totally different thing. There was no committee effort in that. . . . This was something that the President knew he wanted to do; he didn't ask a committee to help prepare that.¹

¹ Personal interview with Harry Middleton, December 21, 1979.
This writer sees two possible reasons why Johnson wanted to use different groups of participants. He probably wanted to keep his announcement confidential and did not want to release that information to a committee of writers. In the past, Johnson had problems with individuals leaking information to the press. He wanted to avoid that situation now. Secondly, Johnson felt that perhaps a committee could better prepare a policy statement while an individual could work with him more intimately in preparing a personal statement. Regardless of the rationale, Johnson used both committee and individual speechwriting efforts in preparing the televised address.

A committee prepared the policy segment of the speech. Says Middleton:

That speech delineating new policy, which involved a halt to the bombing and other things, was really a committee effort, because it had been worked on for many days and by many people. And I mean by that legitimately, because this was the enunciation of a new policy direction for the war in Vietnam. So, the government developed a position on this. It was an evolving position... with the Defense Department and State Department and other people having their input in it.2

The committee included past and present members of governmental agencies and departments as well as staff personnel.

Together with Johnson, they outlined a new position on Vietnam.

Johnson worked closely with these men for several months, trying to decide what actions he should take to improve the situation in Vietnam. Participants discussed alternatives open to the administration. During these months, Johnson made some significant changes in personnel, which meant that some who had contributed ideas in the beginning of the process were absent in the final drafting stages.

The roots of the March 31 speech can be traced back to the last days of October 1967. Johnson knew that he had to revise his administration's policies on Vietnam. In late October he discussed his intentions with several Cabinet members and associates. Although the President had not yet scheduled an address on the Vietnam situation, he set the wheels in motion for a speech. He asked several individuals to outline their ideas for a future address.

Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara was the first to contribute. On October 31, 1967, he suggested that Johnson propose a bombing halt in his speech. Former staff member, McGeorge Bundy concluded with McNamara that there should be no intensification of the bombing. Nevertheless, he opposed McNamara's plan for an unconditional bombing halt before the end of the year. While neither
McNamara nor Bundy were a part of the drafting process in March, they influenced the committee's decision on Vietnam policy from the first stages of speech preparation. When the committee decided in the last days of March to reconsider the bombing halt, they examined McNamara's earlier proposals. Eventually, they decided to incorporate many of McNamara's and Bundy's suggestions into the final text.

Robert McNamara and McGeorge Bundy had served in the Kennedy administration. Johnson developed a great admiration for both men. Of McNamara, Johnson wrote, "He was a loyal Cabinet officer and we had a close working relationship that endured some of the most trying circumstances imaginable."3 Even after Bundy accepted the presidency of the Ford Foundation, Johnson continued to consult him on foreign policy issues. Despite the fact that both men resigned, they maintained their friendships with Johnson and advised him on occasion.

After McNamara's resignation on March 1, 1968, Clark Clifford became Secretary of Defense. He worked closely with Walt Rostow, Bundy's successor as the National Security Advisor. Together, they formed a committee with Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Assistant Secretary of State for East

Asian and Pacific Affairs Bill Bundy, and White House assistant Harry McPherson. Clifford, Rusk, Rostow, and Bill Bundy drafted the major portion of the March 31 speech, outlining the administration's position on Vietnam. McPherson coordinated the drafting process, serving as the chief speechwriter for the final text. "The President," said Middleton, "was the chairman of the committee, and his input was final, and the one that made it formal, and the one that made it the actual enunciation of policy."  

This writer has already described Johnson's close relationship with Clifford, in an earlier chapter. At this particular time in the administration, Clifford's friendship and trust meant a great deal to Johnson, especially after McNamara's resignation, the TET offensive, and diminishing public support. Johnson welcomed Clifford's experience in foreign affairs as well. (During the Six Day War, Clifford acted as the Chairman of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board.)  

Johnson felt equally as fortunate to have a man like Dean Rusk on his staff. Rusk elected to remain on the White House staff after Kennedy's death. Johnson valued Rusk's experience and ability. Of their relationship, the President wrote:  

He stood by me and shared the President's load of responsibility and abuse. He never complained. But he was no "yes man." He could be determined, and he was always the most determined when he was telling me I shouldn't do something that I felt needed to be done.  

Although there were occasions when the two men disagreed, Johnson appreciated Rusk's candor and continued to respect his views as Secretary of State.

Walt Rostow provided a balance on the committee. He represented the conservative view that America's presence in Vietnam might forestall another major war. McPherson contends that "Rostow's most useful ability was in demonstrating grounds for optimism." In March of 1968, Johnson particularly needed to hear a note of optimism, so he was very receptive to Rostow's theoretical position. Says McPherson, "It was his Rostow's memoranda to Johnson from the Policy Planning Staff in the State, in which Johnson's activities in foreign affairs were seen as elements in a great and beneficient design, that attracted the President to him and led to his appointment on the National Security Council when Bundy left."

5 Johnson, The Vantage Point, p. 20.


7 McPherson, A Political Education, p. 258.
In addition to these men, Assistant Secretary of State, Bill Bundy participated in the drafting process. Johnson and other members of the committee valued Bundy's presence because his "knowledge of the personalities and policies of Asian leaders was encyclopedic." The President respected Bundy's observations so much that he requested that the Assistant Secretary accompany Rostow, McPherson, and others on their trip to Saigon. Through his logical, persuasive arguments, Bundy convinced Johnson, after others failed, that a "graduated and continuing reprisal...was the most promising course available." 

The committee included only one presidential aide--Harry McPherson. McPherson coordinated the drafting process and served as the principal speechwriter on the committee. Philosophically, McPherson described himself as "a dove." He tempered his feelings against the bombing of North Vietnam, however, so that he could continue to participate in policy discussions:

I felt that if I behaved like a dove that I would have no hope ever of taking part in either decisions or even of having such an effect as a speechwriter


9 Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, p. 127.
Interestingly, Johnson apparently was never completely aware of McPherson's opposition. The writer disguised his feelings by writing about the "dove's position" and the "hawk's position" in somewhat vague, general terms. McPherson did not commit himself to any position until Clifford announced his support of the bombing halt. It seems to this writer, that Johnson thought McPherson was an articulate writer, capable of presenting new administrative policy. Although McPherson could not agree with Johnson on the bombing question, this writer believes that he maintained a good professional relationship with Johnson as a speechwriter. (However, Johnson did not ask the writer to prepare the final paragraphs of the speech, in which he announced his personal intentions.)

Perhaps the following observations might be made of the committee's relationship to the President. In the early months of the conflict, Johnson was very defensive about his decisions on Vietnam. Because of the virtual stalemate in foreign affairs and the financial situation at home, Johnson became increasingly receptive to opposing views on Vietnam. He began to listen attentively to

Clifford, McNamara, and McGeorge Bundy's proposals. As Johnson himself admitted, he began to value the opinions of Rusk and others who were not the "yes men" that had once encompassed his administration.

The relationship between the participants is not discussed extensively in any historical accounts. Nevertheless, critics do know that McPherson and Clifford agreed philosophically about the need for a bombing halt and supported one another in lobbying for that action later in the year. Clifford, Rostow, and Rusk worked together on a number of speeches and were chosen for this group because of their experience. McPherson, Rostow, and Bill Bundy had traveled together on the President's trip to Southeast Asia and shared similar views on the situation there. It seems to this writer, that Johnson brought these men together because of their expertise on foreign affairs. Although their personalities and political ideologies differed, they each seemed dedicated to pursuing a new course of action in Southeast Asia.

While Clifford, Rostow, Bundy, Rusk, and McPherson drafted the policy section of the speech, other individuals were responsible for the peroration. Only a few aides and associates knew of Johnson's intentions, not to seek the Democratic nomination in 1968. Although he had considered his decision as early as the summer of 1967,
Johnson shared his intentions with only a handful of people. Primarily four individuals contributed to the drafts of the announcement. These were Horace Busby, George Christian, Governor John Connally, and Mrs. Johnson. While Christian, Connally, and Mrs. Johnson suggested some initial remarks in the fall of 1967, Busby wrote the actual text alone with the President. This writer believes that of all Johnson's presidential addresses, this five-minute segment most closely represents an individual speechwriting effort.

In the spring of 1964, the President and Mrs. Johnson discussed their plans to leave the White House in 1969. In *The Vantage Point*, Johnson recalls his wife's thoughts:

> Her position had remained perfectly clear and consistent since she had first expressed it to me in the spring of 1964: she did not want me to be a candidate in 1968.\(^{11}\)

In December of 1967, Busby prepared his first draft of the statement which Johnson planned to include in the State of the Union address. Johnson describes Lady Bird's reaction to the draft as follows:

> I gave it to my wife to read. In all our conversations about declining to run in 1968, Lady Bird had always

\(^{11}\) Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, p. 427.
been most deferential. She never took the lead in these discussions or forced an opinion or a point of view on me. However, I noticed that she made one important change in Busby's draft. Above the phrase "have no desire to accept" Lady Bird penciled in the words we both preferred: "Will not accept."12

Although she did not help the President write his personal statement, Lady Bird actively edited the remarks.

Johnson also discussed his intentions with Governor John Connally at the ranch in the summer of 1967. Connally had decided to stay on the ticket in Texas if the President wanted him to run again. However, Johnson suggested that Connally make an independent decision, informing him that he would not run for re-election. Valenti felt that regional politics alone did not draw these men together. "They were of a piece," he wrote, "dominating, awesomely energetic, shrewd, and prescient, feeling and sensing where others were oblivious."13 In the fall of 1967, Johnson sent George Christian, from his White House staff, to work with Connally on a proposed draft of the statement. While Johnson did not use the original Christian-Connally draft in the final presentation, he continually sought...

12 Johnson, The Vantage Point, p. 429.

Connally's advice on when to make the announcement.

George Christian, Johnson's Press Secretary, wrote the first draft of the statement in October of 1967. Later, Christian combined his proposed draft with Busby's for the State of the Union. Throughout the process, Christian was one of the few members of the President's staff who knew about the announcement. Johnson depended on Christian to keep his secret and to assist in drafting the speech.

Johnson asked Busby to prepare the bulk of his announcement. During Johnson's trip to Australia in December of 1967, Busby wrote his first draft. However, Johnson decided to wait on the announcement until March, at which time he again called upon Busby. Together, Johnson and Busby worked throughout the last two or three days of March preparing the peroration of the speech. It is not surprising, to this critic, that Johnson worked so closely and confidentially with Busby. Former Texas Governor Price Daniel, who also employed Busby's services, described the writer as "Johnson's favorite." Busby seemed to come the closest, of all the writers, to capturing the man and his style. Writes Valenti of their

14 Personal interview with George Christian, December 18, 1979.
He Johnson admired Busby and throughout his career in moments of great crisis, he called on 'Buzz.' (Even in the 'final' crisis--his decision not to seek renomination--he summoned Busby to the White House to help him plot and construct the fateful sentences.)

Of all the participants in the speechwriting process, Johnson looked at his fellow Texans for the words that so personally reflected his intentions. In the March 31 speech, the President turned to those individuals with whom he shared his most private thoughts. As he sat in the Treaty Room with Busby the evening of the address, Johnson searched his own mind and concluded:

My own review of the situation, as honest and searching a review as I could make, had convinced me that the course I had chosen was the one that offered the country the best hope of peace and unity.

The Rhetorical Situation

The next step in evaluating the ghostwritten text requires an analysis of the rhetorical situation in terms

16 Valenti, A Very Human President, p. 74.
17 Johnson, The Vantage Point, p. 18.
of its historical significance and Johnson's creative response to the immediate set of circumstances. The critic examines the speaker and writer's interpretation and response to the rhetorical situation in order to determine if the writer extended Johnson's perceptions of the circumstances and created discourse which furthered the effectiveness of his rhetoric in response to the situation. The critic also considers the speechwriter's ability to understand Johnson's intentions and the political exigences and assist Johnson in preparing his response.

On the evening of March 31, 1968, Lyndon Johnson found himself responding to personal, political, and international exigences:

While sitting at my desk in the White House,...I announced four major decisions. I would not accept my party's nomination as candidate for another term. I was stopping most of the bombing of North Vietnam in the hope that it would lead to peace. I had decided to make the expansion and modernization of South Vietnam's armed forces a goal of even higher priority. Finally,...I had decided to make a small increase in the size of our own military forces in Vietnam.18

18 Johnson, The Vantage Point, p. 365.
Among the things this writer discusses is the impact of the TET offensive and the lingering war upon the necessity for new policies, the speechwriter's perceptions of the national mood and his ability to work with Johnson in proposing a new plan of action.

John H. Patton contends, "Two of the most urgent exigences were the rejections of Johnson as a communicator by the public at large and as an effective leader by certain of his advisors." While perhaps there is some evidence, as Patton states, to suggest that Johnson was unable to alter his image by changing his language, this writer believes that he suffered from more fundamental communication problems. The TET offensive angered many loyal supporters: some citizens no longer accepted the administration's candor on Vietnam. In short, this writer believes that a number of Americans felt that the President told one story while the media captured another scene on their screen at home. As they sat in their living rooms, men and women across the country watched General Loan, the National Police Chief, execute a Viet Cong in the street while their President called the TET offensive a

"psychological victory." McPherson contends:

The terrible quality of the war in Viet Nam came home to people. It appeared that these guys [the North Vietnamese] didn't want to quit at all and were never going to quit; that our crowd was as caught as off guard as ever.

So, first of all, this writer feels that the public had begun to doubt the truthfulness of the President's rhetoric.

Secondly, some citizens and advisors questioned their President's ability to lead the nation. These perceptions of Johnson's ineptness made it necessary for him to re-evaluate his policies and adapt to these circumstances. The damage to our military forces and national pride, caused by the TET offensive, created further exigence for presidential action.

Johnson knew that the situation demanded a response. He sensed the nation's frustration over continued military action and the diplomatic stalemate between the U.S. and Southeast Asian leaders. Johnson had not said a great deal about Vietnam in his State of the Union message in mid-January. Many Americans interpreted the President's virtual silence as an inability to take decisive action.

20 Johnson, The Vantage Point, p. 383.

Especially after the TET offensive, the public questioned the President's sources of information and knowledge of events in Vietnam. Americans not only doubted the truthfulness of the President's rhetoric, they began to see his language as empty rhetoric. Johnson later acknowledged his failures to verbalize the potential of confrontation:

In retrospect, I think I was too cautious. If I had forecast the possibilities, the American people would have been better prepared for what was soon to come [the TET offensive].

The public perceived Johnson's lack of forewarning as a flaw in his ability act. Discontent brewed within the executive and legislative branches, while advisors argued about what new steps Johnson should take. Secretary McNamara proposed an unconditional bombing pause, while McGeorge Bundy opposed any intensification of the bombing in the North. Many other advisors supported a new policy although they opposed any unconditional bombing pause on the whole at that time. Congress was already dragging its feet on a surtax to raise more money for defense spending and many Congressmen reacted violently to the losses suffered in the TET offensive. Morale in the military even began to wane. Busby and McPherson heard the plights of enlisted

22 Johnson, The Vantage Point, p. 380.
men and tried to urge Johnson to revise foreign policy. They repeated one lieutenant's plight to Johnson:

I've hit the same wooden bridge three times. I'm a damned good pilot. I know I've knocked it out every time. Big deal. It takes them two or three days to put it back. And for that I've flown through SAMs, flak, and automatic weapons fire. I've seen the god-damned Russian freighters sitting there, and the supplies stacked along the wharves. I can't hit them. It might start a wider war. Well, the war is too wide for me right now. And it's stupid.23

Governmental officials, the public, and the military reacted similarly; they believed new actions should be taken immediately.

Johnson sensed national dissatisfaction with his policies. In an attempt to relieve these pressures, he appointed two groups of men to discuss what options he could endorse in the speech. Clark Clifford headed one group of governmental advisors, including Secretaries Rusk and McNamara, Treasury Secretary Fowler, Under Secretary of State Katzenbach, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Nitze, Dick Helms of the CIA, Walt Rostow, General Taylor and others.24 In their meeting on February 28, Clifford


24 Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, p. 394.
suggested that Johnson form a similar group of nongovernmental advisors. These men were known as the "Wise Men" and included former Secretary of State Dean Acheson, former Under Secretary of State George Ball, McGeorge Bundy, former Secretary of the Treasury Douglas Dillon, General Omar Bradley, and others. Johnson asked both groups to assist in major policy decisions because of their perceptions of public opinion. It seems apparent to this writer that these groups understood the significance of the rhetorical situation in late February and the need for Johnson to respond to that situation.

Each group sent responses, proposals, and reports to the President, stating their opinions. Johnson was attentive to their recommendations, although he may not have fully agreed with them at the time. Overall, individuals worked diligently to present their solutions. Throughout the months of February and March, they played significant roles in helping to form Johnson's rhetoric.

The TET offensive and mood of the country set the stage historically for the address. The political year had its own peculiar effect on the course of events. The public's opinion of the President's lack of leadership was not only detrimental to Johnson's foreign policy image, it jeopardized his political image as well. Johnson, once the national hero in the war on poverty, was now
perceived as an ineffective leader in Vietnam.

Candidates from both parties began their race to the White House. Democrats scheduled primaries across the nation. The circumstances demanded that Johnson make some quick decisions about his role in this election year. Earlier, he received forty-nine percent of the vote in the New Hampshire primary without his name officially on the ballot, but more primaries were to follow and Johnson needed to announce his intentions to party supporters. The Democratic party waited in limbo to hear what the President might say.

The stage was set domestically and internationally for the speech. Busby and McPherson discussed military unrest; Bill Bundy monitored the international atmosphere abroad; members of the Clifford and Wise Men groups reacted to Congressional and public displeasure at home. It is clear to this writer, that throughout the preparation process, participants were conscious of the significance of the situation and Johnson's intentions to respond to that situation.

Amid this mounting exigence, one question remained: Were these participants qualified to address themselves to the issues confronting the President? The nation faced a continued military conflict in a country far across the globe. The public recognized Johnson's authority on
domestic legislation, but they questioned his credibility to speak on foreign affairs. Under the circumstances, it seems to this critic that Johnson needed to surround himself with a group of critical, articulate spokesmen. Rusk, McNamara, and McGeorge Bundy were all experienced in the decision-making process of the Kennedy years. They had served during the Dominican crisis, the Panama crisis, the Guantanamo incident, the Gulf of Tonkin "attack", and the Israeli-Arab War. Clifford had privately advised Truman and Kennedy before he accepted a similar role in the Johnson White House. Therefore, he also had an extensive background in foreign policy-making. McPherson was probably the least experienced in decision-making, even-though he had served as Deputy Under Secretary of the Army for International Affairs in 1963. Altogether, Johnson selected an experienced group of men to prepare his rhetoric. He also surrounded himself with men whose political and military philosophies sometimes differed, but this difference made them all the more critical of the administrative's policies.

Because of the growing public dissent and the lingering conflict in Vietnam, Johnson needed to present a new policy on Southeastern Asia. The President turned to qualified associates, who understood the significance of the situation, to prepare his response. In addition,
Johnson relied on one individual, who knew him well, to help him declare his intentions not to run for re-election in 1968. All of the participants recognized the exigence of the unrest in foreign and political affairs. They assisted the President in preparing his response to the American people and, in turn, made their own contributions to minimizing this unrest.

The Ideas of the Message

The participants contributed their own ideas to the message in an attempt to assist Johnson in responding to these immediate circumstances. During the drafting process, the speechwriters and the speaker worked together on the content of the speech. In order to determine how the writers assisted Johnson in proposing new administrative policies, this section examines the participants contributions to the ideas.

The March 31 address was by no means a spontaneous response to the faltering circumstances in Vietnam. Johnson considered announcing his political decision and altering the administration's policies for several months before the speech was ever scheduled. The President heard the shrill voices of those shouting anti-war rhetoric. He also heard the voices of Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy.
supporters, mandating a change in leadership. He had listened to the rising opposition to his policies during the previous months.

History teaches us that the President spent much time unsuccessfully trying to instigate a peaceful solution to the conflict in Vietnam. On two occasions, in February and April, Johnson sent letters to Ho Chi Minh offering an end to the escalation of the war in lieu of negotiations. The rhetoric of peaceful negotiations was therefore not a new topic in the March 31 speech.

With the failure of his own policies to produce action, Johnson called on his advisors and Cabinet members to introduce their own approach and ideas. Johnson wanted to address himself to fresh ideas, and so in preparing his next speech on Vietnam, he considered the advice of those around him. On October 31, 1967, Secretary of Defense McNamara proposed a new course of action saying that "he believed that continuation of our current course of action in Southeast Asia would be dangerous, costly, and unsatisfactory to our people." On November 1, he presented these conclusions in a lengthy memo to the President. Johnson summarizes McNamara's recommendations briefly:

First, he suggested we announce that we are stabilizing our efforts

25 Johnson, The Vantage Point, p. 372.
and would not expand our air 
operations in the North or the 
size of our combat forces beyond 
those already planned. Second, 
McNamara proposed a bombing halt 
before the end of 1967. Finally, 
he favored a new study of military 
operations in the South aimed at 
reducing U.S. casualties and 
giving the South Vietnamese greater 
responsibility for their own 
security.26

Johnson considered these arguments carefully and passed them on to some of his other advisors. McGeorge Bundy and Walt Rostow favored tactical bombing and increased participation by the South Vietnamese. Johnson's long-time associates Abe Fortas and Clark Clifford generally agreed with Bundy and Rostow and suggested that McNamara's plan might be interpreted as "a resigned and discouraged effort to find a way out of a conflict for which we had lost our will and dedication."27

Johnson wanted to present a speech which contained a new policy on Vietnam, so he did not dismiss McNamara's contributions. He pondered the proposals for several weeks, as re re-evaluated his own ideas. On December 18, Johnson wrote his own reaction to McNamara's proposal for the record. Among his reactions were:

26 Johnson, The Vantage Point, p. 373.

27 Johnson, The Vantage Point, p. 375.
With respect to bombing North Vietnam, I would wish for us to:
-- authorize and strike those remaining targets which, after study, we judge to have significant military content but which would not involve excessive civilian casualties; excessive U. S. losses; or substantial increased risk of engaging the USSR or Communist China in the War;
-- maintain on a routine basis a restrike program for major targets through North Vietnam;
-- strive to remove the drama and public attention given to our North Vietnamese bombing operations. 28

Johnson was not convinced that he should address the use of additional military forces at the moment, but he considered enlarging the South Vietnamese role in the conflict.

By March, Johnson altered his position, and McNamara's proposals became a part of the speech. Although the Secretary of Defense did not write a draft of the speech, his memo contained the major ideas projected in the President's address to the nation. While rhetorical critics might ignore any contributions which are not prepared within the immediate drafting process, this writer believes that the critic is warranted in taking a more extensive view of the inventional process for the March 31 speech. Historical evidence indicates that participants began to

28 Johnson, The Vantage Point, p. 600.
contribute their ideas for the speech nearly six months before the President delivered his address.

Original documents indicate that the earliest drafts of the March 31 speech appeared during the first week in February. On February 1, Rostow sent McPherson's first draft of a proposed speech to the President. McPherson prepared the initial draft after a conversation with the President. Of that conversation, McPherson said, "Walt Rostow and I and someone else said that the President ought to speak, ought to be candid about the costs of the TET offensive, about what happened at the TET offensive, and call for a renewed national effort." On February 5, Johnson forwarded copies of the draft to McNamara, Rusk, Clifford, and Rostow.

Johnson requested that these individuals respond to the draft by the following morning. McPherson revised the

29 Memo, Walt Rostow to the President, February 1, 1968. The White House: Statements of LBJ: March 27, 1968-March 31, 1968, "February 5, 1968 #1 Address to the Nation 3/31/68," Box 261. All memoranda, speech texts, information packets, fact sheets, and letters noted herein are available at the Lyndon B. Johnson Library in Austin, Texas.


text twice in the next weeks. On February 25, he pre­sented a second draft. In the text, McPherson assessed the impact of the TET offensive:

--why the enemy struck when he did;
--what he hoped to achieve;
--where he succeeded, and where he failed;
--what the situation is today, and what is likely to happen in the coming months.32

He then proposed a plan of action which included calling up a number of reserved, requesting Congressional authority to extend enlistments, periods of active duty, and to activate ready reservists, and to increase defense expendi­tures. Says McPherson, "Some word from the Hill was that unless we had a major call-up of reserves and escalated our committment in Viet Nam with its attendant costs, that we would not be able to get a tax bill through."33

McPherson wrote the final draft in this series on February 27th. Several advisors met that day for lunch in Washington to discuss the latest draft, while Johnson was at the ranch. McNamara, Rostow, Califano, Rusk, Katzenbach, Bill Bundy, Clifford, and McPherson attended the meeting.

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33 McPherson interview, Tape 5, March 24, 1969.
By this point, McNamara condemned the bombing and Clifford mentioned the possibilities of adding a large number of troops, as General Earle Wheeler had suggested. Advisors felt that the President needed to have clear answers before he made any final decision on the number of troops and suggested that he set up a team to weigh the alternatives. This meeting is significant to an understanding of the speechwriting process. The participants played important roles in determining the foreign policy strategy. They freely discussed a number of key policy questions related to future administrative action. Moreover, they aired their differences openly.

On February 28, the Clifford group met to explore the available alternatives and their implications. During the next two weeks they discussed the administration's approach to negotiations. It is of particular interest to this critic that the Clifford group made a distinction between present needs and a long-run military posture. Basically, they proposed many of the same actions that McNamara mentioned before his resignation. Although the participants disagreed on the bombing issue, Clifford and Rusk showed interest in McNamara's plan. Johnson sensed the committee's growing frustration and pessimism over military matters:
The aspect of the Clifford group report that troubled me most was its totally negative approach to any possible negotiations. If ever there was any major ideological change, it came during these meetings. Rusk, who was generally opposed to larger troop employments, none looked at the proposition as a means of establishing negotiations. He forwarded a memo to Johnson, prepared by a group of British intellectuals, which suggested:

At some convenient point this Spring, America should do two things simultaneously, stop the bombing of the North and mobilize more men for Vietnam. It should announce that it will talk at any time, appoint negotiators, appeal to world opinion, remind Hanoi of its offers to talk and conduct a major peace offensive. At the same time, it would reinforce its armies in the South and continue the talk of 'pacification.'

Rusk's change of heart had a powerful impact on Johnson. The President respected Rusk immensely and knew that he was a cautious man who would not advise him to take such action if it were not completely warranted. Johnson was not scheduled to deliver his speech until the end of the month.

34 Johnson, The Vantage Point, p. 398.

35 Johnson, The Vantage Point, p. 399.
and decided to peruse Rusk's memo. In the meantime, Rusk appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on March 11 and told the senators that the administration was reviewing its position.

While Rusk testified in the televised hearings, advisors considered the issue of troop strength for the speech. Johnson wanted to settle the issue and include his recommendations in the March 31 address. After a meeting with the Clifford group on March 4, Johnson moderated his desires to gather selected reservists. He admitted, "My opinion had changed as a result of what I had heard from my advisors and what I saw happening on the ground in Vietnam." The Clifford group completed their debates around March 19, and Johnson presented the administration's thinking on troop call-ups to Senate and House leaders. Although the President wanted the cost estimates refined, he urged his advisors to staff re-drafting the speech.

Harry McPherson coordinated the writing process. Rusk sent background material and suggested language from the State Department. Clifford provided information on troop strength. From these proposals, McPherson prepared an initial draft on March 20. McPherson's draft was very similar to those he had submitted in February with one

large exception. Rusk convinced Johnson to reconsider the bombing halt, as is evidenced in the following paragraphs taken from McPherson's handwritten draft:

To remove every possible barrier to the encouragement of talks, I have instructed our commanders to refrain from the aerial bombardment of Hanoi, Haiphong, and any other targets within a range of ___ miles from those cities, until they are instructed otherwise.37

Other advisors joined in promoting a bombing halt. McNamara's first memo convinced Clifford to reconsider the proposal. Clifford outlined a program for deescalating the war and ending the bombing North of the 20th parallel. McGeorge Bundy supported deescalation but preferred an open-ended approach. McPherson also supported deescalation. Although he did not participate in discussions on troop strength, he was firmly committed to peaceful initiatives. The consensus of opinion expressed by these men, represented a shift in administrative policy. Together they voiced an opinion which influenced a new plan of action and the presentation of that plan in the March 31 speech.

The drafting process covered several weeks and can

be organized into three major phases. The initial phase began in February as a response to the TET offensive, as has been previously discussed. The second phase lasted from March 20 to March 27. McPherson prepared and revised six drafts during these seven days. The final phase began on March 28, and concluded on March 31, when the fifth draft in this series was completed. During these weeks, McPherson wrote a total of at least fourteen drafts of the speech. (These totals do not reflect, however, the final segment in which Johnson stated that he would not accept the party nomination.)

While the first phase highlighted Johnson's response to the TET offensive, the second phase emphasized a continued military posture in Vietnam. McPherson submitted the first draft in this series on March 20, the second one in the President's night reading that evening, a third draft on March 21, a fourth one on March 25, a fifth draft on March 26, and the final proposed text on March 27. Rusk, Clifford, Rostow, McGeorge Bundy, Treasury Secretary Henry Fowler, Bill Bundy, and the President contributed to the editing process during this phase. By March 26, the speech contained the following major revisions:

(a) Clark Clifford's redraft of the military section;
(b) Secretary Fowler's redraft of the economic section—substantially edited; and
(c) Bill Bundy's redraft of the closing section on peace and Southeast Asia—substantially edited.38

On Wednesday, March 27, McPherson forwarded the last draft in this phase to the President with these remarks:

This draft represents the work of secretaries Rusk and Clifford, Bill Bundy, Walt Rostow, and myself. The number of pages have not been cut much but this is because the typing on this draft is less compact. The speech is now about 4000 words, a reduction of 800 from the last draft.39

It seems to this critic that the second phase reflected few changes in the content of the message. Participants did not make contributions which greatly altered the ideas presented in the speech.

McPherson made the major ideological changes in the third drafting phase, between March 28 and March 31. He designated these as "ALTERNATE DRAFTS," since they revealed a change in administrative policy. Two things influenced these alterations. On Saturday, March 23,


McPherson sent a letter to Johnson outlining the steps for a possible negotiation. The writer said that the purpose of the exercise was "to show the American people that we are willing to do every reasonable thing to bring about talks." This exercise portrayed the administration as open and willing to make offers and counter-offers for peace. McPherson proposed this sequence of events:

1. NVN \( \text{North Viet Nam} \) tells the Swiss they are seriously prepared to take part in negotiations after the unconditional halt of the bombing.

2. You announce that you have instructed our air forces to halt the bombing North of the 20th parallel, and you have sent representatives to Geneva and Rangoon to await the NVN.

3. They say that isn't enough; we've got to stop it altogether.

4. We say, we cannot stop it altogether so long as men and supplies are pouring down the Ho Chi Minh trail.

   We show photographs of this and other evidence of the invasion over the past two months.

5. We say, "We'd like to stop the bombing altogether. If you will not mount an attack on our bases or on the cities in I Corps, or upon Saigon, and if you will stop the shelling of SVN from the DMZ and positions North

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of the DMZ, we will stop it altogether during the period in which you refrain from such attacks. And we will send our man to Geneva or Rangoon."

6. They say that's insulting; we must stop our bombing and all other acts of war, etc.

7. We say we regret they have responded in the same old way--"You disarm, while we pistol-whip you."\(^{41}\)

This critic believes that there is evidence to suggest that McPherson's memo influenced the administration's policy decision and, hence, the presentation of that decision in the text of the speech. McPherson's ideas were not unique; Rusk suggested a bombing halt North of the 20th parallel earlier in the drafting process. However, it seems to this critic that McPherson's letter served as a catalyst, articulating the growing consensus of opinion among advisors. Johnson was receptive to these ideas, at this point, and requested copies of the memo for other advisors to review.

On Thursday, March 28, Rusk, Rostow, Clifford, McPherson, and Bill Bundy met in the Cabinet Room to discuss the proposed drafts. Clifford felt that the drafts did not reflect public opinion. He had maintained a close

\(^{41}\) Memo, Harry McPherson to the President, March 23, 1968, Box 205.
relationship with business leaders and legal authorities across the nation and knew their dissention. Other advisors attending the meeting agreed with Clifford when he said, "The American people are fed up with more of the same,...because more of the same means no win, and only a continual long drag on American resources." McPherson expressed a similar concern in the meeting, as he recalls:

The war had become Lyndon Johnson's war and...a lot of people--very intelligent, basically sympathetic people--were beginning to feel that nothing could shake the President, that he had so much of his own place in history tied up in this war that he would continue to escalate it and continue to increase America's commitment no matter what the facts were, no matter what the indications were.

The participants agreed that McPherson should write an alternate draft which might reflect some changes in administrative policy. McPherson complied with their request and submitted his first alternate draft. Later that day, Johnson met with the group to discuss the draft. At that meeting, Johnson noted that the "peace offer statement" included the same language Rusk had been using for several months. Johnson finally agreed that perhaps

42 McPherson interview, Tape 5, March 24, 1969.
43 McPherson interview, Tape 5, March 24, 1969.
he should alter his position, but he did so with relief and caution:

It was what I had decided needed to be done, but I felt I still should not say so flatly for fear of another damaging press leak...I began to feel the pressure lifting. It had been quite a month, but now the wheels were turning; decisions had been made. Only the announcement of those decisions remained.44

The announcement came in the next few days. In the meantime, advisors revised the content and language of the speech, articulating the administration's new policy on Vietnam.

McPherson prepared a peroration for the sixth draft during the second drafting phase. However, Johnson rejected McPherson's conclusion and considered one of his own instead. In the closing days of the preparation process, Johnson decided to announce his decision not to seek or accept the Democratic nomination. He wanted to make this announcement at the end of the March 31 speech. Rather than rely on a committee to prepare his remarks, Johnson asked former aides and close associates to assist him in the speechwriting effort.

As suggested earlier in this chapter, Johnson spent many months contemplating his decision. In August of 1967,

44 Johnson, The Vantage Point, pp. 420-421.
he discussed his intentions with Governor Connally at
the ranch and encouraged the governor not to make personal
decisions on the basis of his intentions. The President
then suggested to his Press Secretary, George Christian,
that he consult Connally in preparing the speech. Christian
recalls the event which followed in October:

President Johnson called me and
reiterated what he told me privately
a time or two. He used some thoughts
that Governor Connally had given him
on how to frame a statement. I took
the statement on a yellow tablet.
He told me to go to Austin (the press
was in San Antonio) and talk to
Governor Connally and get his thoughts
collected on how we should frame the
statement. I went to see Governor
Connally in late October or early
November. . . . Connally and I sat
in the Governor's mansion and
talked about how to go about getting
the announcement made and what to
say.45

Christian accepted the responsibility for drafting the
speech. Johnson wanted the announcement to remain confi-
dential. He thought he might make the announcement at a
political dinner in December, so Christian prepared the
draft for that occasion. However, after the President
and Mrs. Johnson went over the text, they decided that
this was not the logical time to make such an announcement.

45 Recorded Conversation, Dorothy Territo and George
In the meantime, Johnson discussed his intentions with his presidential aide Tom Johnson and former aide Horace Busby. The President worked with Busby on a draft during his international trip in December. At that time, the President thought of including the statement in his State of the Union speech, but was undecided because, wrote Christian, "He did not want to cripple the legislation he proposed by an ill-timed statement." Busby continued to work on the text while Johnson considered the possibilities. "On January 15, Busby submitted a draft," says Christian, "which the President had me incorporate into my draft." Christian revised the text and presented it to Johnson as an addendum to the speech.

During the early part of January, Johnson weighed the advice of several individuals as he tried to decide whether or not to go ahead with his announcement. Connally felt the decision should be presented in the State of the Union address. Christian outlined Connally's reasoning in a memo to the President four hours before the scheduled message:


47 Memo, George Christian to Drew Pearson, May 15, 1968, Box 96.
1. This would be as non-political a setting as we could ever achieve—much different from a news conference or any other speech.

2. The setting and the reasoning gives credibility to the decision.

3. The audience is huge, and the reaction from the public will be much in the President's favor.

4. The poll will start back down after Congress gets in full swing.

5. If the decision has been made, the longer you wait the more difficult it becomes; there will be turmoil in any event, but he thinks delay in announcement helps Bobby Kennedy, who is already free to operate while others are not.48

Busby had already offer his comments saying that "the forum and occasion are the very best."49 However, Busby was convinced that the President could best judge the situation and he encouraged him to make an independent decision, saying:

...on a decision like this, I earnestly believe every man—including presidents—must step to his own drum. If you do what


is right for your own self, it will be right in the history books.50

History records several different versions of the events on January 17, 1968. Some reports suggest that Johnson left this portion of the draft at the White House. Others propose that Johnson never really intended to make his announcement at that time. This writer contends that Johnson was not ready to make such a statement. In The Vantage Point, Johnson writes:

> Although the State of the Union occasion would have provided an excellent forum for my announcement, I sensed that the timing was not the best. I was asking the Congress that night for a heavy and demanding program. To couple such a request with a statement that I was not going to run for President might suggest to various people that I was not willing to fight for what I was asking.51

Perhaps Busby's remarks are accurate, no one but Johnson could make that decision.

The announcement was a topic of discussion once again in March. Busby sent a draft to Johnson on Saturday,

50 Memo, Horace Busby to Lyndon B. Johnson, January 15, 1968, Box 266.

51 Johnson, The Vantage Point, p. 430.
March 29, accompanied by a letter. In this letter Busby praised the draft's simplicity and forthrightness. He also indicated that the timing was right for the President and the country.

On Sunday afternoon, March 31, Busby and Johnson met in the Treaty Room to prepare the President's remarks. (Busby had arrived at the White House at 9:35 that morning and had been writing for several hours.) During the afternoon, Johnson and Busby worked extensively on three drafts of the speech. When the secretary, Marie Fehmer, went into the room at two o'clock that afternoon, she found Johnson reading the first draft and editing it with a felt tip pen. Johnson read the handwritten draft aloud, doing minor editing as he went along. After Miss Fehmer typed a copy of the draft, Johnson shared it with his luncheon guests—Mrs. Johnson, Pat and Luci Nugent, and Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Krim.

In the meantime, Busby prepared a second handwritten draft and showed it to the President at 6:30 in the evening, at which time he explained his revisions to Johnson. In


the editing process, Johnson decided to revise nearly an entire page of this draft, inserting a paragraph on partisanship problems in a political year. He wrote the following language on a shorthand tablet:

I prefer to apply my time to supporting the men and the cause we have committed. The strength and endurance of all of us has its limits and I do not wish to divide and dilute my energies by devoting a day or a week to advancing my political campaign.54

Busby proposed an alternate passage, which he dictated to Johnson. After the President copied these paragraphs in his own hand, he sent the draft to his secretary to be typed. Once the draft was typed, Johnson made a few changes in the language of the speech with Busby. Then, he returned it to the secretary saying, "put it on the teleprompter!"55

During the drafting process of this part of the speech, Johnson worked confidentially with a few individuals. In fact, only a couple of his closest White House aides and secretaries knew of his announcement including:


Christian, Marvin Watson, Tom Johnson, Marie Fehmer, and Juanita Roberts. Those participants who prepared the first portion of the speech never saw the President's closing statement. The last segment was almost completely a joint effort between Busby and Johnson, although Christian, Connally, and Mrs. Johnson were consulted along the way.

Both a committee of writers and a select group of individuals contributed to the ideas of the message. While some participants made their contributions long before the first drafts appeared, they were equally as influential in providing the content of the speech. Johnson encouraged the support of his advisors and staff members in the preparation process and welcomed their contributions.

The Language of the Discourse

Speechwriters not only contributed to the ideas of the speech, they prepared the language of the discourse as well. This section examines the relationship between the speaker, his writers, and the language of the speech. It analyzes the speechwriter's influence on the speaker's language, in an attempt to show how speechwriters helped Johnson articulate his new policies and political intentions. The section also indicates how the participants made the President's language more concrete throughout the drafting process.
In the initial drafting stages, the contributors wanted to project new administrative policy as clearly as possible. McPherson also wanted to avoid any unwarranted, exuberant language which might prove detrimental to the President:

> What I've tried to do since I've had the speechwriting operation is to simplify speeches substantially and to reduce their rhetoric, not to make such extravagant claims. One thing I've tried to do since 1966 is to very much scale down and moderate our language on Vietnam.56

The participants tried to avoid any rhetoric which might dampen Johnson's political image. They also eliminated ambiguous statements which did not accurately represent the administration's policies.

Several examples characterize this type of editing in the third drafting phase. On the evening of March 28, 1968, after an extensive meeting which altered the thrust of the message, the rhetoric changed from confrontation to consultation. In one of his first alternate drafts, McPherson began, "My fellow Americans: tonight I want to speak to you about the prospects for peace in Vietnam and

Southeast Asia. A week before the draft began with "a challenge." Clifford proposed a similar revision in the third alternate draft on March 29:

Tonight, I should like to suggest to Hanoi that we pursue a different and alternate course to peace; a course that would involve a mutual reduction in the present level of hostilities.

Each of these stylistic changes reflected revisions being made in the content of the speech. The language invoked resolution rather than aggression.

In addition, contributors suggested that the President adapt the tenor of his language to this new thrust in administrative policy. The participants wanted Johnson to maintain his resolute posture and vetoed any language which altered from that course. In a memo to the President, McPherson argued against the aggressive language of a proposed peroration. McPherson and Clifford both felt that Johnson must avoid language which might misinterpret the administration's posture.


He [Clifford] argues that if you come on with a strong 'we must resist aggression' line at the end of a peaceful initiative speech, people will say 'ah...now here comes the real Johnson, Old Blood and Thunder,' and that the purpose of the speech will be lost. I agree with him. I believe you should acknowledge...the misgivings the war has aroused. Because that it is so true, it will generate a greater acceptance, and I believe some merited empathy among your listeners.59

The participants also revised the language of the speech which dealt with the bombing halt and troop levels. Once the administration decided what its position on the bombing halt and troop level would be, participants worked diligently to clarify that position. As a result, the language of the final draft was more concrete than it had been earlier in the speechwriting process. For example, in the February 25 draft, McPherson wrote:

We have no desire to continue bombing North Vietnam, and we will stop that bombing, as I said six months ago in San Antonio, --when stopping it will lead to prompt and productive talks, --and when it is clear that North Vietnam will not take advantage of our restraint to launch

precisely the kind of accelerated attacks he has now begun in the South.60

On March 29, as the committee reached decisions on the bombing halt, the language changed:

Beginning tonight, and without waiting for any signal from Hanoi, we will order our aircraft to make no bombing attacks, until further notice, north of the 20th parallel in North Vietnam. The 20th parallel is about 75 miles south of the cities of Hanoi and Haiphong. Our attacks will be limited to the southern-most area of North Vietnam --the area through which weapons, supplies and reinforcements are moving directly toward South Vietnam.61

The bombing halt issue produced one particularly interesting circumstance. Apparently, Johnson and his committee debated setting the limits on the bombing halt up until the last moments, because they did not wish to use specific language to refer to those limits. The day before the speech was to be delivered Johnson met with his advisors for six hours to go over every word and detail in the text. McPherson recalls that Katzenbach did not want


to use the twentieth parallel as a limit. Katzenbach argued, "We should say that we would limit the bombing to that area North of the DMZ in which the enemy might be gathering his forces to strike our people."\(^{62}\) Consequently, while the debate continued, no one took the initiative to restrict the bombing missions scheduled on April 1. Ironically, U. S. planes bombed a truck distribution point near the twentieth parallel the day following the speech and, of course, Congressmen attacked Johnson for his gross oversight. It seems to this critic that perhaps the situation could have been prevented had the debate over the language been resolved sooner.

In each of these instances, the committee played a prominent role in designing the language of the speech and Johnson usually accepted their recommendations. However, in the final analysis, contributors failed to show the same degree of political perception in editing the text as did Johnson. McPherson contends, "Most of the time Lyndon Johnson's skill and sagacity and long-range capacity to anticipate exceeded that of anybody else in the room. And he would ultimately be proved to be right."\(^{63}\) Several examples of Johnson's sagacity can be seen in the speech.

\(^{62}\) McPherson interview, Tape 5, March 24, 1969.

\(^{63}\) McPherson interview, Tape 5, March 24, 1969.
On the afternoon before he spoke, the President videotaped his speech on the small Sony unit in his office. He wanted to practice using the teleprompter and to time his speech without the final statement. During this practice period, Johnson made nearly twenty changes in the language of the speech. Many of these revisions revealed Johnson's astute understanding of politics. For example, he changed "I've told the American people" to "I've assured the American people." He spoke of "prudent measures" instead of "restraints." Johnson also suggested alternate phrasing for grammatically incorrect passages. By the end of the tape, Johnson had a polished draft which eliminated some of the politically detrimental language.

The only changes not reflected in the practice tape were those involving Johnson's personal statement. He did not want anyone to leak his announcement to the press, so he refrained from practicing this part of the speech. Although the language of the January and March drafts differed little, Johnson spent a great deal of time editing a segment concerning the partisanship question. He and Busby added several references to national unity. In the final edited version, Johnson wrote:

64 Videotape, Practice Tape, Address to the Nation, March 31, 1968. LBJ Library, Audio-Visual Archives.
I would ask all Americans--
whatever their personal interest
or concerns--to guard against
divisiveness and all its con-
sequence.65

In summary, this critic found that speechwriters
contributed to the language of the text. Throughout the
writing process, they not only assisted in editing the
content of the speech but they also revised the language
which expressed those ideas. In the initial phase,
McPherson edited drafts as other advisors proposed their
changes. In the peroration, Busby made similar revisions
alone with the President. Ultimately, the participants
significantly affected the language of the speech through
their contributions in the editing process.

An Evaluation

One question remains: How effective were the parti-
cipants in contributing to the ideas and language of the
text as well as assisting Johnson in responding to the
rhetorical situation? In order to answer this question
the critic evaluates the writer's contribution to the
ideas and language of the speech. She also examines the

65 Draft, Address to the Nation, March 31, 1968. The
White House: Statements of LBJ, "Original Drafts," Draft 3,
Box 266.
writer's ability to interpret the significance of the situation and to adapt Johnson's rhetoric to that situation.

While Johnson wanted to propose a new Southeast Asian policy in his March 31 speech, he had not chosen a definite course of action when speech preparation began. McNamara, Clifford, Rusk, McPherson and others assisted Johnson in developing the policy. Through their assistance Johnson prepared and projected a new administrative policy in the speech. The participants presented controversial proposals which forced the President and his advisors to re-evaluate their own particular viewpoints and administration policies. While Johnson may have considered these arguments on his own, the speechwriter's presence enabled him to look more in depth at these positions and to defend his own ideas orally as he interacted with his writers. Through this interaction, the critic believes that Johnson and his advisors were able to weigh the alternatives of the proposed plans of action and suggest a policy which largely reflected a consensus of group opinion. Thus, the critic contends that the speechwriter's presence enabled Johnson to consider more alternatives and present more comprehensive policies than he would have if he had presented only his own ideas in the speech.

The writer believes that the effectiveness of Johnson's language may have been limited by the
speechwriter's presence. While it appears that the President edited the practice tape thoroughly, it does not seem to this critic that the language of the discourse truly reflected Johnson's natural style. Despite the fact that the speech was written for a rather formal presentation, the language of the committee effort seems lifeless to this critic. For example, in speaking of South Vietnam, Johnson said:

We and our allies can only help to provide a shield--behind which the people of South Vietnam can survive and develop. On their efforts--on their determination and resourcefulness--the outcome will ultimately depend. That small, beleaguered nation has suffered terrible punishment for more than two decades. I pay tribute once again to the great courage and endurance of its people.66

Further in the speech, he spoke of President Thieu's actions in Vietnam:

On Wednesday of last week, President Thieu ordered the mobilization of 135,000 additional South Vietnamese troops, for service in the armed forces. He plans to reach--as soon as possible--a level of some 800,000 men in the regular and territorial forces.

forces. . . . Last month, 10,000 men volunteered for military service—two and a half times the number of volunteers during the same month last year. Since the middle of January, more than 48,000 South Vietnamese have joined the armed forces—nearly half of them volunteers.67

Both of these passages reflect the formal and stilted language of the discourse. As the critic viewed the practice tape, she discovered that Johnson rambled through these passages with a sense of boredom. Even in the televised address, the President read from the teleprompter the lifeless statistics of the men, weapons, and casualties of war. He was unable to make those figures come alive as he once had on the campaign trail when the words were his own. While the language was precise and adapted to the formality of the occasion, it did not truly capture Johnson's natural style and speaking ability.

Busby seems to have captured the words of Johnson in the last five minutes of the speech. He projected the President struggling to lead the nation, willing to negotiate with an enemy he so opposed, and able to divorce himself from four years in the White House in order to dedicate his working hours to ending the conflict abroad.

Busby wrote the words which conveyed Johnson's personal convictions about national freedom and unity. He portrayed Johnson amid the trials of his office:

Fifty-two months and ten days ago, in a moment of tragedy and trauma, the duties of this office fell upon me. I asked then for 'your help and God's' that we might continue America on its course, binding up our wounds, healing our history, moving forward in new unity to clear the American agenda and to keep the American commitment for all our people.68

These words suggested Johnson's commitment much more personally than the language prepared by the committee. It seems to this critic that two reasons may explain why Busby captured Johnson's natural style better than McPherson and the other participants. He had the benefit of working virtually alone with Johnson on the peroration. Throughout the preparation process the President actively edited the text and discussed the possible revisions with Busby. In addition, Busby, unlike McPherson, knew Johnson's style because he had worked with the President for years and had been called upon in many instances to write speeches for him. Many White House staff members agreed that Busby knew the essence of Johnson's rhetoric.

Although the committee did not enable the President to realize his fullest potential linguistically, this writer believes that there were aware of the significance of the situation and helped Johnson respond accordingly. The advisors acted as gatekeepers regulating the flow of public opinion to Johnson. In this instance, the members of the committee projected the views of the American public and suggested ways in which he might effectively respond to those views. McNamara, Clifford, and McPherson seemed particularly capable of recognizing the significance of the situation and the need for Johnson to take some action. They knew the divisiveness of public opinion and America's sense of failure after the TET offensive. These participants had the foresight and ability to help Johnson re-evaluate the administration's policies and adapt them to the immediate circumstances surrounding the conflict abroad. This writer believes that the speechwriters not only were able to extend Johnson's understanding and response to the situation but achieved their goals quite effectively.

The writers may not have been able to help the President present his ideas in his own natural style, but they did assist him in outlining the administration's policies precisely with one exception. This critic believes that the committee's inability to reach a consensus about
troop levels and the bombing limits led to some ambiguity. For example, the President had to juggle any decision he might make at the moment about troop levels with the ultimate decision he might announce in the speech. He could not justify sending a small number of men early in the year and ask for a surtax to cover the expense without considering how many men he might send after the first of April and how much these additional troops would cost. The continued ambiguity on bombing limits eventually resulted in an embarrassing situation for the administration. Had the committee and Johnson agreed on these issues earlier and articulated their position, they could have eliminated some difficulties. This writer believes that while the committee assisted Johnson in proposing a new policy they did not succeed in presenting a superior and flawless technical statement of this change in administrative policy.

Lyndon Johnson clearly had two goals in the March 31 speech. First, he wanted to propose a new course of action in Southeast Asia. Secondly, he wanted to announce that he would not seek or accept his party's nomination for the Presidency. This writer believes that Johnson used both of these goals to try to show the public, Congress, the military forces, and the world that he was dedicated to the pursuit of peace and would take any means within
his reach to resolve the crisis in Vietnam.

The public had heard Johnson speak of negotiations before. They listened to the opinions of editorialists, critics, and advisors. The American people had grown tired of empty rhetoric. The writer believes that Johnson’s personal statement indicated to some degree his dedication to a new policy in Vietnam. Perhaps if anything were to encourage the public at this stage in the conflict, it was Johnson’s decision to dedicate all his time to the problems at home and abroad. This critic contends that if anything was to grasp the public’s attention at this point it was the statement from an ardent politician not to seek further political goals at the moment. Yet, many Americans saw Johnson’s action as a statement of utter frustration and the futility of his policies.

Nevertheless, the speechwriter’s influence in the speech may have helped to solidify the administration’s policy. The writers presented a policy which articulated public opinion better than had previous speeches. If these contentions are true, then perhaps the speechwriter’s presence contributed to producing a desired response. Busby’s ability to capture the President’s natural style may have increased the effectiveness of this part of the speech. By announcing his intentions not to seek re-election, Johnson portrayed himself as a leader dedicated
Busby's contributions helped to portray Johnson as a dedicated leader, which was the President's goal. Hence, the speechwriter assisted Johnson in gaining his desired response.

The March 31 speech is significant not because it led to social change, but because the speech announced a change in American policies toward Southeast Asia. The speech also set a precedent for future presidencies. Johnson's decision not to run for office created a situation whereby he could largely divorce the Office of the President from the political event during a campaign year. While he may have created a "lame-duck" position for himself, Johnson eliminated all speculation that his actions in foreign affairs were linked to his own political gains. The speech served as an instrument for acknowledging his desires and announcing an altered course in foreign policy. The speechwriter assisted Johnson in clarifying his position and articulating his decisions to the American public.
CHAPTER SEVEN
CONCLUSION

The writer undertook this study with three basic goals in mind:

To extend the rhetorical critic's awareness of the speechwriter's presence and influence on the drafting process and the final text.

To offer a systematic approach to the study of a ghostwritten speech in order to extend present methodologies in rhetorical criticism.

To apply the proposed criteria to committee and individual speech-writing efforts in the Johnson administration.

The writer discusses the speechwriter's role and influence in the preparation process in order to determine how the speechwriter's presence contributed to the effectiveness of the speech. She also summarizes information on the presence and influence of the speechwriter in rhetorical criticism, reviews her theoretical postulates, and shows how her methodology extends critical insight in studying a ghostwritten speech.

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Speechwriting and Rhetorical Criticism

Although critics have largely ignored speechwriters in their rhetorical criticism, this critic discovered that the speechwriter has long been associated with rhetorical history. In fact, speechwriting practices evolved in the cradle of Greek civilization where speakers in judicial courts required the speechwriter's assistance. Throughout history, speakers have enlisted the ghost's services in preparing political rhetoric. In contemporary politics, the American president is one of the most important international officials employing the services of speechwriters. Especially since the advent of radio, these participants have been an integral part of the presidential staff. In the last forty years, most presidents have prepared few major addresses without their speechwriter's assistance.

Franklin D. Roosevelt relied on a "Brain Trust" to prepare his presidential messages and encouraged them to take an active, critical role in the process. Harry Truman's writers polished his style as they edited his speeches. The speechwriters of the Eisenhower administration formed a regimented staff and prepared addresses with the precision and skill of a military organization. During the early 1960's, John F. Kennedy relied on individual
speechwriters, like Theodore Sorensen, rather than a committee of writers. Lyndon Johnson's speechwriters, however, formed a "wheel-like" structure with Johnson at the center. Richard Nixon's staff took an active role in research and audience analysis. The writers of Gerald Ford's administration played significant roles in the invention process, contributing to the ideas and policies of the administration. While Roosevelt encouraged his writers to be critical in the process, James E. (Jimmy) Carter insisted that his speechwriters be willing to accept his criticism and revisions in their drafts. This critic concludes that although speechwriters played various roles in the drafting process, contemporary presidents have relied heavily on their services.

The critic has located a few major trends in presidential speechwriting practices. In some situations the speechwriter participated only in the editing process or contributed the ideas or form of those ideas in drafting a speech. In other presidencies, speechwriters worked individually with the speaker or collectively in a group as a committee in preparing the speaker's rhetoric. Regardless of their degree of involvement, in all instances, the speechwriter's presence influenced the speechwriting process and final text.

Despite the influx of ghosts in the contemporary presidency, the writer found that few rhetorical critics
considered their impact on the preparation process and the final discourse. In fact, throughout rhetorical history, very few theorists have so much as mentioned the speechwriter in critical methodologies. Only W. Norwood Brigance, Ernest G. Bormann, Marie Hochmuth Nichols, Herbert Simons, and a few others have discussed the significance of the speechwriter in rhetorical criticism. In the past ten years a handful of students in rhetorical studies have focused on the speechwriter in theses and dissertations. However, no theorists has proposed a specific methodology for extending present critical forms to take into account the influence of the speechwriter.

Extending Rhetorical Methodologies

After examining contemporary presidential speechwriting practices and the role of speechwriting in rhetorical criticism, this critic concluded that present critical methodologies are inadequate in examining a ghostwritten speech. While critics may examine the speech text and assume that it is the product of an individual speaker or the work of a committee, they have no way of determining what impact the speechwriter's presence has on the drafting process or the subsequent product. This writer believes that by describing the speechwriter's role, his interaction
with the speaker, his contributions to the ideas and language of the discourse and the speaker's response to the rhetorical situation, as well as evaluating his contributions, the critic can enlarge his understanding of the speechmaking process.

By studying the speechwriter's role and influence in the preparation process, critics can better evaluate the speaker's message. The interaction between the participants can be a key to the critic's knowledge of the speaker's intentions. It may also reflect the speaker's awareness of public opinion, opposing arguments, the possible alternatives open to his consideration. By examining the interaction between a president and his writers, the critic may discern how the speaker's purpose was articulated to his writers. The critic may also discover how aware the speaker was of public opinion. In the interaction process, one might find out what possible alternatives the speaker considered and how he came to adopt a particular course of action. Finally, by examining the interaction process, the critic could evaluate the writer's ability to extend the President's understanding of the situation, public opinion, and alternative courses of action. The critic might also discover how the speaker came to adopt a viewpoint articulated in his speech.

When a critic examines a speaker's rhetoric he is concerned with the speaker's ability to analyze his audience
and respond to that audience. The speechwriter is a very important part of the analysis and response process. For example, in Johnson's March 31, 1968 speech, the participants made Johnson more aware of the public's dissatisfaction with his policies. The speechwriters also shared with Johnson the discontent they heard from individuals in the military forces. Consequently, the writers helped Johnson analyze the situation and urged him to respond by revising his Southeast Asian policy. If Johnson had not had access to the participant's observations and analysis, then he may have continued to endorse existing administrative policy. As a result, he would have limited his perception of public opinion and possible alternatives available to him. The participant's contributions in outlining a new policy, enabled Johnson to extend his own ideas. In addition, the speech offered Johnson an opportunity to re-evaluate existing policies and endorse a new course of action.

If a critic is aware of the speechwriter's role and influence, he will be better able to evaluate the ideas expressed in the speech. He will be in a position to determine if the ideas expressed in the speech reflect the speaker's background or if those ideas were born out of an exchange between the speaker and his writers. Then the critic can determine if the writer's participation
extends the proposed ideas or limits the content of the message. The critic explains the writer's contributions in extending or limiting the speaker's ideas. For example, critics examining the State of the Union address in 1964, might find that because Moyers, Valenti, and other Johnson aides confronted poverty and the problems of inequality in their own backgrounds, they were better able to assist the President in expressing ideas related to those problems of inequality in their own backgrounds, they were better able to assist the President in expressing ideas related to those problems in the "War on Poverty" legislative programs, than were the Kennedy men. On the contrary, the former Kennedy aides who had no referent to the ideas expressed in the speech might limit Johnson's rhetorical effectiveness in presenting those ideas.

The critic's knowledge of the speechwriter and his influence assists him in evaluating the language of the discourse. A critic who knew that the speechwriter prepared the language of a speech might be better able to understand why the rhetoric succeeded or failed. If, for instance, a critic discerns the ambiguity in a speaker's rhetoric and knows that a speechwriter prepared this language, he might concur that the speaker intentionally or unintentionally failed to articulate his ideas to the writer. Hence, his language might be perceived as
ambiguous by the writer and articulated in the same manner. The writer's experience in preparing the language of a speech might be another factor of interest to a critic evaluating the discourse. For example, Sorensen's experience in preparing formal presidential addresses may have produced a more artistic product than if Johnson had prepared the language of his speech alone. However, if the speechwriter were unfamiliar with the speaker's natural language, as was Sorensen in 1964, then he may not have captured the speaker's style in the discourse. Thus, the language of the speech did not truly reflect the speaker's style and may have produced an awkward circumstance for a speaker delivering his text.

This writer contends that when a critic examines a speech prepared by someone other than the speaker, he must extend his theoretical postulates for evaluating the text. In addition to describing the preparation process and evaluating the speaker's effectiveness, the critic should judge the speechwriter's influence on the final text. The critic must examine how the speechwriter and speaker's interaction affects the language and ideas of the discourse. The critic might also consider the speechwriter's assistance in responding to the rhetorical situation. Once the critic examines and explains the writer's role, he must analyze his contributions to the speechmaking process. He may
evaluate those contributions in four ways:

1. Did the speechwriter's presence enable the speaker to realize his fullest potential inventionally, linguistically, and in response to the rhetorical situation?

2. Did the speechwriter help to produce a superior text technically as well as artistically?

3. Did the speechwriter's presence and contributions contribute to producing the desired response?

4. Did the speech function as an instrument for social change?

By simply supplementing present critical methods in these areas, the critic can extend rhetorical theories of criticism to encompass the speechwriter's presence and influence in speech preparation.

While this writer believes that her criteria are applicable in examining a ghostwritten speech, she is not so bold to suggest that the methodology is flawless. This system, like other methods of rhetorical criticism, leaves room for adaptability. The rhetorician may find that he does not have sufficient information to examine each area as extensively as he would like to examine it. He may also find that any evaluative judgments he could make might be limited as well. However, this writer believes that by proposing such open-ended system for criticism she allows the critic to adapt the theoretical
Finally, the critic contends that her criteria are by no means a necessarily sufficient method for criticizing a speech. Her intentions from the beginning have been to propose a supplemental form which might be applicable to speechwriting practices. She suggests that her criteria be adapted to any method of rhetorical criticism which the critic may already understand. The proposed criteria are meant to supplement such critical forms as a canonical approach to criticism, a Burkean analysis, Hillbruner's intrinsic and extrinsic methods, or any other applicable systems of criticism. The writer encourages critics to discover new ways to adapt and extend these proposed criteria to existing forms of rhetorical criticism in order to perfect our methods of analysis and understanding of the speechmaking process.

By examining the speechwriter's role in preparing presidential rhetoric, this critic discovered several characteristics of speechwriting which should interest other critics and open the door to research in this area. She proposes that future critics extend speechwriting studies to expand their knowledge in these aspects of communication: the effects of the speechwriter on other public speaking environments, the influence of speechwriting practices on the theorist's understanding of small group
communication, and the effects of the media on speechwriting practices.

While a critic might enhance his knowledge of presidential rhetoric by further comparing the speechwriting practices of several administrations, this writer believes that critics have much insight to gain from comparing presidential practices with those used by other political figures, business leaders, and academicians. Among the studies which might be very profitable are: a comparative study between a speaker's ghostwritten and non-ghostwritten speeches, a comprehensive study of the use of speechwriters in major corporations, or the use of ghosts in the rhetoric of social, political, economic, or educational movements. These endeavors could add to the critic's knowledge of speechwriting practices in other environments. They could also enhance our understanding of the impact of the ghost's presence in contemporary speechmaking. By comparing presidential practices with the practices of business leaders, for example, critics might observe strengths and weaknesses which might improve his rhetoric by adopting particular practices.

Critical studies of speechwriting may also enlarge the theorist's knowledge of small group communication. Speechwriting practices offer theorists an environment for testing many of their hypotheses of group interaction, participative roles, and goals, the effectiveness of a group
product versus an individual effort, and the function of groups in political as well as business settings. Studies could be pursued in any of these areas and in applying principles of small group research to usually individual speechmaking efforts, to determine the effect of interaction on the speaker and his discourse. Critics might also compare group decision-making processes to a speaker's decision-making process in determining the ideas developed in speechwriting efforts.

Finally, since speechwriting practices have grown along with technology of the media, critics might extend their studies of speechwriting in regard to the media. For example, critics might compare campaign speechwriting before and after the development of television to evaluate the media's impact on the speechwriting practices. Researchers might also study the speechwriter's perceptions of the media's ability to create exigence, to influence public opinion, and to alter the effectiveness of the speaker's discourse as well as the speechwriter's ability to create rhetoric which might alter the media's portrayal of a speaker. Through their studies, critics would hopefully be better able to explain the effects of the media on contemporary speaking.

By extending studies of speechwriting practices and their influence on other areas of communication, critics can develop a greater awareness of contemporary speaking
variables. They may also develop a greater appreciation of the speechwriter's contributions to public speaking. In addition, they may extend the application of rhetorical theories to new communication environments.
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