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Who-Leads and Who Follows: ‘House Style’ at the State Press

Abstract: This paper examines how African political and discursive forms shape the seemingly universal practices of journalism at a state newspaper in Ghana. The daily work routine, relationships with sources, criteria of newsworthiness, narrative techniques—all are locally determined by Ghanaian standards of discourse and sociality. Local aesthetics of representation and discursive propriety establish a distinctive set of conventions for political speech and news writing. Through aesthetically “Africanized” discursive styles, social relations, and everyday practices, the state press constructs the authoritative social imaginary of nation-state (media, the state, discourse, practice, globalization).

Introduction

Newspapers are nearly everywhere, a global form of national discourse. Wherever there are nation-states, there are newspapers to continually imagine, antagonize, and reinforce them. As the set of professional practices for producing newspapers, journalism is a globalized discursive regime whose ethical and political imperatives seem to transcend the cultural and historical particularities so central to the globalized discursive regime of anthropology. While anthropologists are often bent on valorizing the
particular in the interest of cultural relativism, journalists are often bent on universalizing the particular—in terms of objectivity, political legitimacy, and human rights.\textsuperscript{1} Indeed, a global apparatus of professional organizations, news services, conferences, and literature links journalists all over the world in their distinctive vocation, serving not only to universalize journalism as a certain type of national discourse with homologous political and professional functionality in diverse national contexts but also to ideologically support their professional human rights (free speech, freedom from harassment and intimidation, access to information) across those national boundaries.

However, like the hypotheses of homogenization that attended the first prophesies of globalization (Hamelink 1983, McLuhan 1994/1964), the seeming discursive universality of journalism is highly misleading. A glance at the front-page headlines of the local state-run newspaper in Ghana gives some indication of the vast differences in the logic and practice of journalism in a postcolonial African context.\textsuperscript{2}


"President Commissions $13 million Bosumtwi-Sam Fishing Harbour"
“President Commissions Tema-Akosombo Road”


“Let’s Act in Unison—JJ”


“Stop Whipping Up Ethnic Sentiments—President”


Working as a journalist for the press in Ghana, I was continually struck by the complicated ways that African political and discursive forms dramatically shape the seemingly universal practices of journalism. The daily work routine, relationships with sources, criteria of newsworthiness, narrative techniques—all are locally determined by Ghanaian standards of discourse and sociality. Local notions of authority and patronage structure a cultural context for daily assignments and beats. Local aesthetics of representation and discursive propriety establish a distinctive set of conventions for political speech and news writing. Local histories of colonial authoritarianism, anti-colonial nationalism, and postcolonial instability inform the terms and techniques of political contest between the state and oppositional groups, an antagonistic discourse played out
in the public sphere between the state press and the private press.


With few exceptions (O’Barr 1996, Lutz 1993), anthropological interest in media has focused on broadcast media and film, tending to overlook the technologically banal forms of print media, particularly newspapers. More often, newspapers have come under the scrutiny of anthropologists studying the nation-state, examining political processes of authority, ideology, and hegemony (Yurchak 1997, Gupta 1995, Anagnost 1993). Yurchak shows how the soviet state
constructed an "authoritative discourse" through the state press, challenged by the "intermediary" and "non-official" voices of popular ridicule and cynicism in the era of late socialism and the subsequent dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Describing the discourses deployed by the Chinese state, Anagnost uses an article in a party newspaper to demonstrate how the frequent ritual forms of subjectivization (in this case, an awards ceremony for "law-abiding households") are represented in the party press within a hegemonic "master narrative of progress towards socialism" (88). This master narrative subordinates alternative cultural practices as "traditional" and therefore regressive, promoting instead the "modern" practical regime of the Chinese nation-state.

Pulling together anthropological approaches to governmentality and mass media, this paper will explore how the state in Ghana has engineered its political legitimacy by deploying a set of discursive practices to establish a new "master-narrative" (or "mastercode") of national development, disseminated through the state information apparatus.

Postcolonial Newspapers and the National Imaginary

Like all nation-states, the postcolonial nation-state is an imagined community, ritually conjured through the daily incantations of print capitalism. In Ghana, this magic is effected largely through the state media. Through an apparatus of state newspapers, radio, and television, the state composes the high drama of development and redemption,
redundantly inventing its own heroic persona while interpellating readers as grateful political subjects in the national narrative. Distinctive in the postcolonial context, however, the discursive technologies of the bourgeois public sphere were initially imported into African politics in the context of colonial domination. Appropriated by a mission-educated class of African elites, the "modern" discursive forms so integral to the imagination of the nation-state were insistently inscribed over competing and pre-existing forms of African political discourse such as royal oratory, praise-singing, and professional mediation. Circulating their nationalist newspapers, Ghanaian elites were attempting to displace the offices and institutions of "traditional" African authority supported by those discursive forms, thereby positioning themselves to inherit the power structure of the British colonial state. As nationalist politics expanded beyond the elite sphere in the independence struggles of the mid-twentieth century, the discourse of Ghanaian journalism became less antagonistic to African tradition and progressively shaped by African narrative practices and rhetorical techniques, especially those techniques used to construct the charisma and legitimacy of African authority. In short, Ghanaian national modernity went public only through the appropriation of tradition. Contemporary Ghanaian journalism bears the traces of this process.

Explaining the vicissitudes of African politics against
American and Western European paragons of political stability, Africanist scholars often emphasize that indigenous institutions like chieftancy and the extended family and are far more real to Africans than the invented and comparatively recent abstraction of the nation-state (Davidson 1992, Mazrui 1986). Nation-states everywhere are abstractions, however; and Africans are certainly not unique in experiencing them as such. What distinguishes nation-states from one another, as Anderson points out, is not so much their falsity/genuineness, but "the style in which they are imagined" (1983:6). I would modify Anderson's now familiar formulation to argue that nation-states must be understood in the style through which they are imagined. For the style of the national imaginary is not merely a literary aesthetic, but a set of discursive practices that organize social relations in the ceaseless embodiment of the national narrative. Thus, the nation-state is not an imagined thing which has, as an attribute, a distinctive style. Rather, the style repeatedly produces the "thing" of the nation-state as something that was already there--and must always be there (Bourdieu 1999, Anagnost 1997). This production is both culturally routine and historically particular and its product is at once rhetorically abstract and politically concrete.

Journalists in Ghana recognize a distinctive style in the discursive practices that position state journalists and
compel them to redundantly produce a certain narrative of national news. At Daily Graphic, journalists refer to these textual and practical techniques as the "house style" of the newspaper. In this paper, I examine this house style of discursive production at Daily Graphic as the style of discursive hegemony through which the national community is collectively imagined and maintained.

House Style and State Hegemony

...if we now turn to the newspaper as a cultural product, we will be struck by its profound fictiveness. What is the essential literary convention of the newspaper? (Anderson 1983:33)

Through the premier state newspaper, Daily Graphic, the interpretive frame of the state follows the specific hegemonic logic of Rawlings' regime: a political legitimacy based on state accumulation, populist morality, and benevolent patronage. Participation in this hegemonic project distinguishes the state media as a strategic node in the larger "ideological state apparatus" (Althusser 1971) designed to construct and reinforce an official national imaginary. In the pronouncements of state officials, the form of state hegemony specific to Rawlings' regime is conveyed in the
ritual celebration of state plans and accomplishments as so many milestones on the developmental path to prosperity. The style of journalism practiced at Graphic, the "house style," is designed to explain government policies and illustrate the positive impact of development projects on grateful communities, generally ignoring political controversies and popular criticisms. Thus dissent is suppressed and oppositional voices rendered "unqualified" in the narrative frame of Graphic journalism. This house style results in a daily construction of the state as a legitimate, benevolent, and unified authority at the helm of national affairs.

Graphic journalists are reluctant to recognize their participation in the hegemonic project of the state. Rather, state journalists earnestly profess their commitments to the public as well as the state, identifying themselves as both "watchdogs in the public interest" and responsible spokespersons of the benevolent state. Focusing on their own professional intentions and their freedom from outright state censorship, Graphic journalists point out that the democratizing reforms of 1991 have abolished overt state control, allowing state journalists the freedom to pursue all sides of a news story with distinctive fairness and objectivity. Graphic journalists tend to overlook the persistence of state influence in everyday practices and relationships that have remained essentially unchanged in the new democratic dispensation. These practices are historically
shaped by the positioning of Graphic as a strategic representational tool in the larger state information apparatus, still largely intact. Through these journalistic practices, the structural bias of Graphic is subtly actualized in the "house style" of the newspaper.

House style refers to a specific textual frame for shaping the narrative of most news stories at Graphic. This frame structures a set of preferences for highlighting certain elements of an event while de-emphasizing or even obscuring certain other elements. Focusing on the pronouncements of "newsmakers," house style at Graphic foregrounds the elegant rhetoric of state officials at invited assignments, essentially echoing the interpretive frame of the state in both the selection and representation of newsworthy events.

Who-Leads and Who Follows

At the Ghana Institute of Journalism, as in journalism schools all over the world, students are taught how to organize the six essential elements of a news event into a leading paragraph, or "lead." Identifying who, when, what, where, why, and how the news happened ("the five Ws and one H"), the journalist chooses the most provocative element and uses it to contextualize the entire story, preferably highlighting that element in the first few words of the story. Since the structure of the lead is driven by the nature of each news story, newspapers typically feature a wide variety
of leads emphasizing compelling events, actions, places, and people. In American newspapers, leads are most commonly structured around an important event, relevant action, or new discovery. Leads emphasizing personalities, times, and places are less common, followed by explanations of how and why something occurred—elements usually left to the body of the story.

In the pages of Graphic, however, around half of all stories are designed to highlight personalities, with leads that quote the public comments of an authoritative "who." Graphic leads often open with a quote by the most senior official at the assignment, identifying him by name and title. The following paragraph (the "neck") then elaborates on the quote and the third finally explains the occasion of his speech. This structure is so routine it has become nearly formulaic at Graphic. To illustrate the preponderance and uniformity of this kind of lead, I quote a sample of leads from a single edition of Daily Graphic. On October 10, 1996 the paper contained the following leads.

From the front page:

President Jerry John Rawlings has called on Ghanaians to ensure that their political differences
do not degenerate into actions that will disrupt the country's development.

He said no matter how strong the differences are, they should remain at the level of words and not acts of vandalism and violence.

President Rawlings made the call when he met the chiefs and a cross-section of the people of Sunyani at the palace of the Sunyanihene, Nan Bosoma Nkrawiri II, yesterday. ("Political Differences Should not Disrupt Development," story continues)

A member of the Central Committee of the Peoples Convention Party (PCP), Professor Mawuse Dake has stated that the Great Alliance must blame itself and not the National Democratic Congress (NDC) if it fails to resolve its differences regarding the selection of common parliamentary candidates to contest the December 7 elections.

"Competing against each other in the constituencies is tantamount to adopting the tactic of 'marriage in separation for the Great Alliance," he pointed out.

These were contained in a statement signed by Prof. Dake in Accra yesterday in reaction to Mr. Agyenim Boateng General Secretary of the NPP and Mr
Kwamina Bartels a leading member of the party on the subject of a common candidate for the alliance. ("Mawusi Dake cautions NPP-PCP Alliance," story continues)

Dr Emmanuel Evans-Anfom, past chairman of the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), has stressed the need for people in leadership positions and those who seek to lead, to understand that the concept of leadership is one of service.

"To be called upon to lead means to be given the opportunity and privilege to serve.

"The leader should therefore be a servant of his people rather than a master who will lord it over all," he stated.

He said that many leaders fail in their endeavors because they refuse to observe certain cardinal principles of leadership such as consultation and communication with their people.

Dr Evans-Anfom was speaking at the opening of the fourth William Ofori-Attah memorial lectures on the topic "When leaders lead: some reflections on leadership" in Accra on Tuesday. ("Leadership is Service," story continues)
The First Lady, Nana Konadu Agyeman-Rawlings, has advised supporters of the Progressive Alliance to remain resolute and turn out in their numbers on the polling day to cast their votes.

She asked them not to be deterred by present intrigues by those who want to wrestle power from the NDC from exercising their franchise on December 7.

Nana Konadu who is also the President of the 31st December Women's Movement gave the advice when she interacted with a cross-section of members of the alliance comprising the NDC, EGLE Party and DPP at James Town in Accra on Tuesday. ("Sustain Commitment to NDC--Konadu," story continues)

Nkrumahists throughout the country have been urged to rally behind the National Democratic Congress (NDC) which has taken great pains and efforts to rehabilitate the image, raised the stature and continue with the unfinished works of Dr Kwame Nkrumah.

Madame Faustina Nelson, Co-ordinator for Special
Duties at the NDC Secretariat, who made the call pointed out that it is only the NDC which has "restored the image of Dr Nkrumah after the deliberate and conscious attempts by his detractors to obliterate and erase his name and ideals from the political annals of the country after his overthrow in 1966."

Madam Neslon who was at a meeting of the party in Accra yesterday at which she welcomed more Nkrumahist into the NDC said members of the NDC, wholeheartedly welcome and respect Nkrumahists who join the party. ("Nkrumahists Urged to Support NDC," story continues)

The New Patriotic Party (NPP) parliamentary candidate for Hohoe North Constituency Mr Ray Kakraba Quarshie has said the party would take a critical look at the district assembly concept to make it more operative and responsive to the needs of the people if is captures the political power on December 7.

"The NPP would ensure that the assemblies carry out their responsibilities and functions with much seriousness, despatch and a sense of mission," he stressed.
Mr Kakraba Quarshie, who was addressing a rally of the party at Hohoe, called on assembly members to attend assembly meetings and take an active part in their deliberations. ("'NPP Will Make Assemblies Responsive',' story continues)

Mr D.S. Boateng, Minister of Employment and Social Welfare, has stressed the need for a continuous and comprehensive review of legislations and strategies that provide for the protection of the health and safety of workers.

He noted that with the rapid expansion in the application of science and technology workers are increasingly being exposed to potential hazards from the development and use of these new gadgets and equipment.

Mr Boateng was opening a workshop on protecting the Ghanaian workforce and eliminating work hazards in Accra yesterday. ("Workshop on Workers' Safety Opens," story continues).

The Great Alliance Parliamentary Candidate for Talensi Constituency in the Upper East Region, Mrs Marian Adukuma Abagna Khaldi, has said it is only
the government of the Great Alliance that can bring quality education in the country.

She said the NDC Government's Education Reform Programme had been a failure since after several years of its operation, many soldiers in the rural areas still lack basic things such as exercise books, workshop tools and furniture.

Mrs Khaldi made these observations when she addressed party supporters at rallies at Pwalugu and Yinduri, near Bolgatanga. ("Great Alliance to Target Education." story continues).

Of twenty-seven national news stories carried in Daily Graphic that day, twelve were structured around the public statements of authoritative figures. In all twelve of these stories, the structure of the lead is nearly identical: a lengthy opening quote and identification of the speaker in the first paragraph (the "who" of the story), elaboration of the quote in the second paragraph, and finally an explanation of the occasion and context for the remarks in the third paragraph (filling in the remaining four Ws and one H).

Graphic journalists call this kind of lead the "who-lead" and recognize it as a distinctive feature of news writing at Graphic. They point out that The Ghanaian Times, the other state newspaper, more often uses the "occasion-lead,"
foregrounding the "what" or the "where" of an assignment. Quick to emphasize that they don't really "play up the personality too much" (Ofosuhene), Graphic journalists reason that who-leads are so common for Graphic stories because officials are the real newsmakers at any assignment--that is, they make the most important statements. This logic is not merely circular, but rather indicates a complex array of notions involving discursive authority, performativity, propriety, and public interpretation.

Most invited assignments involve the public comments of several official speakers, representing different ministries and/or various ranks within the ministries. In addition, the Public Relations Officer (PRO) of the host ministry often greets journalists with an informal briefing on the proceedings of the assignment, telling them where to go and what to expect. Often, while waiting for an assignment to begin, journalists from the various state media houses share their relevant information about the assignment, including rumors and speculation about the actions of the ministry. If a secretary or other lower-level state worker is nearby, journalists may strike up a chat and ask about certain off-the-record details. From this array of voices, state journalists piece together the context and relevance of the assignment. Since their interactions with busy ministers can be very brief and restrictively formal, journalists often get the most useful information from their informal conversations.
with PROs, lower-level officials, and each other.

In Graphic who-leads, however, the important contributions of all other participants in an invited assignment are subordinated to the public statements of the most senior state official at the assignment.

Every newspaper has its style. Graphic wants something new. The person making the news should be an authority. You can't just say the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare is going to embark on labor enterprises and attribute it to the Public Relations Officer in the Ministry. To us, that is a misplaced source of the story. You have to attribute it to authority, someone in a position to make such a pronouncement to the entire nation. That is why we concentrate on the personality. It's not so much the personality but what they are saying and who made the statement. (Francis)

Ideally, the Minister himself actually makes the most detailed and provocative news in his speech but often these public speeches are vague and rhetorical. Even when the speech has relatively little to do with the substance of the assignment, Graphic journalists feel compelled to open the story with the most authoritative voice. Journalists reason that other sources are simply not qualified to make important public
statements on national affairs. Even if the Minister isn't speaking directly to the topic at hand or conveying any relevant details, his rhetorical statements lend credibility and authority to the rest of the story. Thus, the opening quote by a state official not only promulgates the state rhetoric of development or national unity, but also positions the Graphic news story as a certain type of official national text.

In "The Discourse on Language" (1972), Foucault describes how official knowledge is ordered through the disciplinary practices of discourse. A particularly effective mode of discursive regulation, qualification specifies who may enter the discursive field and speak with what specified authority (224). Qualification requires not merely the necessary certification but also the ritual skills necessary to reproduce the appropriate behavior, gestures, "and the whole range of signs that must accompany discourse; finally, it lays down the supposed, or imposed significance of words used, their effect upon those to whom they are addressed, the limitation of their constraining ability" (225). Along with rules of exclusion, notions of qualification mediate the conceptual boundaries of official discourse, dividing reason from folly and truth from falsity (216).

Similarly, journalists with the state press recognize official news when it is pronounced by officially qualified sources in specifically qualifying contexts. Without the
official qualification, the truth is simply not newsworthy. Francis describes the rationale for this sort of discursive regulation.

If an ordinary economics teacher gets up and makes a contribution that inflation is high and we must embark on.... Who is he to talk of managing the economy? He's not even employed as an economist in the state to make that pronouncement. Though what he said may be true, the right thing, the source of such a story becomes a problem. Not that we are highlighting personalities so much but we have to make the story credible. It's not as if you are playing, it has to be a serious issue of national concern. If left to anybody, then we'd all be standing around in a circle making pronouncements. Because we are also Ghanaians and it concerns us. So we can just take up microphones and be making blah blah blah in the street.

With credibility reserved for state sources, popular and dissenting voices are deemed unqualified and largely irrelevant.

Bourdieu (1984/5) describes how state officials deploy a discursive qualification that derives ultimately from a
"ventriloquist" paradox of political representation. Through their public speeches, state officials wield their exclusive authority to constitute the very social phenomena they are meant to represent (i.e. "the needs of the people," "the country's development," "the national interest"). Concealing this power is crucial to their legitimacy as servile representatives of the "will of the people." By routing their public discourse through the state press, state officials can disguise their self-referential discursive power, "speaking and yet making it appear that it is someone else who speaks, speaking for those who give one the right to speak, who in fact authorize one to speak" (63). The stories in Daily Graphic are not, after all, written by state officials, but by journalists, the representative "watchdogs" of the people sent to witness the activities of the state. Daily Graphic is more than a mere mouthpiece; it functions as the primary tool of symbolic violence through which the state speaks not only on behalf of the people but instead of the people.¹⁰

At the Ghana Institute of Journalism, students are not specifically trained in these discursive regulations, even though the state media are the largest employer of journalists in Ghana. In fact, GIJ instructors can be quite critical of "house style" at both state and private press houses. In a weekly class exercise during the fall term of 1996, one GIJ instructor used close readings of current Ghanaian newspapers
to point out the journalistic flaws in the leads of private and state news stories. A lecture in early December focused on the front page of *Daily Graphic*. The instructor took issue with the lead of a prominent story, a story concerning the emergence of FM radio stations in the Central Region. Opening with a conventional who-lead, this story was framed in the self-congratulatory rhetoric of the president, commissioning the new state-supported local FM station. "Who commissions the project is not important," the instructor insisted. "The most important issue is simply that the Central Region now has FM," a development with important implications at local, regional, and national levels. Obscuring the real news with the authoritative comments of the president, the writer left out very basic information such as how to tune into the new FM frequencies, a vital piece of information for audiences in the Central Region. This critical commentary sparked a lively discussion in class:

Student: But the president is the leader of the country and people may feel that what he says should lead.

Student: But then, every day J.J is commissioning some project.

Instructor: Somebody said that if someone puts up
his own house and invites J.J., he will come and commission it (laughter). The journalist for this story should rather have talked to companies, advertisers, and listeners in the Central Region to get their views on this FM station.

Student: It is an open secret that Graphic is an NDC paper (ruling party). It is possible that the editor likes that kind of story so the reporter writes it to please the editor.

Instructor: One journalist went with the Secretary of State to a construction site in Accra for a story on women workers. The journalist wrote the story about the workers with only two lines on the Minister. The Minister became very angry because he brought the reporter to the story and financed the trip.

This kind of preconceived bias is destroying the profession.

This surprisingly critical perspective in a state training institution puts many GIJ students in a curious position when they go on practical attachment to the state press houses in their second year at GIJ. When I came to work at Graphic, I joined a new group of students coming for their
"practicals." In our first week there, the editor, Elvis Aryeh, called us into his office for a group meeting to introduce himself and welcome us to the paper. After speech on hard work and professional dedication, Aryeh asked us if we had any questions.

Hesitating, one young woman politely raised her hand. "Sir," she said, "we have learned that things are somewhat different here than what we have been studying at GIJ. It seems we are not using the five Ws and one H in our leads."

"Oh, but you should always use the five Ws and one H," Elvis objected. "We always use them in our leads at Graphic."

Aryeh then went on to give a lesson on the inverted pyramid, stressing that journalists must stick to that format for their news stories.

After some time working at Graphic, most journalists eventually reason that what they learn at GIJ is just "theory," and not always adequate to the practical demands of the situation.

Chain-Quoting

After the lesson on leads, students at GIJ learn to organize the information for a story in descending order of relevance, structuring the news story in the form of an "inverted pyramid." The inverted pyramid is designed in the interests of both readers and editors. When stories are structured this way, readers can get the most relevant
information without necessarily reading all the way to the end of the story. Editors prefer the inverted pyramid form because they can easily cut off the end of stories to fit allotted spaces on a page without worrying about losing the most vital elements of the story. Since Graphic stories are so often focused on the commentary of public speakers, the inverted pyramid organizes a chain of quotes roughly in descending order of authority, and not necessarily relevance. Or, rather, the relevance of public commentary is not so much in the substantive content but more in the rank of the speaker, the performative function of his message, and the assimilation of his rhetoric in the larger narratives of state hegemony. These rules of hierarchical quoting are not hard and fast; journalists may exercise their best judgement when lower-level speakers make more informative statements at assignments. However, statements by the President, his wife, or one of his ministers will trump any other informative comments at an assignment.

At certain times, you go for an assignment, the Minister may not make the big news and the reporter will try and get something from him to start the story....The newsmaker is the best person to be used, his name. But if you use another person—who is this? When you use the Minister, it's attractive. I went to Press Freedom Day, Mahama was
the Deputy Minister of Communications, but
the General Secretary of Ghana Journalists
Association seemed more touching as far as press
freedom but I wrote, I had to use...I wanted to
write two stories, one about how PRINPAG (Private
Newspaper Publishers Association of Ghana) would
sanction journalists who violate the GJA code of
ethics. The editor says that the Minister makes the
news, so try and get something to open from the
Minister and then bring in what the GJA man said.
(Dery)

While the who-lead sets an authoritative frame (subsuming
the content of any story in the narrative of state
beneficence), the common practice of "chain-quoting" (my term)
often structures the rest of the story according to the
comments of other official participants at an assignment, in
descending order of formal authority and relevance. Sometimes
an assignment features a minister making an appearance at a
public function, such as a school graduation. Since the
actual event is dominated by the Minister, the resulting story
is consequently dominated by several paragraphs from the
minister's speech while the comments of other officials
receive only brief and cursory treatment at the end of the
story. Other assignments feature a variety of authority
figures whose contributions are organized according to their rank and the "newsworthiness" of their comments. An example of this prevalent practice of chain-quoting is found in an article on the launching of an environmental project, appearing in the center spread of Graphic on May 6, 1997.

The Minister of Environment, Science and Technology, Mr J.E. Afful, has reiterated the ministry's mandate to help identify and find solutions to the pressing environmental problems affecting the country.

Mr Afful said this when he launched the PACIPE-Ghana program in Accra yesterday.

PACIPE is the French acronym for Regional Technical Assistance Programme for Awareness and Information on the Protection of the Environment.

It is aimed at protecting the environment in six West African countries, namely Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Togo.

Dr Kwabena Osei-Bonsu, National Director of PACIPE, said it is funded by the European Development Fund and coordinated by a secretariat in Cotonou, Benin.

He said it is not designed to duplicate any existing information dissemination programme in the country, but to support national and local initiatives in the area of environmental education.
and information.

Dr Osei-Bonsu said the goal of PACIPE is to effect positive change in people's attitudes and behaviors towards the environment.

He said PACIPE has identified four projects for intervention and support.

Dr Peter Acquah, Executive Director of the Environmental Protection Agency, said the aims and objectives of PACIPE are consistent with what the EPA hopes to achieve through its educational programmes.

He said PACIPE can therefore support the EPA to provide training in information and education for its regional staff, as well as organize environmental campaigns to encourage pupils and students to participate in programmes to address community issues, among others.

In a speech read on his behalf, Mr Javier Puyol, Head of the European Union Delegation in Ghana, said under the EU budget, a number of projects are currently being considered by the commission.

He said these include a government proposal on forest certification and an NGO request for support to raise the awareness for the protection of a sensitive lagoon and coastal ecosystem from further degradation.
Mr Alexander Dzogbenuku of Impact Art Limited was presented with CFA 100.000 for designing the PACIPE logo. "Protection of the Environment Programme Launched." Daily Graphic, 5/6/1997:12.

The semiotic implications of who-leads and chain-quoting emerge in a close examination of the structure and content of this story. The lead is a typical who-lead citing the honorable Minister. A strikingly empty quote with very little relevance to the substance of the assignment, the lead quote is quickly abandoned as the reporter skips the elaborated "neck" of the quote, placing the context of the speech in the second paragraph. Next we find some background information which seems to emanate from the National Director of PACIPE, whose comments follow. Comparing his relatively substantive and relevant input with the Minister's quote, the real function of the who-lead becomes obvious. If the story is about the launching an environmental program, why wouldn't a reporter foreground the program director's explanation of the proposed projects of the new program? Or is that really the news here? After the PACIPE director makes a few points, the Director of the EPA emphasizes that PACIPE, an NGO, is working in coordination with the government, to "support" and "provide training" and "organize campaigns." Thus, the EPA director demonstrates the firm and productive alliance of the state with this foreign source of aid while simultaneously
subordinating the work of the NGO to the effective development apparatus of the state. The comments of the EU representative add further detail to this theme, mentioning EU support for both government and NGO initiatives. Since Puyol failed to show up, his comments are placed at the end of the story even though he is a very bigman indeed. Finally, the logo designers are presented with a check which further supports the subtextual notion of the lucrative future of Ghana's alliance with this international NGO, perhaps a trickle-down effect. Thus, the chain-quoting in this story emphasizes consensus and coordination of foreign and local development initiatives under the authority of the state.

Big English

Since who-leads and chain-quoting are prominent features of house style at Graphic, journalists are highly skilled in the reconstruction and attribution of public rhetoric. These are relatively easy tasks when the printed speeches of principle speakers are distributed to journalists at the end of the assignment. Such speeches are frequently written in an erudite rhetorical language, popularly called "Big English," that lends itself particularly well to who-leads. Examples of who-leads cited earlier reflect the Big English in the public speeches of state officials. Another front-page article from August 8, 1996 provides a further example:
Mr John Atta-Quayson, National Co-ordinator of the Free, Compulsory and Universal Basic Education (FCUBE), yesterday assured that the programme will be pursued gradually to rectify all anomalies that would inhibit its effective implementation.

He said the aim is to ensure that the programme attains the objective of its implementation.

The cumbersome, officious vocabulary in vague and paternalistic assurances of "effective implementation" mark this mystifying English as truly Big. Not only news stories, but editorials, many features, and several regular columns (K.B. Asante, R.B.W. Hesse) adopt this pontificating language.

An essential feature of Graphic style, Big English is a distinctively postcolonial linguistic strategy, poaching on the symbolic capital of the colonizer's language while simultaneously drawing on African features of authoritative oratory.

A number of Ghanaian linguists (Nketia 1971, Yankah 1989, 1995; Saah 1986) as well as many other Africanist scholars (Furniss and Gunner 1995, Piot 1993, Finnegan 1976; Parkin 1984) have described the strong emphasis in West African societies on linguistic ability and propriety. Several scholars note that Africans form distinct opinions of each other according to their everyday speaking styles, creativity, and mastery of forms (Barber 1991). According to Ghanaian
linguist Kofi Saah, embellished language signifies wisdom while "one who indulges in plain speech is considered ordinary" (1986). Most of the literature on African linguistic practices, however, focuses on the role of public oratory in the construction and maintenance of authority. While earlier studies emphasized the rigidity of forms, the subordination of content, and the systemic containment of dissent, more recently scholars have demonstrated how these same linguistic forms open up multiple possibilities for individual creativity and renegotiation of social relationships.

In an Akan chief's court, the authoritative pronouncements of the chief are publicly rendered through his professional orator, the okyeame (or "linguist," as early ethnographers translated the term). A chief never addresses the court directly, nor is anyone allowed to address him but through the okyeame. Through this highly-trained linguistic professional, the chief's speech is embellished with proverbs, metaphors, and idioms designed to display his mental agility while situating chiefly judgement in historical precedent and popular consensus (Yankah 1989, 1995). The density of linguistic techniques used by the okyeame renders the chief's pronouncements highly allusive, polysemic, and even obscure. Situated in the pageantry of an Asante court, the baroque quality of courtly language parallels the material wealth displayed in a diverse array of gold regalia, kente cloth, stools, and servants—together symbolizing the wealth and
accumulation of the Asante state. Asante historians (especially McCaskie 1983, 1995) have emphasized the importance of these public performances of stately wealth, essential to the legitimacy of an Asante chief.

State officials are certainly not chiefs\textsuperscript{11} but they face a similar need to reinscribe their authority as African leaders through embellished oratory at public ceremonies. Mbembe (1992) has described the penchant of African leadership for continual "dramatizations of its own magnificence" (4), through excessive displays of language and wealth. While English is comparatively poor in such embellishing tools as proverb and metaphor, colonial authority impressed on Ghanaian political culture a rich bureaucratic vocabulary, signifying an ethnically transcendent governmentality and the elite trappings of British education. As the erudite English of nineteenth century Ghanaian newspapers indicates, English-educated Africans in the colonial period deployed an officious style of language in an effort to position themselves for participation in colonial government, hoping eventually to inherit the authority of the British. Thus, early versions of Big English reveal the attempts of this new class of African elites to convert their foreign-acquired intellectual capital into politically effective social capital at home. While Akan courtly language alludes to the "traditional" wisdom of ancestors, Big English appropriates the authority of the British in the construction of the "modern" hegemony of the
nation-state. As the density of linguistic embellishment indicates the material wealth and accumulation of the Asante state, the density of bureaucratic language indicates the intellectual accumulation of foreign-educated African elites and their access to crucial flows of foreign trade and development aid. Since the adoption of the Structural Adjustment Program, the World Bank and the IMF (along with numerous aid and development agencies) have reinforced and expanded this bureaucratic vocabulary among state officials, requiring constant textual and dialogic performances of it as a condition of further support.

In response to the excessive pageantry of the state, Mbembe also describes the popular tactics of parody and irony that "kidnap power and force it, as if by accident, to contemplate its own vulgarity" (12). If Big English has become a strategy of constructing and mystifying state authority, it has also been appropriated as both a tool of resistant confrontation in the private press (more on this in chapter 6) and a target of popular derision. In his collection of essays, No Big English (1996:1), linguist and popular columnist Kwesi Yankah makes fun of the pompous language of the state and the mystified responses of Ghanaians. Like the rumors and anecdotes described by Mbembe, Yankah's spoof of Big English reveals the suppressed banality of bodily functions beneath the elaborate and euphemistic rhetoric. This parody, spoofing a Secretary of State's visit
the poor district of Kraboa-Coaltar, appeared in Yankah's column for The Mirror, the entertainment weekender affiliated with Daily Graphic.

...the gross per capita income of this our national metropolis has satisfactorily progressed unabated; but lest we are blinded by the rapacity of our conceitedness, let me on behalf of the government pontificate that our modest economic growth is bound to pale into nothingness if pomposity clouds our ocular apparatus and kyinkyinga (kebab) overwhelms our national appetite.

The present recovery programme implies a condition of economic malaise and surgical liability, such that measures ought to be instituted to arrest the unimpeded decline of our economic sewerage and political sanitation.

Sparing no one, Yankah pokes fun at members of the audience who either fall asleep or nod respectfully, pretending to understand.

Missing in Yankah's parody is the figure of the Graphic journalist, a well-dressed stranger on the front row, politely asking the Secretary to clarify his position on the implementation of the new measures specified in his speech. Following the ceremony, the journalists would wait for his
copy of the speech and then make his way back to the office, marking sections of the speech for use in the verbatim who-lead.

Speaking for the Chief

Printed speeches are not always available, however. Ghanaian journalists are often forced to rely on sketchy notes, lacking tape recorders or training in shorthand. Particularly when officials make impromptu comments or respond to questions, a journalist must rely heavily on memory and a sense of the speaker's intended meaning. A further complication, state officials can't always maintain the authoritative rhetorical style when speaking off-the-cuff and sometimes make grammatical and even factual errors. The president himself is particularly renowned for this. When I asked journalists what they would do if a Minister or other government official spoke badly or falsely at an assignment, they either denied that such a thing ever occurred or said they would simply open the story with the occasion-lead instead. What I witnessed, however, is that journalists with the state media (Graphic and Ghana News Agency in particular) routinely transform the rough, extemporaneous comments of state officials into the authoritative and officious style of Big English.

Thus, the experience with Mensah, described at the beginning of this section, is merely a variation of a general
practice. While journalists everywhere are forced to reconstruct events and comments from memory, Graphic journalists rely on a specific kind of language with a particular set of themes to imagine what an authoritative speaker said or intended to say.

Writing another story with a senior state journalist, we discovered that neither of us had taken notes on a the speech of a Deputy Minister, the third or fourth speaker at this particular event. Since his comments were necessary to complete the sequence in a chain of quotes, my partner on the story composed an official-sounding comment that fit quite well into the cooperative dialogue portrayed in the story. Through some subtle facial expression, I must have inadvertently conveyed some hesitation about this rather loose but nicely-worded quote. The senior journalist told me not to worry, that the official would never complain that he was misquoted. Again, the point here is not that we "made something up," but rather that our best guess at what the Deputy Minister had actually said followed a common set of expectations for official speech, consensual public dialogue, and interpretive practice.

Official sources not only tolerate such constructive quoting practices, many have come to rely on Graphic journalists to transform their statements into official rhetoric. On assignment to the Department of Wildlife, Kwarteng and I were covering the launching of a study on the
feasibility of cultivating Ghanaian pythons for export to Europe and the U.S. (at $175 per snake!). Arriving at the Department, journalists with Graphic, Ghana News Agency, and Ghana Broadcasting Corporation met with some confusion as no one seemed prepared to give us an official briefing, even though we had been invited. Clearly embarrassed about the mistake, the assistant to the director assured us he would give us an impromptu briefing on the project so we wouldn't go away empty-handed. We waited for an hour while he obtained permission from his boss to speak with us. Returning at last, he delivered quite a detailed lesson on the business of pythons. Since Ghana was no longer allowed to export bred animals to Europe, the Wildlife Department was forced to come up with an alternative method of cultivation: capturing the eggs of wild snakes. As a junior official, he was reluctant to give us any sort of sensitive information, such as how much the project would cost and why exactly the European Union had rejected animals bred in Ghana. When questioned explicitly on this latter issue, the assistant seemed pressed between his obligation to give us a good story and his fear of circumventing his boss's authority. After vaguely and haltingly equivocating on the "doubts" expressed by the EU, the assistant seemed to sense the awkwardness of his comments. "But you can put it in your Big English," he instructed the group of state journalists.

And so we did. In the fifth paragraph of the story,
appearing in the center spread of the January 16, 1997 edition of Graphic, our treatment of the sensitive issue read: "He said the report of the study will help clear the doubts in the minds of Europeans and other buyers which necessitated a ban on Royal Pythons from Ghana last year."

This example illustrates that the bigness of Big English is not so much in the vocabulary, which is not too remarkable in this case. Big English is not just big words. Rather, language is big when it meets the standards of official pronouncement, matching cultural and political expectations for what a bigman in the Ministry should say. While the assistant was not a bigman in the Wildlife Department, he was speaking on behalf of his boss and certainly wanted to observe the correct discursive procedures and represent the department well. When felt his speech falling short of official standards, he requested that we complete the task of constructing the official language in "our" Big English. What is big about the language in our story, then, is the suppression of an apparently contentious issue in smooth, rhetorical assurances that the government will clear away all "doubts" standing in the way of prosperity, in this case the lucrative trade in pythons.

So Big English, who-leads, and speech-driven stories not only structure the news narrative around well-spoken authority figures, but also position Graphic in a specific interpretive role between that authority and the national audience.
Interposed between the state and its audience, rendering the rough speech of state officials into the elaborate rhetoric of Big English, Graphic assumes a mediating role quite similar to that of the okyeame.

In societies throughout West Africa, the formal oratory of chiefs and elders is rarely delivered directly to a public audience, but is rather routed through a professional mediator who "smooths the rough edges" and "completes" the speech with linguistic embellishments (Yankah 1995:19,107). In Ghana, among the Akan and most other ethnic groups, professional mediation of public discourse is institutionalized in the role of the okyeame. In his excellent study of okyeame, Yankah shows how chiefly speech is rendered public through a combination of verbatim quoting and embellished "analysis," paraphrasing and improving without undermining the essential logic of the chief's commentary. Even in a society emphasizing oratic prowess, royal speech is often hurried and stuttering, requiring the professional linguistic treatment of the okyeame to make it eloquent and official. Often, the okyeame is considered more politically sophisticated than the chief himself.

Similarly, Joe Bradford Nyinah, the Graphic correspondent to the Castle, describes the politically complex guesswork of crafting the extemporaneous comments of the president into official discourse.
We quote him verbatim; but we have been there a long time and we know what he wants to say. At times, he talks in quotes and then it can be a bit confusing.

He has a certain kind of philosophical talk so if he starts something then you know what he is going to talk about. At times, to someone new, he may not be making much sense; but immediately we know what he is driving at. Mostly when he has a prepared speech, he doesn't read all, he puts aside and talks extemporaneously. We have to know what he wants reported and what he doesn't want reported. We can do the gatekeeping ourselves.

Trained in a "modern" discursive profession, Graphic journalists are certainly not in any literal sense the okyeame of the state in general or the president in particular. As Ghanaians, however, their sense of discursive propriety is shaped by the formal authoritative performances of elders and chiefs at frequent ceremonial occasions (durbars, naming ceremonies, weddings, funerals, etc) as well as everyday forms of discursive address (visits, requests). Both ceremonial and everyday discursive situations are often mediated through a third party who perfects both authoritative and appellant speech while softening and managing public controversy. The discursive situations at invited assignments to state ceremonies invoke these pervasive notions of discursive
propriety and authority for both state officials who deliver authoritative oratory and state journalists who relay and interpret it for the public audience.

Yankah describes how okyeame are employed to manage the critical dangers of face-to-face interaction by "softening" immanent controversy through discursive techniques of indirection and politeness. Similarly positioned to manage official discourse, Graphic journalists are likewise motivated to emphasize authoritative consensus and elide controversy, as the above example with the Wildlife Department illustrates.\textsuperscript{12} The aversion to controversy is so strong that when confronted with contradictory accounts by rivaling state officials, Nyinah said he would simply avoid the story altogether.\textsuperscript{13} Nyinah recalled the notorious incident in late December 1995 when a cabinet meeting reportedly erupted in violence, as the president allegedly attacked his own vice-president, punching him and throwing him to the floor. Nyinah heard reports of the violent attack along with the president's own outright denial of the incident. Nyinah wrote nothing and Graphic ignored the story.

This suppression of conflict combines with the discursive presentation of consensus, both among state officials and between the state and the state media. In both royal and state contexts, the reiteration of authoritative pronouncements through a professional mediator presents those comments as the product of public consensus (albeit a
performed consensus), lending "a measure of objectivity to the opinion expressed, implying that the speaker's viewpoint is not a subjective one, but one based on shared experience" (20). When linked in a chain of supportive quotes by lesser state officials, authoritative comments become even more compelling and persuasive.

Conclusion: Presidential Contempt and Graphic Redemption

In moments of royal wrath, an agent is needed to contain the destabilizing forces capable of being activated. Thus boisterous or undignified remarks indiscreetly made by the chief are instantly softened and passed on without retroactive damage; for, since the royal speech act is not complete until relayed by the chief's okyeame, it does not take effect until that point either. (Yankah 1995:19)

As Nyinah has indicated, reporters on presidential assignments are particularly pressed to represent the Head of State as a well-spoken authority, even when he digresses from his written speech to make embarrassing and often shocking comments. Last August, the president gave a speech at the National Theatre for the "official opening" of Emancipation Day celebrations, organized to commemorate the day in 1834
when Great Britain abolished slavery in the British colonies. Capitalizing on the holiday, the Ghana Tourist Board had organized week-long celebrations, attracting Africans from the Caribbean (where Emancipation Day is celebrated every year), as well as African-American visitors and expatriate residents in Ghana. After a sing-along of Bob Marley's "Redemption Song" and a depiction of the horrors of slavery by the Ghana Dance Ensemble, several speakers from diaspora gave speeches calling for a new spirit of Pan-Africanism, involving concrete policy changes like relaxed visa requirements and cultural and economic exchanges among Africans, African-Americans, and Afro-Caribbeans.

As a reporter for Ghana News Agency at the time, I sat in a section with the rest of the press corps, mostly journalists with the state press. My partner on the story, George Yeboah, pointed out a few of the familiar faces among the press corps, among them Joe Bradford Nyinah, Graphic correspondent to the Castle.

Then President Rawlings took the podium to address the international audience at this distinctively Pan-Africanist event. The President began his presentation by reading out a speech in typical Big English, welcoming the guests from the diaspora and calling vaguely for a new era of economic emancipation in Africa. After about ten minutes of this rhetoric, most of the press corps were restless and bored, I noticed. Then the President paused and looked up from his
speech, appraising his audience. "You know," he said, "I don't even know what cocaine looks like."

Slumped over with boredom, we sat up with a start at this provocative non sequitur. I took the cap off my pen and began taking notes. I was the only journalist to do so, I noticed.

"And my wife doesn't know what cocaine looks like," he went on, describing how the private press had accused him of international drug-dealing in outrageous front-page stories four years ago. "We took them to court," he said, "and the journalists were jailed for contempt. I asked if I could release them after a week, just to teach them a lesson; but I was told no, that I had no jurisdiction over the courts."

The context to this seemingly off-the-wall reference was that the editor of the paper that first ran the story, Kofi Coomson of the Ghanaian Chronicle, was currently in court facing criminal charges of seditious libel based on that story. Furthermore, two other private press editors, Harruna Attah of The Statesman and Kweku Baako of The Guide, were then in prison for contempt of court in the proceedings of a civil libel case for allegedly misquoting the First Lady. In this context, the president was obliquely responding to popular outrage over the prison sentences and widespread criticism of the conciliatory relationship between Rawlings and the judiciary—many were saying that Rawlings himself had ordered the imprisonment of the journalists. Inappropriate as the venue might have been, at least Rawlings was finally
addressing the controversy in public. Out of the murk of Emancipation rhetoric, I thought, at least we might get a relevant comment on something in this speech.

But before completing that thought, Rawlings moved on to another argument, launching a diatribe against an international businessman named Aggrey. Born in Ghana, Aggrey currently resides in the U.S., skipping continents in his spurious business dealings and somehow swindling the Ghanaian government out of some money. After explaining his troubles with Aggrey at length, Rawlings finally concluded with a reference to the policy changes proposed by previous speakers.

"So you see," he said with deliberate gentility, "you must understand us if we are reluctant to relax our visa requirements. You must understand."

As his audience was still piecing together the logic of this connection, Rawlings delivered the ultimate blow.
"Forgive me," he said smiling, "but I was thinking to myself that the slave trade could have been a blessing in disguise."

Someone in the audience shrieked. People were shifting in their seats uncomfortably and whispers rippled through the crowd. I stopped scribbling and looked around the press section but unlike everyone else, the journalists didn't seem too surprised at this shocking statement. Envisioning the impossible headline and the who-lead that might be based on this comment, I realized why I was the only one taking notes.
The slave trade was very unfortunate, Rawlings continued, but some good had come out of it. In the same way that the atomic bomb had sparked the ecology movement, he reasoned, the slave trade had "helped to build an army of disciples around the world."

Throughout this performance, I noticed George sighing and looking slightly aggrieved (but not particularly surprised). As we left the ceremony, I searched for some way to elicit his honest opinion without entirely revealing my own (my political leanings were by then pretty obvious but I still wanted to avoid leading questions, especially with my immediate supervisor).

"That was some speech," I said tentatively.

"It was very unfortunate that the President used this forum to go on like that. This is not the forum for that kind of talk," George said, agitated. "He is just confusing these people from the Caribbean who don't need to hear about it."

"You mean the Aggrey part?" I pressed.

"As for that story, I would like to hear Aggrey's side because I bet Aggrey could be someone who got a contract and the government wanted him to work for the party and he refused," George explained. "So Rawlings is now smearing his name in public. It wouldn't be the first time Rawlings did that."

"I was wondering if the whole speech fit together logically," I ventured, an admittedly leading comment but I
really wanted to know what George thought.

"Sometimes you really wonder about this man," he said, disgusted. "That speech was so inappropriate, such an anticlimax to the ceremony."

Certainly inappropriate, I thought, but also provocative. A journalist could pursue these issues for several great stories: maybe an investigative story on Aggrey, a feature on how Ghanaians reason historically about slavery, a front-page story on Rawlings' fighting words against the private press.

On the way back to the office, I was silently speculating what kind of story we would actually write for GNA on Rawlings' speech. As if confirming my suspicion about the only kind of story we could write, George concluded, "Rawlings said nothing relevant today at all."

Accra, July 30, GNA--President Jerry John Rawlings today called for a strong bond between Africans on the continent and those in the Diaspora to ensure unity and progress of the black race.

"If the nations and peoples of Africa and of the Diaspora can come together with determination to build a strong economic base, our people can live in peace and dignity," he said.

President Rawlings was speaking at the official opening ceremony of the First Emancipation Day celebration to be hosted by Ghana in Accra. (story
Rawlings' musings on slavery were rendered thusly:

President Rawlings recounted the atrocities of slavery and said the sacrifices made by Africans should spur them on to a greater sense of unity and well-being.

Two stories were written by GNA on the Emancipation Day celebrations, one for the speech and another for "color," meaning the pageantry: drumming, dancing, costumes, themes, etc. No story was ever pursued by GNA on the troublesome Aggrey. Likewise, Rawlings' defensive condemnation of the private press was simply ignored.

The next morning, I checked *Daily Graphic* to see how Nyinah had covered the story. Emancipation Day filled the front page, with two stories and a large photograph. A smaller story captured the "color" of the event while the lead story presented Rawlings' speech.

**AFRICA NEEDS ECONOMIC FREEDOM**

by Joe Bradford Nyinah

President Jerry John Rawlings said yesterday that economic emancipation of Africa is the greatest task confronting the present generation of African
people.

He said the emancipation which has come about because of a passing of a law which changed the status of a man from a piece of property to a free man is merely giving back what was already his basic human right.

President Rawlings, who was speaking at the official opening of the First Emancipation Day celebration in Africa, noted that the next step in the process of emancipation cannot be handed to the African by some external entity.

"It can only be achieved through our own efforts, our own soul-searching, our struggles to achieve discipline, justice and orderly development," he said. (story continues)

As journalists with the state media, we uniformly depicted the event as a rhetorical tribute to economic Pan-Africanism and development rather than the national embarrassment that I actually witnessed. Yet no collaboration between Graphic and GNA was ever necessary to suppress Rawlings' scandalous and inappropriate comments. In my thirteenth month of fieldwork on the press in Ghana, I knew that Nyinah, George, and I were just doing our job.
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Notes

1. Until recently, the seeming universality of journalistic rhetoric and practice has made newspapers a conspicuously absent feature in ethnographic representation and interrogation (but see recent exceptions Anagnost 1997, Gupta 1994, Bastian 1993). Like the fast food and mobile phones in the national capitals that anthropologists often travel through, newspapers are something that we seem to already know, practices of textual construction and interpretation so familiar as to be obvious and irrelevant.

2. Foreign scholars, diplomats, and tourists often dismiss non-Western newspapers as poor quality imitations of the Western prototype exemplified by The New York Times or Wall Street Journal. Among the specific criticisms of African newspapers, in particular: African newspapers are irresponsibly sensational, tediously redundant, lacking in
objectivity, riddled with typos, and visually unattractive. Many foreigners leveling these criticisms are themselves Africanists, media scholars and historians whose professional lives are dedicated to discovering and valorizing African ways of doing things. Implicit in this comparison are specific expectations for the role of newspapers to neutrally reflect social “reality” thus constituting a marketplace of ideas in the liberal imaginary. In local matters of chieftaincy, oratory, or proverbs, Africans set the standards of excellence; but when it comes to national forms such as newspapers and democracy, European and American standards are more frequently applied.


4. Among the few anthropologists to take newspapers seriously, Bastian’s reading of a Nigerian newspaper article on witchcraft (1993) is a remarkable exception to this anthropological oversight. Bastian admits, however, that she is interested in newspapers as a lens through which to examine witchcraft, and not as an object of study per se (personal communication, 1999).

5. In a fascinating article that demonstrates the role of the media in constituting syncretic “modernities,” Dorothea Schulz illustrates how griots in Mali (“traditional” praise-singers)
participate in the construction of political legitimacy for national politicians in performances broadcast on the radio (1997). Schulz identifies the ambiguous positionality of griots, functioning both as mouthpieces of authority and subtle instruments of popular resistance (446). She shows how this ambiguity is undermined by the commodification of griot performances in the twentieth century, resulting in a change in practices of popular reception to their messages. Her work suggests that African notions of political authority, and the institutions for conserving and representing that authority, are integrated and transformed in the "modern" administrative and mass-mediated politics of the colonial and postcolonial nation-state.

6. Anderson 1983:36: "...the search was on, so to speak, for a new way of linking fraternity, power and time meaningfully together. Nothing perhaps more precipitated this search, nor made it more fruitful, than print-capitalism, which made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways."

7. Davidson describes the precolonial protostate of Asante as a kind of political diamond in the rough, eclipsed by the
zirconian imposter of elite nationalist power, a fake and imported politics hustled in to replace a real and authentically African structure of power. Such a nostalgic gaze down the lost paths of history is familiar to American anthropologists as salvage anthropology.

The problem with the argument of lost political authenticity is that all nation-states are imaginary constructs and not only the postcolonial ones. There is no reason to assume that the invented quality of national communities (versus the genuine quality of traditional ones) is the crucial distinction of postcolonial politics in Africa. In the United States, indigenous institutions like fast food and action films are far more real to most Americans than the abstractions of national politics.

8. Not all news stories at Graphic are written in the same style, however. This analysis focuses on a prevailing style of news coverage at Graphic.

9. Note how closely Francis' reasoning is echoed by Bourdieu, "If I, Pierre Bourdieu, as a single individual and speaking only for myself, said it is necessary to do this or that, overthrow the government, or refuse Pershing missiles, who would follow me? But if I am placed in statutory conditions such that I am able to appear as speaking 'in the name of the masses,' or better 'in the name of the masses and of science,
of scientific socialism’, then this changes everything”(63).
For Francis, qualification is a matter of "seriousness;" for Bourdieu, this "seriousness" is achieved through misrecognition.

10. This sort of collusion with the ventriloquist paradox of the state is common to journalism everywhere.

11. Chiefs are prohibited from participating in party politics.

12. Yankah is both a scholar of okyeame and a critic of the state press. However, he has never explicitly linked his ideas about mediated discourse with the practices of state journalism. In an interview, I asked him what he would say to the argument that Graphic journalists are the okyeame of the state. "Well, I don't recall having said it," he considered, "but it certainly sounds like something I would say."

In an article for Media Monitor, Kwasi Kaakyire discusses the tactic of "pre-emptive spin" used by Graphic to publicize positive stories about particular government officials just as critical stories break in the private press. Kaakyire identifies the state press and okyeame (plural akyeame) both as practitioners of spin. "Spin generally attempts to restate what is stated by a difference source, even when the audience gets to see and hear directly from the original source."
Traces of spinning can be found in the performance of akyeame. The Graphic story and its like can be categorized among the more negative aspects of spinning" ("Ordinary Talk." Jan-Mar/1998:22). Lamenting this practice by the state press, Kaakyire suggests that a daily private paper could interfere with the ability of the state press to scoop and pre-empt private revelations.