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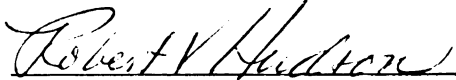
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has been accepted towards fulfillment
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Communication Arts and Sciences


Major professor

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**THE FRONT PAGE ON FILM AS A CASE STUDY OF
AMERICAN JOURNALISM MYTHOLOGY IN MOTION**

Volume I

By

Norma Fay Green

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

THE FRONT PAGE ON FILM AS CASE STUDY OF AMERICAN JOURNALISM MYTHOLOGY IN MOTION

By

Norma Fay Green

To determine if any historical relationship existed between American journalism mythology in popular literature and feature films, as well as to find out any contributory role of the mass media in mediating or substantiating the mythological message, this study examined an important and purposive sample of the journalism movie genre.

Textual and contextual analyses of The Front Page (1931), His Girl Friday (1940), The Front Page (1974), and Switching Channels (1988) indicated that American journalism mythology, (characterizations, stories, and themes about the assigning, gathering, writing, editing and presenting of news for print or broadcast) identified in earlier occupational fiction, re-emerged in the films chosen for this multiple case study. The journalism mythic elements identified in the motion pictures included aggressive, anti-academic, blunt, cynical, drinker, fraternal and unscrupulous character traits; a story line involving a power struggle between a reporter and a news boss over work and personal life decisions; and an overall theme of journalism as a romantic occupation, full of excitement and adventure.

These research findings indicated that the four films derived some

of their mythological message from earlier short stories and novels. Yet, the filmmakers who adapted the Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur stage play, did not adopt the mythology unchanged, as one earlier researcher claimed. Instead, textual analyses indicated that each film version manipulated the same basic bundle of myth elements, comprising the occupational mythology, in different ways to fit the tenor of more modern times. Each film included anti-academic and fraternal character traits not identified in earlier journalism fiction.

Further, these research findings suggested that the mass media contributed to the mythic variations within each of the four movies. Contextual analyses of the mass media during the thirties, seventies, and late eighties indicated that shifting economic alliances and technological rivalries among newspapers, television and motion pictures affected the dissemination of the filmed mythology. In addition, specific contextual evidence of film production circumstances suggested that the variances among the movies can be ascribed to the cyclical nature of genre films, myths and remakes, as well as censorship issues and fluctuations in actual media economics and technology.

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**To My First Teachers,
Pauline and George Warren Green**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The genesis for this research began in 1980 when I first saw the 1931 version of The Front Page film, appropriately enough in the former Cook County Criminal Courts Building where Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur toiled before making their famous contribution to America journalism mythology. The occasion was a journalism film festival, sponsored by the Chicago Headline Club (the local chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists) and the Film Center of the Art Institute of Chicago. So I have them to thank for the initial inspiration. Later, I stumbled upon a copy of Alex Barris' book on journalism films at Metro Golden Memories, a local nostalgia shop, and began to collect more data about movie depictions of my chosen field. Finally, in 1991, I took a provocative course, "Classic Mythology in American Culture," at the Newberry Library Lyceum. All three of these events worked to solidify my interest and final approach to this study.

Beyond the borders of Chicagoland, I traveled to graduate school at Michigan State University where I was encouraged in my specific research efforts by faculty and classmates in the Mass Media Ph.D. program. The Guidance Committee has been most helpful. My chairman and dissertation adviser, Professor Robert V. Hudson, is the best editor a writer could have. (Besides, he claims that Northside 777 was his inspiration for a journalism career). Also, Profs. Gretchen Barbatsis, Erik Lunde, and Stanley Soffin all have contributed invaluable

information in the form of books, videotapes and research suggestions as well as personal contacts in the world of film and media studies. They are all fine examples of the teacher-scholar tradition I have been in training to join. Most importantly, they all conspired to keep me on the focused and narrow path to successful completion of my dissertation.

Further, I could not have completed a crucial check of my own observations without the help of two tireless coding judges: Jeanne Zasadil and J.W. Corbett. Their attention to detail and devotion to the tedium of watching each of the four films several times demonstrated their amazing discipline.

Also, I am indebted to my colleagues at Columbia College, Crain Communications Inc., and Scott, Foresman's aptly named Lifelong Learning Division who gave me work and friendship: Carolyn Hulse, Eric Lund, R. Craig Endicott, Kevin Brown, the multilingual Ilse Cermak, as well as A. Jean Leshner and Elaine Goldberg.

Abiding by Virginia Woolf's precept of a room of one's own, I must single out Janet W. Boyd for providing just that--a place to think and write. Also, special thanks to Nancy L. Kless who consistently reached out with hospitality and camaraderie at all the right moments. Further, I am grateful to Dr. Mary A. Gardner who was only supposed to be my under-graduate advisor but ended up carrying on far above and beyond that call.

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Special praise is reserved for publishing pal Anne Basye and her masterful manipulation of this manuscript into final form.

Perhaps most important, I am blessed with a wonderful family who sustained me through the long process of research, thought, writing and revision. Especially, I am grateful for the love and support of John, whose audiovisual expertise proved invaluable.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Journalists love to tell good stories and some of the best are the ones they tell about themselves via novels, plays, and films. These narratives have been important in shaping perceptions of the news profession as evidenced by continuing comments of aspiring practitioners and the public alike. Picking up where image studies of occupational myths and archetypes in novels about American journalism left off, this dissertation identified and interpreted myth elements -- defined as stories, themes, and characterizations of the news business -- manifest in the four versions of one of the most prominent American feature films about journalism, The Front Page. The purpose was to explain how and why these elements, comprising the myths, endured or changed as they metamorphosed from the printed page to the sound stage and moved from generation to generation of film makers and moviegoers. Specifically, this motion picture case study used textual and contextual analyses to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the occupational myth elements found in each of the four film versions of The Front Page?
 - A. Do these myth elements vary from those already identified in earlier journalism fiction?
 - B. Do the myth elements vary among the four films?

2. What contextual conditions may have contributed to American journalism myth elements changing or staying the same in the four films?

A. Did general economic and technological conditions of the mass media play a part in the myth making about newspaper and television journalism as film subjects?

B. Did any circumstances of the film production substantiate any journalism myth elements portrayed?

Implicit in the first main question was the premise that there may be some historical relationship between the characterizations, stories, and themes of journalism previously identified by researchers of nineteenth century popular literature and any found in twentieth century feature film. The first subsidiary question (1A), particularly, was designed to test an earlier fiction researcher's assertion that occupational mythology in journalism films was just like that found in short stories and novels written long before motion pictures were ever shown in America. Question 1B dealt with presumed differentiations across the nearly six decade-span of films. Beyond determining the presence of particular myth elements, my research inquiry assumed that the mass media were an important factor in the construction of the occupational mythology. The third subsidiary question (2A) was aimed at acknowledging the role mass media may have had in the mediation of messages about journalism projected on the silver screen. The last subsidiary question (2B) sought to explore the relevance of the actual collaborative process of film production as an agent of myth element stability or change. This inquiry intended to make a contribution to the understanding of mythology created about American journalism.

Significance of the Study

The importance of The Front Page as a worthy case study subject appears to have been overlooked by previous researchers, despite repeated references to it in more general works. The Front Page is believed to be the most frequently cited fictional image of journalism in articles, books, and dissertations about the occupation.¹ Further, it was created by two former newsmen, Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur, and is still regularly referred to at journalism conferences and in casual conversations around the newsroom. Yet, in both academic and working press communities, it is often mentioned in conjunction with other fictional works and is never really examined alone. While the depiction is often taken for granted, it appears that no one ever stopped to do an in-depth examination of any mythology manifest in The Front Page. I found no books or dissertations on the topic, but it needs to be singled out and explored for several reasons.

First, The Front Page is believed to hold the record for the most remakes among hundreds of films focused on news operations and journalists² that have appeared since the first documented sighting of a news worker depiction in a 1900 silent film, Horsewhipping an Editor.³ The Front Page, which originally debuted as an early sound motion picture in 1931, was remade into at least three more feature-length films: His Girl Friday released in 1940, The Front Page of 1974, and Switching Channels of 1988. Arguments continue to emerge over possible intermediate reworkings between the initial movie version and its protagonist's gender transformation nine years later. Film critic Pauline Kael asserted that "...Wedding Present, in 1936...was the mold

that The Front Page was then squeezed into to become His Girl Friday,"⁴ while Hecht biographer William MacAdams listed the 1937 release, There Goes My Girl, as an "uncredited loose remake of The Front Page."⁵ Both deal with women reporters torn between work and romance. Other scholars insisted The Awful Truth (1937) and Four's A Crowd (1938) be included, with The Thrill of Brazil (1946) declared a direct descendent of His Girl Friday. For the purposes of this study, I concentrated on an analysis of the four most commonly agreed upon versions of the film.

In addition to its popularity as a source for more or less straight remakes, The Front Page may be the most parodied journalism story as well. Shirley Temple's screen debut in the 1932 one-reel "baby burlesk" comedy was entitled The Runt Page and spoofs continued through 1991 with the staging of the now familiar press room scenes in a dream sequence on the television comedy series, Anything But Love.⁶ Also, one or more versions of The Front Page have been screened recurrently in at least a handful of journalism film festivals held around the country and internationally in the last two decades.⁷

Anecdotal evidence suggested that the influence of The Front Page on certain viewers has been important. Several journalists stated that they traced their interest in the field to fictional portrayals. Howard Good, a journalism professor and former newsman who has studied mythical images in both books and films, observed that "youthful readers of newspaper novels who went on to journalism careers were the image made flesh."⁸ The lure of romanticized representations was validated in a comment by reporter Doug Robarchek that "old movies brought many more of us into the business over the years, not with true stories, but with good ones."⁹ Samuel Fuller, who worked on several newspapers before

turning to directing journalism films, remembered the powerful impression that fictional images made on him: "Seeing The Front Page play on opening night ... moved us because ... we saw what we were not but would like to be."¹⁰ Journalist Loren Ghiglione noted that there is a strong connection between the fictional references of news people and the kinds of expectations they had for their work. He cited The Front Page imagery used by journalist and author Tom Wolfe as well as television anchor Dan Rather in describing their early career fantasies.¹¹ Wall Street Journal veteran Frederick Taylor is quoted as saying, "It is probably embarrassing to admit it, but as a kid I saw the movie, The Front Page, (the original version) and said to myself, 'That looks like fun.'¹²

One editor, Charles Anderson of the Wilmington (North Carolina) Star-News, went so far as to use reporters' reactions to The Front Page as a barometer to measure the journalistic temperament of his staff. He found that those who did not like it soon left the news business.¹³ Yet another editor, the venerable Stanley Walker of the New York Herald Tribune, reportedly "counselled young hopefuls to ignore what the play told them about journalism."¹⁴ Even those who do not relish the image seemed to acknowledge its mythological impact, or at least its visual iconography. A case in point was the seventy-fifth anniversary issue of Quill, the magazine of the Society of Professional Journalists. On page two, editor Mike Moore grudgingly admitted the popularity of The Front Page though dismissing it as a bygone era and praising the image changes wrought by his group while, at the same time, prominently featuring a famous studio still from the 1930 movie version on the cover of the widely-distributed commemorative edition.¹⁵

Two Hecht biographers noted that life seemed to imitate art for some predisposed news professionals who took to heart the mythic characteristics of The Front Page protagonists. Jeffrey Brown Martin observed that "... newsmen ... began to adopt the fictional hyperbole"¹⁶ while Doug Fetherling specified the conduct: "Editors enjoy behaving like the play's Walter Burns in front of their young reporters, who in turn delight in perpetuating Hildy Johnson for an audience of mere civilians."¹⁷ Writing in 1974, Richard Reeves strongly identified with the journalism mythology: "Most of what I've done for the past twelve years reminds me of The Front Page and vice versa. The best and worst of the newspaper business is in that 46-year-old script ..."¹⁸ Indeed, ubiquitous references to The Front Page continue to crop up regularly in journalist's columns, biographies, and memoirs, including Russell Baker's best-selling The Good Times.¹⁹ While it seems unlikely that The Front Page would ever be used as a recruitment tool by journalism schools, versions of it have been shown routinely in journalism courses, especially those covering media history.²⁰

Further study of The Front Page seemed warranted by virtue of the number, variety, and frequency of superlatives and figures of speech used to describe it by journalists, film makers, critics, and scholars. A review of popular commentaries and academic literature revealed references expressed in the terms: "classic," "archetype," "prototypal," "trailblazing," "pace-setting," "trendsetting," as well as "first great," "most popular," "leading presentation," and "newspaper comedy par excellence."²¹ Metaphors included "yardstick" and "standard" along with "landmark" and "bright, shining beacon in a sea of Depression and precious few cinematic precedents."²² In keeping with the visual

tradition inherent in print journalism and motion pictures about it, a journalism professor described The Front Page as "unfading" and as an "image set indelibly."²³ Perhaps unconsciously referring to the changing condition in American journalism from craft to full-fledged vocation and burgeoning business, journalist Alex Barris chose an industrial assembly line allusion when he stated that "The Front Page set a pattern that was used again and again, followed, imitated, distorted, sometimes equalled, and occasionally improved upon."²⁴ A pair of film scholars considered it the source of contemporary attitudes about the print media: "This comedy...established the still existing cultural perception of newspapermen as tough, wise-cracking, and resourceful loners."²⁵ One movie critic offered the rather ambiguous appraisal "that this work more than any other captures the wit, pathos, bathos, callousness, boredom, exhilaration, frenzy and noise of the news business."²⁶ That opinion can be juxtaposed with another's seemingly contradictory view that it "crystallized the screen persona of the newspaperman much to the discredit of the press"²⁷ The sound and fury of the commentary surrounding The Front Page signified something important about American journalism and this dissertation was undertaken to identify and interpret it as a prominent example of occupational mythology in motion.

Scope

It was initially tempting to consider studying a broader spectrum of American journalism myths researched from nineteenth-century literary antecedents through the dawn of silent film portrayals to more contemporary mass media representations. But the few scholars who have

already attempted grander analytical sweeps met with only limited success in explaining the vast landscape of depictions and providing contextual meaning. A comprehensive study of journalism myths in American motion pictures alone could conceivably involve examination of almost a century's worth of films, based on catalogue descriptions of movie plots and characters. However, such an exploration would be time-consuming, costly, and ultimately discouraging, as many works have been lost due to neglect, purposeful destruction (to recover silver), and chemical reactions during storage. Also, film scholars Tim Bywater and Thomas Sobchack observed that "not enough people have written specialized studies about small areas of interest...what is needed is a closer look at narrower topics."²⁸ Once it was determined that The Front Page was available and could provide enough material for a dissertation-length analysis, further delimitations were made.

The Front Page has appeared in many forms. It began as an original smash stage play in 1928 that became a best seller in print form. It was subsequently transfigured into recordings and an early television series before more recent teleplay and musical renditions. It seemed appropriate to concentrate on its adaptations in the mass medium of motion pictures that reached the largest audience of the work over six decades. Film scholar William Kelly noted an advantage to examining a series of popular films: "Their tendency to repeat successful formulas again and again affords an opportunity to identify, through their recurrence, the central metaphors across periods of that culture's life."²⁹ Such a longitudinal exploration is what mythologist Jaan Puhvel called "diffusionary mythology [which] studies how traditions travel, charting the spread and transmission of myth."³⁰

To help understand possible sources of the mythological messages found in the films, it seemed important to incorporate research findings on journalism myths in earlier fictional works as well as to examine contemporaneous media industry conditions that may have contributed to the creation of the occupational myths. Therefore, the scope of the research was narrowed to focus on the cycle of four feature-length films yet left broad enough to acknowledge that these movies were not created in isolation. They needed to be interpreted in terms of contextual connections among the motion picture, newspaper, and later, television industries as well as possible historical links with journalism myths previously identified in popular literature.

This multiple case study was intended as an important contribution to the growing mass media scholarship on journalism mythology and occupational fiction. This research used textual and contextual analyses not employed in previous research about the topic. Using textual analysis, the study examined myth elements, their connection to previous myths identified in short stories and novels, and their historical stability. Further, the contextual analyses sought to determine the role of the mass media and film production conditions in the perpetuation or change of the journalism myths over time.

The next chapter establishes the framework for the important role of mythology to journalists. It summarizes key theories -- religious, socio-functional, structuralist, psychological and literary -- before defining journalism myths. It ends with a critique significant of prior research on journalism fiction for strengths and connections to this study.

NOTES

1. Thirty-seven of 50 studies and commentaries on journalists in fiction and film referred to one or more versions of The Front Page, especially in works critiquing many journalism films. It is mentioned more than any other film about the news business. References to The Front Page can be found in various consumer publications as well. For example, an item on a newspaper policy banning confrontational talk in the newsroom ended with the rhetorical question: "Where have you gone, Hildy Johnson?" (Newsweek, 5 March 1990, 6). Such a phrase presumed a certain occupational "literacy" and familiarity with American journalism mythology.

2. Film researcher Bill Mahon, who claimed to have identified some 1,000 journalism films, observed:

The Front Page has to be the quintessential journalism movie. As I look at all the ones I've found, it's the one story line that's repeated now since 1928. There are a few others -- you can find three or four with the name Scandal Sheet, but they really haven't been the same story line or anything. So that's got to be the most lasting one. (Quoted in Debra Gerish, "Stereotyping Journalists, Editor & Publisher, 5 October 1991, 18).

Film scholar Brooks Robards believed the characterizations were the key: "The charisma of Hildy Johnson as a movie journalist is demonstrated by the frequency with which The Front Page has been remade." ["Newshounds and Sobsisters: The Journalist Goes to Hollywood" in Beyond the Stars: Studies in American Popular Film, vol. 1, Stock Characters, eds. Paul Loukides and Linda K. Fuller (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1990), 137.] Joseph Reed in American Scenarios: The Uses of Film Genre (Middletown, Ct: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 106, stated that The Front Page as a film "probably has more credited and uncredited versions than any other shape...together with Dracula it's a genre-freezing work of art."

3. The American Mutoscope and Biograph release "depicted an editor being attacked by an irate man for some unexplained offense," according to Maxwell Taylor Courson, "The Newspaper Movies: An Analysis of the Rise and Decline of the News Gatherer as a Hero in American Motion Pictures, 1900-1974" (Ph.D. diss., University of Hawaii, 1976), 236. Courson called it the "premier movie farce." He said that the 25 foot-long film no longer exists.

4. Pauline Kael, "Raising Kane" in The Citizen Kane Book (New York: Bantam, 1971), 69.

5. William MacAdams, Ben Hecht: The Man Behind the Legend (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1990), 310.

6. Shirley played "Lulu Parsnips" (Louella Parsons) and another child played "Raymond Bunion" (Damon Runyon) in the release from Educational Films Corp., directed by Roy LaVerne and produced by Jack Hays, according to Loraine Burdick in The Shirley Temple Scrapbook (Middle Village, NY: Jonathan Davis Publishing, 1975), 27.

The ABC-TV sitcom was set in the contemporary editorial offices of fictitious Chicago Weekly, a news magazine. In a dream sequence that paid homage to the first film, reporters ran around in original Front Page film era clothes complete with snap-brim hats. They shouted into candlestick phones and at each other. At one point, a reporter yelled across the room, "Why are we talking so fast?" and a colleague replied, "Because it's the '30s." In order for parodies to mimic successfully an original work, there must be a presumption of audience familiarity with the initial creation. It appears that The Front Page gained swift recognition as a film in the 1930s and was still capable of spoofing status in the 1990s.

7. Both the 1931 and 1940 versions were featured in specialized film festivals, according to catalogue descriptions and articles.

They were included in a Boston program, according to Myron Meisel, "Dateline...Hollywood: A Guide to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Film and Lecture Series, May 1-June 14 1975."

Washington hosted its first festival during the Bicentennial, according to Donia Mills in "Films That Preserve the Sanctity of the Newsroom" (Washington Star, 1 August 1976), G8, that referred to the upcoming American Film Institute series, "The Roar of the Presses" as did Gary Arnold's "Rolling Cameras, Roaring Presses," Washington Post, 1 August 1976, H1, H3.

Chicago was the scene of a film fest the same year. I have a souvenir program book, "The Front Page Film Festival: Presented by the Chicago Headline Club and the Film Center of the Art Institute, March 27 - April 5, 1976" and articles from David Elliott, "Extra! Extra! Front Page Film Festival," Chicago Sun-Times, 23 March 1980, Show 3; Richard Christiansen, "Front Page film fest is celluloid celebration of bygone bylines," Chicago Tribune, 25 March 1980, Tempo 1, and Frank Segers, "Chi, seed-bed of 'Front Page,' sets fest of pix on journalism," Variety, 23 January 1980, 6, 100.

France was host to the first International Film & Press Festival in 1981 featuring forty films from around the world (including the 1931 and 1974 Front Page), according to "Strasbourg Fest Puts Lens on Screen Treatment of Journalism," Variety, 15 July 1981, 6, 29.

The latest journalism film fest tied into the Library of Congress exhibit, "The American Journalist: Paradox of the Press," according to an April-June 1990 schedule for the Mary Pickford Theater in Washington, DC featuring the film series, "Hollywood's Reporters: Journalists in American Film."

8. Howard Good, Acquainted With the Night: The Image of Journalists in American Fiction, 1890-1930 (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1986), 92.

9. Doug Robarchek (Knight News Service), "Movies Like to Make Heroes of Newspapermen," Toledo Blade, 24 April 1983, (page number obscured).

10. Samuel Fuller, "News That's Fit to Film" American Film 1:1 (October 1975), 23.

11. Loren Ghiglione, The American Journalist: Paradox of the Press (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1990), 8-9 quoted from The New Journalism, eds. Tom Wolfe and E. W. Johnson (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 3, about Wolfe's cinema-inspired news job fantasies:

Drunken reporters out on the ledge of the News peeing into the Chicago River at dawn...Nights down at the saloon listening to 'Back of the Yards' by a baritone who was only a lonely blind bulldyke with lumps of milk glass for eyes...Nights down at the detective bureau...the whole movie, nothing left out.

Ghiglione quoted Rather as saying "The average journalist including myself, is a whiskey-breathed, nicotine-stained, stubble-bearded guy..." The quote was picked up from Timothy Crouse, The Boys on the Bus. (New York: Random House, 1973), 230.

12. Ibid, 8-9.

13. Ibid., 9.

14. Doug Fetherling, The Five Lives of Ben Hecht (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Ltd., 1977), 68.

15. Quill 75:10 (November 1987).

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CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Theoretical Rationale

Myths are an important part of the collective life of cultures and American journalists, as an occupational group, constructed myths as a means to organize their feelings about work experiences and to transmit vocational lore. Like ancient tribes who banded together to exchange information for growth and survival, news workers swapped stories, traded tales and created caricatures about their chosen field. Beginning in the nineteenth century, these oral narratives, usually shared around a desk after deadline or over food and drink at a nearby gathering place, began to be written down in the form of short stories and novels for wider audiences. Some of these myths were acted out on stage and, later, several of the more popular performances were preserved on celluloid in the form of photoplays viewed by millions during much of the twentieth century.

Mythic narratives seem always to have served significant purposes in both primitive and post-modern societies, according to the assemblage of scholars who have studied mythology. Myths have been found to provide group identity and foster solidarity. They can offer insight into common life situations and serve as paradigms of behavior. Used for both education and entertainment, myths can supply a means to try to recapture a shared past as well. Scholar Jaan Puhvel summarized the

social content of myths:

In myths are expressed the thought patterns by which a group formulates self-cognition and self-realization, attains self-knowledge and self-confidence, explains its own source and being and that of its surroundings, and sometimes tries to chart its destinies.¹

Expanding on this concept, comparative mythologist Joseph Campbell identified four functions of myth -- the mystical, cosmological, sociological, and psychological.² The latter two functions, which deal with affirming and influencing group and individual behavior, are most relevant to journalism myths that make little pretense to try to explain the origins of the occupation or any spiritual hold it may have, beyond nostalgia for bygone youth, perhaps. Researcher Henry A. Murray developed a typology of characteristic properties of myths that are particularly relevant to the rationale for studying American journalism myths in The Front Page films:

- (a) The sensible mythic representation is peculiarly attractive in one way or another ... leaves a durable and recurrent imprint in many minds, and is often reproduced in different narrated, enacted, or portrayed versions ...
- (b) It evokes empathy ... or recipathy ... and binds positive affection ... over a considerable period of time ...
- (c) It elicits belief in its essential validity or authenticity, or faith in its occurrence in the future ...
- (d) It guides conduct by portraying one or more basic human needs, their goal, the actions they propel, and the disastrous or successful outcome of these actions ...
- (e) It produces all these effects to a sufficient degree in a large number of people -- members of the same group ...³

Murray stated that the power of myths can be tested by measuring "the extent to which each of these functions (outlined above) is fulfilled ... the number of people ... affected and possessed by it, and ... the duration of its influence."⁴ While it is beyond the scope of this

dissertation to attempt to quantify audience reaction, The Front Page mythology met many of the criteria listed by Murray, as evidenced by the regularity of references and frequency of revivals of it in one form or another over the last six decades.

A review of literature on general myth research revealed more of a consensus on the reasons for the existence of myths than on a definition of myth itself. Religion historian Mircea Eliade admitted there was a problem within and beyond the sacred grove of academe regarding myths:

It would be hard to find a definition of myth that would be acceptable to all scholars and at the same time intelligible to non-specialists. Myth is an extremely complex cultural reality, which can be approached and interpreted from various and complementary viewpoints.⁵

Indeed, mythographer William Doty synthesized fifty different definitions in a dense, polyphasic fifteen-line "comprehensive working definition with seventeen components."⁶

While it is an interesting academic exercise, it does not seem to move the discussion forward very much. Perhaps researcher K.K. Ruthven's argument makes the most sense: "Nothing would be gained by formulating a brand-new synchronic definition of myth and insisting that everybody accept it. What we really need is an understanding of those conflicting interests which have contributed to the present muddle."⁷ To that end, the following discussion moves swiftly through the maze, summarizing various theories on myths and offering an operational definition for the purpose of this dissertation research.

Theories on Myth Usage

Etymologists have traced the term "myth" to ancient Greece during Homer's time when the word originally meant "words, speech, and talk."

By the age of Herodotus, the Western father of history (around the 400s B.C.) the concept became more specific and myth meant "fictional."⁸ In today's society, when the public is asked about myth, respondents may conjure up images of creation stories or the so-called "classics" from the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions as well as Indic (Mahabharata) and Babylonian (Gilgamesh) epics. But most common is the usage of the term to mean "unreal." Myth is a convenient four-letter word used routinely by headline writers to mean misconception, illusion, deception, untruth, lie or falsity about a person, group, event or experience. It is often used pejoratively, far removed from what some scholars believe is its root as a sacred story about the gods.

Religious

One of those who saw myths as narratives of sacred history was religion scholar, Eliade. Nevertheless, he and other researchers admitted that these myths became secularized in their peregrinations through time and, though denigrated, survived to this period. Religion professor Wendy Doniger concurred with Eliade and added that myth "continues to have meaning in the present because it is remembered."⁹ She noted that "the question of survival of the content of myth is inextricably related to the question of the form in which the myth is preserved."¹⁰ For many purists, novels and motion pictures are not seen as proper conduits or repositories for myths, as they are so far removed from the narrowest definitions of myths as true religious stories. But film scholars, among other proponents of popular culture, have defended the role of mass media in mythmaking. William Kelly described the general evolution of myths from an unamplified oral tradition to more

modern media metaphors that address commonalities in characters, objectives, and crises:

As the culture develops, more sophisticated forms of communication, such as novels and films, adapt and engage these metaphors ... While these later species of cultural production are certainly not myths in the traditional sense of that term, they do embody the tensions, and frequently the formal patterns of mythic thought ... It is, however, possible, and productive, to recognize similar constellations of metaphor and paradigm in narratives that span both historical periods and levels of sophistication. Indeed, these recurrent images and narrative patterns unify and significantly contribute to the creation of a culture's identity.¹¹

However, even though Eliade conceded that "the screen media create characters to carry on mythological traditions,"¹² the search for them was often like that of an archaeologist trying to unearth shards of pottery to piece together a vase. Just as epoxy can bind the vessel fragments, myths have been viewed as the "social cement that holds society together"¹³ by melding collective remembrances into shared stories.

Socio-Functional

Anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, and, to a lesser extent, sociologist Emile Durkheim embraced the socio-functional theory of myths. Durkheim saw myths as symbolic mirrors or models of society¹⁴ while Malinowski perceived myths as reality and a means for establishing social order as well as "recording and validating institutions."¹⁵ Myth scholar G.S. Kirk best explained Malinowski's theory of "charter myths":

Tales of the origins of clans in particular localities ... used to justify a clan's claim to autochthony and the possession of certain lands and prerogatives, or perhaps to disguise the obvious falsity of such a claim.¹⁶

The territory that American journalists would claim as part of

their fourth estate is actually access to any person or place based on competitive pragmatism as much as constitutional press freedom. Chicago, which was the setting for the original play and three of the four movie versions, is a city where crime, politics, and journalism have been inextricably linked. So-called charter myths about the geocentric nature of Chicago journalism seem bound up in The Front Page. One play reviewer noted a special symbiosis:

In Chicago the newspapers are more aggressive and powerful ... in part because of the close connections of government with crime. The newspapers have the lowdown on both partners ... it is actually in their interest to maintain a balance of power.¹⁷

Myths about American journalism generally would seem to justify not just a need for press presence but perpetuation of a claim to a room of their own within government confines. Indeed, the press room in criminal court buildings across the country, usually maintained as a courtesy to journalists, was the key scene of crime and corruption in The Front Page.

Structuralist

Counterpoint to the functionalist view of myths was the structuralist position of anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss. He maintained that the structure of relationships was all-important. Any overt content or allegorical interpretations were of no concern. For him, the essence of myths involved the initial conflict within and between characters resolved through some sort of mediation. He asserted that "The purpose of myth is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction."¹⁸ Myth researcher Eric Gould observed that Levi-Strauss "consistently declares that as a human enterprise myth is weakened in time through repetition."¹⁹

Given that premise, each subsequent remake of The Front Page in film or other forms would be a dilution of the original play mythology. Critics have called it a flaw that Levi-Strauss saw all myths as conflict-based and mere "bundles of binary oppositions and their resolution."²⁰ While Levi-Strauss maintained that myths were a solution to compromise, semiologist Roland Barthes viewed myth as compromise itself "an incarnation of ideological intent."²¹ Unlike Eliade, who saw myth as pure truth, Barthes observed how myths are appropriated pragmatically by their users: "Men do not have with myth any relationship based on truth but on use; they depoliticize according to their needs."²² Thus, the ambiguous and contradictory reactions to The Front Page would be in keeping with Barthes' assertion that audiences are in partial control as they pick and choose the myths they remember and expose themselves to, regardless of who constructed them.

Psychological

A fourth important theory about myths revolves around a psychological approach advanced by Sigmund Freud. By the time Hecht and MacArthur were working as reporters, Freud had made great inroads with a successful American lecture series and English translations of some of his work. Though he was immensely influential especially right after World War I, when "Freudian gospel began to circulate to a marked extent among the American lay public,"²³ the play and film versions of The Front Page parodied him as a crackpot Viennese psychiatrist, Dr. Max Egglehofer.²⁴ Freud stated that myths, like dreams, were expressions of "unveiled deceits in cultural artifacts"²⁵ that, with psychoanalysis, could be revealed beneath the surface. The myths, he said, represented latent, and often socially unacceptable, impulses ranging from hostility

and tyranny to incest, rape, and murder. At least one film critic has attempted to explain the intense relationship between The Front Page male editor and male star reporter as latent homosexual love.²⁶ Freud saw myths as cultural dreams and is quoted as saying that "myths are probably distorted vestiges of the wish-phantasies of whole nations -- the age-long dream of young humanity."²⁷ Myths thus became "remembered relics of the psychic life."²⁸ Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung viewed myths and dream images as projections from the unconscious, rather than conscious inventions while process-oriented scholars Ernst Cassirer and Susanne Langer theorized about how myths were created as sources of expression for otherwise unarticulated feelings.²⁹ Jung postulated that the collective unconscious (shared by all humans or, at least, members of the same culture) was manifest in archetypes that appear as myth themes.³⁰ Literary critics later assimilated Jung's theories into their analyses of myths.

Literary

Northrup Frye theorized that the mythic archetypes of life, death and rebirth found in novels paralleled those revealed in the natural cycle of four seasons.³¹ He believed that modern literature was really only "displaced mythology."³² Thus, it could be reasoned that motion pictures, deriving some of their narrative ideas from novels, are farther removed but still loosely connected to the earlier myths. More recently, John Cawelti took Frye's theory one step further and applied some of his research on genre, particularly, to film analysis.

Finding the terms "archetype" and "genre" inadequate to describe postulates about motion picture form and content, Cawelti adopted the term "literary formula...a structure of narrative or dramatic

conventions employed in a great number of individual works."³³ Picking up on the functionalist approach, Cawelti observed that these formulas "fulfill man's need for enjoyment and escape."³⁴ But, he added, that to be successful, the story patterns "must be embodied in figures, settings and situations that have appropriate meaning for the culture which produces them."³⁵ Any mythic formula in the first two film versions of The Front Page might be perceived as particular to an urban American society of the Thirties, for instance. Thus, there might not be the universality that comparative mythologists look for in all popular stories. Some of the American journalism mythology created by former news workers, who wrote and directed films about their former occupation, may have been too specific to their corporate culture of news to have been grasped by general viewers initially. Over time, such myths would be refined for the motion picture medium and audiences might be conditioned to certain journalism representations based on repeated exposures. While Cawelti dismissed the newspaper movie as only "partly formulaic"³⁶ and denied that notions of myth can be anything but vague and ambiguous, his description of formula as a structure of conventions came close to my definition of myth.

Defining Journalism Myths

Acknowledging that "defining myth is a growth industry ... though ... impossible to define, it is cowardly not to try,"³⁷ here is my entry: American journalism mythology can be defined as the stories, themes, and characterizations about the assigning, gathering, writing, editing, and presenting of news for print or broadcast. The stories with plots are sequential actions caused by the interplay of one force

upon another.³⁸ The theme is the central, dominating idea about the occupation underlying the narrative. The characterizations are the qualities of the people -- their actions, gestures and speech -- who act out the work. What others have called "images," "stereotypes," "stock characters," or even "archetypes," I would refer to as elements of the myths -- those representations in words, pictures, and sounds -- depicting the news business and its workers. These myths, either in fragments or whole collections, can be found in short stories, novels, plays, motion pictures, television and radio programs as well as cartoons and comic strips. In addition to offering typical popular fiction forms, Loren Ghiglione gave examples of journalism myths in sculpture, painting, board games, advertising trade signs and even fruit box labels.³⁹ So, while scholars continue semantic squabbles about myth, I believe that the four motion pictures selected for this study can be analyzed in terms of occupational mythology, as I have defined it.

I have attempted to reduce complex, and often conflicting,⁴⁰ theories explicated in multiple volume lifeworks to a few sentences to demonstrate the applicability of The Front Page to mythological study. While myth purists might argue that something seemingly as prosaic as The Front Page could not embody profound mythology, a film critic observed "most people have come to regard it, quite correctly, as the Ur-legend of journalism."⁴¹ Film director Howard Hawks noted that when he set about to change the key reporter character -- Hildy Johnson -- from male to female in his remake, some contemporary journalists were aghast that he might tamper with their semi-sacred text: "Newspapermen ... looked on the story as a sort of Bible."⁴² One historian who

surveyed movies of the Depression decade found that "journalism ... [was] by far the most popular occupation for '30s screen heroes."⁴³ Therefore, it may not be surprising that variations on the original theme of The Front Page might be tolerated only to a certain point. Mythographer Doty argued in his study of myth research that "audience expectations set up by regular patterns of myth use may be shattered disturbingly or intensified emotionally if use ceases or is transferred to another social sphere."⁴⁴ One of the purposes of this dissertation was to ascertain any changes which may have occurred in the myths found in the four versions of The Front Page.

Another purpose of this study was to determine if there was any historical linkage between the fiction of earlier novels and short stories and later films about journalism. The editor of The Power of Myth In Literature and Film contended that regardless of one's perspective on myth, there was no denying its existence and value: "Whether we understand myth as an expression of the conscious ... or unconscious, as sacred, psychic, individual, or political paradigm, we must come to recognize it as a fact of our literature and ... our lives."⁴⁵ It was hoped that this research could find out if a pattern existed and was transferred from print to film and from version to version of the film over six decades. In a seminal article, "Prologue to a Study of Myth and Genre in American Movies," Richard Slotkin discussed the function of myth in providing continuity amidst a constantly changing world:

It [myth] highlights the aspects of our ... fictions that represent and preserve bits of history, deploying them as metaphors to interpret the present for us, enabling culture to serve as a kind of collective memory ... [myth] emphasizes the ways in which the historical development of our fictions reflects and justifies the social order as it changes over time.⁴⁶

I believe that the four cinematic versions of The Front Page should be accepted as legitimate repositories of American journalism mythology. Though previous researchers may not have used the concept of journalism mythology per se, I gratefully acknowledge the earlier advances made by scholars plowing in the same field.

Significant Prior Research

Previous film studies looking at stories, themes, and characterizations of journalism have ranged from glorified picture books to scholarly treatises covering almost a century of motion pictures. Many of these researchers have touched on occupational mythology in their efforts to categorize journalists according to character traits or job descriptions. Maxwell Taylor Courson's 1976 dissertation involved a descriptive analysis of journalism films spanning almost three-quarters of a century.⁴⁷ He began with a brief, general contextual history of hero mythology invoking viewpoints ranging from the Great Man theories of Thomas Carlyle and Frederick Nietzsche to Daniel Boorstin's premise that celebrities, with distinct mass media-created images, have usurped the more amorphous yet authentic heroes. Courson tied his discussion of hero to the movie star image and relationship to the film industry before moving on to the biographies of key actors who portrayed journalists. Midway through his 350-page study was a Darwinian-like classification of thirteen news character types by news duties and

media:

- male newspaper reporter
- female newspaper reporter
- magazine reporters
- radio reporters
- television reporters
- editors
- publishers
- columnists
- sports writers
- cameramen
- foreign correspondents
- war correspondents
- celebrities

This list of occupation sub-species followed three common themes he found: the newsgatherer and Cupid, the newsgatherer and crime, and the newsgatherer and strong drink.⁴⁸ Later, he discussed various genres, such as Western or musical, under which journalism films fit. Despite the title of his research on "newspaper movies," he included examples of broadcasting films. All in all, he covered 615 motion pictures, culled from New York Times reviews, primarily. It was unclear whether any or all of the movies were actually viewed (in those pre-videocassette recorder days), and he excluded films in which packs of news gatherers, for instance, flocked to news events but were not singled out as the leading protagonists.

Two books took differing approaches to journalism films. Canadian journalist-turned-Hollywood screenwriter Alex Barris produced what amounted to a movie fan's scrapbook with some 300 photographs from films produced between 1921 and 1976, when his work was published.⁴⁹ His only index referred to the names of actors who played journalists, not the film titles themselves. Barris grouped the characterizations into eight categories:

Reporter as Crime Buster
 Reporter as Scandalmonger
 Reporter as Crusader
 Reporter Overseas
 Reporter as Human Being
 The Sob Sister
 Editors and Publishers
 Newsman as Villain

He offered brief descriptive commentary obviously aimed at a popular audience. On the other hand, journalism professor Howard Good's 1989 book was directed at media academicians. It was an obvious extension of his earlier scholarly research on journalists in American novels and poetry.⁵⁰ It was part genre study and part contextual analysis that dwelt on so-called "representational films" from the 1950s to the 1980s, though earlier ones (including The Front Page) were cited among the seventy-four motion pictures mentioned. He discussed war correspondents, the scoop-crazed reporter and ratings-hungry television executive as well as the investigative journalist, whom he subdivided into four main groups: victim, comedian, penitent, and knight without armor.

Quantitative studies involving journalism films also have been undertaken recently. Toni Amelia Roberts did her 1987 master's thesis using a social scientific experiment which involved fifty-two college students viewing three films with pre-test and post-test surveys of attitudes among media and non-media majors.⁵¹ She used T-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistical procedures to evaluate data. Her use of only fifty-two people might be questioned as constituting too small a sample to be significant. Also, students, who are convenient subjects for academic research, may be atypical of a general population.

Journalism professor Albert Talbott also used a social science

approach. He developed the most sophisticated, comprehensive experiment discovered thus far. It involved audience attitudes toward journalism films using five journalism classes at the University of Iowa.⁵² His experiments involved surveying 200 students over two and one half years (1987-1989). They were asked to complete a ninety-five item questionnaire and Talbott analyzed the data using a variation of Q-methodology factor analysis. Thirty-two films, including all but the 1974 version of The Front Page, were used in various combinations but reasons for their selection or omission to any given class were not explained. Negative images were noted more frequently by students but responses might have been skewed by manipulation of the titles chosen for viewers. Talbott followed up his initial research with a study of foreign correspondent images in films, using the same student database.⁵³

Barry Salt's "Statistical Style Analysis of Motion Pictures" was one of the most empirically enterprising studies. He set out to determine whether film critic Andrew Sarris's claim was true that His Girl Friday had "more fluidity of camera movement and faster editing"⁵⁴ than The Front Page (1931). To evaluate auteur techniques, Salt examined directorial style, montage, deep focus, camera movement, and shot type.⁵⁵ His detailed deconstruction of the 35 millimeter footage into shot length distribution and number of shots per 500 shots with given camera movement, for instance, was impressive as a tedious attempt to translate aesthetic considerations into measurable attributes. But ultimately, his elaborate effort failed to prove anything significant. In an amended version of his study, he even admitted that he used an inappropriate statistical procedure to conclude "that there is only a

moderate difference in the styles of the two films."⁵⁶

Still other book chapters and journal articles offered interesting textual and contextual analyses of journalism films. Mass communications professor Brooks Robards conducted a descriptive analysis of journalism stock characters in a chapter of a multi-volume series on American popular film.⁵⁷ She attempted to distinguish "movie types" from "stereotypes" and "archetypes" but her examples were not thoroughly convincing regarding perceived nuances of difference. Robards mentioned 161 motion pictures dating from 1903 to 1988. She posed interesting questions about the relationship to police and detective film images and pondered the outlook for new films and the continuing appeal "of movie journalist's ... future in the Hollywood firmament" of stars.⁵⁸ In a 1991 Journalism Quarterly article, Stephen Vaughn and Bruce Evensen presented a contextual analysis of film images from 1920 to 1945 drawing on newly-opened censorship files of the Production Code Administration for the movie industry's Hays office.⁵⁹ They gave a descriptive analysis of thirty-five films from six major studios and included an interesting discussion of the changes made from The Front Page (1931) to His Girl Friday (1940) based on complaints by journalists. Thomas Zynda's cover article in a 1979 issue of Journalism History featured a descriptive textual analysis of nineteen journalism films beginning with The Front Page (1931) and ending with Network in 1976.⁶⁰ Acknowledging the impact of television on journalism, he divided the film images into pre and post-1950 camps and focused on four aspects of the press: character of the reporter, nature of the press organization, social role of the press, and character of the society in which the press functions.

Historian Roger Dooley devoted one chapter of his picture book on

films of the 1930s to a chronological description of sixty-four films.⁶¹ He related the rise of the genre to the advent of talkies, which he contended were necessary to make the noisy occupation convincing to moviegoers. Dooley cited Andrew Bergman's identification of two Depression-era depictions of journalists: "slick, scandal-crazed editor and cynical, puckish ace reporter."⁶²

A 1978 book, Questioning Media Ethics, included two chapters on journalism films. Deac Rossell offered a contextual descriptive analysis of synergistic relationships between American newspapers and motion pictures.⁶³ Toward the end of his chapter, he delved into the development of films with journalism images and mentioned thirty-eight films produced between 1913 and the 1960s, including the first two film versions of The Front Page. Co-contributor Roger Manvell developed a typology of characterizations he found in a textual analysis of twenty-three American films (including the first three versions of The Front Page), with brief contextual details on film production:

Newsperson as Cynic
 Newsperson as Unscrupulous
 Newsperson as Human Citizen
 Newsperson as Fighter for Justice⁶⁴

Other research on journalism films was found in short articles for journalism trade publications including The Bulletin of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, Editor & Publisher, Washington Journalism Review, Quill, Chicago Journalism Review, [More], and the company publication, Gannettair. Film journals were a useful source as well, including American Film (its premiere issue in 1975 featured three pertinent articles), Premiere, and Films and Filming. Occasional newspaper and magazine articles also provided a regional or national

perspective on attitudes inside and outside the news business regarding new and old journalism film portrayals. In an essay in Film and History, journalism professor John Stevens claimed that the prevailing stereotypes of journalism were created from a single work -- The Front Page -- and carried forward in subsequent film depictions over decades.⁶⁵ Stevens's essay helped reinforce my conviction that the understudied work was worth exploring. While a case study of a single medium was used in this dissertation, other scholars chose a multi-media survey approach.

Some researchers combined interests in portrayals of journalism in film and fiction. Among these mixed media studies was the dissertation of Heidi Langner-Burns, who did a qualitative content analysis of box office hits and best sellers dealing with fictional journalists over a twelve year period. Her study did not include any of The Front Page versions.⁶⁶ She adapted Leo Lowenthal's analysis of magazine biographies set forth in his book, The Triumph of Idols, to assess differences and similarities between print and audio-visual images of the same occupation. Her work included a fascinating contextual study of working conditions and relationships with colleagues. She also discussed private lives of journalists as factors in fictional image development in seventeen films. Journalism professor Aralynn Abare McMane analyzed depictions of women journalists in successful films and television programs.⁶⁷ She adapted the Conscious Scale of Sexism, developed in the 1970s, to analyze portrayals presented in the 1930s and 1940s (including His Girl Friday) and compare them with images of the last twenty years. Her all-too-brief study included an underdeveloped discussion of real female news workers as "alternative role models that

fit feminist theory."⁶⁸ Another interesting approach was taken by Professor Rod Carveth, who compared journalism feature films and television programs with findings from the Times-Mirror "People and the Press" public opinion surveys.⁶⁹

Journalist Ghiglione juxtaposed real and fictional journalists using a contextual approach. He contrasted factual working conditions with fictional portrayals in seventy-four films produced between 1911 and 1988 (with The Front Page original and remakes cited most frequently) as well as numerous novels, television programs, and other media.⁷⁰ His descriptive typology included nine fictional news types that loosely paralleled real-life divisions of labor in news organizations:

<u>Journalist of Fact</u>	<u>Journalist of Fiction</u>
Unsung Street Reporter	"The Front Page" Reporter
Persuader	Editor
Crusader	Newspaper Carrier
Investigator	Newswoman
Exploiter	Scandalmonger
Entertainer	Small-town Editor
War Correspondent	War Correspondent
Broadcast Journalist	TV Journalist Celebrity
Owner	Owner

It should come as no surprise to find a distinct print bias in his fiction classification. His research was published as a richly illustrated catalogue for a traveling exhibit sponsored by the American Society of Newspaper Editors, which Ghiglione headed. However, his effort was the most diverse in terms of multi-media manifestations of occupational myths.

Fewer researchers investigated journalism images in short stories and novels alone, and only one, among the seven works found, attempted to link the media with one another. Howard Good, whose dissertation on

journalism images in novels became a book, noted an overlap and interrelationship between print and later cinematic depictions of the occupation.⁷¹ He asserted that film images were just like those found in earlier books. He later wrote a book on contemporary film images of journalists -- picking up where Barris left off -- concentrating on the 1970s to present period.⁷² Nevertheless, he did not clearly connect film with earlier forms of fiction as well as one might expect. This was surprising given that so-called "image research" on journalists appeared to be the niche he carved for himself as evidenced by his publishing record.⁷³ His predecessors in the research of fictional images of journalists (most unrecognized in Good's work) need to be acknowledged.

The earliest study found on journalism images was James G. Harrison's 1945 dissertation that described eighty-nine novels, all written in the nineteenth century by fifty-seven different novelists and published between 1803 and 1901.⁷⁴ He analyzed changes between pre and post-Civil War novels. He noted the growing divisions of labor in nineteenth century newspaper and magazine operations and subdivided his study into chapters on the editor, printer, newsboy, reporter and publisher. He segregated newspaperwomen in a separate chapter at the end.

Thomas Berry, the next researcher to delve into journalism-themed works, discussed 155 novels published between 1900 and 1969.⁷⁵ The emphasis in his 1970 book was on depictions of newspapers, but he also devoted a chapter to characterizations of newspapermen. His descriptive analysis was divided into two- and three- decade increments. His study mainly involved contrasting novels that mentioned newspapers with

leading novels of a particular period that did not cover journalism.

The most narrowly focused study was Patsy Watkins' 1976 master's thesis that concentrated on twelve novels depicting reporters in the 1920s.⁷⁶ She offered a good contextual analysis of the decade's journalism styles, followed by the journalistic backgrounds of ten authors (including Ben Hecht). She then summarized the plots of the selected novels and discussed the images of reporters from the point of view of the authors, the reporters portrayed and others standing on the sidelines.

William McKeen's 1977 master's thesis was broader in scope. It involved a content analysis of eighteen novels, selected from a list of 110 published between 1915 and 1975.⁷⁷ He alluded to mythic heroes in his introduction. McKeen examined novels to determine if reporters in fiction were emerging as protagonists of heroic proportions but did not discuss occupational mythology in depth.

Donna Born's 1981 journalism conference paper was the only gender-specific study among those found.⁷⁸ She examined the image of women journalists in twenty-two short stories and seven novels published from 1890 to 1981. She later did research comparing women journalist's biographical information with fictional characterizations of the 1920s and 1930s.⁷⁹

Paralleling Berry's approach, Mary Ann Watson examined portrayals of television journalism in a brief 1987 article that juxtaposed periods of American broadcasting history with twenty-nine novels depicting the same eras.⁸⁰ As a journalism professor, she stated that she hoped her preliminary contextual research would be a catalyst for "integrating the imaginative with the factual in the pursuit of understanding the way it

was."⁸¹

The most recent scholar to examine journalistic images in novels, Good, cited seventy-eight works including ten short stories all published between 1890 and 1930. His cutoff date referred to what he said was the advent of talking pictures (actually, they began in 1927).⁸² One of the purposes of this dissertation was to test his premise of diffusion and see how myths about American journalism may have traveled from one medium to another. Most of the works dealing with journalism novels and short stories did not credit predecessors or contemporaries, which might lead one to believe that researchers were unaware of other scholarship or chose to ignore it. Good dismissed his fellow researchers with the statement: "The little critical writing on newspaper fiction that exists is tendentious and superficial."⁸³ While depth or impartiality may have been lacking in a few studies, I, nevertheless, believed that a majority of the findings mentioned had some direct applicability to my research topic.

Thus, rather than replicating studies involving more than 400 works of fiction, I chose to stand on the shoulders of earlier scholars and synthesize their fiction investigations to see if any commonalities existed. After a comparative reading and assimilation of their findings into my concept of journalism mythology, I found consensus about certain characterizations, stories, and themes. I constructed a theoretical template, based on their findings from novels and short stories, to lay over my film analyses. By connecting their literary studies to other research about motion pictures through this case study of The Front Page, I set out to see if an intertextual bridge of American journalism mythology existed between print and celluloid representations.

Specifically, I could test Good's hypothesis that "[journalism] films adopted unchanged the formulas that the fiction originated."⁸⁴ Further, I could study any shift in the mythological paradigm and speculate on why the myths ran continuously or changed course as they moved from stagnant page to motion pictures. Also, previous findings led me to hundreds of secondary source materials that proved invaluable in developing a contextual analysis of the films and attempting to make inferences about the journalism mythmaking process surrounding each movie.

Summary

This chapter outlined the key theories of mythology -- religious, socio-functional, structuralist, psychological and literary -- and asserted that, despite disagreement on the purpose of myths, scholars concurred on the importance of myths. The occupational mythology embedded in four film versions of The Front Page is an important entry point for examining American journalism mythology defined as the stories, themes and characterizations about the assigning, gathering, writing, editing, and presenting of news for print or broadcast. Rather than ignoring prior research, this study was determined to build on the pioneering work done on journalism fiction and provide yet another way to analyze occupational mythology.

The next chapter will discuss how the previous research findings were incorporated into tools for new research on motion pictures frequently mentioned but heretofore left unexamined from a number of textual and contextual dimensions. Chapter 3 describes the specific analytical techniques employed to answer the research questions. It

concludes with an important section of operational definitions of terms used in the textual analysis designed to answer the first main research question. Details of the contextual analysis used to answer the second main and subsidiary research questions are discussed within the section after a general introduction of my case study strategy.

NOTES

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4. Ibid., 216.
5. Mircea Eliade, Myth and Reality, trans. Willard Trask (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 5.
6. William G. Doty, Mythography: The Study of Myths and Rituals (University, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1986), 11.
7. K.K. Ruthven, Myth (London: Methuen & Co., 1976), 82.
8. Synthesized from reading Harry Levin, "Some Meanings of Myth," Daedalus 88:2 (Spring 1959), 223-232; Mythologies, comp. Yves Bonnefoy, prep. Wendy Doniger, trans. Gerald Honigsblum (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Doty, 1-40; G.S. Kirk, Myth: Its Meaning and Function in Ancient and Other Cultures (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970).
9. Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, Other People's Myths (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1988), 27. (Subsequent books list her name as Wendy Doniger, but she is alphabetized in my bibliography under "O.").
10. Ibid., 56.
11. William Kelly, "More Than a Woman: Myth and Mediation in Saturday Night Fever," Journal of American Culture 2:2 (Summer 1979), 240.
12. Mircea Eliade, Myths, Dreams and Mysteries: An Encounter Between Contemporary Faiths and Archaic Realities, trans. Philip Mairet (New York: Harper Colophon, 1975), 33.
13. Doty, Mythology, 44.
14. Emile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of the Religious-Life, trans. J.W. Swain (New York: Free Press, 1915).

15. Quoted in G.S. Kirk, Myth, 7.
16. Ibid., 20.
17. New Republic 5 September 1928, 73.
18. Quoted in Eric Gould, Mythical Intention in Modern Literature (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 92.
19. Ibid.
20. Puhvel, Comparative Myths, 19.
21. Roland Barthes, Mythologies, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 144.
22. Quoted in Gould, Mythical Intentions, 128.
23. Frederick Lewis Allen, Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the Nineteen-Twenties (New York: Harper & Row, 1931), 81.
24. The character appears in the original play and the first three film remakes of The Front Page. Spelled "Egelhoffer" in 1940 film.
25. Quoted in Doty, Mythology, 133.
26. Parker Tyler, Screening the Sexes: Homosexuality in the Movies (New York: Holt, Rinehart, 1972), 344.
27. Benjamin Nelson, ed. Sigmund Freud on Creativity and the Unconscious: Papers on Psychology of Art, Literature, Love, Religion (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), 53.
28. Ibid.
29. Carl Gustav Jung and Marie-Louise von Franz, Man and His Symbols. (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1964); Ernst Cassirer, An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944); and Language and Myth, trans. Susanne Langer (New York: Dover, 1946); Susanne Langer, Philosophy in a New Key (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941).
30. Jung, Man and His Symbols.
31. Northrup Frye, The Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).
32. Ibid., 135.
33. John Cawelti, Adventure, Mystery and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture (Chicago; University of Chicago Press, 1976), 5.
34. Ibid.

35. Ibid., 6.

36. Ibid., 20.

37. O'Flaherty, 25.

38. Based on a definition described in William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard, A Handbook to Literature, rev. ed. (New York: Odyssey Press, 1960), 356-67.

39. Loren Ghiglione, The American Journalist: Paradox of the Press (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1990).

40. While crass lay persons might proclaim that trying to define and categorize myths is like trying to nail Jello to the wall, two mythologists expressed the discouragement a bit more eloquently, observing that "although deep affinities or cores of agreement exist, the fluidity, flexibility, and eclecticism frustrate any effort to extract very neat positions or programs" regarding myth theories. Burton Feldman and Robert D. Richardson, The Rise of Modern Mythology, 1680-1860 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971), xxiii.

41. Richard Schickel, "Hello Hollywood, Get Me Rewrite!," [More] January 1975, 13-15.

42. Joseph McBride, Hawks on Hawks (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 81.

43. Roger Dooley, From Scarface to Scarlett: American Films in the 1930s (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), 256.

44. Doty, Mythography, 13.

45. Victor Carrabino, ed. The Power of Myth in Literature and Film (Tallahassee: University Presses of Florida, 1980), ix.

46. Richard Slotkin, "Prologue to a Study of Myth and Genre in American Movies" in Prospects: The Annual of American Cultural Studies, vol. 9, ed. Jack Salzman, (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 407.

47. Maxwell Taylor Courson, "The Newspaper Movies: An Analysis of the Rise and Decline of the News Gatherer as a Hero in American Motion Pictures, 1900-1974." Ph.D. diss., University of Hawaii, 1976.

48. Ibid., 131-165.

49. Alex Barris, Stop the Presses! The Newspaperman in American Film (South Brunswick, N.J.: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1976).

50. Howard Good, Outcasts: The Image of Journalists in Contemporary Film (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1989).

51. Toni Amelia Roberts, "Creation of Stereotypical Beliefs About Reporters From Viewing Three Films." Master's thesis, University of Florida, 1987.

52. Albert D. Talbott, "Journalists in the Movies: How Journalists Are Perceived to be Portrayed in Feature Films." Paper presented to the Mass Communication and Society Division and Media Management and Economics Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Minneapolis, August 1990.

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54. Barry Salt, "Statistical Style Analysis of Motion Pictures," in Movies and Methods, vol. II, ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 691-703.

55. Ibid., 691.

56. Ibid., 703.

57. Brooks Robards, "Newshounds and Sob Sisters: The Journalist Goes to Hollywood" in Beyond the Stars: Studies in American Popular Film, vol. 1, Stock Characters in American Popular Film, eds. Paul Loukides and Linda K. Fuller (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press), 131-45.

58. Ibid., 19.

59. Stephen Vaughn and Bruce Evensen, "Democracy's Guardians: Hollywood's Portrait of Reporters, 1930-1945," Journalism Quarterly 68:4 (Winter 1991), 829-38.

60. Thomas Zynda, "The Hollywood Version: Movie Portrayals of the Press," Journalism History 6:1 (Spring 1979), 16-25, 32.

61. Dooley, "Stop the Press! News Hawks and Sob Sisters" in From Scarface to Scarlett, 256-65.

62. Andrew Bergman, We're in the Money: Depression America and Its Films (New York: New York University Press, 1971), 21.

63. Deac Rossell, "The Fourth Estate and the Seventh Art" in Questioning Media Ethics, ed. Bernard Rubin (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1978), 232-46.

64. Roger Manvell, "Media Ethics: How Movies Portray the Press and Broadcasters" in Questioning Media Ethics, ed. Bernard Rubin (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1978), 209-31.

65. John D. Stevens, "The Unfading Image From The Front Page," Film and History 15 (December 1985), 87-90.

66. Heidi Langner-Burns, "The Image of Journalists in American Film and Fiction from 1975 to 1987: An Application of Leo Lowenthal's Model." Ph.D. diss., Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, 1989.

67. Aralynn Abare McMane, "Hello, Handsome, Get Me Rewrite: Toward an Understanding of the Portrayal of Female Journalists in Film and on Television." Paper presented to the Committee on the Status of Women, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Boston, August 1991.

68. Ibid., 2.

69. At the 1988 Speech Communication Association annual meeting in New Orleans, Rod Carveth of the University of Hartford (Conn.) presented a media forum titled, "Images in the Media: Press, Politics and American Society," that looked at feature films and TV programs dealing with journalism and compared them with findings from the Times-Mirror "People and the Press" public opinion survey. He concluded that the public is of two minds about the field of journalism -- the journalists have high believability and the institution tends to be highly respected but some of the standard practices such as invasion of privacy and news for entertainment's sake are questionable procedures. (Summary based on eyewitness report by M.S.U. Professor Gretchen Barbatsis and my follow-up phone conversation with Carveth).

70. Ghiglione, American Journalist.

71. Howard Good, Acquainted with the Night: The Images of Journalists in American Fiction, 1890-1930 (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1986).

72. Good, Outcasts.

73. Good, "The Image of Journalism in American Poetry," American Journalism 4:3 (1987): 123-32; "The Image of War Correspondents in Anglo-American Fiction," Journalism Monographs No. 97 (July 1986); "The Journalist in Fiction, 1890-1930," Journalism Quarterly 62:2 (1985): 352-57.

74. James G. Harrison, "American Newspaper Journalism as Described in American Novels of the Nineteenth Century." Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, 1945.

75. Thomas Elliott Berry, The Newspaper in the American Novel, 1900-1969 (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1970).

76. Patsy A.G. Watkins, "Image of Reporters in the 1920s Fiction About Reporters." Master's thesis, University of Texas, 1976.

77. William McKeen, "The Journalist in the American Novel, 1915-1975." Master's thesis, Indiana University, 1977.

78. Donna Born, "The Image of the Woman Journalist in American Popular Fiction, 1980 to the Present" Paper presented to the Committee

on the Status of Women, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, East Lansing, Mich., 1981.

79. Donna Born, "The Woman Journalist of the 1920s and 1930s in Fiction and in Autobiography." Paper presented to Qualitative Studies Division, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Athens, Ohio, 1982.

80. Mary Ann Watson, "Facts and Fictions: Television History Through the Filter of Fiction," Television Quarterly 22:4 (1987), 21-36.

81. Ibid., 22.

82. Good asserted in Acquainted with the Night: "... after 1930, films began to supplant fiction as the leading popular art for portraying the press." (13).

83. Ibid., 17.

84. Ibid., 14.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Once the concept of American journalism mythology was explicated, it was necessary to come up with a meaningful, yet manageable, approach to analyzing the occupational characteristics, stories, and themes. After much reading and deliberation, I determined that a multiple case study of the four film versions of The Front Page would be a reasonable way to narrow my focus. This research strategy is often good for gathering descriptive and explanatory data as it offered detail and, in this inquiry, provided a means for conducting a systematic investigation of the mythology over time. As stated in Chapter 1, this particular series of journalism films seemed to offer a unique opportunity to do an historical comparative analysis of data over nearly a sixty-year span.

A mass media research textbook stated that case study is used "when the researcher desires to understand or explain a phenomenon."¹ Unlike more specialized experimental and survey research methods applied in previous studies of journalism films, case study is a particularly useful procedure in dealing with a wide spectrum of evidence which this research produced, including documents and historical artifacts. Further, a multiple case study, though taking more time and effort than a single case, should strengthen the value of the research. Indeed, one research strategist argued that multiple case "evidence is often considered more compelling and the overall study is therefore regarded

as being more robust."² Finally, the case study approach was conducive to formulating "what" and "how" questions.

Taking a cue from journalism historian Harold Nelson, my research inquiry was purposely phrased in a neutral fashion, "receptive to both yes and no answers."³ Beyond determining what myths might be found in the films, I wanted to see if the myths changed and if so, how. By constructing a composite profile of journalism character traits, stories, and themes from previous fiction research findings, I was able to contrast and compare two agents of the mythological messages -- popular literature and feature films. So I phrased my research questions in a deliberate manner. Indeed, as journalism historian Maryann Yodelis Smith noted: "Questions that produce an analysis of relationships among historical variables will contribute the most to communication history."⁴ That is certainly an underlying goal of this study. It may be argued that this application of case study is a form of empirical history and that I am acting as an historian:

... who asks an open-ended question about past events and answers it with selected facts which are arranged in the form of an explanatory paradigm. These questions and answers are fitted to each other by a complex process of mutual adjustment.⁵

To help me in my final research design, I turned to the twelve-part system of film analysis devised by historian Karsten Fledelius.⁶ His concise survey offered a useful way to think about various aspects of film from production pre-conditions to contemporary evaluations in relation to my study of occupational mythology. John E. O'Connor's Image as Artifact: The Historical Analysis of Film and Television also proved to be helpful in developing my methodological framework.⁷ After formulating my main questions, I settled on two research methods. I

used a textual analysis to answer the first question on what myths were found and how they might vary. To answer the second main question dealing with contextual conditions in the general mass media and the specific film production, I relied on a traditional narrative explanation defined as a logical organization of contextual material in a chronology.⁸ By combining both historical and social scientific research techniques to study American journalism mythology, I created what is called triangulation. This methodological pluralism should improve the scientific rigor of this study, namely its reliability (likelihood that repetition with given method would yield similar results) and validity (extent to which study measured what it intended to measure).⁹

The next section describes the details of the techniques used to identify the myth data and answer the research questions. It also assesses the limitations of the research methodology.

Explanation of Techniques

Question 1

To discover just what occupational myths about American journalism might be embedded in the four film versions of The Front Page, I viewed each motion picture at least ten times (including once in 16 or 35 millimeter form truest to its original presentation format, where available),¹⁰ to take notes and look for clues as to characterizations, themes, and stories. After a preliminary viewing, I created a rudimentary coding sheet which would later be refined and pretested as a protocol for use by two other coders, to increase intersubjectivity

(multiple coder agreement) and ease of replication. Further, audiotapes were made of each film's sound track and were listened to for dialogue, background noise, and sound effects to isolate audio clues missed in the initial viewings. Watching each film once with the sound off also aided in concentrating on visual clues to myth elements including gestures, props, general appearance, and actions of the characters. As a further check of dialogue, I critically read the scripts for each film, where available,¹¹ looking for elements of the occupational mythology. Though scripts are a secondary source of evidence compared to the actual films themselves, I agree with film historian K.R.M. Short's observation that "a published movie script provides important preliminary insights into the structure and verbal content of film."¹²

By combining these primary and secondary textual sources, the films and their screenplays, in my in-depth analysis of both latent and manifest film content, I developed a typology of myth elements found in each of the four films. As a further check against presentism inherent in some historical research and to strengthen corroboration as well as to acknowledge reception aspects of the moving image document, I examined what key contemporaneous reviewers of each motion picture said.¹³ I looked for affirmation or refutation of my typology in key words or phrases manifest in their written evaluations. I relied on both American consumer and trade publication reviews of each version of The Front Page listed in Film Review Index as well as Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature and other indexes. I was able to gauge what Fledelius called "attitudes prevalent in the opinion-leading circles of society -- to the film."¹⁴ Where possible, I used reviews from the same publications for all four films, to compare messages over time.

Figures showing areas of myth element agreement -- majority consensus -- in reviewer descriptions on each movie are included in the Appendix.

A blended typology was based on my preliminary list of occupational myth elements along with reviewer consensus. This typology became the basis for a refined film analysis protocol when combined with the findings of previous researchers of journalism fiction. The protocol, which indicated five channels of communication,¹⁵ allowed coders to circle all appropriate ways they saw or heard the myth elements. They were also asked to circle the types of journalists involved in the particular myth element. Space was provided for coders to write a three or four word description of the action, dialogue or visual cue to reinforce their judgment. This brief description helped verify agreement among coders, beyond the starting and stopping time of myth that might be more susceptible to error than word descriptions. (See Figure 1 -- "Sample Protocol" in Appendix A).

Two coding judges were recruited and trained to search for the appearance of specific mythic elements in each of the four films. The 1931 version of The Front Page was used for a pilot study to do a preliminary measure of intercoder reliability. Independent coding by more than one person of the same material was done to assure agreement on general units of analysis (myth elements) within the units of observation (films). As film historians Robert Allen and Douglas Gomery note about such analysis: "The manifest content would include the socioeconomic status of characters, their articulated sentiments, plot developments, setting, and ostensible themes."¹⁶

Coders used videotape versions of the motion pictures because the videocassette recorder technology lent itself to ease of operation,

control, and replication. Actual elapsed time of each movie was electronically imprinted in the upper right corner of the frame on each coder's copy of the tapes. This system of superimposing the time was used as a way to check quickly to see if coders were describing the same scene. Regardless of variables in recorder equipment and pace at which coders proceeded, the standardization of the time on the tape assured the best condition for replication.

The judges were allowed to stop and start each tape with a remote control device so they could code data at their own pace. They were able to pause, stop, see a rigid freeze frame or slow motion movement, if they wanted to clarify what they saw, in order to code it. When acceptable coder reliability estimates were achieved,¹⁷ the coding proceeded and the data produced from each independent analysis were assessed for presence of mythological elements in each film. This textual analysis was used to compare data among all film versions and with predecessor literature study findings. It was used to develop an independent line of validation. But before others were asked to code manifest mythological content of the four films, a template needed to be devised. To be inclusive, it needed not only my singular observations overlaid with reviewer consensus but also any conclusions held in common by previous researchers of journalism fiction.

Limitations

In constructing a typology of American journalism myth elements, I had to cope with the danger of trying to adapt previous research data for the purposes of my study. In synthesizing the findings of earlier scholars studying journalism fiction, I was limited to what they found.

I was unaware of any possible flaws or data limitations and I did not know the universe of novels and short stories from which they drew their research. Any overlap of fiction titles among the five studies used was unknown (two studies did not have alphabetical indices of source stories to check readily) but was believed to be small, and thus, insignificant. It is possible that the previous research was not representative of the literature available before the first Front Page movie was made.

However, I tried to overcome this potential concern by drawing on more than one study's findings in construction of my mythological template used to conduct textual analyses of the four films. Also, in devising my typological matrix, the previous research findings were combined with my own observations as well as contemporaneous film reviews issued at the time of the initial release of the four motion pictures. Therefore, the criteria by which the films were to be analyzed became an intertextual bridge stretching across time and media.

Question 1A

To test whether the myth elements I found in the four films were connected with earlier literary traditions, I did a careful reading of previous research about journalism novels and short stories. The research findings revealed majority consensus on a few myth elements that might be compared and contrasted with those found in the journalism films chosen for this multiple case study. It was determined that two of the seven studies located would not be included in the mythology synthesis of past research on fiction. The only gender-intentional study¹⁸ was set aside for use in future research. It, however, was

cited in chapters on the two films, His Girl Friday and Switching Channels, which feature female journalists. Also, the sole research found on fictional portrayals of the television industry in novels was eliminated because it did not look at journalism depictions exclusively and was admittedly only an essay, not "an exhaustive survey and definitive analysis,"¹⁹ comparable to what other researchers attempted with newspaper representations. But it was cited in the chapter on Switching Channels, the only version of The Front Page to deal with television journalism.

In identifying myth elements mentioned by a majority (three or more) of the five remaining researchers,²⁰ I divided their findings into categories of individual character traits, stories and themes. All this was designed to create a tripartite synthesized typology to be used for code categorization. While all five studies of journalism fiction covered time periods beginning well before even The Front Page play of 1928, it was not always clear if myth elements changed over time. Two of the studies continued into more contemporary times, paralleling periods of the first two remakes of The Front Page.²¹ Unless a shift in traits, stories, or themes was stated specifically by the scholars, their findings were considered to hold constant for decades of publications. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, all research findings were treated as if they referred to mythology existing in literature before The Front Page. Their findings represented American journalism mythology found in nineteenth century print which was then compared and contrasted with that found in twentieth century film (see Figure 2 in Appendix).

Question 1B

To determine if there was any variance in mythic elements of the four films, a standard protocol was developed to code all cinematic versions of The Front Page. To facilitate tracking the various characterizations, themes, or stories noted by coders viewing each film, each myth element coding sheet was photocopied on a different color of paper. With the color differentiation, a coder could watch a particular tape with several coding sheets spread before him or her. It aided simultaneous coding of several myth elements, thus reducing the number of times each coder would have to watch each film to note each myth element category. Further, with coding sheets for the mythic characterization of "cynical," for instance, printed in yellow, it was easier to trace the completed data sheets across the four films and three coders (including myself).

Limitations

Like most textual analyses, this one was tedious and time consuming. I tended to find more manifestations of the myth elements than the other two coders probably because I had seen the films so many more times and over a longer period of time. I was looking for and often finding more and different examples of myth elements than the two independent judges who, initially, had each seen the four films a few years ago.²²

Also, the convenience and flexibility of using videotape versions of motion pictures could be countered by the distortion of the original way in which the films were presented. Video images are small, somewhat grainy and have an altered aspect ratio compared to 35 millimeter films

projected on big screens. Nevertheless, the ease and relatively inexpensive videotape format seemed a reasonable way to conduct a case study and was not considered a significant deterrent to coding integrity.

I heeded research advice that one method may not be enough and that "primary documents must be studied in context."²³ Therefore, the next section deals with my approach to studying general conditions surrounding the manufacture of the occupational myth messages.

Question 2

To ascertain contextual conditions that may have contributed to the occupational myths found on the screen, a wide range of reading was undertaken. Secondary sources of historical information that proved especially useful were general histories of the 1930s (the decade in which the first two films were produced), the 1970s and the 1980s; survey histories of the mass media; specific histories of the motion picture, newspaper, and television industries; and biographies of media workers in those fields. A hermeneutical approach to interpretation was needed to grasp the material and condense it into meaningful form for use in the four chapters on the individual films. Film historian Short offered the best explanation of such a seemingly daunting research strategy:

After the historian has seen the film, studied its background music, its dialogue ... the visual symbolism, and the edited structure, he begins to have some idea of what the film means to him. The extent to which this might also be valid for the person in 1944 depends upon how effectively the researcher is able to immerse himself in the period historically and culturally. This is essential for the historian for he is not attempting to assess the film artistically but rather to understand how it reflects its

time and produces evidence towards the solution of his historical problem.²⁴

Immersion into the period when each film was produced involved reading about the social, political, cultural, economic, and technological conditions. It was determined that the latter two conditions should be a major focus, though other factors will be mentioned briefly in the chapters.

Question 2A

Using the general framework explicated by economist Richard Caves in his textbook, American Industry: Structure, Conduct, Performance,²⁵ I developed a way to analyze both the motion picture industry and its relationship to newspaper or television industry economic conditions of a given era. While no comparable text was found to aid in analyzing media technology, Carolyn Marvin's book, When Old Technologies Were New,²⁶ was provocative. The communications professor provided a perspective, not about the instrument-centered historical view dealing with "changes in the speed, capacity and performance of communication devices,"²⁷ but rather about the interaction, overlap, and relativity of technological innovation:

New media, broadly understood to include the use of new communications technology for old or new purposes, new ways of using old technologies, and, in principle, all other possibilities for the exchange of social meaning, are always introduced into a pattern of tension created by the coexistence of old and new, which is far richer than any single medium that becomes a focus of interest because it is novel.²⁸

I pulled together the threads of various mass media relationships with the details of the individual analyses of each film into a tightly-woven tapestry of narrative description.

Question 2B

To determine specific conditions of the individual film production that may have contributed to the journalism myth-making process, I read studio histories as well as biographies about the moviemakers, including screenwriters, directors, producers, actors, cinematographers, and studio heads, along with trade publication articles and consumer press items on the production. Unable to access studio or personnel files held in special collections at non-circulating libraries out of state, I was forced to rely on secondary sources and their research findings that occasionally made reference to one of the four films in this case study. When discrepancies in accounts of various events surrounding a film production were found, I sought corroboration with verifiable sources.

In the last section of this methodology chapter, I list the terms used to help train the coders in their search for and identification of mythic elements. This was a difficult but critical step because it "describes the specific operation the historian performs to discover the presence or absence of the attribute being studied -- established categories and classifications."²⁹ By creating operational definitions of abstract terms it was possible to construct a protocol that would be used in a textual analysis of the films to see if the myth elements were present.

Operational Definitions

As previously defined, American journalism mythology consists of the characterizations, stories, and themes of assigning, gathering, writing, editing, and presenting the news for print or broadcast. The

characterizations, defined as the personal traits and qualities of people who perform the various journalistic tasks, may be manifest in facial expressions, gestures, speech, general appearance, and actions. Based on my initial analysis and corroboration with contemporaneous reviews and previous fiction research findings, seven common characterizations were extracted to be analyzed by independent coders. During the training session with each coder, the following definitions of attributes were discussed and tested with a sample coding.

Common Character Traits

Aggressive

Includes "hard fighting," "driven," and "ambitious" terms considered to be part of the same trait. May be characterized by bold actions of characters and physical movements such as running, snatching, grabbing, ripping, badgering others in an attempt to try to be first or only; movie journalists may say things about themselves or others regarding combative readiness to compete and compelling sense of urgency about task or their strong-minded desire to succeed.

Anti-Academic

Makes fun of college-educated and tries to disparage those who have theories as opposed to those considered more practical. May be manifest in speech or gestures directed toward experts or those with book learning but little on-the-job training.

Blunt

Includes "rude," "rough" and "crude," terms considered to be part of the same trait. Acts crudely and brusquely. Manifests seemingly

unruly behavior that an average citizen might consider offensive, obnoxious, discourteous or ill-mannered.

Cynical

Believes that all people are motivated by selfishness. May be manifest in sneering or scornful facial expression in response to statements about other's sincerity and benevolence as well as sarcastic statements, bitter mocking of others, general faultfinding and pessimism. May range from distrustful doubt to overall contempt for all humankind.

Drinker

Consumes alcoholic beverages. May range from one who drinks to be sociable without seeming to show any effects to a drunk who has lost control and is inebriated to a compulsive drinker who actively seeks alcohol to drink to excess. Character may talk of plans to drink or quit drinking or resist temptation. Other references may be found in props such as glasses, bottles or ice, or the mere sound of them; a scene may be set in a bar or restaurant; a song associated with bars and drinking may be sung or played as well.

Fraternal

Considers self part of a closed circle of persons linked by similar duties, shared backgrounds and common occupation. May be manifest in visual image of physical proximity including moving en masse in reaction to some exterior stimulus or sitting with a sense of social conviviality. Also may be manifest in speech referring to certain space or tasks being off limits or too difficult for certain people deemed

outsiders. A further sense of clannishness or clubbishness may be manifest in the way journalists refer to themselves and differentiate themselves from other workers.

Unscrupulous

Contemptuous of what is right and honorable. May be manifest in his or her actions or speech indicating lying, cheating, double-crossing, stealing and other violations of the law.

Common Story Line

Conflict between journalist and news executive over control of journalist's life decisions. Typically the reporter's attempt to change (marital status, job, and geographic location) is thwarted by the news executive. The reporter becomes a victim of a manager's craving for power and money sometimes masked under the guise of love, friendship or crusading public service.

Common Theme

Journalism is a romantic occupation, full of adventure and excitement. This is manifest in scenes involving intense dramatic action and danger such as a chase scene; may include chaotic noise, shouting, bells, alarms, sound of gunfire; dialogue may refer to the romance of the profession and noble pursuit.

Limitations

The findings of the textual analyses were limited to the categories I selected and the definitions I used for nine myth elements

by collapsing some specific categories into broader groups. Through preliminary testing, I found that the categories were not as mutually exclusive or as exhaustive as I presumed. So they had to be further refined to include specific examples of gestures or dialogue to aid coding judgments. Fortunately, the way the textual analysis was designed, it was relatively easy to repeat a portion of the coding. Therefore, replication was possible.

To examine the concept of American journalism mythology and to focus this research in a significant but manageable manner, I undertook a multiple case study of The Front Page films. I used both content analysis and a historical narrative explanation to conduct the intertextual and contextual analyses.

Summary Conclusion

This chapter set forth the rationale for a systematic multiple case study approach to this research. It explained the reasoned strategy behind the textual and contextual analyses used to answer research questions one and two, respectively. The first main question sought to determine any variance from previous journalism fiction and any variance among the four films. The second question sought to find out the importance of mass media economic and technological conditions as well as the circumstances of each film production in the journalism mythology change or stasis.

I believe that any perceived shortcomings of this case study approach are expiated by considering it as a significant step in continuing research on American journalism mythology. Using the Front

Page films as a multiple case study topic surely will contribute to the growing body of knowledge about fictional images of journalism. The topic is amenable to further research (discussed in Chapter 10) likely to add to the growing body of scholarship being done on journalism fiction.

The next four chapters summarize the findings of the textual analysis of each film and the presence or absence of the seven character traits, the story line and theme defined earlier. The chapters also discuss the contextual conditions of the mass media that may have influenced the journalism mythology detected at the time the films were being made and released. Further, details of the actual film production were constructed from various accounts of participants or later film researchers and found to substantiate myth elements played out on the silver screen.

NOTES

1. Roger D. Wimmer and Joseph R. Dominick, Mass Media Research: An Introduction, 2nd ed. (Belmont, Cal.: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1987), 155.
2. Robert K. Yin, Case Study Research: Design and Methods (Beverly Hills, Cal.: Sage Publications, 1984), 48.
3. Harold Nelson, "Guides to Morasses in Historical Research," Journalism Educator 19:2 (Spring 1964), 39.
4. Maryann Yodelis Smith, "The Method of History," in Research Methods in Mass Communication, 2nd ed., eds. Guido H. Stempel III and Bruce Westley (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1989), 319-20.
5. David H. Fischer, Historian's Fallacies (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), xv.
6. Karsten Fledelius, "Fields and Strategies of Historical Film Analysis" in History and Film: Methodology Research Education, eds. K.R.M. Short and Karsten Fledelius (Copenhagen: Eventus, 1980), 53-80.
7. John E. O'Connor, ed., Image as Artifact: The Historical Analysis of Film and Television (Malabar, Fla.: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Co., 1990).
8. David Nord, "The Nature of Historical Research" in Research Methods in Mass Communication, eds.; Guido H. Stempel III and Bruce H. Westley (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1989), 298.
9. Robert Y. Yin, Case Study Research (Beverly Hills, Cal.: Sage Publications, 1989); Earl Babbie, "Criteria for Measurement Quality" in his book, The Practice of Social Research, 3rd ed. (Belmont, Cal.: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1983), 113-19.
10. The 1974 version is not readily available in any form. A videotape version was finally issued in late 1992.
11. Copies of the 1940, 1974 and 1988 screenplays were obtained from Script City, a California mail order company. I constructed a transcript of the 1931 version based on filling in and making minor changes to a print version of the original play, still readily available in distribution from Samuel French, Inc.
12. K.R.M. Short, Feature Film as History (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981), 24.

13. O'Connor, Image as Artifact believed that moving image documents should be analyzed in terms of content, production and reception. While a reception analysis could be an entire study in itself, I have chosen a limited examination through contemporaneous reviews by journalists critiquing portrayals of their occupation.

14. Fledelius, 66.

15. A system identified by Christian Metz, Film Language. A Semiotics of Cinema, trans. Michael Taylor (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974) and Language and Cinema, trans. Donna Jean Umiker-Sebeok (The Hague: Mouton, 1974).

16. Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery, Film History: Theory and Practice (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 165.

17. Because so few coders were used, due to extensive training required and subtlety of analysis, intracoder reliability -- coding data twice at different times by the same person -- was done to measure agreement with self as well as other coders. My score was 96 percent. W.A. Scott's index of reliability (π), which corrects for the number of categories used and chance agreement, was employed to calculate intercoder reliability. The formula involved subtracting the percentage of observed agreement from percentage of expected agreements divided by one minus percentage of expected agreement. It is described in various media research texts beginning with Ole R. Holsti, Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1969), 140.

18. Donna Born in "The Image of Women Journalists in American Popular Fiction, 1890 to Present," purposefully went looking for female depictions while William McKeen, in his thesis, "The Journalist in the American Novel, 1915-1975," ended up finding only male protagonists, although that was not his intention.

19. Mary Ann Watson, "Facts and Fictions: TV History through the Filter of Fiction," Television Quarterly 22:4 (1987), 22.

20. Thomas Elliott Berry, The Newspaper in the American Novel, 1900-1969 (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1970); Howard Good. Acquainted With the Night: The Images of Journalists in American Fiction, 1890-1930 (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1986); James G. Harrison, "American Newspaper Journalism as Described in American Novels of the Nineteenth Century," (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, 1945); William McKeen, "The Journalist in the American Novel, 1915-1975," (Master's thesis, Indiana University, 1977) and Patsy A.G. Watkins, "Image of Reporters in 1920s Fiction About Reporters," (Master's thesis, University of Texas, 1976).

21. McKeen does make the distinction between pre- and post-World War II protagonists while Berry's approach is more specific, dividing the literature into thirds -- 1900 to 1930, 1930 to 1950, and 1950 to 1964 -- based on various socioeconomic and political factors.

22. Intercoder reliability scores averaged 75 per cent over the four films but varied among the versions from 65 per cent to 87 per cent. However, variance can be explained by what Wimmer and Dominick called the subjectivity factor: "If...a certain amount of interpretation is involved, reliability estimates are typically lower. In general, the greater the amount of judgmental leeway given to coders, the lower the reliability coefficients." Mass Media Research, p. 185.

In this case study, coders had little difficulty agreeing on the drinker trait, for instance, but noted the cynical trait proved more challenging and garnered less consensus despite operational definition examples.

23. Smith, "Method," 323.

24. Short, Feature Film, 29.

25. Richard Caves, American Industry: Structure, Conduct, Performance, 5th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1982).

26. Carolyn Marvin, When Old Technologies Were New (New York: Oxford University Press), 1988).

27. Ibid., 4.

28. Ibid., 8.

29. Smith, "Method," 320.

CHAPTER 4

THE FRONT PAGE (1931) FINDINGS

Summary Introduction

Textual analyses of the first film version of The Front Page indicated the presence of seven myth elements previously identified by researchers of earlier journalism fiction. Three coding judges found the five character traits of aggressiveness, bluntness, cynicism, drinking, and unscrupulousness along with the story line of a power struggle and the occupational theme of journalism as an exciting, adventurous, and romantic career. Thus, in response to research question 1A, many of the myth elements observed in earlier novels and short stories carried over into the newer medium of motion pictures. However, there also were some additions to the mythic mix. Two new character traits not mentioned by earlier scholars -- fraternity and an anti-academic attitude -- were discovered during the textual analysis.

Further, general economic and technological conditions of the mass media -- both the established newspaper and rising motion picture industries along with newcomer radio -- contributed to the American journalism mythology of the 1931 Front Page. The first film version of the play incorporated some character traits, stories, and themes from earlier fiction while introducing new mythic elements. Many of the elements found in the textual analysis seemed to have been played out in the film production. A contextual analysis of the 1931 movie

production, gleaned from a broad-based reading of biographical and historical material on the cast and crew as well as contemporaneous consumer and trade news accounts, indicated that many circumstances of the film making substantiated journalism myths portrayed on the sound stage. Thus, in answer to the second research question regarding contextual influences on the occupational myth making, the 1931 movie tended to reinforce pre-existing mythology rather than stray too far from earlier occupational myth forms.

Released only three years after the smash Broadway play, the 1931 motion picture is considered to be the closest in spirit to its literary antecedent. The New York Times reviewer noted, "The film ... differs but little in construction from the parent work."¹ Nevertheless, there were significant differences between the play and the first of four films based on the stage work. The first film was made during the Depression, unlike the play that was created during the prosperous twenties. By the thirties, both newspaper and motion picture companies were contending with newfangled audio technology that usurped the daily paper monopoly on news and made movie moguls rush to recruit journalists to write dialogue for talkies. Both economic and technological conditions had an impact on the myth making role of the mass media, especially when it came to images about the mediums themselves.

Before launching into a discussion of contextual conditions that played a part in the construction of the American journalism mythology of the 1931 motion picture, it is important to address any temporal confusion about the period portrayed in the first Front Page film. Therefore, the next brief section clarifies the actual time period, identified through textual and contextual research.

Temporal Orientation

Contrary to popular opinion, the first movie, like the 1928 play, is set in the teens, not in the 1920s. So, there is at least a decade gap between media practices shown in the film and conditions existing at the time of the movie's release. The lag may help explain the film's lack of recognition given to newsreels and radio, which both became popular rivals to newspapers in the 1920s and 1930s. As Hecht biographer William MacAdams noted, "The teens was the last decade when the newspaper was the fastest, most effective means of presenting news."² Soon, extra editions would be usurped by radio coverage of breaking news while newsreel operators would rush to film what newspapers could only describe in words or print in grainy, still photographs. But the former newspaper reporters who crafted The Front Page screenplay seemed eager to recall their journalistic roots and relive them with colleagues through scripts for motion pictures.

The next section discusses the actual economic and technological backdrop for the manufacture of the American journalism mythology of the 1931 Front Page. It begins with a description of the opening moments of the film--a throwback to earlier technology yet connected to new economic empires. The narrative explanation then moves into a general chronological analysis, weaving together economic and technological threads of the newspaper and motion picture industries, primarily, into a contextual tapestry of the mass media. It concludes with an explanation of specific economic conditions leading up to the production of the first Front Page film.

Media Economic and Technological Conditions

The Front Page began with a title card stating, "This story is laid in a Mythical Kingdom." The message may have been intended to assure moviegoers of an entertaining escape from the grim realities of an economic depression just outside the (movie) palace doors. A biographer of the film's director Lewis Milestone observed that "although the [card] title's real purpose is probably a disclaimer to placate the politicians in Chicago, it also served to emphasize the romantic elements of the work itself."³ Such a printed caption device harkened back to the silent film era, which was swiftly being displaced by sound motion pictures. The new audio technology, introduced in the mid-twenties, had been installed in most of America's thousands of studio-owned movie theaters by 1931.⁴ Anxious to compete with radio and recoup the costs of wiring all those theaters, motion picture companies were clamoring for more "talkies." Journalists, who were known to be quick at capturing quotes on paper, were recruited to write dialogue for screenplays. When The Front Page premiered April 14, 1931 at New York's Rivoli Theatre (the country's first place to offer a sound-on-film system),⁵ the film was advertised as "the greatest film sensation since the talkies were born!"⁶

While the film's opening title card referred to a kingdom that later dissolved to a gritty urban journalism setting, it just as easily could have meant the place where the new sounds were produced--Hollywood. New York Times reporter Anne O'Hare McCormick, on assignment in southern California during 1931, wrote that "the studios ... form a kind of kingdom."⁷ That metaphor was not lost on film historian Nancy

Lynn Schwartz, who noted that "with the advent of the talkies, anybody who could write dialogue might have the keys to the Kingdom."⁸ This was good news for the hundreds of ambitious but unemployed or poorly paid reporters across the country. The lure was likened to a California gold rush:

Hollywood was the mother lode. They crossed the continent not in covered wagons but in Pullmans. The cry was "Dialogue!" and instead of looking for it, they brought it with them. The words they carried west could be sold for gold.⁹

Instead of making less than fifty dollars a week as a reporter,¹⁰ wordsmiths could command hundreds or, in the case of Hecht, thousands of dollars per week for inserting speech quotations in scripts instead of news stories. Historian Ian Hamilton noted that what seemed like a fortune to journalists was not much to the burgeoning moviemakers: "By the end of 1931, there were 354 full-time writers in Hollywood and another 435 ... part-time, costing the industry \$7 million (which was actually a mere 1.5 percent of the studio's total payout.)"¹¹ In economic terms, by the Thirties the motion picture industry was less a kingdom than a mature oligopoly defined as a "few large producers, who make similar products and collude, either openly or simply by observing each other's behavior, to their mutual advantage."¹² The arrangement was similar to the local newspaper oligopolies that many of the journalists had just left.

In big cities such as Chicago, where The Front Page was set, publishers often owned more than one newspaper and colluded with other owners to set newsstand prices. Before World War I, Chicago had sixteen English language dailies.¹³ Monopolistic competition existed with high product differentiation and low barriers to entry for print

entrepreneurs. Newspapers routinely hired tough guys to rough up and sometimes even kill both vendors and customers who dared to support rival dailies.¹⁴ By the 1930s, there were only seven English language dailies in Chicago, with two of those owned by William Randolph Hearst, who built "the world's largest publishing empire in terms of newspapers and their combined circulation"¹⁵ during that decade. By 1935, his realm included twenty-six dailies and seventeen Sunday editions in nineteen cities.¹⁶ Without Hearst's economies of scale that afforded him advantages in gathering, producing, and distributing news, many long-time newspapers went under.

From the time when the economic panic began with the stock market crash in 1929, newspaper tried to maintain profits by cutting wages and reducing staff, especially through mergers and consolidations. The fixed cost of buying and maintaining Linotype machines and high-speed presses which transformed printing, beginning in the nineteenth century, was offset by publishers' attempts to increase efficiency in the collection of the news. Just as sound motion pictures boosted demand for screenwriters, telephone communications revolutionized the work of reporters. Newspapers began using telephones in the 1890s and the new audio apparatus created a division of labor between the message sender and receiver. Reporters became remote "legmen" running around the city on assignment connected by telephone to a "rewrite man" who stayed at the newspaper headquarters. There was no time for reporters to rush back and write their own stories. Instead, their livelihood depended on trying to be first with exclusive details or the latest update that they phoned in to a faceless colleague who typed it in story form. Writing in 1927, media historian Willard Bleyer noted the profound impact this

technology made on journalism:

By telephoning the bare facts of the news to rewrite men in the newspaper office, reporters and correspondents tended to become news gatherers rather than newswriters ... There was a constant danger of sacrificing accuracy for speed.¹⁷

During the teens, when newspapers were the main source of news, reporters could afford a more leisurely pace in their journalistic narratives to set a scene, describe characters and action, much like fiction writers.¹⁸ One observer noted the focus on style over substance before World War I, when face-to-face interviews were the rule: "... articles were dense with personal description and visual detail. But attribution, documentation, and telling both sides of the story were frequently ignored."¹⁹ Later, mechanization, including higher speed rotary presses and telephones, as well as tabloid layout limitations and increased competition from other media, forced newspaper reporters to work faster and in a briefer, standardized style. Stripped of their autonomy, reporters could be considered as interchangeable parts of the newspaper whole.

Thus, it seemed no wonder that frustrated journalists might be lured to Hollywood thinking they would be better compensated and, perhaps, offered the opportunity to express themselves more creatively. But the journalists who went to Hollywood hoping their individuality would be respected and writing conditions would be different were soon sorely disappointed. Hecht biographer MacAdams described the alienation caused by the industrialization of moviemaking:

A Hollywood screenwriter under the studio system was an assembly-line worker: he wrote scripts ... other writers rewrote his scripts and still others rewrote the rewrites. Then a director was assigned by the producers. Every step in the process was isolated from the next, which stirred up discontent among many writers, who resented the loss of control over their material.²⁰

The collaborative effort that journalists resented at newspapers was compounded at film companies. Two years after The Front Page film, frustrated scribes formed both the American Newspaper Guild and the Screenwriters Guild to pressure media management for better wages and working conditions.

By the time The Front Page was transformed from stage to photoplay, Hollywood had become a producer-dominated system of film making. The new sound technology helped enhance the studio hierarchy, which was first organized in the teens and became fully developed by the 1930s.²¹ The studio executives had begun their careers by making one-reelers or running nickelodeons at a time when the audience for such inexpensive entertainment was the urban working class. In economic terms, these entrepreneurs got involved in the new medium when there was greater product differentiation, low barriers to entry, and a growing demand for the film product. To assure a steady supply of films and gain some economies of scale, they hired heretofore anonymous actors, directors, and writers to create a certain number of films during a given period as part of an exclusive contractual agreement.

Smaller companies were unable to compete and many fell by the wayside or were bought out by larger companies during the late teens and early 1920s. By the 1930s, a select few executives were able to set prices for a majority of U.S. film productions, exhibition rentals, and, thus, tickets. The full development of the studio system created a more standardized and higher quality product, though. Thus, the era became known as the Golden Age of Motion Pictures. Hollywood was a company town and most of American movie output was concentrated in eight companies headquartered there.

Five major studios -- Fox, MGM, Paramount, RKO, and Warner Brothers -- were fully vertically integrated, handling all aspects of movie production, distribution, and exhibition. These five interacted with the so-called "Little Three" companies, United Artists, Universal and Columbia, all of which produced and/or distributed versions of The Front Page. The smaller companies concentrated on production and distribution. The majors were in constant need of more films than they themselves could make to fill increased demand for at least twice-weekly movie turnovers (often double features) in their theater chains. Therefore, as film historian John Izod pointed out, the success of the minors "depended on their identifying unsupplied needs that they could film."²²

United Artists, which distributed The Front Page, was unique among the eight companies, though, in that "it was able to function exclusively for the benefit of the independent producer."²³ Founded by Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, Charlie Chaplin, and D.W. Griffith, UA was organized in direct opposition to the studio system. The silent film actors and directors risked their own money to gain more control over film profits and to showcase their talents. But they seemed to lack basic business acumen. Film scholar David Cook noted that, despite UA's inefficient system of negotiating production and distribution of each film on an individual basis, the company survived the Depression because it had no huge overhead with acres of sound stages, a stable of actors, or theaters to maintain.²⁴ After a peak of 17 films in 1929,²⁵ the company's output dwindled when it seemed unable to accommodate the rush to talkies. It looked for help and found it in Howard Hughes.

Like his newspaper counterpart William Randolph Hearst, Hughes

inherited his wealth as a young man and was interested in a mass medium in which he had little experience. He was impressed with the Hollywood he saw when visiting his uncle, Rupert Hughes, who was a screenwriter and director.²⁶ So Howard Hughes used some of his fortune to set up Caddo Corporation, a film production company. With original screenplays in seemingly short supply, Hughes, like many other producers, looked to Broadway for ideas. Also, because movies cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to make, producers were reluctant to risk a major investment on unproven works. Therefore, theatrical hits were popular script fodder as they were considered "pre-sold." It was reasoned that a box office smash in one medium might transfer well to another and sustain already proven demand.

Fortunately, there was much to choose from during the late 1920s, "before the sound film put [American theatre] in permanent decline."²⁷ The 1927-28 season, which included The Front Page premiere at Broadway's Times Square Theater, set a record with "264 [plays] ... flitting in and out of the city's eighty theaters."²⁸ By the time Hughes got around to optioning the work, there were two ongoing stage companies performing it.²⁹ As a Hecht biographer observed, The Front Page seemed well suited for film adaptation because of "its combination of manic action and rapid-fire dialogue ... its contemporaneity and the promise ... of gunfire and other sound effects then being perfected."³⁰ So Hughes negotiated for the film rights and hired director Lewis Milestone and ex-newsman Barlett Cormack, both of whom he had work with previously, to help shape the first film version of The Front Page. Journalist Charles Lederer, a protege of Ben Hecht and nephew of Hearst's mistress, film actress Marion Davies, was brought on board to help scenarist Cormack

additional dialogue. Production began in the fall of 1930 and the movie premiered in April 1931.

Section Summary

The 1931 Front Page film was on the cusp between successful but soon-to-be obsolete silent movies and the burgeoning revolution to talkies. Like the stage play, upon which it was based, it harkened back to an earlier era when newspapers reigned supreme as the fastest mode of information dissemination to the masses. But the innovation in radio technology changed the economics of predecessor media including newspapers and motion pictures. Also, the Depression had a profound impact on all mass media and challenged traditional business practices. The older media exhibited more aggressive, blunt, and cynical corporate behavior as they tried to remain competitive while often locked in power struggles between management and labor.

The narrative explanation employed in the section began with a micro-view of the Front Page's opening title card before going on to a more macro-view of the mass media's economic and technological circumstances and finally concluding with a return to the specific conditions leading up to the production of the first Front Page film.

The next section addresses each of the nine myth elements individually. Aggressive, anti-academic, blunt, cynical, drinker, fraternal, and unscrupulous character traits along with the power struggle story line and romantic vocation theme are described in terms of the actual textual analysis and specific references within the film as well as through a contextual analysis of film production

circumstances that paralleled the occupational mythology played out on screen.

Myth Element Analyses

This section includes both the summary of the textual analyses of the film and the contextual analyses of the film production including descriptive evidence of circumstances surrounding the film making that indicated substantiation of the occupational myths. The textual analysis was done by me initially and then corroborated by two other coders. After I did a preliminary analysis of the film and found evidence of all seven myth elements previously identified by journalism fiction researchers as well as two new character traits, I refined my study protocol and recruited two coding judges. Both of the judges had seen the film at least once prior to this analysis and set about to code independently for myth elements after acceptable levels of intercoder reliability³¹ were reached in a pilot study.

The tables accompanying discussion of the textual analysis of the individual myth elements summarize all three judges' findings. The tables indicate the approximate place in the tape where the manifestation of the myth element was cited along with a brief narrative description of the sight or sound and number of coders who cited a particular manifestation. This last column of intercoder agreement is expressed as single-coder citation (33 per cent), two-coder verification of same instance (67 per cent) and full agreement among all three coders (100 per cent).

The contextual production circumstances are presented in

descriptive narrative form. They are drawn from a wide spectrum of sources including biographies, studio histories, consumer and trade news accounts and advertisements as well as correspondence files and a copy of the play upon which the first film was based.

The myth element findings begin with the textual analysis of the film itself and then examine evidence of any contextual circumstances of the film production that may have contributed to the journalism myths found in the movie itself.

Aggressive

Coding judges found twenty-eight instances of the journalism myth element, aggressiveness, in their textual analyses of the 1931 Front Page (see Table 1). As operationally defined, aggressiveness (including hard-fighting, driven and ambitious character traits) was characterized by bold actions and physical movements as well as dialogue regarding combative readiness, compelling urgency of task, and a strong-minded desire to compete and succeed. All three coders cited ten of those manifestations while two of the three coders agreed on seven other instances. Eleven other manifestations were cited by only one coder.

TABLE 1.-- AGGRESSIVE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
00:05:08	00:00:34	Reporter Bensinger runs upstairs into press room.	67%
:08:06	:12	Tracking shot of editor Burns shows his brisk pace; pointing finger at Louis.	100%
:14:24	:26	Reporter Johnson jumps at the sound of fire alarm; talks excitedly about "another" Iroquois (theater disaster); runs outside toward bell.	67%
:10:14	:09	Reporter Johnson escapes from Pollack Mike's by going through window.	33%
:20:18	:82	Reporter Johnson throws suitcase into pressroom; sings to colleagues; tells off Burns and other reporters	33%
:20:15	:30	Reporter predicts Johnson in advertising will be like "fire horse tied to milk wagon."	33%
:27:45	:14	Reporter asks sheriff to move up the hanging so he can make deadline and get the competitive edge.	67%
:31:00	:30	Reporter Bensinger's call to his newspaper prompts others to phone in updates.	33%
:39:10	:01:00	Reporters scramble to get sandwiches from policeman.	33%
:40:20	:28	Reporter Johnson yells at editor Burns on phone; yanks cord; throws phone out of window.	67%
:43:04	:01:01	Reporters rush to phones after hearing gunshots; Johnson throws suitcase down; rips off coat and hat, phones report to Burns, then runs out of press room.	100%

Table 1 (Cont'd)

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
:43:59	:01:06	Reporter Johnson corners Jacobi to give him scoop.	100%
:45:08	:47	Other reporters rush back to use press room phones before running off again; Johnson shuts door to keep secret.	100%
:50:15	:15	Two reporters try to corner sheriff and grab him by collar.	33%
:53:05	:35	Reporter Johnson runs down hall talking fast past policeman.	33%
:54:28	:01:02	Reporter Johnson grabs Diamond Louis about money; fast-talking scribbles at I.O.U.	33%
:56:41	:02:32	Reporter Johnson yells at escapee Williams to put down gun; pulls down shades; carries Williams and dumps him in bathroom; locks door and phones Burns.	100%
01:00:20	:04:32	Reporters pound on door; speculate on Williams' location.	100%
1:02:33	:77	Reporters suggest they search for Williams; nix idea to divide up with Johnson staying put.	33%
01:04:50	:02:09	Other reporters try to choke Johnson to confess; grab Mollie, threaten her; run to window when she leaps, then rush to phone.	67%
01:11:05	:02:41	Editor Burns takes control of press room; tells Louis to take Mrs. Grant to speakeasy; pushes Johnson to type; phones city editor Duffy. Johnson types furiously; moves typewriter around room to avoid fiancée. Burns and Johnson argue; Burns Burns rips paper from machine; Johnson poises to strike him; quickly locks door after Bensinger.	100%

Table 1 (Cont'd)

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
01:18:25	:05	A shot of a divided pressroom window juxtaposes shouting Burns with wistful Johnson. Johnson puts up fists to strike when Burns says leeringly he would know what to do with pure girl.	33%
01:19:00	:10	Disheveled Diamond Louis excites Burns and Johnson with his misadventure contrasted with other reporters passively waiting around for news on prostitute.	33%
01:20:35	:01:19	Burns shouts for Johnson to snap out of grief over fate of Mrs. Grant; bullies Johnson to continue typing; phones Butch and threatens to kill him; screams at Duffy; asks Louis to round up strongmen to move desk.	67%
01:22:00	:01:07	Burns and Johnson pace while on phone.	100%
01:23:26	:03:16	Other reporters rush in and grab Johnson to find out truth about Williams.	100%
01:24:21	:01:09	Burns tells sheriff to get out of press room; sheriff starts to arrest Johnson; Johnson tosses gun to Burns.	67%
01:28:00	:01:00	Reporters scramble to call in Earl's location (in desk).	100%

Aggressive Contextual Production Circumstances

The aggressive pace of the film seemed to parallel the actual production schedule. Variety reported on the "speedy direction of the picture, with the company often working until near midnight on the talker."³² The March 18, 1931 article noted that The Front Page "has been a fast making job in film ... finished about 10 days ago"³³ and set to open that week. Using some of the bullying tactics that Burns tried on Hildy, director Lewis Milestone was able to get actor Adolphe Menjou to complete his most difficult scene:

... I kept blowing lines, and forgetting speeches, thus ruining the scene. I got so upset I begged Milly to cut the scene up into shorter takes. "You say you are an actor," Milly finally taunted, "well, prove it!" Real actors go through two hours onstage without blowing any lines. Can't you do a six-minute scene?" That stopped me. I went back at it and finished.³⁴

The ambitions of the two former reporters turned playwrights, Hecht and MacArthur, were thwarted by producer Howard Hughes, who refused to pay them \$80,000 -- beyond the screen rights fee -- to adapt their play into a scenario.³⁵ This worked to the advantage of their former newspaper colleague Barlett Cormack, who was at the Chicago American after Hecht. Cormack had scooped them in New York by getting his journalism play, The Racket, on stage before The Front Page and working on the film adaptation of his drama with Hughes.³⁶ Apparently some lingering rivalry existed among the trio. Ben Hecht's first wife, Marie, wrote a roman a clef about their Chicago years and mentioned Cormack as a frequent visitor at their home.³⁷ Despite one Hughes biographer's observation that "Hecht and MacArthur made no objection to the respected Cormack,"³⁸ MacArthur later wrote that Cormack was "a mental pee-wee and celebrity worshipper who is even a lousy

newspaperman, and I don't know anything more devastating than that."³⁹
So the reporters remained not-so-friendly rivals as they moved to the
new competitive venues of plays and motion pictures.

Anti-Academic

Coders cited five manifestations of an anti-academic character
trait operationally defined as making fun of college-educated and
disparaging theorists (see Table 2). The trait in movie journalists
might be manifest in speech or gestures directed toward experts and
those with book learning but little practical, on-the-job training.
There was no agreement among all three judges on any particular instance
of the trait within the film but two of the three coders cited the same
three manifestations.

TABLE 2.-- ANTI-ACADEMIC TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
00:30:06	:69	Reporter Bensinger carries book under his arm; sits at roll-top desk to call in update about Dr. Max Eggelhofer, "an alienist from Vienna ... author of The Personality Gland," to which reporter McCue retorts "and where to put it."	67%
:19:20	:28	Reporters try to dismiss policeman Woodenshoes and his phrenology theory: "Williams is a dual personality on account of the way his head is shaped."	33%
:57:06	:14	Before he faints, escapee Williams tries to explain his political philosophy to Johnson who is not interested in ideological distinctions: "I'm not a Bolshevik -- I'm an Anarchist," to which the reporter says, "Be quiet; the hell with that."	67%
01:07:55	:04	When Johnson laments to Burns about losing his hope of marriage, Burns says, "Your girl? You sound like some puking college boy."	67%
01:36:16	:03	As Johnson departs with his fiancée Burns says, "I'd kill you if you ever worked for anybody else," to which Johnson replies, "Hear that, Peggy? That's my diploma."	33%

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Anti-Academic Contextual Production Conditions

Research conducted on the film production revealed no references to an anti-academic attitude.

Blunt

Coders cited twenty-nine manifestations of the blunt trait that included rude, rough and boorish behavior (see Table 3). The occupational myth element was operationally defined as crudeness, brusqueness, and unruliness that an average citizen might consider offensive, obnoxious, discourteous, and ill-mannered. All three coders cited the same seventeen instances of blunt behavior or references to it while two of the three coders agreed with each other on eight other citations. Single coders found four additional manifestations.

TABLE 3.-- BLUNT TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
00:03:15	00:00:25	Reporter Kruger throws bottle out of window, spits at hanging crew, and gargles.	100%
:03:50	:04:54	Reporters wear hats indoors; bawdy comments on news stories.	67%
:05:30	:26	Reporter McCue sits on desk with feet propped up; phones in story full of sexual innuendos.	67%
:08:36	:22	Editor Burns speaks gruffly to city editor Duffy as he strides through newspaper office.	67%
:18:40	:01:10	Reporters try to ignore policeman Woodenshoes, then talk sarcastically to him.	100%
:20:11	:04	Reporter Johnson is blunt speaking in his phone resignation.	100%
:20:15	:01:10	Reporter Johnson tries to kiss cleaning woman; sings and waltzes around room with her; throws her pail out the window.	100%
:23:18	:04	Reporter Kruger shouts out window for hanging crew to keep noise down.	67%
:23:40	:01:14	Reporter Johnson criticizes rudeness of reporters, crassness of journalism jobs.	33%
:25:45	:03:20	Reporters sarcastically tell sheriff that "Judge Mankiewicz threw pail" when sheriff calls them "hoodlums yelling and throwing things out the window." They call the sheriff "Pinky" and mock him in song. A reporter takes the sheriff's press release and says he'll use it in toilet, while another lights his cigar with press pass for the hanging. When sheriff says, "Williams is as sane as me," Kruger remarks "saner."	100%

Table 3 (Cont'd)

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
:32:00	:10	Reporter Kruger hangs up phone with his foot.	67%
:33:06	:02	Reporter tweaks prostitute's cheek and says, "Keep your skirts on ... They're fixing up a pain in the neck for your boyfriend."	100%
:37:24	:04	Reporter Bensinger tosses mop out the window. Johnson displays his rear end to the sheriff. Reporters sit with feet propped up.	100%
:40:24	:20	Reporter Johnson shouts story into phone at Burns; impatient Burns tells him to shut up.	100%
:48:51	:58	Reporter McCue meets Johnson's fiancée; sits cross-legged on desk; doesn't censor language.	100%
:53:15	:26	Reporter Johnson tells policeman Woodenshoes to shut up.	100%
01:01:15	:85	Reporters tease prostitute Mollie about perfume; feign horniness and talk in sexual innuendos.	100%
01:03:40	:05	Bensinger shoos Mollie from his desk.	
01:07:31	:24	Editor Burns tells Johnson's future mother-in-law to shut up; shouts at Johnson. Johnson yells back.	100%
01:09:36	:23	Editor Burns tells Johnson's fiancée to shut up. Johnson makes crude reference to government official; Burns starts to answer "Holy Jumping ..."	67%
01:10:54	:02	Editor Burns shouts at Williams; calls him a "mock turtle."	33%
01:11:43	:01:03	Editor Burns shouts at Johnson and Duffy; Johnson shouts back.	100%

Table 3 (Cont'd)

Start	Tape Time Duration	Description	Intercoder Agreement
01:21:08	:05	Editor Burns starts to swear on phone at Butch: "Oh, for H ... Sebastian, Butch ..."; calls his girl friend "roundheeled tramp."	67%
01:22:09	:02	Johnson tells Burns to shut up as he phones to find out about Mrs. Grant	33%
01:26:30	:02:34	Editor Burns sarcastically tells sheriff to take a magazine when he searches the toilet; calls sheriff a "pimple-headed spy;" calls Mrs. Grant a "gray-haired old weasel" and starts moving toward her menacingly.	100%
01:33:20	:02	Reporter Johnson sarcastically tells mayor he'd hang his own mother to win an election.	100%
01:33:50	:03	Editor Burns makes fun of the sheriff as "hoo doo."	100%
01:35:20	:20	Reporter Johnson tells his fiancée he's going to cut out swearing.	67%
01:36:00	:50	Johnson's fiancée says moving, getting married and changing jobs is "your chance to have a home and become a human being."	33%
01:39:27	:05	Editor Burns is heard, amid noise uttering "son of a bitch."	100%

Blunt Contextual Production Circumstances

Actor Pat O'Brien recalled how the filmmakers were able to get past the censors to insert the profanity of the last line from the play. He said Menjou told Milestone, "The Hays Office would run us all out of the picture business! They even frown on 'bum'."⁴⁰ But Milestone directed them to find a way to do the scene with the vulgarity intact:

Look, when you pick up the phone from the desk to make the call, just before you read the son-of-bitch tag line, plant your fanny next to the typewriter. As you say that word, nudge the Underwood, so the carriage will release itself and ring the bell ... We'll do take and retake until the synchronization is perfect.⁴¹

To get the proper ambience for the less-than-genteel reporters, Menjou said that Milestone kept the set filthy:

It was supposed to be a dirty, untidy place with cigarette butts and copy paper on the floor. Every day of shooting, it got dirtier and dirtier. After we finished shooting for the day, a sign would be placed on the set warning the janitors not to sweep or dust it.⁴²

O'Brien recalled "the wonderful ratty set of a Chicago press room ... Realism went as far as functioning spittoons."⁴³

Cynical

Coders found twenty-seven manifestations of the cynical character trait (see Table 4). It was operationally defined as believing all people are motivated by selfishness and ranging from distrustful doubt to overall contempt for humankind. It was manifest in sneering and scornful facial expressions in response to statements about other's sincerity and benevolence as well as sarcastic statements, bitter mocking of others, general faultfinding and pessimism. There was full

agreement among all three judges on eleven instances of cynicism while seven other manifestations were cited by two of the coders. Nine instances were cited by only a single judge.

TABLE 4.-- CYNICAL TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
00:03:14	:03	Reporter Kruger complains about noise of gallows while trying to do work.	100%
:04:18	:36	All reporters have sarcastic asides when McCue calls woman about Peeping Tom incident.	100%
:06:45	:55	Reporters discuss seeming impossibility of leaving newspaper work and Burns.	100%
:07:27	:26	Reporters have sarcastic asides as McCue calls in story on Swedish masseuse.	100%
:10:30	:04	Shot fades from madam complaining that editor Burns owes her \$2 to marriage license bureau clerk asking love struck Johnson for \$2.	33%
:11:24	:36	Reporter Johnson tells fiancée he's come out of the sewer to find her like "cool, fresh air."	67%
:12:45	:03	When fiancée protests that she's not finished packing, Johnson says, "All we have to do is throw some underwear in a trunk."	33%
:15:36	:02	In Pollack Mike's speakeasy Johnson says, "None for me," to which Burns replies, "He'll have the same."	33%
:18:36	:02	Press room reporters say "papers so full of the hanging that they ain't got room for ads."	67%
:20:24	:01:17	Reporters make sexist, racist comments; tease Johnson about marriage; doubt that Burns' goodwill is sincere.	100%
:22:30	:01:65	Johnson announces that he's marrying in New York to prevent kidnapping bride.	33%

Table 4 (Cont'd)

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
:23:10	:05	Kruger yells out window to gallows crew, "Hey, ain't you guys got anything better to do?"	67%
:23:29	:01:36	Johnson delivers his farewell speech on journalism and what a demoralizing occupation it is.	100%
:24:00	:02	Johnson shows a \$500 bill and another reporter asks to count it.	33%
:25:45	:10	Reporters tell sheriff that the hanging means votes in the upcoming election; sing song.	100%
:23:29	:02	Kruger asks "Why can't they jerk this guy at a reasonable hour so we can get some sleep?"	67%
:23:32	:01:36	Reporters make snide remarks as Bensinger phones in his update.	100%
:29:53	:07	Reporters mock Molloy, saying "Williams left a wake-up call for 7 a.m." and "they're fixing a pain in the neck for your boyfriend."	100%
:44:40	:15	Reporter calls in story about tear bombs: "Criminals cry for it."	33%
:46:59	:02:07	Editor Burns covers phone and laughs before assuring Johnson he'll send him reimbursement money.	67%
:49:25	01:25	Reporter McCue calls in story on baby and "effect on colored vote."	33%
01:01:00	:01:25	Reporters doubt Johnson's explanation that he was "interviewing Mollie."	33%
01:07:00	:05:00	Editor Burns appears unmoved by Mollie's leap; launches into misogynist diatribe; when fiancée appears. Burns cautions Johnson, "Tell her nothing, she's a woman, you fool!" Burns yells at Duffy, "Never mind your diabetes!"	67%

Table 4 (Cont'd)

Start	Tape Time Duration	Description	Intercoder Agreement
01:13:10	:01	Johnson observes of Burns, "You could talk yourself to death."	33%
01:16:06	:04	Editor Burns mocks Bensinger with flattery about his verse "white-haired mother's tears."	100%
01:17:10	5:10	Burns delivers more misogynist philosophy about coming in through bedroom window to discover third wife with rival reporter who stole his story; he insults Butch's girl friend and comments about Duffy: "I ought to know better than to hire a guy with a disease." Editor Burns smiles.	100%
01:33:45	:05	when he asks if Mrs. Grant has been killed. Reporter Johnson asks the mayor and sheriff: "Why don't you guys quit politics and take in washing?"	67%

Cynical Contextual Production Conditions

Research on the film production revealed no references to the cynical character trait.

Drinker

Coders cited nine instances of the drinker character trait in the 1931 film (see Table 5). Evidence was operationalized to include talking about plans to drink alcoholic beverages as well as quit or resist temptation. In addition to actual drinking, other references included props or the sounds of glasses, bottles, or ice; scenes set in bars or restaurants and songs associated with bars and drinking. Four manifestations were cited by all judges, while two coders agreed on four other instances with one citing by a single judge.

TABLE 5.-- DRINKER TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
00:02:53	:02	Bottle thrown at feet of jailer.	100%
:09:50	:02	Speech: told Johnson "on wagon" Scene: speakeasy peephole.	67%
:15:40	:03:34	At Pollack Mike's speakeasy, Johnson and Burns drink with bottles and glasses in foreground.	100%
:22:00	:05	Press room: Johnson tells other reporters Burns tried to get him drunk at Pollack Mike's.	67%
:23:05	:02	Johnson tells others there is "bad gin" at New York papers.	33%
:24:06	:02	Johnson says newspapermen are cross between "bootleggers ..."	67%
01:07:38	:05	Burns tells Diamond Louis to take fiancée Peggy's mother to Pollack Mike's.	67%
01:19:00	:02	Burns gives Johnson a pocket flask; Johnson unscrews it but doesn't drink.	100%
01:35:15	:02	Johnson tells Peggy he's going to cut out "drinking and everything connected with the newspaper business."	100%

Drinker Contextual Production Circumstances

Even though the film was made before the so-called Prohibition era officially ended, with the repeal of the Volstead Act through the 21st Amendment in 1933, alcohol was present in the film and on the set.

Menjou recalled the set up:

Milestone also supplied a bar and a bartender on the stage. Whenever anyone wanted a drink, he just stepped up and ordered it, free of charge. At the end of the picture, which took five weeks to shoot, his bill for liquor was \$900.⁴⁴

O'Brien reminisced that he was "tasting the blends" with friends at a New York club when he got the call to come to Hollywood.⁴⁵ He said that one of his fellow reporter actors, Matt Moore, who was a brother-in-law of United Artists studio co-founder Mary Pickford, came from a family of drinkers. "All enjoyed drinking and never denied it."⁴⁶ Therefore, one wonders how much acting was needed for the journalist drinking scenes, with imbibing so much a part of their personal lives and real liquor available within arm's reach on the set.

Nevertheless, some of the more negative images of drinking found in the play were expunged from the 1931 movie. One of Milestone's biographers noted that "serious, realistic, and even poignant bits from the play were dropped from the film; for example, Mrs. Schlosser searching for her drunken reporter-husband."⁴⁷ (In the play, she speculates that her husband and Hildy "are out sopping it up together." She admonishes their colleagues in the pressroom "sitting around like a lot of tramps! Drinking and bumming!"⁴⁸) For whatever reason, drinking was present in the film but, perhaps, toned down from the stage version.

Fraternal

Coders were in full agreement on all six manifestations of the fraternal character trait they cited in their film analyses (see Table 6). Operationally defined as part of a closed circle of persons linked by similar duties, shared backgrounds and common occupation, the fraternal element was manifest in visual image of physical proximity and familiarity including reacting *en masse* or sitting with a sense of social conviviality as well as dialogue referring to off-limits exclusiveness of space from outsiders and clannish differentiation from other workers.

TABLE 6.-- FRATERNAL TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time Start	Duration	Description	Intercoder Agreement
00:03:10	:35	Reporters are sitting around a table playing cards; in hats.	100%
:22:30	:01:16	Reporter Johnson undresses in front of other reporters as if press room is locker room.	100%
:23:25	:23	Reporter Johnson tries to collect debts; forgives them.	100%
:25:46	:01:38	None of the reporters tell sheriff who threw pail, although they all saw it.	100%
:27:12	:14	Reporters sing in chorus: "And they're hanging Eddie Deaver in the morning ..."	100%
:35:50	:01:57	Reporters throw Mollie out of pressroom; Bensinger says she oughtn't to be allowed in pressroom; another says "this is the press room; we're busy."	100%

Fraternal Contextual Production Conditions

There was a sense of fraternity among the men who wrote and directed The Front Page as well as those who acted out scenes as journalists. Sometimes the lines blurred. Even though the Russian-born director had never been a journalist, like the two screenwriters Cormack and Lederer, he ended up playing a bit part as a reporter in one crowd scene.⁴⁹

The actors formed a close-knit group as well on both the East and West coasts. Pat O'Brien recalled that the men he was to play with on the sound stage were part of his Broadway fraternity. "It was heartwarming to see on the cast sheet of the production the names of some old New York pals: Frank McHugh, Walter Catlett, Freddie Howard."⁵⁰ O'Brien said he was concerned about how actor Lee Tracy, who had originated the Hildy Johnson role on Broadway, would feel about being passed over for the film adaptation. Sour grapes notwithstanding, O'Brien related that Tracy was gracious to him and offered advice:

Even if they wanted me, I'm under a two-year contract to Jed Harris. So grab it -- and I'll give you the sides of The Front Page that I had for the part, and some pieces of business not in the script ... Look, Paddy boy -- I remember what Fred Allen said about California: 'It's a great place to live -- if you're an orange!'⁵¹

Regardless of what Tracy said, he soon ended up in Hollywood and became the consummate on-screen reporter of the journalism film genre in the 1930s and 1940s.

One of the unlikeliest actors to play a scruffy journalist was the debonair Adolphe Menjou, whom O'Brien likened to a "repainted Rolls Royce."⁵² Nevertheless, after actor Louis Wolheim died three weeks into the production, Menjou was hired to play editor Walter Burns. O'Brien

recalled that the cast was worried about how this new actor would fit in:

... twelve of us were shooting craps, all of us down on the dirty, grimy floor of the stage ... Someone looked up and there was ... Mr. Menjou himself, standing with great aplomb, impeccably groomed as always. "Hi, suckers," he said ... He knelt down (in that beauti-fully tailored suit with the knife-blade creases in the pants) and joined us in the wildest crap game that has been yet seen on any set. Near dawn he counted his winnings, dusted his tailoring and said, "Bring on some real plungers."⁵³

Menjou remembered the clubhouse-like regimen that Milestone imposed upon the production:

Milestone started shooting at one o'clock in the afternoon and shot until about seven. Then everybody would go and have a Turkish bath, a rubdown, and a nap. At eight thirty we would all have

dinner and then return to the studio and shoot until one o'clock in the morning.⁵⁴

The actors bonded together on the set because of their enforced together-ness due to the work schedule as well as their previous affiliations and fast friendships with one another.

Unscrupulous

Judges cited nineteen instances of the unscrupulous character trait in their individual film analyses (see Table 7). The trait was operationally defined as contemptuous of what is right and honorable manifest in actions or speech indicating lying, cheating, double-crossing, stealing and other violations of the law. Coders revealed eleven citations in common while five instances were cited by pairs of coders and three manifestations were cited by single judges.

TABLE 7.-- UNSCRUPULOUS TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
00:10:20	:11	Reporters talk about Burns' treatment of reporters who leave the business -- involves lying, cheating, stealing, double-crossing.	67%
:14:08	:37	Editor Burns causes a false fire alarm to lure Johnson then threatens to have him jailed on false charges if he doesn't accompany him.	100%
:15:26	:01:22	At Pollack Mike's speakeasy, Burns keeps switching glasses so that Johnson drinks three times as much before Burns ever sips (after Johnson leaves).	33%
:19:52	:08	Reporters talk policeman Woodenshoes into getting them sandwiches by telling him to "put it on police tab."	100%
:23:00	:05	Johnson's speech to his colleagues describes newsmen as stealing pictures.	100%
:32:40	:18	Bensinger calls in update on Williams's last meal with plug for local restaurant; reporters accuse him of "petty graft -- that's how he got his clothes."	100%
:33:40	:01:17	Prostitute Mollie Molloy accuses reporters of lying about her relationship with Williams.	100%
:47:19	:16	Johnson bribes Jacobi with \$260 to get exclusive; lies to fiancée when confronted about money; he finally admits he doesn't have it "right now."	67%
01:01:22	:11	Kruger, while lying down on press room table, calls in to his paper to say he's out with deputies and challenges doubting rewrite desk to call him at phone booth.	100%

Table 7 (Cont'd)

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
01:03:50	:01:51	Johnson convinces Bensinger that he's sick, to get rid of him.	33%
01:04:45	:10	Johnson tries to deceive other reporters into thinking he'll collaborate -- "we'll split the reward, search various floors, I'll stay here."	67%
01:05:23	:09	Johnson lies when he confronts Mrs. Grant who says he captured Williams; he denies it.	67%
01:07:21	:49	Burns directs Diamond Louis to kidnap Mrs. Grant and take her to speakeasy, claiming he has Johnson's best interests at heart.	100%
01:10:13	:15	Johnson's fiancée accuses him of lying but blames Burns as bad influence.	67%
01:14:42	1:62	Burns offers Bensinger a job and then calls Duffy, instructing him to fire him after he files story. Johnson calls him double-crossing. Burns defends action, "A gentleman's handshake means nothing. That'll teach him to quit his job without giving notice."	100%
01:25:08	:07	Burns lies about ownership of gun Johnson tosses to him.	100%
01:27:00	:01:18	Burns denies even knowing Mrs. Grant, moreover kidnapping her. She calls him "unprincipled;" he calls her a liar.	100%
01:25:31	:01:25	Reporters accuse Johnson of double-crossing them; he lies to sheriff about Williams's whereabouts.	33%
01:39:26	:05	Burns reports that his watch has been stolen.	100%

Unscrupulous Contextual Production Conditions

In negotiating for the screen rights to The Front Page play, producer Jed Harris admitted that he deceived Hecht and MacArthur about the amount at stake and lied to Hughes.⁵⁵ He explained that he knew the playwrights would leap at the initial \$50,000 offer, but he held out for more without telling them. After much long-distance discussion, Hughes agreed to \$125,000, not realizing that the authors would have settled for less. Harris was not satisfied, although the "average movie sale of a Broadway play was \$25,000,"⁵⁶ and wanted more. He summed up his devious deal:

And so it ended, the whole preposterous farrago of lies, postures, late offers, final offers, threats of violence, and midnight telephone calls. But I have not the slightest doubt in the world that I could have gotten \$150,000.⁵⁷

So if the film began with Hughes thinking he paid too much for the film rights, it ended with him feeling cheated by United Artists on profits. It was reported The Front Page cost \$537,507.97 to make.⁵⁸ After the film opened to favorable reviews and \$58,000 of box office receipts in its first week,⁵⁹ Hughes was convinced that profits should have been forthcoming despite what UA accountants told him. UA historian Tino Balio reported it was conceivable that the privately held company's only outside producer was deceived and that his film broke even ... or grossed \$700,000.⁶⁰ Balio offered a play-by-play commentary on bookkeeping irregularities and Hughes' sense of studio deceit:

... he [Hughes] was puzzled by the poor returns on his pictures ... the United Artists board turned down Hughes' request (to be released from his distribution contract) ... When his contract ran its course, Hughes asked to examine the books. After the audit, Hughes accused United Artists of making unauthorized reductions, rebates, and adjustments on contracts with theaters amounting to \$200,000. Hughes not only wanted this money refunded, he also put in a claim for \$1 million, the amount he alleged he

had lost because United Artists did not use its best efforts to sell his pictures and because they were sold in blocks with other United Artists releases.⁶¹

Balio concluded that Hughes' claims were probably true as UA settled for \$75,000.⁶²

Also, brand name promotions seem to have crept into the film. The film reviewer for Variety observed that unsuspecting moviegoers were subjected to product plugs in the dialogue and conspicuous props including Listerine mouthwash and Zonite.⁶³

Power Struggle

Coders cited six manifestations of the power struggle story line (see Table 8). Operationally defined as a conflict between the journalist and the news executive over control of the journalist's life decisions including marriage, relocation and career change. All three judges agreed on all six instances in the film of the power struggle.

TABLE 8.-- POWER STRUGGLE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
00:15:31	:05	At Pollack Mike's, Burns says, "So, you're leaving me for marriage."	100%
:20:35	:02:35	Johnson complains that Burns gave him crazy assignments; left him temporarily deaf; Burns counters with how he helped him.	100%
01:07:00	:05	In press room, Burns cajoles Johnson to type saying, "If I didn't have your best interests at heart ..."	100%
		When fiancée appears, Burns says, "What the devil do you want?"	100%
01:17:10	:01:10	Johnson complains, "I'm a sap, falling for your line -- Johnson Street."	100%
01:22:00	:02	When Johnson grieves for the assumed loss of Mrs. Grant, Burns admonishes him to carry on "for the sake of the paper;" then says "if it was my own mother ..."	100%

Power Struggle Contextual Production Conditions

Producer Howard Hughes, who had conflicts with United Artists' executives over film promotion and profits, also struggled with motion picture industry censors. The controversy centered on exactly what could be translated directly from the bold stage drama and what needed to be toned down for mass movie audiences. Researchers have found evidence of correspondence suggesting that the press corps, either directly or indirectly, influenced the Production Code Administration to pressure Hughes to revise the mythic image of journalists to show less connection with corruption and leftist leanings.⁶⁴

Loosely paralleling the "inconvenience" that reporter Hildy Johnson's pending nuptials were causing editor Walter Burns, actor Pat O'Brien related how he had to squeeze in his own wedding: "... two short hours given us out of a busy schedule when Eloise would become Mrs. Pat ... The brief ceremony was ended and ... [I] went quickly back to the studio to resume filming The Front Page."⁶⁵ It was O'Brien's film debut so he had no proven movie success and bargaining power to leverage in asking for any more time off.

Romantic Vocation

Judges found four instances of the overall theme of journalism as romantic, exciting and adventurous (see Table 9). The theme was manifest in scenes involving intense dramatic action and danger as well as chaotic noise like shouting, bells, alarms and gunfire. Film dialogue referred to the romance of the occupation and alluded to journalism as a noble pursuit. All three coders agreed on all the manifestations.

TABLE 9.-- ROMANTIC VOCATION TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
00:16:00	:25	At Pollack Mike's, Burns tells Johnson he'll miss "all the crazy excitement of this town ... instead you'll take the 5:17 to the suburbs." Despite complaints, Johnson smiles recalling some of good scoops	100%
01:07:30	:10	In the pressroom, Burns announces that Johnson's scoop will have "the whole city by the seat of the pants."	100%
01:36:00	:20	Johnson's fiancée comes in pressroom and when she sees how animated and happy Johnson is talking about his journalism, Peggy asks: "You don't want to go to New York down deep, do you?"	100%
01:39:00	:05	In the final scene, Johnson says, "Well, if I ever come back to the business," but quickly adds to assure Peggy, "which I won't!"	100%

Romantic Vocation Contextual Production Conditions

Research conducted on the specific film production uncovered no references to journalism as a romantic vocation.

Myth Element Summary

Three coding judges found evidence of all nine myth elements in their individual textual analyses of the first Front Page film. Aggressive and blunt character traits were cited the most (twenty eight and nine times respectively) with the romantic vocation theme and anti-academic character trait cited the least (four and five times respectively). Thus, the two other coders confirmed the presence of two additional mythic character traits not cited by earlier researchers of journalism fiction but discovered in my initial textual analysis of the film. Overall intercoder reliability involving agreement on identification and categorization of the nine myth elements between at least two of the three coders was 76 per cent.

In terms of the contextual analysis of the film production drawn from broad-based reading of various historical sources on The Front Page, my research confirmed the presence of six of the nine myth elements: aggressive, blunt, drinker, fraternal, and unscrupulous character traits and power struggle story line. Of those mythic elements, the power struggle yielded the least amount of evidence of production circumstances paralleling the manifestation of the occupational myth in the film. My research on the production circumstances turned up no references to the anti-academic and cynical character traits nor the romantic vocation theme.

The next section is designed to corroborate the myth findings of the textual and contextual analyses of the first Front Page film. It will discuss references to the myth elements in six magazines and newspaper reviews written at the time of the movie's release in 1931.

Myth Corroboration in Movie Reviews

All myth elements except anti-academic and drinker character traits were alluded to by at least two of the six brief reviews consulted.⁶⁶ (See Figure 3 in the Appendix). Bluntness came across as the strongest occupational trait with five of the six reviewers mentioning it in reference to the reporters or the editor. The cynical trait was cited the least -- by only two reviewers. Reasons why certain elements were mentioned or ignored will be discussed in Chapter 8. In the meantime, the reviewer references to seven of the nine myth elements seem to reinforce the idea that the film's mythology adapted elements from earlier literary forms while incorporating a new fraternal characterization. Therefore, in answer to the first research question regarding the mythology found in each film, contemporaneous reviewers found traces of all earlier myth elements except the drinker attribute and corroborated the identification of one of the two new character traits found in the textual analysis. Reviewers cited a fraternal trait but not an anti-academic one. The reviewer references to American journalism mythology will be discussed under the nine sub-categories of myth beginning alphabetically with the seven character traits and ending with the story line and overall theme.

Aggressive

Four of the six reviewers used terms synonymous with the operational definition of aggressive (including hard fighting, driven and ambitious). Their adjectives were used exclusively to describe the Walter Burns character. Both Nation and New Republic referred to him as "hard-boiled"⁶⁶ while Commonweal called him a "tyrant" and Variety referred to him as "cold-blooded," allowing nothing to stand in his way of retaining his star reporter and scooping the other newspapers.

Anti-Academic

No reviewers referred to the on-screen journalists displaying a disdain for book learning and expertise based on theoretical knowledge.

Blunt

Five reviewers alluded to the blunt, rude, rough, and crude behavior of the movie journalists. Commonweal described the newsmen as "rough and rowdy" while New Republic used "rowdy" in its review headline. Time called Walter Burns "impolite" compared to The Nation's description of the "gruff managing editor." Four of the reviewers mentioned the vulgarity of the language, bawdy jokes, "coarse epithets" and especially, Burns "spouting expletives."

Cynical

Alexander Bakshy used several sentences of his brief review in The Nation to question whether the "hard-boiled cynicism" depicted in the movie is handled honestly by the film makers. He claimed that the audience might be led to believe that the trait connoted "superior knowledge and understanding of life, instead of being merely ... a

protective mechanism of inferior intelligence against the demands of life." The Variety reviewer noted the cynicism of Burns in proclaiming "love is bunk" especially when compared with the quest for a story.

Drinker

None of the reviewers mentioned the presence of or allusion to consumption of alcoholic beverages in the film.

Fraternal

Three reviewers alluded to the news collegiality manifest in the on-screen reporters' behavior. The New York Times reviewer said the pressroom corps "indulge in their argot" as a specialized language excluding non-journalists (including the public officials with whom they deal, and most viewers, presumably). The Nation review mentioned the movie setting "confreres of the court pressroom" and praised director Lewis Milestone for offering "atmospheric unity in which all characters and all action flow in a constant stream as part of a single whole." Variety's review referred to the fraternal image of "reporters waiting, talking, and playing 10 cent ante."

Unscrupulous

Four reviewers described Walter Burns with the adjective "unscrupulous" while Variety called him "conniving."

Power Struggle

Commonweal described the external struggle between Walter Burns and Hildy Johnson but especially honed in on Johnson's internal struggle "torn between his lifeblood (... scent of a good story) and his life problem (... his fiancée)." Variety also focused on that aspect of the

conflict while the New York Times and Time reviews explained the story line generally.

Romantic Vocation

In a review entitled "Too Much Halo," the Nation's Alexander Bakshy worried about the authenticity of the portrayal of newspaper adventures in the 1931 Front Page. He conceded that audience curiosity about journalism was understandable but urged that the exaggerated character traits and theme (what I call occupational mythology) be tempered with some healthy skepticism:

We are all interested in newspapers and what newspapermen write about their calling. The business of supplying us with our daily scandal, if we are to believe these chroniclers turned novelists and playwrights, is in itself full of scandal. Moreover, it has its thrills which, as they are pictured in books and plays, can stand comparison with the most exciting experiences of the world of crime.

Bakshy complained that the "glamour, the romantic halo, surrounding the characters" may mislead moviegoers. However, he concluded that despite the "romantic embellishment of the newspaperman and his profession," a true-to-life portrayal comes through in the film. The New York Times review alluded to the almost compulsive "call of a good story" while the Time review referred to the lure of the news business when Johnson is "overcome by the opportunity for a scoop."

Movie Review Summary

Contemporaneous reviewers of the 1931 Front Page confirmed the presence of seven of the nine American journalism myth elements identified in textual and contextual analyses of the movie. The reviews, taken from six national consumer and trade publications,

mentioned aggressive, blunt, cynical, fraternal, and unscrupulous character traits as well as the power struggle story line and romantic vocation theme. None mentioned anti-academic and drinker character traits cited by coding judges in a textual analysis of the film. The reviews helped corroborate what occupational myths were found in the film, in response to research question 1.

The last section of this chapter summarizes both the textual and contextual analysis findings from the 1931 film in terms of a response to research questions 1A and 2A and B.

Conclusion

This chapter summarized the findings of textual and contextual analyses of the 1931 Front Page film that indicated the American journalism mythology, identified in literary antecedents, carried over into the new medium. Aggressive, blunt, cynical, drinker, and unscrupulous character traits of news workers along with a power struggle story line and romantic vocation theme were found. However, the motion picture included two anti-academic and fraternal character traits not mentioned in earlier journalism fiction research. These new traits, found in my initial textual analysis, were confirmed by two other coding judges. In addition, contemporaneous film reviewers corroborated the presence of all the myth elements but the anti-academic and drinker character traits in their brief evaluations of the movie.

Also, in response to the second research question of this study, contextual analyses of the circumstances surrounding the specific film production as well as the general economic and technological conditions

of the mass media in the early thirties, indicated the importance of various outside influences in shaping and disseminating the American journalism mythology seen on the silver screen. Radio technological innovations broke the newspaper monopoly on daily news while the Depression caused all media enterprises to become more economically efficient in order to survive. Anecdotal evidence and historical records suggest that the film art was imitating life twice removed. Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur's conjured tribute to their previous lives as journalists was transported from Broadway to Hollywood and reinterpreted by an expanded collaboration among writers, directors, producers and media industry leaders. The behind-the-scenes production circumstances of the cast and crew often paralleled the journalism mythology projected on the big screen. Thus, real life imitated the mythology crafted by two former newsmen and transformed into stage and screen productions.

In a double-page advertisement in the April 29, 1931 Variety featuring flattering excerpts from nineteen reviews, the New York Mirror proclaimed The Front Page "the best newspaper movie yet made."⁶⁷ Eight years later, director Howard Hawks set out to remake the "best" with a topical twist. The next chapter summarizes the findings of a textual and contextual analysis of American journalism mythology in His Girl Friday.

NOTES

1. Mordaunt Hall, a review of the 1931 Front Page film. "A Newspaper Melodrama," New York Times 20 March 1931, 39.
2. William MacAdams, Ben Hecht: The Man Behind the Legend (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1990), 16.
3. Joseph R. Millichap, Lewis Milestone (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981), 55.
4. Researchers disagreed on the total number of movie theaters but three sources said a majority had sound by 1931: "... of the more than fifteen thousand theaters in the United States, ... by late in 1929 and into 1930 the transition [to sound] was by and large completed," according to Douglas Gomery, Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), p. 223. He contradicted earlier information stating, "By 1931 only 1,500 out of 22,000 film theatres were without sound," Abel Green and Joe Laurie Jr., Show Biz from Vaude to Video (New York: Holt, 1951), p. 368. Daniel Blum generalized that "Eighty-three percent of the theatres in the U.S. were equipped for sound [in 1931]" in A Pictorial History of the Talkies (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1958), 37.
5. Green and Laurie, Show Biz, 264.
6. Tony Thomas, Howard Hughes in Hollywood (Secaucus, N.J.: Citadel Press, 1985), 65.
7. Anne O'Hare McCormick, "The Great Empire of Celluloid," New York Times 29 November 1931, Sec. 5, 1-2. She wrote that the movie moguls were "absolute but uneasy rulers, more powerful and fawned upon, more difficult to access, than political potentates any longer dare to be."
8. Nancy Lynn Schwartz, comp. by Sheila Schwartz, The Hollywood Writer's War (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), 18.
9. Samuel Marx, A Gaudy Spree: The Literary Life of Hollywood in the 1930s When the West Was Fun (New York: Franklin Watts, 1987), 1.
10. Stanley Walker in City Editor (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1934), 43-44 discussed the Depression's effect on journalists' salaries:

... weekly pay, on most of the large papers, may be \$15, \$20 or \$25 ... Since the beginning of the Depression in 1929 hundreds of young men have been held back because the newspaper publishers, far from raising the pay of anyone, were trying to save money ... Ten and fifteen years ago the outstanding reporter in New York could expect to receive from \$100 to \$200 a week. Those figures are considerably lower today. Six years ago, the average salary for New York reporters was between \$60 and \$65 a week. Now it is \$50, or possibly a dollar or two less.

The movie industry knew that journalists-turned-screenwriters got better wages and did not seem to understand why they might be unhappy in their new writing roles, as evidenced by Variety 13 March 1931, p. 3 article headlined: "Tired of ex-Reporters at \$90 Top Squawking Over \$200 to \$1,000 Soft Jobs, in Studios, Says East's Filmdom."

11. Ian Hamilton, Writers in Hollywood, 1915-1951 (New York: Harper & Row, 1990), 43.

12. John C. Strick, "The Economics of the Motion Picture Industry: a Survey", Philosophy of the Social Sciences 8:4 (December 1978), 408, quoted in John Izod, Hollywood and the Box Office, 1895 - 1986 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 97.

13. Based on newspapers listed in Winifred Gregory, ed. American Newspapers, 1821-1936: A Union List of Files Available in the United States and Canada (New York: Bibliographic Society of America, 1937; rep. in New York: Kraus Reprint Corp., 1967), 119-25. This source probably underestimated the total number of dailies actually started in Chicago as those without extant files would not have been included.

14. The strong-arm tactics of Hearst's circulation managers Max and Moe Annenberg and Dion O'Banion were legendary in Chicago newspaper wars as chronicled in John J. McPhaul, Deadlines and Monkeyshines: The Fabled World of Chicago Journalism (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1962), 230-231 and Joseph Gies, The Colonel of Chicago (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1979), 35-36.

15. Edwin Emery and Michael Emery, The Press and America: An Interpretive History of the Mass Media, 5th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1984), 428.

16. Ibid.

17. Willard Grosvenor Bleyer, Main Currents in the History of American Journalism (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1927), 397.

18. MacAdams, Ben Hecht, 16, mentioned the literary journalism style.

19. Barbara Belford, Brilliant Bylines (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), xii.

20. MacAdams, Hecht, 169.

21. Thomas Schatz, The Genius of the System (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 4.
22. Izod, Box Office, 90.
23. Tino Balio, United Artists: The Company Built by the Stars (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), 240.
24. David A. Cook, A History of Narrative Film (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1981), 80.
25. Balio, U.A., 95.
26. Thomas, Howard Hughes, 14.
27. MacAdams, Hecht, 106.
28. Ethan Mordden, The American Theatre (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 89.
29. Martin Gottfried, Jed Harris: The Curse of Genius (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1984), 115.
30. Doug Fetherling, The Five Lives of Ben Hecht (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Limited, 1977), 82.
31. Robert D. Wimmer and Joseph R. Dominick, Mass Media Research: An Introduction, 2d ed. (Belmont, Cal.: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1987), 186, stated that a reliability figure of 75 per cent or above was acceptable when using pi calculations.
32. "Milestone 50% with Hughes," Variety 18 March 1931, 4.
33. Ibid.
34. Adolphe Menjou and M. M. Musselman, It Took Nine Tailors (New York: McGraw Hill, 1948), 204.
35. Thomas, Howard Hughes, 65.
36. Clarence A. Andrews, Chicago in Story: A Literary History (Iowa City: Midwest Heritage Publishing Co., 1982), 166.
37. Marie Armstrong Hecht, My First Husband by His First Wife (Greenberg, N.Y.: privately printed, 1932), 82.
38. Thomas, Hughes, 65.
39. Undated letter from Charles MacArthur to Ben Hecht, Newberry Library, Chicago, The Ben Hecht Collection, unnumbered file of correspondence from MacArthur.
40. Pat O'Brien, The Wind at My Back: The Life and Times of Pat O'Brien (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1964), 151.

41. Ibid., 152.
42. Menjou, Nine Tailors, 203.
43. O'Brien, Wind, 145.
44. Menjou, Nine Tailors, 203.
45. O'Brien, Wind, 11.
46. Ibid., 157
47. Millichap, Milestone, 54-55.
48. Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur, The Front Page: A Play in Three Acts (New York: Samuel French Inc., 1955), 15, 17.
49. Millichap, Milestone, 56.
50. O'Brien, Wind, 144.
51. Ibid., 152.
52. Ibid., 147.
53. Ibid., 148.
54. Menjou, Nine Tailors, 203.
55. Jed Harris, A Dance on the High Wire: Recollections of a Time and a Temperament (New York: Crown Publishers, 1979), 114-123, esp. 119.
56. Gottfried, Jed Harris, 129.
57. Harris, Dance, 123.
58. Jon Tuska, ed., Close Up: The Contract Director (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1976), 347.
59. Variety, 25 March 1931, 9: " 'Man World' Going to \$65,000, Par, This Wk.: 'Front Page' \$58,000..."
60. Balio, UA, 111.
61. Ibid., 112.
62. Ibid.,
63. Review of The Front Page, Variety 25 March 1931, 17.
64. Stephen Vaughn and Bruce Evensen, "Defending Democracy: Hollywood, the Hays Office, and the Portrait of Reporters, 1930-1945" Paper presented at Midwest Regional Conference of Journalism and Mass Communication Historians, April 7, 1990 discussed the pressure put on film makers to put journalists in a positive light:

...the film showed newsmen as resourceful and censors in the Production Code Administration thought this would be pleasing since such reporters were typical "Hearst men." But the movies also linked newspaper people to crooked politicians and bolshevism. The PCA pushed Howard Hughes to show journalists as dedicated and humane. (p.11).

65. O'Brien, Wind, 153-54.

66. Unless otherwise indicated, The Front Page contemporaneous reviews quoted are from: Alexander Bakshy, "Too Much Halo," The Nation, 15 April 1931, 428, 430; Commonweal, 6 May 1931, 17; Mordaunt Hall, "A Newspaper Melodrama," New York Times, 20 March 1931, 29; "A Rowdy Film," The New Republic, 29 April 1931, 303; Time, 30 March 1931, 33; and Variety, 25 March 1931, 17.

67. Variety, 29 March 1931, 54-55.

CHAPTER 5

1940 HIS GIRL FRIDAY FINDINGS

Summary Introduction

Textual analyses of His Girl Friday, the second film version of The Front Page play, indicated the presence of seven myth elements previously identified by researchers of earlier journalism fiction. Three coding judges found the five character traits of aggressiveness, bluntness, cynicism, drinking, and unscrupulousness along with the story line of a power struggle and the occupational theme of journalism as an exciting, adventurous, and romantic career. Thus, in response to research question 1A, many of the occupational myth elements observed in earlier novels and short stories carried over into movies. However, while the motion pictures derived some of their mythology from literary antecedents, they also added new elements. Two character traits -- fraternity and an anti-academic attitude -- discovered during the textual analysis of the 1931 Front Page (but not mentioned by earlier fiction scholars) also were cited by coding judges analyzing the 1940 remake. Therefore, in answer to research question 1B, the nine myth elements cited in the first film version of The Front Page still were found in the second film, His Girl Friday, produced at the end of a decade of journalism movies. The number of instances that particular myth elements were recorded by judges conducting textual analyses vary between the two films but the overall set of seven character traits,

a story line and general theme remained constant.

Even though His Girl Friday introduced a newswoman into the heretofore all-male journalism bastion of The Front Page, her presence did not alter the overall mythic composition of the work. Also, contextual analyses of the economic and technological conditions of the mass media in the late thirties as well as the 1939 film production itself paralleled the occupational mythology found in textual analyses. Both the economic challenge of the global Depression and the competition between radio and older media contributed to the American journalism mythology of the 1940 film remake. Many of the elements found in the textual analysis seemed to have been played out in the film production. A contextual analysis of the His Girl Friday production, gleaned from a broad-based reading of biographical and historical material on the cast and crew as well as contemporaneous consumer and trade news accounts, indicated that many circumstances of the film making substantiated journalism myths depicted in the finished product. Thus, in answer to the second research question regarding contextual influences on the occupational myth making, the 1940 movie, though reincarnated with a female protagonist, maintained pre-existing mythology traced from its 1931 predecessor.

The next section discusses the actual mass media economic and technological backdrop for the construction of the American journalism mythology of the 1940 His Girl Friday. It begins with a description of the opening moments of the film that establish its connection to the 1931 movie and earlier mythic narrative devices of silent film technology while asserting its distinction from previous assumptions about journalistic labor (including gender). It concludes with an

explanation of specific economic conditions leading up to the second film, made eight years after the first movie and more than a decade after The Front Page play debuted.

Media Economic and Technological Conditions

Paying homage to the first film version and its vestige of the silent film era, His Girl Friday began with an expository title card that poked fun at the press while presumably guarding the film makers against libel:

It all happened in the dark ages of the newspaper game when to a reporter getting the story justified anything short of murder. Incidentally, you will see in the picture no resemblance to the men and women of the press today. Ready? Well, once upon a time...

Then, the movie opens, not in the familiar courthouse pressroom, but at a newspaper office where a confident woman is seen striding through a newsroom gate on her way to the inner sanctum of editor Walter Burns. She asks one of the newswriters if the "Lord of the Universe" is in. Reporter Hildegard Johnson's epithet for her former husband and boss seemed not far from the actual perceptions of newspaper executives in the thirties.

Just as the motion picture studio system created so-called movie moguls, local newspaper monopolies and duopolies produced "press lords" who exerted power and influence over their news staffs as well as the community as a whole.¹ An Editor and Publisher survey of the 1930s indicated that, while the print owners recognized that journalists were bitter about their economic situation, owners did not see themselves to blame. When polled, publishers agreed with the statements: "Editorial departments had grown cynical because of their unsuccessful competition

with the business department" and "Labor unionism smacks of class-conscious propaganda."² Clearly, newspapers were big business for the owners. In Frederick Lewis Allen's history of the thirties, he points out that city newspapers that survived the depression were interested in maintaining their profitable positions at all costs, including wage cuts for newswriters. The owner's spirited capitalism, directed at pleasing key advertisers, was not always shared by journalists:

Not that the newspaper editors and reporters were conservative by preference. Many if not most of these, in fact, were aggressive supporters of the underdog. Indeed, the decrease in the number of newspapers, the increasing use of syndicated material, and the drastic economies required by the Depression had thrown so many newspapermen out on the street that what had once been hopefully spoken of as "the profession of journalism" had become one of the most crowded and ill-paid of all white-collar occupations, and the reporter might well regard himself as an underdog.³

It was a buyer's market in the journalism labor pool and many positions, formerly held by male graduates of the School of Hard Knocks, were now being filled by college-educated women.

Despite prejudice on the part of professors and potential employers, more women became newspaper editors and reporters during the 1930s than in any previous decade.⁴ Most seemed willing to take low-paying jobs in exchange for the opportunity to prove themselves and garner experience. By 1940, when His Girl Friday debuted, there were 15,890 women journalists.⁵ Journalism education researchers Maurine Beasley and Kathryn T. Theus speculated that a newswriting career was more flexible than other vocational pursuits. The scholars surmised that "perhaps it was because journalism appeared to offer the possibility of combining marriage and career that the field became increasingly popular with women in the 1930s."⁶ They said journalism faculties both feared that women would take jobs away from men and tended to dismiss the

commitment of women to long-term career goals. However, because there were low job-entry barriers to journalism and high turnover, pragmatic management was open to trying out graduates of either gender willing to endure low pay and thus, low status. Deference to male bosses was the key to women journalists' success, according to a 1941 book of career advice. The guidebook "urged graduates to let the editor think he is training you, partly as a way of letting him relive his own youth."⁷

Once working in the newsroom, women often found it difficult to convince their bosses that they were capable of covering hard news, including the county courthouse beat that Hildy Johnson handled.⁸ One researcher, Barbara Belford, explained the imposed restrictions:

Women wrote mostly feature stories rather than front-page news in their early days in the profession not because they couldn't handle other assignments but because male editors did not trust them with breaking news.⁹

But Belford noted that a double standard of performance challenged the women journalists who pioneered at papers across the country: "If she succeeds under pressure, the greatest compliment she can receive from a male editor is that her work is just like a man's."¹⁰ Yet Chicago Tribune reporter Genevieve Forbes Herrick seemed ready for the challenge as she addressed the Chicago Women's Club in 1933:

Typewriters are sexless. Let her strive to write all her news better than as many men as she can. Let her write the way the world says a man writes; not the way a man says a woman writes.¹¹

Herrick's attitude conformed to conclusions drawn by Donna Born in a study of women journalists in the 1920s and 1930s. Born found them to be "strong, intelligent, courageous professionals ... unfaltering in their determination to be independent and to pursue careers."¹²

Writing in the thirties, Stanley Walker, New York Herald Tribune

city editor, did not think most women could handle the demands of crime reporting but he did concede that some newswomen had proved their worth on the hard news beat. Walker grudgingly seemed to admire "... the tabloid women reporters who know tricks that would make the ordinary man reporter dizzy."¹³ He even intimated that they could be as pragmatic and, perhaps, unscrupulous as newsmen in tracking down their stories. Walker said their newsgathering "isn't always cricket, but it gets the facts."¹⁴ However, for the most part, Walker said that women reporters needed to be protected from the "rough and tumble world of policemen, firemen, ambulances, gunmen, lawyers and politicians in the back room."¹⁵ Staying behind kept women from covering front page news, which to Isbel Ross was "still the critical test"¹⁶ of economic and professional progress in the 1930s. Writing as an insider during 1936, Ross described women's lowly place in the newsroom hierarchy:

On the whole, newspaper women make few demands on their city editors. They would gladly work for nothing, rather than be denied the city room. They scarcely ever fuss about their salaries, which range from \$35 to \$150 per week in large cities ... They rarely ask for increases, or complain about their fare. They work hard and have a somewhat touching faith in what they are doing. They are seldom lazy. But the highest compliment to which the deluded creatures respond is the city editor's acknowledgment that their work is just like a man's.¹⁷

While a few women reporters broke through the front page barrier, most male editors did not go out of their way to actively recruit more women journalists. As early as 1934, Walker contended that there was a surplus of women applicants "more than the traffic will bear."¹⁸ As late as 1941, a journalism textbook author stated that "the ideal newsroom should be comprised of no more than five percent women."¹⁹ The coming of the United States entry into World War II changed the domestic labor force and women journalists were in demand. As the country geared up to

switch from a consumer goods and services base to a military defense economy, the subsequent manpower shortage tipped the civilian employment scales in favor of women. Meanwhile the symbiotic relationship among American mass media, especially the pragmatic associations between newspapers and motion pictures, continued.

The Chicago Tribune was an early innovator that, in 1914, had established a daily directory of motion picture screening schedules.²⁰ Realizing the popularity of certain actors and features, newspapers began to cover Hollywood entertainment as news and printed the serial narratives of movies, offering prizes to build circulation. During the 1920s, newspapers started sending reporters to sit in the dark all day and critique the local movie fare. Carl Sandburg, while working for the Chicago Daily News, became the first regular bylined newspaper reviewer of photoplays.²¹ But by 1931, the term "film criticism" came into common usage²² and motion picture reviewing was no longer considered "journalism's illegitimate brother."²³ Ben Hecht's first wife, Marie Armstrong, whom he met when they worked at Hearst's Chicago American, was typical of this new breed of specialized journalists. She began as a campus correspondent for her Chicago university and worked for both radio and print media before becoming the moving picture critic for the Chicago Journal.²⁴ By 1939, there were enough journalists like her to form the Newspaper Film Critics of America.²⁵

Perhaps the most famous journalist to cover Hollywood was one who was born there -- Adela Rogers St. Johns, of whom it was said many women movie reporters were based, including Hildegarde Johnson of His Girl Friday.²⁶ She had gone to work for Hearst's San Francisco Examiner in 1919 and through the years became celebrated for her coverage of such

typically male bastions as police news and sports.²⁷ By the mid 1930s, at least four radio serials featured women reporters, including one entitled "Jane Arden," based on a newspaper comic strip.²⁸

Given the harsh economic realities of the thirties, the Assembly of the League of Nations admonished the International Labor Organization to "examine ... discriminations ... detrimental to women's right to work."²⁹ Film historian Marjorie Rosen contended that the global mandate trickled down to Hollywood as the "reporter-working girl genre" movie increased in the last half of the decade as a means to promote more employment equality.³⁰ During the late thirties, women, including journalists, steeled themselves for battles to get work and hang on to it. Another film historian noted that this period marked a "transition ... between overly sexual women of the early thirties films toward cynical, disillusioned, less erotic, less threatening buddy ..."³¹ Economic efficiency did not allow for romantic distractions between co-workers. Therefore, the Hildegard Johnson character would have been the epitome of the Depression-weary worker who no longer had to prove her worth but nonetheless exuded a professional attitude while performing extraordinary tasks. At the end of the decade, Hollywood was doing everything it could to attract moviegoers and keep the dream factory open and running.

Film historian Otto Friedrich observed that "the most remarkable thing about Hollywood in 1939: how successful it was."³² His view was not shared by the leading industry trade paper. Variety's front page description of general financial conditions in 1939 seemed much dimmer: "A static condition on sales ... to the general uncertainties ... the delay on the trade practice code, the bickering over terms ... on the

new ... pictures ..."³³ Making movies was a risky business, despite the economies of scale brought on by the studio system. Moguls were wary of what the 1939-40 film season held. Also, money may not have been the only thing in short supply that season. The November 15, 1939 Variety article was headlined, "Dearth of Film Story Material Noted."³⁴ Therefore, given the film industry's preference for "a movie that resembles others for which the public has already shown a liking,"³⁵ remakes were popular ways to fill out film production schedules.

During the thirties, Warner Brothers was credited with pioneering the so-called "newspaper movie" genre, films set in cities and featuring stock characters from the world of urban journalism.³⁶ Scenery, story lines, and actors were recycled to maximize profits and take advantage of the studio's efficiency of scale in producing these weekly feature films. As film historian John Izod noted: "The industry (which had always repeated its successes) found in modified repetition another important device for stabilizing income. Genre, formula movies, and cycles all became elements in studio output."³⁷ So it must have seemed natural for struggling studios to turn to a tried and true way to make money -- remakes. The first film version of The Front Page had turned a profit. The stage versions had been revived at least twice.³⁸ Because of these factors, pragmatic movie executives, no doubt, reasoned they could not go wrong by following the oft-quoted adage, "Imitation is the sincerest form of box office."³⁹

Columbia Pictures, one of the minor studios, needed just such a box office hit. The company had started as a storefront studio on so-called "Poverty Row" but it did not want to finish the decade living up to its location. By 1939, Columbia's profits had fallen to \$2,000 from

a peak of \$1.8 million four years earlier.⁴⁰ Clearly, the company could have used another commercial and critical smash like its 1934 Academy Award-winning It Happened One Night, featuring a newspaper reporter and a wisecracking woman. Columbia Pictures' logo of a torch-bearing woman draped in the American flag on a pedestal seemed a fitting symbol. The studio would lead the way to a return of profitability, on the eve of World War II, with a film blending the decade's most popular (and democratic) movie occupation with the women's picture genre. A trade advertisement in Variety promoted the hybrid appeal of His Girl Friday: "Imagine the wild woman of The Women and the reckless lover of The Awful Truth ganging up on your patrons!"⁴¹ By employing the "same but different" film formula that helped allay audience doubt or anxiety, studio head Harry Cohn hoped His Girl Friday would pay off, as he desperately needed a winner.

Cohn, the only movie mogul to be both a president and production chief, was known for doing things in the most inexpensive way possible. As studio historian Bernard Dick observed, Cohn's production strategies were quite efficient: "... short-term contracts, tight budgets, and limiting directors to one take of a scene for printing and viewing ... proved it was possible to produce art on the cheap."⁴² After an economic slump in the late thirties, Cohn showed his business savvy with a change in policy from production of "B" movies, the shorter features that came second on a double bill, to better quality movies.⁴³ Film historian David Cook explained that Cohn's change succeeded:

Columbia's staple product was the low-budget co-features, but Cohn had a policy of hiring, for single pictures, stars who were temporarily disaffected from their regular studios, and he managed to produce a number of first-class films in this manner including His Girl Friday.⁴⁴

Cohn had director Howard Hawks under contract and accepted Hawks' story pitch about the gender twist in the remake of The Front Page. Hawks ended up working on the script with Charles Lederer, who had apprenticed on the 1931 version by providing additional dialogue, and Ben Hecht, who was Lederer's mentor. Working within the confines of a typically fast schedule, Columbia was reported to be shooting His Girl Friday as of October 1939.⁴⁵ By December 27, Variety reported "the picture now in cutting room or awaiting release."⁴⁶ It premiered January 18, 1940.

Section Summary

His Girl Friday reflected the economic and technological challenges facing American mass media during the late thirties. The Depression challenged newspapers and motion picture companies to keep audiences informed and entertained while still turning a profit. Further, the older media were employing technological innovations, spurred by the popularity of radio, to keep their market share. Across the spectrum of media, both owners and workers demonstrated aggressive, anti-academic, blunt, cynical, sometimes fraternal and unscrupulous character traits as they competed in power struggles between management and labor and promoted romantic allusions about their occupations.

The narrative explanation employed in the section began with a discussion of the movie's title card and establishing shot in the newspaper office of a bold woman reporter. It discussed the emergence of formal college training in journalism and the pragmatic business decisions to employ more college-educated women in news organizations. It concluded with a return to specific conditions leading up to the

production of the second Front Page film that seemed to portend the economic shift to more women workers when the United States entered World War II.

The next section addresses each of the nine myth elements individually. Aggressive, anti-academic, blunt, cynical, drinker, fraternal and unscrupulous character traits along with the power struggle story line and romantic vocation theme will be described, both in terms of the actual textual analysis and specific references within the film. Further, the elements will be discussed through a contextual analysis of film production circumstances that paralleled the occupational mythology played out on screen.

Myth Element Analyses

This section includes both the summary of the textual analyses of His Girl Friday and the contextual analyses of its production including descriptive evidence of circumstances surrounding the film making that indicated substantiation of the occupational mythology. The analyses were performed in order to answer research questions about what myths were found and what contextual conditions may have contributed to the myths changing or staying the same. Specifically, the textual analysis was designed to answer question 1A: Do these myths vary from myths already identified in earlier fiction? and 1B: Do the myths vary among the four films? and 2B: Did any circumstances of the film production substantiate any myths portrayed? (Question 1B will be answered cumulatively with each subsequent remake compared to previous versions. A full review and discussion are in Chapter 8.)

The textual analysis was done by me initially and then

corroborated by two other coders. After I had done a preliminary analysis of the movie and found evidence of all seven myth elements previously identified by journalism film researchers as well as two new character traits, I refined my study protocol and recruited two other judges. Both the judges had seen His Girl Friday at least once prior to this analysis and set about independently to code for myth elements after acceptable levels of intercoder reliability were reached in a pilot study.⁴⁷

The tables accompanying discussion of the textual analysis of the individual myth elements summarize all three judges' findings. The tables indicate the approximate place in the tape where the manifestations of the myth elements were cited along with a brief narrative description of the particular sight or sound. The last column, entitled intercoder agreement, indicates the number of coders who noted a particular myth manifestation. The agreement is expressed as a single coder notation (33 percent), two-coder verification of the same instance (67 percent), and full agreement among all three coders on a particular film reference (100 percent).

The contextual production circumstances relating to each particular myth element are presented in descriptive narrative form. The contextual evidence was culled from a wide spectrum of historical sources including biographies, studio records, consumer and trade news accounts and advertisements as well as correspondence files and a copy of the revised final film script dated September 26, 1939.

The myth element findings begin with a general summary of the textual analysis in narrative form, followed by tables indicating the specific references to the elements cited by the coding judges. The

discussion of each element ends with an examination of evidence of any contextual circumstances of the film production that may have contributed to the journalism myths found in the movie itself.

Aggressive

Coding judges found twenty-one instances of the aggressive character trait in their textual analyses of His Girl Friday (see Table 10). As operationally defined, the aggressive myth element (including hard-fighting, driven and ambitious character traits) was characterized by bold actions and physical movements as well as dialogue regarding combative readiness, compelling urgency of tasks and a strong-minded desire to compete and succeed. All three coders cited nine of those manifestations while two of the three coders agreed on four other instances. Eight other manifestations were cited by only one coder.

TABLE 10.-- AGGRESSIVE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time		Description	Inter-coder Agreement
Start	Duration		
00:01:49	:05	Johnson walks through newsroom gate, tells staff "I'll blow my own horn;" charges into Burns' office.	33%
:03:45	:05	Burns emphatically points finger to ceiling about politics.	67%
:12:00	:50	Burns puts hands on Johnson who tells him to get away; she throws purse at him.	67%
:15:06	:02	At restaurant, Burns sits where Baldwin intended.	33%
:22:60	:01:40	Johnson negotiates with Burns to buy insurance policy if she does story.	33%
:26:18	:10	Johnson gets excited when firebell goes off; she identifies its location.	100%
:39:31	:05	Johnson runs out of pressroom to rescue Bruce in jail.	100%
:40:04	:07	Bensinger asks that hanging be moved up for his deadline.	33%
:41:54	:16	Johnson rushes out of cab, bumps in- to passerby on way back to pressroom.	33%
:42:00	:03:20	Johnson confronts reporters; says she overheard them talk about her and then yells at Walter on phone, tears up copy and throws phone away.	67%
:45:39	:31	After gunfire and alarms sound, reporters rush to phone their offices; Johnson throws off coat, chases source down street; executes tackle.	100%
:47:26	:02:44	All reporters rush back to pressroom to phone in updates; then run back out when more gunfire while Johnson runs in, closes door to guard her "exclusive."	100%

Table 10 (Cont'd)

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
00:52:20	:01:80	Johnson wants to yell at Burns; reporters rush out of pressroom after mayor and sheriff	100%
:57:50	:01:50	Johnson yells at Louis about "mashing" frame-up; demands fiance's wallet and threatens him with jail.	67%
:00:09	:04:66	Johnson takes gun away from escapee Williams; pulls shade, runs to phone and carries on two conversations When knock at door, she puts him in desk. Other reporters run in, badger her and then Molloy.	100%
01:05:53	:20	All reporters run to see if Molloy is alive after leap.	100%
01:06:30	:05:50	In pressroom, Burns grabs Johnson and tells her to write the story; she starts typing, rips out paper; writes the story; runs, puts on hat, moves, picks up typewriter, rips paper out while Burns is on phone barking orders to tear up the front page for scoop.	100%
01:14:29	:11	Bensinger asks Burns about becoming foreign correspondent as long as he's making offer.	33%
01:16:00	:50	Johnson grabs disheveled Louis, asks about Mrs. Baldwin then frantically starts calling hospitals.	33%
01:18:35	:06:00	Other reporters grab Johnson as she runs to find Mrs. Grant; Burns tells sheriff to get out and Johnson throws gun to Burns. When taps are heard on desk, reporters grab their phones for next update on Williams' capture.	100%
01:28:45	:03	Johnson runs back to answer phone as reluctantly leaves pressroom.	33%

Aggressive Contextual Production Conditions

It does not take much imagination to see Columbia studio mogul Harry Cohn as the aggressive Walter Burns to all who worked for him. Film historian Neal Gabler said Cohn "ran Columbia like a private police state ... He was tough, feared, ruthless, and courageous."⁴⁸ When director Howard Hawks went in to pitch his idea for a female Hildy Johnson, Cohn at first rejected it but then was persuaded because Hawks stood up to him and argued his case persuasively.⁴⁹ (It probably did not hurt that the studio needed new material and could not afford to reject everything outright). Gabler contended that "Cohn seemed to love a good tussle ... tension was the catalyst in his distinctive artistic presence."⁵⁰

Cohn's hard-fighting style seemed compatible with that of his employees under contract. Director Howard Hawks was good at "goading his stars into throwing it (His Girl Friday) off like a charade overlapping their lines and battling via jest."⁵¹ Hawks sometimes threatened his actors to get them to perform at the frantic pace certain scenes demanded. The director said: "Actors don't usually jump on one another's line ... so I told them that I'd fire them if they didn't."⁵²

One biographer of Cary Grant, who played Walter Burns, noted that aggression was encouraged on the set. Grant related how Hawks goaded him to shove Rosalind Russell harder than he had been. The biographer related Hawks insistence on aggression: "Grant demurred that he didn't 'want to kill the woman.' Hawks though that over for a moment before he said, 'Try killin' 'er.'"⁵³

Rosalind Russell, who was loaned out to Columbia from Metro Goldwyn Mayer, knew she was not the first choice to play the female

Hildy. According to a Cohn biographer, the studio head foisted the actress on a reluctant Hawks.⁵⁴ Sensing this, Russell feistily appeared for her first meeting with the director still damp from a poolside drip (dress and all). This is how the hard-fighting actress remembered the confrontational encounter with Hawks:

I was always so sassy, it seems to me, so unattractive, now that I think about it. Hawks came out, did a triple take ... "You didn't want me for this, did you?" I said. (Besides being sassy, I was forever assaulting some guy -- Bill Powell, Howard Hawks -- with the news that he really hadn't wanted me.)⁵⁵

Her defiant stance must have worked, for he hired her and told her to go to wardrobe for proper costuming as the star reporter in a pin-striped suit, "kind of hard-boiled looking."⁵⁶

Anti-Academic

Coders cited two manifestations of an anti-academic character trait operationally defined as making fun of college educated and disparaging theorists (see Table 11). The trait in movie journalists might be manifest in speech or gestures directed toward experts and those with book learning but little practical, on-the-job training or common sense. All three judges coded the same two instances, thus reaching full agreement on the presence of that myth element in His Girl Friday.

TABLE 11.-- ANTI-ACADEMIC TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
00:08:46	:02	Editor Burns tells Johnson: "What were you when you came here five years ago? A little college girl from a School of from a School of Journalism! ... I made a reporter out of you!"	100%
:24:21	:01:44	Bensinger carries a book under his arm; when he calls in story about alienist Eggelhofer, reporter Endicott says, "Eggelhofer went to Washington to interview the Brain Trust and gave out a statement that they were sane."	100%

Anti-Academic Contextual Production Conditions

Information collected on the film's production indicated no evidence of an anti-academic attitude.

Blunt

Coders cited twenty-one manifestations of the blunt character trait that included rude, rough, and boorish behavior (see Table 12). The occupational myth element was operationally defined as crudeness, brusqueness and unruliness that an average citizen might consider offensive, obnoxious, discourteous, and ill-mannered. All three coders cited the same eleven instances of blunt behavior or references to it while two of the three coders agreed with each other on five other citations. Single coders found five additional manifestations.

TABLE 12.-- BLUNT TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
00:02:30	:05	Johnson walks into Burns' office without knocking.	33%
:02:50	:35	Burns dismisses Duffy's attention with "I'm busy."	67%
:03:42	:58	Johnson asks Burns if he minds if she sits down and he points to his lap; she sits on the desk; she asks for a cigarette and match which Burns throws at her	100%
:05:41	:06	Burns reminds Johnson he tried to thwart divorce by hiring plan to carry sign, "Hildy, don't be hasty. Remember my dimple!"	67%
:12:42	:58	As they leave office, Burns doesn't open door, take off hat or walk behind Johnson	100%
:14:00	:20	Burns insults Johnson by mistaking older man for fiancé; makes fun of Baldwin and insurance business.	100%
:18:45	:03	At restaurant, Burns refers to Johnson's mother "kicking the bucket."	33%
:23:07	:04	Burns leaves Johnson struggling with arm of coat not yet on.	67%
:26:30	:05	Reporter shouts down to hanging crew to keep the noise down.	67%
:39:45	:35	Reporters mock sheriff; call him "Pinky" and "B" for "Bull."	100%
:42:58	:02:02	Johnson calls Burns a baboon and a chimpanzee.	67%
:53:00	:57	Reporters ask mayor insulting questions about Williams' escape.	100%
:57:40	:47	Johnson insults Louis by calling his girlfriend an "albino."	33%

Table 12 (Cont'd)

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
01:02:59	:45	Reporters have crude repartee about someone hiding in a woman's piazza.	100%
01:05:56	:04	Burns tells Mrs. Baldwin to shut up.	100%
01:06:50	:10	Burns tells Johnson they have the city by the seat of its pants.	33%
01:17:00	:30	Burns insults Butch's girlfriend; makes fun of language.	33%
01:17:32	:03	Johnson tells Burns to shut up as she's checking on Mrs. Baldwin.	100%
01:21:00	:01:00	Burns insults Mrs. Baldwin.	100%
01:24:00	:50	Johnson mocks the sheriff, tells mayor she'll "pull his nose out of the feedbag."	100%
01:30:40	:05	Burns walks in front of Johnson, who ends up carrying her own suitcase.	100%

Blunt Contextual Production Conditions

Characteristics of Harry Cohn emerge as models for the bluntness manifest in His Girl Friday. Film historian Neal Gabler described the studio head as "unbearably crude, profane."⁵⁷ His swearing was legendary.

One film scholar, Ethan Mordden, contended that the production of His Girl Friday, which he classified as a "screwball comedy," would not have been as successful under other studio conditions. He described the genre as "basically unruly and even a subversive form" that matched the studio style "disorderly by Hollywood standards, cheap ..."⁵⁸ Columbia's policy of tight budgets, shooting schedules and single takes

led to a more realistic-looking movie with its rough edges showing.

Film scholar Gerald Mast related Hawks' philosophy about the inevitable cinematic production errors.

The secret of making movies which have a natural ring...is to let the mistakes of rehearsals be apparent in the finished print ... If a muffled line, or a carpet flip get a reaction from the players around and the electricians on the set, be sure that you get the same ostensibly unstudied effect in the "take."... If my players are good enough -- and I try always to get that sort --... I let them interpret their scenes their own way and ad lib if they like ...⁵⁹

Comments of Cary Grant seem to support this liberty the actors were allowed to be impolite, to break in on dialogue and to step on each other's lines. Grant said His Girl Friday, with its blunt traits of the journalists, was a departure from the usual way he was directed to act: "Rosalind Russell and I were constantly interrupting each other. The sound men would say, 'We can't hear you' and we'd say, 'well, you're not supposed to hear us. People do interrupt each other, you know.'"⁶⁰

Cynical

Coders found fifteen manifestations of the cynical character trait (see Table 13). The journalism myth element was operationally defined as believing all people are motivated by selfishness and ranging from distrustful doubt to overall contempt for humankind. It was manifest in sneering and scornful facial expressions in response to statements about others' sincerity and benevolence as well as sarcastic statements, bitter mocking of others, general faultfinding and pessimism. There was full agreement among all three judges on seven instances of the cynical trait, while one other manifestation was cited by two of the coders. Seven instances were coded by only a single judge.

TABLE 13.-- CYNICAL TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
00:02:17	:02	In opening scene, lovelorn columnist tells of new kittens; Johnson says it's her own fault.	33%
:08:29	:59	When Burns pretends to phone Sweeney and feigns dismay, Johnson asks skeptically, "What's the matter, Walter? Dead?"	33%
:10:00	:36	Johnson delivers her diatribe against journalism to Burns.	100%
:19:15	:05	Baldwin says that Burns has charm, to which Johnson replies, "His grandfather was a snake."	100%
:22:55	:06	When Johnson doubts Burns' sincerity, he asks, "Do you want my fingerprints?" to which she replies, "Never mind, I already have those."	33%
:24:44	:36	In the pressroom, a reporter is heard calling in "more slop on the hanging."	33%
:25:48	:02:02	Reporters tease Johnson about marriage and family: "Can you picture Hildy hanging out didies?"	100%
:34:45	:02:08	In the pressroom, reporters practice gallows humor; tell Mollie that Williams "left a wake-up call for 7 a.m." and "a pain in the neck."	100%
:38:50	:03	Johnson sarcastically refers to colleagues as "gentlemen of the press."	100%
:39:00	:40	Reporters mock Johnson's marriage, then sheriff's "law and order" ticket; don't think he's as sane as Williams	100%
:48:06	:24	When reporters run out of pressroom after more gunfire, one says, "There goes another scrubwoman;" they speculate that maybe sheriff released him so he could go vote.	33%
:52:40	:02	When mayor asks reporters if they've seen the sheriff, one says, "Hard to say, there have been so many cockroaches around."	33%

Table 13 (Cont'd)

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
01:05:31	7:12	Burns is unimpressed by Mollie's leap; tells Johnson she can have a "drooling idiot wedding anytime"	33%
01:14:53	:01:29	When Burns learns that Mrs. Baldwin was in accident, he asks hopefully if she was killed. He tells a grieving Johnson, "Snap out of it, would you rather have her squawking to the police?" Burns is contemptuous of Butch's girlfriend and when Duffy can't be reached he says, "I ought to know better than to hire anyone with a disease."	100%
01:18:18	:07:18	Reporters suspect Johnson of holding out on them; Johnson mocks sheriff and Burns, smirks at Mrs. Baldwin as she accuses him; Johnson tells mayor, "Oh, you'd hang your own mother to get reelected."	67%

Cynical Contextual Production Conditions

The adjective "cynical" was commonly used by film scholars to describe the outlook of the studio executive, the director and his writers. Gabler contended that Harry Cohn's "flagrant contempt" and his cynicism were armaments of anger.⁶¹ Cohn was not impressed by supposed politeness and benevolence many expected from captains of industry. Believing that everyone was motivated by selfishness, Cohn operated "by stripping down the dynamics of class into a kind of vicious Darwinism,"⁶² according to Gabler. Ben Hecht, who called Cohn "White Fang" and did not trust him enough to be paid for script work in anything but daily cash, worked on His Girl Friday with Charles Lederer

and director Hawks. Hecht and Hawks, particularly, shared jaded views of the world. A Hecht biographer noted their compatibility. "Since Hawks's ... personal cynicism about sex, wealth and fame were in tune with the script and with Hecht's views theirs was a comfortable and productive collaboration."⁶³ Film scholar Louis Giannetti supported that observation of mutual cynicism:

The legendary wit of ex-newspaperman Hecht, who collaborated on at least eight Hawks films, appealed strongly to the director's cynical side. Hecht's sense of humor was brazenly malicious and sardonic. He was delighted in satirizing hick values and conventional morality ... Hecht ... helped create several of Hawks's ... Machiavellian schemes, like the monstres sacres [wily monsters] of ... His Girl Friday.⁶⁴

And Lederer, who was responsible for much of the script, was fond of mocking, just like his mentor Hecht. Giannetti noted that "Lederer's specialty was deflating pomposity with a well-placed wise crack."⁶⁵ No one seemed to escape his ridicule, including William Randolph Hearst. Even though his aunt Marion Davies was Hearst's mistress, Lederer and another screenwriter, Herman Mankiewicz, "wrote and had printed parodies of Hearst newspapers to amuse the publisher and Marion."⁶⁶

While all this playful contempt was going on, Hecht's original collaborator on The Front Page sat out their successful remake His Girl Friday. Around the time the screenplay was being worked on at Hawks' home, Charles MacArthur sent Hecht a letter laced with cynicism. MacArthur seemed bitter about his usurpation as Hecht's chief writing partner, as evidenced by the correspondence riddled with sarcasm:

I've been conning the communiques and come to this conclusion. You and the dauphin seem to have the situation well in hand. The changes sound rational and M. Lederer's dialogue sparkles like old Burgundy. I am not sidestepping (not much) but my faith in you and your pint-sized assistant is such that I feel and so do the people at large that you girls can carry on without any quibbling from me.⁶⁷

A cynical Rose Hecht noted on the back of the telegram, which was not signed, "Hawks, or guess who else, must have bought up Front Page option from Columbia, gratis, of course, ah friendship."⁶⁸ (A Time review of His Girl Friday noted that Hawks bought the rights for \$35,000.)⁶⁹

Drinker

Coders cited two instances of the drinker character trait in the 1940 film. Evidence of the occupational myth element was operationally defined to include talking about plans to drink alcoholic beverages as well as to quit or resist temptation. In addition to actual drinking, film references included props or the mere sound of glasses, bottles or ice; scenes set in bars or restaurants and songs associated with bars and drinking. One manifestation was cited by all three judges while one other was coded by two judges.

TABLE 14.-- DRINKER TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Start	Time Duration	Description	Intercoder Agreement
00:07:58	:02	Burns claims he was "tight" the night he and Johnson got engaged	67%
:17:53	:08	Burns and Johnson both order coffee with rum (at the urging of the waiter, because "It's a cold day")	100%

Drinker Contextual Production Conditions

Perhaps because Prohibition had been repealed with the enactment of the 21st Amendment six years earlier, the Pollack Mike's speakeasy

scene in the 1931 film was dropped in the second film version of The Front Page. Also, a stage direction indicating Burns giving a flask to Johnson, who takes a drink, was dropped after the revised final script, dated September 26, 1939, was printed.⁷⁰

Fraternal

Coders cited seven manifestations of the fraternal trait of American journalism mythology in His Girl Friday (see Table 15). As operationally defined, fraternal meant being part of a closed circle of persons linked by similar duties, shared backgrounds and common occupation. It was manifest in visual images of physical proximity and familiarity including reacting en masse or sitting with a sense of social conviviality. The definition also included dialogue referring to off-limits exclusiveness of space from outsiders and clannish differentiation from non-news workers. All three coders noted the same four citations while a pair of judges noted two more references with a single coder finding one other instance.

TABLE 15.-- FRATERNAL TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
00:10:01	:03	Burns tells Johnson, "You're a newspaperman." Johnson replies, "That's why I'm quitting. I want to go some place where I can be a woman"	100%
:23:07	:04	At restaurant, Johnson agrees to do story and says, "I'll step into some working clothes and hop over to the pressroom. It'll be kind of fun to see the boys again, too."	100%
:25:10	:02:07	Johnson greets "boys in the pressroom" with familiarity; in cooperative spirit, they fill her in on the Williams case for her final story; all have on hats and suits.	100%
:35:25	:40	Reporters fantasize about having curvaceous secretaries; gesture about shape.	67%
:34:14	:01:02	After she leaves, reporters express disbelief that she'll stay away. Schwartz says "Hildy's a newspaperman."	33%
01:11:17	:02	When Burns comes to pressroom and Johnson starts to type story, she refers to herself as a "newspaperman."	100%
01:18:50	:33	When the other reporters confront her, both they and the sheriff call her by her last name.	67%

Fraternal Contextual Production Conditions

Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur had written The Front Page at a time when female newspaper reporters were rare and resented. His Girl Friday transformed their all-male news fraternity into a mixed gender league. But some of Hecht's lingering misogyny about newswomen seemed to end up in the script. Hecht's diatribe on "girl reporters," mentioned in the novel written by his first wife, whom he had met when they were both reporters in Chicago, sounded quite similar to the bit of dialogue which ended up in His Girl Friday:

Hecht:

"They are all nuisances. Most of them sit waiting for some man to pay them attention. They have just one idea in the back of their silly heads -- to catch a man and either marry him or seduce him in one way or another.⁷¹

Burns and Johnson:

B: I took a little doll-faced mugg --

J: You wouldn't have taken me if I hadn't been doll-faced.

B: Why should I? I thought it would be a novelty to have a face around here a man could look at without shuddering. It would have worked if you'd been satisfied with just being editor and reporter. But no! You had to marry me and spoil everything.

J: ... I suppose I proposed to you!

B: Well, you practically did!

Making goo-goo eyes at me for two years until I broke down.

Script changes deleted pressroom actions of Hildy Johnson, including noticing a run in her stockings and changing into a new pair in front of the other reporters, and later sitting down to play poker and winning the game.⁷²

While the script presented Johnson as an admired equal of her reporting colleagues, the title of the film referred to a female employee with a great variety of responsibilities but seemingly more clerical in nature than Hildegard's role. Though the title might be a twist on Daniel Defoe's "Man Friday" character in Robinson Crusoe, film analyst Stanley Cavell observed that a radio serial of the late 1930s, "Our Gal Sunday," might have been the real inspiration: "a `story about a girl from a small mining town in the West (a doll-faced hick?) which asks the question whether she can find happiness with a rich and titled Englishman."⁷³ As it turned out, the fraternity of British exiles working in the movie colony helped turn the radio story into reality for Rosalind Russell. Cary Grant's houseguest during the film was fellow Englishman Frederick Brisson. Grant arranged for the two to date and they married shortly after filming His Girl Friday.

Another film reviewer surmised that the film title was derived from a frequent phrase of Walter Winchell, syndicated radio and newspaper commentator of the 1930s.⁷⁴ Once when he got stuck for material to fill his column, he adapted his secretary's daily reports on phone calls and upcoming events. The "My Girl Friday" column became a regular fixture in the New York Daily Mirror and, while readers thought the column was actually penned by his secretary, Winchell used the ploy to good advantage:

Winchell was able to use his secretary's voice to express thing it was not seemly for him to say. Thus he could print retractions and apologies in the form of a memo from the secretary, rather than embarrass himself by making them. He could also record his scoops and reprint words of praise of Walter Winchell with less accusation of immodesty.⁷⁵

Winchell took credit for gathering all the information for the column and shared none of the glory with his assistant. In contrast, the 1940 film depicted the male managing editor and fellow reporters praising Hildy's reportorial abilities. Therefore, the title seemed rather misleading and demeaning for someone considered a journalistic peer, regardless of gender.

Unscrupulous

Judges cited twenty five instances of the unscrupulous myth element in their textual analysis of His Girl Friday (see Table 16). The occupational trait was operationally defined as contemptuous of what is right and honorable manifest in actions or speech indicating lying, cheating, double crossing, stealing and other violations of the law. Coders revealed eleven citations in common while ten instances were cited by two coders and four manifestations were cited by single judges.

TABLE 16.-- UNSCRUPULOUS TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
:00:02	:15	Title card hints at questionable practices: "Getting the story justified anything short of murder."	33%
:08:20	:01:50	Burns pretends Duffy is reporter Sweeney to deceive Johnson and get her to cover hanging.	100%
:10:29	:25	Johnson tells Burns that reporters peek through keyholes and steal pictures.	67%
:18:16	:01:30	Burns makes water spill look accidental so he can get Johnson to do story via faked phone call.	67%
:21:23	:47	Burns lies that Sweeney had twins, but Johnson remembers that Sweeney was newlywed.	100%
:23:30	:26	Johnson warns Baldwin about Burns; tells him not to pay restaurant tab; Burns takes Baldwin's change for tip.	33%
:29:06	:10	Burns sheds mock tears to make Baldwin think he is sincere.	67%
:30:00	:01:40	After Johnson lies to Baldwin about reporter folklore of putting check in hat brim, Burns has Louis follow Baldwin to steal dubious check back.	33%
:32:18	:20	Johnson bribes jailer to get Williams interview.	100%
:35:08	:08	Reporters recall Burns' treatment of Fenton who tried to go to Hollywood: thrown in jail.	67%
:36:00	:12	Prostitute Molloy accuses reporters of lying about her relationship with Williams.	33%
:39:00	:35	Johnson, rescuing Baldwin from jail, threatens to blackmail if he's not released.	67%
:41:48	:01:33	Reporters read Johnson story she left in typewriter; Bensinger says it's not ethical to read, then he is accused of graft through commercial plugs in his copy.	67%

Table 16 (Cont'd)

Tape Time Start	Duration	Description	Intercoder Agreement
:43:00	:41	Taking no chances, Johnson tears up her copy and tells Burns she never agreed to deliver story, just write.	67%
:48:50	:10	Johnson bribed source to get scoop on Williams' escape.	100%
:49:10	:10	Burns lies to Johnson that he will reimburse her. He: "I swear on my mother's grave." She: "She's still alive."	100%
:50:20	:33	Burns plans to frame Baldwin with woman and sends Louis to pressroom with counterfeit money.	100%
:51:40	:01:02	Johnson gets call from Baldwin about mashing charge; realizes it is Louis' girlfriend in set up; criticizes Louis for his actions.	100%
:57:51	:01:48	Johnson lies to Molloy, initially, about Williams' whereabouts.	67%
01:02:41	:19	Reporters ask Johnson about Williams; she feigns ignorance. They suspect deceit and she lies about Mrs. Baldwin's comments.	100%
01:06:00	:10	Burns has instructed Louis to kidnap Mrs. Baldwin.	100%
01:09:45	:08	Burns double checks to see that Baldwin still has counterfeit money.	67%
01:13:20	:01:25	Burns offers Bensinger a job to get rid of him, then calls Duffy and tells him to fire him when he gets there; Johnson calls Burns a double crosser.	100%
01:15:45	:55	Burns blames Louis for losing Mrs. Baldwin.	100%
01:16:45	:01:29	Burns yells at Butch and says Butch can't double cross him.	67%

Unscrupulous Contextual Production Conditions

Screenwriter Charles Lederer had a reputation for only pretending to work, which probably explained why Hawks had him come to his Palm Springs residence (away from Hollywood temptations) to knock out the script in eleven weeks.⁷⁶ A film historian noted that Lederer, who was fired from several studios, was clever in his deceit:

He would drive in through the studio gates at an early hour, wave to the guard at the gate, enter his ground-floor office and within minutes, climb out the window. Then he would spend the day at his favorite pub or tennis club ... returning in the late afternoon the same way and impressing everyone with his industry.⁷⁷

He struck a delicate balance between being forthright about an upcoming movie on Hearst and betraying confidences. Lederer told Hearst about a script Herman Mankiewicz wrote that Orson Welles was preparing to shoot later in 1940 as Citizen Kane.⁷⁸ Four months after His Girl Friday opened to good reviews, Lederer married Welles' ex-wife, Virginia. Hecht, for his part, told Mankiewicz, who was upset about having to share co-authorship of the script with Welles, to "take the ten grand and double-cross the son of a bitch."⁷⁹ Walter Burns could not have said it better.

Power Struggle

Coders found five manifestations of the power struggle story line in His Girl Friday (see Table 17). Operationally defined as a conflict between the journalist and the news executive over control of the journalist's life decisions including marriage, relocation and career change. All three judges cited the same coding reference only once with two judges agreeing on two other citations and single coders citing two other instances.

TABLE 17.-- POWER STRUGGLE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
00:12:30	:10	Johnson doesn't want Burns to meet her fiance; when he dares her, she retorts, "It won't do any good."	33%
:43:17	:19	Johnson tries to gain upper hand by tearing up copy of interview	100%
:52:09	:07	Burns, who is available when she calls with news, is suspiciously unavailable by phone when she calls to complain about Baldwin frame-up.	33%
01:06:29	:01:20	In trying to get Johnson to write story, Burns declares "This is war! Don't desert me now." He says, "The movies and radio will be after you ..." which, if true, would take her away from him once again.	67%
01:27:15	:03:25	Burns uses reverse psychology to get Johnson to stay. She cries, something Burns says he's never seen her do.	67%

Power Struggle Contextual Production Conditions

Unlike many directors who were dependent on the studio system as their sole source of income, Howard Hawks was independently wealthy thanks to an inheritance from his family of paper manufacturers. He found the role of contract director constricting, and film scholar Jon Tuska reported that after 1929 Hawks negotiated to retain control of his films whether he worked with studios or individuals:

The fact that he didn't have to depend on directing for a living and that he had extraordinary talent for making financially successful pictures combined to provide him an enviable degree of artistic freedom.⁸⁰

Nevertheless, Hawks told an interviewer that it was a struggle to convince Columbia executive Harry Cohn to underwrite His Girl Friday

because he was "opposed to a remake and the change to a girl reporter."⁸¹

The final film incorporated several changes made after the revised final script was typed regarding the relationship between reporter and editor. Most notable was the deletion of a final scene involving a shotgun marriage in Burns' office with Louis sticking a gun in the ribs of a reluctant Johnson as the journalists are remarried. When she glanced at a newspaper headline lying on the desk, she noticed that her former fiancé had been arrested once again for passing counterfeit money. A furious Johnson was last seen throwing her bag at Burns and smashing the glass-paneled door to his office as she chased him around the table. The judge got the last word on the power struggle, noting, "I think it's going to work out all right this time."⁸²

Romantic Vocation

Judges found five instances of the overall mythic theme of journalism as romantic, exciting, and adventurous (see Table 18). The theme was manifest in scenes involving intense dramatic action and danger as well as chaotic noise like shouting, bells, alarms and gunfire. Film dialogue was included that referred to the romance of the vocation and alluded to journalism as a noble pursuit. All three coders agreed on two instances with two judges agreeing with each other on two other instances and single coders citing one other manifestation of the theme.

TABLE 18.-- ROMANTIC VOCATION TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
00:16:35	:21	Burns and Johnson reminisce about newspaper antics at restaurant	100%
		In restaurant, she gets all excited about Williams' story; envisions front-page treatment; tells Burns to run a two-column contrasting expert evaluation with her interview showing innocence; she feels she can sway public opinion and save Williams' life.	33%
:20:30	2:00		
:35:35	:10	Reporters observe, "Did you see her when that bell went off?"	67%
		Reporter Schwartz says Johnson won't quit reporting: "She's got headlines in her veins -- the way we all have or we'd be out of these lousy jobs.	67%
:36:00	:03		
01:26:40	:25	In the pressroom, Burns and Johnson reminisce about fun they had working together. She says "We've certainly been in some swell jams."	100%

Romantic Vocation Contextual Production Conditions

Information collected on the film's production revealed no evidence of journalism as a romantic vocation.

Myth Element Summary

The three coding judges found evidence of all nine myth elements in their individual textual analyses of His Girl Friday, the second feature film based on The Front Page play. Thus, in response to the first research question, all seven American journalism myth elements identified in literary antecedents were manifest in this film version.

His Girl Friday contained the aggressive, blunt, cynical, drinker and unscrupulous character traits along with the power struggle story line and romantic vocation theme.

In addition, judges indicated that the 1940 film, like its 1931 predecessor, included anti-academic and fraternal character traits not discussed in scholarship about earlier journalism novels and short stories. Thus, in response to research question 1B regarding myth variance among the Front Page films, His Girl Friday had the same set of myth elements as the 1931 film but not necessarily in the same proportions. For instance, while aggressive and blunt character traits were cited the most in both films, His Girl Friday had fewer citations overall (twenty-one for each trait, compared to twenty-nine for each trait in the 1931 version). Also, His Girl Friday textual analysts cited anti-academic and drinker traits the least (two references each) compared to the 1931 Front Page's fewest mythic manifestations -- romantic vocation theme and anti-academic character trait (cited four and five times respectively). Overall intercoder reliability involving agreement on identification and categorization of the nine myth elements between at least two of the three coders was 65 per cent.

In response to research question 1B regarding any film production circumstances that substantiated the journalism myth elements portrayed in the finished movie, my research confirmed the presence of seven of the nine myth elements: aggressive, blunt, cynical, drinker, fraternal and unscrupulous character traits and power struggle story line. Evidence of these mythic elements within the film production context was drawn from a broad-based reading of various historical sources on His Girl Friday.

Of the seven mythic elements, the fraternal trait yielded the most amount of evidence of production circumstances paralleling the manifestation of the occupational myth in the film. Interestingly, this was the first adaptation of The Front Page to introduce a female reporter into the heretofore all-male pressroom group. The drinker trait yielded the least amount of evidence. This contrasts with contextual production circumstances of The Front Page. In the 1931 film, I found the most amount of evidence for the fraternity trait and the least for the power struggle story line. For both versions produced in the thirties, I found no references to the anti-academic character trait or the romantic vocation theme. For the 1931 film, my research revealed no references to the cynical character trait, while my study of production circumstances surrounding His Girl Friday found evidence of the cynical trait. Thus, the first two films varied in terms of number and amount of information about the occupational myth elements.

The next section is designed to corroborate the myth findings of the textual and contextual analyses of the second Front Page film under study. It will discuss references to the myth elements in eight magazine and newspaper reviews written at the time of His Girl Friday's initial release in 1940.

Myth Corroboration in Movie Reviews

All myth elements except the anti-academic trait were alluded to by at least one of the eight brief reviews consulted.⁸³ (See Figure 4 in the Appendix.) Aggressiveness and the power struggle story line came across as the strongest occupational trait with seven of the eight reviewers mentioning them. The drinker character trait and romantic

vocation theme were mentioned by one reviewer each. Reasons why certain elements were mentioned by many or few reviewers will be discussed in Chapter 8.

The 1940 reviewer references to eight of the nine myth elements reinforced the idea that the film's mythology adapted elements from earlier literary forms, novels and short stories dating back to the nineteenth century, as well as more recent film antecedents. The reviewers mentioned some form of all seven myths synthesized from earlier scholarship while also picking up on the fraternal character trait, first noticed in the 1931 film version. Therefore, in answer to the first research question regarding the myths found in each film, contemporaneous reviewers found traces of all the earlier myths plus two of the newer character traits identified initially in a textual analysis of the first film. There was a variance in terms of references to the mythology among reviewers of the 1931 and 1940 films as well as a difference in number of reviews researched. Eight reviewers of His Girl Friday found all but one of the nine myth elements while the six 1931 Front Page film reviewers mentioned seven of the nine elements. Neither set of reviewers from 1931 or 1940 mentioned the presence of an anti-academic trait in the newsmen portrayed. The specific reviewer references to American journalism mythology in His Girl Friday will be discussed under the nine sub-categories of myth beginning alphabetically with the seven character traits and ending with the story line and overall theme.

Aggressiveness

Seven of the eight reviewers used terms synonymous with the operational definition of aggressive (including hard fighting, driven, and ambitious). Commonweal referred to the movie reporters as "hardened skunks" ready to take on anyone, while The Nation called Walter Burns a managing editor who had gone beyond the driven stage into the realm of "fanatical." Time picked up a term from the Hecht and MacArthur stage dialogue referring to ambitiously curious newsmen as "buttinskis," while Variety referred to the lot of them as "hard boiled." The pressure of deadlines that made the on-screen reporters so aggressive was noticed by New Republic that referred to their "faster" work pace, while the New Yorker remarked about the reporter's "verve" and Newsweek cited the "rapid-fire" dialogue.

Blunt

Five of the eight reviewers alluded to the blunt, rude, rough and crude behavior of the movie journalists. Both New Republic and the New York Times cited the boisterous noise of the reporters, while Time honed in on the "smutty ... newshawks," and Variety mentioned the "earthiness ... may be expected to get some minor scissoring from scrupulous censors. For instance, Miss Russell's gentle nose-thumbing." The New Yorker observed the female Hildy was "unabashed at her own audacity" and seemed to fit right in to the pressroom "rumpus."

Anti-Academic

None of the eight reviewers referred to the movie characters displaying a disdain for book learning or expertise based on theoretical knowledge.

Cynical

Three of the eight reviewers referred to the cynical character trait with Time using the actual term. Variety called the movie reporters "smart alec," while Newsweek described Hildy as a "disillusioned reporter."

Drinker

Only one of the eight reviewers alluded to the consumption of alcoholic beverages. A metaphor in Time, related to the previous character trait, refers to the on-screen performance of "whiskey cynicism toned down to half of one per cent" compared to the original play.

Fraternal

Three of the eight reviewers alluded to the collegiality among the newswriters. Two reviewers mentioned the card game of the pressroom gang, while Variety specified how the reporters "continue their penny ante poker through everything."

Unscrupulous

Half of the eight reviews mentioned some form of unscrupulous behavior with three of the eight specifying the managing editor's actions. Commonweal noted that Walter Burns "tries all the tricks," while Nation more strongly asserted he is a "villain." The New York Times and Variety both referred to him as Machiavellian, while Newsweek indicts the entire news as a "world of ... skulduggery."

Power Struggle

The story line of a conflict between the reporter and managing

editor with Walter Burns struggling to maintain power was noted by all reviewers except one.

Romantic Vocation

Two of the eight reporters alluded to the excitement and adventure depicted as part of the journalist's work. Newsweek referred to occupational lure (albeit "baleful influence") that Hildy finds impossible to escape, while Variety described the fun of newsgathering in the "screwy newspaper business."

Movie Review Summary

Contemporaneous reviewers of the 1940 His Girl Friday confirmed the presence of eight of the nine American journalism myth elements identified in textual and contextual analyses of the movie. The reviews, taken from eight national consumer and trade publications, mentioned aggressive, blunt, cynical, drinker, fraternal and unscrupulous character traits as well as the power struggle story line and romantic vocation theme. None mentioned the anti-academic character trait cited by coding judges in a textual analysis of His Girl Friday. The reviews helped corroborate what occupational myths were found in the film, in response to research question 1.

The last section of this chapter summarizes both the textual and contextual analysis findings from the 1940 film in terms of responses to research questions 1A, 2A, and 2B.

Conclusion

This chapter summarized the findings of textual and contextual

analyses of the 1940 His Girl Friday film that indicated the American journalism mythology, identified in literary antecedents, was carried over into the new medium. Aggressive, blunt, cynical, drinker and unscrupulous character traits of news workers along with a power struggle story line and romantic vocation theme were found. However, the 1940 film, like the 1931 Front Page movie, included two new anti-academic and fraternal character traits not mentioned in earlier journalism fiction research. These new traits, discovered in my initial textual analysis, were confirmed by the two other coding judges. In addition, contemporaneous film reviewers corroborated the presence of all myth elements except the anti-academic character trait in their brief evaluations of the movie.

Also, in response to the second research question of this study, contextual analyses of the circumstances surrounding the specific film production as well as the general economic and technological conditions of the mass media in the late thirties, indicated the importance of various outside influences in shaping and spreading the American journalism mythology seen on the silver screen. Newswomen emerged as a competitive part of the journalism labor force. Many were college trained but worked for less money than male reporters as the Depression lingered on. Further, cash-strapped movie studios took note of the popularity of women's pictures and started featuring more working women, including journalists, on the eve of World War II.

Though His Girl Friday made a passing reference to Hildy becoming famous enough to go on the radio and be in the movies, the newspaper world clearly dominated the realm of the 1940 remake, even after a decade in which radio had made significant inroads in terms of news.

Motion picture companies played up the fast pace and fast-talking films to lure audiences from their in-home radio entertainment and back into the theaters.

One year after His Girl Friday debuted, the United States entered World War II and movie production turned to patriotic themes. In 1946, the motion picture industry experienced its peak patronage when ninety million Americans went to the cinema, about 75 percent of the population. By 1973, attendance had dipped to twenty million weekly moviegoers, (about ten per cent of the population).⁸⁴ Restructured movie companies looked for stories and themes that would compete with television entertainment. Screenwriters Billy Wilder and I.A.L. Diamond were looking for a vehicle to revive their careers at the same time The Front Page play was being revived for the umpteenth time (but the first time in London). The success of the two previous films based on The Front Page plus the British stage production encouraged Universal Pictures to try for another movie remake.

The next chapter discusses the American journalism mythology of the 1974 Front Page film and the changes wrought in the newspaper and motion picture industries in the three-decade interim between remakes of The Front Page.

NOTES

1. Edwin and Michael Emery say the phrase was coined by journalist George Seldes in his 1938 book, Lords of the Press. It was followed the next year by Harold L. Ickes' survey of newspaper owners entitled America's House of Lords. The Emerys cited this in their The Press and America: An Interpretive History of the Mass Media, 5th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1984), 427.
2. Cited in Jean Folkerts and Dwight Teeter, Voices of a Nation: A History of the Media in the United States (New York: Macmillan, 1989), 409.
3. Frederick Lewis Allen, Since Yesterday, 1929 - 1939 (New York: Bantam, 1940), 218.
4. Marion Marzolf, Up from the Footnotes: A History of Women Journalists (New York: Hastings House, 1977), 51-52 quoted in Maurine H. Beasley and Kathryn T. Theus, The New Majority: A Look at What the Preponderance of Women in Journalism Education Means to the Schools and to the Professions (New York: University Press of America, 1988), 13.
5. Beasley and Theus, 25.
6. Ibid.,
7. Marjorie Shuler, Ruth A. Knight and Muriel Fuller, Lady Editor (New York: Dutton, 1941), 17-18 as quoted in Beasley and Theus, 28.
8. Female journalists were, no doubt, heartened that "the ancient taboo that kept gifted young women from matching wits with men in the production of news features is luckily losing its deadening grip," according to Harry Franklin Harrington and Elmo Scott Watson, Modern Feature Writing (New York: Harper & Row, 1935), 54 as quoted in Linda Steiner, "Construction of Gender in Newsreporting Textbooks, 1890-1990" Journalism Monograph 135 (October 1992), 16. However, many women reporters thought being able to do features was too restrictive; they wanted to do more.
9. Barbara Belford, Brilliant Bylines: A Biographical Anthology of Notable Newspaperwomen in America (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), x.
10. Ibid.
11. Quoted in Stanley Walker, City Editor (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1934), 262.

12. Donna Born, "The Woman Journalist of the 1920s and 1930s in Fiction and in Autobiography," 22, a paper presented to the Qualitative Studies Division, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Annual Conference, Athens, Ohio, July 1982.

13. Walker, City Editor, 258.

14. Ibid,

15. Ibid, 251.

16. Isbel Ross, Ladies of the Press: The Story of Women in Journalism by an Insider (New York: Harper & Row, 1936), 69.

17. Ibid, 73.

18. Walker, City Editor, 263.

19. Lana Rakow's foreword in Steiner, "Gender in Text," Journalism Monograph, 18.

20. Robert L. Baker, "An Early Experience in Motion Picture Criticism: Carl Sandburg and the Chicago Daily News," 5, a paper presented to the History Division, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, August 1984.

21. Ibid, 3.

22. Stuart Berg Flexner, Listening to America (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 386.

23. Leda V. Bauer, "Movie Critics," American Mercury (January 1929), 71.

24. Marie Armstrong Hecht, My First Husband by His First Wife (Greenberg, N.Y.: Published anonymously, 1932).

25. "Newspaper film Critics of America Formed," Variety 30 August 1939, 16.

26. Pauline Kael, "Raising Kane" in The Citizen Kane Book (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), 69 and Molly Haskell, From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies (New York: Penguin, 1974), 72.

27. Adela Rogers St. Johns, The Honeycomb (New York: New American Library, 1969).

28. John Dunning, Tune in Yesterday: The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio, 1925-1976 (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1976).

29. Marjorie Rosen, Popcorn Venus (New York: Avon, 1973), 145.

30. Ibid.

31. Rebecca Bell-Metereau, Hollywood Androgyny (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 71.

13. 32. Otto Friedrich, City of Nets (New York: Harper & Row, 1987),
33. "'39-40 Film Deals Progress Slowly," Variety 2 August 1939, 1.
34. Variety 15 November 1939, 2.
35. John Izod, Hollywood and the Box Office, 1895-1986 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), ix.
36. Nick Roddick, A New Deal in Entertainment (London: British Film Institute, 1983).
37. Izod, 55.
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39. Paul Bern quoted in Samuel Marx, A Gaudy Spree: The Literary Life of Hollywood in the 1930s When the West Was Fun (New York: Franklin Watts, 1987), 49.
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41. Variety.
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43. Gomery, Hollywood Studio, 167.
44. David Cook, A History of Narrative Film, (New York: Norton, 1981), 279.
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46. Variety, 27 December 1939, 14.
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48. Neal Gabler, An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood (New York: Crown Publishers, 1988), 198.
49. Joseph McBride, Hawks on Hawks (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 80.
50. Gabler, An Empire of Their Own, 154.
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55. Rosalind Russell and Chris Chase: Life Is a Banquet (New York: Random House, 1971), 87.
56. Ibid.
57. Gabler, An Empire of Their Own, 198.
58. Ethan Mordden, The Hollywood Studios: House Styles in the Golden Age of the Movies (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 186.
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61. Gabler, An Empire of Their Own, 154.
62. Ibid.
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64. Louis Giannetti, Masters of the American Cinema (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1981), 199.
65. Ibid., 198.
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67. Undated handwritten letter from the Ben Hecht Collection (letters from Charles MacArthur file), Newberry Library, Chicago.
68. Ibid.
69. "The New Pictures: His Girl Friday," Time 22 January 1940, 76.
70. "His Girl Friday," Revised Final Script dated September 29 1939, 150.
71. Marie Armstrong Hecht, My First Husband, 151.
72. "His Girl Friday," script, 39-43.
73. Stanley Cavell, Pursuits of Happiness (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 168.
74. John Moser, "The Great Hildy," New Yorker 13 January 1940, 52.

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76. Fred Lawrence Guiles, Hanging On in Paradise (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975), 201-02.

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79. Ibid., 71.

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81. McBride, Hawks on Hawks, 80.

82. "His Girl Friday" script, 186-91.

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CHAPTER 6

1974 THE FRONT PAGE FINDINGS

Summary Introduction

Textual analyses of the third film version of The Front Page play indicated the presence of seven American journalism myth elements previously identified in novels and short stories about the news occupation. Three coding judges found the five aggressive, blunt, cynical, drinker, and unscrupulous character traits along with a power struggle story line and a romantic occupational theme. Thus, in response to research question 1A regarding whether the journalism film mythology varied from that in earlier popular literature, the seven occupational myth elements found by fiction scholars carried over into the 1974 movie.

However, while motion pictures derived some of their mythology from literary antecedents, they also added new elements as well. Two other character traits--fraternity and an anti-academic attitude -- discovered during the textual analysis of the 1931 Front Page film (but not mentioned by earlier fiction scholars) also were cited by coding judges analyzing this 1974 remake and the 1940 His Girl Friday version. Therefore, in answer to research question 1B regarding any variance among the Front Page remakes, the nine myth elements cited in the 1931 film were still found in the second and third movies, spanning four decades. The number of instances that particular myth elements were

recorded in the textual analyses varied among the three films, but the overall set of seven character traits, story line and general theme remained constant between the 1931 and 1974 films.

Also, contextual analyses of the economic and technological conditions of the mass media in the mid-seventies, as well as the 1974 film production itself, paralleled the occupational mythology found in the textual analyses. Both the worldwide inflation (stagflation caused by soaring petroleum costs) and competition between broadcast and print news organizations along with increased mechanization all contributed to the American journalism mythology of the 1974 film remake. Many of the elements found in the textual analysis seemed to have been played out in the film production. A contextual analysis of the 1974 Front Page production, based on wide-ranging biographical research on the cast and crew as well as contemporaneous consumer and trade news accounts, indicated that many circumstances of the filmmaking substantiated journalism myths depicted in the finished product. Thus, in answer to the second research question regarding any contextual influences on the occupation myth making, the 1974 movie, despite major economic and technological changes in the three decade gap between Front Page remakes, managed to retain pre-existing mythology traced from its 1931 forebearer film.

The next section sets the scene for the Front Page film revival by discussing the actual mass media economic and technological backdrop for the construction of the American journalism mythology of the 1974 movie. It begins with a description of the opening moments of the film, featuring a cinematic cliché derived from dozens of earlier journalism films that displayed the technology that dominated twentieth-century

American newspaper production. The section goes on to describe inter-media rivalry among newspaper and motion pictures with television. The section concludes with an explanation of some of the economic considerations leading up to the third film, made thirty-six years after His Girl Friday and almost half a century after The Front Page play debuted.

Mass Media Economic and Technological Conditions

The third film version began with a mini-lesson in early twentieth century newspaper production as viewers watched the literal creation of a front page. A banner headline was handset with a stickful of metal letters and placed beneath a newspaper nameplate. The camera then cut to a group of men sitting at manually operated line and letter casting machines, busily churning out sentences from handwritten and typewritten copy. Viewers saw hot metal type being scooped up in blocks and placed on the front page from around photoengravings. As giant cylinders of paper were rolled down a corridor, a worker turned screws to clamp shut the metal frame of the front page. Viewers saw a curved metal plate page impression placed on an inked cylinder. When paper was rolled over it, a page proof was pulled to check for last-minute corrections before webs of newsprint were locked on the press, a speed button pushed, and folded editions came off a conveyor belt at the other end. As that completed edition was "put to bed," the newspaper industry was preparing to put the labor-intensive typesetting process to rest. Therefore, the film's compressed tour of letterpress printing may have been needed by the mid-seventies when American dailies were busily experimenting with

photocomposition and offset printing, as well as investing in word processing computer systems.¹

Although the initial expenses for all the new equipment were high, newspaper owners were confident that they would get a good return on their investment through increased readership and advertising. Greater use of color and better picture quality were two direct benefits of the new web offset printing. Whole departments were eliminated when newspapers switched from manual to electronic typesetting with computers. There was no more need for copyboys or entire composing rooms. Some of the tasks and responsibilities that editors relinquished when mechanized typesetting was reduced, now reverted back to them. One printing historian explained the technological revolution's efficiency:

All the editorial, origination and composition processes from author to printing plate, are now telescoped into a single stage...once it has entered the system as 'soft copy'; information can be edited, proofed, corrected, typographically formatted and integrated with images without having to be rekeyed by typists or compositors.²

Soon the noise of the newsroom would be lessened as the clamor of manual typewriters was temporarily drowned out by the din of construction workers tearing up spaces to install video display terminals with cathode-ray tube screens and portable plastic keyboards. Hums and clicks replaced pounding and ripping as news workers settled in to learn the new procedures. It was quieter because there were fewer journalists as well. To pay for the new equipment, many newspapers reduced their news staffs and did not replace retirees. Historian James Baughman said that, for a while, reporters "enjoyed more autonomy than they had in a while as owners hired fewer editors to check their copy."³ This reportorial freedom, however temporary, was not lost on

college-trained aspirants.

Journalism education burgeoned during the 1970s as Baby Boomers came of college age and were encouraged to get college degrees as a means of upward mobility and economic success. The 1973-74 school year was reported to be the highest single year increase (16 per cent) in the history of journalism enrollment.⁴ But the idealistic students, many inspired by political events, may not have been aware of the highly competitive job market realities that awaited them. For the 48,327 students enrolled in 1,958 journalism schools and departments, there was a universe of only 50,000 reporting jobs, including 17,000 posts in the fairly new field of radio and television news.⁵ With many of those jobs already filled, that meant many of the journalism majors would have to seek employment in non-news positions, try to create their own news organizations or wait for news veterans to leave coveted jobs.

Reporter Timothy Crouse observed that the new crop of reporters operated differently than the pre-World War II journalists because most were college trained. He noticed that they asked "different kinds of questions ... were more comfortable with theories or concepts, and more anxious to analyze the political process and report how it worked."⁶ Despite the development of more critically thinking journalists, Crouse discovered a herd or pack journalism style of reporting whereby reporters became more concerned with reaching consensus among colleagues in covering stories than scooping their competitors. He claimed that reporters took fewer risks that might jeopardize their standing in the news fraternity:

There was giddy camaraderie mixed with fear and low-grade hysteria. To file a story late, or to make one glaring factual error, was to chance losing everything -- one's job, one's

expense account, one's drinking buddies, one's mad-dash existence ... Therefore reporters channeled their gambling instincts into late-night poker games and private bets on the outcome of the elections. When it came to writing a story they were as cautious as diamond-cutters ... But they all fed off the same pool report, the same daily handout, the same speech ... the whole pack was isolated in the same mobile village. After a while, they began to believe the same rumors, subscribe to the same theories, and write the same stories ...⁷

Competition seemed to have been displaced by complacency at many newspaper chains with fewer rivals and perhaps no other daily in direct contention for local readership.

Newspaper concentration, which began decades earlier, continued during the 1970s as "groups or chains accounted for one-half the nation's dailies and two-thirds of its circulation."⁸ Hearst Corporation, which dominated the 1930s, had been joined by circulation leaders like Knight, Newhouse, Scripps Howard and the Tribune Company. Through mergers and acquisitions, the Gannett and Thomson newspaper chains gained the most dailies in municipalities across North America.⁹ By 1974, when The Front Page play was adapted on film for a third time, Chicago was down to two metropolitan dailies. The Tribune's Chicago Today folded three months before the film premiere.

The economic recession of 1970, though not as widespread as the 1930s Depression, affected newspaper companies but not nearly as much as the 1974 energy crisis. The oil embargo caused short supplies of petroleum-based ink and compatible paper. The fuel shortages also created distribution problems for metropolitan newspapers already hard pressed to keep delivery deadlines in rush-hour traffic. Some were forced to raise prices and this contributed to the greatest drop in the number of households reading newspapers since the invention of radio.¹⁰

Newspapers did not seem to be keeping pace with the population

growth. Suburbanization, a major trend in post-World War II America, challenged the long-term viability of urban dailies. Many of them reoriented their reach to outlying, more affluent, suburban readers and de-emphasized their inner-city coverage.

Powerful newspaper organizations developed a few key economic survival strategies. The federal Newspaper Preservation Act, which became law in 1970, legitimized local monopolies. Journalism historians Jean Folkerts and Dwight Teeter asserted that it "legalized pre-existing anti-competitive arrangements"¹¹ under the premise that only one newspaper company might be able to survive in major cities under modern economic restraints. Further, many newspaper groups went public, issuing stock. This move, away from privately held, family-run companies, offered stability in ownership changes, avoided inheritance tax liability, and made mergers easier.¹²

Much like the country that turned inward to domestic crises in 1973 after the United States withdrew from its longest foreign conflict in Vietnam, newspapers seemed self-absorbed. Once again, the print media ignored or denied any threat to their journalistic supremacy from electronic media, especially television. While newspapers still accounted for more advertising revenue than television news did in the early 1970s,¹³ the habit of watching the evening news instead of reading an afternoon paper was causing great changes in journalism.

Perhaps newspapers were so consumed with their own survival that they did not notice that the front page urgency of news had been quietly displaced by the living room convenience of the newest electronic news. Just as newspapers engaged in a power struggle with radio news, once they realized its ability to dilute print media's share of advertising

revenue, television news promised to be a hard fight as well. Television combined the immediacy of radio with the emotional draw of newsreel photography. Unlike news-hungry Americans of World War II who kept abreast with radio, newspaper, newsmagazine and newsreel accounts, the Vietnam War was broadcast to a nation of television viewers. Questions arose as to whether newspaper journalism would once again get aggressive enough to maintain its standing amidst shifting market conditions.

Change was portended as far back as 1940. The same year that Edward R. Murrow's radiocasts from Europe mesmerized millions of stateside listeners, America launched its first successful television broadcasts.¹⁴ In 1946, the Radio-Television News Directors Association was founded and two years later, weeknight news programs began on network television.¹⁵ Newsreel companies lingered until the 1960s. They tried to adapt by shooting footage for television instead of waiting for theater distribution, but the last two holdouts, Hearst's Metrotone and Universal newsreel, both folded in 1967.¹⁶ While radio had been superseded by television, radio news helped Austrian-born journalist-turned-screenwriter Billy Wilder learn English so that he could eventually co-write and direct the 1974 Front Page.¹⁷

In the twenty four years between the second and third versions of the journalism film classic, a generation had grown up with television news and relegated front page urgency to the back seat during the information revolution. By 1974, television had become the prime news source for most Americans, according to a Roper poll.¹⁸ Millions had tuned in on the special 1973 U.S. Senate hearings on the Watergate scandal that eventually led to the resignation of President Richard

Nixon. Television news had created a "see and hear it now" appetite that newspapers could not quell. Television also changed the consumption patterns of feature films as well.

The Big Five motion picture companies were so preoccupied with the loss of their theater outlets as a result of a 1948 anti-trust suit¹⁹ that they either failed to recognize or chose to ignore the inroads television was making in terms of media habits. When it was finally recognized, major film companies tried to specialize in expensive blockbusters or in technological gimmicks designed to lure patrons from their free, small screens at home to experience widescreen Cinerama, Cinemascope, 3-D holography or even Smell-o-Vision.²⁰ While the Big Five retained production and distribution arms after the government ruling, the loss of valuable real estate and the loss of a guaranteed means of exhibition in theaters as well as television competition spelled the end of the studio system. The oligarchy shifted to a more competitive marketplace as independent film makers rushed in to fill the void.²¹ By the 1950s, most of the old moguls had been replaced by younger men, in moves similar to the generational succession going on in the press corps. The major film companies found it difficult to sell a regular supply of films to the new, aggressive exhibitors. However, the minor film companies, with no exhibition units to divest, found themselves well situated to compete ambitiously in the Television Age.

Universal, which produced the third film version of The Front Page, gambled on the success of the new broadcasting technology. It avoided a power struggle with television, unlike major studios, by forming an aggressive alliance with TV instead. Despite Universal's lackluster early years,²² film historian Thomas Schatz observed the

minor studio's shift to a more aggressive, winning strategy in a post-World War II media marketplace:

[Universal] developed a more regulated, factory-oriented operation ... it would find itself ideally suited to network television with its brutal economies and demands for quickly produced, formula-bound product.²³

Its ability to adjust to swiftly changing market conditions caught the eye of many deal makers and it became one of the first filmmakers to become part of a multi-media conglomerate.

Decca Records bought Universal in 1952, and a year after stereo records and phonographs began to be marketed in this country, Decca/Universal merged with Music Corporation of America (MCA).²⁴ While the film industry had gone through a period of independence and diversification, this merger seemed a harbinger of a business cycle back to consolidation. There had been a shift from the studio to power vested in bankable talent and their agents, like MCA co-founder and ex-talent agent Lou Wasserman. Universal finally surpassed the former Big Five and captured millions of dollars in profits,²⁵ but the high cost of survival meant relinquishing studio autonomy and control.²⁶

Though the film companies gave up some of their power, in exchange for their new affiliations with conglomerates, they were able to ride out the recession of the 1970s. When fewer and fewer films were made during the economic downturn, Universal was able to profit. The deep pockets of diversified parent companies, like MCA-Revue, boosted Universal's bottom line by providing a steady cash flow for its film projects.²⁷ One year after the release of the third version of The Front Page, Universal, along with Fox and Columbia, controlled more than half the film distribution market.²⁸ It seems ironic, though, that

supposedly forward-looking companies succeeded in the Seventies by mostly looking backwards for product inspiration.

Nostalgia became the "most powerful cultural force of the Seventies,"²⁹ according to film scholar James Monaco. He attributed this to filmmakers "not having confidence in their own stories or the way they tell them (or not having any stories to tell.)"³⁰ By 1974, The Front Page had been turned into numerous stage productions, a television series, and two network teleplays. One film researcher noted that "the Old Vic's energetic mounting of the play in London"³¹ was the catalyst for the 1974 film remake. The producer Paul Monash, who did Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, was eager to find another period piece to cash in on the nostalgia craze and ride the coattails of Universal's mega-hit of 1973, The Sting. It made \$78.2 million, putting it in the all-time top 25 blockbuster list, based on domestic box office rentals.³² Therefore, setting films in popular bygone eras or remaking movies from the twenties and thirties became a popular pursuit in Hollywood. Media critic James Twitchell reiterated the motion picture industry adage that "Films are made to imitate films that made money. This is, after all, the attraction of genre from the storyteller's point of view. A clone is as good as a sequel."³³

The Sting, set in 1920s Chicago, was familiar territory to the eventual director of the 1974 Front Page, Billy Wilder. He had done Some Like It Hot set in the same city and era and was well versed in journalism as a former practitioner. He incorporated his self-described cynical reflections and bittersweet remembrances about news work into many of the films he produced, directed, and co-wrote. As a reporter in Post-World War I Vienna and Berlin, Wilder had worked for a few

newspapers before switching to moviemaking.³⁴ Journalism was a topic he had tackled in several films he wrote and directed from Dar Tuefelsreporter (Daredevil Reporter) of 1929, through Sunset Boulevard, Ace in the Hole (renamed the Big Carnival), The Spirit of St. Louis and The Fortune Cookie, all released in the 1950s and 1960s.³⁵ Also, Wilder's collaborator, I.A.L. Diamond, had been a student journalist at Columbia University before coming to Hollywood.³⁶

In discussing the Front Page remake, Diamond said he and Wilder had been searching for a 1930s newspaper farce, like Roxie Hart, Libeled Lady or Nothing Sacred, to redo.³⁷ It did not hurt their case that journalistic revelations about the Watergate political scandal propelled some newspaper reporters into national heroes. Diamond told a reporter that he and Wilder reworked the Hecht and MacArthur script with "about sixty per cent of the film's dialogue ... new."³⁸ Wilder observed, "The playwright himself [sic] might have opened up the play more had he not been straight-jacketed by the format of the stage."³⁹ The 1974 Front Page represented the first movie since 1963 for which Wilder was not also producer. After a decade of flops, he needed a commercial, if not critical, success to recharge his reputation and secure a multiple-picture contract.

Universal, like all the film companies of the seventies, was cautious in moving ahead on movies with high production costs. After at least two directors turned down the assignment,⁴⁰ a relatively low-risk personnel "package" was assembled. The team of director Wilder and co-writer Diamond along with actors Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau seemed to fit an acceptable pattern of "bankable talent ... with a proven track record at the box office."⁴¹ Lemmon and Matthau had previously worked

together three times (once directed by Wilder), and Wilder and Diamond had written screenplays together since the fifties and won Academy Awards. But the film cast and crew fraternity was not the only consideration in the Front Page contract.

Being part of multi-media conglomerates, film companies commonly negotiated licensing agreements for ancillary merchandise to be promoted along with the film. Related products included everything from soundtrack albums and books to clothing and home furnishings. The Front Page was no exception to this trend. Warner Communications Inc., which earlier absorbed Warner Brothers film company, published a paperback novelization of The Front Page under its mass market Warner Book imprint to tie in with the 1974 film.⁴² The lines of cross-media ownership were becoming more entangled and the patterns of concentration would intensify in the following decade.

The \$4 million production of The Front Page was shot in the spring of 1974, edited in four days during the summer⁴³ and released on Christmas Day with the promotion tagline "The Happy One for the Holidays." It grossed between \$5 million and \$10 million⁴⁴ and helped give the 1974 film season the biggest box office receipts since 1946, the former peak.⁴⁵ Additionally, its 1975 carryover revenue helped Universal's winning lineup that set box office records for theatrical film rentals.⁴⁶

Section Summary

The 1974 Front Page reflected a return to the economic and technological past -- a bygone era of fierce newspaper competition with

no radio or television rivals to bother the fraternities of print newsmen and the movie business. The actual power struggles that ensued during the seventies involved conflicts over control of the technology-mechanization meant fewer newspaper editors and more expensive motion picture productions. Both media owners and their employees often acted aggressively, bluntly and sometimes cynically and unscrupulously displaying traits similar to those acted out in the 1974 Front Page remake.

The movie appeared during a transitional era when American newspaper journalism was trying to assert its continuing importance in the face of aggressive competition from television news. Also, veteran news managers, accustomed to the status quo, had to contend with college-trained upstarts who challenged traditional work behavior while struggling against disillusionment about their chosen profession in a tightening job market. The motion picture industry, having undergone its own conflicts with electronic interlopers, mingled with the newspaper and television lambs and lions of the not-quite peaceable kingdom of mass media.

The next section addresses each of the nine myth elements individually. Aggressive, anti-academic, blunt, cynical, drinker, fraternal, and unscrupulous character traits along with the power struggle story line and romantic vocation theme will be described both in terms of the actual textual analysis and specific references within the film as well as through a contextual analysis of film production circumstances that paralleled the occupational mythology played out on screen.

Myth Element Analyses

This section includes both the summary of the textual analyses of the 1974 Front Page and the contextual analyses of its production including descriptive evidence of circumstances surrounding the filmmaking that indicated substantiation of the occupational myths. The analyses were performed in order to answer research questions about what myths were found and what contextual conditions may have contributed to the myths changing or staying the same. Specifically, the textual analysis was designed to answer question 1A: Do these myths vary from myths already identified in earlier fiction? and 1B: Do the myths vary among the four films? and 2B: Did any circumstances of the film production substantiate any myths portrayed? (Question 1B will be answered cumulatively with each subsequent remake compared to previous versions. A full review and discussion are in Chapter 8).

The textual analysis was done by me initially and then corroborated by two other coders. After the preliminary analysis of the movie revealed evidence of all seven myth elements previously identified by journalism fiction researchers as well as two new character traits, I refined my study protocol and recruited two other judges. Both had seen the 1974 Front Page at least once prior to this analysis and set about independently to code for myth elements after acceptable levels of intercoder reliability were reached in a pilot study.⁴⁷ The intercoder reliability was 87 per cent.

The tables accompanying discussion of the textual analysis of the individual myth elements summarize all three judges' findings. The tables indicate the approximate place in the tape where the

manifestations of the myth elements were cited, along with a brief narrative description of the particular sight or sound. The last column, entitled intercoder agreement, indicates the number of coders who noted a particular myth manifestation. The agreement is expressed as single-coder notation (33 per cent), two-coder verification of the same instance (67 per cent), and full agreement among all three coders on a particular film reference (100 per cent).

The contextual production circumstances relating to each particular myth element are presented in descriptive narrative form. The contextual evidence was culled from a wide spectrum of historical sources including biographies, studio records, consumer and trade news accounts as well as advertisements, correspondence files and a copy of the revised final screenplay.

The myth element findings begin with a general summary of the textual analysis in narrative form followed by tables indicating the specific references to the elements cited by the coding judges. The discussion of each element ends with an examination of evidence of any contextual circumstances of the film production that may have contributed to the journalism myths found in the movie itself.

Aggressive

Coding judges found twenty instances of the aggressive character trait in their textual analyses of the 1974 Front Page (see Table 19). As operationally defined, the aggressive myth element (including hard-fighting, driven, and ambitious character traits) was manifest in bold actions and physical movements as well as dialogue regarding combative

readiness, compelling urgency of tasks, and a strong-minded desire to compete and succeed. All three coders agreed on seven of those manifestations while two of the three coders agreed on eleven other instances. Two other manifestations were cited by only one coder.

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TABLE 19.-- AGGRESSIVE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
00:07:13	:27	Editor Burns paces as he barks into phone.	100%
:09:17	:01:29	Burns discusses strategy on covering hanging to scoop competition.	67%
:22:09	:34	Reporters assess Johnson's hard-fighting style: "one helluva reporter -- no contest."	33%
:39:11	:35	Reporters rush to phone after gunfire, except Johnson and Keppler.	100%
:41:33	:05	Johnson takes over from Keppler, who was sent to replace him: "Hold everything in the composing room," he calls on phone.	67%
:41:47	:10	Reporters, who ran out of pressroom, are seen surrounding the sheriff and questioning him.	100%
:44:05	:45	Johnson tracks blood to cleaning closet.	67%
:48:42	:01:51	When Burns yells at Johnson on phone, he puts the earpiece in the drawer.	67%
:50:46	:09	Reporters run out of meeting with sheriff and mayor.	100%
:55:37	:02:07	Reporters fight to get through police barricade at stakeout.	67%
:59:06	:04:12	Johnson springs into action when Williams faints; takes gun, pulls shade, calls Burns, drags Williams into bathroom, searches for tourniquet, guards door and stalls Molloy.	100%
01:01:50	:01:22	Reporters pound on door; Johnson hides Williams in desk.	100%

Table 19 (Cont'd)

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
01:08:39	:03:07	Johnson threatens to belt other reporters for insulting him about Molloy. They surround him and start to beat him; then they fight her, and finally corner her. They rush to see her fate when she leaps out window.	100%
01:12:21	:03:36	Burns appears as reporters run out of pressroom; goads Johnson to type story; Burns improvises flash photograph; issues commands on phone.	67%
01:16:43	:02:19	Burns argues with Duffy; barks at Johnson's fiancée; Johnson defends self when Burns bullies him and rips paper from typewriter.	67%
01:21:42	:07:01	When Bensinger pounds on door Johnson covers his copy in typewriter, pulls Burns by ear when he blocks door.	67%
01:28:17	:01	Burns rips phone from plug to prevent sheriff from getting any more news.	67%
01:25:17	:03:09	Reporters surround Johnson while a policeman restrains him; Johnson fights to leave to find his fiancée; Burns accuses sheriff of impersonating a managing editor.	67%
01:34:49	:01:03	In jail, Johnson laments his plight, talks of his ambition.	33%
01:34:10	:06	Burns negotiates police escort to get Johnson to train.	67%

Aggressive Contextual Production Conditions

Although Wilder denied that any of his newspaper experience crept into The Front Page screenplay, the aggressiveness of the reporters and the editor sound like descriptions of him. One biographer noted: "He was fearless, aggressive, and irrepressible even when he had nothing."⁴⁸ Another biographer related the techniques Wilder used to get his journalistic exclusives back in Vienna:

His ruthless competence, his extravagant personal charm, and his natural nosiness about other peoples' business made him one of the city's top reporters. He developed a fantastic knack for getting interviews, even from men who never talked to the press. No reporter was ever able to get to Sir Basil Zaharoff, the munitions tycoon who sold arms to governments ... One day, Billy learned that Zaharoff was on a train that was scheduled to make a two-hour layover in Vienna. He walked onto the train and caught Sir Basil in his private car. He was so taken aback by Billy's gall that he granted him an interview.⁴⁹

Wilder managed to retain that tenacity when he went to Hollywood. His aggressiveness and ambition to succeed were transferred from pursuing stories to directing pictures.

Anti-Academic

Coders cited nine instances of an anti-academic attitude operationally defined as making fun of college-educated and disparaging theorists (see Table 20). The trait in movie journalists was manifest in speech or gestures directed toward experts and those with book learning but little practical, on-the-job training or common sense. All three judges agreed on seven manifestations with two of the three judges concurring on one other citation. A single coder noted one other instance of the trait.

TABLE 20.-- ANTI-ACADEMIC TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
00:06:54	:05	Bensinger calls in story about Dr. "who wrote the book, <u>Self-Abuse and Anti-Social Behavior.</u> "	100%
:07:00	:05	Reporter Murphy dismisses Oedipus Complex theory regarding Williams' case: "This poor bastard is going to swing in the morning, and this big brain from Vienna wants to ask him whether he played with himself when he was five."	100%
:22:03	:07	Cub reporter Rudy Keppler, college grad who worked on school newspaper, introduces himself.	100%
:22:45	:08	Reporters surmise he went to college and worked on school newspaper.	100%
:28:36	:02	Keppler says he has never covered a hanging, "just social notes, book reviews, couple of fires."	100%
:40:00	:30	College-trained reporter wets his pants; doesn't know how to call in news; doesn't recognize news value.	100%
:48:20	:05	Johnson calls Burns to tell him of Eggelhofer shooting: "That profound thinker from Vienna, in order to prove some cocamammie theory ..."	100%
:56:20	:04	Keppler gets sick at police blockade.	100%
01:02:30	:04	Exasperated reporter asks, "What correspondence school did you graduate from?"	67%
01:05:45	:02	Johnson nicknames Keppler "Slick."	33%

Anti-Academic Contextual Production Conditions

Two of Wilder's biographers noted that the director used his films to get revenge against the famous doctor of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, with whom he had an unpleasant face-to-face encounter in Vienna.⁵⁰ When Wilder was a journalist he tried to get an interview but was ejected by Freud who found out he was a reporter and not a patient. A Viennese alienist appeared as a character in The Front Page play and the first two film versions but Wilder and Diamond's script poked even more fun at the so-called court expert. Theirs is the only script to show the doctor after he is wounded.

Wilder and Diamond created a whole new character, Rudy Keppler, to make fun of college graduates who may have had some experience working for a school newspaper or even studied journalism but were inexperienced in real-world reporting procedures. Wilder had dropped out of law school to become a newspaper reporter⁵¹ while Diamond went to Columbia University on a math scholarship but soon got interested in writing for the campus newspaper. He wrote an article for the New York Times that caught the attention of motion picture executives.⁵² He was promptly hired as a junior writer for MGM.

Blunt

Coders cited forty manifestations of the blunt character trait that included rude, rough and boorish behavior (see Table 21). The occupational myth element was operationally defined as rudeness, brusqueness, and unruliness that an average citizen might consider offensive, obnoxious, discourteous, and ill-mannered. All three coders

cited the same twenty-three instances of blunt behavior or references to it while two of the three coders agreed with each other on ten other citations. Single coders found seven additional manifestations.

TABLE 21.-- BLUNT TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
00:03:12	:33	Reporter yells down to jailer Jacobi, calls him "Fatso," tells him to knock off the "gallows noise" as respect for the press.	100%
:04:05	:07	All reporters wear hats indoors except Schwartz; lewd comments about Chinese whores.	100%
:05:38	:10	Reporter throws pink toilet paper at Bensinger.	100%
:07:18	:19	Burns curses on phone, then apologizes to other reporter who answers instead of Johnson.	67%
:13:17	:03	Burns swears, yells at Johnson, throws something at him.	100%
:20:18	:42	Johnson swears, yells at Burns for trying to upset fiancée; Burns yells back.	100%
:22:28	:05	Bensinger describes Johnson as "rowdy, ill-mannered..."	100%
:26:03	:49	Reporters tease Molloy, make sexist comments, along with telling her to "get your keister out of the press room."	100%
:27:09	:20	Johnson tells cleaning woman she has a great behind, then taps it with a cane.	67%
:28:02	:08	Johnson starts to get angry, swears about Burns.	100%
:25:03	:03	Reporters toast Johnson as "lucky bastard."	100%
:29:42	:02:12	Reporters describe job with "rug on the floor and stenographer on your lap."	67%
:30:13	:37	Johnson gives blunt assessment of press to fellow reporters.	100%
:31:44	:06	Johnson insults sheriff.	67%

Table 21 (Cont'd)

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
:38:58	:22	Reporter yells out window after gunfire, "Hey Fatso, what happened?"	33%
:40:60	:40	Johnson curses Keppler's ineptitude, says he's full of "piss and vinegar"; Burns swears.	100%
:43:30	:10	Reporters interview wounded Dr. Eggel-hofer and ask him, "Where'd he get ya, Doc? Right in the old love bells?"	67%
:48:05	:01:05	Burns yells at Johnson on phone.	100%
:49:10	:20	Johnson hears Burns swearing at him; puts phone down.	100%
:50:15	:05	Reporter tells mayor, "You've got your ass in a sling."	100%
:57:15	:08	Johnson swears at himself when he left wedding rings in pressroom.	33%
:59:20	:30	Johnson swears at both Burns and Duffy.	100%
01:00:00	:10	Burns swears.	100%
01:03:12	:01:08	Reporters curse Johnson for locking them out of pressroom, utter crudities.	100%
01:05:13	:04	Johnson uses profanity when referring to sheriff.	100%
01:08:58	:03	Johnson insults reporters: "It wouldn't be hard to make Keppler look stupid."	67%
01:10:50	:08	Reporters talk crudely to Molloy, calls her a slut; swear.	100%
01:11:49	:04:05	Burns talks crudely to Johnson, swears at Williams.	100%
01:13:40	:31	Burns orders Duffy to find "three gorillas from circulation."	33%
01:14:40	:10	Burns tells Keppler, "Shut up!"	33%

Table 21 (Cont'd)

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
01:15:40	:18	Johnson tells Keppler to beat it when he tries to look over his shoulder at typewriter.	33%
01:16:58	:01:02	Burns swears at Duffy about redoing front page; yells at Johnson fiancée.	100%
01:18:05	:25	Burns criticizes Johnson's story with crude remark, partly self-censored when he looks at Johnson's fiancée.	33%
01:21:50	:05	Johnson utters expletive when Bensinger pounds on door.	33%
01:25:00	:05	Johnson tells Burns that editors only get sexually excited about a deadline.	67%
01:25:40	:04:30	Burns swears at sheriff; Johnson swears; reporters use crudities; Burns and Johnson insult sheriff.	100%
01:32:00	:12	Burns throws disconnected phone out of window.	67%
01:34:37	:03	Burns shouts to fellow prisoner to stop singing.	67%
01:39:50	:10	Johnson swears at Burns when discovering "secret family" ruse at train station.	67%
01:42:38	:02	Burns utters expletive.	100%

Blunt Contextual Production Conditions

Film historian David Shipman contended that director Billy Wilder, known for his vulgarity, was well-suited to redo The Front Page:

Wilder's reputation for handling "bad taste" caused him to be asked to remake The Front Page ... Raciness was considerably and pointlessly added; given that Wilder had been ... a newspaperman, we may not find the four-letter words inappropriate, but the coarsening was often unfunny.⁵³

The old Production Code enforced since the Depression had been lifted in the mid-sixties and replaced by a ratings system that allowed for more permissiveness in what was shown and spoken on screen. Wilder biographer Bernard Dick noted that the director evidently took this into consideration when the dialogue was written:

Wilder availed himself of the new freedom of speech, but just enough to stay within the boundaries of PG (Parental Guidance advised for children -- but all admitted) ... Wilder stops short of the national obscenity -- which, in 1974, would have meant an automatic R -- and instead uses its weaker form, "frig"... In trying to update the language, Wilder sometimes uses references (... flasher) and idioms ("getting it up," "kicking in balls") that are jarringly anachronistic.⁵⁴

Film writer Joseph McBride visited Wilder on the set at Universal and described the director's language "salty as that of the characters in the story ... a barrage of quips and insults."⁵⁵ When McBride asked Walter Matthau if he got inspiration for Walter Burns from Wilder, Matthau said, "I always play Wilder. Wilder sees me as Wilder -- a lovable rogue full of rogue blades."⁵⁶ Described as "brusque and blasphemous even with his intimate friends,"⁵⁷ Wilder seemed to enjoy his reputation for being blunt. Wilder's wife, Audrey, was quoted as saying, "Long before Billy Wilder was Billy Wilder, he behaved like Billy Wilder...[he] has always been his own brash, impudent, sassy self."⁵⁸

In the screenplay, Wilder and his partner, I.A.L. Diamond, revised the characterization and dialogue of Chicago Tribune reporter Bensinger to have him react positively to the announcement that Hildy Johnson is leaving because of his rowdiness and ill-mannered ways. The changes made Johnson and the rest of the reporters appear even rougher and cruder than the overly sensitive Bensinger who considered his refined taste under-appreciated, like a pearl cast before swine.

Cynical

Coders found twenty-two manifestations of the cynical character trait (see Table 22). The journalism myth element was operationally defined as believing all people are motivated by selfishness. The trait ranged from distrustful doubt to overall contempt for humankind. It was manifest in sneering and scornful facial expressions in response to statements about others' sincerity and benevolence as well as sarcastic statements, bitter mocking of others, general faultfinding and pessimism. All three judges agreed on sixteen instances of the cynical trait, while the other six instances were coded by a single judge.

TABLE 22.-- CYNICAL TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
00:03:43	:03	Reporter sarcastically observes that Jacobi has no respect -- for the press.	100%
:07:08	:08	At pressroom card game, one reporter calls another, "Gaylord Schwartz, riverboat gambler," for his small bid.	33%
:08:10	:16	A cynical shot shows the <u>Herald Examiner</u> nameplate sign reflected on behind of Burns.	33%
:08:20	:10	Burns laments the paper would have better choice of headlines if state used electric chair.	100%
:12:29	:04	Burns wonders why Johnson wants to get married again; offers him weekend off; shows contempt for bride's occupation -- spits out words "concert pianist."	100%
:22:27	:02	Reporters suspicious of Johnson's plans to remarry; ask if he got Burns' okay.	100%
:20:12	:31	Burns dismisses Johnson's plan to go into advertising: "You're a newspaperman, not some faggot writing poetry about brassieres and laxatives."	100%
:22:21	:05	Reporters tease Molloy with "gallows humor" about Williams.	100%
:23:21	:03:30	Johnson tells reporters they're "nothing but a bunch of Budinskis."	100%
:28:39	:02	When Keppler announces he's covering his first hanging, Johnson sarcastically says, "It's Earl's first too."	33%
:30:38	:05	Reporters take bets on Johnson's longevity in advertising.	100%
:32:49	:01:00	Johnson sneers, mocks sheriff.	100%
:46:20	:01:20	Reporters sarcastically speculate on sheriff and Eggelhofer.	100%

Table 22 (Cont'd)

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
00:43:53	:47	Johnson tells sheriff he let Williams out so he could vote for him.	100%
46:20	:01:19	Reporters call rewrite desk with various jaded views.	100%
01:01:50	:10	Molloy says, "If it's in the papers, it must be true. The paper don't lie."	33%
01:03:50	:05	Reporters speak sarcastically of Johnson and Molloy locked in the pressroom; accuse him of trying to deceive them.	100%
01:08:22	:01:08	When the reporters start to beat up on Johnson, Keppler wonders what they are doing, while Bensinger shows more concern for his desk.	33%
01:11:53	:03	Burns is unimpressed by Molloy's leap out the window.	33%
01:13:47	:08	Burns tells Duffy to forget his diabetes.	100%
01:19:25	:02:00	Burns complains about Johnson's fiancée's presence as a distraction. Burns tells fiancée, "Wedding rings will make nice cuff links," and later tells Johnson, "You had a narrow escape -- almost married."	100%
01:25:16	:01:09	Other reporters are suspicious of Burns' attempt to cover up something. Johnson and Burns contemptuous of sheriff.	100%

Cynical Contextual Production Conditions

If Ben Hecht was considered among the most cynical screenwriters to ever hit Hollywood, Billy Wilder was not far behind: "Almost alone among Hollywood directors, ... Wilder has succeeded in hanging on ... to a corrosive misanthropy, a disenchanting view of the public."⁵⁹ Film scholars Charles Higham and Joel Greenberg quoted Wilder on his philosophy:

People will do anything for money. Except some people. They will do almost anything for money. I guess that's the theme of all my pictures ... I have a kind of philosophy; maybe it's cynical but I have to be true to what I feel.⁶⁰

Cynical was the most frequent adjective used by biographers and film critics to describe Wilder. His bittersweet baggage was carried from one project to the next, including The Front Page.

Drinker

Coders cited ten instances of the drinker character trait in the 1974 film (see Table 23). Evidence of the occupational myth element was defined to include talking about plans to drink alcoholic beverages as well as to quit or resist temptation. In addition to actual drinking, other film references were defined to include the presence of props or the mere sound of glasses, bottles or ice; scenes set in bars or restaurant and songs associated with bars and drinking. All three judges agreed on seven manifestations of the trait while three other citations were made by a single coder.

TABLE 23.-- DRINKER TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
00:07:56	:12	Duffy says he checked speakeasy looking for Johnson.	33%
:13:06	:06	Johnson reminds Burns "When Ben Hecht was leaving for Hollywood, you slipped him a Mickey (Finn) drink."	33%
:27:21	:07:23	Johnson comes into pressroom carrying a paper bag; asks cleaning woman to get ice and mixers; lays liquor down in center of table; reporters get paper cups.	100%
:34:45	:01	Bottles are centerpiece of pressroom table; reporters are singing.	100%
:47:12	:43	Johnson returns to pressroom after getting scoop and sips, mixes drink with leftover liquor.	100%
:38:24	:20	Liquor bottles are visible as Williams breaks into pressroom.	100%
:39:07	:01:03	Pressroom liquor bottles still visible.	100%
:57:48	:04:06	Pressroom bottles seen.	100%
01:16:29	:11	Cabdriver characterizes newspaperman; says they pass out in his cab late at night, he has to carry them.	33%
01:31:15	:02	Liquor bottles still visible in pressroom.	100%

Drinker Contextual Production Conditions

Soon after the movie premiered and Jack Lemmon got so-so reviews, with many critics commenting on his innervating performance as Hildy Johnson, he quit drinking. A biographer, who was on the set of The Front Page that involved many drinking scenes, noted that Johnson may not have reformed but Lemmon did:

He will tell you that this landmark event had to do with his health; that alcohol was beginning to have physical effects, such as lowering his energy level. It is more than that; much more. The old Lemmon drank ... At a recent meeting an old friend commented over cocktails that he "liked the old Lemmon better, my drinking buddy."⁶¹

While the epilogue of the film revealed that Johnson returned to the Herald-Examiner, and his old drinking patterns presumably, Lemmon used the wrap of that film production to start a new alcohol-free life. Perhaps the actor was tired of playing out a drinker myth in real life after wretched excesses on stage.

The screenplay for the 1974 film contained many more stage directions and descriptions of liquor bottle props and drinking than the two previous movie versions:

He [Johnson] is taking bottles out of the paper bag--gin, scotch, rye ... the guys start to clear the table, one goes to fetch the paper cups from the water cooler ... Jennie comes in with a big bucket full of crushed ice, and in it some bottles of club soda and ginger ale ... She put the bucket on the big table. The reporters start pouring themselves drinks in paper cups, adding ice, adding mixers ... They all drink ... As they start pouring themselves another round, Sheriff Hartman strides in ... With a bottle of rye in one hand and a bottle of gin in the other, he [Johnson] starts refilling everybody's cups ... They all drink. Without any warning whatsoever, McHugh launches into song, in his whiskey baritone ... Hildy's farewell party is in high gear, everybody drinking and singing.⁶²

Later, after Johnson has called in his exclusive on the shooting of Egghoffer and escape of Williams, he started to make himself a drink

while telephoning Burns that he was really quitting this time:

He gets a clean paper cup, starts to pour some rye--but there isn't much left in the bottle...Hildy adds some scotch to the rye -- but that bottle is almost dead too. However, there is still a finger of gin left in the third bottle -- so he throws that into the mixture ... He picks up his paper cup, holds it up in a toast, bends toward the mouthpiece of the phone ... He drinks.⁶³

Fraternal

All three coders cited the same three manifestations of the fraternal trait of American journalism mythology in the 1974 Front Page (see Table 24). As operationally defined, fraternal meant being part of a closed circle of persons linked by similar duties, shared backgrounds and common occupation. It was manifest in visual images of physical proximity and familiarity including reacting en masse or sitting with a sense of social conviviality. The definition also included dialogue referring to off-limits exclusiveness of space and clannish differentiation from non-newswriters. There was full concurrence on the three total citations of fraternal traits.

TABLE 24.-- FRATERNAL TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
00:21:23	:03	Pressroom looks like clubhouse, with reporters sitting around table wearing hats, playing cards, joking, smoking.	100%
:26:40	:01:05	Bensinger insists Molloy shouldn't be allowed in pressroom.	100%
:27:30	:07:19	Johnson appears with liquor; they break into song, continuing their conviviality.	100%

Fraternal Contextual Production Conditions

Walter Matthau, Jack Lemmon and Billy Wilder were all friends in real life, so the film shoot was an extension of their off-stage familiarity. Also, the buddy theme was a favorite of Wilder's who had paired Matthau and Lemmon in four of his previous films.⁶⁴ The fraternal spirit was obvious to all who observed them. A Lemmon biographer noted:

Matthau did his own share of stunts--and his own falls. When one of these went wrong, Billy Wilder told me, it was an opportunity to witness the unadulterated love the two men have for each other ... They are like brothers ... But it's marvelous to watch them. If anything bad happened to one of them, they would first call each other. Lemmon would call Matthau, not the police or the ambulance, God forbid.⁶⁵

I.A.L. Diamond, who worked well as Wilder's writing partner for many years, lamented the demise of the studio system that nurtured collegiality: "The studio was like a college campus, and the writers' building was like a fraternity house ... Today, writers work out of their homes and rarely ... meet other writers."⁶⁶

A Wilder biographer noted that the director tried to keep a fraternal "happy ship" atmosphere while shooting: "... a stranger ... might easily walk away convinced that he had stumbled upon a class reunion rather than a movie in production."⁶⁷ Film scholar Louis Giannetti noted that Wilder liked to work with people he already knew and rewarded them: "Working on a Wilder project is considered a plum assignment by most technicians, for his salaries are traditionally among the highest .. not to speak of frequent gifts, bonuses, and location amenities."⁶⁸ Since he only directed and did not produce The Front Page, it is not known whether that film reinforced the fraternal reputation his previous pictures had. What was certain though, was the

camaraderie among the pair of actors playing out the journalistic bond and the pair of writers who shaped the occupational characteristics.

Unscrupulous

Judges cited fifteen instances of the unscrupulous myth element in their textual analyses of the 1974 Front Page (see Table 25). The occupational trait was operationally defined as contemptuous of what is right and honorable manifest in actions or speech indicating lying, cheating, double crossing, stealing, and other violations of the law. Coders revealed complete concurrence on eight manifestations while two other citations were noted by a pair of coders. Single coders cited five other manifestations.

TABLE 25.-- UNSCRUPULOUS TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
00:09:23	:01:22	Burns plots secret illegal photograph of hanging to be developed in portable darkroom disguised as ambulance. Johnson says he'll "either get a Pulitzer or a year in the clink."	100%
:12:07	:09	Duffy announces that parochial school boys are playing hookey to deliver extra editions on hanging.	67%
:16:11	:05:10	Burns rips star off poster; impersonates probation officer; tells fiancée Johnson is exhibitionist; insists, "Or my name isn't Otto Fishbein" even after she realizes impersonation	100%
:23:50	:03:30	Molloy accuses reporters of lying, making up quotes.	33%
:30:31	:15	Johnson launches diatribes on reporters "stealing" pictures ..."	67%
:31:04	:28	Johnson brings illegal liquor in pressroom, cleaning woman steals ice from morgue.	33%
:57:19	:31	Johnson tells fiancée he hopes his colleagues didn't steal rings he left in pressroom.	33%
01:08:02	:01:18	Johnson harbors Williams in bathroom; lies to Molloy; lies to fiancée about gun she sees.	100%
01:07:58	:01:12	Johnson tries to get other reporters to leave; intimates he and Molloy had dalliance; others recalled he lied and scooped them on St. Valentine's Day Massacre.	100%
01:16:10	:10	Taxi driver says when he helps semi-conscious reporters home and tries to go through their pockets for fare, they call the cops.	33%

Table 25 (Cont'd)

Tape Time Start	Duration	Description	Intercoder Agreement
01:22:00	:02:00	Burns lies to Bensinger about reading his story and job offer. Bensinger says it wouldn't be ethical to quit without notice; Burns later calls Duffy, tells him to fire Bensinger.	100%
01:25:10	:04:50	Johnson lies to colleagues about Williams and hides copy; Burns lies about gun. When confronted by sheriff, Burns: "Are you implying the <u>Examiner</u> would aid and abet a criminal?" He accuses the sheriff of impersonating a managing editor.	100%
01:21:50	:01:05	Reporters call in various versions of eyewitness accounts of Williams' capture.	100%
01:39:59	:02:33	Burns has hired fake family to sabotage Johnson's wedding plans.	100%
01:42:35	:02	Epilogue says Burns teaches ethics of journalism at University of Chicago.	33%

Unscrupulous Contextual Production Conditions

Wilder admitted to biographers that when he was a newspaper reporter he employed many deceptions and disguises in order to get access to famous people he was trying to interview.⁶⁹ Therefore, it does not seem surprising that the screenplay he co-authored would include a scene where Walter Burns impersonated a probation officer to try to break up Hildy Johnson's impending marriage. Burns even went so far as to fashion a badge from a star he stole off a film poster for All Quiet on the Western Front. (That movie had special meaning for Wilder. It was based on a novel by his former journalism colleague, Erich Maria Remarque and the motion picture was directed by Lewis Milestone, who also directed the first Front Page film). In Wilder and Diamond's epilogue, a device they admitted borrowing from American Graffiti,⁷⁰ a hit youth movie, they wrote that Burns "retired, and occasionally lectured at the University of Chicago on the Ethics of Journalism." The irony of how Burns supposedly ended up was juxtaposed in the advertising campaign for the movie that showed Burns and Johnson in the pressroom and featured a tagline: "They'd do anything for a story -- and do."⁷¹

Power Struggle

Coders found five manifestations of the power struggle story line in the 1974 Front Page film (see Table 26). Operationally defined as a conflict between the journalist and the news executive over control of the journalist's life decisions including marriage, relocation and career changes. All three judges cited the same coding references four times and a single coder cited one other instance of the trait.

TABLE 26.-- POWER STRUGGLE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
00:07:00	:40	Burns offers to raise Johnson's salary until he finds out another newspaper is not the reason he's leaving.	100%
:11:52	:05	Johnson sounds like a reformed criminal: "I'm quitting this racket. I'm going straight."	100%
:20:20	:40	Burns alternately tries to make Johnson feel guilty, and then dares him to cover the story: "I picked you up when you were nothing -- covering Polack weddings on the South Side. I taught you everything I knew--and now when I need you, you stab me in the back. Well, I can take the greenest cub out there and turn him into a better reporter than you ever were.	100%
01:12:30	:40	When Burns tries to flatter Johnson with fame he'll achieve with the story: "You and I will be running this town -- they'll be naming streets after us -- Johnson Street, Burns Boulevard," Johnson retorts: "How come you rate a boulevard and I only get a street?"	100%
01:42:30	:02	The epilogue states that Johnson returned to the Examiner and succeeded Burns.	33%

Power Struggle Contextual Production Conditions

The scene in which Burns came to the pressroom and cajoled Johnson to type up the story was reminiscent of descriptions of how Wilder and Diamond collaborated on the screenplay: "Diamond stations himself at the typewriter while Wilder paces back and forth, shouting lines and gags. They argue frequently, but not seriously."⁷² One Wilder biographer who observed the director on the set of The Front Page said he seemed to be struggling to come up with a convincing triangle of power to film:

...his imaginative energy sagged in The Front Page because there was no woman of dignity and class to fight Walter Matthau for the love of Jack Lemmon ... The Front Page ... was not a story which struck Wilder's ruling obsessions. For this was a love/hate story between two men, and the woman is quite peripheral. Wilder knew these aspects of life, and he was willing to explore them ... but it would only strike fire in his hands if there was also a powerful woman present.⁷³

Romantic Vocation

Judges found six instances of the overall mythic theme of journalism as romantic, exciting, and adventurous (see Table 27). The occupational theme was manifest in scenes involving intense dramatic action and danger as well as chaotic noise like shouting, bells, alarms and gunfire. Film dialogue was included that referred to the romance of the vocation and alluded to journalism as a noble pursuit. All three coders agreed on three instances while two judges agreed with each other on one other instance. Single coders cited two other manifestations of the theme.

TABLE 27.-- ROMANTIC VOCATION TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
00:13:17	:50	Burns disparages all other forms of writing as frivolous compared to journalism: "Look at him [Ben Hecht] now -- sitting under those goddamn palm trees, writing dialogue for Rin-Tin-Tin. What's the matter with you guys? Traitors, all of you. If it isn't Hollywood, it's Broadway -- or Paris -- write the Great American Novel -- be Scott Fitzgerald. Christ! And now you're gonna sell out -- the last real newspaperman I got on this sheet."	33%
01:15:40	:18	Burns declares, "This is the hottest story since the Chicago Fire -- we'll kick City Hall ... We'll crucify them!"	100%
01:16:58	:01:02	Johnson tells his fiancée, This is the biggest thing that's happened to me in my life," meaning the scoop, not her.	100%
01:18:05	:25	Johnson boasts to Burns that his previous stories affected many -- "Even the telegraph operator was crying."	67%
01:19:00	:05	Johnson's fiancée sees how excited and absorbed Johnson is in trying to type this story and says, "You don't really want to give this up, do you? deep down?"	100%
01:20:00	:05	Burns tells Johnson, "Give me everything you got. Because with this, you're stepping into a new class ... Broun, Mencken ..."	33%

Romantic Vocation Contextual Production Conditions

No specific references were found regarding the theme of journalism as a romantic vocation in the research on the film.

Myth Element Summary

Three coding judges found evidence of all nine myth elements in their individual textual analyses of the third Front Page film. Aggressive, anti-academic, blunt, cynical, drinker, fraternal, and unscrupulous character traits, as well as a power struggle story line and romantic vocation theme were cited. The blunt character trait was, by far, the most frequently coded myth element, with forty citations, compared to the second most referenced element, cynical trait, with twenty-two citations. The fraternal trait was the least-cited element with only three references coded, followed by the power struggle story line with five citations. Thus, in answer to question 1A regarding any variance in myths between literary antecedents and this film, coders indicated that the 1974 film included references to the earlier myth elements but went beyond the initial seven and confirmed the presence of two additional elements in the Front Page films.

In response to research question 1B regarding any variance among the three Front Page films examined thus far, all manifest the same set of nine myth elements, though in varying proportions according to the coding results. For instance, while the blunt character trait was a dominant myth element in all three films studied from 1931 to 1974, the most recent Front Page contained more references (40) than the original film, which had twenty nine, and especially more than the twenty-one

references in His Girl Friday. Also, the judges found more evidence of the cynical trait in the 1974 film than the aggressive trait that was tied for most frequent mention in the two earlier movies. In terms of fewest references, the three citations of the fraternal trait contrast with the least mention of the romantic vocation theme in the first film and the drinker myth element in His Girl Friday (both mentioned twice).

The contextual film production circumstances of the 1974 Front Page contrast with its two predecessor movies. In the 1931 film production, I found the most amount of evidence for the fraternity trait and the least for the power struggle story line. In the 1940 motion picture production I found the most amount of information on the fraternal trait and the least amount of evidence for the drinker trait. Thus, the circumstances of the first two film productions varied in terms of the number of myth element references as well as the amount of fairly accessible information about the specifics of the filmmaking.

The next section is designed to corroborate the myth findings of the textual and contextual analyses of the third Front Page film under study. It will discuss references to the myth elements in twelve magazine and newspaper reviews written at the time of The Front Page's release across the country in late 1974 and early 1975. In addition to the general consumer and trade publications, the seventies generated a spate of journalism publications. They were designed to criticize the occupation that had lost credibility with the public, according to opinion polls of the late sixties,⁷⁴ by evaluating it from within. The publications were written and produced by journalists and three of the professional journals with national circulation -- Chicago Journalism Review, [More], and Quill -- reviewed the 1974 film and therefore are

included in the chart for comparison with general media.

Myth Corroboration in Movie Reviews

All nine myth elements--the aggressive, anti-academic, blunt, cynical, drinker, fraternal and unscrupulous character traits as well as the power struggle story line and romantic vocation theme -- were alluded to by at least one of the twelve contemporaneous reviews consulted (see Figures 6 in the Appendix). The power struggle story line of the 1974 Front Page was the element cited by the most reviewers (ten of twelve) followed closely by the blunt trait (cited by nine of twelve). The drinker trait was the least cited element, with only one reviewer mentioning it. Reasons why certain elements might have been mentioned or ignored will be discussed in Chapter 8.

In the meantime, the reviewer references to all nine myth elements reinforce the idea that the third film's mythology adapted elements from earlier literary forms while incorporating the new anti-academic and fraternal characterizations of previous films. Therefore, in answer to the first research question regarding what myths were found in the film, contemporaneous reviewers cited traces of all earlier literary antecedents and corroborated the continued diffusion of the two newest traits found in textual analyses of the first Front Page movie versions (both the 1931 and 1974 Front Page and 1940 His Girl Friday). The reviewer references to American journalism mythology will be discussed under the nine sub-categories of myth beginning alphabetically with the seven character traits and ending with the story line and overall theme.⁷⁵

Aggressive

Eight of the twelve reviewers used terms synonymous with the operational definition of aggression (including hard fighting, driven, and ambitious). The New Republic, Quill, and Variety all referred to the competitive spirit of the journalists. Quill offered the most specific description of "hard-nosed Hildy ... whose lifeblood is printer's ink ... and whose greatest satisfaction comes from beating the competition." Pauline Kael in the New Yorker observed the physical aggression as well when "other reporters start pummeling Hildy, as if to beat him to death."

Managing editor Walter Burns' tendencies did not go unnoticed, though. The New Yorker's Kael referred to the "tough editor," while Newsweek contrasted the "hard-boiled reporter" with the "hard-bitten editor." Both the New Yorker and New York Times referred to Burns' maniacal spirit. Quill cited the managing editor's "screaming, begging, commanding" techniques, while the New Yorker's Kael complained about the "hollering lines bellowed."

Overall, New York's Judith Crist referred to "the frenzies" and frantic tone of the film, while New Republic described the "rushing about," and Time summed it up as a "hotfooted newspaper comedy." The New York Times reviewer, Vincent Canby, described the aggressive tone of the journalist depictions as "people who barrel on through life completely intimidating those who should know better."

Anti-Academic

A disdain for book learning and expertise based on theoretical knowledge was alluded to in references by reviewers to reporter

Bensinger, cub reporter Rudy Keppler and Viennese alienist Dr. Max Eggelhofer. [More] referred to Bensinger as a "man of some intellectual pretense [... a poet]" who "dissociates himself from...colleagues." Quill commented on the journalism school grad-cub reporter who "doesn't bother Hildy until the young innocent dives under the table when shots ring out at the courthouse."

By far, Eggelhofer drew the most comments. New York's Judith Crist referred to him as "... the ultimate Freudian to end all psychiatrist takeoffs," while [More]'s Richard Schickel described him as "parody of the old-fashioned Viennese alienist who is ... crazier than his patients." Newsweek noted "the foolish Freudian doctor is a well-worked-over figure from the 1930s, but Wilder flagellates him as though he stood at the center of contemporary culture."

Blunt

Nine of the twelve reviewers alluded to the blunt, rude, rough and crude behavior of the movie journalists. The reviewers singled out the language of the 1974 motion picture for particular bluntness. New York's Judith Crist commented on the "tang and topicality and realism of language not acceptable on stage or screen before the seventies." The Newsweek review mentioned the "harsher vernacular of the 1970s," while the New Yorker cited the "uglified" dialogue with "Matthau ... booming out expletives." Variety observed the third Front Page film took advantage of the newly liberated ratings system with disastrous effects: "monotonously tedious use of undeleted expletives ... cheaply vulgar, gratuitously coarse, and embarrassingly strident."

Even the journalism publications commented on the blunt language

used by movie versions of news workers. Quill called the 1974 Front Page, "... more profane version" with a managing editor whose reactions were "punctuated with late 20th-century profanity." [More]'s Richard Schickel was not impressed with the blunt language and devoted part of his commentary to condemning what he did not deny was a realistic trait of journalists: "Wilder knows ... that newspaper people tend to talk dirty when they're off on their own, and so there is a steady stream of humorless expletives flowing through the film ... the obscenities are played as if they were genuine jokes ..." The New York Times review commented that the film seemed to reflect "Wilder and Diamond's ... special appreciation for the vulgar."

Cynical

Five of the eight reviewers made direct references to the term "cynical" or a form of the word. Newsweek cited the tone of the journalism depiction as "sentimentally cynical but darkened with heavy smudges of contemporary despair," while New York referred to the "bite and cynicism" of the occupational portrayals. The New York Times found the film full of "giddy bitterness ..." especially the portrayal of the "ruthless managing editor." Time referred to Burns as a "shambling cynic." Chicago Journalism Review's Mary Knoblauch observed that "Wilder evoked all the bitterness ... Hecht and ... MacArthur thought they had written into it." She noted that the movie journalists, like their real-life counterparts, had a right to be "callous and unfeeling ... from seeing more of the grim nuts and bolts of life than other people." The New Yorker's Pauline Kael saw the 1974 movie as "celebrating the lowdown talk of a cynical ... profession" but going to

extremes"...beyond the tough-guy cynicism into cretinous misanthropy." The Variety reviewer noted this tone as well: "[Wilder's] pervading strain of misanthropy ... comedic nihilism shrouds all characters and situations."

Drinker

Only one of the twelve reviewers made any mention of the presence or allusion to consumption of alcoholic beverages. [More]'s Richard Schickel referred to the movie journalists as "booze-swilling."

Fraternal

Half of the reviewers alluded to occupational alliances of news workers, with Variety referring to the "gang of newsmen" while Village Voice mentioned the "clubby newsroom." Commonweal referred to the "press corps, an assemblage that falls somewhere between a tragic chorus and a barber-shop quartet" constrained by a tight physical space. The New Yorker's Pauline Kael described the movie as a "celebration of a profession that once had its own wise-cracking camaraderie ... razzing musketeers [who] play poker ... celebrating the lowdown talk of a ... male profession." [More] mentioned the "poker-playing ... colleagues" and the "common table ... the journalists [other than Bensinger] share." Chicago Journalism Review cited the journalists' "respect for humor and ... unusual camaraderie" that came from covering crime news.

Unscrupulous

Five of the twelve reviewers alluded to movie journalists who were contemptuous of what is generally considered right and honorable. The

operational definition of unscrupulous included actions or speech indicating lying, cheating, double crossing, stealing and other illegal activities. The New Yorker's Pauline Kael described Walter Burns as "unscrupulous ... Satan of the double-cross." New York's Judith Crist asserted that Wilder's version of The Front Page allowed the audience to see "those giants and pygmies of twenties journalism as amorality, scroungers, and parasites." The New York Times reviewer mentioned Wilder's "appreciation for ... con artists" that was reflected in his portrayal of journalists, able to deceive others and act fraudulently. Chicago Journalism Review's Mary Knoblauch described the movie journalists as "corrupt (Hildy frankly deals with bootleggers) and totally insensitive con men, just as bad as the corrupt politicians they cover." [More]'s Richard Schickel also noticed the sleazy image of the press corps whom he surmised "in the last analysis, sewer rats ..."

Power Struggle

Ten of the twelve reviewers mentioned specifics of the plot line, the conflict between the star reporter and his editor. [More]'s review was the only one to mention the internal struggles that Johnson may not have been able to admit to himself but that Burns recognized and exploited. Reviewer Richard Schickel noted "Burns has won ... he ... saved Hildy from deadening respectability."

Romantic Vocation

The perceived adventure and excitement of journalism was discussed by six of the twelve reviewers. Stanley Kauffmann of the New Republic questioned whether any version of The Front Page had ever presented a realistic portrait of the occupation. Citing Nathaniel Hawthorne's

definition of romance as "... truth, under circumstances, to a great extent of the writer's own choosing or creation," Kauffmann determined that all constructions of The Front Page from Ben Hecht's and Charles MacArthur's original to the Wilder-Diamond collaboration had a romantic view of journalism. He concluded that the 1974 film was not hurt by its allusion to the romantic vocation but rather by the "lack of faith in romance" to sustain occupational devotion.

The New Yorker's Pauline Kael referred to the portrayal of "addiction to excitement" with reporters "itching for scoops." The Chicago Journalism Review voiced concern over whether the contemporary audience would understand the compelling urge that almost lost Hildy Johnson his fiancée: "In those days, a newspaperman was addicted to news. It was the story and the process itself that attracted him, not the possible effect on history." Quill's reviewer observed the journalism juggernaut portrayed in the film when "Hildy's creative blood begins to stir. Nothing can interfere now." [More's] reviewer surmised that the movie's "pressroom crowd was never glamorous but ... attractively subversive in their humble way."

Village Voice's Andrew Sarris found an analogy to the nostalgia for the Golden Age of Movies in Wilder's romantic evocation of an earlier period of American journalism. Sarris contended the "mourning ... [for the] end of Hollywood and the dispersal of its once homogenic audience into individualistic enclaves in which everyone yells and no one really listens" was present in the 1974 Front Page about an era before journalism was fragmented into broadcast and print camps.

Movie Review Summary

Contemporaneous reviewers of the 1974 Front Page confirmed the presence of all nine of the American journalism myth elements identified in textual and contextual analyses of the movie. The reviews, taken from twelve national consumer and trade publications (including three journalism publications of self-criticism), mentioned aggressive, anti-academic, blunt, cynical, drinker, fraternal, and unscrupulous character traits as well as a power struggle story line and romantic vocation theme. The reviews helped corroborate what occupational myths were present in the film, in response to research question 1.

The last section of this chapter summarizes both the textual and contextual analysis findings from the 1974 film in terms of response to research questions 1A, 2A and 2B.

Conclusion

This chapter summarized the findings of textual and contextual analyses of the 1974 Front Page film that indicated the American journalism mythology, identified in literary antecedents, was carried over into the new medium. Aggressive, blunt, cynical, drinker and unscrupulous character traits of news workers, along with a power struggle story line and romantic vocation theme were found. However, the 1974 version, like its 1940 and 1931 predecessor films, included two new academic and fraternal character traits not mentioned in earlier journalism fiction research. These new traits, discovered in my initial textual analysis, were confirmed by the two other coding judges. In addition, contemporaneous film reviewers corroborated the presence of all myth elements in their brief evaluations of the movie.

Also, in response to the second research question of this study, contextual analyses of the circumstances surrounding the specific film production, as well as the general economic and technological conditions of the mass media in the seventies, indicated the importance of various outside influences in shaping and continuing the diffusion of American journalism mythology seen on the silver screen. Television emerged as the dominant news medium of post-World War II America. Newspapers and motion pictures struggled to remain competitive in the media marketplace. The news fraternity had expanded grudgingly to include electronic journalism. College-trained reporters and editors were becoming the norm with the switch to computerization causing displaced news veterans to become anti-academic and cynical. Even the graduates' glow about journalism faded a bit as they realized how aggressive they needed to be to land a job and keep it in an inflationary economy and more automated age. Motion pictures looked backwards for inspiration and profit during a turbulent decade when nostalgia seemed a national defense to the uncertainties of the seventies.

The next chapter discusses the findings of analyses of the fourth Front Page film, Switching Channels. It leapfrogged over its three predecessor movies' devotion to newspaper journalism and the historical post-World War II dominance of network television news to portray satellite cable news gathering and presentation techniques. The copyright on Columbia's His Girl Friday had lapsed into public domain by the eighties. The film company was persuaded to update what had become an accessible favorite film -- regularly aired on television and easily available for video rental. Thus the Front Page was readied for revival in a fourth film version.

NOTES

1. Ninety-nine percent of all U.S. dailies had converted to photocomposition by 1980, though a quarter of them still did letterpress printing, according to an American Newspaper Publishers Association survey reported in Edwin Emery and Michael Emery, The Press and America: An Interpretive History of the Mass Media, 5th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1984), 726.

2. Alan Marshall, Changing the Word: the Printing Industry in Transition (London: Comedia Publishing Group, 1983), 111.

3. James L. Baughman, The Republic of Mass Culture: Journalism, Filmmaking and Broadcasting in America Since 1941 (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1992), 182.

4. Jan Schaffer, "The Great Journalism Rush," Quill April 1974, 13.

5. Ibid., 14.

6. Timothy Crouse, The Boys on the Bus (New York: Ballantine, 1974), 32.

7. Ibid., 5.

8. Jean Folkerts and Dwight Teeter, Voices of a Nation: A History of the Media in the United States (New York: Macmillan, 1989), 508.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., 540-41; also Baughman, Republic, 175.

11. Folkerts and Teeter, Voices, 511.

12. Ibid., 543.

13. Ibid., 510.

14. James Monaco, "Film and Media Chronology" in How to Read a Film, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 502.

15. Edward Bliss Jr., Now the News: The History of Broadcast Journalism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 473.

16. Raymond Fielding, The American Newsreel, 1911-1967 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 309-09.

17. Louis Giannetti, Masters of the American Cinema (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1981), 314 and Steve Seidman, The Film Career of Billy Wilder (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1977), 8, said Wilder immersed himself in English by religiously tuning in baseball games and soap operas on the radio. Wilder's fascination with the ephemeral jargon he heard on daily broadcasts manifested itself in his scripts "laced with slang words and phrases."

18. Media historians have agreed generally that the 1974 Roper poll was a watershed survey in documenting shifts from print to broadcast news dominance. However, some found earlier changes in media credibility and news habits. Folkerts and Teeter quoted a 1977 Roper Organization document, "Television and Other Mass Media," 4:

By 1961, television bypassed newspapers as the most believable news medium. In 1968, it reached a two-to-one advantage over newspapers, and by 1974, the margin had widened to a two and a half-to-one advantage.

Television chronicler Barbara Matusow stated that "1963...[was] the first time more people said they got their news from television than from newspapers" in her book The Evening Stars (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983), 106.

19. *United States v. Paramount Pictures, et al* was initiated by the Justice Department in 1938 to break up what government officials considered an illegal cartel of motion picture companies. The anti-trust litigation dragged on for a decade and the final consent decree ordered the major studios to divest themselves of their exhibition houses. Also, as distributors, they were not allowed to force theater owners to bid blindly on movie rentals and package deals of feature and film shorts, nor could the studios demand block bookings.

20. John Izod, Hollywood and the Box Office, 1895-1986 New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) 138-150 and James Monaco, Read a Film, 86-89.

21. Giannetti, Masters, 19.

22. Ethan Mordden, The Hollywood Studios (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 325, 337.

23. Thomas Schatz, The Genius of the System (New York: Pantheon, 1988), 11.

24. Anthony Slide, The American Film Industry: An Historical Dictionary (New York: Limelight Editions, 1986), 366.

25. Douglas Gomery, The Hollywood Studio System (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 160.

26. Schatz, Genius, 481.

27. James Monaco, American Film Now (New York: Zoetrope Books, 1984), 32.

28. Ibid., 33.
29. Ibid., 283.
30. Ibid., 280.
31. Joseph McBride, "In the Picture: The Front Page," Sight and Sound (Autumn 1974), 212.
32. Ibid.
33. James B. Twitchell, Carnival Culture: The Trashing of Taste in America (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 156.
34. Ephraim Katz, The Film Encyclopedia (New York: Perigree Books, 1979), 1234-35.
35. Bernard F. Dick, Billy Wilder (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980), 24, 115.
36. James Venson and Greg S. Faller, eds. The International Dictionary of Films and Filmmakers vol. 4 Writers and Production Artists (Chicago: St. James Press, 1987).
37. McBride, "Pictures," 212.
38. Ibid.
39. Gene D. Phillips, "Interview with Billy Wilder," Literature/Film Quarterly 4:1 (Winter 1976), 11.
40. Doug Fetherling in The Five Lives of Ben Hecht (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Ltd., 1977), 84, reported: "...rumors that Elia Kazan was to undertake the project...came to nothing" while another film scholar stated, "Joseph L. Mankiewicz was first offered the project, but...turned it down..." Steve Seidman, The Film Career of Billy Wilder (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1977), 15.
41. Robert Bookbinder, The Films of the Seventies (Secaucus, N.J.: Citadel Press, 1982), 11.
42. The novelization, written by Ira Wallach, was twice removed from the original fiction. The cumbersome credit on the softcover reads, "based on the screenplay by...Wilder...and Diamond and the play by...Hecht and MacArthur." The back cover is devoted to full screen credits with a paragraph promoting the Universal Studios adaptation.
43. Charles Champlin, "Wilder Still Working without Net," Los Angeles Times 14 July, 1974, Calendar 1, 77-78.
44. A.D. Murphy, "Universal Pics Make Film History," Variety 14 January 1976, 1.
45. A.D. Murphy, "1975 Record Film B.O. Near \$1.9-Bil," Variety 14 January, 1976, 1.

46. Murphy, "Universal Pics," 1.
47. Roger D. Wimmer and Joseph R. Dominick, Mass Media Research: An Introduction, 2nd ed. (Belmont, Cal.: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1987), 186 stated that minimum reliability coefficient of .75 or above is acceptable when using pi.
48. Tom Wood, The Bright Side of Billy Wilder, Primarily (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970), 2.
49. Ibid., 164.
50. Ibid., 165. Also, Seidman, Film Career, 2-3.
51. Katz, Film Encyclopedia, 1235.
52. Ibid., 337.
53. David Shipman, The Story of Cinema (New York: St. Martin's Pres, 1982), 896.
54. Bernard F. Dick, Billy Wilder (Boston: Twayne, 1980), 118.
55. Joseph McBride, "In the Picture: The Front Page," Sight and Sound (Autumn 1974), 212.
56. Ibid.
57. Wood, Bright Side, 3.
58. Ibid., 2.
59. Charles Higham and Joel Greenberg, The Celluloid Muse: Hollywood Directors Speak (London: Angus & Robertson, 1969), 244.
60. Ibid., 253.
61. Don Widener, Lemmon: A Biography (New York: Macmillan, 1975), 239-40.
62. Billy Wilder and I.A.L. Diamond, The Front Page, revised final screenplay, Universal Studios, 1974, 39, 44, 48-89, 55.
63. Ibid., 72-73.
64. Dick, Billy Wilder, 111, 115-120.
65. Michael Freedland, Jack Lemmon (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 160.
66. "I.A.L. Diamond: A wicked wit of the West tosses a few darts at the New Hollywood," People 9 February 1987, 67.
67. Wood, Bright Side, 130.

68. Louis Giannetti, Masters of the American Cinema (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1981), 330.
69. Seidman, Film Career, 2.
70. Phillips, "Wilder," 3.
71. Chicago Tribune, 19 December 1974, Sec. 3, 8.
72. Seidman, Film Career, 18.
73. Maurice Zolotow, Billy Wilder in Hollywood (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1977), 219, 332-33.
74. Folkerts and Teeter, Voices, 501: "At the end of 1968, George Gallup reported that never in his time had media been held in such low esteem."
75. Unless otherwise stated, the quotes are from the contemporaneous reviews of the 1974 Front Page film: "Back number," Newsweek 23 December 1974, 79; Vincent Canby, "Wilder's Uneven film of 'Front Page,'" New York Times, 19 December 1974; Judith Crist, New York, 23 December 1974, 71; Pauline Kael, "Hardboiled Valentine," New Yorker, 27 January 1975, 94; Stanley Kauffman, The New Republic, 1 February 1975, 20, 34; Mary Knoblauch, Chicago Journalism Review, January 1975, 19-22; Halina Czerniejewski, "A Zipper Version of How It Was: Rated PG (Professional Guidance)," Quill, December 1974, 11; Richard Schickel, "Hello Hollywood, Get Me Rewrite!" [More], January 1975, 13-15; "Late, Late Edition," Time, 23 December 1974, 4; Andrew Sarris, "The Front Page: Wilder and More Wistful," Village Voice, 23 December 1974, 83-85; Variety, 11 December 1974, 18 and Colin Westerbeck Jr., Commonweal 17 January 1975, 328-30.

CHAPTER 7

1988 SWITCHING CHANNELS FINDINGS

Summary Introduction

Textual analyses of Switching Channels, the fourth film version of The Front Page play, indicated the presence of seven American journalism myth elements found in earlier novels and short stories about the news occupation. Three coding judges identified evidence of the aggressive, blunt, cynical, drinker, and unscrupulous character traits, along with a power struggle story line and a romantic vocational theme. Thus, in response to research question 1A regarding whether the journalism film myths varied from the myths in earlier popular literature, the seven occupational myth elements identified by previous fiction scholars carried over into Switching Channels, just as they had in three predecessor movies.

However, even though the Front Page motion pictures derived some of their mythology from literary antecedents, they also added new elements as well. Two other characteristics -- fraternity and an anti-academic attitude -- discovered during the textual analysis of the 1931 Front Page film (but not mentioned by earlier fiction scholars) also were cited by coding judges analyzing this 1988 remake, as well as the 1940 and 1974 versions. Therefore, in answer to research question 1B regarding any variance among the remakes, the nine myth elements cited

in the first film appeared in the three subsequent movies as well. The number of instances that particular myth elements were recorded in the textual analyses has varied among the four films, but the overall set of seven character traits, story line and general theme remained constant in the four films spanning more than fifty years.

In answer to the second research question regarding any contextual influences on the occupational myth-making changing or staying the same in the four Front Page films, Switching Channels managed to retain pre-existing mythology traced from its 1931 predecessor. Contextual analyses of the economic and technological conditions of the mass media in the eighties, as well as the 1988 film production itself, paralleled the occupational mythology found in the textual analysis.

Established mass media forged new alliances in the eighties initially to resist but eventually to profit from the emergence of cable and satellite technology. A power struggle, marked by aggressive, often blunt, and sometimes unscrupulous behavior ensued during the era as local newspapers and network television were threatened by national dailies and cable outlets in the news marketplace. Also, the news fraternity was fragmented by lingering resentment over women competing in the television news labor force. The splintering was not just between print and broadcast journalists but also within television -- between network and cable news operations. Further, the motion picture industry, which had made peace with television over dissemination of movies, now had to contend with the videocassette revolution affecting control of film consumption.

Many of the elements found in the textual analysis seemed to have been played out in the film production. A contextual analysis of the

1988 Switching Channels production, based primarily on contemporaneous consumer and trade news accounts, advertisements and biographical research on the cast and crew, indicated that many circumstances of the film making substantiated myths depicted in the finished product.

The next section discusses the actual mass media economic and technological conditions that helped shape the American journalism mythology of the 1988 movie. It begins with a description of the opening scenes that showcase the reporting feats of a star reporter and establish her competitive spirit. The section goes on to describe the effects of cable, satellite and videocassette technology on the news and motion picture industries. The section concludes with an explanation of the economic backdrop for the fourth film, made nearly fifty years after its direct inspiration, His Girl Friday.

Economic and Technological Conditions

The fourth film began with vignettes of journalist Christy Colleran in action. She was shown demonstrating her versatility in covering dangerous shoot outs, performing daring stunts and moderating political debates. Splashed as she ran in a lakefront marathon, she stared breathlessly into a camera and shouted, "Hit me, beat me, I love it, Chicago!" The opening shots of Switching Channels established her as a television news personality, maybe even a local celebrity. This update of His Girl Friday reflected the technological innovations of journalism in the 1980s and the increased visibility of women working in television news.

In the thirteen years between the release of the third and fourth

remakes of The Front Page play, news technology had advanced dramatically with the electronic variations of journalism shifting yet again. Network television news, which had gained pre-eminence over newspapers as a primary news source in the 1960s, was in danger of losing its influence. The proliferation of communication satellites and relatively inexpensive home dish antenna cable systems allowed both local stations and home viewers more control of their news sources. Network news was deemed an unnecessary duplication when local television affiliates could bypass expensive national feeds and do their own remote reporting. Journalist Ron Dorfman observed that the local TV stations operated much like newspapers had: "... local stations can share live and packaged news among themselves, much as Hearst newspapers in different cities used to cooperate without benefit of a national service."¹

Along with station satellites, and portable dishes slightly larger than umbrellas, typical journalists of the eighties had access to more communication devices than their 1930s counterparts ever could have imagined. Field reporters were supplied with portable laptop computers, battery-operated printers, cellular telephones and paging devices, shortwave radios, microcassette tape recorders, camcorders, mini color TV sets, photocopiers and facsimile machines. All this electronic apparatus helped television journalists, particularly as they vied for air time in an effort to prove their reportorial mettle and build their hard-fighting reputation:

... in television, reporters are not thought to have "paid their dues" unless they have spent long years in the field trudging through rain and snow, covering natural disasters, or enduring endless "stakeouts" in front of courthouses or embassies. These are unpleasant, exhausting, dirty assignments -- performed for

years almost exclusively by men -- and any reporter, who has not done enough of them, is unlikely to be regarded as a card-carrying journalist.²

The few women who were allowed to lug around the equipment and file live reports outside the television studios were there as a result of federally mandated affirmative action plans implemented in the 1970s by network owned-and-operated stations.

However, despite legal threats, few women were seen as reporters or news readers beyond pioneers like Pauline Frederick, Nancy Dickerson and Marlene Sanders. One of the most popular television series of the 1970s, "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," featured a fictional female news producer at a Minneapolis TV station, and dealt more with her personal life than with her professional duties. Even the one million dollar annual salary given to Barbara Walters in 1976 to co-anchor the "ABC Evening News" did little to appreciably increase the number and pay of other women in front of the camera. Writing in 1988, broadcaster Victoria Fung noted the wage disparity continued for women in her field, who comprised about one-third of the TV network news force:

...they're heavily clustered in support positions and scarce in jobs with power and authority ... They are the underclass at networks, where men's salaries run anywhere from 15 per cent to 81 per cent higher, where an unwritten double standard required female anchors to be an average of 20 years younger than male anchors and where looks often matter more than experience and credentials.³

Chronicling sexism at the network news shows, author Barbara Matusow said some women managed to succeed "over the strong objections of the majority of their male colleagues."⁴ CBS journalist Leslie Stahl was known for her dogged pursuit of a story, and early on male competitors tried to belittle her ambition by nicknaming her "Brenda Starr," after the comic-strip reporter.⁵ Aggressiveness in women was not welcomed by

the broadcast brotherhood.

Thus, the oligopoly of American Broadcasting Company, Columbia Broadcasting Company and National Broadcasting Company was being challenged from within by local affiliates' technological hubris and newswomen's legal battles for equal opportunity. Also, the Big Three faced external competition from independents like Rupert Murdoch, who started Fox Television in 1985, the newest fourth network since the Dumont Channel of the 1940s, and especially the upstart entrepreneur Ted Turner.

Cable News Network, launched from an Atlanta superstation in 1980, had a budget as austere as its founder, Turner, was flamboyant. Known for its low-paid, non-union staff, CNN nevertheless succeeded in what has been called the last journalistic frontier -- a twenty-four hour news service. Early on, the Big Three and government sources alike denied CNN access to televised press conferences and Washington press pool coverage. But over the decade, as one-third of all television owners subscribed to cable programming⁶, it gained acceptance. In 1987, CNN anchor Bernard Shaw was treated as an equal for the first time when he and the Big Three anchors joined President Ronald Reagan for a televised interview.⁷ That same year, CNN reported a \$60 million profit and grew to 2,000 employees (from an initial 300)⁸, while the networks laid off scores of veteran journalists as they tried to survive their new competition.

The television networks had become complacent about their share of the news market. It had been 75 per cent in 1981, when CBS news patriarch Walter Cronkite retired.⁹ By 1988, when Switching Channels was released, the Big Three's share had slipped 15 or 20 per cent.¹⁰

News audiences had changed their media habits, and television news had fragmented from broadcasting to narrowcasting. In 1982, ABC and Westinghouse Corporation started Satellite News Channel to thwart CNN but the effort failed.¹¹ In 1987, deregulation allowed cable operators to ignore municipal guidelines and set their own subscription fees, so cable profits soared while networks tried to stanch their red ink. Don Hewitt, executive producer of CBS-TV's "Sixty Minutes" news program, observed that the television oligopoly failed to adapt to competition:

When I came (to CBS) in 1948, if you wanted to get from here to there, the only way to get there was on the railroad tracks of ABC, CBS, and NBC. They owned the tracks. It's not like that anymore. The Big Three networks, like the Big Three car makers, have probably seen their best days. And the CNNs and the Home Box Offices and the Showtimes and the Hearst networks are to ABC, NBC, and CBS like Subaru, Toyota, Honda are to Chrysler, GM and Ford.¹²

As a consequence of the networks' failure to reinvest their earnings in long-term product improvement, they became ripe for takeover. By the late 1980s, the Big Three were all under cost-conscious new ownership or management: ABC had been bought by Capital Cities Communications, NBC was once again under the ownership of General Electric, and CBS, after two unsuccessful takeover attempts including one from Turner, was under new management from Laurence Tisch of Loews Corporation.¹³ Historian James Baughman pointed out that the networks' hegemony had been seriously weakened in the 1980s by the birth of more than two hundred cable and independent television stations.¹⁴ Further, by the mid-eighties there were more TV stations than newspapers.¹⁵ Therefore, it should not be surprising that newspapers started to imitate television, especially a new national daily that challenged the complacency of local papers in monopoly markets.

After much market research into what readers wanted in their daily

newspaper, the Gannett newspaper chain launched USA Today in 1982. Dispensed from a vending machine shaped like a television screen, the paper featured numerous four-color illustrations, many charts and graphs, more but shorter stories than dailies, and an upbeat "we (Americans)" style. A former USA Today editor, Carl Sessions Stepp, observed that the aggressive paper shook the staid newspapers into revamping their page makeup, printing and even writing techniques:

What is notable is how slow papers had been to change, hanging back in a lazy pack until the brash newcomer surged ahead and embarrassed everyone else ... In city after city, where competition was being diluted, publishers were padlocking the safes and archrivals were cozying together in joint operating agreements, USA Today swooped in ...¹⁶

Newspapers, which represented the most economically mature segment of the mass media, had experienced stagnant circulation since the 1960s and household penetration had been dropping since the post-World War II period.¹⁷ Nevertheless, many of the 1,745 dailies of the 1980s were highly profitable and ripe for takeover by multi-media and diversified conglomerates.¹⁸

The eighties, particularly, were known as the era of "merger mania" when Wall Street speculators acquired various newspapers, magazines, radio and TV stations, as well as motion picture companies. Spurred by government deregulation of communication companies such as multi-media cross ownership, investors saw media companies as cash cows ready to be milked. They financed their purchases through low-security, high-interest "junk bonds" and leveraged buyouts whereby the acquired company's earnings are used to pay off the loan used to buy it. None of this boded well for journalists.

Former newspaper executive James Squires noted that the

transformation of the news industries in the 1980s has taken its toll on the labor force and the news products themselves:

As the major news-gathering organizations have been taken over by media conglomerates -- or transformed into corporate behemoths of their own -- the price of economic success has been measured in sagging employee morale and diversion of profits away from reinvestment in product research, market expansion and employee development.¹⁹

In a bitter book subtitled, "The Corporate Takeover of American Newspapers," he grumbled about the "accountants, lawyers, investment bankers and deal makers who view and manage newspapers as if they were dry cleaners."²⁰

Ironically, the situation in television newsrooms was not much different, with circulation concerns translated in ratings and market share obsessions. A veteran broadcast observer explained that the two and one-half year average tenure of TV news directors was easily understandable given the economic pressure they face: the TV analyst characterized station management as "strictly bean counters who say all the right journalistic things but really believe it's the promotion, marketing and style of the newscasts that count, not the substance."²¹ So the idea that print journalists should follow the lead of broadcast journalists and change the way they gather and present the news had profound effects. Not content with just imitating some of the broadcast style, both USA Today and the Christian Science Monitor tried and failed with television versions of their newspapers. As much as newspapers attempted to win back a bigger share of the American news audience by mimicking TV, it seemed that motion picture companies were trying to ignore the inroads that cable television and, especially, videocassettes were making into their theater receipts.

Cable television had started to encroach on the careful trickle of feature films released by the studios for network TV viewing. Film historian James Monaco observed that 1981 marked the first time film revenues for cable television surpassed theatrical film rental revenue.²² A year earlier, the U.S. Justice Department charged Columbia, MCA, Paramount and 20th Century Fox with restraint of trade for trying to form their own pay-cable network in competition with Home Box Office.²³ The specter loomed of the Paramount anti-trust suit of the 1940s that helped bring about the demise of the studio system. Monaco noted that, in a typical mass media pattern, "the film industry had come to grips with the television industry by avoiding it,"²⁴ initially and finally decided that it was in a good position to profit from TV production, given economies of scale and cost efficiencies honed during the studio era. The same pattern of resistance and then embrace occurred in movie companies reacting to the technological innovation of videocassette formats of theatrically released films for home viewing.

The VCR revolution caught the motion picture companies unprepared. Film historian Douglas Gomery reported that at the beginning of the 1980s, only two of every 100 households had a VCR but fifty had them by 1988 with close to sixty six homes equipped by the end of the decade.²⁵ It happened as quickly as the acceptance of television swept post World War II America -- but not without a fight. The Motion Picture Association of America resisted the conversion of feature films to videotape in the early 1980s to maintain control and profits. But it was a technological force that could not be ignored. By the mid-1980s, more than 100 million cassettes were rented per month.²⁶ By 1986, a year before Switching Channels went into production, "receipts for

rentals and sales of pre-recorded tapes for the first time exceeded box-office take."²⁷ Gomery pointed out that by the end of the decade there were 25,000 movie theaters compared to 100,000 video outlets.²⁸ Variety proclaimed videocassettes "the biggest boom ... since celluloid."²⁹

With the emergence of television and video technology, the Little Three filmmakers, who had fewer capital investments in people or property than the Big Five, were able to adapt to the changing market conditions more quickly. Columbia Pictures, which produced Switching Channels, had been the first of the motion picture oligopoly to anticipate the power of television. Film historian Tino Balio observed that the conversion to telefilm production turned the tide against the independent producers of the post-war era.³⁰ As the market consolidated once again, they either went out of business or were merged with conglomerates. Columbia's foresight and success in acknowledging the interplay of motion pictures and television caught the attention of non-media investors.

Coca-Cola Corporation bought Columbia Pictures in 1982 for \$700 million with plans to apply its scientific marketing strategy to the motion picture business. Balio described the consumer goods application:

To secure more shelf space for its pictures, which is to say more theater bookings, Coke created a new brand in 1982: Tri-Star Pictures. A joint venture of Columbia, HBO, and CBS, Tri-Star's goal was to produce a steady flow of movies that would be distributed to theaters by Columbia, to pay TV by HBO and to network television by CBS.³¹

In theory, the plan was supposed to profit all three markets equally, but in reality, it did not work that efficiently. Through its distribution fees, Columbia recouped on its investment, but CBS and Time

Inc.'s HBO did not and soon sold back their shares to Columbia. This was a typical pattern of many business deals of the eighties. Business Week reported that Tri-Star, conceived by a lawyer who was a Columbia executive vice-president, had \$1 billion in start up capital.³² It was vertically integrated to take over video distribution after initial cinema release.

In 1986, Tri-Star became the largest theater-chain owners in the country when it bought 1,350 movie screens from United Artists and 229 screens from the Loews chain.³³ It somehow convinced a federal judge that its massive entry into the exhibition arena would not be in violation of the long-standing Paramount consent decree.³⁴ Despite protests on the part of independent exhibitors, the acquisitions were allowed.³⁵ They made Tri-Star the dominant exhibitor on both coasts and gave it an estimated \$100 million in real estate.³⁶

In October 1987, many of the publicly traded media stocks lost millions of dollars in value when, in the nuclear nomenclature of post-World War II, the New York Stock Exchange suffered a "financial meltdown." Coca-Cola's Entertainment Business Sector was not affected as much as others, but it nevertheless looked for ways to keep its profitability despite the collapse of the bull market. After Switching Channels was filmed (by Nelson Entertainment for Columbia), but before it was released (by Tri-Star), parent company Coca-Cola crafted a complex restructuring of its filmmaking division.³⁷ It consolidated Columbia and Tri-Star under a new umbrella company, Columbia Pictures Entertainment. Despite the merger, the two film companies were to remain separate and autonomous production and distribution entities. The investment scheme was designed to spin off Coca-Cola's entertainment

operations, while giving it 49 per cent stock ownership. All this corporate maneuvering put CPE in the perfect position to be bought out, which is just what happened. A year after Switching Channels was released in theaters and on videocassette, Sony Corporation, a Japanese electronics corporation, bought CPE and made it part of its multi-national, multi-media conglomerate.³⁸

Given the corporate conservatism that emphasized good return on investment, it does not seem surprising that Columbia would have attempted to remake its 1940 His Girl Friday in the 1980s. The journalism film genre had finally started to acknowledge television, and women employed in broadcasting. This was especially true after the success of Network in 1976. Broadcast News debuted to rave reviews and good box office revenue just a few months before Switching Channels. As has been noted in previous chapters, the recycling of ideas for films has been a basic principle of cinematic production for almost a century. The only difference in the eighties, one scholar observed, was that blockbuster movies were not necessarily the goal, rather it was "breaking even, or earning a small profit to keep the sales curve stable."³⁹ Also, with the video aftermarket perhaps riding on the coattails of theatrical rentals, film companies could recoup their costs through TV and video rights as well.

Unlike the studio system, movie deals of the 1980s were being put together by former agents and independent producers, who seemed well suited to assemble a group of actors, director and crew. Indeed, one industry insider observed that CAA, a powerful Hollywood agency, helped launch Tri-Star Pictures by "providing it with some big-name packages that a new studio wouldn't ordinarily get."⁴⁰ For Switching Channels,

eventually released under the Tri-Star banner, Martin Ransohoff seemed to be able to pull all the pieces together. He was former chairman of Filmways, primarily a television production house but also involved in magazine and book publishing. It had been rated one of the most successful independent companies of the sixties and seventies.⁴¹ It merged with American International Pictures and later became part of Orion Pictures Corporation, leaving Ransohoff free to make new deals through his old connections.

Among Ransohoff's feature film credits, he produced The Jagged Edge, a drama involving a newspaper publisher. He hired playwright Jonathan Reynolds, who had written the script for Micki and Maude, a movie about the life of a TV journalist, to do the Switching Channels screenplay. Reynolds, better known for his stage plays, was likened to "Ben Hecht with an honors degree in English."⁴² One theater critic compared his work to that of Hecht and MacArthur.⁴³ Reynolds never worked as a journalist but he had been a writer for two TV talk shows.⁴⁴ Ransohoff also hired Canadian director Ted Kotcheff, best known for action films like North Dallas Forty and First Blood.⁴⁵ Kotcheff must have felt right at home when it came time for shooting. Switching Channels, which was supposed to be set at a Chicago cable TV station, was filmed mostly in Canada.

Just as CNN owner Ted Turner used non-union labor at his headquarters in the right-to-work state of Georgia, cost-conscious American filmmakers had been turning to Canada because of its favorable exchange rate, investment tax credit and receptive film crews.⁴⁶ Interviewed in American Film, one Canadian producer listed the main benefits of filmmaking in Canada versus Hollywood, or anywhere else in

the United States: "Our exchange rate is 1.3 to 1 in your favor, our unions ... are flexible, they ... work weekends with no premiums, there's no featherbedding, and we don't have Teamsters."⁴⁷

With the threat of a Directors Guild of America strike in July 1987, all the major motion picture producers, including Columbia, went into a filmmaking frenzy. By the end of June, Variety tallied a 38 per cent increase over production schedules of the previous year.⁴⁸ Actors Burt Reynolds and Kathleen Turner were hired to play the news boss and reporter roles, respectively. The production started in April and finished in June 1987.⁴⁹ Due to the backlog of films purposefully stockpiled, however, Switching Channels was not released until March 1988.

Section Summary

The 1988 Switching Channels acknowledged the technological changes taking place in mass media and the inter-media rivalry that cable, satellite and video technology fueled. Film companies manifested aggressive and blunt traits while newspapers and network TV struggled to maintain marketshare. The news fraternity seemed split in internecine battles among print, network TV and cable TV.

The next section addresses each of the nine myth elements individually. Aggressive, anti-academic, blunt, cynical, drinker, fraternal, and unscrupulous character traits, along with the power struggle story line and romantic vocation theme, will be described both in terms of the actual textual analysis and specific references within the film, as well as through a contextual analysis of film production circumstances that paralleled the occupational mythology played out on screen.

Myth Element Analyses

This section includes both the summary of the textual analyses of the 1988 Switching Channels and the contextual analyses of its production, including descriptive evidence of circumstances surrounding the filmmaking that indicated substantiation of the occupational myths. The analyses were performed in order to answer research questions 1A: Do these myths vary from myths already identified in earlier fiction?; and 1B: Do the myths vary among the four films?; and 2B: Do any circumstances of the film production substantiate any myths portrayed?

The textual analysis was done by me initially and then corroborated by two other coders. After I did a preliminary analysis of the movie and found evidence of all seven myth elements previously identified by journalism fiction researchers, as well as two new character traits, I refined my study protocol and recruited two other judges. Both the judges had seen the 1988 Switching Channels at least once prior to this analysis, and set about independently to code for myth elements after acceptable levels of intercoder reliability were reached in a pilot study.

The tables accompanying discussion of the textual analysis of the individual myth elements summarize all three judges' findings. The tables indicate the approximate place in the tape where the manifestations of the myth elements were cited along with a brief narrative description of the particular sight and sound. The last column, entitled intercoder agreement, indicates the number of coders who noted a particular myth manifestation. The agreement is expressed as single coder notation (33 per cent), two-coder verification of the

same instance (67 per cent), and full agreement among all three coders on a particular film reference (100 per cent).

The contextual production circumstances relating to each particular myth element are presented in descriptive narrative form. The contextual evidence was culled from a wide spectrum of historical sources including biographies, advertisements, consumer and trade news accounts, as well as a copy of a re-revised first draft of the screenplay dated February 20, 1987.

The myth element findings begin with a general summary of the textual analysis in narrative form followed by tables indicated specific references to the elements cited by the coding judges. The discussion of each element ends with an examination of any evidence of contextual circumstances of the film production that may have contributed to the journalism myths presented in the movie itself.

Aggressive

Coding judges found thirty-six instances of the aggressive character trait in their textual analysis of the 1988 Switching Channels (see Table 28). As operationally defined, the aggressive myth element (including hard-fighting, driven, and ambitious character traits) was manifest in bold actions and physical movements, as well as dialogue regarding combative readiness, compelling urgency of tasks, and a strong-minded desire to compete and succeed. All three coders agreed on fifteen of those manifestations, while two of the three coders agreed on twelve other instances. Nine other manifestations were cited by single coders.

TABLE 28.-- AGGRESSIVE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time Start	Duration	Description	Intercoder Agreement
00:00:49	:03:05	Colleran jogs, drives race car.	67%
:08:30	:40	Siegenthaler runs to awaken Sullivan.	100%
:09:30	:57	Siegenthaler runs to bring coffee to Sullivan.	67%
:09:45	:57	Sullivan orders Colleran to cover Roscoe story when she returns.	67%
:11:23	:03	Driven, Sullivan defends news story during honeymoon, "You can't experience lava indoors."	33%
:11:40	1:18	Siegenthaler rushes in with pizza for Sullivan's breakfast.	100%
:12:30	:05	Siegenthaler rushes with tape.	67%
:08:21	:06	Siegenthaler dashes in with Ike Roscoe electrocution update.	67%
:15:40	:03:39	Sullivan rushes to prevent Colleran from leaving office.	67%
:17:06	:02	Sullivan pulls Bingham's sunglasses, hits Christy, puts arm on shoulder.	33%
:18:55	:15	Sullivan runs to Siegenthaler who negotiates election assignment.	100%
:19:40	:05	Sullivan beats Bingham to seat at table.	33%
:24:40	:45	Colleran runs out of restaurant.	100%
:27:40	:16	Sullivan runs to Siegenthaler to tie up other transportation.	33%
:33:21	:19	Colleran bullies warden to tape.	100%
:33:14	:02	Politician says "Mike Wallace got me" with ambush interview.	33%
:41:48	:02:05	TV rivals run, chase Colleran.	100%
:50:30	:23	Sullivan hits reporter who is trying to track Colleran.	67%

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Table 28 (con't)

Tape Time Start	Duration	Description	Intercoder Agreement
:49:00	3:00	Colleran gets Bingham down from elevator, throws tape, races into newsroom, punches newsworker.	100%
:55:47	:13	Sullivan runs to congratulate Colleran after her editorializing; Sullivan screams at station owner.	67%
01:02:20	:05	Siegenthaler runs with Bingham's dry cleaning.	33%
01:06:52	1:68	Reporters shove, push each other at execution site.	100%
01:11:55	:03	Colleran orders limo stopped.	100%
01:13:12	:03:86	Colleran tackles Roscoe as he escapes prison, helps him into newsroom to hide; calls Sullivan re. scoop.	100%
01:16:08	:12	Sullivan rounds staff into action.	100%
01:22:00	:12	Reporters rush in packs around building.	100%
01:20:40	:01:05	Reporters talk back to politician.	33%
01:22:30	:20	Colleran guards press room door.	33%
01:25:30	:01:70	Reporters rush to watch Roscoe's lawyer leap and talk to her.	100%
01:27:57	:10	Print reporter Jessica hits lawyer demanding she cooperate.	67%
01:33:27	:01:17	Sullivan and staff rush to move copier from press room.	100%
01:32:21	:01:08	Sullivan tries to buy photocopier, offers movie critic job to print reporter who owns copier.	100%
01:33:40	:15	Sullivan and Colleran scurry to get copier in elevator.	67%
01:33:58	:01:18	Reporter and news crews station themselves station selves to get to get shoot out coverage.	67%

Table 28 (con't)

Tape Time Start	Duration	Description	Intercoder Agreement
01:38:23	:05	Colleran calls Roscoe down from hiding spot, then confronts politician.	67%
01:38:30	:01:40	Siegenthaler gets to cover story.	33%

Aggressive Contextual Production Conditions

The aggression of the actor-journalists in pursuing the breaking news seemed to pale in comparison to the driving ambition of Columbia Pictures executives to get Switching Channels filmed before the threatened director's strike. Despite trade advertising that appeared in the special Cannes Film Festival issue of Variety⁵⁰ touting the film with Michael Caine prominently featured by name and in photograph, the published production schedule had substituted Burt Reynolds two weeks later.⁵¹ The executives decided not to wait for Caine to finish filming Jaws: the Revenge.

Also, the ambition of actress Kathleen Turner to play the journalist may not have been so obvious until it was reported that she was pregnant -- in her second trimester -- while running around acting as the aggressive reporter.⁵²

Anti-Academic

Coders cited five instances of an anti-academic attitude, operationally defined as making fun of the college educated and disparaging theorists (see Table 29). The trait in movie journalists

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might be manifest in speech or gestures directed toward experts and those with book learning, but little practical on-the-job training or common sense. All three judges agreed on four manifestations with two of the three judges concurring on the one other citation.

TABLE 29.-- ANTI-ACADEMIC TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Start	Time Duration	Description	Intercoder Agreement
00:09:38	:55	Sullivan re. Collieran sub, Ludlow: "God help the reporter who's read a book."	100%
:41:50	:02:00	Cameo of black reporter in TV trailer reading vocabulary-building book.	100%
:27:38	:40	Siegenthaler says he's a phys. ed. major; Sullivan says it'll be handy for running errands.	100%
01:02:25	:03	Broadcasting references to Murrow, Huntley & Brinkley are lost on Siegenthaler, whose "occupational literacy" is lacking.	67%
01:32:20	1:45	Sullivan offers movie critic job to 15-year print vet, saying "You don't even have to read!"	100%

Anti-Academic Contextual Production Conditions

Research on the film's production found no evidence of an anti-academic attitude.

Blunt

Coders cited thirty-six manifestations of the blunt character trait that included rude, rough, and boorish behavior (see Table 30). The occupational myth was operationally defined as crudeness, brusqueness, and unruliness that an average citizen might consider offensive, obnoxious, discourteous, and ill-mannered. All three coders cited the same thirteen instances of blunt behavior or references to it, while two of the three coders agreed with each other on fifteen other citations. Single coders found eight additional manifestations.

TABLE 30.-- BLUNT TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
00:01:28	:02	Fellow anchor hits snoozing Colleran.	33%
:02:19	:04	Colleran shouts to break up TV political debate.	67%
:03:33	:08	Colleran slaps hand on desk, laughs heartily on air.	67%
:09:38	:01:00	Sullivan calls Ludlow "airhead;" Colleran calls her "twinkie."	100%
:12:08	:12	Sullivan eats pizza for breakfast with feet propped on desk.	33%
:13:12	:34	Sullivan swears at Siegenthaler, who goes out to kick satellite	67%
:14:25	:05	Colleran sarcastic to Sullivan about "heavy chores of conceiving."	33%
:16:56	:44	Sullivan calls station manager "Hitler;" makes crude references to courting Colleran.	67%
:22:00	:02	Colleran calls Ludlow "twinkie."	100%
:22:45	:08	Sullivan doesn't pour beer for Colleran until she asks.	33%
:27:30	:03	When Bingham says all flights to NYC are booked, Sullivan says "Oh, the garbage strike must be over."	33%
:28:18	:10	Sullivan has feet up on desk.	33%
:30:00	:08	Sullivan talks about his relationship with Colleran as all sex.	67%
:30:50	:05	Sullivan swears, tells Siegenthaler to take Bingham shopping.	67%
:31:40	:02	Sullivan calls Bingham "dildo."	100%
:41:30	:03:07	Reporters in pressroom greet Colleran with profanities.	100%
:44:20	:05	Crude pun.	67%

Table 30 (Con't.)

Tape Time Start	Duration	Description	Inter-coder Agreement
:44:09	:03	Newspaper veteran gives finger to rival who makes fun of his clothes.	67%
:44:59	:05	Jessica utters crude reference, re. possible story.	67%
:45:20	:30	"10 p.m. to fry him" refers to execution crudely.	67%
:47:30	:30	Colleran swears, re. Bingham problem.	67%
:48:04	:02	Sullivan swears when asking about Colleran's whereabouts.	67%
48:40	:20	Sullivan puts feet up on desk.	33%
:51:14	:46	Sullivan and Christy swear at each other.	67%
:55:20	:05	Colleran swears at reporters in farewell address.	100%
:56:20	:05	Sullivan swears at station owner.	100%
01:05:00	:03	Sullivan uses profanity when talking to Colleran.	100%
01:09:21	:39	Reporters shout questions to Ike.	100%
01:12:30	:05	Reporters curse after blackout.	100%
01:15:49	:30	Colleran dumps Ike off her shoulder and he falls.	67%
01:16:16	:24	Sullivan kicks satellite dish, curses.	100%
01:17:28	:50	Reporters swear in newsroom.	100%
01:26:55	:03:05	Reporters insult police and politicians.	67%
01:38:30	:20	Rescued Ike described by reporter as "rushing to save the man going to fry him."	100%
01:39:20	:05	Sullivan insults governor.	100%
01:40:44	:25	Sullivan calls Bingham "a helluva guy."	33%

Blunt Contextual Production Conditions

Information collected on the film's production revealed no evidence of blunt, rude, rough, or crude traits.

Cynical

Coders found seventeen manifestations of the cynical character trait in their textual analyses (see Table 31). The journalism myth element was operationally defined as believing all people are motivated by selfishness. The trait ranged from distrustful doubt to overall contempt for humankind. It was manifest in sneering and scornful facial expressions in response to statements about others' sincerity and benevolence, as well as sarcastic statements, bitter mocking of others, general faultfinding and pessimism. There was full agreement among all three judges on four instances of the cynical trait while four other manifestations were noted by two of the coders. Nine instances were coded by only single coders.

TABLE 31.-- CYNICAL TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
00:08:39	:02	Colleran calls Sullivan "Ayatollah."	67%
:09:30	:05	Sullivan says summit is unimportant to viewers.	33%
:10:48	:05:06	Sullivan asks why Colleran not happy with divorce; surmises marrying rich exec means "raising little suits."	67%
:18:00	:01:19	Sullivan mocks Bingham's clothing style -- sunglasses, suit, and hair.	100%
:19:50	:03:10	Colleran insults Sullivan.	33%
:42:00	:04:10	Colleran refers to TV reporters as animals; print reporters are disparaged by TV rivals.	100%
:46:22	:50	Ike's lawyer criticizes media coverage.	100%
:48:25	:01:00	Station owner says fire is needed to boost ratings; says Sullivan has contempt for public.	67%
01:07:00	:04:12	Aerial shot of media preparing to cover execution schedule.	100%
01:14:40	:15	Colleran to Roscoe: "You just escaped from the electric chair, and you're asking me how to get to the second floor?"	33%
01:18:20	:04	When Colleran asks to borrow typewriter, print reporters say, "If it's not too 19th century for you ..."	33%
01:20:00	:01:58	When Roscoe makes noise in photocopier, Colleran says groaning sound must be "machine reading your copy."	33%
01:27:05	:02:53	Colleran and Sullivan argue over makeup: "It wouldn't help to do on-site interview	33%
01:28:58	:02	Sullivan says re. Roscoe lawyer: "If she lives, I'll give her a job; if she dies, I'll name a foundation after her."	33%

Table 31 (Con't.)

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
01:32:26	:01:26	When reporter protests unqualified to be movie critic, Sullivan says, "That's okay, they haven't changed; just go home and watch cable."	33%
01:29:15	:04	Print reporter calls tv crew an "electric parasite ... this is supposed to be a newspaper office."	67%
01:33:12	:26	Sullivan tells politician he was very "brave ... you just killed a copy machine."	33%

Cynical Contextual Production Conditions

Screenwriter Jonathan Reynolds, who had worked as a talent coordinator and writer for "The David Frost Show" and "The Dick Cavett Show," showed a rather cynical side in a quote he gave to a research directory, Contemporary Authors:

I'm lucky because I've always had just barely enough money not to have to write for television, which to me is analogous to an artist taking up house painting. I did write for television for a while, and the dedicated second-rateness of the people in the medium -- producers, performers, writers, agents -- makes me feel very comfortable and privileged to be in the theater.⁵³

Drinker

Coders cited eleven instances of the drinker character trait in the 1988 film (see Table 32). Evidence of the occupational myth element was operationalized to include talking about plans to drink alcoholic beverages as well as to quit or resist temptation. In addition to actual drinking, other film references were defined to include the presence of props or the mere sound of glasses, bottles, or ice; scenes

presence of props or the mere sound of glasses, bottles, or ice; scenes set in bars or restaurants and songs associated with bars and drinking. All three judges agreed on seven manifestations of the trait while two other citations were noted by two of the coders. Two instances were coded by single coders.

TABLE 32.-- DRINKER TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time Start	Duration	Description	Intercoder Agreement
00:08:25	:02	Liquor bottle is seen on table in front of couch where Sullivan is sleeping.	67%
:06:45	:38	Colleran sips champagne while on vacation.	67%
:17:32	:03	Sullivan gestures that Colleran drinks when he meets Bingham in lobby.	100%
:19:34	:02	Sullivan and Colleran order "shooters of Wild Turkey" at restaurant.	33%
:20:00	:25	Sullivan refers to Colleran's need for spare liver the way she drinks.	100%
:21:28	:02	Sullivan orders beer pitcher with lunch.	100%
:48:38	:55	Sullivan gets ice out of office fridge, pours liquor for station owner and self.	100%
01:02:30	:02:30	Sullivan, Colleran and other newswriters toast newscast.	100%
01:06:35	:13	When Colleran leaves, Sullivan picks up drink but doesn't sip.	33%
01:40:13	:47	Sullivan pulls champagne out of Bingham's picnic basket in pressroom.	100%
1:40:26	:30	On second honeymoon in Hawaii, they are served tropical drinks	100%

Drinker Contextual Production Conditions

Information collected on the film's production revealed no references to drinking.

Fraternal

Coders cited nine manifestations of the fraternal trait of American journalism mythology in their textual analysis of the 1988 Switching Channels (see Table 33). As operationally defined, fraternal meant being part of a closed circle of persons linked by similar duties, shared backgrounds, and a common occupation. It was manifest in visual images of physical proximity and familiarity including reacting en masse or sitting with a sense of social conviviality. The definition also included dialogue referring to off-limits exclusiveness of space and clannish differentiation from non-news workers. There was total concurrence on the three total citations of fraternal traits. All three coders agreed on six manifestations, while two coders agreed with one another on one other instance. Single coders found two other instances of the trait.

TABLE 33.-- FRATERNAL TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time Start	Duration	Description	Intercoder Agreement
00:41:50	:05:06	Colleran warns crew to watch out for rival TV reporters.	100%
:43:46	:14	Reporters greet Colleran in newsroom as comrade.	100%
:47:28	:26	Jessica tips other reporters to what phone line Colleran is using.	67%
:50:40	:15	Like a football, SNN crew tosses video tape between themselves.	33%
:50:59	:11	Non-newswriters (like Colleran's fiancé) are kept from newsroom by security guard.	33%
01:02:01	:04:51	SNN crew celebrates farewell broadcast of Colleran.	100%
01:16:00	:03:00	Reporters follow politician en masse, looking like Keystone Kops	100%
01:18:02	:11	Despite inter-media rivalry, all defer to print veteran when quoting number.	100%
01:27:18	:05:00	Consonance of news interpretation as TV reporters finish each other's sentences.	100%

Fraternal Contextual Production Conditions

An advertising spread in Variety paid homage to the original Front Page and tried to establish a strong link of camaraderie between the creators from the twenties and the producers of the eighties remake:

Sixty years ago the talents of Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur combined to create something special. It was called The Front Page. It was an occasion that introduced new possibilities for romantic comedy and served as an inspiration for a generation of future talent. These men gave a reason to rejoice to everyone who shared that special affection for farce. Next March there will be one more reason. Everyone involved in the production of Switching Channels wishes to thank Messrs. Hecht and MacArthur for making laughter an event.⁵⁴

Unscrupulous

Judges cited twenty-one instances of the unscrupulous myth element in their textual analysis of the 1988 Switching Channels (see Table 34). The occupational trait was operationally defined as contemptuous of what is right and honorable manifest in actions or speech, indicating lying, cheating, double crossing, stealing and other violations of the law. Coders revealed complete concurrence on fourteen manifestations, while three other citations were noted by a pair of coders. Single coders cited four other manifestations.

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TABLE 34.-- UNSCRUPULOUS TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time Start	Duration	Description	Intercoder Agreement
OO:14:12	:04	Sullivan fakes pinched neck	33%
:16:48	:03:12	Sullivan has false plane reservations booked.	100%
:21:32	:24	Sullivan lies in boasting about Ludlow's performance/ratings.	67%
:25:27	:01:24	Colleran blackmails warden to get exclusive interview.	100%
:26:41	:01:56	Sullivan steals Bingham's pen.	100%
:27:42	:38	Sullivan orders staff to tie up other NYC-bound transportation.	100%
:28:03	:07	Sullivan places order for athletic equipment; then arranges to have it purposely damaged so he can return it.	100%
:28:12	:01:00	Sullivan listens in on phone conversation between Colleran and Bingham; she mentions his contract antics.	67%
:30:00	:13	Sullivan looks in Bingham's briefcase	100%
:30:50	:21	Sullivan purposely misleads acrophobic to shop at tall building.	100%
:39:50	:38	Siegenthaler lies about Bingham's credit card.	33%
:44:11	:09	TV rival looks over Colleran's shoulder as she types.	33%
:47:28	:26	Press room reporters eavesdrop on Colleran phone call with Siegenthaler.	33%
:51:28	:32	Colleran accuses Sullivan of amoral tactics.	100%
:42:07	:01:33	Rival reporters try to double cross each other in pursuit of Colleran.	100%
01:14:26	:03:14	Colleran helps Roscoe escape and hides him.	100%

Table 34 (Con't)

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
01:19:00	:01:27	Colleran lies about photocopier problems.	100%
01:29:18	:40	Sullivan tries to buy copier with IOU, not cash.	100%
01:30:48	:01:00	Colleran kisses Bingham to divert him from photocopier.	67%
01:36:00	:03:16	Entrapment of politicians via unannounced videotaping.	100%
01:35:33	:03	Sullivan tears up IOU announcing he doesn't want copier with holes in it.	100%

Unscrupulous Contextual Production Conditions

A damning article in Premiere magazine had the three principal actors, Kathleen Turner, Burt Reynolds, and Christopher Reeve, denying the remarks attributed to them in "unbearably enthusiastic" press kits prepared for Switching Channels.⁵⁵ The magazine hinted at fabricated quotes in the production notes because the movie was such a box-office bomb. Reeve was quoted by Premiere as saying, "When I saw the people at Tri-Star at the press junket, I said to them, 'I don't think you people have made us sound very good. In trying to sell a comedy, you made us sound stupid.'"⁵⁶

Product placement, meaning prominent mention or sight of a particular brand name within the movie, was big business by the eighties. Therefore, the Domino's pizza box and the reference to Ampex videotape at the end seem typical of the trend to have manufacturers pay for the mention or offer free use or consumption in exchange for the

commercial plug inserted before unsuspecting moviegoers.

Power Struggle

Coders found one manifestation of the power struggle story line in the 1988 Switching Channels. Operationally defined as a conflict between the journalist and the news executive over control of the journalist's life decisions including marriage, relocation, and career changes. All three judges agreed on the single manifestation.

TABLE 35.-- POWER STRUGGLE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
00:23:00	:01:50	Restaurant with a boxing ring motif is where Colleran and Sullivan negotiate for her to do story in exchange for sports equipment contract.	100%

Power Struggle Contextual Production Conditions

In a November 11, 1992 conversation on "The Tonight Show," with host Jay Leno, actor Burt Reynolds said he got along with all his leading ladies except one, whom he declined to name. To anyone who knew anything about the circumstances of this production, it was clear he was referring to Kathleen Turner. He said that the unnamed actress tried to have him kicked off the set. Reynolds said they did not get along, and he surmised that she was upset that Michael Caine (whom Reynolds did mention by name), who was supposed to get the part, was tied up on another film. It seemed that the power struggle between news director

and reporter was nothing like the tussle going on during the filming.

As for the director's strike against film companies, Variety dubbed it the shortest of the year. It was aimed at Warner Brothers and Columbia Pictures, and it was settled quickly:

That strike, which lasted only five minutes on the west coast (13 hours and five minutes on the east coast), was settled shortly after it began when management and Directors Guild of America officials, after an all-night bargaining session, agreed to terms for a new three-year film and TV contract.⁵⁷

Romantic Vocation

Judges found one instance of the overall mythic theme of journalism as romantic, exciting, and adventurous (see Table 36). The occupational theme was manifest in scenes involving intense dramatic action and danger as well as chaotic noise like shouting, bells, alarms and gunfire. Film dialogue was included that referred to the romance of the vocation and alluded to journalism as a noble pursuit. All coders agreed on the same instance.

TABLE 36.-- ROMANTIC VOCATION TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Tape Time		Description	Intercoder Agreement
Start	Duration		
01:04:30	:41	Colleran's fiance tries to get out of pressroom. He: "You people really have a hole in your heart ... I know this is all very exciting to you ..."	100%

Romantic Vocation Contextual Production Conditions

Tri-Star Pictures' press kit contained a quote, attributed to actress Kathleen Turner (who denied she said it), that characterized the television journalism as exciting: "Overlapping dialogue from caricatures of all sorts rushing in and out, the fast pace of the TV newsroom makes for a very romantic setting."⁵⁸ A quote attributed to Burt Reynolds (and unconfirmed by him) claimed that while the film was "not a spoof on today's television news," it dealt with "mixing obsession for the job and love."⁵⁹ Regardless of who actually wrote those publicity lines, it seemed clear that Tri-Star was trying to portray journalism as romantic and adventurous.

Myth Element Summary

The three coding judges found evidence of all nine myth elements in their individual textual analyses of the fourth Front Page film. Aggressive, anti-academic, blunt, cynical, drinker, fraternal, and unscrupulous character traits as well as a power struggle story line and romantic vocation theme were cited. The blunt character trait was the most frequently coded myth element, with thirty-six citations, compared to the second most-referenced trait, aggressive, with thirty codings. The romantic vocation theme was the least cited element, with only references coded. Thus, in answer to question 1A regarding any variance in myths between literary antecedents and this film, coders indicated that the 1988 film included references to the early myth elements but went beyond the initial seven and confirmed the presence of two additional elements found in earlier Front Page films from 1931, 1940

and 1974. Overall intercoder reliability involving agreement on identification and categorization of the nine myth elements between at least two of the three coders was 74 per cent.

In response to research question 1B regarding any variance among the other Front Page films, all four movies manifest the same set of nine myth elements, though in varying proportions according to coding results. For instance, while the blunt character trait was a dominant myth element in all four films, the 1974 version contained the most references (40). In contrast, the 1931 film had twenty-nine references, the 1940 version had twenty-one and this 1988 remake had thirty-six. Switching Channels paralleled the two pre-World War II versions with the aggressive trait pulling in the second highest number of references compared to the 1974 film that coders found to have more cynical manifestations than aggressive.

In answer to research question 2B regarding any film production circumstances that substantiated the journalism myth elements portrayed in the finished movie, my research confirmed the presence of five of the nine myth elements. Evidence of aggressive, cynical, fraternal, unscrupulous character traits along with a power struggle story line within the film production context was drawn from limited historical sources on the 1988 Switching Channels. I found no evidence of the anti-academic, blunt, drinker traits or the romantic vocation theme. Of the references to five myths, the unscrupulous trait and power struggle story line yielded the most amount of evidence of production circumstances paralleling the manifestation of the occupational myth in the film itself. The cynical and fraternal traits yielded the least amount of information.

The contextual film production circumstances of the 1988 Front Page contrasted with its three predecessor movies. In the 1931 film production, I found the most amount of evidence for the fraternal trait and the least for the power struggle story line. In His Girl Friday, the inspiration for Switching Channels, I found the most amount of information for the fraternal trait and the least amount of evidence for the drinker trait. The 1974 Front Page production research yielded the most amount of information on the blunt trait with the aggressive trait alluded to the least in reference material consulted. Thus, the first three film production circumstances varied in terms of the number of myth element references as well as the amount of fairly accessible information about the specifics of the film making.

The next section is designed to corroborate the myth findings of the textual and contextual analyses of the fourth Front Page film under study. It will discuss references to the myth elements in seven magazine and newspaper reviews written at the time of the delayed release of Switching Channels in 1988.

Myth Corroboration in Movie Reviews

All journalism myth elements except the drinker character trait were alluded to by at least one of the seven contemporaneous reviews examined.⁶⁰ Aggressive, anti-academic, blunt, cynical, fraternal, and unscrupulous character traits as well as the power struggle story line and romantic vocation theme were described (see Figure 6 in the Appendix). The aggressive trait was the occupational myth element cited by the most reviewers (five of seven) followed closely by the blunt

trait, cited by four of the seven. The drinker trait was not mentioned at all and the cynical trait was alluded to by only one reviewer. Reasons why certain elements might have been mentioned or ignored will be discussed in Chapter 8.

In the meantime, the reviewer references to eight of the nine journalism myth elements reinforce the idea that the fourth film's mythology adapted elements from earlier literary forms while incorporating the newer anti-academic and fraternal traits of previous films. Therefore, in answer to the first research question regarding what myths were found in the film, contemporaneous reviewers cited traces of all but one of the earlier literary antecedents and corroborated the continued diffusion of the two newest traits found in textual analyses of the first three Front Page movies. The reviewer references to American journalism mythology will be discussed under the nine sub-categories of myth beginning alphabetically with the seven character traits and ending with the story line and overall theme.

Aggressive

Five of the seven reviewers used terms synonymous with the operational definition of aggression (including hard-fighting, driven, and ambitious). Time referred to Switching Channels's overall tone of "manic energy and toxic bite." The New Yorker described the star reporter, played by Kathleen Turner, as "gutsy," while People mentioned how she "rushed about covering beats." Time described the newswoman's ambitions manifest in "suave maneuvering" and even her walk demonstrating how she "struts in high style."

But the news director character, Sullivan, played by Burt

Reynolds, received the most mention. The New Yorker referred to his "determination," while the New York Times described him as "hard-driving" compared to People's "slave-driving news manager" characterization. Variety described him as a "crafty, manipulative boss" who "launches into a frantic campaign" against "competing newshounds."

Anti-Academic

Only one of the seven reviewers made any mention of the movie journalist's disdain for book learning and expertise based on theoretical knowledge. Referring to the insults lobbed at Collieran's replacement, Ludlow, Variety noted "emptyheaded, inexperienced TV reporters get their share of barbs."

Blunt

Four of the seven reviewers alluded to the blunt, rude, rough and crude behavior of the movie journalists. The New Yorker characterized Switching Channels' portrayal of the occupation as "often screechy ... rambunctious, sloppy," while New York enjoyed the satire of "hair-raisingly slapdash" news operations. Commonweal described "TV newsmen run around rudely." But Commonweal also lamented the use of "poor language ... verbal sloth" in the film portrayal while the New York Times review concluded with a warning about vulgar language.

Cynical

Only one of the seven reviewers alluded to traces of journalistic cynicism manifest in "Reynolds ... sardonic insincerity," according to Variety.

Fraternal

Only one of the seven reviewers mentioned any sense of journalists being part of a closed circle of persons linked by similar duties, shared backgrounds and common occupation. Time honed in on the physical proximity as "the media line up ... for the first televised electrocution" with everybody pushed into a confined space.

Five reviewers alluded to a lack of fraternal spirit. Variety mentioned the lack of esprit de corps in the "antipathy between the ink-stained wretches still working for traditional newspapers and the modern electronic generation." Three reviewers observed no fraternal attributes between the star reporter and her news boss. The New Yorker observed "Turner and Reynolds don't get verbal rhythms going, the way Rosalind Russell and Cary Grant did, and you don't really feel that they belong together." The New York Times also noted the lack of rapport and New York said "... Kathleen Turner barely makes eye contact with Reynolds ... he could be a pawnshop clerk, for all she's concerned." Commonweal found the whole movie press corps lacking "sufficient skill in repartee" and fraternal banter needed to convey unity.

Unscrupulous

Three of the seven reviewers mentioned the movie journalists' contempt for what is right and honorable manifest in unethical or illegal behavior. Commonweal noted the "... few remaining print reporters are corrupt fools despite their pretensions to greater integrity." The New Yorker singled out Sullivan as "sneaky." Time compared the 1988 movie journalists to earlier versions and determined "these journalists can be as rapacious and fallacious as the old guys,"

with Sullivan willing to aid and abet a criminal for the sake of his exclusive story.

Power Struggle

The New Yorker, Time and Variety all commented on specific aspects of the story line centering on control of the reporter's life.

Romantic Vocation

Three of the seven reviewers mentioned some aspect of the overall mythic theme of journalism as romantic, exciting, and adventurous.

Commonweal's Tom O'Brien observed that the movie makes fun of journalism while, at the same time, showing it as a noble pursuit. He traced the myth back to the Front Page play portrayals:

The Ancients, we know, were credulous. MacArthur and Hecht may be forgiven their subscription to the myth that rascally reporters serve the public by saving us from rascally politicians ... Many myths are grounded in truth. But it's all too easy for writers to invent this particular one, all too convenient for media folks to spread it.

The New York Times seemed unconvinced of the romance of the star reporter's brand of journalism and questioned whether viewers believe that Colleran "would be selling out in any measurable way by switching from SNN to AM Manhattan." The reviewer, Vincent Canby, sees little drama in the reporter's routine assignment: "Though the movie tries to persuade us that she has made a name for herself by covering wars and revolutions, she appears most at home when doing dopey human-interest features ..."

Though Colleran may have been on the verge of burnout before her vacation, the New Yorker remarked that "Christopher Reeve ... as the

square ... who doesn't know how the newspeople feel about their work" was an important juxtaposition to all the clamor for news about him.

Movie Review Summary

Contemporaneous reviewers of the 1988 Switching Channels confirmed the presence of eight of nine American journalism myth elements identified in textual and contextual analyses of the movie. The reviews, taken from seven national consumer and trade publications, mentioned aggressive, anti-academic, blunt, cynical, fraternal, and unscrupulous character traits as well as a power struggle story line and romantic vocation theme. The reviews helped corroborate what occupational myths were present in the film, in response to research question 1.

The last section of this chapter summarizes both the textual and contextual analysis findings from the 1988 film in terms of response to research questions 1A, 2A and 2B.

Conclusion

This chapter summarized the findings of textual and contextual analyses of the 1988 Switching Channels film that indicated the American journalism mythology, identified in literary antecedents, was carried over into the new medium. Aggressive, blunt, cynical, drinker, and unscrupulous character traits of news workers, along with a power struggle story line and romantic vocation theme were found. However, the 1988 Front Page remake, like predecessor films from 1974, 1940, and 1931, included two new anti-academic and fraternal character traits not

mentioned in earlier journalism fiction research. These new traits, discovered in my initial textual analysis, were confirmed by the two other coding judges. In addition, contemporaneous film reviewers corroborated the presence of all but one of the nine myth elements in their brief evaluations of the movie.

Also, in response to the second research question of this study, contextual analyses of the circumstances surrounding this specific film production as well as the general economic and technological conditions of the mass media in the eighties, indicated the importance of various outside influences in shaping and continuing the diffusion of American journalism mythology. Aggressive news organizations launched satellites into space to compete with other local, national, and independent TV stations as well as newspapers in a crowded media marketplace. Once again, the news fraternity evolved to include television journalists, later TV newswomen, and finally, cable television newswomen.

The descriptions of the general media economic and technological conditions along with specific film production circumstances in these last four chapters were responses to the second research questions of this study: what contextual conditions may have contributed to the myth making? The tables of textual evidence were designed to illustrate the occupational myths found in each of the four films through a textual analysis involving the judgement of three coders.

The next chapter reviews and interprets the importance of the myth elements as they appeared in the four films. Specifically, it addresses research question 1B regarding any mythological variances among the four films and offers possible reasons for the changes.

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**THE FRONT PAGE ON FILM AS A CASE STUDY OF
AMERICAN JOURNALISM MYTHOLOGY IN MOTION**

Volume II

By

Norma Fay Green

A DISSERTATION

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CHAPTER 8

CUMULATIVE REVIEW AND INTERPRETATION OF MYTH ELEMENT VARIANCE

This chapter answers the research question 1B: Do the American journalism myth elements vary among the 1931 Front Page, the 1940 His Girl Friday, the 1974 Front Page and the 1988 Switching Channels? This multiple case study indicated that the same set of nine occupational myth elements continued through the four movies, spanning nearly sixty years but appeared in altered states with each remake. The elements include aggressive, anti-academic, blunt, cynical, drinker, fraternal, and unscrupulous character traits. Along with a power struggle story line and romantic vocation theme, these elements are reviewed individually and collectively in this chapter.

In the first section on the element descriptions, the character traits are presented alphabetically, followed by discussions of the general story line and overall theme. They are discussed in terms of how they differ from film to film and possible reasons for why they changed. Each element description begins with a summary paragraph specifying the actual number of textual references to that element in all four films. The last section of the chapter discusses the overall patterns of the collective myth elements found in each film in terms of relative frequency as well as reliability and validity.

Review of the Myth Elements

Aggressive

Textual analyses of the 1988 Switching Channels, which featured a newswoman, yielded the most citations of aggressive behavior (36) of any of the Front Page films. The 1974 version provided the fewest references (20), compared with the 1931 version (28) and the 1940 His Girl Friday (21).

The reporters and their bosses in all four films manifested some form of the physical or psychological aggression, defined as hard fighting, driven, and ambitious behavior. The character trait included bold actions and physical movements such as running, snatching, grabbing, ripping, and badgering as well as signs of mental activities including combative readiness, compelling sense of urgency, and strong-minded desire to succeed.

While journalistic aggression continued throughout the four films, its form was exaggerated, especially when female reporters were involved. The women, operating in a male-dominated occupation, had to work harder physically to remain competitive. Despite being hampered by movement-inhibiting skirts and high-heeled shoes both women managed literally to capture their news sources with flying tackles, a technique common on the football field but not taught in Reporting 101.

All four versions showed reporters rushing to telephones. In the first three films they scrambled to action at the slightest noise while, in the fourth movie, Christy Collieran dashed out of a limousine when she saw the electricity go off at the jail.

The managing editor was the initial aggressor in the first film,

in contrast to the bold star reporter emphasized in opening scenes of the second film. In the 1931 Front Page, Adolphe Menjou, as editor Burns, moved briskly through the lair of his news kingdom to track down his errant star reporter. In His Girl Friday, Rosalind Russell, as reporter, exuded an aggressive confidence as she strutted through the newsroom to tell Burns she was quitting. Pat O'Brien's Johnson may have doubted his ability to stand up to his boss back in the newspaper office. He resigned in a telephone call from the security of his remote pressroom, unlike the female Johnson who confronted her editor face-to-face on his home turf. The final two versions of The Front Page repeated the direct, aggressive style of the reporter in the 1940 remake.

The hard fighting, driven, and ambitious characteristics of the ace reporters appeared in the way they handled the escaped convict. In the 1931 Front Page, Johnson yelled at Williams to put down the gun, pulled down the window shades, carried him to the bathroom, locked the pressroom door and phoned Burns, almost instinctively. Though the drop-in prisoner was clearly a surprise, the reporter coolly took control of the situation to guard his "exclusive." In His Girl Friday, Johnson, who already had performed a flying tackle on a news source, was even bolder. She grabbed the gun away from the escapee, pulled the shades, ran to the phone and simultaneously carried on two telephone conversations. In the third version, the 1974 Front Page, Johnson sprang into action after Williams fainted. The reporter took the gun, pulled the shades, called Burns, dragged Williams into the bathroom, searched for a tourniquet, guarded the door and stalled visitor Mollie Molloy. In the fourth version, Switching Channels, the convict did not fall into Colleran's lap. She aggressively pursued the escapee, and ended up

tackling him as he ran outside the prison grounds. She then helped him crawl over a balcony into the criminal courts pressroom. She was ambitious enough to hide her news source to protect her exclusive story.

In the relentless pursuit of a hot story, the reporters ganged up on each other and were not above pummeling fellow journalists, as seen in the first and third films, to get information out of them. The cutthroat competition and aggression of groups of reporters was perhaps best manifest in Switching Channels during the setup for the televised electrocution. In that scene, reporters pushed and shoved each other, like ancient Romans at the Coliseum, to get the best vantage point. Also, the pack journalism was spoofed as they surrounded the woman attorney who attempted suicide and especially when they chased after the state's attorney Ridnitz in Keystone Kops fashion. They ran back and forth, up and down stairs and hallways of the government building before cornering Colleran and her news director Sullivan at the elevator. Sullivan and Colleran bravely walked in front of the armed guards ordered to shoot (just as Jack Lemmon did in the third version) and the aggressive strategy worked to thwart any killing.

But physical aggression was not the only manifestation of the reporter's drive. Psychological warfare prevailed in the pressroom as reporter Bensinger was teased as a prissy hypochondriac in the first version and as a potential bridesmaid in the second version. Homophobic colleagues mocked his finicky ways in the third film. He had all but disappeared by the fourth version. Nevertheless, Bensinger represented the journalist with literary ambitions. The only reporter in the pressroom with a rhyming dictionary, he incorporated verse into his version of the crime story. In the first two films he tried to browbeat

the sheriff to move the hanging up so he could make his deadline. He was capable of brazenness despite his seemingly refined demeanor.

Possible Reasons for Aggressive Differences

The abundant aggressive behavior of Switching Channel's Christy Colleran and her news competitors might be attributed partially to the production interpretation of director Ted Kotcheff. He was accustomed to directing actions pictures such as North Dallas Forty and First Blood. The latter starred Sylvester Stallone, who was known more for his physical than verbal prowess. Also, by the 1980s, the international market was all important, so filmmakers looked for movies with universal appeal, like slapstick action rather than ponderous prose in tedious dialogue, to entertain overseas audiences.

In contrast, in knowing Billy Wilder's love of words, it is possible that his 1974 Front Page de-emphasized aggressive action to focus on the dialogue of the movie journalists, provided by Wilder and his writing partner, I.A.L. Diamond.

Anti-Academic

Textual analyses of the 1974 Front Page, which featured a new cub reporter character fresh out of college, yielded the most references (9) to an anti-academic attitude of any of the four films. Judges found the fewest citations (2) in His Girl Friday, with five references each in the 1931 and 1988 versions.

Most of the reporters and all their news bosses manifested an anti-academic bias, defined as street-wise journalists who valued practical knowledge of urban experience and regional politics along with

boundless energy and fast feet far more than any isolated book learning. Also, the myth element included a distrust of theory-based experts who lacked what pragmatic reporters considered a commonsense approach to reality.

College in general was disparaged in the first version, especially when editor Burns tried to shame Johnson not to be distracted by romance and "stop acting like some puking college boy." At the end, while saying goodbye after working together fifteen years, Burns told Johnson he would kill him if he ever reported for anyone else. Johnson turned to his fiancée, Peggy, and said, "Hear that? ...that's my diploma." To Johnson, Burns' backhanded compliment signaled his graduation from journalism school as taught on the job at the Herald-Examiner. College journalism was specifically ridiculed in the second and third films.

In His Girl Friday, editor Burns told Johnson that he was not initially impressed with her ability despite her academic credentials. The 1974 Front Page presented a whole new character, Rudy Keppler, who was eager but ignorant of crime reporting. He worked on his college newspaper in Wisconsin, not Chicago, and carried a portable typewriter but was clueless as to how to apply his academic training and tools to real-life pressroom procedures.

In Switching Channels, it could be assumed that most of the news workers have some college training, though not necessarily in journalism. News director Sullivan kept making references to past broadcast journalism heroes whom editorial assistant Siegenthaler did not know because of his age or education. When the eager news worker revealed that he was a "phys. ed. major," pragmatic Sullivan said "that's great ... we need good legs" to carry out his frantic

directives. The news director sneered at Colleran's replacement as he watched her on a monitor doing a report from outside the jail. The delivery style was fine but the substance was vacuous. As Sullivan observed, "God help the reporter who's read a book." One of the few scenes of a minority journalist showed an African-American TV reporter in his trailer practicing pronunciation of polysyllabic words as he read from a paperback on vocabulary building. While self-improvement might normally be lauded, here the action was comedic and pretentious, maybe even racist.

Viennese psychoanalyst Dr. Max Eggelhofer was the brunt of jokes in the first three films as reporters made fun of his Freudian perspective on crime. Officer Woodenshoes also was teased in the first film about his phrenology theory of criminal behavior, a pseudo-scientific concept popularized in the nineteenth century. Johnson, in the 1931 version, dismissed attempts to explain the semantic differences between prisoner Williams' anarchist stance and the Bolshevism he was accused of professing.

Being anti-academic did not mean that the journalists were anti-intellectual. On the contrary, they were often able to reason out motives for crime and find clues to the truth faster than law enforcement officials.

Possible Reasons for Anti-Academic Differences

Before the days of formal journalism education, spurred on by an industry drive for professionalism, and later, the G.I. Bill and expectations for a post-World War II generation, most reporters got only on-the-job training. College training was less important than knowing

the city. Reporters served a type of informal apprenticeship, working alongside a veteran (master) reporter, to learn the news craft. This arrangement, dating from the nineteenth century, worked well as long as there was a "low amount of canned news, individual ownership of papers, a large number of independent papers, expansion of the press (generally) and newspaper dependence on local circulation."¹ However, recruitment conditions had changed drastically by the Depression, when news jobs were harder to come by and keep. While news organizations still looked for young people, willing to work for low wages in entry-level positions, they did not want to waste time and money training them in basic news principles. An editor might choose a job candidate with a journalism diploma, presuming a certain level of vocational preparedness and, therefore, labor efficiency.

By the time that Billy Wilder and I.A.L. Diamond wrote the third film, journalism schools were burgeoning.² Perhaps Wilder, who had dropped out of college, wanted to knock the chip off the collective shoulder of an idealistic generation of journalism school graduates. One of Wilder's biographers observed that the film makers' view of the world was "informed by a strong sense of the past either in its culture or in terms of generational conflicts."³ Perhaps Wilder, who was known for his cynicism, wanted to remind moviegoers with little historical sense that there was more to American journalism than the contemporary glorification of investigative reporters like Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward. It is possible that he wanted to show a more negative image, like his 1951 Ace in the Hole,⁴ and remind would-be journalists of some of the not-so-proud traditions of the American news business. A Wilder biographer noted that most of the director's films of the seventies

showed a "marked preference for the values of the older generation."⁵ Because much of the earlier generation of journalists was not college trained, Wilder and Diamond may have created the greenhorn Rudy Keppler as the perfect foil for the jaded Johnson, indoctrinated at the "Walter Burns School of Journalism." Keppler may have had a college education but he was still wet behind the ears and other places (he wet his pants at the sound of gunfire in the courthouse). Clearly Keppler's journalism degree was no measure of his street-smarts.

Reporter Bensinger also seemed to suffer from other journalists' anti-academic bias, particularly in the first three versions of The Front Page. Bensinger, portrayed as the most bookish and aesthetically sensitive of the crime reporters, may have been the scapegoat for the insecurities of the newsmen-turned-screenwriters, according to at least one film scholar. Vito Russo saw Bensinger as the "yardstick sissy ... made to do all the things that intellectuals are caricatured as doing."⁶ Russo claimed that the Tribune reporter was a personification of the media industry's ambivalence:

The rough, no-nonsense masculine image of the film business was constantly at odds with its reputation for feyness, just as was journalism. The sissy was used onscreen and off, as both scapegoat and weapon, to expose a mistrust of brightness or wit in men...⁷

Thus, Bensinger might have been created to ridicule pedantic behavior and assuage the inadequacies of screenwriters, who were shown little respect for their skills by either studio bosses or their bygone news editor. Outside of academia, the world of news and entertainment did not seem to know how to handle men with a scholarly bent.

Possible reasons why fewer contemporaneous film reviewers mentioned the anti-academic trait than any other myth element were

either that it was too subtle (and reviewers were too myopic to notice the attribute) or too obvious (perhaps a sentiment shared by most moviegoers and taken for granted). Also, most likely such an attitude was not relevant given the film critic's time and space constraints in a review.

Blunt

Textual analyses of the 1974 Front Page yielded the most references (40) to blunt behavior of any of the four films. Judges cited the fewest references (21) in His Girl Friday, with 29 citations in the 1931 film and 36 in the 1988 version. Movie journalists in all four films demonstrated some form of blunt behavior that average citizens of a particular era might consider to be impolite and lacking in decorum. Such crude, rough, and rude actions included swearing, throwing office objects such as telephones and mops, as well as sitting with feet propped up on a desk, for instance.

In the first three films, the reporters wore hats or caps indoors, which was considered ill-mannered for the pre-World War II era depicted. Also, they showed a lack of etiquette and courtesies typically bestowed on women of the time, whether they were Mollie Molloy the prostitute, Johnson's fiancée or his would-be mother-in-law. Indeed, Mrs. Grant, as a paragon of gentility, seemed the perfect foil, much like actress Margaret Dumont was to the Marx Brothers' antics. Mrs. Grant had vanished by the last two versions, leaving hypocritical government officials to manifest outrage at the rough and raw behavior of journalists.

The vulgarities of the 1931 pressroom talk gave way to more sexual innuendos in the 1940 version. Movie reviewers considered the 1974

version to be the crudest, based on its profanities alone, though few critics mentioned the many expletives in the subsequent 1988 film. Switching Channels included equal opportunity swearers, particularly the foulmouthed female reporter, Jessica. The blunt behavior, manifest in the crude language, was alluded to in the 1931 Front Page when Johnson told his fiancée that he would reform and give up swearing and all other bad behavior associated with news work. Comparing the four films showed that little changed in terms of blunt behavior of the journalists. What did seem to change over time was shocked reaction to it, especially on the part of journalists critiquing the various versions.

Possible Reasons for Blunt Differences

The Motion Picture Production Code, adopted by the industry in 1930 and in force until the mid-fifties, had clauses on vulgarity, obscenity, and profanity -- all marks of rough, rude, and crude behavior. The code even specified words that could not be used in films. Nevertheless, some of the forbidden terms got past the industry censor in the first Front Page, including "hot (applied to a woman)," "in your hat," and "whore."⁸ Also, "toilet gags," like the reporters teasing the sheriff about where to find the escaped convict, were supposed to be excised by industry watchdogs. The code also noted a list of words or phrases "obviously offensive to patrons ... in the United States and ... in foreign countries."⁹ Despite being on the unapproved list, the 1931 film included the term "nigger," which was changed to "colored" in the 1940 and 1974 versions. The term "pickaninny" was used in both versions made in the thirties and was not on the code list of ethnic and racial slurs.

Film critic Pauline Kael asserted that Hollywood made the screenwriters blunter than they had been as rough-and-ready newsmen. She observed that "in New York, they may have valued their own urbanity too highly; faced with the target Hollywood presented, they became cruder and tougher, less tidy, less stylistically elegant."¹⁰

The motion picture industry production code relaxed over the decades including the censorship of blunt language in films. United States Supreme Court rulings on obscenity began to usurp the authority of the P.C.A. in the Fifties. The code's profanity clause was challenged in the sixties and, by the seventies, the code had been replaced with a ratings system geared to a movie's suitability for a certain age group.

The Front Page of 1974 received a PG rating, meaning "Parental Guidance advised for children -- but all admitted." It was not particularly violent, nor did it have any explicit sex scenes that might have earned it a restricted rating. But it was full of expletives and profanities and curses, so many that even the contemporaneous reviewers of the movie complained about the gratuitous swearing.¹¹ Film researchers have noted that cursing in the movies increased dramatically after the ratings system began but "reached a certain plateau" from the seventies to the early nineties.¹²

The blunt character trait of American journalism mythology reflected the tenor of the times. Film scholars asserted that the changes to blunter language in motion pictures reflected the shifts in American culture to different forms of insult and taboo over this century.

Cynical

Textual analyses of the 1931 Front Page yielded the most references (27) to cynical attitudes of any of the four films. Judges cited the fewest references (15) in His Girl Friday, with 17 references in Switching Channels and 22 in the 1974 Front Page.

The facial expressions, gestures, dialogues, and singing of the journalists in all four films suggested their cynicism. The cynical trait was defined as a sense of sarcasm, bitter mocking, pessimism, distrust of people's motives -- particularly politician's -- and contempt for others.

Reporter Johnson's disillusionment with the news occupation was manifest in his 1931 farewell address that described reporters as a "bunch of buttinskis, swelling around with holes in their pants, borrowing nickels from office boys! And for what? So a million hired girls and motormen's wives know what's going on." The 1940 and 1974 versions had variations of that dialogue, with the speech eliminated in the 1988 film. The speech in the first and third films was directed to fellow reporters, while a similar speech in the second film was addressed to the managing editor.

Each version indicated cynicism for marriage and family, while the first and third versions particularly manifest misogynist attitudes. Burns, in the first film, had contempt for everyone, from the politicians and prostitutes he encounters to his own staff. The managing editor cursed his city editor, Duffy, for not being at his beck and call because the man's diabetes (and implied frequent urination) took him away from a telephone vigil. Burns also disparaged his tough guy Diamond Louis for ineptitude in losing his hostage, Johnson's

potential mother-in-law. Burns railed at circulation employee Butch who was reluctant to interrupt his amorous encounter for Burns' assignment in the pressroom. Also, Burns displayed disgust for Johnson's seeming preoccupation with anything other than reporting. The managing editor, as played by Menjou, saved some of his best scorn for women, including Johnson's fiancée, her mother and, especially, Burns' ex-wife. In the third version, the Diamond Louis and mother-in-law characters were eliminated, but the news workers never seemed to run out of cynicism.

In the second and fourth films, which involved women reporters as protagonists, the news bosses made fun of their own marriages and divorces from the reporters. Nevertheless, they respected their former wives as competent colleagues and did not seem to harbor the hatred of women shown in the 1931 and 1974 versions. In His Girl Friday, the reporters made fun of Johnson's lack of domesticity and expressed disbelief in her ability to be content with marriage and a family life outside journalism. In the 1988 film, Sullivan teased Colleran about her ability to adjust to a Yuppie lifestyle and career switch to a morning TV news show. Most of his sarcasm was directed, however, at shallow people and those he deemed incompetent or wrong-headed, including Colleran's fiancée, reporter Ludlow, and his own boss. Station owner Themistocles Berger said he wanted less smut and more fires on his programs. He accused Sullivan of having contempt for his audiences.

Considering the often gruesome and macabre events that reporters routinely covered, such as hangings and executions, along with daily exposure to crime, corruption and injustice, it should come as no surprise that cynicism surfaced. Also, the ubiquitous and irreverent "gallows humor," part of the occupational argot, contributed to a

protective coating, accompanying pessimism about the human condition. Newspaper terms such as "bleed," "break," "deadline," "graveyard shift," "hellbox," "kill," "morgue," "tombstone," and "widow" reflected a preoccupation with death and dying. The broadcast world continued the violent verbiage with frequent references to "cut," "shoot," and "dead air."

Possible Reasons for Cynical Differences

Film historian Eric Rhode suggested that movies of the Thirties reflected the disillusionment brought on by the Depression coupled with the specter of world war:

Most of the themes stem from a distrust of the professions and civic authorities and reveal a half-veiled sympathy for the criminal, an ironic involvement with the American need to get rich quick and a wish to acknowledge the damage the First World War had done to the spirit of the nation.¹³

The first Front Page film director, Lewis Milestone, had won an Oscar for his unromantic depiction of World War I in All Quiet on the Western Front. The cynical cinematic portrayal belied the optimism and patriotic promise of fighting "the war to end all wars." Rhode observed that the first Front Page film stuck closely to the original play, which alluded to the "Red Scare" era of anti-Bolshevik feeling in America right after the first World War. He noted that Milestone "emphasizes ... the heroism of its anarchist prisoner ... and the social background of each of the characters who erupt into the reporter's room at the condemned man's prison."¹⁴ The director, a Russian emigre, was characterized as more political and pessimistic than most American filmmakers.

The differences in the cynicism of the two Front Page films made in the thirties may be attributed to a change in attitude to a more

apolitical stance, on the part of film makers by the end of the decade. Rhode observed that the motion picture industry seemed slow to "realize how the threat of war and the loss of foreign markets had affected its box-office return."¹⁵ Also, the disenchantment of screenwriters who had been journalists, uncovering government corruption and incongruities in democratic principles and practices especially as it played out in daily examples of urban life, probably contributed to the cynical myth element found in the films they helped create. Just as Hildy Johnson seemed ambivalent about journalism so were the former news writers about their new careers and the jobs they left behind:

Hollywood paid them so much more money than they had ever earned before, and the movies reached so many more people than they had ever reached before, that they were contemptuous of those who hadn't made it on their scale at the same time that they hated themselves for selling out.¹⁶

The personal bitterness that many of the screenwriters felt was reflected in occupational mythology of the Front Page films they scripted.

Drinker

Textual analyses of the 1988 Switching Channels yielded the most references (11) to journalists drinking of any of the four films. His Girl Friday contained the fewest citations (2), with ten references in the 1974, and nine in the 1931 versions.

The drinker myth element, involving consumption of alcoholic beverages, ranged from one who drinks to be sociable without seeming to show any effects to a drunk who has lost control and is inebriated to a compulsive drinker who actively seeks alcohol to drink in excess. The character trait as operationally defined included talk of plans to drink or quit drinking or resist temptation. Other references coded in the

textual analyses of the four films included the prevalence of props such as glasses, bottles or ice, or the mere sound of them; a scene set in a bar or restaurant; a song associated with bars and drinking sung or played.

The consumption of alcoholic beverages by journalists was mentioned in all four film versions. All but one movie actually showed liquor bottles and newspeople imbibing. The 1931 motion picture was made two years before Prohibition was repealed. While drinking was not actually observed in the pressroom, a bottle was thrown from the window and, in a later scene, editor Walter Burns handed a pocket flask to reporter Hildy Johnson as he typed a story. The Constitutional Amendment designed to prevent the manufacture and distribution of alcoholic beverages had failed to stop citizens from drinking. Illegal establishments, such as Pollack Mike's speakeasy shown in the 1931 movie, were commonplace.

The 1940 film was the most discreet of the remakes regarding alcohol consumption. Rum was only mentioned and its presence was disguised (and diluted) in the coffee both Burns and Johnson ordered with their lunch. The 1974 movie offered the most prominent display of liquor bottles, visible throughout most of the scenes set in the pressroom, and the actual drinking by all the reporters present. The 1988 remake featured drinking by the staff in the newsroom, in the news director Sullivan's office, in the courthouse press room and while on vacation. Clearly, it was a sanctioned way of the work world, as Sullivan had a mini-bar in his office where he mixed drinks for himself and the station owner, who poured liquor from a cane he carried. Reporter Colleran joined her fellow newswomen in a toast after her

supposed farewell broadcast. Though she poured herself a beer at lunch, she barely had time to sip off the foam before dashing off to interview the convict.

Possible Reasons for Drinker Differences

The Motion Picture Production Code, in effect from 1930 through post-World War II, seemed to have been a major force in toning down the depiction of the myth element of news worker's drinking in the first two film versions. Fearing that the new dimension of spoken dialogue would allow for more literal translations of liberal subject matter from plays and books, religious leaders and socially conscious reformers pressured motion picture producers and distributors to adhere to some ethical guidelines.¹⁷ One of the provisions of the code, adopted a year before The Front Page was first filmed, stated that "the use of liquor in American life shall be restricted to the actual requirements of characterization or plot."¹⁸ In an excellent analysis, Hollywood Shot by Shot: Alcoholism in American Cinema, author Norman Denzin observed that the production code restrictions set the pattern for how drinking could be portrayed. The first version of The Front Page fit into the four-stage process Denzin identified in most movie representations of drinking:

1. Central character is characterized as having a problem with alcohol.
2. Narrative shows main character drinking, not drinking, trying to stop drinking, sometimes drinking again, being tested by a crisis situation, not drinking and finally establishing a sober or drunker lifestyle.
3. Sobriety is accomplished by: a. loving care of another; b. spiritual experience; c. intervention of treatment centers and Alcoholics Anonymous; or d. will-power.
4. End of film positions alcoholic either back in society, with family and job, or outside society, leaving family and work behind.¹⁹

Much like closing the barn door after the horses escaped, a newsman wrote a 1946 article complaining about the motion picture representation of journalists as drinkers. His article came after the most popular decade of journalism films in the nascent sound film industry. The author, Milt Phinney, who was a newspaper feature writer and past president of the Los Angeles Newspaper Guild, wanted his brethren screenwriters to make distinctions between on- and off-duty indulgences:

Newspapermen drink, certainly. But they don't drink on the job and last very long. Some of them, on beats and away from the office, may get away with it for a time. but I've seen too many of them bounced to think that drunken reporters are the rule ... Usually with a shift that goes off at 4 p.m., the drinking starts about 3, and then the boys hang around till 5 or 6 -- but they're not working.²⁰

The newspaper film genre waned after World War II, and watchdog Phinney would have to wait almost three decades before the key paradigm of the genre, The Front Page, was remade by Billy Wilder with his co-writer, I.A.L. Diamond. The two screenwriters were trained in the old school of two-fisted drinking imagery and, by 1974, were trying to stage a comeback with exaggerated references to earlier journalism mythology. Lost Weekend, Wilder's 1945 film about a writer who goes on a drinking binge, became a classic.²¹ It set the standard by which future dramatic films about problem drinkers were judged. His comedies, like The Front Page of 1974, depended on hyperbole.

The two most recent remakes reflected the withdrawal of the M.P.P.C. in favor of a more liberal ratings system geared to specific audience age groups. Also, by the 1970s, social mores had changed. A younger generation turned away from the expensive hard liquor and mixed drinks of their parents to consume beer and wine and experiment with

marijuana. A physician, Donald Goodwin, chronicled a link between alcohol and writers and found a shift in consumption took place after World War II and during the Vietnam era. He quoted from a 1979 National Council on Alcoholism forum on drinking writers, at which "the Front Page tradition was much discussed:"

[Roger] Kahn said: "Heavy drinking was socially acceptable in journalism, certainly in an earlier generation before there was so much pot ... Ring Lardner Jr. agreed. Heavy drinking was common on ... newspapers in the thirties when he became a reporter and was probably even greater in his father's day, he said."²²

Dr. Goodwin noted that the myth element of drinking seemed to be a self-fulfilling prophecy for some news workers: "journalists as well as novelists have a tendency to mythologize and romanticize alcoholism."²³ But the 1979 forum participants concluded that the volume and type of drinking among reporters was less and of lower alcohol content than in the past. The 1988 Switching Channels ran the gamut from a low-brow pitcher of beer in one scene to an elegant split of champagne in the pressroom.

The drinker myth element in the four Front Page films ranged from open drinking, first in illegal establishments and later in the boss' office, to clandestine consumption in the guise of press room mouthwash or enhanced coffee. His Girl Friday was the most discreet, with no visible consumptive evidence, just allusion to an alcoholic additive in the restaurant coffee. The 1974 remake featured a free-flowing bar in the pressroom, much like the off-stage amenities provided by director Lewis Milestone for the first film's cast. The drinker element of occupational mythology about American journalism flowed through all four movies.

Fraternal

Textual analyses of the 1988 Switching Channels yielded the most references (9) to fraternal behavior of any of the four films. The 1974 Front Page contained the fewest citations (3) with 6 for the 1931 version and 7 in His Girl Friday.

The character trait was defined as movie journalists who regard themselves as part of a closed circle of persons linked by similar duties and shared backgrounds. It included visual images of physical proximity such as sitting with a sense of social conviviality, and pack journalism with reporters moving en masse in reaction to some exterior stimulus. The fraternal element also was manifest in speech referring to certain space or tasks off limits or too difficult for people deemed outsiders as well as clannish or clubby differentiations between journalists and others.

All four films showed journalists acting fraternally toward one another. There was a clubhouse atmosphere, particularly, in the first version that was filmed almost exclusively in a single room. It opened with reporters sitting around a table playing cards with others close by making phone calls or strumming a banjo. In this casual atmosphere, they confided their laments and ambitions to one another and gossiped about absent colleagues. When Johnson arrived, he forgave the card players their outstanding debts to him. Everyone was nonchalant when Johnson undressed down to his underwear in their midst. No one told the sheriff who threw a pail out the window, when he came looking for the culprit. Instead of betraying fraternal confidences, they sang to mock the sheriff and excluded him from their inside humor.

Women were clearly unwelcome in the pressroom, a dumpy place with "girlie" pictures on the wall. Citing some generally agreed-on clubhouse rule, Bensinger questioned Molloy's presence and she was eventually thrown out. Later, Burns did his best to get rid of Johnson's fiancée and future mother-in-law. Even the cleaning lady was shooed away.

The second version introduced a woman reporter in the pressroom. To gain admittance, though, it appeared she had to wear a mannish suit and hat. Even though the male reporters made fun of Johnson's hat, they admired her work and could not imagine her giving up the news profession and pressroom privileges to marry an insurance man and become a mother. She referred to herself as a newspaperman and, in one of the final scenes, the reporters and sheriff all called her by her last name as they would a man, not a woman. While the male reporters made bawdy comments, Johnson seemed to know how to hold her own in the pressroom. She called them a "bunch of old ladies" when they gossiped about her and peeked at her copy while she was gone. Yet the 1940 film showed collaboration. The other reporters were willing to fill in Johnson on details of the hanging. So the fraternal disorder of reporters walked a fine line between competition and cooperation.

The 1974 Front Page offered the most visions of the press room as a private social club. All the reporters openly drank and many smoked cigars. They all played cards and broke into song. Again, the male conviviality did not extend to Molloy or Peggy Grant, who looked waif-like and out of place in the news saloon.

In the fourth version, Collieran and her audiovisual crew acted as a self-contained mobile fraternity of news workers. They fended off

rivals and met deadlines through finely choreographed cooperation as when they played hand-off football with their precious videotape. In the courthouse press room, reporters greeted Colleran as a comrade, but their competitive spirit seemed stronger when they tried to peek over her shoulder at her computer copy and listened in on her phone conversation.

By the eighties, the wildly different versions of the same eyewitness accounts of Molloy's leap and Earl William's capture had been reduced to consonance. The television reporters were able to finish each other's sentences as they all gave a seemingly identical version of the incident. Also, despite the rivalry between the print and broadcast factions of the press corps, all deferred to a newspaper veteran on a minute detail of the Roscoe escape. They made fun of the veteran newspaperman's clothes and yet, when it came time for fact-checking, they looked to him for accuracy and he provided a wrong number.

If the courthouse press room was off-limits to non-news people, the newsroom was even unfriendlier. In His Girl Friday, Johnson's fiancée waited outside the knee-high wooden railing with a "No Admittance" sign on the gate. In the 1988 version, an armed guard was not above frisking would-be visitors trying to get past the public lobby in Switching Channels.

Possible Reasons for Fraternal Differences

The 1931 film focused on the closed circle in which the journalists operated with its staging and limited exterior shots. Because director Lewis Milestone deviated only slightly from the original play, almost all the action took place within the confines of

one room. Historian Eric Rhode noted that Milestone was "less devoted to keeping the narrative on the move than to insisting on the physical relationship of the characters to their surroundings and on the sculptured presence of heads in close-up."²⁴ Indeed, art historian Anne Hollander found visual reference to Rembrandt's painting of a seated group of uniformly dressed Dutch guild members in Milestone's composition of the pressroom scene and placement of reporters around a table.²⁵ They were in close proximity to one another and yet a breed apart from the world outside the pressroom.

Journalist Timothy Crouse described his experience as part of an entourage of reporters covering a political campaign as "trapped ... they ate, drank, gambled and compared notes with the same bunch of colleagues week after week."²⁶ While he was referring to the seventies, his description could apply to decades before and after his own adventure in a press corps. Given the long and irregular hours that journalists worked or were on call, there was very little social life outside the pressroom. Therefore, they got to know each other well and saw their colleagues more than any family they may have had. Indeed, one historian noted that "marriage, if not condemned was further complicated by the erratic work schedule"²⁷ and that editors discouraged marriage "to the extent of threatening to cut ... salaries or discharging them if they married."²⁸

Given the relatively close environment in which they worked, it should come as little surprise that they would marry their own kind. Also, given the unpredictable work schedules and conflicts of working closely together, it should come as no surprise that they divorced each other as well, like both Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur had done with

their first wives, who happened to be reporters they met on the job in Chicago. Nevertheless, the news fraternity, for all its traces of misogyny, seemed to prove that good journalism was genderless. Hildegard Johnson was admired as a semi-sob sister writing a sympathetic account of the condemned man's rationale for killing, while Christy Colleran editorialized to sway public opinion to save the condemned man's life.

Newswomen were grudgingly admitted to the former all-male pressrooms, but the few who entered did not seem to tame the Bohemian atmosphere and make the dreary place any more homelike. Only Bensinger of the first three films stood aloof with his domestic baggage of a huge, Victorian rolltop desk. He did not join in the card games and acted proprietary about his phone and desk. He was alienated in his attempts to domesticate the pressroom, and ridiculed for his use of pink toilet paper in the 1974 version.

By the fourth film, the fraternity of the reporters was reflected in how they covered the attempted suicide. The consonance, missing in the previous three films, might have been due to industry consolidation. There were fewer independent news organizations than in previous times, with more information pooling, more syndicated and shared news. Also, there appeared to be strength in numbers. The world had become a much more unfriendly place, with weapons checkpoints in courtrooms and airports. Police no longer walked the beat as much as they rode in patrol cars, while reporters often worked in windowless rooms detached from the outside world. They had to rely on each other, and collaboration began to show up in the second version and was spoofed in the fourth version.

Film critic Pauline Kael found that while journalist-turned-screenwriter Herman Mankiewicz lured former newsmen to Hollywood with talk of fabulous wages, fraternity was the underlying motive: "the bait that brought the writers in was money, but those writers who ... helped set the traps had their own reasons: conviviality."²⁹ The myth elements of fraternity manifest on the screen were at the heart of the screenwriters' work that relied so much on collaboration to succeed. Kael noted that they were "dependent on the fun and companionship of joint authorship ... within a few years they were rewriting the remakes of their own or somebody else's rewrites ... They were a colony--expatriates without leaving the country."³⁰ They worked in a small world, so the overlap among the first three films was not surprising.

The screenwriters and directors of the first three films had worked with one another on other projects. The hand of Ben Hecht is believed to have been present in the first two screenplays, though he received no official screen credit.³¹ He and Charles MacArthur knew the first film scenarist, Bartlett Cormack, from their Chicago newspaper days. Hecht was mentor to Charles Lederer who was credited with additional dialogue help on the first film and took sole screenwriting credit for the second version. Howard Hawks, who directed His Girl Friday, admired Hecht and MacArthur and is believed to have worked with Hecht and Lederer on the 1940 screenplay.³² Also, I.A.L. Diamond had worked with Hawks, Hecht and MacArthur on scripts, while Billy Wilder knew them all through Hollywood socializing.

Unlike the interconnected film making fraternity of the first three Front Page movies, the 1988 Switching Channels film had no direct personnel links to previous remakes. Jonathan Reynolds (no relation to

Burt Reynolds) was the screenwriter for the 1988 version. Though following in the footsteps of other Broadway playwrights-turned-screenwriters, he had never worked as a journalist and so did not write about the news fraternity from personal experience.³³

In a 1985 interview, veteran scenarist Diamond lamented that contemporary screenwriters worked in isolation: "Today, writers work out of their own homes and rarely get to meet other writers. It's a pity."³⁴ The camaraderie of the studio screenwriters was missing in the modern remakes. By the eighties, with satellite news technology and cable news programs proliferating, the news fraternity was fragmented into tiny, self-contained mobile units of television crews. They were dispatched to cover events and protect each other from competing teams as they raced in neatly choreographed coordination to meet the ever-approaching deadline.

As much as the news gang loved to taunt outsiders, it also made hierarchical distinctions within -- between veterans and novices, and especially between print and broadcast newsmen. Switching Channels embodied evidence of the internal rivalry yet ultimate inter-reliance of one medium upon another. Despite the dispersions cast on the newspaper reporters in the pressroom, old-fashioned tools of the print trade inadvertently helped Christy Collieran get a scoop and save a life.

The innocent-looking pen she carried into the broadcast interview in the prison later was used by the convict to escape. Also, the prosaic writing instrument required no electricity and would never have contributed to the prison power outage caused by television news equipment overloads. Further, as much as broadcast reporters sniped at newspaper reporters, Collieran found herself having to rely on an

antiquated but adequate typewriter when her portable computer was unavailable. The fraternal synergy between the supposed warring tribes of print and broadcast journalism was present but subtle.

Each of the four motion pictures demonstrated some sense of the fraternal element of American journalism mythology. The reporters stuck together against their bosses and, when the chips were down against politicians, for instance, all the journalists -- reporters and managers alike -- banded together.

Unscrupulous

Textual analyses of His Girl Friday yielded the most references (25) to unscrupulous behavior of any of the four films. The 1974 Front Page included the fewest citations (15), with 19 references in the 1931 version and 21 in the 1988 movie.

The on-screen newswriters demonstrated contempt for what was right and honorable, a key characteristic of the occupational myth element. All four films of The Front Page featured journalists who lied, deceived, bribed, blackmailed, doublecrossed, cheated, stole, and accepted graft. While reporters behaved unethically and illegally, their news bosses lacked the most scruples.

Managing editor Walter Burns, who appeared in the first three films, set a false fire alarm in the 1931 Front Page, and framed Johnson's fiance on mashing and passing counterfeit money in the 1940 film. In the 1974 remake, Burns plotted an illegal photograph of the hanging, got schoolboys to play hockey to deliver the extra edition, impersonated a probation officer, and fabricated a family to embarrass Johnson at the train station.

By 1988, editor Burns had been succeeded by Switching Channels television news director John L. Sullivan IV, who managed to live up to the mythological legacy of unscrupulous news administrators. In this fourth version, Sullivan booked all New York-bound flights with bogus airline reservations called in by his staff. He stole the pen of Colleran's fiancée and looked in his briefcase. He plotted a deceit to trap his rival. Sullivan was not above dirty deals, which Colleran hinted at, such as signing a fictitious name or date to a contract. So it should come as no surprise that he agreed to buy athletic equipment but arranged to have it scuffed up and stomped on when it arrived so it could be returned as damaged goods. He attempted to buy the pressroom photocopier with an IOU that he claimed was better than cash and then, after the machine was bullet-ridden from a police shootout, he refused to accept it. Colleran and Sullivan secretly taped an incriminating conversation between two public officials. Using a hidden video camera to record the words and expressions of the politicians might be construed as unethical entrapment but, clearly, it was too tempting for them not to try.

Yet it cannot be overlooked that the ace reporter in each case was the one who hid an escaped prisoner. The journalists faced charges of aiding and abetting an escaped criminal, but the ultimate unscrupulous act seemed to be the final doublecross by Burns, who gave his pocket watch to Johnson as wedding present and then reported it stolen. This action was found only in the first and third versions. The second film ended with Johnson and Burns to remarry and go on a honeymoon convenient to a labor strike, while the fourth version went further, showing the remarried pair honeymooning near an erupting volcano. Colleran looked

at Sullivan accusingly and the viewer was left wondering if the conniving news director planned the trip purposefully to coincide with the news event.

In all four films, the news manager was the most unscrupulous of all the movie journalists. While the reporters were not above unethical and illegal behavior, they had much to learn from the masters of the unscrupulous myth element.

Possible Reasons for Unscrupulous Differences

The Motion Picture Production code, in force through the first two film versions, stated that "the sympathy of the audience shall never be thrown to the side of crime, wrongdoing, evil or sin."³⁵ Nevertheless, the unethical and illegal antics of the reporters and the editor probably were entertaining to spectators. Whether this portrayal influenced public opinion about American journalism in the thirties is unknown.

By the seventies, however, news organizations and journalism groups, such as the Society for Professional Journalists, resurrected codes of ethics, formed a National News Council as an internal watchdog, and appointed ombudsmen. Journalists tried to counter charges that they "were out of control and out of line with dominant social values...[and] constituted a separate and subversive class."³⁶ Amidst all the renewal of standards for personal behavior in the line of news duty, Wilder may have wanted to skewer the pomposity of high-minded news workers by reasserting the Walter Burns character, described in the 1974 screenplay as a "cross between Machiavelli, Rasputin and Count Dracula."³⁷

By the eighties, dubbed the "me decade" by journalist author Tom

Wolfe, newspeople were looking out for themselves as they tried to hang onto their jobs. As the rationale for on-air, unethical editorializing, movie reporter Christy Collieran declared that "sometimes being right is more important than being objective." Later, she secretly taped talk between the state's attorney and a gasping warden. Although she engaged in unethical and illegal behavior, her questionable actions were directed toward a greater good for society. So her personal principles and journalistic practices appeared justified in the end since Ike Roscoe was saved from execution and political corruption was exposed.

In all four films, the viewer might be led to believe that the end justified any supposed unscrupulous means. Justice prevailed when the movie journalists uncovered political plots to stall or hide pardons from the public to influence impending elections. In the case of His Girl Friday, Burns tried various nefarious ways to prevent his ex-wife from remarrying anyone but him. The second and fourth films ended with the editor and reporter wedded both to each other and their work, and the journalists expressed no regret over the tactics they used in their personal and professional lives.

Power Struggle

Textual analyses of the 1931 Front Page yielded the most references (6) to the power struggle story line of any of the four films. Switching Channels had the least (1), with 5 each for the 1940 and 1974 versions.

Findings for all four films indicated a common myth story line of a news reporter and a news manager engaged in a power struggle. In each case, the reporter ended up as a victim of the manager's craving for

power and money, sometimes masked under the guise of love, friendship or crusading public service. The plot was further complicated by the additional power struggle between the women reporters in His Girl Friday and Switching Channels, and their ex-husbands as well. Also, reporters grappled with internal conflicts as to what change they thought was best in marital status, career, and location -- and what continuity they felt compelled to maintain.

The 1931 Front Page featured Burns, who knew Johnson's weaknesses, taking him to a speakeasy, where he declared, "So you're leaving me for marriage." He proceeded to get him to drink and filled him with thoughts about how different his life would be if he was married -- with babies and suburban routines. Burns pointed out that he had helped Johnson. He used other tactics to maintain control of his star reporter, alternately cajoling, flattering, bullying, daring, and deceiving him.

In the second version, Johnson did not want Burns to meet her fiance but he dared her. She tried to gain the upper hand by negotiating more money through an insurance policy and then tore up her story when Burns' tactics encroached on her fiance. But Burns used reverse psychology, urging her to leave, to get her to stay and convinced her that marriage to a newsman was inevitable.

While His Girl Friday featured Johnson throwing her purse at Burns, the 1974 Front Page showed Burns tossing something at Johnson as he left the office after his resignation. The cocky Johnson seemed to be prepared to leave and yet the epilogue showed that, by hook or crook, he returned to run the newspaper and did not marry the fiancée with whom he left Chicago. The epilogue indicated his fiancée married someone

else but named a daughter Hildy (to explain His Girl Friday, presumably set two decades later).

In the fourth version, Colleran negotiated a story in exchange for an athletic equipment contract benefitting her fiancé. It seemed appropriate that the scene was set at a sports-themed restaurant, where they sat in a boxing ring and verbally sparred about what Colleran would or would not do before leaving her employer, SNN. Switching Channels also was the only one of the four films in which viewers saw a higher authority than Colleran's immediate supervisor. For the first time, another struggle was going on, between the news director and the station owner. Dialogue in an early draft of Switching Channels included the debt-ridden Sullivan lamenting about his ability to pay creditors: "Yes, this man [gesturing to the station owner] will fire me! I'm already \$27,000 in debt--and that's just my Mastercard."³⁸ This passage was eventually deleted from the finished film. In previous versions, all power seemed to rest with the managing editor in the form of Walter Burns.

Possible Reasons for Power Struggle Differences

The first three films harkened back to an era when the news craft was learned under the tutelage of an experienced reporter. The mentor system offered a form of nurturing thought necessary to cultivate and keep talented newswriters. Historian Hugh Dalziel Duncan noted that while young reporters were fairly free to cover stories as they saw fit there was a check to their independent thinking:

The only judgment he feared was that of his city editor, whose taste in writing was the adamant influence in the formation of the journalist's taste ... they were the true masters of the first years of so many of our writers.³⁹

As often happens in tutorial and parental relationships, letting go of the learner or child was difficult. Editors, as mentors, struggled with the same conflicts when reporters left them for rival editors or new careers.

The leave-taking struggle was exacerbated in romantic relationships shown in His Girl Friday and Switching Channels. By the fourth film, the news manager's chief concern was the blow to his ego caused by his ex-wife's plan to marry a good-looking tycoon and leave SNN. She was a star at the station and garnered better audience ratings than her replacement. Sullivan had a major economic interest in keeping her at SNN as it would directly affect his job. The trend in the late 1980s and early 1990s was a shift from traditional hierarchical management to more participation on the part of the whole news team. One industry observer noted, "If journalism managers do not adapt they will end up with news people who are not as smart, not as accomplished, more compliant, more malleable."⁴⁰ Sullivan may have feared having to supervise a newsroom full of Ludlows (Colleran's vacuous replacement), who had finely sculpted facial features but no noses for news.

The power struggle boiled down to maintaining the economic status quo. When reporters announced they wanted to better themselves financially by switching careers or marrying someone of means or both, the managing editor or news director sprung into action to try to prevent any such changes. Any reporter's talk of marriage, changing jobs or moving out of his or her boss's geographical grasp threatened the power and authority that the Burns and Sullivan characters wielded. The editors and news directors knew how to manipulate the reporters to continue doing what they had been doing so well.

Romantic Vocation

Textual analyses of the 1974 Front Page yielded the most references (6) to the romantic vocation theme of any of the four films. The 1988 Switching Channels had the fewest citations (1), compared with 4 and 5 references for the 1931 and 1940 versions respectively.

All four films carried the same occupational myth theme of journalism as a romantic, exciting and adventurous vocation. The textual analysis coding definition included manifestations in scenes of intense dramatic action and danger such as a chase scene. The romantic theme also involved chaotic noise, shouting, bells, alarms, and the sound of gunfire. Dialogue referred to journalism as a noble pursuit.

In the first two versions, other reporters commented that Johnson has a Pavlovian response to fire bells and imagined that the star reporter would be like a firehorse hitched to a milk wagon if they left for more staid lives. In the first three films, those betrothed to the various Johnsons realized the compelling pull of the adventuresome work, while in the fourth movie fiancé Blaine Bingham did not understand what all the fuss was about. Confronting his fiancée in the newsroom he told the SNN staff, "You people have a hole in your heart ... I know this is exciting to you all, but I'm a businessman. Either the man dies or he doesn't." Bingham offered to hire a writer to protest the execution through the Op-Ed page of the New York Times, but he did not realize that Collieran could directly influence public opinion with her on-air plea for the governor to pardon the prisoner.

The romantic image of the vocation came across in the

reminiscences that Johnson, in the first three versions, had with Burns about their favorite stories -- the ones involving intrigue, drama and thrills. In the third film, Johnson contrasted the excitement of news writing with screenwriting, play writing and penning the Great American Novel -- all of which he found dull pursuits compared to journalism. Also, the rich legacy of reporter heroes was not lost on the third Johnson who is momentarily dazzled by Burns' flattering promise that his story will propel him into the same league as Heywood Broun and H.L. Mencken. In contrast, the young and culturally ignorant Siegenthaler missed the historical context of Sullivan's references to Edward R. Murrow and Walter Cronkite, legends of American broadcast journalism.

Advertising work was the lucrative writing career alternative proposed by Johnson in the first and third versions, while getting married and starting a family were the job switches mentioned by Johnson in His Girl Friday. Script dialogue mentioning her desire to write fiction, however, was deleted from the final film version. The fourth version was the only Front Page remake in which the star reporter was not leaving the news business but was, as the title states, switching channels or shifting gears, from the frenzy of 24-hour news coverage to a supposedly less taxing, more passive morning television news show.

Possible Reasons for Romantic Vocation Differences

The 1974 Front Page appeared midway through a nostalgia-crazed decade. It was written by two former journalists who used their own love of the news business as inspiration for the remake of the 1931 film. Perhaps because the seventies were marked by the political turmoil of Watergate and much criticism of American newswriters for

their coverage of it, the filmmakers of the 1974 version may have been attempting to explain the lure of journalism to a new generation of moviegoers by showing the fun and fulfillment of this career.

In the four films, the star reporter announced that he or she was leaving the news business, retiring or just tiring. In the first and third versions, Johnson prepared for a higher salary and more job security as an advertising copywriter for an in-law's agency. During the 1920s, considered the golden age of advertising, agencies burgeoned and almost two-thirds of all newspaper and magazine revenue came from advertising.⁴¹ But agencies employed few women (about five percent of the total agency workforce),⁴² so the same doors were not open to Hildegard Johnson. She would not have had the option of finding a copywriting job as easy as the male Johnsons did.

Instead, she had to choose between being a police reporter or a mother. It seemed clear that she could not successfully integrate an exciting career outside the home with the demands of parenting. The erratic hours and assignments of crime reporters would disrupt her prospects for a stable homelife; thus, she would be torn between devotion to news reporting and to child care. A veteran newspaperwoman, Elsie Carper, said that through much of this century female reporters were routinely prevented from attempting to combine journalism with motherhood even if they wanted to try: "Time was ... that the day a woman even said she was getting married, much less having a child, was the day she was in effect resigning from newspaper work."⁴³ Hildegard obviously wanted to have adventures and write about them as well.

By the 1988 Switching Channels, the rose-colored glasses were donned only to hide the dark circles under sleepless eyes. Not only was

Colleran on call, but also she was on air seemingly 24 hours a day at the all-news station. She appeared to enjoy her work, but at the same time she was exhausted. "Burnout," the physical and mental stress of overworked employees, was an occupational epidemic of the eighties when media companies had a smaller labor pool that worked longer hours than their predecessors. Recent surveys indicate that news managers could no longer rely on the romance of the vocation to keep journalists working. A New York Times reporter observed "growing unease in newsrooms ... may challenge a basic assumption of the news business that people do it for love."⁴⁴ Colleran could have a much-needed rest from unrelenting stress as well as monetary security by marrying a tycoon who arranged for her to co-host a less-adventurous morning news show.

The star reporters claimed they wanted to get married and looked forward to more lucrative, leisurely, or psychologically rewarding jobs as advertising copywriters, morning news anchors, or parents. While they talked about career changes in a rational manner, their addiction to journalism was still overpowering. Ultimately, they were unwilling to give up the rush of adrenalin that came with covering a breaking news story. They did not seem to realize the strength of the lure of journalism and its concomitant adventure and excitement until they had the opportunity to leave it. Their news bosses understood the vocational attraction and used the romantic attitudes the journalists had toward their calling to keep them working.

As this section described the myth elements individually, the next section discusses them collectively across the four films by comparing and contrasting mythology patterns.

Myth Element Patterns

Honing in on the character traits, the dominant aspect of the occupational mythology, this section discusses the overall patterns of journalistic attributes indicated in textual analyses of the four films. Tables illustrate key findings and supplement narrative explanations regarding relative frequencies of traits cited within each film and across all four movies. This section also discusses patterns of reliability and validity.

Relative Frequency

The three coding judges who conducted the textual analyses of the four films cited the blunt attribute more than any of the other six character traits. It accounted for more than one quarter of all the character trait references. Combined with the aggressive trait, which ranked second with 22 per cent, these two attributes account for nearly half of all mythology character trait references. Cynical and unscrupulous traits tied for third place with 17 per cent each (about one quarter of the total number of citations). Anti-academic and fraternal traits were the least cited, representing 5 per cent each of the total occupational references. The drinker trait citations were 7 per cent of the total. That attribute combined with the anti-academic and fraternal traits were equivalent to the cynical and unscrupulous trait references alone (see Table 37).

Blunt and aggressive traits appear to be the most stable occupational attributes in terms of frequency across the patterns of myth elements for all four films (see Table 38). Bluntness is the dominant journalistic trait in three of the movies. Even when it is

secondary, in the 1974 film, it occurs at the same relative frequency as when it is dominant. The aggressive trait dominates in half of the films. Also, it appears with the same relative frequency in three of the four films.

There seems to be an interrelationship between the blunt and aggressive traits. In the 1974 Front Page, aggressive goes down as blunt goes up, while in the 1988 Switching Channels, aggressive goes up as blunt (and cynical) go down. The inverse relationship between blunt and aggressive traits in the 1974 remake may be interpreted as aggression sublimated into language. Blunt speaking verbal aggression substituted for fist fights.

Two of the films have one character trait that dominates among all the others coded in that particular version. His Girl Friday findings revealed unscrupulousness, a secondary trait in other versions, as the dominant attribute. The 1974 Front Page findings indicated that bluntness surpassed aggression in a 2 to 1 ratio. Bluntness was tied with aggressiveness in other film versions studied, while the cynical trait diminished with each subsequent remake, according to the textual analysis.

Of the total 470 references to the character traits, Switching Channels provided the most citations (135), with His Girl Friday the least (93). Coders cited 123 trait references in the 1931 film, compared to 119 in the 1974 remake.

The frequency variations among the seven character traits may be attributed to several factors, including continuity with earlier literary models of journalists as well as earlier cinematic models. These and many more possibilities are discussed in more detail in the following

TABLE 37.-- CHARACTER TRAIT RELATIVE FREQUENCY ACROSS FILMS

Trait	N	Relative Frequency
Aggressive	105	22%
Anti-academic	21	05
Blunt	126	27
Cynical	81	17
Drinker	32	07
Fraternal	25	05
Unscrupulous	80	17
Total	470	100%

TABLE 38.-- CHARACTER TRAIT RELATIVE FREQUENCY WITHIN EACH FILM

Trait	1931	1940	1974	1988
(N)	(123)	(93)	(119)	(135)
Aggressive	23%	22.5%	17%	27%
Anti-academic	04	02	08	04
Blunt	23.5	22.5	34	27
Cynical	22	17	18	12
Drinker	07	02	08	08
Fraternal	05	07	02	07
Unscrupulous	15	27	13	15

chapter on reasons for mythological variances within the four films.

All but the anti-academic and fraternal traits were carryovers from a literary tradition of journalism portrayals in novels and short stories traced back to the nineteenth century. Filmmakers relied on literature as inspiration and fodder for their newer medium. Also, aggressive behavior was a staple of motion picture scenarios even before sound technology. Audiences had become accustomed to the visual shorthand of running, snatching and grabbing being conveyed in terms of driven and ambitious attitudes. Blunt, cynical and unscrupulous traits needed dialogue to convey character nuances to moviegoers. Actors would not have succeeded in expressing those occupational traits as well, before talkies gave them speech. The next subsection discusses patterns of reliability and validity in the analyses of the character traits.

Reliability and Validity

Coding agreements among the three judges on references to character traits were close to the generally accepted 75 per cent

TABLE 39.-- INTER-CODER AGREEMENT ON CHARACTER TRAITS

Trait	Overall	1931	1940	1974	1988
Aggressive	70%	65%	68%	75%	72%
Anti-academic	83	53	100	90	93
Blunt	76	82	76	80	69
Cynical	69	69	66	82	45
Drinker	80	78	83	80	82
Fraternal	88	100	81	100	81
Unscrupulous	78	81	76	73	83
Overall	--	74.5%	74%	81%	72%

research guidelines for reliability (see Table 39). It is believed that future researchers, using the same operational definitions and videotapes, would get similar results and therefore confirm the reliability of this study.

Overall, the anti-academic and fraternal traits, the two myth elements not mentioned in literary antecedents, yielded the highest agreement among coders (83 and 88 per cent respectively). These attributes also were cited less frequently than any of the other traits, which may have made for easier isolation and recognition when coding.

Aggressive and cynical trait references, which appeared more frequently, were the least reliable overall (with 70 and 69 per cent respectively). It is possible that some of the numerous references, often only a few seconds in duration, were overlooked by one or more of the judges recruited for the textual analysis. Despite individual judgment variations, agreement across the four films averaged 75 per cent. Also, the intracoder (self-check) reliability score was 96 per cent. All of these scores would indicate a good level of reliability that would contribute to the study's face validity (the extent to which the study appeared to measure what it intended to measure).

In addition to textual analysis, this multiple case study examined contemporaneous reviews and production references to each of the four films to corroborate mythological findings. Table 40 shows that all seven character traits were mentioned by both film reviewers and production researchers only in the 1974 Front Page.

TABLE 40.-- FILM REVIEW (FR) & PRODUCTION REFERENCES (PR) CORROBORATION

Trait	1931	1940	1974	1988
Aggressive	FR PR	FR PR	FR PR	FR PR
Anti-academic	-- --	-- --	FR PR	FR --
Blunt	FR PR	FR PR	FR PR	FR PR
Cynical	FR --	FR PR	FR PR	FR PR
Drinker	-- PR	FR PR	FR PR	-- --
Fraternal	FR PR	FR PR	FR PR	FR PR
Unscrupulous	FR PR	FR PR	FR PR	FR PR
Total	5 5	6 6	7 7	6 4

Overall, the anti-academic attitude was referred to the least, with no evidence found in the first two versions and no production references to that trait in the last version, Switching Channels. The drinker trait was the second-least mentioned trait, with no references found in film reviews of the 1931 Front Page. Also, journalist drinking in Switching Channels was not confirmed in either film reviews or production references. Less production information was found for the 1988 film than its three predecessor movies. The general lack of information about Switching Channels production might partially explain why fewer specific production references to mythic elements were found. However, a majority of the character traits were referred to by reviewers and production chroniclers, thus corroborating the textual analysis findings and offering a potential line of concurrent validity.

Conclusion

In summary, the four films chosen for this multiple case study of American journalism mythology retained seven key myth elements found in earlier literary forms: aggressive, blunt, cynical, drinker, unscrupulous character traits, power struggle story line and romantic vocation theme. In addition, they added two new elements -- anti-academic and fraternal character traits -- when the mythology moved from short story and novels to motion pictures. As the journalism myth elements of nineteenth century popular literature diffused into twentieth century film, the occupational mythology was altered.

Each time the set of myth elements appeared in one of the four versions of The Front Page, it was reformulated. The nine elements appeared in varying proportions for each subsequent presentation, from 1931 to 1988. The variations ranged from refinement or addition of characters embodying certain myth elements, to change of mythic settings and emphases. Everything from individual artistic license tempered by film collaborations to national socioeconomic pressures contributed to the changes in the myth elements within the four films.

In addition to reasons specific to an individual myth element, the mythic variations might be attributed to changing economic and technological contextual conditions, censorship issues, the natural evolution of genres, remakes and myths. Also, important transformations occur when myths move from print form to motion pictures.

The next chapter explains why the overall American journalism mythology of The Front Page varied from earlier literary forms and then from one remake to the next.

NOTES

1. Hugh Dalziel Duncan, The Rise of Chicago as a Literary Center from 1885 to 1920: A Sociological Essay in American Culture (Totawa, N.J.: The Bedminister Press, 1964), 153.

2. The highest increase in the history of journalism school enrollment occurred during the 1973-1974 school year with nearly 50,000 students registered, according to Jan Schaffer, "The Great Journalism Rush," Quill, (April 1974), 13-14.

3. Steve Seidman, The Film Career of Billy Wilder (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1977), 24.

4. Billy Wilder told an interviewer that Ace in the Hole bombed at the box office because it was too cynical: "I brought the audience into the theater expecting a cocktail and instead I served them a shot of vinegar. In effect I was saying...`Look, this is you, you bastards, because there is a man dying in this mine shaft and you are all sensationalists'." Gene D. Phillips, "Interview with Billy Wilder," Literature/Film Quarterly 4:1 (Winter 1976), 10.

5. Seidman, Billy Wilder, 24.

6. Vito Russo, The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 31.

7. Ibid.

8. Robert H. Stanley, The Celluloid Empire: A History of the American Movie Industry (New York: Hastings House, 1978), 278.

9. Ibid.

10. Pauline Kael, "Raising Kane" in The Citizen Kane Book (New York: Bantam, 1971), 26.

11. Variety 11 December 1974, 18: "The extent of the liberation [from the old Production Code]...appears to be in monotonously tedious use of undeleted expletives." Vincent Canby, New York Times 19 December 1974, 59 noted, "The Wilder-Diamond screenplay updates and makes somewhat rougher the original tough-guy dialogue and wisecracks..." Even British reviewer John Coleman, New Statesman 27 December 1974, 940 observed the Wilder film made "the most of the greater freedom of speech now permitted."

12. Timothy Jay, Cursing in America: A Psycholinguistic Study of Dirty Language in the Courts, in the Movies, in the Schoolyards and on the Streets (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1992), 225-26.
13. Eric Rhode, A History of the Cinema (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 314.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., 315.
16. Kael, "Raising Kane," 34.
17. Stephen Vaughn and Bruce Evensen, "Defending Democracy: Hollywood, the Hays Office, and the Portrait of Reporters, 1930-1945." Paper presented to the Midwest Regional Conference of Journalism and Mass Communication Historians, April 1990.
18. Stanley, The Celluloid Empire, 276.
19. Norman K. Denzin, Hollywood Shot by Shot: Alcoholism in American Cinema (New York: Aldine DeGruyter, 1991), 12.
20. Milt Phinney, "Please Stop Libeling Us," The Screenwriter 1:10 (March 1946), 34-35.
21. Denzin, Shot by Shot, 49. Also, Jim Hillier's "Filmography" in Images of Alcoholism, eds. Jim Cook and Mike Lewington (London: British Film Institute and Alcohol Education Centre, 1979), 75-76.
22. Donald W. Goodwin, Alcohol and the Writer (New York: Penguin, 1988), 205.
23. Ibid., 206.
24. Rhode, A History of the Cinema, 314.
25. Anne Hollander, Moving Pictures (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 452-53, 455.
26. Timothy Crouse, The Boys on the Bus (New York: Ballantine, 1972), 7.
27. Duncan, The Rise of Chicago as a Literary Center, 114.
28. Editor Walter Howey (supposedly the model for Walter Burns) quoted in Burton Roscoe, Before I Forget (New York: Literary Guild, 1937), 238.
29. Kael, "Raising Kane," 12.
30. Ibid., 25.
31. Jeffrey Brown Martin, Ben Hecht: Hollywood Screenwriter (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985), xiii.

32. Fred Lawrence Guiles, Hanging On In Paradise (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975), 201-02.
33. Based on biographical information from Hal May and James G. Lesniak, eds. Contemporary Authors, New Revision Services, vol. 28 (Detroit: Gale Research, 1990), 380, and Jane A. Bowden, ed. A Bio-Bibliographical Guide to Current Writers in Fiction, Nonfiction, Poetry, Journalism, Drama, Motion Pictures, TV and Other Fields Vol. 65-68 (Detroit: Gale Research, 1977), 485.
34. Anon, "I.A.L. Diamond: A wicked wit of the West tosses a few darts at the New Hollywood," People, 9 February 1987, 69.
35. Stanley, Celluloid Empire, 276.
36. James Boylan, "Declarations of Independence," Columbia Journalism Review, November-December 1986, 41.
37. Billy Wilder and I.A.L. Diamond, The Front Page, revised final screenplay, Universal Studios, 1974, 9.
38. Jonathan Reynolds, Switching Channels, re-revised first draft, Martin Ransohoff Productions, 1987, 74.
39. Duncan, The Rise of Chicago as a Literary Center, 117.
40. William Glaberson, "Survey Finds Newsrooms Discontented," New York Times, 23 November 1992, C6.
41. William Leiss, Stephen Kline and Sut Jhally, "Advertising, Consumers, and Culture" in Communication in History: Technology, Culture, Society, eds. David Crowley and Paul Heyer (New York: Longman, 1991), 180.
42. Jean Folkerts and Dwight Teeter, Voices of a Nation: A History of Media in the United States (New York: Macmillan, 1989), 384.
43. Elsie Carper, quoted in Kay Mills, A Place in the News: From Women's Page to the Front Page (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1988), 41.
44. Glaberson, "Survey Finds Newsrooms Discontented," C6.

CHAPTER 9

CONTEXTUAL EXPLANATIONS FOR MYTHIC VARIATIONS

The four Front Page films revived, disguised, and supplemented American journalism mythology identified in late nineteenth and early twentieth century literature. Also, each of the movies modified the mythological mix to distinguish itself from predecessor films. In a further explanatory response to research question 2; What contextual conditions may have contributed to American journalism mythology changing or staying the same in the four films, this chapter provides seven possible reasons for mythic variations not already ascribed to particular myth elements summarized in Chapter 8. These contextual explanations for mythic variations include basic differences in print and motion picture channels of communication, the natural evolution of genre films, remakes, and myths, as well as censorship issues, along with technological and economic shifts in moviemaking and news production.

The first section explains why the occupational mythology, though carried over from earlier journalism fiction, varied its emphasis when it moved from stagnant page to motion picture.

Intrinsic Format Differences

Generally, when print stories undergo a metamorphosis to become films, their mythology is reduced and simplified to serve the needs of the film company. While retaining traditional mythological narrative parts such as "a strong plot line, boldly delineated characters and heightened action,"¹ they usually are selectively reshaped to become more schematic than novels. With the demand for compression to fit the usual ninety-minute filmic format, the screenwriter and director may "reshuffle the sequence of events...eliminate characters...and...strip away subplots."² This change in mythological emphasis may have a profound effect quite different from the original work. Often, as one book-to-film analyst noted, "explicitness...tends to turn metaphor and symbol into fact."³ Another film scholar observed that streamlining, which draws attention to the development of key characters, helps sustain the quickened pace and visual manner of the filmed narrative."⁴

In the case of The Front Page, the stage was the intermediate step in myth transmission between the page and film. Indeed, Hecht biographer Jeffrey Brown Martin argued that journalism films were indebted to theatrical antecedents.⁵ He claimed that stage productions were the dominant paradigm in the development of the motion picture. (To make his case, he did not discuss any obvious influence of photography and later, radio, in the evolution of filmed narratives). Martin contended that newspaper settings in silent films were just a convenient expositional device with little significance. He noted that audio technological innovations boosted the movie reporter's role and heightened identity of the occupation among viewers:

In early sound newspaper films ... the paper and its workers moved to the center of the story ... With The Front Page the melodrama, scandal, or crime story the paper was reporting became secondary to the newsman's fight to get the story and his relationship with his girl, his editor, or his fellow reporters. The silent newspaper film had focused on plot turns, but with sound, the emphasis could shift to the dialogue and the irreverent character of the reporter.⁶

Journalism film chronicler Alex Barris concurred, noting that The Front Page film was a catalyst for change. He contended that the film shifted emphasis from the story line about the convicted killer in the play to the characters' relationship and especially the power struggle between Hildy Johnson and Walter Burns.⁷ The 1931 Front Page may have made the larger-than-life on-screen projections of newcomer Pat O'Brien and suave veteran actor Adolphe Menjou more personally appealing to a fickle movie audience. During the Depression, it may have been more pleasant to identify with defiantly mobile journalists than benign, trapped prisoners.

The next section addresses the cyclical factor of genre films that may help account for mythological variances among the four films.

Genre Evolution

Researchers traced the proliferation of journalism films, particularly talkies, as a mythological variation of the crime movie. Film scholars argued that reporters were an amalgam of the gangster-shyster and detective characters, who were able to move through all levels of society.⁸ Film critic Tom Powers noted that the journalism hero was a natural mythological outgrowth of crime movie heroes:

The movies needed a figure who would combine the cynicism and street wisdom of the gangster (whose popularity in films was declining) with the more positive outlook engendered by the New Deal and endorsed by the Hays Office: someone who was on the right

side but wouldn't look like a sap if righteousness didn't prevail.⁹

This idea relates to film historian Louis Giannetti's theory on the three stages of genre evolution from the simplistic through the more sophisticated stage and on to the self-deprecatingly campy stage. Giannetti asserted that a genre started out as rather "naive allegories of good and evil."¹⁰ This description fits the gangster movies that originated with D.W. Griffith's 1912 The Musketeers of Pig Alley and peaked in the 1930s with films like Scarface, (a movie about an Al Capone-like character written by Ben Hecht, directed by Howard Hawks and produced by Howard Hughes).

At the intermediate stage of genre development, a group of identifiably similar movies became "more complex in both form and range...[they] embody...classical ideals...such as balance, richness and poise."¹¹ Given that premise, the 1931 Front Page film's presentation of occupational mythology falls in the first simplistic stage. Eight years later, after refinements, the genre evolved into films such as His Girl Friday, part of a more sophisticated second stage with its complicated interplay between reporter and editor who also were former husband and wife. The dual personal and professional relationships intensified and compounded the power struggle even further than the earlier Front Page. Also, the casting of the debonair Cary Grant and the cosmopolitan Rosalind Russell offered a new level of glamour to the still shoddy but cleaner-looking pressroom.

The final or ironic stage of genre evolution mocked the genre's original values and conventions, according to Giannetti, by being more "self-conscious stylistically nuanced and more intellectual in its

appeal."¹² The audience was assumed to hold certain knowledge hidden from key players. The third genre stage involved cerebral humor with deliberate incongruities. Certainly the mocking began with self-references in the 1940 version when Grant said that Hildy's fiancé, Bruce Baldwin (played by Ralph Bellamy) "looks just like that Ralph Bellamy guy." Also Grant referred to his real name, Archie Leach (no doubt known by movie fans of that era), in another scene. The press room gang mentioned Ben Hecht by name, as an errant reporter who went to Hollywood.

Film scholar Charles Eidsvik observed that familiarity with a story line and genre's conventions becomes a launching pad for future storytelling. He noted an "elitist ironizing of...popular myths"¹³ was a natural evolution of repetitions of certain story conventions. This was evident by the second remake and certainly Billy Wilder's version of The Front Page was riddled with sardonic irony about journalism mythology. Hecht biographer Doug Fetherling noted that the 1970s era of nostalgia was manifest in Wilder's intent to "make us squirm with embarrassment over how silly we were back then, just this side of memory's horizon."¹⁴

Film scholars Seth Cagin and Philip Dray observed that Seventies movies tended to "undercut traditional Hollywood types and repudiate the characteristic misogyny and gin-soaked universal view"¹⁵ of earlier films. The journalism genre was no exception. The 1974 Front Page came after Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein's book about Watergate but before the movie adaptation. The Front Page revival may be seen as intentional backlash to all the goodness garnered by the deified image of crusading journalists. Or it just may have portended a genre paradigm shift back

to the earlier constructions of The Front Page presentation of journalism mythology.

Reporter Woodward saw the occupational mythology surrounding the Watergate investigation as an anomaly. He claimed: "People are not going to look at the press normally as their friend...[the] mid-70s may have been a little different, but it wasn't a natural situation."¹⁶ Hecht biographer Fetherling insisted that the film, All the President's Men, be subsumed under the long-standing Front Page model. He saw it simply as a recast of the old mold, "sort of Hecht and MacArthur Go to College"¹⁷ with "Walter Bradley and Hildy Woodstein"¹⁸ in the lead roles. Regardless of how much goodwill the film may have generated momentarily for the news business, the movie pendulum swung back to a darker view of journalism in the next decade with the negative occupational portrayals like Absence of Malice (1981) and The Mean Season (1985).

The myth irony stage of genre, begun in The Front Page film cycle with His Girl Friday and carried through in the 1974 Front Page, continued with the 1988 version. In Switching Channels, the star reporter was dispatched to rescue her acrophobic fiancé, played by Christopher Reeve, who was best known in the 1980s for the Superman films in which he portrayed a mild-mannered reporter-turned-flying hero. Eidsvik ascertained a certain aesthetic smugness in the insider humor when both film makers and viewers colluded to "congratulate themselves by ridiculing the more naive myth's underlying forms that [they] still enjoy but feel they have outgrown."¹⁹ Even though the perpetrators of American journalism mythology may "know better," they continued to recycle elements from another form and an earlier era to create new

movies.

The next section discusses the challenges of film remakes trying to balance how much to change or maintain of the original mythology. The section offers yet another possible explanation for mythological variances--the remake's need to be simultaneously similar yet different than predecessor films.

Problems with Remakes

The whole premise of a motion picture remake is predicated on the economic principle that a film company can capitalize on past success, if the original mythology is still workable. Industry observers have noted that few remakes ever achieve the critical or financial success of predecessor films. Reasons for failure include the decision to improve the original myth elements when film makers should have left well enough alone. Critics argued that it is not easy to update antiquated moral values or work situations for more modern audiences. But, as one film maker stated, "the biggest cross that the producer of a remake must bear is his audience's memory."²⁰

Regardless of viewers' cumulative recollections, film companies plunged ahead routinely with remakes and, because the mythology of a previous film seemed timely somehow to revive, there were opportunities to showcase current talent and adapt new film techniques. This was especially true with His Girl Friday that was produced when the sound process was perfected to give voices more clarity and allow the camera more fluidity,²¹ according to a remake researcher, Michael Druxman. He found that producers targeted two types of viewers as potential remake moviegoers: those familiar and fond of earlier versions who might be

curious about the recasting and those who have only heard about the original but have never seen it. The latter group, Druxman noted, might like to see the first version but settle on the remake because the original is not available for viewing.²²

In the case of The Front Page, a film historian noted that director Howard Hawks held exclusive rights to The Front Page for a prolonged period, and this delayed re-release of the 1931 film until the early 1970s.²³ Hawks defended His Girl Friday and other so-called pattern pictures as "not as deadly as some critics charge, provided an original or oblique slant on the story is taken."²⁴ Regardless of his rationalization, keeping the first film out of the television and video distribution avoided any direct comparison of the occupational mythology in the two versions. Despite Hawks' unapologetic attitude, participants in both the 1974 and 1988 remakes expressed reservations or regret about their attempts to alter the original inspirations.

Wilder was criticized for what some reviewers considered sacrilege of a cherished mythology. Even Charles MacArthur's widow, Helen Hayes, was said to be upset with the 1974 version.²⁵ In retrospect, the writer-director said he regretted his hubris in attempting to revise a cultural sacred cow:

Only a fool would involve himself in remaking something that has gone down in history as an "...immortal masterpiece"...It was a fairly good play at the time, but they (the audience) remember it being much better than it actually was when it was a smash on Broadway and as a movie. I will not do those things again: I will not remake anything--it is like trying to repaint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel."²⁶

Switching Channels screenwriter Jonathan Reynolds, who wrote the journalism film in between best-forgotten scripts for Leonard Part 6 and My Stepmother is an Alien, said he reluctantly agreed to do the fourth

Front Page film: "My idea of a remake is to redo a good idea that wasn't executed well, and you certainly can't say that about His Girl Friday."²⁷ He fretted, in print, that Switching Channels would be considered frivolous by comparison to Broadcast News, another journalism film about television news that came out just before the delayed Switching Channels.²⁸ But reviewers found the fourth film version of The Front Page did not measure up to either its contemporary competition or pre-war mythological models.²⁹ Yet, film scholar James Monaco was able to find a silver lining in the dark cloud of mediocre remakes. He asserted that "mimicry...simply means film makers have been attracted to mythic structures; (and) variations on the themes refine those myths."³⁰ Journalism myth elements often were sustained through several remakes but in a transformed state from the original version.

The next section discusses the idea of myth cycles and explains how the particular phase at which a film appears may affect its presentation of mythology.

Myth Phases

Mythologist William Doty traced three general phases in the life of a myth.³¹ He said mythic development begins with embellished experiences that turn into stories such as the original Front Page play. Later, the myths are diffused to larger audiences and finally modified without loss of essential mythic meaning. In the initial stage, the myth acts as a cultural model and a new mode of self-understanding begins to be assimilated (by news workers, in the case of The Front Page). Doty asserted that the appeal of the emerging myth is "its newly discerned ability to explain how the world got the way it is and how the

parts of the experienced universe fit together."³²

For the creators of The Front Page, Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur, the occupational mythology was, perhaps, a way for the two men to make sense of the changes in their lives and the news business as well as to justify the crazy things they did as reporters. Hecht said he and MacArthur "were of the tribe who, sitting lonely around the last campfires, search the past...we begin to make tea-leaf readings of our youth, and to see mystic points in it that escaped our attention when life was popping around us."³³ Perhaps feeling alienated from the journalism scene of the twenties, longing for the bygone excitement of Chicago newspaper competition, they created a "valentine thrown to the past."³⁴ Thus, what may have started as therapy for the two men turned into an elixir of journalism mythology, produced in convenient form for dispensing to generations of moviegoers.

Doty noted that the second or middle stage of myth development occurred when "internal contradictions are hammered out and mythic story begins to be accepted as a part of the way things really are."³⁵ Indeed, His Girl Friday director Howard Hawks is quoted as saying that newsmen of the 1930s treated the first film version as their occupational bible and were concerned about his plans to change it and transfigure reporter Johnson from a man to a woman.³⁶ Doty observed that the dominant myth may assimilate some competing world views "by modifying them to fit within its own contours."³⁷ The economic context of the media in the late thirties may have influenced changes in the second film. The actual increase in women graduates of journalism schools and those employed in news organizations along with Hollywood's attention to portrayals of independent career women in the thirties may have

contributed to the reincarnation of reporter Johnson from the male Hildy to the female Hildegarde.

Wilder was on the cusp between the first explicit phase of the journalism myth's cycle and the second implicit phase assimilating some occupational contradictions. Media critic James Twitchell observed that competing mythology caused conflicts between generations of film makers. He imagined the old guard's lament with this piece of interior monologue:

There is no feeling so hopeless as the loss of mythic nurture. They don't want my stories. I can't hear my stories. No one is paying attention to me. The next generation's stories often seem repetitive rather than original, dynamic rather than dramatic, overwhelmed by the special effects, cartoonic parodies of once-central concerns.³⁸

Wilder seemed to want to remind a younger generation of moviegoers about the era of his youth, which he may have feared was forgotten in the romanticism about journalism surrounding the Watergate revelations. Film historian and director Andrew Bergman, who analyzed movies of the thirties, found that as the myths were reformulated and changed over the decade, their original essence became "utterly unsupportable."³⁹ No matter how old-fashioned his mythological vision might be perceived, Wilder wanted to make pictures, like the ones he was accustomed to doing for older audiences. He complained about the compromises movie makers were making to woo the youth cult⁴⁰ yet he was willing to jump on the nostalgia bandwagon in his own attempt at a comeback.

The final phase of Doty's myth development is the rationalized level, when subtle changes in myth demonstrate that it can be changed without jeopardizing the essence of the originating myth. Doty claimed that the last stage in the myth life cycle shows that reworking the

original myth will "no longer conflict with more recent knowledge and understanding."⁴¹ In the case of The Front Page, this last stage was evidenced in Switching Channels, which shifted from a newspaper setting to a cable television news operation to present the occupational mythology. The 1988 movie seemed to reinforce the essential truth about journalism--that news was news--regardless of the news medium, whether it was disseminated in print or broadcast and whether it was network or cable television variations and whether it was gathered and presented by a man or a woman. The source for news stories also seemed unchanging: there always would be corrupt government officials and politicians to tell news stories about.

Beyond objections to individual myth elements, various social groups including journalists may try to control the mythology disseminated about their occupation. The next section offers some explanations about the mythological variances among the four films, based upon the ebb and flow of internal and external pressures brought to bear on the film makers.

Censorship

If Hollywood screenwriters were agenda setters in films written about their former, yet familiar occupation, then the movie executives, through the Motion Picture Producers Association, were gatekeepers monitoring what journalism myth elements got disseminated. A study of the effect of the major movie studios' self-censorship on journalism films of the thirties and forties found that film makers were anxious to sustain control of their work through prior restraint.⁴²

The pre-production code, adopted in 1930 and in effect through

post-World War II, represented the film maker's grudging acknowledgement of some conservative social institutions threatened by the rising influence of motion pictures. Several church and school leaders lobbied to maintain the status quo. The code was a compromise. Former postmaster Will Hays and former newspaperman Joseph Breen, appointed by the film industry to enforce the code, went beyond the original intent of the rules to create strict industry compliance to positive occupational portrayals. The study of the self-censorship claimed that, by the late 1930s, "disparaging portrayals of the fourth estate were the exception rather than the rule."⁴³ Such a policy enforcement strategy helped studios get good film reviews, while journalists benefitted from an elevated status with "an improved public image shown around the world on theater screens."⁴⁴ Thus, the industry helped change the journalism mythology to suit its own purpose and placate some powerful journalists of the thirties who were beginning to feel that their occupation was being unduly maligned.

Indeed, some of the pressure to change the mythological mix in occupational portrayals came from the journalists themselves. Researchers claimed that the 1931 Front Page offended some journalists who did not appreciate the implied unscrupulous link between reporters and editors to crooked politicians and bolshevism. Correspondence files indicated that the Production Code Administration pressured the film's producer, Howard Hughes, to "show journalists as dedicated and humane."⁴⁵ This would have been advantageous to reporters, particularly, who were moving toward increased professionalization to win higher wages and more respect.

Thus, behind-the-scenes lobbying efforts between journalists and

the movie industry may account for some of the mythic variances between the first two Front Page films. Indeed, film historian Robert Sklar found that His Girl Friday, with its rather benign treatment of occupational character traits, stories and themes, was a much tamer version of the 1931 film. He saw the original was "redeemed by the broad range of ... satire and ... persistent effort to shock."⁴⁶ By the end of the decade, the movie industry seemed willing to alter the occupational mythology to accommodate the crucial movie criteria.

Both film critics and scholars alike have stated that movie companies were afraid of press reprisals because bad reviews and vindictive assessments of their movies would be box office poison.⁴⁷ Studios were aware that powerful newspaper publishers, like Hearst, who owned the largest chain of newspaper and movie magazines, could pressure theater owners not to show certain films. To manipulate critics, United Artists' co-founder Mary Pickford pioneered the press junket of all-expense paid trips for journalists to visit movie sets and interview the stars.⁴⁸

Two entertainment historians observed that "handling critics with velvet gloves rapidly became a Hollywood custom."⁴⁹ Certainly, the double-page trade ad in Variety⁵⁰ touting eighteen favorable reviews of the 1931 Front Page (a United Artists release) was not wasted on reluctant theater owners and exhibition companies. Film historian Deac Rossell noted that the symbiotic relationship between film makers and film reviewers worked well during the pre-World War II era: "Newspapers gave movies their best writing talent and through their columns, pictures, reviews and features, gave the public its moviegoing habit."⁵¹ Film historian Nick Roddick claimed that, to avoid alienating

newspapers, the industry was affectionately presented as "hives of activity, in which disabused professionals go about their business in an exciting and entertaining way."⁵²

Since the industrial revolution, technology has been an important factor in work. The occupation of journalism is not exempt and the next section explores some of the variances in journalism mythology due to technological shifts.

Technological Changes

Journalism film historians have pondered why it took so long to alter genre mythology to acknowledge broadcasting. TV news had superseded the newspaper in terms of advertising revenue and as a source of public information years before Switching Channels was produced. One critic speculated that the genre shift to television journalism was either "too exotic or all too familiar a subject...it lacked the necessary romantic tradition."⁵³ Another film scholar noted that TV journalists tended to be "better educated...better paid, more urban and more urbane"⁵⁴ than many of their viewers. This may have caused resentment and jealousy on the part of the public and fueled a shift in journalism films away from any goodness-and-light aberration like All the President's Men and back to "seditious, impudent, arrogant and pretentious"⁵⁵ characterizations of news workers. Network, a 1976 black comedy, set the standard for other television news portrayals such as China Syndrome and Electric Horseman, (both 1979) Eyewitness (1981) and Broadcast News (1987).

The next section addresses the importance of economic changes and their possible contributory role in the emergence and revival of the

four Front Page films at particular times in American history.

Economic Shifts

The Front Page mythology, with variance among four film versions, appeared to have been redeployed at strategic times of journalism economic crisis and contraction. Applying the cyclical theory of American capitalism--whereby forty to sixty year "long waves" of alternating growth and expansion are followed by stagnation and contraction ⁵⁶--to the economics of journalism yielded parallels between market conditions and mythological dissemination.

Notably, the original Front Page play and the first two film versions emerged during what the media economists called the period of inter-media competition (1925-1945). Two more film versions of the occupational mythology appeared during the so-called "neo and inter-media competition period" from 1975 onward.⁵⁷ All four films were released during the "long wave news industry contraction"⁵⁸ rather than the alternating prosperous eras of expansion. In the case of the first three versions, making movies about newspaper journalism would be a way to reassert the importance of the established occupational mythology in light of radio and, later, television rivalry.

Indeed, film scholar James Monaco saw the 1931 version, particularly, as a watershed movie that marked the "continued growth in importance of newspapers as a cultural medium."⁵⁹ While the last version deals with satellite cable television news, jumping ahead of network television news altogether, it may be seen simply as an expansion of the news franchise and enlargement of the mythological journalism stage.

Switching Channels may be viewed as a reassertion of the need for a news habit, regardless of the medium or technological changes, in an era of

inter-media conglomerates and economic concentration.

Summary

While textual analyses indicated that the films used mythology identified earlier in popular fiction, the movies appeared to present the same set of elements differently in each version. Initially, the intrinsic format differences between book and stage mythic messages compared to cinematic presentations may have contributed to basic changes. Beyond that variance, the chapter discussed overlapping contextual factors such as evolutions in the journalism genre film, remakes, and myths as well as censorship pressures and shifts in media technology and economics. These contextual factors are believed to have been significant mediating influences in the variances observed in the four Front Page films.

The next and final chapter places this case study of American journalism mythology in perspective regarding the significance of the findings, and implications for journalism, concluding with suggestions for future research.

NOTES

1. Michiko Kakutani, "Books into Movies," New York Times Book Review, 10 July 1983, 39.
2. Ibid.
3. Gabriel Miller, Screening the Novel: Rediscovered American Fiction in Film (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1980) x-xi.
4. Ibid., x.
5. Martin, Hecht: Hollywood Screenwriter, 44.
6. Ibid., 41.
7. Alex Barris, Stop the Presses! The Newspaperman in American film (South Brunswick, N.J.: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1976), 15-16.
8. Carlos Clarens, Crime Movies: From Griffith to the Godfather and Beyond (New York: W.W. Norton, 1980); Andrew Bergman, We're in the Money: Depression America and Its Films (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1977), 18, 21 and Nick Roddick, A New Deal in Entertainment (London: British Film Institute, 1983), 91.
9. Tom Powers, "His Girl Friday: Screwball Liberation," Jump Cut No. 17 (April 1978), 27.
10. Louis Giannetti, Masters of the American Cinema (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1981), 45.
11. Ibid., 47.
12. Ibid.
13. Charles Eidsvik, Cineliteracy: Film Among the Arts (New York: Random House, 1978), 72.
14. Douglas Fetherling, The Crowded Darkness (Toronto: Quarry Press and Subway Books, 1988), 15.
15. Seth Cagin and Philip Dray, Sex, Drugs, Violence, Rock 'n Roll and Politics (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 249-250.
16. Jane Gross, "Movies and the Press Are an Enduring Romance," New York Times 2 June 1985, sec. 2, 1.

17. Fetherling, Crowded Darkness, 24.
18. Ibid., 26.
19. Eidsvik, Cineliteracy, 72.
20. Michael B. Druxman, Make It Again, Sam: A Survey of Movie Remakes (South Brunswick, N.J.: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1975), 13, 20.
21. Ibid., 24.
22. Ibid., 15.
23. Roger Manvell, "Media Ethics: How Movies Portray the Press and Broadcasters" in Questioning Media Ethics, Bernard Rubin, ed. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1978), 214.
24. Bosley Crowther, "Treatise on Hawks," New York Times 17 December 1939, unpag.
25. Joseph McBride, "In the Picture: The Front Page," Sight and Sound Autumn 1974, 212 does not specify Hayes' objection.
26. Michael Freedland, Jack Lemmon (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 132.
27. Nancy Bilyeau, "Trailers," American Film March 1988, 69.
28. Ibid.
29. Terri Minsky, "I'd Rather Say It Myself: Questionable Quotes," Premier July 1988, 12 states Switching Channels "lasted only a few weeks in theaters and collected an abysmal \$8 million at the box office."
30. James Monaco, American Film Now, 2nd ed. (New York: New York Zoetrope Books, 1984), 15.
31. William Doty, Mythography: The Study of Myths and Rituals (University, Ala: University of Alabama Press, 1986), 50.
32. Ibid.
33. Ben Hecht, Charlie: The Improbable Life and Times of Charles MacArthur (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 47.
34. Tim Pulleine, "Headline Hollywood," Films and Filming April 1988, 24.
35. Doty, Mythography, 50.
36. Joseph McBride, Hawks on Hawks (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 81.
37. Doty, Mythography, 50.

38. Twitchell, Carnival, 190.
39. Bergman, We're In the Money, xvii.
40. Gene D. Phillips, "Interview with Billy Wilder," Literature/Film Quarterly 4:1 (Winter 1976), p. 3 included the director's comments that seemed to try to distinguish his work from other contemporary films by younger directors: "It was not that a bunch of dilettantes got together and the end result was an American Graffiti that made forty million marks [sic]."
41. Doty, Mythography, 50.
42. Stephen Vaughn and Bruce Evensen, "Defending Democracy: Hollywood, the Hays Office, and the Portrait of Reporters, 1930-1945." Paper presented to the Midwest Regional Conference of Journalism and Mass Communication Historians, April 1990.
43. Ibid., 11.
44. Ibid., 19.
45. Vaughn and Evensen, "Defending Democracy," 11.
46. Robert Sklar, Movie-Made America (New York: Random House, 1975), 240.
47. Roddick, New Deal, 91, 92-93; Kael, "Raising Kane," 6-7 and Barris, Stop the Presses!, 18.
48. Abel Green and Joe Laurie Jr., Showbiz: From Vaude to Video (New York: Holt, 1951), 252.
49. Ibid.
50. Variety, 29 April 1931, 54-55.
51. Deac Rossell, "The Fourth Estate and the Seventh Art," in Questioning Media Ethics, ed. Bernard Rubin (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1978), 232.
52. Roddick, New Deal, 91.
53. Ibid., 19.
54. Glenn Garelik, "Stop the Presses! Movies Blast Media. Viewers Cheer," New York Times 31 January 1993, 18H.
55. Ibid.

56. The American economy has experienced four of these waves of adaptations whereby reconstruction produces profitability in the expansion phase and contradictions induce failure (crises) during the contraction phase. The theory is discussed in D.M. Gordon, R. Edwards, M. Reich, Segmented Work, Divided Workers: The Historical Transformation of Labor in the United States (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) and two works by Arthur Kaul and Joseph P. McKerns, "Long Waves and Journalism Ideology in America, 1835-1985." Paper presented to the Qualitative Studies Division, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Memphis, Tenn., 1985. Also, "The Dialectic Ecology of the Newspaper," Critical Studies in Mass Communication 1985, 217-33.

57. The 1974 Front Page was officially released on Christmas and generated most of its box office revenue in the first quarter of 1975.

58. Kaul and McKerns, "Long Waves" 5.

59. James Monaco, How to Read a Film: The Art, Technology, Language History, and Theory of Film and Media, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 500.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

American Journalism Mythology in Motion

In this most visual century, with so many mediated messages spinning by for spectators to glimpse and perhaps grasp, motion pictures embedded with journalism mythology attracted attention. The mythology, traced back to the nineteenth century novels and short stories, involved journalists demonstrating aggressive, anti-academic, blunt, cynical, drinker, fraternal, and unscrupulous tendencies as they went about their news work. Reporters got locked in power struggles with their news bosses over quitting journalism, portrayed as a romantic, exciting, adventurous job impossible to abandon.

To determine any historical relationship between American popular literature and feature films about journalism, this research examined an important and purposive sample of the journalism movie genre. Of all the filmed narratives of journalism's storied past, none has been revived more than The Front Page. This multiple case study of The Front Page (1931 and 1974), His Girl Friday (1940) and Switching Channels (1988) indicated that the four motion pictures derived some of their mythological message from the earlier short stories and novels.

Certainly, Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur, creators of the 1928 Front Page play that was inspiration for the films, were familiar with the stories, themes and characterizations of earlier occupational

fiction. Yet they, and the film makers who adapted their stage work, did not adopt the mythology unchanged, as one researcher claimed.¹ Instead, textual analyses indicated that each film version manipulated the same basic bundle of myth elements, comprising the occupational mythology, in different ways to fit the tenor of more modern times. Each film included anti-academic and fraternal character traits not identified in earlier journalism fiction. Film makers took a familiar mythological skeleton and fleshed it out with additional occupational attributes.

Beyond determining that a historical relationship existed between earlier popular literature and a purposive sample of feature films about journalism, these research findings suggest that the mass media contributed to the mythic variations within each of the four Front Page movies. Contextual analyses of the mass media during the thirties, seventies, and late eighties indicate that shifting economic alliances and technological rivalries among newspapers, television and motion pictures affected the dissemination of the filmed mythology. In addition, specific contextual evidence of The Front Page film production circumstances suggests that the variances among the four movies can be ascribed to the cyclical nature of genre films, myths and remakes, as well as censorship issues and fluctuations in actual media economies and technology.

The movies, representing nearly sixty years of American journalism mythology in motion, now exist in jumbled chronology scattered about the mass media marketplace. They appear regularly on television and are available on videocassette. Some of the versions are shown in journalism classes on the history of the mass media or, more recently,

in ethics classes as bad-case scenarios of behavior that aspiring journalists should not strive to emulate.²

The next section discusses ramifications of these research findings on mythology in terms of perceptions of journalism by news practitioners and the public alike.

Implications of the Findings in Perceptions of Journalism

Any mediated messages about American journalism disseminated through the mythology presented in four Front Page films seem decidedly mixed. On the one hand, the moviegoer may construe aggressive, blunt, cynical, drinker, and unscrupulous character traits of the movie journalists as socially negative attributes. On the other hand, these same occupational myth elements may be lauded by certain news practitioners who view them as professionally expedient. Yet any Social Darwinism interpretation -- that only the strong survive in the dog-eat-dog world of journalism -- must be tempered by the fact that the occupational mythology was presented in films promoted as comedies.

While the four motion pictures of this case study were part of a continuum of movies about the news business stretching back to the turn of the century, all the Front Page films were talkies that seemed to give voice to internal contradictions within the news industry. Journalists, who boldly defended their news practices with great street bravado, may have secretly harbored doubts about their career choices. With the advent of sound motion pictures about journalism, millions of moviegoers were being encouraged to sit back and listen in on conversations in the inner sanctum of the fictionalized Fourth Estate. With the spread of American journalism mythology through a profusion of

hit films like The Front Page, journalists confronted more public skepticism about their work and criticism of their professional pragmatism.

Film scholar Deac Rossell found that journalism movies of the Thirties were a distinct departure from the naive and enthusiastic treatment that the newspaper world got in silent films. He noted that the dialogue of talkies reflected the personal dilemma of journalists-turned-screenwriters. The sound motion pictures about journalism "often had a more questionable moral tone and an ideology of the press began to be discussed in public for the first time on a broad populist scale."³ All this was happening at a period, during the Depression, when newswriters were trying to professionalize. Reporters, particularly, were hoping to earn more public respect along with higher wages and fairer working conditions through unionizing. The Front Page ending tended to reinforce the status quo by indicating that leaving journalism was a bad idea. The message seemed to say that reporters should endure the lousy pay and work schedules because of the irresistible nature of their true calling.

American journalism mythology, like that manifest in the Front Page films, may have "reassured the patrons that reality could not hurt them once stereotypes were made from bogeymen,"⁴ as one observer asserted. Just as earlier silent films helped quell the public's curiosity about what went on in newspaper offices,⁵ The Front Page peeled away more of the mystique about how reporters worked in remote press rooms. Nevertheless, while The Front Page got audiences laughing, it also, no doubt, got a few thinking as well.

The 1931 film and its successors over nearly six decades, may have

raised more questions about journalism than they ever answered. For instance, how did journalists reconcile their aggressive side with fraternal traits? Within an American dichotomy between the individual and the community, how did reporters work in competition and collaboration? Also, did middle class American values of hard work and perseverance bring success for Hildy Johnson, who seemed to be struggling to overcome past misjudgments? Or were all journalists social misfits? Were they always such misanthropes or did their daily work make them that way? Were they incapable of a lasting, loving relationship? Were there any places in a mostly white, mostly male bastion for other races, ethnicities and genders? If so, what do His Girl Friday and Switching Channels say about the special compromises that women may have to make to remain journalists? Also, what about the need for formal journalism education? Are newspapers doomed in the face of television competition? What is the psychic toll of twenty-four hour news on a cable news staff? Finally, are most journalists out to abuse their public trust?

Perhaps it all comes down to the ethical paradox of what New York Times correspondent Sydney Schamberg called "the essential tension ... of being a human being and a professional observer."⁶ The lure of journalism seems an odd addiction: "Being a reporter is as much a diagnosis as a job description."⁷ The question remains whether there is a cure and if the news patient wishes to seek treatment and be rehabilitated into advertising copywriters or morning television talk show hosts. The Hildy Johnson and Christy Colleran characters of the four Front Page films wanted attention. A little more money would not hurt either, but mostly they wanted recognition as people, not just

reporters. They valued the worth and dignity of their individual efforts and balked at becoming some interchangeable newsgathering automaton.

Some of the thrill of being a journalist had gone out of the news business by the time The Front Page occupational mythology resurfaced in Switching Channels. While journalism could be exciting, it might be spiritually exhausting as well. Real-life reporters seemed less ambivalent about journalism than the mythical Johnsons and Colleran. Media historians noted that, by the eighties, "reporters between 30 and 45, those who were best educated and experienced, expressed the greater desire to leave the field"⁸ than a decade earlier. The vocational restlessness has continued into the nineties, with a Gannett-sponsored study indicated "what may be an unprecedented discontent inside newsrooms."⁹

Anecdotal evidence suggested that news practitioners with a sense of humor have not minded the various references to The Front Page which they regard as an entertaining look at their occupation. Serious-minded journalists, who wish that the news business would be regarded as a profession in the same ranks with the clergy, physicians, and lawyers, loathe any mention of The Front Page. Little empirical research exists on public opinion about journalism deduced from viewing any version of The Front Page.

The next section suggests other research paths to explore in the study of American journalism mythology.

Recommendations for Further Research

Beyond my guided entry into American journalism mythology through analysis of the four film versions of The Front Page, the study of occupational stories, themes and character traits could continue in many intriguing directions.

Because the research questions of this study focused on journalism mythology manifest in films through textual and contextual analyses, it did not address one important aspect of mythology construction and message mediation--the audience. The significance of spectatorship in shaping films and mythological perceptions should be explored.

A reader response survey or even focus-group interviews of those who have just seen the films could be attempted. Also, an impact analysis might be considered. It might be feasible to adapt the viewership approach used by author Helen Taylor in her survey of fans about their relationship with Gone with the Wind in order to get a sense of their collective associations.¹⁰

To find out if the myth elements manifest in The Front Page are generalizable to other films and media, it would be worthwhile to randomly select a sample of journalism films and subject them to a textual analysis like the one used in this study. Further, it would be interesting to try adapting the same research methods to study dime novels and pulp magazines, comic strips, radio and television programs dealing with journalism fiction to compare occupational myth elements.

Looking at The Front Page as a journalism classic, it seems important to explore the intermediate step between the nineteenth century novels and short stories that influenced its presentation of occupational myths and the motion pictures it spawned. The several

theatrical productions of the early twentieth century, especially those dealing with American journalism, need to be examined for possible links with The Front Page.

Considering the emergence of The Front Page as the canonical work of this century in terms of American journalism cultural heritage juxtaposed with the ongoing racial tensions in the United States, it would be interesting to investigate the elimination of a black stage character, Alderman Willoughby, from the original play and subsequent film versions. Racial, ethnic, political, and gender prejudices of the Front Page films could be explored.

Further research could be conducted on any post-production censorship of the Front Page films as well as distribution patterns and the context of the screening schedule across the country to see if there were any notable differences in how the motion pictures fared (in local reviews and revenue) in various parts of the country. Also, the variations in exhibition, distribution, advertising and promotion could be contrasted among the four motion pictures.

Looking outward, a cross-cultural study exploring the absence or presence of American journalism myths in foreign films about the occupation might be revealing. Further research could investigate the postulate of American exceptionalism, the idea that the United States (and its type of journalism) is different than anywhere else in the world.¹¹ The English-language corpus of English, Canadian or Australian feature films about journalism might be investigated using the premise of occupational comparisons and contrasts.

Looking myopically inward, it might be worthwhile to investigate the geo-centricity of Chicago journalism and its place in the

occupation's American mythology. Critics have argued that The Front Page was specific to Chicago and that the imagery presented did not apply to other parts of the country.

Many paths can be taken in continuing research on American journalism mythology. This study, employing a unique blend of textual and contextual analyses in a case study of four films, is but one important step in ongoing research about American journalism mythology.

Summary

This study indicated that American journalism mythology has not stood still as it moved from an oral traditional to printed page and from film to film through this century. Once the occupational stories, themes and character traits tumbled out of the mouths of news workers, they became part of the flow of messages designed to educate and entertain one another. Like most occupational mythology, they were constructed to organize feelings, transmit vocational lore, foster solidarity, offer insights and even provide role models for behavior. The myth elements, sometimes only fragments of a larger tale, were transported into short stories, novels and plays to be shared beyond the original circle of insiders. As the pace of life in America quickened with increased urbanization and industrialization, the cultural communication of journalism mythology continued to move across time and space. Initially, the mythology may have been created for news practitioners' own amusement and reflection. Over decades of recapitulation, the mythology became important second-order knowledge, not found in journalism textbooks but nevertheless passed on from one

generation of news workers to the next. The mythology was designed to remind journalists of their occupational heritage. This study is but one important advance in ongoing scholarship aimed at addressing historical roots of American journalism and the interrelationships of the mass media.

NOTES

1. Howard Good asserted that "... after 1930, films adopted unchanged the formulas that the [journalism] fiction originated." Acquainted with the Night: The Images of Journalists in American Fiction, 1890-1930. (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1986), 14.
2. Lee Wilkins, "Film as an Ethics Text," Journal of Mass Media Ethics, 2:2 (Spring-Summer 1987), 113.
3. Rossell, "Fourth Estate and Seventh Art," 242.
4. Fetherling, Crowded Darkness, 30.
5. Edwin L. Shuman, Practical Journalism (New York: Appleton, 1902), vii stated: "There are few things concerning which the general public is more curious, and about which it knows less, than the inside of a metropolitan newspaper office."
6. Gross, "Movies and the Press," 19.
7. Anna Quindlen, "Reporters chronicle our ever-shifting threshold of pain," Chicago Tribune 16 March 1993, Sec. 1, 19. The syndicated columnist called journalism "... a strange business, making a living off other people's misfortunes, standing in the rubble with a press card as a nominal shield, writing in a crabbed hand notes no one else can read, riding an adrenaline surge that ends in a product at once flimsy and influential."
8. Folkerts and Teeter, Voices of a Nation, 533.
9. Glaberson, "Survey," New York Times 23 November 1992, C6.
10. Helen Taylor, Gone with the Wind and Its Female Fans (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1989).
11. Robert B. Ray, A Certain Tendency of the Hollywood Cinema, 1930 - 1980 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985) contended that an audience's idea of the United States "its space, economic abundance, and geographic isolation" presented in American films encouraged viewers both here and abroad to accept its optimistic premise (56). Also, James Harvey, Romantic Comedy in Hollywood: From Lubitsch to Sturges (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), 89-90 discussed the specialness of American community and Chicago in the context of The Front Page. Kael, Kiss Kiss Bang Bang (New York: Bantam, 1971), 350 discussed American "verbal slapstick" and how it was admired by audiences overseas for its "freedom from certain kinds of political censorship ... perhaps no other country could so freely criticize and satirize itself."

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Figure 1 -- Sample Protocol

FILM: FP '31 HGF FP '74 SC MYTH _____				
(Myth start)				
_____ : _____ : _____ hrs. mins. secs.				
VISUAL	SPEECH	NOISE	MUSIC	PRINT/GRAPHIC
REPORTERS(S)	EDITOR/NEWS DIRECTOR		OTHER NEWS WORKER(S)	
(Myth end)			_____ : _____ : _____ hrs. mins. secs.	
(Myth start)				
_____ : _____ : _____ hrs. mins. secs.				
VISUAL	SPEECH	NOISE	MUSIC	PRINT/GRAPHIC
REPORTERS(S)	EDITOR/NEWS DIRECTOR		OTHER NEWS WORKER(S)	
(Myth end)			_____ : _____ : _____ hrs. mins. secs.	
(Myth start)				
_____ : _____ : _____ hrs. mins. secs.				
VISUAL	SPEECH	NOISE	MUSIC	PRINT/GRAPHIC
REPORTERS(S)	EDITOR/NEWS DIRECTOR		OTHER NEWS WORKER(S)	
(Myth end)			_____ : _____ : _____ hrs. mins. secs.	

APPENDIX B

Figure 2 -- Journalism Myth Elements Cited by Earlier Fiction Researchers

	Berry	Good	Harrison	McKeen	Watkins
CHARACTER-IZATIONS:					
Aggressive	X	X	X	X	X
Anti-Academic					
Blunt	X			X	X
Cynical	X	X		X	X
Drinker	X			X	X
Fraternal					
Unscrupulous		X	X	X	X
STORY:					
Power Struggle	X	X	X		
THEME:					
Romantic Occupation		X	X	X	X

Sources: Thomas Elliott Berry, The Newspaper in the American Novel, 1900-1969 (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1970); Howard Good, Acquainted With the Night: The Images of Journalists in American Fiction, 1890-1930 (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1986); James G. Harrison, "American Newspaper Journalism as Described in American Novels of the Nineteenth Century" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, 1945); William McKeen, "The Journalist in the American Novel, 1915-1975" (Master's thesis, Indiana University, 1977); Patsy A.G. Watkins, "Image of Reporters in the 1920s Fiction About Reporters" (Master's thesis, University of Texas, 1976).

APPENDIX C

Figure 3 -- Journalism Myth Elements Cited in Reviews of 1931 The Front Page

	Commonweal	Nation	New Republic	New York Times	Time	Variety
CHARACTER-IZATIONS:						
Aggressive	X	X	X			X
Anti-Academic						
Blunt	X	X	X	X	X	
Cynical		X				X
Drinker						
Fraternal					X	X
Unscrupulous	X	X			X	X
STORY:						
Power Struggle	X			X	X	X
THEME:						
Romantic Occupation	X	X			X	

APPENDIX D

Figure 4 -- Journalism Myth Elements Cited in Reviews of 1940 His Girl Friday

	Commonweal	Nation	New Republic	New York Times	New Yorker	Newsweek	Time	Variety
CHARACTER-IZATIONS:								
Aggressive	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Anti-Academic								
Blunt			X	X	X		X	X
Cynical						X	X	X
Drinker							X	
Fraternal	X						X	X
Unscrupulous	X	X		X		X	X	X
STORY:								
Power Struggle	X	X		X		X	X	X
THEME:								
Romantic Occupation								X

APPENDIX E

Figure 5 -- Journalism Myth Elements Cited in Reviews of 1974 The Front Page

CHARACTER- IZATIONS:	Commonweal	New Republic	Newweek	New York	New Yorker	New York Times	Variety	Village Voice	Chicago Journalism Review	[Moral] Quill
Aggressive		X		X	X	X				X
Anti-Academic			X	X					X	X
Blunt			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cynical		X		X	X	X	X			
Drinker									X	
Fraternal	X	X			X		X	X	X	X
Unscrupulous				X	X		X	X		
STORY:										
Power Struggle	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X
THEME:										
Romantic Occupation					X			X	X	X

APPENDIX F

Figure 6 -- Journalism Myth Elements Cited in Reviews of 1988
Switching Channels

	Commonweal	New York	New Yorker	New York Times	People	Time	Variety
CHARACTER-IZATIONS:							
Aggressive		X		X	X	X	X
Anti-Academic							
Blunt	X	X	X	X			
Cynical							X
Drinker							
Fraternal							
Unscrupulous	X	X				X	X
STORY:							
Power Struggle		X	X			X	X
THEME:							
Romantic Occupation			X	X			

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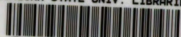
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