We close with two brief observations. The first concerns the endless crescendo of enthusiasm and expectations with which Western culture is greeting digital media. Each month seems to bring new evidence of the voracity with which new media are refashioning the established media and reinventing themselves in the quest for immediacy. Each new Hollywood blockbuster gives computer graphics artists and programmers the opportunity to claim that they are getting closer to transparency. More remarkable are those pageants of mediation and remediation that emerge as part of current events, such as elections, trials, and the deaths of famous people. In disseminating information about such events, the Internet is quickly taking shape as an established news medium alongside television, radio, and the press. The Internet is also now a full participant in the process of incorporating the media into the event itself.

The 1996 presidential and congressional contest was the first election covered widely and deeply on the World Wide Web. Partisan and nonpartisan web sites provided information throughout the campaign. On the evening of the election, news sites such as CNN Interactive were offering continuous streams of results from each congressional district. Their promise was that the viewer could bypass the television coverage, which while rapid was still rigidly linear, and get closer to the election itself. On television the viewer had to wait until the networks got around to displaying the results in her state or district; on the Net, the viewer could pass directly to particular elections that interested her. Furthermore, she could supposedly view the same election tallies on which the networks themselves made their pro-
jections, thus bypassing the middleman. The assumed immediacy of broadcast television was exposed as faulty, in that television could not be interactive and respond to the needs of each viewer. Unfortunately, the CNN Interactive web site was jammed with so many hits that most users could not get through at all. For these users, television was still a more efficient system for delivering information. Yet even this jamming was taken as evidence of the future of news delivery on the Web: it indicated that users clearly wanted an Internet-based news service.

When, in the summer of 1997, the Mars Surveyor spacecraft landed safely and released its Rover to photograph the surface, the Jet Propulsion Laboratory web site received millions of hits and became tantalizingly inaccessible. Even more clearly than in the case of the 1996 election, the Mars landing was a mediated event in which media constituted the subject. The slow movement of the Rover, a special camera on wheels, was the only thing that was happening at the rocky desert landing site. The story was that this medium could itself provide an authentic and exciting viewing experience. Moreover, the photographs could now be refashioned into a web site, in addition to the customary presentations on television and in the print media. In covering the mission, each news medium made its own claim to immediacy, while both critiquing and emulating the coverage provided by the others.

Within two months, the Mars landing was eclipsed by the death of Princess Diana, an event that brought the mutual remediations among on-the-air and online media to a level of frenzy unprecedented in recent media history. The reality of media was demonstrated in a gruesome fashion, when the paparazzi pursued Diana’s car and were blamed as at least the indirect cause of the accident. The story that the photographers may actually have interfered with those trying to help the victims showed again that media can intrude in the “real” world, with serious or fatal results. Even if it was not fully accurate, the story became an instant cultural obsession. The photographers, after all, seemed to be trying to achieve the ultimate immediacy by photographing death itself. Who can listen to the story of Diana without recalling Barthes’s analysis of the immediacy of photography? We may also think of Antonioni’s Blow-up and of the computer game Myst that mediates the fatal stillness of Antonioni’s films. The picture of death taken by Antonioni’s photographer was anything but transparent and immediate: each successive blow-up moved the image further along the scale toward hypermediacy. But in the case of
Diana’s death, the photograph instantly took on such white-hot immediacy that it could not be published at all, although an apparent digital fake was made available briefly on the Internet and then removed. In that all the media joined the paparazzi in their pursuit of the immediacy of Diana’s death, few could fail to see the irony that the press, television, and the Internet were condemning the photographers while themselves providing absurdly inquisitive and detailed coverage of a private tragedy. Yet even that irony was absorbed into the media coverage. The media even critiqued themselves as complicit in the death of Diana for having fed the public curiosity that led the paparazzi to pursue her in the first place. The news media thus expressed a fascination with media that they simultaneously condemned as morbid.

Meanwhile, television and the web were as always each promoting its own definition of immediacy: television through live coverage that went on for days and the Internet through web casting and the “participatory democracy” of the newsgroups, in which contributors could conduct their own grieving dialogue. Sometimes the emphasis in the television broadcasts passed from the live coverage to the authenticity of the emotional experience: the size of the crowds, its outpouring of grief, and so on. From there it was an easy move to hypermediacy. That movement became apparent, for example, in the broadcasts by CBS News. Because the funeral itself occurred for American audiences in the middle of the night, CBS decided to run a videotape of the whole ceremony later in the morning. At that time, however, the procession was still carrying Diana’s body to its final resting place. The producers of the broadcast thus faced the problem of providing two image streams to their viewers. They decided not to switch the entire screen from one scene to the other, as they would undoubtedly have done five or ten years before. Instead, they periodically shrank the videotaped funeral to a window on the screen and slid in a second window carrying a shot of the continuing procession. The two windows would appear overlapping for some seconds or minutes. Above the one was the rubric “videotape” and above the other “live”—as if the live “shot” were any less mediated than the videotape. The producers chose the hypermediated windowed style, even though or perhaps because they wanted to elicit in their viewers feelings of authenticity and deep emotion. Because the two images (one videotaped and one live) were both available to the producers, both demanded their place on the screen. This crowding together of images, the insistence that everything that technology can present must be presented at one time—this is the logic of hypermediacy.
We can hardly imagine a better example of hypermediacy’s claim to authenticity of experience. And yet other and perhaps better examples (both of hypermediacy and remediation) will no doubt appear, as each new event tops the previous ones in the excitement or the audacity of its claims to immediacy.

**The Future of Remediation**

Our second observation concerns our culture’s insistence on the newness of new media. It is not surprising that enthusiasts should continue to make the claim of novelty, for they have inherited from modernism the assumption that a medium must be new in order to be significant. As Cavell (1979) has remarked, the task of the modern artist was always "one of creating not a new instance of his art, but a new medium in it" (104). In digital media today, as in modern art in the first half of the century, the medium must pretend to be utterly new in order to promote its claim of immediacy. It must constitute itself as a medium that (finally) provides the unmediated experience that all previous media sought, but failed to achieve. This is why each innovation on the World Wide Web must be represented by its promoters as a revolution. Streaming audio, streaming video, Java, VRML—each of these cannot merely improve what the Web offered before but must “reinvent” the Web. As we have shown, what is in fact new is the particular way in which each innovation rearranges and reconstitutes the meaning of earlier elements. What is new about new media is therefore also old and familiar: that they promise the new by remediating what has gone before.

The film *Strange Days*, with which we began our study, is not really a prediction about the future, but a description of our culture’s current fascination with both transparent and hypermediated technologies of representation. Throughout this book, we too have tried to describe the present moment and to resist the urge, so tempting when writing about new media, to make predictions. We surely cannot predict how digital media will work their particular remediations in the coming years and decades. Today, virtual reality refashions film; the World Wide Web refashions television and everything else. However, as they develop, these technologies may change the focus of their remediations. Other digital hardware and software may be invented and deployed against the same targets (particularly television and film) or perhaps against others. Our one prediction is that any future media will also define their cultural meaning with reference to established technol-
ogies. They will isolate some features of those technologies (point of view, motion, interactivity, and so on) and refashion them to make a claim of greater immediacy.

The true novelty would be a new medium that did not refer for its meaning to other media at all. For our culture, such mediation without remediation seems to be impossible.