"This is Roosevelt's World" - FDR as a Cultural Icon in American Memory

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Chapter 1: Self-fashioning and Autofabrication

Introduction

In the preface of Ken Burns' and Geoffrey Ward's coffee table book accompanying their 14-hour documentary *The Roosevelts: An Intimate History* (PBS, 2014) Burns formulates what inspired him to make this documentary series: "Seen close-up, for all their seeming difference from the rest of us – their riches, their fame, their historical importance – the Roosevelts seem familiar" (xii). The Roosevelts were not only relatives, Burns seems to say, but are also intimately relatable for 21st-century audiences. He continues by providing three underlying justifications driving the documentary and the book. First on the level of civic engagement, the Roosevelts "dealt, as we deal, with great public questions that are still achingly present in their urgency: What is the role of government? What can a citizen expect of that government? What are the qualities of lasting leadership? What is the correct balance between principle and pragmatism?" (xii). The problems they had to address in their various public functions are still recognizable today – indeed the Roosevelts are presented as exemplifying still pertinent best practices in these dilemmas. Second, they are recognizable as individuals dealing with universal themes: "But more than that, as individuals, they wrestled in their personal lives with issues familiar to everyone everywhere: betrayal and forgiveness, grief and self-doubt, courage and cowardice, loyalty to family and the need to be one's own self" (xii). These more personal themes too are as relevant and unresolved for us now as they were for them and therefore, their heroic stories mirror our own. And finally, "the Roosevelts' lives" pose an "ultimate mystery" which the makers hope to "provide clues to": "How is it that these three utterly different people, each of whom endured so much pain and loss and fear – 'wounded people,' Geoff Ward calls them – could leave us such a legacy of hope?" (xii).

Each of these points are generic to biography and biopic, indeed to storytelling: some sort of question or cavity in understanding is a basic condition to warrant a biography, and while not every story addresses the themes Burns lists, these are indeed "familiar to everyone everywhere" and therefore often work to make stories about them relevant across eras. Burns' documentary about the Roosevelts – or, in terms of structure and time allotted, really about FDR, with Theodore and Eleanor Roosevelt as important book ends – does indeed set out, as practically every other Roosevelt biography or documentary, to get to the heart of the Roosevelts on an intimate level. Nonetheless, even if using an "ultimate mystery" as a justification for storytelling and "wounded people" as a universally germane theme are common strategies, the Roosevelts, FDR in particular, lend themselves especially well to this emplotment. FDR is one of the most intensely examined of all American presidents: only George Washington and Abraham Lincoln have been written about more often (Smith x). Most of these works explicitly set out to give a new interpretation of who he really was, what he ultimately felt or thought, or what he obscured and revealed through his enigmatic texts and behavior.

This chapter does not primarily address the mysteries, enigmas and unanswered questions the Roosevelt icon offers, but rather theorizes the mechanics of becoming such an icon. Burns refers to four aspects that I consider to be at the heart of this issue: first, who FDR is "as [an] individual", second what environment he is a product of – "riches" as well as what he endured – third what it is that makes him a relatable public icon, i.e., the fact that he is so easily understood as wrestling "with issues familiar to everyone everywhere", and fourth the "great public questions" that he answered in such a way that they permanently changed the parameters of American government. These four elements are, I will argue, key in the production of a political leader as a cultural icon. In order to be able to study that production, this chapter will outline the dynamic between the familiar, and often misused, concept of self-fashioning, as introduced by Stephen Greenblatt in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (1980) and what I will call *autofabrication*. Essentially, self-fashioning covers the first two aspects: a self's individuality and how a self is the product of a cultural and social environment; and autofabrication the other two: the production of a leader's recognizable public image and the simultaneous exertion and obscuring of his immense power.

Mediating between these four aspects requires an iconic leader to be a skillful and manipulative politician. Whereas self-fashioning is a process every individual is engaged in, autofabrication is an extension of self-fashioning, specific to the making of icons, particularly political leaders. Political leaders, especially in democratic systems, are exceptional on the one hand because they are bound to represent a far larger constituency than just themselves, and therefore need a public image that is recognizable for an immense range of citizens. On the other hand they possess and often use their ultimate power over subjects' life and death, but need to seem benevolent and considerate to all those they purportedly represent. I will focus first on how autofabrication emerges from and interlocks with self-fashioning, and then argue that a successful autofabrication needs to encompass an extremely plastic public image, so as to appeal to a wide variety of audiences and address "issues familiar to everyone everywhere."

Self-fashioning and Autofabrication: Complementary Concepts

Ken Burns focuses mostly on the making of the Roosevelts as individual selves, both through their own agency and through environmental factors influencing them: their personal struggles as well as what happened to them to make them what they became as historical characters. In this sense, he is partly concerned with what Stephen Greenblatt calls 'self-fashioning':

> Self-fashioning is in effect (…) the cultural system of meanings that creates specific individuals by governing the passage from abstract potential to concrete historical embodiment. (3-4)

Greenblatt here defines in theoretical terms and in a larger, essentially Foucaultian frame, what Burns is talking about when he refers to "loyalty to family and the need to be one's own

self", seeing both the individual and his or her environment as parts – which may be pulling in different directions – of a cultural system of meanings that as a whole produces identity. Greenblatt goes on to explain how literature written by the individuals whose self-fashioning he studies operates in this cultural system:

> Literature functions within this system in three interlocking ways: as a manifestation of the concrete behavior of its particular author, as itself the expression of the codes by which behavior is shaped, and as a reflection upon those codes. (4)

Greenblatt sees literature as an expression of the author's self, as reflective of larger cultural codes that shape the author's and other people's behavior, and also as an occasion to rethink those codes to allow them to develop. Burns' documentary concentrates on Roosevelt as a product of "(family) loyalty and the need to be one's own self" and in doing so it treats FDR to some extent as a writer of his own narrative, as Greenblatt does with literary authors. While FDR did not write literary texts, he was as a statesman a versatile creator of implicit and explicit texts that do the three things Greenblatt lists: make manifest his own concrete behavior, express the cultural codes that shaped it, and reflect on and develop such codes.

However, neither Greenblatt nor Burns directly address what happens when an individual becomes, more than an author, the embodiment of authority, and can thus produce texts that are legally and practically a performative of power. To address the cultural production, representation and remembrance of political leaders, rather than authors and texts, I build on Greenblatt's concept of self-fashioning, expanding his theory by including a notion of practice through executive power. To do so I add autofabrication as a corresponding concept to complement self-fashioning, with "auto-" referring explicitly not to the self in a Freudian sense, but to the independent making of one's public image.

Fabrication, with its implication of falsity, may seem too tendentious a word to refer to image-making, especially in the case of an authoritative and seemingly authentic leader like FDR. However, I use it following Burke, and moreover, specifically to refer to Hannah Arendt's application of the word. As Keith Breen explains in *Hannah Arendt and the Law*, for Arendt politics in the ancient world was an issue of collective action: "Action here consisted in *praxis*, that is, acting and speaking in public, whereby citizens revealed to the world their unique identities, 'who' they were." (17). Because the *polis* was the space to represent oneself, political power and violence, understood by Arendt as limitations imposed on self-expression, were direct opposites. In Arendt's reading, political life however – deplorably – became a matter of *poiesis*, 'work' or 'making', both in the sense of 'art' and of 'fabrication' (Arendt 195). *Poiesis* by definition implies representation, and thus, some degree of re-shaping, which Arendt understood as violence to the originals inherent in representation. As such, Breen explains, for Arendt, political power through *poiesis* became directly associated with force used to condition

originals to fit representations. Autofabricating political leaders, I will argue, are both acutely – often deviously – aware of this force they use to impose limits on their constituents, and of the need to artfully obscure this. Moreover, they understand that making an authoritative icon of themselves involves reshaping their selves – another exploit that must be made invisible.

Burns' documentary and many other academic and popular cultural artefacts have noted that Franklin Roosevelt juggled these roles and interests with particular success: he was an individual, but also the resultant of a particular culture, the leader of a political party, a public icon and from 1933 until his death the embodiment of executive power. As such he is an intriguing case study, in the dynamic between discourse and practice, between being shaped and shaping, and between self-fashioning and autofabrication. He has occupied both ends of the self-fashioning/autofabrication dialectic in the course of his life: while he successfully kept his disability out of the public view and therefore was never openly stigmatized by society, he came close to the brink after his bout of poliomyelitis in 1921, and was, on the other hand, among the most regal, activist and belligerent presidents in American history. Especially after 1940, when he had, unprecedentedly, been reelected to a third term, he became an institution in his own right.[1] His identity and image were shaped intensely by what his culture and society demanded, even more so than Greenblatt's exemplary renaissance authors, because as a presidential candidate he had to live up in detail to what the electorate expected from its leader. Simultaneously, he acquired unprecedented power over the lives of others, as well as over his projected identity, representations and remembrance (Maney 193).

Although I argue that self-fashioning is too limited a concept to grasp the cultural production of FDR, Greenblatt did intend self-fashioning to refer to all aspects of self-making: by the person whose identity is being shaped, as well as by others, and including the person's influence on other selves. Greenblatt locates the concept historically in the sixteenth century:

> Perhaps the simplest observation we can make is that in the sixteenth century there appears to be an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process. Such self-consciousness had been widespread among the elite in the classical world, but Christianity brought a growing suspicion of man's power to shape identity: "Hands off yourself," Augustine declared. "Try to build up yourself, and you build a ruin." This view was not the only one available in succeeding centuries, but it was influential, and a powerful alternative began to be fully articulated only in the early modern period. (2)

Although Greenblatt refers to a "manipulable, artful process", he does not mean a public image that may be removed from the internal experience of selfhood, but the production of selfhood

1 See for instance Jean Edward Smith, *FDR*; Alan Brinkley, *Franklin Delano Roosevelt*; James MacGregor Burns, *Roosevelt, The Lion and the Fox*; Patrick J. Maney, *The Roosevelt Presidency.* John Gunther, *Roosevelt in Retrospect: A Profile in History.* Frank Freidel, *Franklin D. Roosevelt, A Rendezvous with Destiny.*

internally as well as externally. Greenblatt's term includes autofabrication as an element of self-fashioning, which makes sense for the discussion of writers or players in a renaissance court. Although the "self" in self-fashioning mostly refers to the shaping of identity, Greenblatt implicitly allows it at times to mean "auto-", from the Greek *autos*, referring to the self-steering, free will-driven nature the fashioning of identity may take on. However, these are different uses of "self-", and especially for a modern politician, the autonomous act of projecting a particular public image, while occluding the less than glorious parts of his story, is a separate and essential part of legitimizing his political power. That the leader and his aides are fabricating an artfully concealed construction need not be a problem as long as the act is skillfully carried out, crafting a convincing sense of authenticity, that is, the impression that private identity and public image merged entirely. However, to grasp this distance between self and image in the making of political leaders as cultural icons, I need to distinguish autofabrication from self-fashioning.

I draw apart autofabrication and self-fashioning for two more reasons: first, because FDR did not only embody both his public image and the broader cultural "text" that produced him, he also to some extent authored both public image and cultural text. FDR did not literally write much, but through the autofabrication of his public image co-authored himself as a cultural text. The result is that author and text threaten to become inextricably confused in a way that is not the case with Greenblatt's writers whose texts are ontologically separate from their bodies. Secondly, FDR, as indicated, was at once a flesh-and-blood individual with his own personality, a man dependent on what was acceptable within his society's ideological framework, a public icon, and the embodiment of his society's executive authority. This cluster of elements is dialectical: FDR resolutely exercised power over the last two, the first two are the aspects in which his self was shaped by environmental forces; the politician FDR represents a fifth aspect, charged with mediating between these four aspects. To draw out this dialectical nature of the cultural production of a head of state, I regard the first two elements as self-fashioning – with Greenblatt – and the opposing two as autofabrication.

These five aspects: an individual – a "body natural" to use Ernst Kantorowicz's paradigmatic phrase (24) – a self intensely shaped by societal demands, a manipulative politician, a public icon, and the embodiment of power – a "body politic" (21) – are uniquely combined in statesmen. This is especially so in a tremendously powerful president of the United States at a particularly formative moment in twentieth-century world history. Two of these aspects, the fashioning of individual identity, and the fact that any elected presidential self is an outcome of apparent collective social and cultural demands, are clearly part of self-fashioning as Greenblatt formulates it. The aspect of a president's embodying formal power over life and death is, however, hardly part of the process of cultural shaping that Greenblatt describes. The aspect of giving shape to a public image may be part of self-fashioning, but Greenblatt does not separate a leader's public image management, which can acquire its own momentum, from that of other actors representing the leader, independently or with their own agenda, nor from the collective

reception of the image projected. This independent shaping of their own public image, in the interest, and through the use, of their unique power, is precisely the point at which leaders deviate from others, and where self-fashioning is too limited a concept.

On the other hand, there is a host of theorists who have considered the fabrication of iconic leaders, quite apart from their making as individuals. Presumably all political leaders consider at some point the mediation of themselves as cultural texts to their subjects, and the question of how they will "go down in history." Although this is especially imperative in a democratic context because one needs a favorable and widespread public image in the present to be elected or re-elected, and particularly feasible in a modern, mass-mediated context because wide dissemination is so easy, it is an issue of all time. Augustus famously had his facial image impressed on the Roman coin, thus clearly publicizing his iconic image in the most literal sense. The paradigmatic monograph analyzing "the making of great men", in the sense of creating a public image, is Peter Burke's *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (1992). Burke introduces his book as "a case-study of the relations between art and power, and more specifically of the 'making of great men'" (2). It was intended particularly as

> …concerned not so much with the man or the king as with the image. Not with his self-image, although this has been reconstructed. Not with his image in the eyes of posterity, which has been the subject of other studies. It is the public image of the king on which the book will focus, the place of Louis XIV in the collective imagination. (1)

Thus Burke focuses on the making of Louis XIV's public image, the visual and textual performance of kingship produced for the sake of visibility, in a process of clearly Arendtian fabrication. Burke does not engage with Louis XIV as an individual or a product of his culture, but as a celebrity who needed an artistic and artful apparatus to create a public image that would determine the collective imagination. However, fabricating a public image in the way Louis XIV's image was made, that is, divorced from the king's personality, has become impossible with the advent of modern mass media. Self-fashioning and autofabrication may be different things, but successful autofabrication in the modern context hinges on the idea that the public image is authentic, that is, in synchrony with the leader's "real" self. Thus, in autofabrication the need for authentic self and public image to coincide, or seem to do so, has become both a key value and an important rhetorical trope (Boorstin 182).

It is telling in this context that there are two books titled *The Making of FDR*, neither of which actually discuss "the making of great men" in the sense in which Burke interprets it. Richard Goldberg's *The Making of Franklin D. Roosevelt: Triumph over Disability* in fact studies the development of Roosevelt's self, particularly how his disability presumably influenced his personality. Linda Levin's *The Making of FDR: The Story of Stephen T. Early, America's First Modern Press Secretary* focuses on Roosevelt's press secretary, so Levin's book does concern FDR's

fabrication rather than his self-fashioning. Stephen Early was a key agent in Roosevelt's public communication and the book is a biography of Early more than a study of Roosevelt's public image. However, the fact that "the making of FDR" is both used in the sense of the creation of his self and the creation of his image suggests that a complicated entanglement of the two is at stake.

Autofabrication is thus a tangent of self-fashioning, which must seem to be involved with the leader's internal self, but in fact is the leader's performance of self, crucial to the negotiation of his public image on the one hand and wielding of executive power on the other. It is no coincidence that precisely these last two aspects are also central to Kantorowicz's formulation of the body politic, although he is not involved with its cultural production, but rather with its theological embedding as operative in medieval Europe. Together self-fashioning and autofabrication cover all aspects of the social and cultural construction of statesmanship – self-fashioning covers the fact that a statesman is an individual and a resultant of a culture, and autofabrication covers the aspects of independent public image creation, and the embodiment of power. The four 'corners' that this dialectic draws up meet in the fifth aspect at the heart of democratic statesmanship: the fact that the leader is also an elected and manipulative *politician*. I see self-fashioning as a dialectic between individual characteristics and environmental shaping, and autofabrication as a dialectic between public image management and executive authority. Those two dimensions are axes that cross each other at the center, which is where the political aspect of leadership is located. They draw up a field of negotiation in which the cultural production of statesmanship is performed: the dynamic of self-fashioning and autofabrication allows the politician to transform into a statesman. That dynamic in turn lays out the fundaments for future remembrance, an issue to which I will return in the next chapter.

From Self-fashioning to Autofabrication

First, however, it is important to note that there is, in FDR's as in most cases, a diachronic movement from self-fashioning to autofabrication. To become a statesman, one must first be fashioned as an individual self, and be cast, both in the pottery sense of "molded", and in the dramatic sense of "thrown" into the role, as representative of the collective. With formal power the need and agency for autofabrication increase immensely, a process that normally happens through political leadership, but the stages are by no means clearly separate – a young politician already starts to autofabricate himself as much as he can, and however powerful FDR became, he continued to depend profoundly on the mandate of the nation that empowered him, as well as on his own body and personality. With due attention to this nuance, autofabrication is a process that is firmly embedded in the performance of statesmanship. While the word may suggest autofabrication is done by a leader alone, as a painter who paints his own portrait, it is usually a more collective effort. In FDR's case, certainly, there was a fairly large inner circle of autofabricators involved – press secretaries, public relations men, speech writers – who under FDR's auspices worked on "spinning" his autofabrication. This was the time when advertising

and public relations became major businesses, and FDR greatly expanded the White House staff responsible for his autofabrication accordingly (Boorstin 205, Schoenherr 40). However, this could only be done once he was president, and the shift from self-fashioning to autofabrication merits specific attention.

Essential to the process of self-fashioning are, according to Greenblatt, on the one hand "submission to an absolute power or authority situated at least partially outside the self – God, a sacred book, an institution such as church, court, colonial or military administration", and on the other "something perceived as alien, strange or hostile. This threatening Other – heretic, savage witch, adulteress, traitor, Antichrist – must be discovered or invented in order to be attacked and destroyed" (9). If we project this onto FDR, it is easy to see both concrete authority figures and opponents, but the Authorities and Others that Greenblatt refers to are impersonal, abstract and pervasive. The American political establishment seems to have been FDR's Authority: the quest to approach and eventually acquire power over it drives him, and his uncle Theodore Roosevelt is the closest concrete embodiment of the political establishment whose particular example FDR followed in great detail. The Other is formed by the social forces holding him back in his quest, concretely, the social constructs that marginalized disability.

FDR aspired to the presidency from very early on, and greatly admired his distant relative Theodore Roosevelt, who became president when Franklin was 19. On the day of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt's wedding, President Theodore Roosevelt, brother of Eleanor's deceased father, gave the bride away and was the guest of honor, eclipsing the bride in a way that prefigured Eleanor Roosevelt's own special brand of autofabrication, which reverberates in her remembrance, as I will show in chapter 8. FDR habitually addressed Theodore Roosevelt as "Uncle Theodore" (Smith 37), and his later political career mirrored TR's in striking detail: they both became Assistant Secretary of the Navy, ran unsuccessfully for vice-president, and became governor of New York. FDR strongly believed from the 1910s onwards that he could follow Theodore Roosevelt's path to the presidency (Smith 99-116). In a roundabout way, TR became an even more important precursor, when, as a result of a bout of poliomyelitis, FDR's legs were paralyzed.

When FDR became wheelchair-bound in 1921, the older social expectations were that he would drop out of public life. A cripple was regarded as a burden on society, to be shifted to its margins. A widespread assumption was that polio affected the mind as well as the body, and most polio survivors were relegated to institutions in which they were treated as utterly dependent, mentally as well as physically, to the point that they would usually start behaving as such (Gallagher 32). Given that Roosevelt was a wealthy cripple, he did not go to such an institution, but was expected, among others by his mother, to retire to his estate and live out the rest of his days there in relative luxury, but out of public view. However vigorous a sailor and athlete he had been, responding to quintessentially American values of freedom, sportsmanship and closeness to

nature, all contributing to the self-fashioning of a successful American man in the 1920s, after he had become disabled there was no escaping the fact that he no longer suited the ideal. Roosevelt's loss of ability made him entirely unsuitable in the well-established paradigm, in which infectious disease – particularly polio – was seen as one of society's threatening Others, the victims of which must be purged from public life.

One central way in which Roosevelt battled this Other, polio, was by banishing the disease rather than its victims: from 1924 on, he developed a polio rehabilitation clinic in Warm Springs, Georgia, and the charity organization that he set up, March of Dimes, eventually, in 1955 succeeded in finding a polio vaccination (Rose). In the body, Roosevelt personified a new paradigm already in the making, in which disease could, like other forms of adversity, strengthen and toughen a true American, the way the Frontier experience might have done to earlier generations (Turner 4). By doing so, he cast himself no longer as a potentially great man "lost" to polio, but as a reformer, who had not only survived the disease, socially and otherwise, albeit through hiding its effects, but also fought it as a national epidemic, and through his exuberant presence and success allayed widespread fears of its crippling nature.

Before FDR's election, several presidential "templates" had been in vogue, such as the Founding Father president, the frontiersman president, and the Civil War veteran president (Rossiter 75). FDR was none of those, but was lucky to be able to mold himself also outwardly on the model of Theodore Roosevelt, who was the first of what would come to be regarded as the Governor Presidents, which is why it is important that both were Governor of New York before their presidencies. Like FDR, Theodore Roosevelt had not been a clear example of one of the models – his predecessor McKinley had been the last Civil War veteran to become president – and one of the ways in which TR handled that issue was by fashioning, and later autofabricating, himself as a frontiersman and a cowboy. He had worked as a rancher and exuded enormous physical strength, exuberant health and confidence (Morris 347). Without claiming to have been born in a log cabin – as had been essential for instance in Andrew Jackson's and William Harrison's campaigns (Boller 72) – he revived the presidential template of the frontiersman president that had served them. After 1921, Franklin Roosevelt could no longer match any of these entirely, but he worked extremely hard to develop his chest and arm muscles, so that his upper body was and looked very strong (Gallagher 20). Where TR was often photographed on horseback, FDR had his photos taken in his car, presenting a modernized version of his uncle and predecessor. Moreover, since TR's precedent, more people had entered the presidency from governor positions, particularly FDR's mentor and other iconic president, Woodrow Wilson. So when FDR ran for president he followed a recent template that suited him better than earlier available models, and had simultaneously been doing what he could to live up to and modernize the existing templates.

This measuring up to self-fashioning expectations and modernizing traditions remained a balancing act. Roosevelt like any other successful American with aspirations to the highest

political office still had to allow himself to be molded by basic cultural assumptions of what it meant to be a successful American. Copying Theodore's career worked out well in part because Theodore Roosevelt was a presidential model FDR could match up to, and someone who had himself also modernized the model of the US president. More than his predecessors, TR understood the importance of mass publicity, and he was more than an administrator (Schoenherr 7, MacGregor Burns and Dunn 121). Although Theodore must have been crucial for Franklin's self-fashioning, it was not until FDR was president himself that it became advantageous to publicly stress his links with his uncle: by the time he had truly acquired his own position he could advertise his having voted for TR, and adopt the name "New Deal" for his major domestic change program, named in reference to Theodore Roosevelt's 1906 Square Deal program (MacGregor Burns and Dunn 142). Thus, TR was probably an important factor in FDR's autofabrication, or rather, in creating space for him to get away from cultural molds he would not have been able to fit into. However, society, and its self-fashioning forces, were also beginning to shift fundamentally and overwhelmingly, turning Roosevelt from a highly unlikely candidate for the presidency, into someone who could manipulate to some extent the ongoing transition so as to suit himself. Thus, the boundary between self-fashioning and autofabrication became in his case unusually fluid.

Emerging from an old Dutch family as a crippled but rich inheritor, FDR could not lay claim to being a self-made man, a particular proponent of America's success in achieving its Manifest Destiny or an embodiment of the American Dream. TR had not had most of these characteristics either, but had adapted himself, for instance by working as a cowboy for some time, whereas FDR, partly because TR had leveled the path, could get away with being an outlier. By the time Franklin Roosevelt's political career was budding, space had been created for him to modernize the older ideals of Manifest Destiny towards new versions, for instance, by arguing that it was America's duty to uphold international law and order (Quarantine Speech, 1937) and to become the world's "arsenal of democracy" (Fireside Chat 16, 1940). Indeed the implicit presence of the older rhetoric of America's Manifest Destiny and American Civil Religion enhanced his argument against isolationism in the late 1930s (Rosenberg, *Spreading* 115). At the same time, FDR's move away from Emersonian rhetorics of self-reliance and "rags-to-riches" interpretations of the American Dream was well-received against the background of the Depression, which rendered so many American dreams ridiculous and gave the lie to so many people's sense of self-reliance (Cullen 117). One presidential template that FDR could conform to to some extent was that of the president as benevolent parent to the nation – an American archetype that had existed since the Founding Fathers. That was not a role he could step into before he was president, also because of his relative youth, but he did find an early entrance to it, via his role of informal friend or older brother – a role he mainly developed in radio addresses, as the many letters he received in response attest. Here again, he did not only adopt a modern medium, but also update a much older ideal, in an apt response to society's need for modernization of cultural archetypes.

But however much TR had helped FDR to gain control over his public image, FDR also realized that the family connection with TR and the Roosevelt name meant that he needed to steer clear of his famous uncle. One way in which he did that was by joining the Democratic Party, whereas Theodore had been a Republican president. This may however seem to be a greater difference than it really was. At least initially, neither Theodore, nor Franklin were strongly attached to their parties and both were known for being realists rather than idealists (Freidel 16-17). They essentially shared all main political beliefs, which were best summarized under the term Progressivism.[2] Theodore Roosevelt after his presidency left the Republican Party and started his own new Progressive Party, thus splitting the Republican electorate and giving the 1912 election victory to the Democrat Woodrow Wilson (Davis *The Beckoning* 274-276). Despite the difference in party affiliation, Franklin Roosevelt voted for Theodore on all occasions the latter ran for (vice)president (Tugwell 17). He may indeed have chosen to join the Democratic ticket in New York State mainly because as a Republican he would always have been overshadowed by the then still much more famous Teddy Roosevelt, and therefore would stand no chance of election as a Republican (Smith 99-116).

This tendency of FDR to define himself against others is part of a larger pattern in his autofabrication. During his presidency Roosevelt's declared enemies were first the Great Depression and then the Axis powers (Germany, Italy, and Japan). These opponents were particularly crucial to the fabrication of Roosevelt's public image, as his two still popular nicknames, Dr. New Deal and Dr. Win-the-War, attest. Although Roosevelt's ideals seem to have derived primarily from antitheses to politics he strongly opposed, he became increasingly associated with his own active agenda. 'Dr. New Deal' and 'Dr. Win-the-War' suggest as much: they rather stress Roosevelt's actions against the Depression and fascism than the mere fact of his opposition. However, because Roosevelt was rather an ideological complement of the "isms" of the day – colonialism, fascism, communism – than an ideologue himself, and because he had to represent an extremely wide spectrum of Democratic party wings and members, he increasingly became an emblem and a mascot of democracy in the broadest sense. Although this was probably not initially an intentional strategy, it later became an active tool for Roosevelt to cast himself as representative of the ideals that all true Americans shared. Indeed, his eminently practical "Try something, if it doesn't work, try something else" approach to the New Deal (Polenberg 6), was relatively successful in fighting the national spirit of desperation also because it tapped into the quintessentially American conviction that acting is better than theorizing – a principle that must also have had a role in FDR's self-fashioning.

A primarily technological development that Roosevelt was the first to utilize in making his way up to the presidency, was the rise of radio. His use of radio will be discussed in detail in chapter 3, but it is important to point out here, that radio gave him a new and unusual opportunity for

2 MacGregor Burns and Dunn 121; Davis *The Beckoning* 224.

autofabrication. Roosevelt could not only advertise himself via the radio, but could also use the US's evolution towards what Benedict Anderson has called an "imagined community" (46). Anderson defines the nation as "an imagined political community." The nation is "imagined as a community, because regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always perceived as a deep horizontal comradeship" (7). Thus Anderson uses "imagined community" to define the nation in the era of free citizens who are no longer subjects of a divine ruler. The term is, however, also easily applicable to describe the effect of mass media. Anderson wrote about upcoming nations and nationalism in the nineteenth century, when newspapers and novels were the main forms of mass media through which nationalism was dispersed, but radio was arguably a much more powerful medium to create a "deep horizontal comradeship" across an entire nation, even one as large as the US. FDR's radio addresses were broadcast at such a time that they were more or less prime time radio for all Americans across time zones, and they were broadcast live, so that everyone – at times more than 80% of American citizens – could hear the President live at the same time.[3] Thus, Roosevelt did not only manage his own autofabrication through his use of radio, but also profoundly influenced the imagined community that had practically and ideologically created him.

Roosevelt operated in a modern mass media landscape that was rapidly evolving. This meant that the circumstances of his fabrication were obviously different from Louis XIV's. In the age of mass communication, a politician's self and public image must seem to coincide if the public image is to be successful. I define authenticity in practical terms as congruence between the stories one tells oneself about oneself and the stories one tells others about oneself. For politicians in a democratic system, who, on the one hand exercise more brutal power than they can sell to their electorate, and on the other, have to represent their constituents metaphorically embodying all of them, doing this is impossible by the nature of their role. Nonetheless, it remains important to be perceived as authentic . Some, like sociologists Alexander and Jaworski, even consider it the pinnacle of presidential success (2). For a politician to come across as authentic it must seem as if there is no autofabrication, only self-fashioning. Of course, achieving that suggestion requires an act of autofabrication in itself, so that authenticity becomes a rhetorical performance. This need for appearing authentic is a particularly twentieth century American issue, as Jaap Kooijman argues in *Fabricating the Absolute Fake: America in Contemporary Pop Culture* (19), and may thus not necessarily have been a concern for Louis XIV, as it was for FDR.

In the twentieth century democratic American landscape in which Roosevelt operated, there were also far more mass media channels and more active agents, who could express themselves more widely and with less restraint, than Louis XIV's fabricators had to deal with in seventeenth century France. As a result, Roosevelt both had to make himself heard from among more voices,

3 Ryfe; Goodman 62; McLoughlin 201.

had more channels through which to engage with a mass audience, and more of a political need to do so. In Roosevelt's case a wide range of dependent, independent, sympathetic and disapproving voices contributed to his public image, because virtually every individual or organization was free to engage with it. Nonetheless, Roosevelt's own PR machine, in which he was not the only agent, but the ultimately responsible director, set the tone and provided a leading voice in the fabrication of the FDR icon (Winfield 231).

Although FDR, before 1933, was consistently engaged in positioning himself well for the presidency, and started to become successful at doing so early in his career, this is not yet autofabrication. He played the game of self-fashioning by its implicit rules, successfully, no doubt, because he intuitively understood them, but before 1933 he was still attempting to fit the mold, rather than changing it. During his first campaign he had a special campaign biographer "prove" his physical health and mental well-being, suggesting that FDR was far more able-bodied than he really was (Costigliola 125). I do not draw attention to this to argue that he fabricated untruths about his health, but rather to showcase the extent to which he had to insinuate that he was more physically fit than he really was. Other examples of his posing as almost entirely physically "normal" are rife – including photos and film footage of FDR "walking" to the rostrum before speeches, and many photos that conceal he is leaning into something or on a second walking stick hidden behind his leg.

Figure 1. FDR with a visible and a hidden walking stick, Warm Springs, GA, 1928 (Collection of Stefan Lorant, International Center for Photography, NYC).

Although Roosevelt's taking ownership of his own image began early on during campaigns for political office, the more transformative acts of autofabrication could only happen when as president he acted as a powerful figure. The Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library – the first ever presidential library – was Roosevelt's idea, its construction beginning in 1938, and opening in 1941. Those dates bracket another key moment in his presidency: his unprecedented third term re-election in 1940. After that, and especially after the United States became officially engaged in World War II, FDR's executive power – now also as commander in chief during wartime – became almost limitless. This extreme power conferred upon an elected president in a democracy traditionally highly suspicious of the corrupting effect of power vested in a single individual, yet also in need of continuity because of the ongoing war, called for a great deal of autofabrication. Autofabrication, particularly, of FDR as a masculine yet mild and humane parental figure to a country in wartime, became necessary to create a sense of self-confidence and unity in the war, and to occlude the less heroic, or indeed criminal, elements of his presidency. As a war president in his unprecedented third and fourth terms, FDR acquired more room for autofabrication. The novelty and uniqueness of the situation allowed him to shape expectations of what his legacy would be.

Autofabrication

As noted, Greenblatt does not stringently distinguish between authors and their texts, seeing both as cultural artefacts of the same society, nor between practice and discourse: the practice he studies is the production of discourse. But in the final pages of *Renaissance Self-fashioning* he does, inadvertently and without theoretically framing it as such, outline an opposition between self-fashioning and autofabrication in his discussion of Shakespeare's *Othello*: he reads Othello as a product of self-fashioning without agency and Iago as an embodiment of autofabrication without self. Greenblatt's discussion of *Othello* is a tour de force which works very well on the level of close-reading, but stretches the term self-fashioning too far, in order to make it incorporate Iago as well as Othello. I would argue that Iago is actually a literary archetype for what I mean by autofabrication, in the sense that, of the four aspects that determine the cultural production of a statesman, Iago embodies the two on the autofabrication dimension. Iago exerts power over life and death in the play, albeit not as the diegetic king, but rather as the malevolent director on stage, the narrator and the character who manipulates and directs all the play's action, and he is also the character most deeply invested in producing his own public image, which in Iago's case is entirely divorced from any "true" internal selfhood. Indeed, that is precisely what Iago does not have, as Greenblatt implies (236). Nor does *Othello* portray Iago as a product of his culture, the other tangent of self-fashioning. Those two elements are embodied in Iago's foil, Othello, who does have a life narrative, and whose position is untenable exactly because of the problematic fit between his background and the cultural expectations of his role. All the issues of power, race, and sexuality that are on the table are played out through politics, a language game with real-world implications, that Iago manifestly wins, although the anxieties involved in

autofabrication without underlying selfhood do emerge in full. Though obviously more than a textual phenomenon, FDR became adept at autofabrication through textual presence that shares much with Iago's.

Greenblatt introduces his treatment of *Othello* with a long and scathing discussion of sociological research by Daniel Lerner (*The Passing of Traditional Society*). He agrees with Lerner's initial assumption that modern western societies inculcate in their peoples a "*mobile sensibility* so adaptive to change that rearrangement of the self-system is its distinctive mode" (224), but goes on to vehemently disagree when Lerner argues that other, "traditional" societies lack "empathy" – defined by Lerner as "the capacity to see oneself in the other fellow's situation" – a trait Lerner considers crucial to western societies. Greenblatt rightly points out Lerner's disregard for the role of power in this process, arguing that what Lerner calls empathy, is what enabled European colonists to trick native peoples into slavery, by improvisationally making use of their rudimentary understanding of the natives' cultural and religious practices. Greenblatt goes on to suggest that precisely this "empathy" is what Iago – and FDR, I would add – deviously use to wield power, calling "that mode *improvisation*" (227, italics in the original). This improvisation is not defined by its "spur-of-the-moment quality" but rather by "the ability both to capitalize on the unforeseen and to transform given materials into one's own scenario" (227). FDR possessed exactly that ability in a high degree, and, to use Greenblatt's words: "understood the impromptu character of an improvisation [a]s itself often a calculated mask, the product of careful preparation" (227).

Iago is a perplexing but also a revealing example of autofabrication because the persona that he fabricates for himself is so empty – he does not give himself any narrative body: precisely the flexibility of the role-player that he derives from his emptiness, is, while extreme in Iago's case, typical of successful autofabrication. Of course the historical FDR was not *only* or in the first place an actor subsuming an identity not his own, nor was he *only* made up of text, but the toothless yet incessant insistence of critics to pinpoint Iago's motives resembles the ever-continuing zeal with which FDR biographers try to get to the heart of his being, as if some revelation were still to be discovered.

Roosevelt himself on May 15, 1942 famously commented in a conversation with Henry Morgenthau:

> You know I am a juggler, and I never let my right hand know what my left hand does.... I may have one policy for Europe and one diametrically opposite for North and South America. I may be entirely inconsistent, and furthermore I am perfectly willing to mislead and tell untruths if it will help win the war. (Kimball 7)

While winning the war is the unequivocally stated aim here, the first part of the statement resembles Iago's "I am not what I am" as well as the liar's paradox in that Roosevelt is entirely and

compellingly transparent about his dissembling. "You know" stresses the addressee's awareness of the trickery while it is happening. FDR is honest and open in this text about his duplicity in his war practice. The reference to his left and right hands primarily fits in with the juggler metaphor, but on a secondary level refers to his tendency to tell different cabinet members, officers, and other close assistants ("right hands") different and conflicting things (Goodwin 23). It may even be read as referring to the left and right wings of the political spectrum to which he performed contradictory narratives. A juggler is to some extent by nature an improviser in Greenblatt's sense, juggling the elements that offer themselves in a particular situation, but essentially performing a perplexing and confusing act, that may seem impromptu, but which can only be pulled off because of the juggler's practiced skill.

The juggling Roosevelt does in this now epigrammatic statement puts a bewildering yet falsely reassuring spin on his actual behavior as a wartime president. In its attractive ability to puzzle while claiming to be revealing, it draws attention to itself as text. In its content it posits and in its form it performs FDR as a nimble figure through language, drawing attention away from his physical inability to move independently, and this nimbleness altogether obscures what it is that he misleads and tells untruths about. Thus FDR engages in autofabrication *as a textual figure*. He did very real things, indeed he exerted his presidential power in unprecedented ways and to extreme extents, sending more than 12 million American soldiers into combat, incarcerating nearly 122,000 Japanese Americans without proof of disloyalty, but this was made possible primarily through his texts – which I consider to have been performative in several ways.

On the most obvious level, the president issued executive orders, texts with legal status, commanding the execution of specified acts, such as the internment of potentially disloyal citizens on the West Coast, Executive Order 9066 (February 19, 1942). Such texts are explicitly performative "by virtue of the power vested in me as president", as Executive Order 9066 has it, so they stay away as far as possible from fabricating FDR as a public icon or an individual. Rather, the opposite is going on: "by virtue of the power vested in me" is passive in various ways, as "by virtue of the power" suggests that FDR is not personally doing anything, but the depersonalized "power" is, not of its own accord, but "by virtue", which means "because of", but implicitly signals that there is a moral justification involved. Moreover, "vested in me" draws attention to the fact that anyone, given the democratic structure even perhaps everyone, did the vesting, that is, except FDR. This glosses over the fact that FDR actually exerted "the power" personally, when he had a choice to do otherwise. Executive Order 9066 is a very specific and much debated example, and much of its wording is formulaic and not typical of FDR, but my point here is that FDR did not shun the execution of extreme power including the suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus* for particular ethnic groups, but he used his power through extremely impersonal means and language. EO9066 was held up by the Supreme Court during FDR's presidency – it was only rescinded decades later by Gerald Ford in 1976 – so it was a decision supported by the system of checks and balances. Still, EO9066 is a text FDR issued, which had

great practical impact on the lives of people, while it does what it can to refrain from shaping FDR's public image as a person. I see it as an act of autofabrication, in its near-denial that there is an individual exercising tremendous power here, although that is what is going on. With over 290 executive orders per year in office, FDR is the president who issued by far the most of them of all presidents before and after him.[4]

The most clearly autofabricating texts FDR produced, however, were not performative in the usual sense, but did act on a practical level by almost or entirely concealing what he did in other domains. His Fireside Chats, for instance, were politically influential in the sense that they often had very tangible impact on public opinion about particular issues, but they also importantly contributed to constructing FDR's public image as an authentic and human individual (Buhite xx). Four days after the issuance of Executive Order 9066, on February 23, 1942, FDR delivered his 23rd Fireside Chat, a glowing war speech, in which he frames himself and early-1942 America in sweeping historical and geographic contexts. It begins by mentioning that today is George Washington's birthday, and ends:

> And General Washington ordered that these great words written by Tom Paine be read to the men of every regiment in the Continental Army, and this was the assurance given to the first American armed forces:
> "The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the sacrifice, the more glorious the triumph."
> So spoke Americans in the year 1776.
> So speak Americans today!

Thus, Roosevelt frames the American war effort in 1942 as a contemporary version of the American Revolutionary War, typical and constitutive of true Americanness. In the process he associates himself with General George Washington – significantly: the military leader rather than the president, albeit in a moment that Washington used the literariness of words to inspire his army. In the rest of the Fireside Chat FDR exhorted his "fellow Americans" to look at a map of the world to understand the global movements and stakes of the war. The language is rife with moral righteousness, referring to the United States in Roosevelt's own earlier phrase as the world's "arsenal of democracy" –an expression that has continued to reverberate – and indexing the Four Freedoms, which he first formulated in the State of the Union address on January 6, 1942, six weeks before this Fireside Chat, and which have become more than almost

4 Up until Theodore Roosevelt no one had issued more than 40 Executive Orders per year as president, TR upped this to 144 and it stayed high, around 200/year, until FDR's presidency, when it became nearly 300. The number has since declined dramatically to between 30 and 40 in the last few decades. See http://fivethirtyeight.com/datalab/every-presidents-executive-actions-in-one-chart/

any Roosevelt text part of his cultural and political heritage. This Fireside Chat shapes FDR as a man – a person as well as a masculinity – through his morally just military mission in the world. It both attends to American foreign policy and to his own outward image, and is thus clearly an act of autofabrication, but although it successfully constructs a public image of a profoundly frank and morally upright man, it is at no time really inward-looking. The fact that FDR had, just days before, ordered 122,000 innocent citizens to be locked up without due process or stated end-date is wholly absent and irrelevant to this speech, a text that – unlike the Executive Order – reached the majority of Americans, and was delivered to most of them in Roosevelt's own intimate radio voice. Thus this Fireside Chat is an act of autofabrication in the active sense that it helps construct Franklin Roosevelt's public image, as well as his relation to the US, and the US's relation to the world as a whole, but it is so in a secondary fashion as well. It obscures one of the most immoral acts of his presidency, and contributes to the framing of the Japanese internment as an event for which no one bore personal responsibility.

Another similarly crucial pair of moments in FDR's autofabrication are his Four Freedoms speech – the traditional State of the Union address he gave on January 6, 1941, so before official American involvement in World War II, and his meeting off the coast of Newfoundland with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill on August 14, 1941, producing the Atlantic Charter (Smith 128). In the Four Freedoms Speech Roosevelt formulated his definition of freedom ("the supremacy of human rights everywhere") and specified the Four Freedoms at the heart of human rights:

> In the future days, which we seek to make secure, we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms. The first is freedom of speech and expression – everywhere in the world. The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way – everywhere in the world. The third is freedom from want – which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants – everywhere in the world. The fourth is freedom from fear – which, translated into world terms, means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor – anywhere in the world.
>
> That is no vision of a distant millennium. It is a definite basis for a kind of world attainable in our own time and generation. That kind of world is the very antithesis of the so-called new order of tyranny which the dictators seek to create with the crash of a bomb. To that new order we oppose the greater conception – the moral order. A good society is able to face schemes of world domination and foreign revolutions alike without fear. Since the beginning of our American history, we have been engaged in change – in a perpetual peaceful revolution – a revolution which goes on steadily, quietly adjusting itself to changing conditions – without the concentration camp or the quick-lime in the ditch.

> The world order which we seek is the cooperation of free countries, working together in a friendly, civilized society.
> This nation has placed its destiny in the hands and heads and hearts of its millions of free men and women; and its faith in freedom under the guidance of God. Freedom means the supremacy of human rights everywhere. Our support goes to those who struggle to gain those rights or keep them. Our strength is our unity of purpose. To that high concept there can be no end save victory.

The most frequently quoted lines are the ones in which FDR names the four freedoms, and because they are usually quoted in isolation this seems a purely idealistic text, largely or entirely divorced from its historical circumstances and practical impact.[5] They did however have great impact, not only rhetorically at the time of the address's delivery, but also in the formulation of the United Nations' aims, and it is one of the most central and best remembered statements of FDR's principles. But this long excerpt also shows how the speech functioned as a whole, and was in the first place a war message at a time the United States was not yet involved directly in the war, and public opinion – unlike FDR – still largely opposed involvement. Roosevelt explicitly states his opposition to "the so-called new order of tyranny which the dictators seek to create with the crash of a bomb" and uses clearly belligerent words – supremacy, struggle, strength, victory – in a more or less metaphorical context, but the pointed theme of all these metaphors is war. While the speech seems to be, and tends to be remembered as, a plea for freedom and human rights and against violence, Roosevelt invoked those high principles to ready the nation for war. At the same time, his formulation of the Four Freedoms is a constitutive part of his autofabrication, both in what was then the present and for his future remembrance, presenting his character as kind, fatherly and morally firm, and linking his principles directly to the ideological foundations of the United States. When saying that "Since the beginning of our American history, we have been engaged in change – in a perpetual peaceful revolution", he uses "we" to ostentatiously place himself and his contemporaries in the same glorious historical context of peaceful change. Simultaneously, to say that "there can be no end save victory" implies that there will be war. Thus the autofabrication lies in FDR's proposition of a public image that stresses his uniquely American peacefulness, morality and zeal for freedom. The latent message that is insinuated in passive terms, and which the assertive autofabrication covers up, is that under FDR the United States will go to war.

The first key and most direct reconfiguration of the Four Freedoms speech, is in the Atlantic Charter, issued on August 14, 1941. The meeting between FDR and Winston Churchill that produced the Atlantic Charter, a pivotal policy statement which officially formulated their

5 Although there are many degrees to be distinguished here: at one end of the spectrum the Franklin D. Roosevelt memorial in Washington DC simply lists the four freedoms, and at the other extreme the Four Freedoms memorial in New York City quotes the speech from "In the future days" to "in our own time and generation", incorporating more of a sense of the historical circumstances that inspired Roosevelt's formulation of the four freedoms.

shared aims for the postwar world, was held in secret on HMS *Prince of Wales* in Placentia Bay, off the coast of Newfoundland. This secrecy is in itself worthy of note: while there was of course a security issue involved, FDR and his staff went out of their way to an unnecessary extent to present alternative narratives to convince the American public of his whereabouts (Smith 128). The Atlantic Charter itself is a key document in its statement of agreed principles between the US and Great Britain, including the projected end of European/British colonialism, the envisioning of the United Nations as a global body to assert the four freedoms as central aims and ends of humanity, and the statement that "the Nazi tyranny" must be destroyed. Its point 6 illustrates this all-encompassing quality very well:

> After the final destruction of Nazi tyranny, they hope to see established a peace which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance that all the men in all the lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want.

Apart from the principles Churchill and Roosevelt formulate for the entire world here, including refraining from national expansion and explicating "freedom from fear and want" as ambitions every nation ought to have, this point became especially important because of the opening subclause. Hitler read the Atlantic Charter days after Roosevelt and Churchill drafted it – diplomatic relations between the United States and Germany were still intact and functioned – and he allegedly and understandably interpreted it as a declaration of war (Paterson et al. 179).

The first meeting between Roosevelt and Churchill, and the Atlantic Charter they produced, form a key turning point in World War II, even before the US was officially engaged. However, while this is one of the moments in which Roosevelt used the presidential power at his discretion most forcefully and influentially, the meeting was clouded in secrecy, and the text of the Atlantic Charter is extremely impersonal. The Atlantic Charter formulated some of Roosevelt's most favored principles, both personally and in the construction of his public image, as we have seen in the discussion of the Four Freedoms speech, but the Atlantic Charter refrains from stressing those links between "the president" and FDR as a public icon and an individual person and politician. The Atlantic Charter's text refers to Roosevelt as "the President of the United States" twice, and never uses his name. This is all the more striking since "the President of the United States" is on both occasions mentioned alongside "the Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill." Despite the fact that the Atlantic Charter was for Churchill a more problematic message to bring home, because it stated the vision of a world without colonialism, obviously a sacrifice for Great Britain, but gave no clear guarantees of American help in fighting the war, Churchill owns the message personally, whereas Roosevelt ostensibly acts only through the power invested in the President. Indeed, there is no official signed version of the Atlantic Charter; the text was telegraphed to London and Washington. Roosevelt at a press conference in 1944 said about this: "There isn't any copy of the Atlantic Charter, so far as I know. I haven't got one. The

British haven't got one. The nearest thing you will get is the [message of the] radio operator on *Augusta* and *Prince of Wales*. That's the nearest thing you will come to it ... There was no formal document." (Gunther 15-16).

Conclusion

Statements like the one above, with their bantering tone, tendency to draw up smokescreens, and near denial of the existence of the Atlantic Charter in official form, remind of the "I'm a juggler" epigram: Roosevelt openly and in a personable – friendly as well as person-like – manner states that he has acted presidentially at his discretion on behalf of the nation, without attaching his name to any document. The Atlantic Charter is a pivotal policy statement and a product of Roosevelt's personal interaction with Churchill and with the country he represented, but disagreed with about the need for overseas intervention in the war, yet his name is as far away from it as possible, a fact he cared to stress explicitly. His active autofabrication of his iconic image lies elsewhere: it is part of his public addresses such as the Four Freedoms speech. The autofabrication involved in Roosevelt's treatment of the Atlantic Charter is its passive counterpart: the obvious secrecy surrounding the meeting and the explicit denial of the existence of a formal document themselves contribute to the image of FDR as a compelling but elusive icon.