The Performative Presidency

*The Performative Presidency* brings together literatures describing presidential leadership strategies, public understandings of citizenship, and news production and media technologies between the presidencies of Theodore Roosevelt and Bill Clinton, and details how the relations between these spheres have changed over time. Jason L. Mast demonstrates how interactions between leaders, publics, and media are organized in a theatrical way, and argues that mass mediated plot formation and character development play an increasing role in structuring the political arena. He shows politics as a process of ongoing performances staged by motivated political actors, mediated by critics, and interpreted by audiences, in the context of a deeply rooted, widely shared system of collective representations. The interdisciplinary framework of this book brings together a semiotic theory of culture with concepts from the burgeoning field of performance studies.

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Crisis and Resurrection during the Clinton Years

Jason L. Mast
To my mother and father, Nancy and Louie, for doing supportive and encouraging things with their words
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1.1 With finger pointed, President Clinton denies having sexual relations with Monica Lewinsky, January 26, 1998. © AP Photo/Associated Press/Greg Gibson.

1.2 Independent Counsel and Whitewater investigator Kenneth Starr carrying a bag of garbage in front of reporters gathered at his house in Virginia on April 2, 1998. © AP Photo/Associated Press/William Philpott.


7.1 Framed against a portrait of Teddy Roosevelt on horseback, Clinton performs to the nation his denial of an affair with Monica Lewinsky, January 26, 1998. © AP Photo/Associated Press/Greg Gibson.


7.3 President Clinton responding to congressional applause at January 27, 1998’s State of the Union Address, held eleven days after the Drudge Report had announced his involvement with a White House intern. © AP Photo/Associated Press/Joe Marquette, POOL.
Acknowledgments

In its transformation from a germ of an idea into a book, this project traveled from America’s west coast to its east coast, where it made periodic trips to the University of Konstanz in Germany, and it came to fruition at Zeppelin University, Konstanz’s neighbor on the Bodensee. Along the journey, many people helped shape its ideas and contributed emotional support for the endeavor. I turn to Wonderland’s King of Hearts for instruction on how to thank the many people who helped me along the way; I will start thanking them from the beginning and go on till I come to the end, and then stop.

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