

GRAND THEFT 2000: MEDIA SPECTACLE AND A STOLEN ELECTION

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PUBLICATION INFORMATION

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INTRODUCTION

The battle for the White House following the election of November 7, 2000, was arguably one of the major media spectacles in U.S. history, comparable to the Army-McCarthy hearings, the Kennedy assassination, the Watergate hearings, the Iran-Contra affair, the O. J. Simpson trial, and most recently, the Clinton sex scandals and impeachment trials. It was in many ways more contained and circumscribed than these other epochal events, taking place over thirty-six days from the uncertainty of election night to Al Gore's concession on December 13 and George W. Bush's acceptance of the mantle of president-elect. The story was highly theatrical with ups and downs, and surprises and reversals, for the candidates and the global audience, exhibiting unpredictability and uncertainty until the end. Its colorful cast of characters and melodramatic story line could hardly be bettered by the most creative Hollywood central casting.

The narrative structure of the media spectacle was conventional, with beginnings, middles, and an end, although it was a comedy with a happy ending for some and a dark tragedy for others. Of course, a contest for the presidency is more than a spectacle, and there were high political stakes in the drama. Election 2000 involved one of the most

intense and important political contests in recent history, with potential for a constitutional crisis of an unprecedented proportion. During the struggle for the presidency, the U.S. machinery of voting was exposed as obsolete and dysfunctional, and U.S. institutions—from the television networks up to the Supreme Court—were radically questioned and continue to face a crisis of legitimacy.

The intense fight for the presidency is, therefore, by all standards a Big Story. But a story it is, and I propose to undertake a narrative and political analysis of the spectacle, using the methods of critical social theory, media analysis, and cultural studies to unpack and interpret Election 2000 and its stunning aftermath. I will dissect how it was produced and unfolded, what it communicated, and ultimately, what it tells us about the U.S. system of media, politics, and democracy at the turn of the new millennium.

It is clear from reflection on the period from November 7 to December 13 that television is still at the center of media culture and political contests. During both the election and the postelection combat, competing political players were most intent on manipulating the broadcasting networks. For it remains the case that people turn to television to experience key political and social events, and that television is the ultimate arbitrator of political reality. Yet the spectacle also highlighted that the United States and the global village enveloping it were entering the age of the Internet, and that more information is available to a greater number of people, more easily, and from a wider range of sources than any period in history. It was astonishing to discover the extensive array of material available, articulating every conceivable point of view on the election battle and providing news, opinion, and sources of a striking range and diversity.

Indeed, the wired world at least, and increasingly the public at large, is now in a total information environment, consisting of a broad spectrum of radio and television broadcasting networks; print media and publications; and the wired global village of the Internet, which itself contains the most varied and extensive sources of information and entertainment ever assembled that can send disparate types and sources of information and images instantly throughout the world. It is also true that thanks to media mergers of the past decade, fewer hands control the dominant media outlets, which can be utilized by powerful corporate and political interests for specific partisan ends, as I document in this study. To be sure, much of the world is not yet wired, many people do not even read, and different inhabitants in various parts of the globe receive their information and culture in very dissimilar ways through varying sources, media, and forms. Thus, the type and quality of information vary tremendously, depending on an individual's access and ability to properly interpret and contextualize it.

This study is undertaken from a specific social location, which turns out to be the very belly of the beast of the communications-spectacle industry that was crucial in the intense struggle for the presidency in November and December 2000. My focus is on how the spectacle played out on the U.S. television networks and infotainment system. I critically dissect the text of the media spectacle with sources from broadcasting to print media and the Internet. The latter often tell a different story than television, helping to provide necessary contextualization for TV's narratives and critique of its limitations.

Grand Theft 2000 follows my *Television and the Crisis of Democracy* and *The Persian Gulf TV War* (1992) by applying the tools of critical social and media theory to analyze the role of the mainstream media, especially television, in U.S. politics and the ways that television has contributed to a crisis of democracy by not adequately informing, or misinforming, the public. The three books illustrate the ways the media have aggravated a crisis of democracy from the media presidency of Ronald Reagan, to the Persian Gulf TV war, and through Election 2000 and its startling conclusion. I stress, as before, the intersection of the media and politics, the means by which interested political parties manipulate the media, and the ways that various media are highly partisan and are themselves key players in political contestation. As I have long argued, the media are a contested terrain (1979, 1990, 1995), which themselves have competing interests and biases and are wooed, attacked, undermined, and used by competing political forces and interests.

Election 2000 and its aftermath acutely illustrate the crisis of democracy in the United States and the ways the media contribute to the sickness, but also suggest how democratic media can help provide the cure. More specifically, I engage what I consider a fierce confrontation over competing conceptions of democracy itself in the struggle for the White House. The spectacle projected highly resonant images of people struggling to determine the conditions and fate of their social and political life, contrasted with representations of opposing forces attempting to crush participatory democracy in favor of a more conservative concept of democracy in which elite institutions, like the U.S. Supreme Court, ultimately have sovereignty. Thus, democracy itself is at stake in the struggle that put on display the stunning limitations of democracy in the United States as well as some of its strengths.

In *Grand Theft 2000*, I also apply the model of cultural studies developed in my books *Media Culture* (1995) and *Media Spectacle* (forthcoming). In fact, a study of the 2000 election was envisaged as a dramatic opening for the latter book, or an illustrative chapter, exemplifying the ways that I saw media spectacle as increasingly central to U.S. politics and everyday life in an environment of mushrooming information and entertainment as we enter a new form of infotainment society in an emergent era of global and technocapitalism. As the battle for the White House unfolded, however, the study expanded quickly into a book-length manuscript.

While some of my recent books have engaged a postmodern turn in politics and culture in which the mediascapes of broadcasting and cyberspace have fundamentally transformed the economy, society, politics, and everyday life, the events described in this study are both a postmodern media spectacle and an old-time modern power struggle.¹ Although the Bush camp's success was in part due to the ability of Bush's handlers and the candidate's personality to construct a positive image, in the end, I argue, it was the Bush dynasty and the Republican Party's political machine that overwhelmed the Gore forces in the war for the presidency, with the media, especially certain television networks, aiding the Bush victory. Thus, while aspects of the struggle played out in cyberspace and the media, which strikingly captured some surprising and unpredictable twists and turns in the saga, it was old-fashioned power politics and the mobilization of money, lawyers,

political operatives, and a disciplined and focused political organization that won the prize for Bush.

Election 2000 was indeed the most expensive in history, costing more than \$3 billion, up 50 percent over 1996. According to a *Mother Jones* survey based on research of the Center for Responsive Politics, "An estimated 55 percent went to Bush and GOP candidates for Congress and \$646 million that came from corporations and wealthy executives eager to underwrite the Republicans' hands-off approach to business."² Bush had massive support from corporations, the Republican Party, rightwing activist groups, and allies in the media, and part of this story documents how the Bush machine mobilized support to steal an election to perpetuate its political dynasty and the economic and political interests of its supporters.

The limitations of a work of instant history are obvious. We are still immersed in the events being analyzed, and subsequent commentary and scholarship will provide more adequate perspectives and interpretations. The book was largely written during the heat of combat in which I videotaped and watched hours of television every day and downloaded stacks of information and analysis from the Internet, which now includes most mainstream newspapers and journals, as well as a wide range of political publications, Web sites, and other information sources and an array of disinformation. In terms of material relied upon, I consulted the sites regularly on which I was increasingly depending in the Internet era, including salon.com and slate.com, as well as the main national newspapers such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, my hometown *Los Angeles Times*, and a wide range of Internet sources.³ As is often the case in the culture of hypertext, explorations for material often take one into novel and surprising places and yield interesting material, and I have attempted to assemble the most significant of these materials for this study.

No doubt my critique will be read as a partisan text, and I readily admit to being partial toward democracy, social justice, accurate information, and good journalism. I cannot, of course, claim to tell the "truth" about the election since, as mentioned above, we are far too close to the events to completely present the whole story of the skirmish for the presidency, the factors behind the facts, or the yet-to-be-determined consequences and effects of Election 2000. I can, however, describe the unfolding of the spectacle of the Florida war for the presidency and engage issues that I believe significant as have legions of journalists and commentators already. And I try to tell the most reliable and compelling story of the events that I can, based on sources now available.

As for my political biases, they are for radical democracy and social justice. I am not a partisan for either of the two major parties, found Election 2000 itself dispiriting, and was not enthusiastic about either major-party candidate. Both chief contending parties relied on focus groups and polls for their "issues" and "messages" and chose less than inspiring themes and foci for their campaigns. Both were financed by big corporations and represented only slightly different corporate agendas, and neither presented uplifting visions of social progress, justice, or democratic social transformation. Neither was sufficiently critical, in my view, of the U.S. military and its bloated budget and misguided

priorities; neither adequately addressed the problems of globalization, of the environment, of the digital divide, and of other growing divisions between haves and have-nots.

Yet I did not agree in the least with Ralph Nader's disastrously wrong argument that there were no differences between the major political parties or candidates. The Democrats had the support of African Americans, Hispanics, gays and lesbians, and labor and working-class people; their policies were directed toward the constituencies who would be represented in a Gore White House. The Republican Party support, by contrast, was rooted in hard-core conservatives, the religious right, promarket corporate elites, and the usual upper-class constituencies thirsting for the tax cuts, deregulation, and cutting back of government that Bush had promised. Al Gore, whatever his charisma and personality deficits, was one of the most intelligent and competent politicians of his party and well qualified for the presidency. George W. Bush, by contrast, was the most underqualified candidate for the presidency during my lifetime, and he appeared to many to not have the intelligence, experience, or abilities to cope with the economic, political, and social challenges facing the United States in the new era of globalization, technological revolution, a networked society, a new cyberculture, and emerging forms of political and social unrest.

This is not, however, a book primarily about Gore and Bush, but about media and politics at the beginning of a millennium. It engages Election 2000 and its outcome in an era of spectacle politics and dissects how the drama was played out in the different stages of the struggle. A curious set of characters emerges, as does a contestation between the major U.S. political parties and players in the contemporary era, but my focus is on the often eye-catching events of the conflict and how the spectacle itself was constructed and played out. Rarely has live television ever been so raw, unedited, and direct in its immediacy, and seldom have journalistic investigations or critical commentary circulated so far and so fast. Thus, I engage the battle for the White House during an era in which politics is played out on the terrain of media spectacle—the site of my analysis.⁴

Initially, the president elect of the United States, George W. Bush, does not appear as a main protagonist in this story, although his family's formidable resources, connections, and networks play a major role in the theft of an election. George Junior himself, however, seldom appeared on stage during the Florida recount wars, preferring to let his handlers and representatives wage battle on his behalf, some say wisely. But those behind and for the conservative Republican appear front and center, and many, including myself, find the players and their actions worrisome. Bush's muted presence in this narrative suggests that George W. Bush himself is a spectacle, an actor in a ritual of image management, in which his handlers produce the script, and that the president of the United States is a puppet of powerful social forces.⁵

A change in tone and focus emerges as the book proceeds. As noted, I'd initially planned to undertake an analysis of media spectacle in Election 2000, and the opening study is a critical and analytical interpretation of the role of media and spectacle in the presidential election campaign. Like many, the drama of election night captured my interest, and

initially I saw the ensuing political conflict as a great exercise in civic education that was disclosing the embarrassing flaws of the U.S. electoral system and limitations of its democracy. It also provided a revealing morality play of the foibles and follies of major political and media players within the U.S. political theater, as well as offering glimpses into how the media, political system, legal institutions, and partisan struggle workóor failóto produce properly democratic results. Early chapters thus often dwell on the absurd and surreal elements of the contestation for the presidency and what it revealed about the current state of U.S. society. Once it was clear, however, that the Republican juggernaut for Bush was not going to concede no matter what the election results and would do anything necessary to win, the story becomes darker and my description becomes more detailed and interpretive.

Ultimately, the story becomes one of a stolen election and Republican coup d'état, and I thus focus on how this could take place, what it tells us about politics in the United States today, and the alarming consequences for democracy in the agon for the White House, as titanic a political struggle as has occurred in the United States in the modern era. The concluding studies focus on the Orwellian themes of corruption of political language in the media age and on what I consider a form of Republican Stalinism that brazenly stole the election, corrupting the U.S. Supreme Court, the political system, media, and culture in the process, thus intensifying the crisis of democracy under way for the past decades.

By "Grand Theft 2000," I mean that a crime of the highest magnitude was carried off by the Bush machine, that the presidency was stolen, that U.S. democracy was undermined, and that the hardright were able to seize control of the state apparatus and public policy. The theft of an election shows the U.S. system of democracy to be highly defective and vulnerable to takeover by societal forces that were heavily financed by corporate and rightwing groups, highly organized, and completely ruthless. The theft of Election 2000, as I attempt to demonstrate, was one of the most scandalous political crimes in American history and a demonstration of the need for radical change in the U.S. system of democracy.

Thus, while *Grand Theft 2000* presents a historical narrative of the heist of the presidency, my study also carries through a critique of the media and political system that registers a crisis of democracy in the U.S.A. today. Arguing that the media are culpable in the theft of the presidency by the House of Bush, my studies also highlight failures of voting technology and literacy, Republican manipulation of the Florida electoral process and political system in the counting of the votes, and structural problems with the system of democracy in the United States. In addition to exposing the flaws and underbelly of U.S. democracy, I also suggest some solutions to the problems revealed. A final chapter critically dissects the first 100 days of the Bush presidency, which is emerging as one of the most reactionary and contentious in U.S. history.⁶

As I unravel the story of the Florida recount wars, I argue that the theft of Election 2000 took place on three levels. First of all, before the election, Jeb Bush, Katherine Harris, and the Florida state Republican Party did everything possible to augment Republican votes and block Democratic votes, displaying gross partisanship, bordering on illegality.

The Florida Republicans hired a Republican-based company, DataBase Technologies, to "cleanse" the voting lists of felons, which also eliminated thousands of legitimate voters, mostly poor and African American. The Jeb Bush gang allowed Republican political operatives to illegally fill in absentee ballot applications in Seminole and Martin Counties, breaking the law and denying Democrats equal privileges. Jeb Bush vetoed a \$100,000 voter literacy bill depriving first-time voters of obviously necessary education on how to vote. The Florida Governor, brother of the Republican presidential candidate, sent out from his office absentee ballots, instructions, and a letter urging recipients to vote. Further, Florida secretary of state Katherine Harris employed Gulf War hero General Norman Schwartzkopf, a Bush supporter who frequently campaigned for George W. Bush and a close friend of his father, to participate in a get-out-and-vote TV ad campaign that was, in effect, using state funds to tell people to vote for Bush.

Second, on the day of the election, the Florida state Republican Party did everything possible to facilitate Republican votes and block Democratic ones. African American voters were harassed by police as they drove in vans to vote; largely first-time African American voters who had registered to vote found their names missing on voting lists, while many other longtime voters found that their names were purged from the voting lists and were denied their votes. There were not enough poll workers at many lower-income and predominantly Democratic Party precincts, inadequate computer lists of eligible voters, and insufficient language help for Spanish-speaking and Haitian voters. Moreover, there were a record number of undervotes that did not register because of faulty voting machines, primarily in low-income and/or heavily Democratic Party districts. In addition, there were a record number of overvotes due to faulty ballots, including the infamous butterfly ballot in Palm Beach County and a two-page ballot of presidential candidates in Duval County that contained instructions to vote for candidates on each page. Finally, there were many other voting irregularities and the manufacturing of many votes for George W. Bush and erasure of votes for Al Gore, as I will document in the course of this study.

Third, after the deadlocked election on November 7, the Bush machine and Florida Republican Party did everything possible to block the manual recount of selective counties called for by the Gore campaign. The Republicans pushed to certify Bush as president as quickly as possible, even though many thousands of votes had not been counted, attempting to seize the presidency for Bush, while blocking the counting of the votes that the Democrats demanded. In addition, the Bush camp was prepared to use the Florida legislature to name its electors, an act never before carried out that risked constitutional crisis and chaos. Finally, they ultimately called upon the U.S. Supreme Court to block the tallying of undervotes mandated by the Florida Supreme Court and in effect to give the presidency to Bush, in one of the most brazen examples of judicial activism and most controversial Supreme Court decisions in U.S. history.

I will recount the heist of the presidency as it proceeded during the Florida Recount wars, will provide documentation of the step-by-step and multifaceted theft of an election, will show how the mainstream media aided and abetted the Bush camp, and will uncover the crisis of democracy that the theft of an election reveals. It was an astounding and

audacious theft, taking place in front of an audience of millions, played out on television before the wondering eyes of the world. Would the thief and his minions get away with the crime, would the President-Select (selected by the Supreme Court and not the voters) continue his reign of crime, robbing the federal treasury for his friends; undo social progress and governmental reforms of the past decade, and further subvert democracy in the United States? Or would the Presidential Pretender be unveiled, his reign cut short, his theft uncovered? The end of the story is uncertain, and the episodes in this study are thus but the beginning of what promises to be a highly eventful and unpredictable era in U.S. and global history.

This book is not, then, a swan song to American democracy, for precisely the events studied here reveal the highly contested nature of the political, legal, social, and cultural system in the contemporary era, the power of democratic forces, and the openings for a new era of radical democratic struggle. In an era of turbulent transformation, with technological revolution and the global restructuring of capitalism transforming every area of life, no one can predict what the morrow will bring. U.S. politics are especially unpredictable and indeterminate in a high-saturation media-infotainment environment in which fierce competition for audiences produces intense pressure to generate stories that will capture audience attention. Hence, as Bill Clinton discovered, the media are prepared to circulate just about anything, and in an era of frantic competition the media become the sites of intense political struggle and potential enlightenment, as well as mystification.

George W. Bush and his supporters may well learn that the loser now may later win, and the winner could become a major loser, as Richard Nixon was after his highly successful 1972 election when the Watergate scandal erupted and he became the first president in U.S. history to resign. Election 2000 could be a scandal bigger than Watergate, and it remains to be seen how the outcome of the war for the presidency will play out. As the following studies indicate, although Election 2000 leading up to voting night was relatively uneventful, with the confounding statistical dead heat erupting on election night, all hell broke loose and the seams, fissures, conflicts, and contradictions of the system burst out on the rostrum of the global village. Significant sectors of the public and media are now focused on the ongoing political confrontations, which are hardly over with Gore's concession and Bush's occupation of the White House. I tell this story after a brief setup that engages the role of the media in the 2000 election campaign—a topic that will no doubt be the subject of many articles and books.⁷

There are many people whom I would like to acknowledge for help with this project. I learned much about the Bush family during the eighteen years of 1978 through 1996 when I did with Frank Morrow *Alternative Views*, a public-access television show in Austin, Texas, and I thank our many student interns for research material into Bush senior's misdeeds during the era. Mari Shulaw encouraged me to pursue a book on Election 2000 when I first sent her my analysis of election night. Bob Antonio and Phil Agre provided useful comments on the first draft, and Agre's Red Rock Eater listserv continued to be a helpful source of information. Rhonda Hammer edited the first draft and was strongly supportive of the project, even though it forced her to endure my replaying of the tapes of the painful thirty-six days. Carl Boggs and Steve Bronner

provided detailed comments and critiques of later versions of the manuscript. Steve Wrinn was highly supportive of Rowman & Littlefield's publication of the manuscript and helped through the various stages of production, as did Lynn Gemmell, Mary Carpenter, and Ginger Strader. And for excellent copyediting, I would like to thank Pat Knight. Finally, I would like to dedicate this book to the Heroes of Democracy in Florida who tried to count the votes.

Los Angeles, June 15, 2001

NOTES

1. For my studies of modern and postmodern theory, see Kellner 1989a, 1989b, 1989c, and 1995; and Best and Kellner 1991, 1997, and forthcoming.

2. See "Campaign Inflation: Industry Pumped in a Record \$646 Million to Elect George W. Bush," *Mother Jones* (Mar., Apr. 2001): 47. For a variety of sources indicating who contributed to the Bush campaign, see the Center for Responsive Politics Web site at <http://www.journalism.berkeley.edu/resources/internet/crp.htm>. The two presidential campaigns were restricted by law to spending \$67.6 million for the general election (hard money). But the two parties were also able to raise and spend "soft money" with the Republicans raising about \$211 million, 74 percent more than 1996, while the Democrats raised about \$199 million, an increase of 85 percent over the previous election. The single major cost is television ads with about one out of every five dollars raised going to TV advertising with the TV station owners taking in an estimated \$600 million in revenue from political advertising in 2000, a 40 percent increase over 1996, helping broadcasters to achieve pretax profit margins that range from 25 to 50 percent (see *The Alliance for Better Campaigns*, "Gouging Democracy: How the Television Industry Profiteered on Campaign 2000," in Schechter 2001: 77,92).

The *Washington Post* reported that Republicans enjoyed a huge advantage in hard-money contributions (i.e., limiting contributions to \$1,000 for candidates and \$20,000 for political parties, and \$5,000 political action committee [PAC] donations), amassing \$447.4 million in such contributions during the 2000 election, compared with \$270 million for the Democrats. But in the soft-money category (i.e., unlimited donations for issue advertising or political parties), Democrats were basically even with Republicans, pulling in \$243 million compared to the Republicans' \$244.4 million, leading the authors Ruth Marcus and Dan Balz to report "Democrats Have Fresh Doubts on 'Soft Money' Ban" (Mar. 5, 2001, A1). The Bush team pulled in more than \$40 million from a network of Bush allies called the "Pioneers," in which those who pledged to raise at least \$100,000 for Bush's campaign were put on an A-list and promised access and potential benefits for their contribution (see the list on [www](http://www.counterpunch.org/pioneers.html).

www.counterpunch.org/pioneers.html). A more elite group, "The Republican Regents," involved 139 contributors who contributed at least \$250,000 in soft money since January 1999 and were promised special access and favors; see Don van Natta and John M.

Broder, "The Few, the Rich, the Rewarded Donate the Bulk of G.O.P. Gifts," *New York Times* (August 2, 2000).

3. Internet sources that were particularly useful include the daily lists of commentaries and links published by www.bushwatch.com, the commentaries and links to Internet material sources posted by Phil Agre in his Red Rock Eater News Service (RRE, now archived at <http://commons.somewhere.com/rre/>), and sources from <http://www.counterpunch.org>; <http://www.alternet.org>; <http://www.eatthestate.org>; <http://www.commondreams.org>; <http://www.consortiumnews.com/>; <http://www.buzzflash.com>; <http://www.americanpolitics.com/>; and www.democrats.com.

4. The concept of spectacle that I am using derives from Guy Debord and the French situationists; for previous articulations of the concept of spectacle developed here, see Best and Kellner (1997 and 2001) and Kellner (forthcoming).

5. I happen to know a lot about the Bush family having published two books in which George Herbert Walker Bush plays key roles (Kellner 1990 and 1992). Moreover, I was professor of philosophy at the University of Texas at Austin from 1973 to 1998, and was thus in Austin at the time George W. Bush won his first race for governor and was then reelected. I followed his career with interest, knew some of his insiders, have heard copious stories about the person and his politics, and have read the major books on Bush junior including Ivins and Dubose (2000), Mitchell (2000), Begala (2000), Hatfield (2000), and Miller (2001). I also followed the election spectacle closely and read a lot of material, from print sources and the Internet, as the event unfolded, which I draw upon in this study.

6. The first draft of my text was written during December 2000 and January 2001, right after the events described. While editing the text and the proofs, I have been able to read a series of books that have appeared on the election. Jake Tapper, in his book *Down and Dirty: The Plot to Steal the Presidency* (2001), argues that both the Republicans and the Democrats were playing "down and dirty," attempting the heist of the presidency, and were equally unprincipled, mendacious, and ruthless. I argue, however, that the two sides cannot be symmetrized and made equivalent, that the Bush machine stole the election and was significantly more mendacious and ruthless than the Gore team, as, obviously, one side pulled off the theft and the other failed in its intention to get votes counted. A book by *Washington Times* correspondent Bill Sammon, *At Any Cost: How Al Gore Tried to Steal the Election* (2001), is ludicrously one-sided and recycles the Republican propaganda line that Bush legitimately won the presidency on election night and that Gore ruthlessly attempted to "steal" that election that Bush won. This position overlooks the simple fact that the Bush team *did* manage to seize the presidency, in a highly problematic and thuggish manner, as I attempt to show in this book, which provides the antithesis to Sammon's book and the correction to Tapper's too-easy synthesis.

Vincent Bugliosi's *The Betrayal of America: How the Supreme Court Undermined the Constitution and Chose Our President* (2001) provides a damning indictment of the role of the Supreme Court in the theft of the presidency and supplements my account. Alan

Dershowitz also published an attack on the Supreme Court decision titled *Supreme Injustice: How the High Court Hijacked Election 2000* (2001). Dershowitz points out how the decision for Bush against Gore contradicted the conservative justices' previous rulings, was tarnished by their partisan self-interests and motivations, and itself brought disgrace upon the Court. Since Dershowitz's book only arrived as mine was going to press, I was not able to draw upon it for my study.

I would also recommend the collection of articles found in Danny Schechter (ed.), *Mediocracy 2000: Hail to the Thief* How the Media Stole the U.S. Presidential Election (2001). Many of the studies collected here are extremely useful, but I would disagree with the thesis in the subtitle that it was the media that "stole the U.S. Presidential Election," although I present the media as an important accessory to the crime. Jeff Greenfield's book on the media and the election (2001), however, is trivial fluff that distorts the biases of the media, generally repeats the standard Republican version of the election, and has been systematically critiqued by Bob Somerby in www.dailyhowler.com. Just as I was sending in the page proofs for my study, I received Mark Crispin Miller's provocative Benjaminian collage *The Bush Dyslexicon* (2001), a jolly good piece of Bush-bashing and theorizing that complements my critique.

On the campaign of Election 2000, reporter Dana Milbank's first-person accounts in *Smashmouth* (2001) are highly entertaining and sometimes insightful. I will also occasionally draw on the *Washington Post* instant book on the election, *Deadlock* (2001), the *New York Times* collection of articles *36 Days* (2001), and *U.S. News and World Report* correspondent Roger Simon's *Divided We Stand. How Al Gore Beat George Bush and Lost the Presidency* (2001). The first two-thirds of Simon's book provides a lively overview of the election campaign with penetrating portraits, a lot of insider information, and perceptive analysis of Election 2000. The last third of the book, dealing with the Florida recount wars, misses the narrative and significance of the theft of the election. Simon's account dribbles into incoherence and fragments, recycles the same stories already circulated by mainstream media and published accounts, and fails to offer any original insight or reporting. All of these establishment mainstream media books are shockingly lacking in investigative reporting that unfortunately reflect the sad state of mainstream corporate media. I will argue, however, that the Internet compensates for the pathetic state of our establishment media and provide some hope that the truth about the Bush family dynasty, Election 2000, and the theft of the presidency will circulate and have appropriate consequences.

7. A word on sources and citations: I videotaped much of the battle for the White House and cite the networks viewed and the date in my analysis. I provide dates and sources for newspaper and journal citations, although since I accessed many of these from the Internet, often they do not have page number citations. I present Internet URLs for the Web sources used, but the reader is warned that these pages often disappear (which is why I also often cite source, date, and site so that readers can conduct searches). Finally, a word on nicknames. One of George W. Bush's personality quirks is the devising of nicknames for those around him so it is entirely appropriate to come up with suitable nicknames for the president, as I do throughout the text.

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