

Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository

11-11-2022 9:00 AM

After the Storm: Histories of Cultural Marxism/s in the United States

Andrew Woods, *The University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor: Calcagno, Antonio, *The University of Western Ontario*

: Gardiner, Michael, *The University of Western Ontario*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Theory and Criticism

© Andrew Woods 2022

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd>



Part of the [Intellectual History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Woods, Andrew, "After the Storm: Histories of Cultural Marxism/s in the United States" (2022). *Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository*. 8966.

<https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/8966>

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Scholarship@Western. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository by an authorized administrator of Scholarship@Western. For more information, please contact wlsadmin@uwo.ca.

Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository

11-11-2022 9:00 AM

After the Storm: Histories of Cultural Marxism/s in the United States

Andrew Woods

Supervisor: Calcagno, Antonio, The University of Western Ontario

: Gardiner, Michael, The University of Western Ontario

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Theory and Criticism

© Andrew Woods 2022

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd>



Part of the [Intellectual History Commons](#)

Abstract:

In this dissertation, I use the work of the Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci to analyze the meanings and functions of the “Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory” or “Cultural Marxism.” According to this theory, members of the Frankfurt School emigrated to the United States to undermine traditional American culture and destroy Western Civilization. From New Right think tanks and conservative filmmakers, various segments of the American Right deploy this narrative to lament the decline of traditional cultural norms and the rise of ‘political correctness.’ Whereas most academic accounts portray the “Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory” as a narrative that remains substantially the same throughout all its subsequent or local adaptations, I adopt a strict contextualist approach to emphasize the differences between specific articulations of “Cultural Marxism/s.” Building on Gramsci’s theory of intellectuals, I develop a method for investigating the organizational and institutional contexts of the intellectuals who devised and disseminated these narratives. I perform a conjunctural analysis to contextualize “Cultural Marxism/s” as a series of ideological responses to the diffuse crises of the post-1960s United States. I argue that the intellectuals of various emergent political forces developed “Cultural Marxism/s” to explain these crises, organize identities, and promote proposals for societal transformation. I examine the meanings and functions of “Cultural Marxism/s” in the specific contexts of three reactionary political forces in the United States: the Lyndon LaRouche movement, the Free Congress Foundation and the New Right, and the Tea Party Movement.

Keywords:

Cultural Marxism, Antonio Gramsci, intellectuals, conspiracy theory, the New Right, the Free Congress Foundation, William S. Lind, Paul Weyrich, Lyndon LaRouche, the Tea Party movement, Andrew Breitbart, American Studies, intellectual history, conjunctural analysis, culture wars, ideology, the Frankfurt School, American conservatism.

Summary for Lay Audience:

The “Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory,” or “Cultural Marxism,” is commonly known as a right-wing narrative that accuses a group of German Marxist theorists called the Frankfurt School of infiltrating the United States in the 1930s to undermine American culture and thus destroy Western Civilization. From New Right think tanks to conservative film-makers, various segments of the American Right use this idea of “Cultural Marxism” to lament the decline of traditional cultural norms and the rise of ‘political correctness,’ ‘wokeness,’ and ‘Critical Race Theory.’ Whereas most academic accounts describe the “Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory” as a narrative that remains substantially the same throughout all its subsequent or local adaptations, I adopt a strict contextualist approach to highlight the differences between specific articulations of “Cultural Marxism/s.” Building on the Italian Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci’s theory of intellectuals, I develop a method for analyzing the practices and conditions of particular intellectuals in certain organizational and institutional contexts. I use this method throughout the dissertation to contextualize the various articulations of “Cultural Marxism/s.” I point out that these articulations represent a series of ideological responses to the diffuse crises of post-1960s America. I argue that the intellectuals of different organizations and movements used “Cultural Marxism/s” to explain these crises, organize political identities, and promote their own proposals for social transformation. I examine the meanings and functions of “Cultural Marxism/s” in the specific contexts of three reactionary political forces in the United States: the Lyndon LaRouche movement, the Free Congress Foundation and the New Right, and the Tea Party Movement.

Acknowledgements

From September 2016 to June 2017, I belonged to a relatively informal Critical Theory meeting group in Portland, Oregon. When Donald Trump won the presidential election in 2016, we decided to dissect the nature of Trumpism and the alt-right in our future meetings. Those gatherings at the Lucky Labrador pub prompted me to research the history of fascism and the American Right more seriously. As I edit the final drafts of this dissertation, I can detect the faint echoes of our conversations in my arguments and analyses. Consequently, I think that the core members of this group deserve to be thanked first: Jan Mieszkowski, Chris O’Kane, James W. Russell, and Johannes Wankhammer.

The first thing that I ever wrote about Cultural Marxism was a seminar paper that I presented in Mireya Folch-Serra’s graduate class “Contemporary theories of Fascism and Counter-Fascism.” I want to thank Professor Folch-Serra for her rich and encouraging feedback on this initial paper. It was a wonderful and rewarding seminar.

I doubt that I would even be ready to write an Acknowledgements page for my doctoral dissertation without my supervisor Antonio Calcagno. I am so grateful for his patient and enduring belief in my work. He has taught me to trust my intuitions, to think and write in my own voice. I will never forget the generosity of his spirit or the sharpness of his insight. My cat Mulberry was always pleased to see him on Zoom.

I want to thank my second reader Michael Gardiner for his book recommendations and his references to the songs of Billy Bragg. He has a remarkable knack for identifying which concepts or arguments need to be fleshed out further and which theorists might help you to think through a problem in a different way. I am glad that I could rely on his guidance during key stages of the dissertation-writing process.

My dissertation would have been significantly worse if I hadn’t sought the advice of people who are much smarter than me. I must thank Ian Gardner, Andreas Huyssen, Martin Jay, Johannes von Moltke, and Moira Weigel for sharing their thoughts on Cultural Marxism over Zoom, Facetime, email, and in-person. I cherish my chats with Bruce Wilson and Sam Hoadley-Brill who encouraged to think about the development of Cultural Marxism in new ways. I need to thank Stephen Gennaro and Douglas Kellner for speaking with me about the New Left, FBI surveillance, and the old PL rumor that Marcuse was a CIA double-agent. And I am enormously grateful for Devin Daniels and Marah Nagelhout’s generous and perceptive feedback on Chapters Three and Four.

Sections of this dissertation are revised and expanded versions of my previous work on Cultural Marxism. I want to acknowledge the book and magazine editors that published some of my earlier writings on Cultural Marxism: Christine M. Battista and Melissa R. Sande, Jasper Bernes, Charlotte Slivka, Julia Foulkes and Mark Larrimore, Eviane Leidig, Anna Pivovarchuk, and Claire Potter. Thank you for letting me express my initial thoughts on Cultural Marxism and the American Right.

I once belonged to an institution that was known as the Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right, where I encountered and engaged with the work of many exceptional scholars. I am constantly returning to, and reflecting on, the research of my former colleagues and fellow antifascists, especially Beatriz Buarque, Justin Gilmore, Brian Hughes, Eviane Leidig, Greta Jasser, and Louie Dean Valencia. I am proud to call them my peers.

I am glad that I can hang out with my *Radical Thoughts Podcast* co-hosts Patrick Higgins and Donald Parkinson to record episodes on interesting (and sometimes not-so-interesting)

books. Our conversations nourished this dissertation in surprising ways. Additionally, I want to thank the hosts of the podcast *Contrarian Humanitarian*, Erin Edmiston and Mikey Pogoloff, for inviting me to talk about the history of Cultural Marxism.

I want to thank Chris Stroud at Bread & Roses Books for supplying me with my first copy of Antonio Gramsci's *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. You are undoubtedly the coolest bookseller in this city.

I should thank my friends in the NDP—Marie Rioux, Madeline Vrolyk, Suhaib Alazem, Terence Kernaghan, and many more—for getting me to leave my study and talk to strangers. You learn many strange and surprising things about the nature of politics when you are canvassing in a city as peculiar as London, Ontario. Thank you for the laughter, the hand warmers, and the yacht rock.

I must acknowledge the patience and love of my parents, John and Anne Woods, who have been supportive enough to let their youngest child pursue another graduate degree in a distant country. I promise that I will not be playing the role of the prodigal son for much longer.

I want to thank Vanessa for talking me through the early versions of this dissertation. I am still grateful for your discernment and honesty. We will always have Athens.

I moved to London, Ontario in 2017. Although I was anxious about moving to a new city and starting a new graduate program, I was lucky enough to be part of the best PhD cohort ever. The members of this legendary line-up include Chris Burke, Julian Evans, Jennifer Komoroski, Nick Wees, and Sangie Zaitsoff. I owe so much to each of you.

The Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism has been my intellectual home for the past five years, and I have shared this space with some truly wonderful and gifted people. I thank Anarchist Will for our long conversations about fascism and the far right. I thank my close friend Jeremy R. Smith for reminding me constantly that “it’s institutional(!)” until I finally understood what he meant. And I thank Alexander Harasymiw for his encouragement and support when I started to write more about right-wing politics and conspiracy theories. Special thanks to the following people for their friendship and feedback over the last five years: Nicholas Birmingham, Maxwell Hyett, Jacob Vangeest, Ben Maynard, Anna Mirzayan, Vikram Panchmatia, Annaliese Pope, Jeremy Arnott, Authentic Dylan, and David Guignon. And I need to thank Melanie Caldwell for everything she does to make sure that the Theory Centre does not fall apart.

The process of writing a dissertation is immensely overwhelming and stressful. I am grateful that I could always count on my cats Mulberry and Simba to cheer me up whenever I felt lost and confused.

I could have never completed this dissertation without the love and support of Natalie Treviño. If I listed all the best ideas in this dissertation, I can promise you that each of them were prompted by Natalie’s questions. She is a true intellectual companion, and I am overjoyed that I can share my life with her.

Contents

Abstract:	i
Keywords:	ii
Summary for Lay Audience	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Introduction.....	1
The Frankfurt School on Cultural Marxism.....	8
Antonio Gramsci on Cultural Marxisms	12
Chapter Outlines	15
A Note on Terminology	20
Chapter 1: Gramsci and Us Again	25
Intellectuals	35
Intellectuals in Crisis	54
Chapter 2: Origin Stories: The Terrain of the Conjunctural	69
Conjunctural Analysis	78
The Liberal Consensus and Normative America	88
The Young Radicals and the Mass Culture of Rebellion	99
The Cultural Turn of the Right	102
Cultural Crossfire: Culture Wars as Polemics	105
Chapter 3: Lyndon LaRouche: From the New Left to the New Dark Age	112
The Rise of a Pseudo-Leninist	123
Rockefeller Fascism: Zombies in America, Brainwashers in Frankfurt	147
Aristotle’s Secrets: Adorno, Marcuse, and the Rock-Drug-Sex Counterculture	157
The Authoritarian Personality and the New Dark Age	171
Chapter 4: Free Congress Foundation: A War for the Soul of America	184
The Elite Populists	189
The Long Histories of the New Rights	196
Free Congress Foundation	220
Weyrich and William in Washington	227
“Political Correctness: The Dirty Little Secret”	242
<i>Victoria</i>	253
That 2002 Conference: Cultural Marxism as Coded Antisemitism	269
Chapter 5: The Tea Party Movement: Red Smoke, Blue Donkey	275

The Tea Party Movement	278
Cultural Marxism: The Corruption of America	299
Agenda: Grinding America Down	310
<i>Righteous Indignation: Excuse Me While I Save the World!</i>	318
Concluding Remarks	331
Bibliography	340
C.V. Andrew Woods	364

Introduction

In 2003, Bill Berkowitz wrote an article entitled “‘Cultural Marxism’ Catching On” for the Southern Poverty Law Center’s magazine *The Intelligence Report*.¹ In this article, Berkowitz reveals that prominent American conservatives and antisemites are spreading a “conspiracy theory” about a group of German-Jewish Marxist thinkers called the “Frankfurt School,” who fled Hitler’s Germany in the 1930s to seek refuge in the United States. According to this theory, members of the Frankfurt School, such as Theodor Adorno, Erich Fromm, and Herbert Marcuse, invented and promoted the ideologies of multiculturalism, feminism, and political correctness to undermine American democracy and destroy Western Civilization. Berkowitz warns that this theory, which had been circulating through the communication channels of white supremacist organizations, was threatening to enter mainstream American political discourse. The historical significance of Berkowitz’s article lies in the fact that it was the first document to give a name to what has come to be known as the “Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory” (or “Cultural Marxism”).²

Over the past two decades, countless articles have appeared in major publications to alert the public about the spread of Cultural Marxism.³ Commentators note that

1. Bill Berkowitz, “‘Cultural Marxism’ Catching On,” *Intelligence Report*, August 13, 2003, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligencereport/2003/cultural-marxism-catching?page=0%2C0>.

2. I will attempt to distinguish between two kinds of Cultural Marxism/s in this dissertation. When I use Cultural Marxism/s without quotation marks, I am referring to the narratives that people spread. When I use quotation marks, I am referring to what these people mean when they describe something as “Cultural Marxism.”

3. Jason Wilson, “‘Cultural Marxism’: a uniting theory for rightwingers who love to play the victim,” *The Guardian*, January 19, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jan/19/cultural-marxism-a-uniting-theory-for-rightwingers-who-love-to-play-the-victim>; Scott Oliver, “Unwrapping the ‘Cultural Marxism’ Nonsense the Alt-Right Loves,” *Vice*, February 23, 2017, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/78mny/unwrapping-the-conspiracy-theory-that-drives-the-alt-right>; Jeet

conservatives and fascists in other countries, such as the Norwegian white supremacist terrorist Anders Behring Breivik and the former New Right Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro, have adopted this theory to demonize their opponents. Antifascist journalists and watchdog groups point out that this theory has inspired acts of Islamophobic and antisemitic terrorism, such as the mosque shootings in Christchurch, New Zealand and the Poway Synagogue shootings in Poway, California. Much of this reporting expresses shock that the same idea could take root in so many different political and national contexts. Indeed, one of the most significant characteristics of Cultural Marxism is the degree to which, as the journalist Jason Wilson observes, “the tale varies in the telling.”⁴ Consequently, I wonder whether we miss something when we use the name of the “Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory” to refer to all these different variations. To probe this issue further, we may need to ask what happens to these ideas and narratives when we categorize them as this or that conspiracy theory.

In his 2008 book *Conspiracy Panics: Political Rationality and Popular Culture*, the media theorist Jack Bratich investigates the discursive and institutional mechanisms through which certain ideas and narratives come to be labelled as “conspiracy theories.” Building on the work of Michel Foucault, Bratich argues that “conspiracy theories are

Heer, “Trump’s Racism and the Myth of ‘Cultural Marxism,’” *The New Republic*, August 15, 2017, <https://newrepublic.com/article/144317/trumps-racism-myth-cultural-marxism>; David Neiwert, “How the ‘cultural Marxism’ hoax began, and why it’s spreading into the mainstream,” *Daily Kos*, January 23, 2019, <https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2019/1/23/1828527/-How-the-cultural-Marxism-hoax-began-and-why-it-s-spreading-into-the-mainstream>; Samuel Moyn, “The Alt-Right’s Favorite Meme Is 100 Years Old,” *The New York Times*, November 13, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/13/opinion/cultural-marxism-anti-semitism.html>; Paul Rosenburg, “A user’s guide to ‘Cultural Marxism’: Anti-Semitic conspiracy theory, reloaded,” *Salon*, May 5, 2019, <https://www.salon.com/2019/05/05/a-users-guide-to-cultural-marxism-anti-semitic-conspiracy-theory-reloaded>.

4. Jason Wilson, “‘Cultural Marxism’: a uniting theory for rightwingers who love to play the victim.”

defined not merely by their strictly denotative inherent properties, but by their discursive position in relation to a ‘regime of truth.’”⁵ Foucault’s concept of a regime of truth refers to the ‘general politics’ of truth that operates in every society: “the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.”⁶ Regimes of truth regulate and reproduce the discourses, institutions, and apparatuses that are empowered to produce and distribute ‘true’ statements. Foucault clarifies that he is less interested in “the ensemble of truths which are to be discovered and accepted” and more concerned with “a battle about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays.”⁷ Likewise, Bratich focuses less on verifying or ‘debunking’ the facts of specific “conspiracy theories” and more on understanding the techniques that invest certain ideas with the delegitimizing status of a “conspiracy theory,” i.e. statements that do not obtain the status of ‘the true.’

Bratich coins the term “conspiracy panic discourse” to describe the assorted procedures that brand an idea as a “conspiracy theory.”⁸ Conspiracy panic discourse preserves the division between the production of legitimate knowledge and the fashioning of devious “conspiracy theories,” defines the boundaries of acceptable dissent, and guards

5. Jack Bratich, *Conspiracy Panics: Political Rationality and Popular Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 3.

6. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 131.

7. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 132.

8. Bratich, *Conspiracy Panics*, 15.

‘our’ rational consensus from a poisonous ‘them’ (the “conspiracy theorists”).⁹ The practitioners of conspiracy panic discourse tend to be trusted and legitimated intellectuals, such as trained journalists and university-affiliated academics, who occupy positions in the apparatuses of the regime of truth. Bratich contends that these contexts of conspiracy panic discourse are not detached from the “conspiracy theories” themselves. As he puts it, the “context is not separate from conspiracy theories; it is constitutive of them.”¹⁰ In other words, a ‘conspiracy theory’ does not exist as an object until conspiracy panic discourse captures and categorizes it.¹¹

Bratich’s provocation raises a considerable theoretical problem for those who plan to write histories about ideas that are known as “conspiracy theories.” If conspiracy panic discourse is what turns a set of ideas or narratives into a recognizable object (a conspiracy theory), then what precedes this moment of categorization? Is it possible to move beyond or behind conspiracy panic discourse to study the ideas themselves, to analyze the various meanings and expressions that were subsumed under the label of this or that conspiracy theory? One could say that the naming of a conspiracy theory—especially its naming *as* a conspiracy theory—homogenizes all the expressions of certain ideas into a

9. Ibid., 11-15. For more on the history of the stigmatization of conspiracy theories, consult the following texts: Mark Fenster, *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 3-74; Jodi Dean, “Declarations of Independence,” in *Cultural Studies and Political Theory*, ed. Jodi Dean (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 285-304; Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2006), 1-38; Michael Butter and Peter Knight, “The History of Conspiracy Theory Research: A Review and Commentary,” in *Conspiracy Theories and the People Who Believe in Them*, ed. Joseph Uscinski (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 33-46, and Katharina Thalmann, *The Stigmatization of Conspiracy Theory Since the 1950s: “A Plot to Make Us Look Foolish”* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 25-69.

10. Bratich, *Conspiracy Panics*, 19.

11. To phrase it differently, an idea or narrative becomes a ‘conspiracy theory’ when it is assigned its ‘discursive position’ in a regime of truth. In this sense, a ‘conspiracy theory’ is never defined primarily by its inherent structural properties.

unified object that appears to possess an inner essence. For instance, the notion of *the* “Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory” often presumes the stability of a core narrative that remains identical throughout all its subsequent or local adaptations and articulations.

Over the course of my research, it has become apparent that there is no such thing as *the* “Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory.” As the scholar John E. Richardson observes, Cultural Marxism seems to be a “discursive *will-o’-the-wisp*” whose “meaning shifts according to the rhetorical, political and contextual conditions of its use.”¹² There is no essence to *the* “Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory” that can be abstracted from any historical context. On the contrary, there are only Cultural Marxisms that must be studied within their different contexts. Consequently, this dissertation investigates the multiple articulations of these Cultural Marxisms in what Lawrence Grossberg would call their “radical contextuality.”¹³

In this dissertation, I examine how certain articulations of Cultural Marxisms represent ideological responses to a specific set of political problems, issues, and conflicts. Instead of recounting *the* history of *the* “Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory,” I analyze the ideas and narratives that have conventionally been gathered under the label of “Cultural Marxism” in their own historical contexts. Whereas conspiracy panic discourse diagnoses its “conspiracy theories” from an external standpoint, I aim to understand the meanings and functions of these Cultural Marxisms from within the contexts in which they were employed. Given the scope of this dissertation, I concentrate primarily on American

12. John E. Richardson, “‘Cultural Marxism’ and the British National Party: a transnational discourse,” in *Cultures of Post-War Fascism*, eds. Nigel Copsey and John E. Richardson (Croydon: Routledge, 2015), 222.

13. Lawrence Grossberg, “Cultural Studies in Search of a Method, or Looking for Conjunctural Analysis,” *new formations: a journal of culture/theory/politics*, Vol. 96-97 (2019), 48.

contexts (specifically, the Lyndon LaRouche movement, the Free Congress Foundation, and the Tea Party) to ensure that I can discuss these articulations of Cultural Marxisms in adequate detail.

I admit that I have not entirely escaped the orbit of conspiracy panic discourse. After all, one could say that my choice of examples is somewhat ‘pre-chosen’ by conspiracy panic discourse. In other words, I could choose these examples as relevant expressions of Cultural Marxisms only because they have already been catalogued as instances of *the* “Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory.” Of course, it would be naïve—perhaps even a little pompous—to suggest that I could have transparent or ‘unmediated’ access to the ‘natural’ meanings of these ideas.¹⁴ I acknowledge that I am writing this dissertation in 2022 and that a mass of scholarly and journalistic writing has already constituted my object of study for me. I see my dissertation as an initial contribution to a larger intellectual project of complicating and potentially undoing this constitutive work. I claim that the automatic reflexes of conspiracy panic discourse obscures important specificities and particularities in the different articulations of Cultural Marxisms that can only be identified through a closer contextual analysis. Acknowledging and addressing these differences may help us to better understand the new variations of these ideas that emerge in contemporary politics—the recent right-wing assault on so-called Critical Race Theory, for instance—and to develop more situated and effective political strategies for countering them.

14. One might even say that conspiracy panic discourse claims to possess unmediated access to the object of *the* “Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory” without realizing that it was precisely what constituted it as an object. It is possible that I am merely bringing our attention to the fact the conventional accounts of *the* “Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory” are already mediated by the implicit procedures and techniques of conspiracy panic discourse.

Despite their contextual variations, I concede that the multiple articulations of Cultural Marxism in the United States share some commonalities largely because they represent a series of congruent ideological responses to the historical conjunctures of post-1960s America. They tend to distort and inflate the role of the Frankfurt School as a historical agent. They express a reactionary impulse against new forces of political dissent and cultural difference (the New Left, feminism, Black liberation, and LGBTQIA+ struggles). These narratives often reflect a desire for a fixed and uniform culture, or what Henry Giroux calls “the profoundly ethnocentric fantasy of a common culture,” that conforms to a set of conservative beliefs.¹⁵ Furthermore, the vocal opponents of “Cultural Marxism” hope to eliminate the forces of ‘political correctness,’ ‘multiculturalism,’ and ‘wokeness’ from the public sphere either through legislative reform, lifestyle changes, or violence.

The political scientists David Paternotte and Mieke Verloo argue that these contemporary attacks on “Cultural Marxism” should “not be regarded simply as a form of backlash but also an attempt to build something new.”¹⁶ Paternotte and Verloo theorize that narratives of Cultural Marxism exercise a dual function of *diagnosis* and *prognosis*. These narratives identify a left-wing hegemony that dominates the major institutions of knowledge and cultural production, such as the universities, the media, and the arts. Furthermore, they claim that this situation necessitates the construction of alternative epistemic institutions, such as think tanks and digital media platforms, to contest and

15. Henry Giroux, *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope: Theory, Culture, and Schooling* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 268.

16. David Paternotte and Mieke Verloo, “De-democratization and the Politics of Knowledge: Unpacking the Cultural Marxism Narrative,” *Social Politics*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (Fall 2021), 569-570.

supplant the hegemony of “Cultural Marxism.” These narratives are not passive and neutral descriptions of social reality, but, rather, ideological tools that shape political identities, inform organizational strategies, and intimate societal alternatives. In this dissertation, I focus on how these tools—the narratives of Cultural Marxisms—are deployed in a variety of specific contexts. Before I introduce my own methodological approach to this topic, I want to acknowledge and address four significant critiques of Cultural Marxism by scholars who operate within the tradition of Frankfurt School critical theory. I will then explain why I have not chosen to draw on the thought of the Frankfurt School in this dissertation.

The Frankfurt School on Cultural Marxism

Many prominent scholars have worked to dissect Cultural Marxism. The most stimulating of these interventions base their critiques in the work of the Frankfurt School, especially their studies on authoritarianism and propaganda. For these scholars, returning to the texts of the Frankfurt School yields important insights about the political uses of Cultural Marxism.

In his 2020 essay collection *Splinters in Your Eye*, Martin Jay proposes an immanent critique of Cultural Marxism that “reads it against the grain, tries to understand its appeal from within and is sensitive to its critical impulses along with its ideological function.”¹⁷ Is it possible that belief in these paranoid narratives represents a distorted revolt against the ravages and displacements of neoliberal globalization? Is there something in the hypermodern dynamics of contemporary capitalism that turns all

17. Martin Jay, *Splinters in Your Eye: Frankfurt School Provocations* (Croydon: Verso, 2020), 160.

knowledge into information that can be rearranged and retold as a compelling myth about the ills of society? Jay feels that we should not pathologize or ridicule people who believe that the agitators of the radical right will provide cures for their anxieties. He writes that the psychological pathologization of potential supporters of fascism in Adorno et. al's 1950 study *The Authoritarian Personality* somewhat excludes the possibility of changing the minds of people who fall for the promises of the far-right.¹⁸ Inspired by the insights of Jürgen Habermas' *Knowledge and Human Interests*, he wonders whether "a willingness to empathize with their dilemmas and hear their grievances may well be a more constructive way to address the increasing polarization of our body politic."¹⁹

Andreas Huyssen's 2019 *n+I* article "Behemoth Rises Again" revisits the Frankfurt School's analyses of interwar fascism to reflect on Trumpism and the alt-right. Huyssen recognizes that the categories of the Frankfurt School are simultaneously relevant and obsolete. They may stir us to think about the resurgent right in new ways, yet we must be willing to rethink these categories to face new realities. Huyssen observes that "Cultural Marxism now occupies the discursive space Bolshevism once held as dominant enemy image in Nazi ideology."²⁰ The invention of a boogeyman serves as a rationalization for the alt-right's promotion of hate speech and white supremacy. Drawing on Adorno and Max Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and Leo Lowenthal and Nibert Guterman's *Prophets of Deceit*, Huyssen claims that the alt-right actually imitates their conception of

18. For a more substantial version of Jay's critique of *The Authoritarian Personality*, read Martin Jay, "The Authoritarian Personality and the Problematic Pathologization of Politics," *Polity*, Vol. 54, No. 1, (January 2022), 124-145.

19. Jay, *Splinters in Your Eye*, 171-172.

20. Andreas Huyssen, "Behemoth Rises Again," *n+I*, July 29, 2019, <https://www.nplusonemag.com/online-only/online-only/behemoth-rises-again/>.

the enemy. Although alt-right agitators claim that the Frankfurt School subverted the norms of American culture and politics, they are the ones who poison public discourse with their “alternative facts,” fake news, and offensive memes. Huysen also points out that the “older, top-down communication between the leader and the masses,” i.e. the mid-twentieth century context in which the Frankfurt School analyzed fascist agitation, “has been replaced by multidirectional communication and agency in the anonymity of chat networks.”²¹ Not only do prominent right-wing agitators (Andrew Breitbart, Patrick Buchanan, Richard Spencer) promote Cultural Marxism, but so do the casual users of Twitter, 4chan, and Reddit who produce memes and other online content to demonize the Frankfurt School.

In his 2019 keynote lecture “The Meme is the Message: Alt-Right/Neue Rechte and the Political Affordances of Social Media,” the scholar Johanne von Moltke argues that Cultural Marxism operates as a “gateway meme” to the disturbing online world of alt-right ideology.²² von Moltke suggests that Adorno’s 1967 speech *Aspects of the New Right-Wing Extremism* offers “analytical tools for thinking about the reasons for fascist revivals.”²³ Instead of trivializing the threat of revived fascism, von Moltke reflects that Adorno pushes us to “take the New Right seriously” as the “scar” of a democracy that fails to live up to its promises.²⁴ Just as Adorno classified the propaganda “tricks” of the right-wing extremists to reveal their implications, von Moltke dissects the rhetorical strategies of the alt-right to

21. Huysen, “Behemoth Rises Again.”

22. Johannes von Moltke, “The Meme is the Message: Alt-Right/Neue Rechte and the Political Affordances of Social Media,” (lecture, John F. Kennedy Institute at Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany, July 4, 2019), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7e7lSGlSWs>.

23. von Moltke, “The Meme is the Message.”

24. Ibid.

demonstrate that they use the meme of Cultural Marxism to seduce impressionable and alienated youth into absorbing the hateful ideologies of racism, misogyny, and antisemitism.²⁵ He suggests that Contrapoints, a popular leftist Youtuber who debunks right-wing narratives and talking points, exemplifies the kind of digital activism that might persuade young people to reject the alt-right.

In her talk at the 2020 conference on the seventieth anniversary of *The Authoritarian Personality* at Yale University, the media scholar Moira Weigel uses a digital materialist approach to analyze how the infrastructure of the Internet facilitates the circulation and transmission of Cultural Marxism. Weigel observes that the Internet has fractured the public sphere into a dizzying array of counterpublics. The realm of the digital promotes an intellectually shallow and affectively potent mode of interpretation called “hate-reading.”²⁶ The rhetorical gesture of “hate-reading” is hostile to forms of thought that prioritize critical reflection and dialectical subtlety. The fragmenting and stereotyping dynamics of online discourse lends itself to the circulation of simplified caricatures of the Frankfurt School’s work. Weigel recommends that we must rethink the implications of *The Authoritarian Personality* due to this shift from the anonymous masses of the culture industry to the customized users of algorithmic culture.²⁷ Understanding the nature of this shift might help us to study the contemporary spread of Cultural Marxism.

25. Theodor Adorno, *Aspects of the New Right-Wing Extremism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020), 39.

26. Moira Weigel, “Hating Theory: The Cultural Marxism Conspiracy and Right Cyberutopianism,” paper presented at *The Authoritarian Personality: Annual Conference of the Yale Program for the Study of Antisemitism*, Yale University, February 15, 2020.

27. Moira Weigel, “The Authoritarian Personality 2.0.,” *Polity*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (January 2022), 146-180

Each of these critiques represents a timely intervention into the public discourse about the alt-right and conspiracy theories that followed Donald Trump's presidential victory in 2016. They propose daring rethinkings of the Frankfurt School's theoretical insights to confront current sociopolitical crises. Nonetheless, they tend to accept and reproduce the framing of *the* "Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory" as an object with a relatively fixed essence. Furthermore, they do not delve too deeply into the histories of the various contexts from which the different articulations of Cultural Marxisms emerged. Of course, none of these critiques claim to be comprehensive or contextual histories of Cultural Marxism. Yet, it does suggest that the theorists of the Frankfurt School may not be the most appropriate guides for my own project. Consequently, I have chosen to ground my investigation in the work of a thinker who emphasized the need for a style of analysis that prioritizes the specific, the particular, and the contextual: Antonio Gramsci.

[Antonio Gramsci on Cultural Marxisms](#)

Antonio Gramsci is sometimes assigned a supporting role in Cultural Marxism narratives. He is blamed for allegedly inventing the strategy of the "Long March Through the Institutions" that inspired the Frankfurt School's rampage against Western culture. As the Gramsci scholar and translator Joseph A. Buttigieg writes, "some prominent conservatives in the U.S. have been propagating the notion that 'Gramscism' is very much alive today; in their eyes, Gramsci is the master theoretician and strategist of a resilient anti-capitalist, anti-democratic political current that has survived the communist debacle of 1989 and that, even now, represents an imminent threat to the political, social, and cultural *status quo*."²⁸

28. Joseph A. Buttigieg, "Antonio Santucci and Antonio Gramsci: An Open Dialogue," in *Antonio Gramsci*, ed. Lelio La Porta (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2010), 14.

Although Gramsci was a significant Marxist intellectual and leader of the Italian Communist Party, he exerted no influence on the work of the Frankfurt School. Yet, I contend that turning to Gramsci's work may help us to identify the practices and conditions that gave rise to the multiple articulations of Cultural Marxisms.

A central theme of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* is a sustained and innovative rethinking of the concept of the intellectual. Gramsci did not accept the standard notion of the intellectual as an autonomous being who maintained both a spiritual connection to the realm of ideas and a strange detachment from the structures and struggles of daily life. As he remarks in a letter to his sister-in-law Tatiana Schucht, Gramsci wanted to extend this concept beyond the limits of "the current notion that refers only to the preeminent intellectuals."²⁹ Instead of starting his investigation with an idealized conception of the intellectual, Gramsci wanted to study how specific intellectuals functioned in society. The sociologist Jerome Karabel would describe this reorientation as a shift from a *normative* framework, which "treats intellectuals not as they actually are, but as they should be," to an *analytical* one that identifies "the conditions and processes that shape the actual political consciousness and actions of different groups of intellectuals."³⁰

I build on Gramsci's rethinking of intellectuals to study the development and dissemination of Cultural Marxism narratives. Like Gramsci, I hold that ideas are not the unprompted inventions of isolated individuals. As Gramsci expresses it, "[i]deas and opinions are not spontaneously 'born' in each individual brain: they have had a centre of

29. Antonio Gramsci, *Letters from Prison: Volume II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 67.

30. Jerome Karabel, "Towards a Theory of Intellectuals and Politics," *Theory and Society*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (April 1996), 205-206.

formation, of irradiation, of dissemination, of persuasion—a group of men, or a single individual even, which has developed them and presented them in the political form of current reality.”³¹ We must investigate the nature of these centers to understand how and why they function as the contexts in which certain ideas and opinions are devised and propagated. How do these centers accommodate and encourage different practices of knowledge production? Do these centers exhibit any links to specific classes and political forces? What is the role of these centers in projects of societal transformation? How do the individuals who operate these centers function as intellectuals?

What is so valuable about Gramsci’s approach to intellectuals, especially for my dissertation, is his emphasis on specificity. He is less interested in ideas and intellectuals *in general*, and more focused on, as Kate Crehan points out, “the particular economic and political locations in which their practices of knowledge production are rooted, and out of which the questions they seek to answer arise.”³² Even when intellectuals claim to be ‘non-political’ or autonomous, they—to borrow another phrase from Crehan—are “never outside politics.”³³ Throughout this dissertation, I stress that we must examine how specific intellectuals function within these specific centers or contexts to reveal what is specific about the various narratives of Cultural Marxism.

31. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (New York: Lawrence & Wishart, 1980), 192-193.

32. Kate Crehan, *Gramsci’s Common Sense: Inequality and its Narratives* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), 193.

33. Crehan, *Gramsci’s Common Sense*, 192.

Chapter Outlines

In Chapter One, I outline my strategy for reading and using Gramsci's work. I follow the scholar Guido Liguori's recommendation to develop a firm philological exposition of Gramsci's concepts before adapting them to current sociopolitical realities. I propose a form of analysis that uses Gramsci's main categories to orient the contextualist study of history. Building on the work of Robert F. Carley, Kate Crehan, Michele Filippini, Liguori, Esteve Morera, and Anne Showstack Sassoon, I explore the main "pathways" of Gramsci's thought—the human, the organic, hegemonic apparatus, the State, crisis, historical bloc, ideology—through the central leitmotiv of *intellectuals*.

I argue that Gramsci conceives of intellectuals as ensembles of relations, practices, and functions. Intellectuals exhibit varying degrees of 'embeddedness' within a matrix of relations to social classes (or class fractions), political forces, and state institutions. The practices of intellectuals—the varied activities of knowledge production—display what Gramsci calls a higher or lower "quantity of qualitative elements" (homogeneity, logicity, coherence) that ranges from inventing the most advanced and sophisticated philosophies to administering or disseminating pre-existing ideas and narratives.³⁴ The intellectual's function, which Gramsci describes as "organizational and connective," varies according to the strength of their capacity to organize and unify social, political, and institutional forces into a historical bloc (as well as their capacity to impose an ideological direction on this bloc).³⁵ I demonstrate that intellectuals occupy positions in a variety of civil and state apparatuses to maintain the social hegemony of the ruling class and adapt the wider

34. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 347.

35. *Ibid.*, 12.

population to the needs of productive development. Drawing on Gramsci's dynamic crisis-theory, I show that periods of intensified disequilibrium present openings for the intellectuals of different class fractions or political forces to propose a transformation and redirection of the historical bloc. I suggest that certain American intellectuals developed cultural polemics of Cultural Marxism to explain the intertwined economic, political and ideological crises of the United States from the early 1970s onwards and to promote their proposals for societal change.

In Chapter Two, I tackle some misconceptions about the origins of Cultural Marxism and contextualize the historical period (the mid- to late-twentieth century United States) in which these narratives emerged and developed. In his 2010 column "Dialectic of Counter-Enlightenment: The Frankfurt School as Scapegoat of the Lunatic Fringe," the intellectual historian Martin Jay traces the origin of the "Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory" to a 1992 article in *Fidelio*, a publication that was associated with the political cult leader Lyndon LaRouche. Over the past decade, several academics and commentators have struggled to explain why this theory originated in the early 1990s. Many of them (Tanner Mirrlees, Ellen Engelstad and Mimir Kristjansson, Samuel Moyn, and others) speculate that American conservatives decided to revive and rebrand the Nazi trope of "Cultural Bolshevism" at the end of the Cold War.

Contrary to these accounts, I use the method of conjunctural analysis to trace the emergence of the political forces that would deploy these narratives of Cultural Marxism. I suggest that these forces developed during the slow crises of what the historian Godfrey Hodgson calls the *liberal consensus*. I argue that this crisis shaped the terrain of the conjunctural—the overlapping sociopolitical and ideological spheres—on which an ever-

shifting struggle between various political and cultural forces took place. I borrow Andrew Hartman’s fruitful notion of *normative America* to describe the social and cultural practices that started to become destabilized during this crisis. I set firm chronological boundaries, from the late 1960s to the early twenty-first century, for this conjunctural analysis. Given the scope of this dissertation, I concentrate mainly on the organic changes and conjunctural shifts that informed the development of Cultural Marxism narratives. I stress that various organizations developed the notion of “Cultural Marxism” in their “ideological, religious, philosophical, political and juridical polemics” to struggle for hegemony on this terrain.³⁶

In Chapter Three, I investigate the function of Cultural Marxism/s in what Gramsci would call the “arbitrary ideology” of the Lyndon LaRouche movement. According to Gramsci, arbitrary ideologies issue from the “formally constitutive will of one personality or of a group that is driven to propose it by its own fanatical philosophical and religious convictions.”³⁷ The central element of this LaRouchean arbitrary ideology is the notion of an elite. Broadly speaking, LaRouche and his followers believed that they constituted an intellectual elite that could save humanity from an oligarchical conspiracy—a counter-elite that included the Frankfurt School. Drawing on the research of Kevin Coogan, Dennis King and Molly Kronberg, I demonstrate that this sense of elitism—a mood of superiority and separateness—is wrapped up in the social and organizational history of the LaRouche movement. I argue that this arbitrary ideology captured a lived sense of antagonism between the LaRouchean elite and what they saw as the oligarchical counter-elite, between reason and mythology, and between civilization and barbarism.

36. *Ibid.*, 178.

37. Antonio Gramsci, *Subaltern Social Groups: A Critical Edition of Prison Notebook 25* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021), 86.

Every LaRouchean narrative about the thinkers of the Frankfurt School portrays them as agents of an oligarchical conspiracy who use the power of mythology to degrade and subjugate humanity and bring about a New Dark Age. As I analyze these narratives, I pay special attention to the claims that Marcuse “brainwashed” New Left leaders, that Adorno masterminded the rock-drug-sex counterculture, and that Horkheimer invented the concept of the authoritarian personality to destroy Judeo-Christian culture. I contend that these theories about the Frankfurt School produced an image of “the enemy” against which the LaRouche movement could continually define themselves as an intellectual elite. Finally, I borrow Michael Barkun’s fruitful notion of “bridging mechanisms” to argue that Minnicino’s 1992 *Fidelio* essay succeeded in communicating a LaRouchean narrative of Cultural Marxism to other political forces, because it contributed to the American New Right’s attacks on “political correctness.”³⁸

In Chapter Four, I investigate how Paul Weyrich and William S. Lind of the Free Congress Foundation (FCF) reworked LaRouchean narratives about the Frankfurt School into an easily-digestible and marketable polemic about the rise of political correctness, the disintegration of traditional American culture, and the waning of the conservative movement. The FCF (under the initial name of the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress) was established as a think tank in the 1970s as part of the ascendant New Right, a conservative movement that sought to reverse the social and legislative achievements of the 1960s. I explain that the New Right constructed a material apparatus of institutions (think tanks, foundations, political action committees) and political technologies (direct-mail campaigning and single-issue campaigns) to propagate a new reactionary ideology of *elite*

38. Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy*, 181.

populism. I demonstrate that this infrastructure generated a type of intellectual, which I provisionally call *the New Right think tank intellectual*, who could produce and promote conservative ideas, identities, and ideologies for an increasingly commercialized marketplace of ideas.

I contend that FCF's polemics against Cultural Marxism and Political Correctness contributed to what Valerie Scatamburlo calls "a much broader right-wing counterrevolution designed to restore conservatism to higher education and other spheres."³⁹ I investigate a variety of sources, such as Weyrich's 1999 "Letter to Conservatives" and the FCF's 1999 documentary "Political Correctness: The Dirty Little Secret," to examine how they try to incriminate the Frankfurt School as the conspiratorial culprits of political correctness, and how they use this framework to promote their own project of "cultural conservatism."

In Chapter Five, I describe how the pre-existing narratives of Cultural Marxism resonated with what Gramsci would call the *senso comune* of the Tea Party Movement. *Senso comune* denotes a worldview that, "even in the brain of one individual, is fragmentary, incoherent, and inconsequential, in conformity with the social and cultural position of those masses whose philosophy it is."⁴⁰ Drawing on the research of Kate Crehan, Lisa Disch, and Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, I trace the efforts of right-wing journalists and intellectuals to reshape the jumbled *senso comune* of the white American middle class into the contradictory ideology of the Tea Party. Many Tea Partiers saw Barack Obama's tax and healthcare reforms as precursors to a total socialistic takeover of the United States. Various branches of the Tea Party movement—patriot groups, Christian fundamentalists,

39. Valerie Scatamburlo, *Soldiers of Misfortune: The New Right's Culture War and the Politics of Political Correctness* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1998), 13.

40. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 419.

conservative media entrepreneurs—cited and reconfigured existing narratives of Cultural Marxism to assert that Obama was trying to “turn America into a Frankfurt School dystopia.”⁴¹ I argue that these anti-Obama twists on Cultural Marxism helped to form a political identity that framed Tea Partiers as a historical agent that might restore the American republic.

I examine three texts—James Jaegar’s 2010 *Cultural Marxism: The Corruption of America*, Curtis Bowers’ 2010 *Agenda: Grinding America Down*, Andrew Breitbart’s 2011 autobiography *Righteous Indignation: Please Excuse Me While I Save the World!*—and analyze how they repackage the myth of Cultural Marxism to appeal to Tea Partiers. Building on the insights of Ute Caumanns and Andreas Önnerrfors, Jodi Dean, and Bjørn Sørenssen, I explain that Jaegar and Bowers use specific visual and rhetorical strategies to persuade their viewers that the Frankfurt School orchestrated the social and culture decline of the United States. I adopt Anthony Nadler’s compelling notion of “countercultural conservatism” to analyze Breitbart’s claims that the Frankfurt School constructed a vast media apparatus (what he calls the “Democrat-Media Complex”) to suppress free speech and demonize American conservatives. Each of these narratives tell the Tea Partiers to distrust the established kinds of broadcasting and journalism, and encourage them to support emerging forms of alternative conservative media.

A Note on Terminology

I have decided not to use the term “conspiracy theorist” to describe the people that I discuss in this dissertation. Not only is “conspiracy theorist” a poorly-defined concept, but

41. Andrew Breitbart, *Righteous Indignation: Excuse Me While I Save the World!* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2011), 139.

it is also incompatible with a Gramscian approach to intellectuals. I should clarify these points before I continue the dissertation.

In 2018, Joseph E. Uscinski edited a substantial anthology entitled *Conspiracy Theories and the People Who Believe Them* that brought together scholars from multiple disciplines to share their research on conspiracy theories. In one of his brief editorial asides, Uscinski lists definitions for the keywords of conspiracy theory research: *conspiracy*, *conspiracy theory*, *conspiracy belief*, etc. Yet, he struggles to settle on an adequate and stable definition of *conspiracy theorist*. He confesses that the term “has never been well defined,” because scholars use it to denote a whole range of characters.⁴² He remarks that, as most people believe in a conspiracy theory or two, “the term could apply to everyone, but this would render the term meaningless.”⁴³ Or *conspiracy theorist* could refer to “people who believe in a specific conspiracy theory, or to people who believe in many conspiracy theories.”⁴⁴ Or “professionals who spread conspiracy theories for a living, like Alex Jones, or amateurs who improve upon particular theories.”⁴⁵ Or “a person with a high level of conspiracy thinking.”⁴⁶ Uscinski’s succession of ‘or’s suggests that each of these definitions are mutually exclusive. Arguably, this absence of a unified definition (or this excess of partial definitions) results from the multidisciplinary nature of conspiracy theory research. Whereas social psychologists tend to be interested in test subjects who

42. Joseph E. Uscinski, “Section I: What is a Conspiracy Theory?,” in *Conspiracy Theories and the People Who Believe Them*, ed. Joseph E. Uscinski (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019). 51.

43. Uscinski, “Section I,” 51.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.

exhibit conspiracy ideation, historians prefer to concentrate on those professionals who have turned conspiracy theorizing into a career. In the end, Uscinski resolves this multidisciplinary muddle by advising contributors either to avoid the term altogether or to define exactly what they mean when they use it. This is a pragmatic editorial remedy that seeks to project a sense of scholarly consensus for the purposes of an academic publication. Yet, this choice does not solve the problem of this unsettling indefinability that lies at the heart of conspiracy theory research. Why does the meaning of this term remain simultaneously so obvious yet so elusive?

The classic disavowal—“I’m not a conspiracy theorist, but...”—suggests that most people would rather not be associated with this term. As the sociologists Ginna Husting and Martin Orr argue, the act of calling someone a conspiracy theorist operates as “a transpersonal strategy of exclusion.”⁴⁷ When you label someone as a conspiracy theorist, you undermine and devalue their claims as well as their competence to make such claims. This is a strategy that preserves a stable political consensus that sets “the borders of legitimate versus risible statements, and intellectually competent actors versus paranoiacs.”⁴⁸ Husting and Orr point out that not only does this strategy discredit the claims and competencies of “paranoiacs,” but it also protects “certain decisions and people from questions in arenas of political, cultural, and scholarly knowledge construction.”⁴⁹ Although the term “conspiracy theorist” is not always precisely defined, it often performs a

47. Ginna Husting and Martin Orr, “Dangerous Machinery: ‘Conspiracy Theorist’ as a Transpersonal Strategy of Exclusion,” *Symbolic Interaction*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Spring 2007), 127.

48. Husting and Orr, “Dangerous Machinery,” 141.

49. *Ibid.*, 130.

powerful delegitimizing function. Consequently, this strategy is a key procedure of conspiracy panic discourse.

A certain group of people possess the authority to deploy this “conspiracy theorist” label effectively. Husting and Orr claim that those who can banish the “conspiracy theorists” from public discourse are trusted and legitimated intellectuals, such as trained journalists and university-affiliated academics. Whenever these figures speak or write about “conspiracy theorists,” they portray them as the discursive “antithesis of ‘the intellectual.’”⁵⁰ Whereas the intellectual practices rational thought, sober discussion, and diligent research, the conspiracy theorist comes across as a scatterbrained maverick whose conspiratorial aspersions lack rigor and credibility. In fact, it is almost impossible to describe the conspiracy theorist without simultaneously evoking this normative image of the intellectual.

Essentially, the notion of the “conspiracy theorist” is a relational concept that remains tied to a normative conception of the intellectual. Most definitions of the conspiracy theorist are based less on *what they are or what they actually do*, and more on *what they are not or what they do not do*. I claim that it is impossible to divorce the term “conspiracy theorist” from this normative framework or repurpose it for an analytical approach to intellectuals. Instead of branding the proponents of Cultural Marxism as conspiracy theorists, I aim to theorize what is specific about their form of intellectual practice. I hold that this attempt to move away from the reflexes of conspiracy panic discourses may offer new insights into how to study those ideas that we call “conspiracy theories” and those people that we call “conspiracy theorists.”

50. Ibid., 141.

Chapter 1: Gramsci and Us Again

The title of this chapter alludes to Stuart Hall's well-known 1987 essay "Gramsci and Us," which draws on Gramsci's ideas to analyze the culture and politics of Thatcherism. Hall clarifies that his essay is not "a comprehensive exposition of the ideas of Antonio Gramsci, nor a systematic account of the political situation in Britain today," but, rather, "an attempt to 'think aloud' about some of the perplexing dilemmas facing the left, in the light of – from the perspective of – Gramsci's work."⁵¹ What has always fascinated me about this encounter with Gramsci is Hall's refusal to "pluck up this 'Sardinian' from his specific and unique political formation, beam him down at the end of the twentieth century, and ask him to solve our problems for us."⁵² According to Hall, Gramsci is a thinker who urges us to think carefully and concretely about what is specific or unique about our own historical conjunctures and how we can develop strategies to overcome our political troubles. Although this essay employs such classic Gramscian terms as "hegemony" and "historical bloc" somewhat loosely, Hall remains faithful to Gramsci's insistence on paying "attention to difference . . . to the specificity of a historical conjuncture."⁵³ Instead of advancing a purely academic account of Gramsci's theory, Hall's essay demonstrates what it might mean to think about contemporary political conflicts in "a Gramscian way."⁵⁴

Yet, the invitation to think in a 'Gramscian way' demands some reflection on the very meaning of the term 'Gramscian.' In his 2008 article "The Uses and Abuses of Gramsci," Alastair Davidson recalls a speech that the scholar Guido Liguori delivered at a

51. Stuart Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal* (London: Verso, 1988), 161.

52. Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal*, 161.

53. *Ibid.*, 162-163.

54. *Ibid.*, 161.

meeting of the International Gramsci Society of the Asia-Pacific. Liguori acknowledges that some of the most influential and inventive uses of Gramscian concepts outside of Italy have occurred in the field of cultural studies. He also points out that, since the 1990s and 2000s, numerous Italian scholars have been developing a “close ‘philological’ reading of Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks* to establish with precision his use of each of the terms that are now common discourse . . . : hegemony, intellectuals, common sense, and so on.”⁵⁵ Instead of arguing that these approaches are irreconcilable, Liguori decides that “both areas of research could learn from the other.”⁵⁶ He counsels the philologists to appreciate that Gramsci’s work will often serve as “the starting point for further amplification and development in its application to new historical realities.”⁵⁷ Likewise, he advises the “applied Gramscians” to accept “some limit to creative extension of [Gramsci’s] work by reference to what he really wrote about such matters as hegemony.”⁵⁸ Ultimately, Liguori outlines a style of Gramscian analysis that reconciles the philological rendering of Gramsci’s ideas with a productive application of these concepts to sociopolitical phenomena.

Those who want to develop this kind of Gramscian analysis must first reckon with complicated legacy of Gramsci’s work. After all, the very title of the *Prison Notebooks* illustrates that Gramsci’s most famous and cited text was composed under unfavourable conditions. When Gramsci was put on trial with other Italian communist leaders in June

55. Alastair Davidson, “The Uses and Abuses of Gramsci,” *Thesis Eleven*, Vol. 95, No. 1 (November 2008), 68.

56. Davidson, “The Uses and Abuses of Gramsci,” 668.

57. *Ibid.*

58. *Ibid.*

1928, the Fascist prosecutor told the court that “we must prevent this brain from working for twenty years.” During the first few months of his imprisonment in Turi, Gramsci struggled to obtain permission to write and study in his prison cell. As soon as he was granted this permission in January 1929, he set out a plan to read systematically and prepare notes on a list of certain topics. And, on February 8, 1929, Gramsci started to write what would come to be known as his *Prison Notebooks*. As the scholar Roberto Dainotto points out, we must acknowledge the conditions and limitations that shaped the composition and reception of this text:

Because of incarceration, censorship, bad health, and premature death, Gramsci was unable to bring to publishable order the over two thousand presumably preparatory notes he had written in jail. Instead, he left posterity an unwieldy mass of thirty-three notebooks filled with over two thousand annotations, fragments, aphorisms, reflections, allusions, translations, and bibliographic references that could be coaxed into saying, well beyond what they actually did say, a great number of things, in a number of worldly contexts, and for a number of goals.⁵⁹

In his important study *Gramsci Contested: Interpretations, Debates, and Polemics, 1922-2012*, Liguori stresses that “the myriad of accumulating and overlapping interpretations and reinterpretations that have been produced over the decades are . . . difficult to decipher, containing their own theoretical presuppositions and political motivations, [and] thus provid[e] their own additional obstacles rather than helping one in approaching the author himself.”⁶⁰ The *Bibliografia Gramsciana* lists over 15,000 publications that have translated, compiled, or explicated Gramsci’s writings. Given the scope and purpose of this dissertation, I will not review every significant interpretation and instrumentalization of

59. Roberto Dainotto, “Introduction,” in *Gramsci in the World*, ed. by Roberto Dainotto and Fredric Jameson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 1.

60. Guido Liguori, *Gramsci Contested: Interpretations, Debates, and Polemics, 1922-2012* (Leiden: Brill, 2022), xii.

Gramsci's works.⁶¹ Yet, I will briefly discuss Norberto Bobbio's influential reading of Gramsci that perpetuates a misunderstanding about the meaning of ideology in the *Prison Notebooks*.

At the 1967 International Symposium of Gramscian Studies, the Italian political philosopher Norberto Bobbio presented an influential paper entitled "Gramsci and the conception of civil society." In this paper, Bobbio contends that Gramsci inverts the core premise of Marxism. Whereas Marx (or Bobbio's mental image of Marx) held that the economic base of a society wholly determines the ideological forms that circulate in the superstructures of civil society, Gramsci treated ideologies "as forces capable of creating a new history and of collaborating in the formation of a new power, rather than to justify a power which has already been established."⁶² In other words, Bobbio argues that Gramsci flips the relationship between the base and the superstructure in Marxist theory to turn

61. The most well-known 'political' use of Gramsci's work comes from his longtime collaborator and leader of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) Palmiro Togliatti, who was chosen by the Comintern to manage Gramsci's literary estate. In 1944—45, Togliatti used the unpublished *Prison Notebooks* to justify the PCI's reformist postwar strategy (known as the "Salerno Turn"). At the end of World War Two, the early signs of the Cold War and the military presence of the U.S. army in Italy convinced many PCI militants that it would be unwise to engage in open armed struggle to seize control of political and economic power. The Salerno Turn saw the PCI abandon its revolutionary ambitions and transform itself into a social-democratic parliamentary force that could command "a large coalition of national unity [including] all the anti-fascist forces in Italy, left to center." Togliatti often invoked Gramsci's name to defend this strategic reorientation. He declared, as he stood beside Gramsci's ashes at the Cimitero Acattolico in Rome on April 27, 1945, that the party was obliged to realize Gramsci's vision of "the unity of all democratic, antifascist, and progressive forces." Togliatti's interpretation and instrumentalization of the *Prison Notebooks* delivered an image of Gramsci as a theorist of democratic alliance that legitimated the PCI's strategy of a parliamentary Italian road to socialism.

62. Norberto Bobbio, "Gramsci and the conception of civil society," in *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*, ed. Chantal Mouffe (Whitstable: Routledge, 1979), 36. Gramsci was neither an economic nor ideological determinist. Although he does not fit the stereotypical and mechanical conception of Marxism as the claim that the economy is the only determining force in history, he does not "invert" this economicist Marxism to claim that social institutions and conditions can be transformed through ideology alone. As I will demonstrate later in this chapter, Gramsci theorizes that the relationship between material forces and ideology is reciprocal, rather than linear or mechanical. Furthermore, Gramsci felt that the distinction between the state and civil society, as well as the one between base and superstructure, was a purely methodological one, not an organic fact of social reality.

ideology into the primary and determining element in history. What emerges from Bobbio's interpretation of the *Prison Notebooks* is a kind of culturalist or liberal Gramsci who sees civil society—the superstructural realm of competing discourses and ideologies—as the primary site of historical transformation. Although this conclusion does not faithfully convey the nature of Gramsci's dialectical understanding of civil society, Dainotto notes that, when the “*Notebooks* began circulating in the world, it was often through the filter of Bobbio's interpretation.”⁶³ For instance, one can detect the lingering influence of Bobbio's culturalist thesis in Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau's post-Marxist ‘discursive’ Gramscianism.

There is often a danger of conflating Gramsci's actual words with the various ‘Gramscis’ that stem from certain readings and uses of his work. Yet, Dainotto wonders whether it might be impossible to “affirm some kind of ‘purist’ version of Gramsci” that resists the more obviously political instrumentalizations of the *Prison Notebooks*.⁶⁴ He argues that philology cannot be separated from politics. Whenever one reads editions of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, “the layout, the commentary, the annotation and paratexts, the prefaces, postfaces, and critical assessments are all a matter of political choices, as they are the different contexts in which these texts are to acquire meaning.”⁶⁵ Although I agree with Dainotto's basic claim that readings of Gramsci are always somewhat ‘mediated’ and political, this fact does not necessarily preclude the possibility of engaging with Gramscian concepts in a way that does not overly distort or misrepresent them. Admittedly, there is

63. Dainotto, “Introduction,” 8.

64. *Ibid.*, 14.

65. *Ibid.*, 13.

something about the structure of the *Prison Notebooks*—as well as the way that this text has been translated and anthologized in English-language editions—that often lends itself to conceptual muddling. In fact, what is often so difficult about reading Gramsci is the interpretative task of identifying exactly what he means when he uses certain terms.

The literary critic Fredric Jameson contends that the enduring relevance of the *Prison Notebooks* lies in “the ambiguity of Gramsci’s analyses.”⁶⁶ Jameson notes that Gramsci substituted standard Marxist terms for inventive euphemisms (“philosophy of praxis” = Marxism, and “social group” = class) to trick the fascist censors who monitored his prison writings. Whereas interpreters of the *Prison Notebooks* often retranslate this secret code back into familiar terminology, Jameson wonders whether the constraints of prison life “might have led Gramsci himself, in the course of seeking alternative phrasing, into wholly new paths and problems, if not, indeed, solutions altogether new and distinctive.”⁶⁷ For Jameson, this ambiguity is precisely why activists and scholars return to the *Prison Notebooks* to think through contemporary crises and concerns. Only when we refrain from prematurely settling the meaning of Gramsci’s terms, Jameson insists, can we use his writings to understand our current conjuncture. Jameson might be right to point out that the openness of the *Prison Notebooks* is what initially attracts people to Gramsci’s thought, yet it is problematic to overemphasize this sense of ambiguity. As Liguori reminds us, there are limits to this creative extension. The philological work on the *Prison*

66. Fredric Jameson, “Preface: Gramsci in the World,” in *Gramsci in the World*, ed. Roberto Dainotto and Fredric Jameson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), xii.

67. Jameson, “Preface: Gramsci in the World,” xi.

Notebooks demonstrates that many of Gramsci's key ideas possess relatively unambiguous meanings within an identifiable "family of concepts."⁶⁸

Of course, Gramsci did not abstractly 'apply' his concepts to historical life. As he suggests in Notebook 25, the theorist's task is "to 'translate' the elements of historical life into theoretical language—but not vice versa, where reality is made to conform to an abstract scheme."⁶⁹ Joseph Buttigieg, the prominent Gramscian scholar and translator of the *Prison Notebooks*, offers a rich description of how Gramsci approached this task:

Gramsci did not set out to explain historical reality armed with some full-fledged concept, such as hegemony; rather, he examined the minutiae of concrete social, economic, cultural and political relations as they are lived by individuals in their specific historical circumstances and, gradually, he acquired an increasingly complex understanding of how hegemony operates in many diverse ways and under many aspects within the capillaries of society.⁷⁰

The *Prison Notebooks* reveal the importance of examining phenomena in their particularity, specificity, and multiplicity. Gramsci's observations serve as starting-points for broader considerations about the formation of intellectuals, the dialectical relationship between state and civil society, and the organization of politics. He sensed that it was necessary to start from the "immediate, direct, and vivid impression"—the details of concrete activity and real historical circumstances—to illuminate larger cultural, political, and social patterns.⁷¹

68. Guido Liguori, *Gramsci's Pathways* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015), 80.

69. Gramsci, *Subaltern Social Groups*, 36.

70. Buttigieg, "Antonio Santucci and Antonio Gramsci, 17.

71. Antonio Gramsci, *Letters from Prison: Volume I* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994),

In a recent essay, Michael Denning reflects on how Gramsci's oeuvre can inform historical research. He remarks that "what is vital is less his vocabulary—integral state and historical bloc, hegemony and common sense—than his starting points—'a study might be made . . . it must first be shown, it is necessary to study'—his, to use a favorite phrase, 'methodological criteria.'" ⁷² Denning's approach resists the tendency to reduce Gramsci's work to an 'all-you-can-cite' buffet of trendy jargon. Yet, I am not sure whether one can isolate Gramsci's method from his vocabulary so easily. Just as we should not inflate the *Prison Notebooks* into an infallible doctrine of 'Gramscianism,' we must not dismiss Gramsci's conceptual terminology as nothing more than a stash of idiosyncratic (or 'ambiguous') word choices. If you strip Gramsci's texts of their rich and suggestive array of 'expanded' or 'extended' concepts, you are left with a series of reminders to study the specific and the concrete. ⁷³ It seems that Denning would rather beatify Gramsci into the Saint of Contextualism than reckon with the fact that his terminology is a necessary component of his methodological criteria. For instance, Gramsci's concepts of the *conjuncture* and the *organic* help us to analyze concrete forms of politico-intellectual practice. ⁷⁴ Even if they can be misunderstood and misused, Gramsci's terms open areas of investigation that might otherwise be ignored. Of course, Gramsci's vocabulary is not some unerring theoretical code that one can use to decipher the hidden secrets of the capitalist system. After all, this is the thinker who derides those who "think that they can have the whole of history and all political and philosophical wisdom in their pockets at

72. Michael Denning, "Why No Gramsci in the United States?," in *Gramsci in the World*, ed. Roberto Dainotto and Fredric Jameson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 164.

73. Primarily, Gramsci expanded and extended the concepts of the State and the intellectuals.

74. I examine the distinction between the *organic* and the *conjunctural* more thoroughly in Chapter Two.

little cost and no trouble, concentrated into a few short formulae.”⁷⁵ Rather, I think that a fruitful application of Gramsci’s method requires a deeper engagement with what Liguori describes as the “pathways” of his thinking: “the main concepts, categories and sources of inspiration that appear in Gramsci’s work.”⁷⁶ The task of mapping these pathways is a necessary prelude to any serious attempt to think about contemporary sociopolitical events and processes in a Gramscian way.

In the rest of this chapter, I will explore these pathways through a central theme of Gramsci’s work: intellectuals. The question of intellectuals possessed an urgent theoretical and strategic importance for Gramsci. He was one of the editors of *L’Ordine Nuovo*, a socialist journal established in 1919 that enjoyed popularity among workers during the Turin factory occupations. As Gramsci recalls, “the workers loved *L’Ordine Nuovo* . . . because the articles . . . were not cold, intellectual artefacts, but something that sprang from our discussions with the best of the workers; they built on the actual feelings, desires, and passions of the Turin working class.”⁷⁷ The experience of *L’Ordine Nuovo* convinced Gramsci that communist intellectuals needed to establish mutually educative relationships with workers to organize the working classes into a revolutionary party. In the draft of his pre-prison essay “Some Aspects of the Southern Question,” Gramsci observes that rural intellectuals—clergy, administrators, officers—performed a mediating function between

75. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 164. This sentence is an allusion to Fredrick Engels’ famous 1890 letter to Joseph Bloch, where Engels clarifies that the “production and reproduction in real life” is “ultimately” (not ‘only’) the “determining element in history.” Engels criticizes “Marxists” who believe that the economic is the *only* determining element: “Unfortunately, however, it happens only too often that people think they have fully understood a theory and can apply it without more ado from the moment they have mastered its main principles, and those even not always correctly.”

76. Liguori, *Gramsci’s Pathways*, ix.

77. Antonio Gramsci, *Pre-Prison Writings* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 181

the big landowners and peasants in Southern Italy to preserve the status quo of the agrarian bloc.⁷⁸ He theorized that an alliance between the proletariat and the Southern peasant could be forged only if socialist intellectuals dissolved the ideological cement that held together the agrarian bloc and attracted existing Southern intellectuals to the revolutionary cause. According to Gramsci, intellectuals possessed the power to split dominant blocs and organize the members of different classes into a new political force. The organizational function of the intellectual remains key to Gramsci's theorizations.

In this chapter, I follow the pathways that lead to and from the concept of the intellectual in Gramsci's work (the human, the organic, hegemonic apparatus, the State, crisis, historical bloc, ideology). I set the boundaries of creative extension and application: the conceptual and methodological guidelines that frame my Gramscian analysis of Cultural Marxism. As I mentioned in the introduction, I am less interested in the 'idea' of Cultural Marxism and more concerned with the centers of formation and dissemination in which these ideas were produced and propagated, i.e. the conditions and contexts that shaped the different expressions of Cultural Marxism. Of course, these material circumstances do not wholly and unilaterally determine the appearance of ideas. There is always an active reciprocity between the ideas of intellectuals and the contexts they inhabit. Gramsci's concept of intellectuals illuminates the various social, political, and institutional forces that envelop the production of ideas, ideologies, and narratives. Once I clarify the possibilities and limits of this concept, I can use it to understand how the ideas of Cultural Marxism/s became so intellectually convincing and affectively compelling in a

78. Gramsci, *Pre-Prison Writings*, 327-328.

series of contexts, such as the LaRouche movement and the post-New Left, the Free Congress Foundation and the New Right, and the Tea Party movement.

Intellectuals

We must start this exposition of Gramsci's concept of intellectuals by examining his conception of the human, which is indebted to Karl Marx's famous 1845 text *Theses on Feuerbach*. In this text, Marx criticizes Feuerbach for abstracting a human nature from the real historical process. Whereas Feuerbach presupposes an "abstract—*isolated*—human individual" with an unchanging essence, Marx argues that the human is an "ensemble of social relations."⁷⁹ Feuerbach seeks to turn the human into an object for contemplation; Marx insists that the human is a site of "sensuous activity" and "practice."⁸⁰ There is no abstract essence of humanity separate from the activities and relations of existing humans. Yet, Marx does not succumb to the deterministic illusion that social and historical circumstances wholly condition people's lives. As he puts it, "the materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing and that, therefore, changed men are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that circumstances are changed precisely by men and that the educator must himself be educated."⁸¹ Marx grants that people can change the ensemble of social relations that determine their lives, because these circumstances are the effects of previous and present human practice. He offers a

79. Karl Marx, "Marx's Theses on Feuerbach," in *Karl Marx: Selection Works in Two Volumes, Vol. I*, ed. Vladimir Adoratsky (London: Lawrence and Wishart Limited, 1943), 473.

80. Marx, "Marx's Theses on Feuerbach," 471.

81. *Ibid.*, 472.

theory of becoming that invests the human with the capacity to know and change the conditions of their existence. Yet, in that famous sentence from *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Marx acknowledges that this capacity is not unlimited: “Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given, and transmitted from the past.”⁸²

In the *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci acknowledges that an investigation of the human is not an “abstract or objective question.”⁸³ On the contrary, it is “born of our reflections about ourselves and others.”⁸⁴ Just as Marx chastises Feuerbach for his abstraction of human essence, Gramsci criticizes all hitherto existing philosophies (idealism, Catholicism, positivistic science) for conceiving of “man as an individual limited to his own individuality.”⁸⁵ Like Marx, Gramsci posits the individual—not a limited and isolated essence—as an ensemble of social relations. What is the nature of these relations? How do they cohere into an ensemble?

Gramsci defines the human as a *process*: a “series of active relationships.”⁸⁶ Although ‘individuality’ may be the most important element in this series, he notes that other elements must be considered. The human consists of three main elements: the individual, other people, and the natural world. Gramsci stipulates that these relationships

82. Karl Marx, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,” in *Karl Marx: Selected Works in Two Volumes, Vol. 2*, ed. by Vladimir Adoratsky (London: Lawrence and Wishart Limited, 1943), 315.

83. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 351.

84. Ibid.

85. Ibid., 352.

86. Ibid.

are not always simple and mechanical. Insofar as an individual produces these relationships, they are active, conscious, and moving. Instead of simply analyzing these relationships as they exist “at any given time in a given system,” Gramsci urges us to examine the “movement of their formation.”⁸⁷ As he puts it, “each individual is the synthesis not only of existing relations, but of the history of these relations.”⁸⁸ When one investigates these interweaving and active relationships, one must not forget that they are the living effects of historical processes and human practices.

Individuals form relations with others “organically” and belong to “organic entities that range from the simple to the complex.”⁸⁹ Individuals relate to the natural world not by simply living in it, but by engaging with it actively “by means of work and technique.”⁹⁰ As Gramsci clarifies, *technique* is “not only the ensemble of scientific ideas applied industrially . . . but also ‘mental’ instruments, philosophic knowledge.”⁹¹ He observes that these techniques—manual and mental—can help people to know and modify the relationships that structure their lives. People can work together in political associations to multiply the effects of their activity and “obtain a change which is far more radical than at first sight even seemed possible.”⁹² In other words, these techniques and associations empower people to ‘educate the educator.’

87. Ibid., 353.

88. Ibid.

89. Ibid., 352.

90. Ibid.

91. Ibid., 353.

92. Ibid.

Gramsci's insights expose the shabbiness of both the idealist illusion of a transcendental human essence and the deterministic fantasy of individuals as helpless victims of circumstance. When Gramsci theorizes the human as a series of active relationships, he locates the source of this activity in "the consciousness of the individual who knows, wishes, admires, creates."⁹³ In this sense, his characterization of the human as the complex of social relations embraces becoming and denies man *in general*.

The Gramscian human combines individuality and history. As Gramsci puts it, the human is an "historical bloc of purely individual and subjective elements and of mass and objective or material elements with which the individual is in active relationship."⁹⁴ When one writes about individuals in history, one cannot isolate their seemingly 'personal' qualities from larger historical processes. They represent a living and often contradictory ensemble of relations—with other people, with different techniques and associations, with the world they inhabit—that must be analyzed as a properly historical process. Furthermore, Gramsci's conception of the human must not be drained of its Marxist character. As Peter D. Thomas reminds us, Gramsci examined the human "not merely as an ensemble of historically determined social relations, but, rather, as an ensemble of historical relations of class struggle."⁹⁵ Under the capitalist mode of production, our relations with other people, techniques, and associations are not independent of these class antagonisms. Once we grasp the fundamentally antagonistic character of these relations and conditions, we can start to determine how these activities, practices, and techniques

93. *Ibid.*, 354.

94. *Ibid.*, 360.

95. Peter D. Thomas, *The Gramscian Moment* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 394.

reinforce, reflect or resist a dominant hegemony. And this issue is precisely what motivates Gramsci's conception of intellectuals.

As he sat in his prison cell, Gramsci wrote a letter to his sister-in-law Tatiana Schucht to inform her that the study he was making on "intellectuals" had become "very broad."⁹⁶ He remarks that he had extended the concept of the intellectual beyond the limits of "the current notion that refers only to the preeminent intellectuals."⁹⁷ As I noted in the Introduction, Gramsci rejects what sociologist Jerome Karabel calls the *normative* or *moralist* conception of intellectuals that "treats [them] not as they actually are, but as they should be."⁹⁸ Contrary to this normative framework, Karabel—whose argument is built on Gramscian premises—endorses an analytical approach that identifies "the conditions and processes that shape the actual political consciousness and actions of different groups of intellectuals."⁹⁹ Such conditions and processes include forms of institutional prestige and status, professional codes of conduct, shared assumptions and practices, degrees of specialization, divisions of labour and types of employment, the use of different techniques and technologies, and so on. Those who adopt this analytical viewpoint do not start with an idealized notion of what it means to be an intellectual, but, rather, with a question about how intellectuals actually function in society. This is a corollary of Gramsci's conception of the human as an ensemble of historical practices and relations, rather than an abstract essence.

96. Gramsci, *Letters from Prison: Volume II*, 66.

97. *Ibid.*, 67.

98. Karabel, "Towards a Theory of Intellectuals and Politics," 205.

99. *Ibid.*, 206.

When one reads Gramsci's writing on intellectuals, one encounters multiple reminders to ground the study of intellectuals in concrete reality. He writes that the formation and elaboration of intellectuals "follows ways and means which must be studied concretely," that these various forms must "be gone into and studied concretely," and that this "elaboration of intellectual strata in concrete reality does not take place on the terrain of abstract democracy, but in accordance with very concrete traditional historical processes."¹⁰⁰ He emphasizes this concreteness to dispel the impression that intellectuals themselves form an "autonomous and independent social group" detached from other social and economic classes.¹⁰¹ As Gramsci recognizes, it is difficult to determine whether intellectuals are truly independent or attached to other classes, largely because the real historical process has formed so many different categories of intellectuals.

Gramsci identifies two specific kinds of intellectual that he categorizes broadly as *organic* and *traditional*. When a class starts to gain dominance in the sphere of production, it produces several strata of organic intellectuals that give it "homogeneity" and "awareness of its function" in economic, social, and political fields.¹⁰² These organic intellectuals possess the technical capacity to organize a society in such a way that maintains the conditions "most favourable to the expansion of their own class."¹⁰³ The techniques of these intellectuals are often "specializations of partial aspects of some primitive activity of the new social type" embodied by the new ascendant class.¹⁰⁴ Gramsci

100. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 6-11

101. *Ibid.*, 5.

102. *Ibid.*

103. *Ibid.*, 5-6.

104. *Ibid.*, 6.

cites the example of the capitalistic entrepreneur who gives rise to the categories of “the industrial technician, the specialist in political economy, the organizers of a new culture, of a new legal system.”¹⁰⁵ These specializations serve to shape and reproduce the character of a bourgeois society.

The various kinds of *traditional* intellectual tend to derive from earlier social formations and thus appear to represent an “historical continuity uninterrupted even by the most complicated and radical changes in political and social forms.”¹⁰⁶ Gramsci refers to “the ecclesiastics” as a typical example of the traditional intellectual as they were once “organically bound to the landed aristocracy” and exercised a monopoly over a series of important services: “religious ideology, that is the philosophy and science of the age, together with schools, education, morality, justice, charity, good works, etc.”¹⁰⁷ Essentially, what we see as ‘traditional intellectuals’ are residual organic intellectuals that have outlived the form of society from which they emerged.¹⁰⁸ As these traditional intellectuals appear to be independent of the present ruling classes, they portray themselves as a wholly autonomous group. Gramsci points out that this “self-assessment” is deeply consequential in terms of the ideological and political field, because it allows these intellectuals to present their ideas as non-ideological and apolitical.¹⁰⁹ Insofar as these intellectuals believe that they inhabit a “social utopia” of purely cerebral autonomy, they

105. Ibid., 5.

106. Ibid., 7.

107. Ibid.

108. Consult Raymond Williams “Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory” in *Culture and Materialism* (New York: Verso, 2020), 45-47, for an extended definition of the *residual* as it relates to Gramsci’s theory of hegemony.

109. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 7.

obscure the incorporation of their activities and practices into the hegemony of the dominant classes.¹¹⁰ Idealist philosophy, for instance, cannot acknowledge that its sense of an independent consciousness would not exist without a series of material and hegemonic conditions and limits. I will deal more explicitly with the role of intellectuals in the construction of these hegemonic limits later in this chapter.

We must recognize that this distinction between the organic and the traditional does not comprise the entirety of Gramsci's thinking about intellectuals. Gramsci explains that this distinction is primarily a methodological decision to differentiate the two most important forms "assumed to date by the real historical process of formation of the different categories of intellectuals."¹¹¹ When one examines the practices of certain intellectuals, it is not enough to simply label them as 'organic' or 'traditional.' Drawing on the work of Robert F. Carley, we can locate different kinds of intellectual along a continuum of "organicity" or "organic quality" (*organicità*).¹¹² Following Gramsci and Carley, I define *organicity* as the degree, extent, and density of connections that link specific intellectual practices to fundamental social classes. Intellectuals that can organize members of classes into more durable organizations, associations, and institutions exhibit a higher level of organicity. As Carley observes, the links between these intellectuals and their classes are not always simple and straightforward. He points out that Gramsci's emphasis on concrete analysis prompts us to examine classes in their "fractionalization, stratification . . . their organic quality, regularity, autonomism, and elaboration to and

110. Ibid., 8.

111. Ibid, 5.

112. Robert F. Carley, *Cultural Studies Methodology and Political Strategy: Metaconjuncture* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 101-108.

through political forces.”¹¹³ As fundamental social classes are not always tightly unified, intellectuals often function to mediate between various class fractions and political forces. The success of this mediation—this tying of class interests to political and institutional forces—depends on the intellectual’s *embeddedness* within the class that it claims to represent. I demonstrate later in this chapter that the organicity of these intellectuals affects the kinds of ideologies that they elaborate.

As he reflects on this topic, Gramsci searches for the “maximum limits” of his extended concept of the intellectual.¹¹⁴ He wonders whether there is a “unitary criterion” that can capture “all the diverse and disparate activities of intellectuals” and distinguish them from the labor and function of other groups.¹¹⁵ The basis of this criterion, Gramsci decides, must not be located in the “intrinsic nature of intellectual activities,” but, rather, “in the ensemble of the systems of relations in which these activities (and the intellectual groups that personify them) have their place within the general complex of social relations.”¹¹⁶ Just as “the worker or proletarian . . . is not specifically characterized by his manual or instrumentalized work, but by performing this work in specific conditions, and in specific social relations,” the intellectual is not necessarily characterized by mental or cultural work, but by performing it in specific conditions, and under specific social relations.¹¹⁷ Once again, Gramsci returns to this theme of characterizing the human as a historical entity that combines individual and social elements in an ensemble of specific

113. Carley, *Cultural Studies Methodology and Political Strategy*, 106.

114. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 8.

115. *Ibid.*

116. *Ibid.*

117. *Ibid.*

and concrete activities, practices, and relations. As Kate Crehan observes, Gramsci conceives of intellectuals “as living human beings [that are] personifications of these relations.”¹¹⁸ What are these relations? How are they linked to what Gramsci describes as our relations with others and the world we inhabit? How do these intellectuals become organically linked to classes and class-fractions that can be mobilized in political struggle?

The *Prison Notebooks* contains Gramsci’s oft-quoted observation that “all men are intellectuals, one could therefore say; not all men have in society the function of intellectuals.”¹¹⁹ What does this mean? Gramsci clarifies that “there is no human activity from which every form of intellectual participation can be excluded.”¹²⁰ Everyone is engaged in some sort of intellectual activity. We subscribe to a certain worldview. We express ourselves in language and other systems of communication. We absorb or contest the opinions of others. Even chatting to a friend is a form of philosophizing, because a common language encapsulates an entire conception of the world or an unconscious and ‘spontaneous’ philosophy. Yet, Gramsci does not think that these casual activities amount to the function of an intellectual. How does he distinguish between these ordinary forms of intellectual activity and the actual functions of intellectuals?

Gramsci traces the function of intellectuals to forms of education. He argues that the concrete manifestations of the intellectual function become more complex and variegated as the activity and organization of education becomes more widespread and specialized. For Gramsci, the education system exercises two basic functions: to deepen

118. Crehan, *Gramsci’s Common Sense*, 42.

119. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 9.

120. *Ibid.*

and broaden the intellectuality of individuals, and to multiply and narrow various specializations. The former serves to inculcate forms of linguistic, cultural, and technical literacy; the latter aims to shape these generic abilities into advanced skills. The first teaches young people to write, whereas the second instructs them to compose speeches or contracts. Gramsci judges that “the more extensive the ‘area’ covered by education and the more numerous the ‘vertical’ levels of schooling, the more complex is the cultural world, the civilization, of a particular state.”¹²¹ The practices and functions of intellectuals, then, depend on the historical level and complexity of education in given societies. Moreover, it seems that the organization of education and intellectuality in bourgeois society is bound to a certain conception and construction of the State.

In his letter to Schucht, Gramsci remarks that his study of intellectuals has led him to reconsider “certain definitions of the concept of the State.”¹²² Whereas Lenin regarded the State as “a coercive apparatus,” Gramsci redefines it as an equilibrium “between political Society and civil Society.”¹²³ He describes this equilibrium as “the hegemony of a social group over the entire national society, a hegemony exercised through the so-called private organizations, such as the Church, the unions, the schools.”¹²⁴ Although he mentions in this letter that intellectuals “mostly operate” in the sphere of civil society, he writes in the *Prison Notebooks* that the intellectual function traverses two major superstructural levels: civil society and political society.¹²⁵

121. Ibid., 11.

122. Gramsci, *Letters from Prison: Volume II*, 67.

123. Ibid.

124. Ibid.

125. Ibid.

In her 1986 *boundary 2* article “The People, Intellectuals and Specialized Knowledge,” Anne Showstack Sassoon explains that Gramsci’s interest in the political question of intellectuals “derives from long term trends in capitalist society and from more immediate historical events, in particular the Russian Revolution and Italian fascism.”¹²⁶ Fascism enlisted many intellectuals in its project of reconstructing the Italian State and Italian society. Mussolini wanted to “win over the experts, to set architects to build modernistic cities, to create institutions of mass culture like radio and cinema, to organize intellectuals in associations, institutes and academies, to give economists and lawyers and engineers jobs in the state bureaucracy.”¹²⁷ The Italian fascists believed that modern intellectuals performed an essential mediatory function to produce an authentic relationship between the State and the People. Similarly, the Bolshevik project aspired to construct a new type of State that forged a deeply democratic relationship between the masses of the Russian people and the leaders of the party. Sassoon suggests that Gramsci’s reflections on intellectuals were also sparked by changes in capitalist society, especially the transition from the non-interventionist liberal state to organized capitalism in the late nineteenth-century. Gramsci argues that, since 1870, “the internal and international organizational relations of the State [had] become more complex and massive.”¹²⁸ The proliferation of so-called private organizations, such as trade unions and political parties, required the cultivation of increasingly specialized intellectuals. As Gramsci puts it, the “democratic-bureaucratic system has given rise to a great mass of functions, which are not all justified

126. Anne Showstack Sassoon, “The People, Intellectuals and Specialized Knowledge,” *boundary 2*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Spring 1986), 140.

127. Sassoon, “The People, Intellectuals and Specialized Knowledge,” 141.

128. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 243.

by the social necessities of production, though they are justified by the political necessities of the dominant fundamental group.”¹²⁹ Consequently, the question of intellectuals took on a political relevance during this historical emergence of a new kind of State.

According to Gramsci, civil society consists of an “ensemble of organizations commonly called ‘private’” that exercise the function of social hegemony.¹³⁰ The intellectuals of civil society, or *civil intellectuals*, organize the ‘spontaneous’ consent of the masses in line with the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant classes. How does one organize this ‘spontaneous’ consent? As Esteve Morera clarifies, “hegemony is not the result of the sum of individual acts of consent, but, rather, the organization of a collective will.”¹³¹ Morera continues that “to create a new hegemony means to organize the will of individuals so that in their free actions they nevertheless choose within permissible limits, limits that are set by the interests of a ruling class.”¹³² Civil intellectuals create and control forms of knowledge and culture that naturalize and preserve these limits.

Yet, these limits are not entirely arbitrary. Gramsci notes that certain organizations of consent stem from the *prestige* and *confidence* of the ruling classes’ position and function in the world of production. Only when a ruling class delivers the opportunities for individual and group satisfaction and development—economically, socially, politically—does it continue to reliably sustain the consent of the masses. Bourgeois society may attend

129. Ibid.,13.

130. Ibid., 12.

131. Esteve Morera, *Gramsci’s Historicism: A Realist Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 1990), 165

132. Morera, *Gramsci’s Historicism*, 165.

to our longings and needs in an alienated and alienating fashion, yet it succeeds in maintaining its hegemony only by negotiating and partially conceding to the interests of subordinate groups. In these instances, the ruling classes—and their civil intellectuals—direct (*dirigere*) society and embody a concrete spirit of moral, cultural, and economic leadership (*direzione*).

Of course, people do not always wholly and consciously commit themselves to this organization of consent. The leadership of the ruling class may simply transform subjects on a “molecular” or fragmented level insofar as it rearranges the ensembles of social relations that comprise individuals. In his Gramscian analysis of Thatcherism, Hall describes this experience of molecular consent vividly:

What is the nature of this ideology which can inscribe such a vast range of different positions and interests in it, and which seems to represent a little bit of everybody? For, make no mistake, a tiny bit of all of us is also somewhere inside the Thatcherite project. Of course, we’re all one hundred per cent committed. But every now and then – Saturday morning, perhaps, just before the demonstration – we go to Sainsbury’s and we’re just a tiny bit of a Thatcherite subject...¹³³

Even if you do not vote for Thatcher, you may still contribute—in hundreds of minor and molecular ways—to Thatcherite hegemony. Something as banal as shopping at Sainsbury’s can represent a moment of passive consent to the leadership of the ruling class. Instead of thinking about consent as a conscious agreement to a set of principles, one may understand hegemony as a force that radiates throughout the various layers of social life.

Hegemony does not represent a state of complete unity, but, rather, a continual process of unification. As Vittorio Morfino argues, intellectuals are the agents of this

133. Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal*, 165.

unification.¹³⁴ They perform this unifying function on a variety of levels to organize associations that range from marginal political sects to formal parliamentary parties to major civil institutions. They elaborate ideologies that can bind agents together into a bloc and establish a common direction for their activity. Although Gramsci notes that a “multiplicity of private associations” can proliferate in the sphere of bourgeois civil society, he stresses that the direction of the State “predominates relatively or absolutely” over the life of a society.¹³⁵ People may even belong to associations that seem to contradict or oppose the direction of the State. And these associations, even if they produce ideologies and visions of unification that contest the leadership of the ruling class, operate within the existing hegemony of the State.

When their leadership wanes and the ruling class fails to organize the active or passive consent of certain groups, they resort to the “apparatus of State coercive power.”¹³⁶ Political society, or the State, exercises “direct domination” through the juridical government to repress and punish instances of dissent and dysfunction.¹³⁷ *State intellectuals* author and administer laws that shape the life of a society and criminalize anyone who does not conform to these limits. Direction (*direzione*) and domination are methods for maintaining State hegemony.

The dominant intellectual function, as it is distributed across the spheres of civil and political society, underpins what Gramsci perceives as the “educative and formative role of

134. Vittorio Morfino, “The Layers of History and the Politics in Gramsci,” in *A Companion to Antonio Gramsci: Essays on History and Theories of History, Politics and Historiography*, ed. by Davide Cadeddu (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2020), 55.

135. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 264.

136. *Ibid.*, 12.

137. *Ibid.*

the State.”¹³⁸ The most important function of every State, as Gramsci understands it, is to “raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level, a level (or type) which corresponds to the needs of the productive forces for development and hence to the interests of the ruling class.”¹³⁹ Civil society exercises a positive educative function; political society, a negative one. The former organizes consent; the latter enforces coercion. Whereas some may assume a hard distinction between force and consent, Gramsci theorizes these functions as a dialectical unity or “unity-distinction.”¹⁴⁰ For Gramsci, the State unites civil society and political society within a dialectical nexus—“hegemony protected by the armor of coercion”—that holds together force and consent to exercise an educative function on society.¹⁴¹ The preservation of this State requires the realization of a hegemonic apparatus that can create “a new ideological terrain, determine a reform of consciousness and of methods of knowledge.”¹⁴² The operation of this apparatus, especially in bourgeois society, requires the continual and extensive cultivation of intellectuals. As Gramsci notes, the function of organizing social hegemony and state domination demands a complex division of labor and a strict hierarchy of qualifications. Whenever the intellectual function becomes so diffuse, it becomes possible to distinguish various levels of intellectuals from their intrinsic characteristics.

“Hang on,” some might say, “isn’t this a contradiction in Gramsci’s theory of intellectuals? Only a few paragraphs ago, you declared that we shouldn’t define intellectuals

138. Ibid., 242.

139. Ibid., 258.

140. Liguori, *Gramsci’s Pathways*, 1.

141. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 263.

142. Ibid., 365.

by their intrinsic activities...?” This is an objection that Gramsci easily resolves. Although he does not think that one can distinguish intellectuals from non-intellectuals by their intrinsic activities, he judges that one can differentiate between the levels and qualities of intellectuals themselves. There is a real qualitative difference between “the creators of the various sciences, philosophies, etc.” and the “most humble administrators and divulgators of pre-existing, traditional, accumulated intellectual wealth,” even if they share a similar educative function.¹⁴³ Of course, Gramsci regards these qualitative differences as more of a difference in the “quantity of qualitative elements” in the sense of greater or lesser degrees of homogeneity, coherence, and logicity, which reflects a real division of intellectual labor between the originators of philosophical and political doctrines and the functionaries who administer or disseminate this knowledge.¹⁴⁴ And these differences between intellectuals determines their roles and ranks within the hegemonic apparatus.

Liguori identifies the concept of the hegemonic apparatus as crucial to Gramsci’s theory of intellectuals. For Liguori, the term *hegemonic apparatus* evokes “the materiality of the processes of hegemony.”¹⁴⁵ The struggle for hegemony, as Liguori describes it, is “not a matter of a ‘battle of ideas’ but of true and proper apparatuses—charged with the creation of consent.”¹⁴⁶ Gramsci perceives that ideas and ideologies are not free-floating entities, but, rather, elements of intellectual activities, practices, and functions that operate within certain institutions, organizations, and apparatuses. He grasps that societies contain multiple forms of cultural organization—schools, churches, newspapers, magazines, the publishing

143. *Ibid.*, 13.

144. *Ibid.*, 347.

145. Liguori, *Gramsci’s Pathways*, 17.

146. *Ibid.*, 17.

industry, the legal profession, unions, political parties—that participate in a specific “ideological world.”¹⁴⁷ Each of these forms cultivate intellectuals who occupy a position within a larger hegemonic apparatus, and exercise a certain degree of influence over the creation of consent. Gramsci points out that the relationship between intellectuals and social classes is often thoroughly “mediated” by this dense fabric of hegemonic apparatuses that comprise the superstructure of a society.¹⁴⁸ We cannot figure out the role of an intellectual within this hegemonic apparatus without taking account of their actual function. In other words, we cannot conceive of intellectuals outside the concrete reality of the societies that they inhabit. Once again, I return to Gramsci’s reminders that the various historical forms of intellectuals must “be gone into and studied concretely.”¹⁴⁹ How can we use Gramsci’s insights—*hegemonic apparatuses, the educative role of the State, the ensembles of social relations*—to frame a concrete study of certain intellectuals?

We acknowledge that we are not examining individuals, but, rather, the ensembles of relations, practices, and functions that comprise their role as intellectuals. We identify the scale and complexity of a society’s educational system to understand how these institutions equip intellectuals with certain technical specializations, cultural outlooks, and social practices. We study the hierarchization and distribution of the intellectual function in the ideological world of a given society. We assess the extent and quality of different intellectuals’ ‘embeddedness’ within a fundamental social group (or class fraction/strata), and examine the nature of their mediation between class interests and political forces. Does

147. Gramsci, *Subaltern Social Groups*, 87.

148. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 12.

149. *Ibid.*, 7.

the State tolerate or incorporate oppositional and alternative practices? How do various laws shape the terrain of cultural, social, and moral life? How are the interests of different groups articulated, refracted or stifled within the limits of the dominant group's hegemony? None of these questions can be answered abstractly. Yet, they can serve as guides that can support our concrete inquiries.

For instance, how might these insights inform the task of investigating the histories of Cultural Marxisms? What are the organizational and institutional elements that shape and reproduce the practices of intellectuals who articulate a particular narrative of Cultural Marxism? How do these narratives circulate in the ideological world of a given society? Do these intellectuals appear to use the narratives of Cultural Marxisms to mediate the interests of a specific social group? How do the different techniques and practices of certain intellectuals affect their nature of these narratives? Do they register any opposition to the existing arrangement of social, cultural, and political life? Do they seek to preserve or dissolve the ideological cement that unites the hegemonic apparatus? We will delve into these questions in more detail in the later chapters

What is absent in the preceding paragraphs is the question of how Gramsci theorizes societal change. There is often a danger of mistaking Gramsci's theory of hegemony for a structural-functionalist model of society. After all, the functions of intellectuals and the State seem to sustain a sort of harmonious equilibrium or unified consensus. Yet, Gramsci emphasizes that this equilibrium is always unstable. As Christine Buci-Glucksman points out, one cannot explain Gramsci's theory of hegemony "without a theory of the crisis of hegemony."¹⁵⁰ How does the hegemonic equilibrium of the State deteriorate? When do new

150. Christine Buci-Glucksman, *Gramsci and the State* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980), 58.

ensembles, practices, and associations start to pose a threat to this hegemony? What exacerbates the dynamics of class antagonism in bourgeois society? When does a certain construction of civil and state intellectuality lose its directive sway and become vulnerable to challenges? To address these questions, we must examine Gramsci's crisis-theory.

Intellectuals in Crisis

In the *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci proposes a dynamic theory of crisis. Contrary to earlier economistic Marxist thinkers, Gramsci did not sense that a major economic crisis would automatically trigger capitalism's downfall. As Michele Filippini observes, Gramsci saw capitalist crises "more as a contradictory development of the system than as an aspect of that system's breakdown."¹⁵¹ Note 5 of Notebook 15 features the clearest exposition of this crisis-theory. Although the note largely concerns the historical fallout of World War One and the Wall Street Crash, one can extract a series of methodological principles that comprise a Gramscian definition of crisis (and these principles reveal more about Gramsci's actual theory than tired references to decontextualized quotations about 'morbid symptoms').¹⁵²

Gramsci writes that one must not oversimplify moments of crisis into simple matters of cause and effect. Such reductive interpretations "misrepresent and falsify" a complex

151. Michele Filippini, *Using Gramsci: A New Approach* (London: Pluto Press, 2017), 88.

152. For instance, Nancy Fraser's 2017 *American Affairs* essay "From Progressive Neoliberalism to Trump—and Beyond" dresses up a Habermasian theory of crisis in Gramscian language, and appears to claim that Gramsci's own crisis-theory can be summed up in a single quotation: "the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear." Fraser understands the phrase "morbid symptoms" to refer to the emergence of fascisms, the breakdown of social supports, and environmental crises. Yet, Gramsci actually used the term to characterize the PCI's ultraleft turn. For a close reading of Gramsci's "morbid symptoms," please read Gilbert Achcar, "Morbid Symptoms: What Did Gramsci Really Mean?," *Notebooks: The Journal for Studies on Power*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (February 2022), 379-387. For a critique of Fraser's writings on crisis, consult Chris O'Kane, "Critical Theory and the Critique of Capitalism: An Immanent Critique of Nancy Fraser's 'Systematic' 'Crisis-Critique' of Capitalism as an 'Institutionalized Social Order'," *Science & Society*, Vol. 85, No. 2 (April 2021), 207-235.

process.¹⁵³ He describes crisis as “a process that shows itself in many ways, and in which causes and effects become intertwined and mutually entangled.”¹⁵⁴ The complexity of this process makes it harder to identify a single origin of a crisis. The crisis itself does not have a specific starting-point, even if one can identify the date and location of its more “striking manifestations.”¹⁵⁵ Gramsci recommends that an analysis of the Wall Street Crash, for instance, should proceed from these three premises: 1) that the crisis is a “complicated process,” 2) that the crisis started in at least World War One, and 3) that it has “internal origins, in the modes of production and thus of exchange.”¹⁵⁶ Filippini helpfully formalizes these premises into the principles of Gramsci’s crisis-theory: 1) “that a crisis is a process rather than an event,” 2) “a crisis always has remote origins, that, however, does not always explain its subsequent development,” and 3) “crisis is an inherent feature of the capitalist mode of production.”¹⁵⁷ For Gramsci, crisis is a complex process that does not have a clear and exact historical origin other than the antagonistic dynamic of capitalism itself.

Gramsci refines this conception of crisis further on in Note 5. He defines crisis as “the quantitative intensification of certain elements, neither new nor original, but in particular the intensification of certain phenomena, while others that were there before and operated simultaneously with the first, sterilizing them, have now become inoperative or have completely disappeared.”¹⁵⁸ What is this process of intensification? What are these

153. Antonio Gramsci, *Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1995), 219.

154. Gramsci, *Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 219.

155. *Ibid.*

156. *Ibid.*, 220.

157. Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, 91.

elements? How do they operate together or sterilize one another? How do they become inoperative or disappear? Gramsci answers that the development of capitalism is a “continual crisis” that intensifies, balances and destabilizes various elements of a society.¹⁵⁹ The continual crisis of capitalism represents “an extremely rapid movement of elements that mutually balanced and sterilized one another.”¹⁶⁰ As this movement accelerates, certain elements have either “gained predominance and others have disappeared or become irrelevant within the general framework.”¹⁶¹ Gramsci concludes the note by stating that events which “go under the specific name of ‘crisis’ have then burst onto the scene, events that are more or less serious according to whether more or less important elements of equilibrium come into play.”¹⁶²

Gramsci holds that the continual crisis of capitalism manifests itself either explicitly or indirectly through this balancing-act of various conflicting and antagonistic forces. When this crisis remains latent, new and potentially unstable elements are incorporated into this system and sterilized by the existing framework. When it becomes more disruptive, these previously balanced elements have either become more volatile or fallen dormant. The onset of explicit crises—events which go under the specific name of crisis—prompts factions of the capitalist class to launch efforts to calm or recalibrate the contradictory development of the system. Such movements of decomposition and reorganization often signify a crisis of hegemony.

158. Gramsci, *Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 220.

159. *Ibid.*

160. *Ibid.*

161. *Ibid.*

162. *Ibid.*, 220-221.

As Filippini points out, Gramsci rarely discusses crisis in abstract or general terms. In fact, Gramsci's dynamic theory of crisis usually serves as the unspoken premise for "a mapping of the forms that [crisis] takes in specific contexts."¹⁶³ Whenever Gramsci mentions crisis in the *Prison Notebooks*, he is often discussing the crisis of a particular element: a crisis of hegemony, a crisis of authority, a crisis of education, a crisis of conformism, a crisis of generations, a crisis of libertinism, etc. Yet, Filippini notes that each of these particular crises "all refer to, and are dependent on, the type of development of society imposed by the capitalist system, and for this reason their underlying causes are to be found in the mechanisms governing that system."¹⁶⁴ Although economic crises may not mechanically cause political events, Gramsci understands that the antagonistic development of capitalism can produce "a terrain more favourable to the dissemination of certain modes of thought, and certain ways of posing and resolving questions involving the entire subsequent development of national life."¹⁶⁵ He recognizes that "it is difficult in real terms to separate the economic crisis from the political and ideological ones," because they spring from a similar disequilibrium of elements.¹⁶⁶ A crisis of hegemony represents a moment in which this shift of terrain undermines existing political forms and produces an opening for new types of organization and expression.

Admittedly, the manufactured equilibrium of bourgeois hegemony will always be unstable, insufficient, and incomplete. The intense and antagonistic dynamic of capitalism, which Marx once characterized as a constantly expanding "spiral," refuses to conform to the

163. Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, 88.

164. *Ibid.*, 90.

165. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 184.

166. Gramsci, *Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 219.

measured cycles of bourgeois life.¹⁶⁷ As Gramsci observes, the national forms of the bourgeois state often come into contradiction with the internationalist nature of the capitalist mode of production. The major contradiction of the bourgeois state unfolds in this continual effort to mediate the disequilibrium of capitalism and represent it as equilibrium. In short, hegemonic crises expose the fundamental disequilibrium that underpins the appearance of regularity in a bourgeois society.

The crisis of hegemony, as Gramsci describes it, refers to a split between social classes and the existing political parties that once represented them. He specifies that “the traditional parties in that particular organizational form, with the particular men, who constitute, represent, and lead them, are no longer recognized by the class (or fraction of a class) as its expression.”¹⁶⁸ The most decisive manifestation of this crisis is the failure of moral and cultural, or educative, leadership. The hegemonic apparatuses of the ruling class, of which political parties are part, are no longer successful in organizing and enforcing the boundaries of consent. The masses do not believe that their longings, interests, and needs can be satisfied within the current system, even on a molecular level. This is not a matter of arbitrary desire, but, rather, an expression of the contradictions between the forms and relations of material life. Although these contradictions expose the reality of capitalism’s continual crisis, Gramsci recognizes that various ruling factions and political forces will promote different ideological responses that aim to resolve such moments of intensified disequilibrium.

167. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (London: Penguin, 1993), 620.

168. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 210.

In particular, the crisis of hegemony provides abundant political opportunities for the factions who can “change men and programmes with greater speed than . . . the subordinate classes [and] reabsorb the control that was slipping from its grasp.”¹⁶⁹ Gramsci describes this as a process of *passive revolution*, whereby the leading political classes try to absorb and sterilize subversive forces and establish a more favourable balance of elements. Yet, this process is not revolutionary in the sense that it initiates a transition to a new phase of society. As Gramsci writes, “the problem is to see whether in the dialectic ‘revolution/restoration’ it is revolution or restoration which predominates; for it is certain that in the movement of history there is never any turning back, and that restorations *in toto* do not exist.”¹⁷⁰ Passive revolutions may introduce or expel certain elements, yet it tends to function as a restorative act to repair the pre-existing framework of the hegemonic classes. The progressive social changes of passive revolution always remain within the terrain of set hegemonic limits. As always, we must examine each specific political situation closely to determine how a certain manifestation of crisis—and the corresponding efforts to stabilize these fluctuations—plays out concretely.

In her 1994 *New Left Review* article “Second-Hand Dealers in Ideas: Think-Tanks and Thatcherite Hegemony,” the theorist Radhika Desai recognizes that these times of hegemonic crises can result in a tremendous realignment of intellectual life. As Desai puts it, “conventional intellectual practices and discourses become obviously ineffective [and] intellectuals find themselves in a critical phase.”¹⁷¹ The prevailing functions of civil and state

169. Ibid.

170. Ibid., 219-220.

171. Radhika Desai, “Second-Hand Dealers in Ideas: Think Tanks and Thatcherite Hegemony,” *New Left Review*, No. 203 (February 1994), 39.

intellectuals are precisely the kinds of elements that falter and dissolve in periods of hegemonic crisis. Subsequently, the practices of intellectuals acquire a direct and decisive political relevance as “fundamental issues must be rethought and reworked for society to be reorganized.”¹⁷² During this period of rethinking and reworking, “sects at the margins of the dominant intellectual tradition” aim “to raise their profile through active interventions in debates on the many aspects of society that have become problematic, and, as these multiply, to aggressively peddle their ideology as the basis of a successful hegemonic order.”¹⁷³ Some of these sects may perform a mediatory function for a different fraction of the ruling class that wishes to adjust or reformulate the ideological direction of the state. As Gramsci remarks, one can calculate the historical value of a philosophy from the “practical efficiency it has acquired for itself.”¹⁷⁴ The practical effectiveness of these sects and associations will depend on their capacity not only to win the favor of the ruling class, but also to present a compelling vision of a new stabilization that will organize the active and passive consent of society. Other associations may fail to turn their ideology into the basis of a new hegemonic stability, because their ideas and philosophies cannot provide effective leadership for the different groups, practices, and apparatuses of the *historical bloc*.

The precise meaning of Gramsci’s “historical bloc” is the subject of much debate. As Alvaro Bianchi documents, the PCI presented this concept in the postwar period as a synonym for class alliances. At the Congress of Gramsci Studies in January 1958, Palmiro Togliatti describes “Gramsci’s study of alliances” as the “fundamental, organic nexus” of a

172. Desai, “Second-Hand Dealers in Ideas,” 39.

173. *Ibid.*, 40.

174. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 346.

new historical bloc.¹⁷⁵ Although this concept has significant strategic implications for social movements, it does not refer to this policy of class alliances (the latter has more to do with the PCI's postwar strategy of a parliamentary road to socialism).¹⁷⁶ In fact, as Derek Boothman clarifies, Gramsci used the term *social bloc* (“*blocco sociale*”) to define the moment of unifying different class strata into a tight-knit political association.¹⁷⁷ Ultimately, I agree with Bianchi's argument that Gramsci conceived of the historical bloc originally as a “critical tool aimed at interpreting historical relations . . . that were . . . concrete and moving, existing between the structure and superstructure, objective conditions and subjective conditions, material forces of production and ideologies.”¹⁷⁸ Furthermore, this tool offers a dynamic alternative to the overly deterministic vision of the base-superstructure metaphor.

Contrary to the claims of Nicola Badaloni, Gramsci did not arrive at this solution by ‘accepting’ Sorel's concept of the historical bloc.¹⁷⁹ Buttigieg's recent English translation and critical edition of the *Prison Notebooks* points out that not only did George Sorel never use the phrase ‘historical bloc’ in his writings, but Gramsci did not even have a copy of Sorel's writings in his cell.¹⁸⁰ Buttigieg speculates that Gramsci associated the notion with

175. Quoted in Alvaro Bianchi, *Gramsci's Laboratory: Philosophy, History and Politics* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 118.

176. For a compelling analysis of the historical bloc as “strategic concept,” please consult Panagiotis Sotiris, “Gramsci and the Challenges for the Left: The Historical Bloc as Strategic Concept,” *Science & Society*, Vol. 83, No. 1 (January 2018), 94-119.

177. Derek Boothman, “A note on the evolution—and translation—of some key Gramscian terms,” *Socialism and Democracy*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (2000), 125.

178. Bianchi, *Gramsci's Laboratory*, 119.

179. Giuseppe Cospito, *The Rhythm of Thought in Gramsci* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 11.

180. Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks: Volume II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996),

Sorel once he encountered a paraphrase of the latter's *Reflections on Violence* in Giovanni Malagodi's *Le Ideologie politiche*. As Malagodi tries to paraphrase Sorel's notion of political myth, he writes that "We should not attempt to analyze these 'systems of images' in the way we analyze a scientific theory, breaking it down to its elements. We should 'take them en bloc' [in the original Italian, "*prenderli in blocco*"] as historical forces."¹⁸¹ Regardless of its antecedents, Gramsci appears to have transformed this phrase into a vital and original conception of the relationship between material forces and ideologies.

Gramsci introduces the term "historical bloc" in Notebook 4 as he critiques Benedetto Croce's inaccurate interpretation of Marx. Whereas Croce holds that Marx regards superstructures as illusions, Gramsci retorts that, for Marx, "ideologies are anything but appearances and illusions; they are an objective and operative reality; they just are not the mainspring of history."¹⁸² In an allusion to Marx's "Preface" to *A Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy*, he writes that it is "not ideologies that create social reality, but social reality, in its productive structure, that creates ideologies."¹⁸³ For Marx and Gramsci, ideologies form the terrain on which people become conscious of social conflicts and contradictions and fight them out. Ideologies are not mere fancies or falsehoods, but, rather, a practical and concrete element of social reality.

Gramsci acknowledges that he needs to explain the concreteness of superstructures and thus recalls "Sorel's concept of the 'historical bloc.'"¹⁸⁴ If people become conscious of their conflicts and tasks on the terrain of ideologies, Gramsci opines, then it seems that "there

181. Quoted in Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks: Volume II*, 538.

182. Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks: Volume II*, 157.

183. *Ibid.*

184. *Ibid.*

is a necessary and vital connection between structure and superstructures, just as there is between the skin and skeleton in the human body.”¹⁸⁵ The analogy between the historical bloc and the human body implies that material structures shape and support ideologies, and that superstructures envelop and express this materiality. Instead of a base that unilaterally determines the superstructure, Gramsci offers a tool for grasping the vital and reciprocal link between material forces and ideology. There is not a simple one-to-one correspondence between the two spheres. On the contrary, “the complex, contradictory, and discordant ensemble of the superstructures is the reflection of the ensemble of the social relations of production.”¹⁸⁶ The reciprocal relationship between these two ensembles is neither fixed nor predetermined, but, rather, an effect of the real dialectical process.

Gramsci’s tool of the historical bloc dispels several misunderstandings about the nature of ideology. For instance, he notes that “there is a potential element of error in assessing the value of ideologies, due to the fact (by no means casual) that the name ideology is given both to the necessary superstructure of a particular structure and to the arbitrary elucubrations of particular individuals.”¹⁸⁷ He criticizes other Marxist theorists, notably Nikolai Bukharin, for implying that ideology was entirely detached from the structure and that it was nothing more than “‘pure’ appearance, useless, stupid.”¹⁸⁸ According to Gramsci, the solution to this error was to distinguish between “historically organic ideologies” and “arbitrary, rationalistic, or willed ones.”¹⁸⁹ What is Gramsci’s criterion for this distinction?

185. Ibid.

186. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 366.

187. Ibid., 376.

188. Ibid.

189. Ibid., 376-377.

He explains that organic and historically necessary ideologies “have a validity which is psychological: they organize human masses and create the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc.”¹⁹⁰ The organicity of these ideologies refers to their active capacity to motivate and frame the practices and relations of larger groups. It is an ideology that can become a practical, material, and concrete reality. In his remarks on the *organizational-relational* nature of Gramsci’s conception of ideology, Carley writes that “ideology binds and separates; it produces groups and identities; it frames issues; it challenges orthodoxies and maintains its own . . . it is both the collective product of its members and interpreted and realized by each person through what they do, remember, and experience.”¹⁹¹ In other words, an organic ideology organizes the relations between people in associations that range from small sects to entire societies. Organic ideologies are not merely a set of abstract ideas, but, rather, the terrains on and through which people understand and interact with reality.

How might one assess the organicity of an ideology? Organic ideologies tend to be deeply ‘embedded’ in the enduring practices, habits, and patterns of a society. They “cement” and “unify” social groups, political forces, and hegemonic institutions into a relatively stable historical bloc that follows a common direction.¹⁹² Intellectuals that shape and support these ideologies must develop an “organic cohesion,” or unification, between the ‘knowledge’ of the intellect and the ‘feeling’ of the popular elements.¹⁹³ As Crehan

190. Ibid., 377.

191. Robert F. Carley, *Culture and Tactics: Gramsci, Race, and the Politics of Practice* (New York: State University of New York, 2019), 103.

192. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 328.

193. Ibid., 418.

writes, these intellectuals “need to maintain genuine links with the common people since ultimately it is the knowledge of the masses, rooted in their practical activity,” that identifies the problems that need to be solved and suggests the shared narratives that can be developed.¹⁹⁴ Only when this reciprocal exchange “between the leaders and the led” is established, Gramsci argues, can there be an organic relationship of “representation” between the intellectuals and their classes.¹⁹⁵ Organic ideologies, then, provide clear and representative mediation between the interests of social groups and their expressions in political associations.

Arbitrary ideologies, on the contrary, do not attain this degree of ‘embeddedness’ or representativeness. They exert a limited psychological appeal and material force, largely because they do not resonate with the feelings and experiences of popular social groups. Intellectuals that elaborate arbitrary ideologies are often not embedded within the social classes that they claim to represent. When an ideology is arbitrary, it inspires only “individual movements [and] polemics” that fail to direct a lasting and convincing historical bloc.¹⁹⁶ Ordinarily, these movements and polemics have little more than a temporary or esoteric significance.

The difference between organicity and arbitrariness, however, is a matter of degree, not kind. What differentiates organic ideologies from arbitrary ones is their greater capacity to transform subjectivities, relations, and apparatuses. An arbitrary ideology can produce or steer certain practices and activities, even if this effectiveness is limited. Whether an

194. Crehan, *Gramsci's Common Sense*, 37.

195. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 418.

196. *Ibid.*, 377.

ideology succeeds or fails according to Gramsci's criterion is an issue of concrete historical interpretation.

Contrary to Bobbio's thesis, Gramsci did not perceive ideology as the primary creative force in history. Yet, he also refused the vulgar Marxist claim that ideologies are passive, one-to-one reflections of material conditions. Instead of resorting to these extremes of ideologism or economism, Gramsci's concept of the historical bloc stresses the reciprocity and "*non-separation*" of material forces and ideologies.¹⁹⁷ Ideology organizes and unifies force; material conditions ground and support ideology. Gramsci compares the materiality of these ideologies to the relationship between form and content: "material forces would be inconceivable historically without form and the ideologies would be individual fancies without the material forces."¹⁹⁸ The ongoing reciprocity between the intellectual and the material (institutions, organizations, etc.) suggests that any study of ideas must investigate the conditions and contexts within which intellectuals operate.

How can we bring these theoretical insights into a historical study? Gramsci did not treat history and theory as separate disciplines. Theory is not an abstract framework that needs to be applied to a static catalogue of facts; history is not a repository of anecdotes that merely illustrate philosophical propositions. As Gramsci writes, "reality is teeming with the most bizarre coincidences, and it is the theoretician's task to find in this bizarreness new evidence for his theory, to 'translate' the elements of historical life into theoretical language—but not vice versa, where reality is made to conform to an abstract scheme."¹⁹⁹

197. Liguori, *Gramsci's Pathways*, 33.

198. *Ibid.*

199. Gramsci, *Subaltern Social Groups*, 36.

I will summarize what has been covered before we continue this study of Cultural Marxism. The following summary, as it were, is not a description of *the* Gramscian Theory of intellectuals, but, rather, a candid statement of the presuppositions that will guide my investigation—a statement of how I will think in a Gramscian way. Intellectuals, and the individuals who personify them, are active and complex ensembles of relations, practices, and functions. They exhibit varying levels of ‘embeddedness’ in the classes or fractions that they seek to represent and organize. The practices of intellectuals—the assorted techniques and activities of knowledge production—vary from the invention of highly developed and specialized philosophies to the dissemination of pre-existing ideas and narratives. Intellectuals perform organizational and connective functions in an array of associations, institutions, and organizations that comprise the hegemonic apparatus of an expanded state. They produce ideologies, which can be assessed on a spectrum of organicity and arbitrariness, to unify different elements into a stable and coherent historical bloc that pursues a common direction. (For instance, a conservative ideology may direct the practices of the economy and the State towards the preservation of traditional lifestyles and values).

Yet, the inherent antagonisms and contradictions of the capitalist system can disrupt these processes of ideological unification and leadership. Periods of intensified disequilibrium produce opportunities for intellectuals of other sects, associations and fractions to advance alternative ideologies that unite a new balance of elements under a different direction for the historical bloc. These intellectuals may redirect the educative functions of the state to reorder social relations, cultural norms, and economic activities. The reorganization of the historical bloc affects a variety of levels from the molecular textures of individuality to the institutional practices of the hegemonic apparatus.

How will these insights inform my concrete study of Cultural Marxisms? To understand the differences between the various narratives of Cultural Marxisms, one must highlight the differences between the intellectuals of, say, the LaRouche movement and the Tea Party. The LaRouchites and the Tea Partiers inhabit separate contexts, represent different social groups, and engage in differing practices. Their narratives of Cultural Marxisms serve different ideological meanings and functions. Although they share the objective of wanting to reorganize the state and impose a new direction on the historic bloc, their visions of an alternative society differ markedly. Gramscian analysis urges us to emphasize these differences and to examine how they affect specific articulations of Cultural Marxisms. In the next chapter, I will use the Gramscian methodology of conjunctural analysis to demonstrate how a crisis of direction in the United States in the mid-to-late twentieth century produced a terrain on which different political forces could produce their specific narratives of Cultural Marxisms.

Chapter 2: Origin Stories: The Terrain of the Conjunctural

“What is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity.”
 – “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” Michel Foucault

In 2010, the intellectual historian Martin Jay wrote an illuminating column for *Salmagundi* on the increasing popularity of a right-wing “conspiracy theory” known as “Cultural Marxism.” According to this theory, members of the Frankfurt School, such as Theodor Adorno, Erich Fromm, and Herbert Marcuse, emigrated to the United States of America in the 1930s to spread the so-called Marxist ideologies of political correctness, multiculturalism, and feminism. Jay traces the origin of these claims to a 1992 *Fidelio* article called “The New Dark Age: The Frankfurt School and Political Correctness” by Michael J. Minnicino, who worked for the notorious American political cult leader Lyndon LaRouche. Instead of plunging into the strange swamp of LaRouchean lore, Jay dismisses LaRouche and his acolytes as “the fringe of the fringe” who are “too confused in their ideology to be taken seriously.”²⁰⁰ Although Jay states that the LaRouche movement had “little if any significant impact on the real world,” he acknowledges that Minnicino’s warped portrait of the Frankfurt School has become disturbingly influential.²⁰¹ He warns that “the answer should not be to replace one scapegoat with another and trace all critiques of political correctness . . . to the machinations of an extremist cult,” yet he opines that “exposing the paper trail leading to Lyndon LaRouche . . . can cause some of the more

200. Jay, *Splinters in Your Eye*, 154.

201. *Ibid.*

gullible to pause before they leap into the abyss.”²⁰² After all, no sensible person would want to share the same beliefs as an eccentric megalomaniac like LaRouche.²⁰³

Jay hoped that this intervention in *Salmagundi* would deter others from sharing dubious claims about the legacy of the Frankfurt School. As he observes in a brief preface to the revised version of this column in his 2020 collection *Splinters in Your Eye*, his remarks were “frequently duplicated on a number of websites hoping to contain the damage (of the “Cultural Marxism” conspiracy theory).”²⁰⁴ Yet, he laments that his critique of Cultural Marxism was “woefully ineffective as an antidote to the meme’s continued dissemination, and, alas, disastrous political consequences.”²⁰⁵ It seems that the reason and research of “the intellectual” could not overpower the passion and propaganda of “the conspiracy theorist.”

Nonetheless, Jay’s column has become an authoritative reference-point in the conspiracy panic discourse about Cultural Marxism. No one has disputed Jay’s claim that Minnicino’s 1992 article fired the “opening salvo.”²⁰⁶ Various scholars have offered hypotheses about why this theory surfaced in the early 1990s. This is where their scholarly inquiries often turn into criminal investigations as they hunt for the craven motives that compelled Minnicino to calumniate the Frankfurt School. In most instances, these

202. Ibid., 159.

203. LaRouche has been an object of mockery and satire since at least the late 1970s. *Saturday Night Live*, a famous comedy-sketch show on the *NBC*, even aired a sketch about LaRouche called “Lyndon LaRouche Theatre,” which lampooned his conspiracy theories about Queen Elizabeth II, Henry Kissinger, and David Rockefeller.

204. Jay, *Splinters in Your Eye*, 151.

205. Ibid., 152.

206. Ibid., 154.

academics diagnose the genesis of Cultural Marxism as an immediate response to a certain historical event, such as the end of the Cold War. Other commentators even suggest that this conspiracy theory is little more than camouflaged Nazi propaganda. Yet, these conjectures often neglect the histories, ideologies, and activities of the American Right. Arguably, these scholars commit the same crime as the “conspiracy theorists” they condemn, and reduce the complicated history of this idea into a simplistic narrative. In the next few paragraphs, I examine the competing narratives about the origin of Cultural Marxism.

In his 2018 article “Cultural Marxism: A Survey,” Jérôme Jamin asserts that Cultural Marxism stemmed from a “specific vision of the end of the Cold War.”²⁰⁷ Instead of celebrating the supposed triumph of liberal democracy, a handful of conservative commentators warned that the collapse of the Soviet Union did not mean that communism was no longer a threat. According to Jamin, these commentators believed that this threat had “passed from the economic to the cultural arena.”²⁰⁸ Yet, Jamin fails to demonstrate exactly how the foreign enemy of Soviet communism was revised into this ‘enemy within’ of the Frankfurt School or why conservatives were suddenly preoccupied with cultural concerns.

In 2019, I speculated that the source of this suspicion may be traced to the diffuse anxiety of what sociologist Zygmunt Bauman called “living without an alternative.”²⁰⁹ Bauman theorizes that American capitalism needed the threat of a real or imagined

207. Jérôme Jamin, “Cultural Marxism: A Survey,” *Religion Compass*, Vol. 12, No. 1-2 (2018), 6.

208. Jamin, “Cultural Marxism,” 6.

209. Andrew Woods, “Cultural Marxism and the Cathedral: Two Alt-Right Perspectives on Critical Theory,” in *Critical Theory and the Humanities in the Age of the Alt-Right*, ed. Christine M. Battista and Melissa R. Sande (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 51.

communism to legitimize itself as a political and economic system. Once the Soviet Union ceased to be a convincing rival, conservative commentators needed a new foe from whom they could defend traditional American values and Western ideals. Consequently, the Frankfurt School was cast as the villain of this postmodern Red Scare.

Yet, I am now unconvinced that Cultural Marxism is merely a post-Cold War reprisal of McCarthyist anticommunism (a case of “exhuming McCarthy,” as R.E.M.’s 1987 anti-Reagan anthem puts it). Various exponents of Cultural Marxism had written about the Frankfurt School or complained about progressive cultural agendas before the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Minnicino penned a three-part article on the Frankfurt School called “The Authoritarian Personality: an anti-Western hoax” for the LaRouchite magazine *Executive Intelligence Review* in 1988; William S. Lind—a major disseminator of anti-Cultural Marxism polemics—co-authored a 1987 pamphlet called *Cultural Conservatism: Towards a New National Agenda* that bemoaned the rise of “cultural radicalism” on American college campuses.²¹⁰ The historical overlap between the demise of the Soviet Union and the rise of Cultural Marxism is pertinent only if one accepts Jay’s claim that this theory originated in 1992.

Other academics and journalists have also stumbled down Jay’s chronological cul-de-sac. David Neiwert, whose widely-read work shines a spotlight on the American far right, asserts that “Cultural Marxism” is a “conspiracy theory concocted by radical white nationalists in the 1990s to explain the spread of multiculturalism.”²¹¹ Furthermore, he

210. William S. Lind and William H. Marshner, *Cultural Conservatism: Toward a New National Agenda* (Washington, D.C.: Free Congress Research and Education Foundation, 1987), 6.

211. David Neiwert, “How the ‘cultural Marxism’ hoax began, and why it’s spreading into the mainstream,” *Daily Kos*, January 23, 2019, <https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2019/1/23/1828527/-How-the-cultural-Marxism-hoax-began-and-why-it-s-spreading-into-the-mainstream>.

notes that this theory has been “nurtured by a combination of neo-Nazis and nationalists over the ensuing years.”²¹² Although Neiwert is correct about the later uses of this theory, he remains mistaken about its origins. Whereas the neo-Nazi Liberty Lobby issued a 2002 report called *Cultural Communism: The Vivisection of America* that blames the Frankfurt School for multiculturalism, Minnicino’s article was more preoccupied with sex, drugs, and media manipulation.

In their 2020 article “Cultural Marxism: far-right conspiracy theory in Australia’s culture wars,” Rachel Busbridge, Benjamin Moffitt, and John Thorburn offer the most convincing hypothesis for the origins of this theory. They point out that “political correctness was a point of contention in the US college culture wars between progressives and conservatives between 1990 and 1992,” and theorize that the “discourse of Cultural Marxism” added a “conspiratorial spin” to this debate.²¹³ Instead of acknowledging the grievances of marginalized students on university campuses, American conservatives could insinuate that political correctness was the result of a secretive Marxist plot. I admit that the culture wars of the 1990s fueled the spread of Cultural Marxism, but Busbridge et al. do not explain why the American New Right framed this debate as a cultural issue.

Ironically, some observers suggest that Cultural Marxism was itself the product of a right-wing conspiracy. The media scholar Tanner Mirrlees contends that, following the end of the Cold War, “paleoconservative thinktanks and white nationalist organizations resurrected the Nazi idea of ‘Cultural Bolshevism’ but renamed it ‘Cultural Marxism.’”²¹⁴

212. Neiwert, “How the ‘cultural Marxism’ hoax began, and why it’s spreading into the mainstream.”

213. Rachel Busbridge, Benjamin Moffitt, and Joshua Thorburn, “Cultural Marxism: far-right conspiracy theory in Australia’s culture wars,” *Social Identities*, Vol. 26, No. 6 (2020), 4-5.

Similarly, the reporter Ari Paul claims that certain paleoconservative thinkers, such as Lind and Paul Weyrich, recrafted “Cultural Bolshevism” with “just enough cosmetic changes to make it acceptable for the moderate right.”²¹⁵ The conflation of “Cultural Marxism” with “Cultural Bolshevism” is a matter of semantic confusion that can be swiftly refuted. The phrase “Cultural Marxism” does not appear in Minnicino’s 1992 article. Weyrich and Lind’s notion of Cultural Marxism is little more than a re-coining of what they once called “cultural radicalism.”²¹⁶ Contrary to Mirrlees’ claims, white nationalist organizations did not feel any obligation to retire or revise the term “Cultural Bolshevism.” When one reads the work of various prominent antisemites and white supremacists in the 2000s, one learns that they were more than willing to use “Cultural Marxism” and “Cultural Bolshevism” synonymously.²¹⁷ Only in the late 1990s did white nationalist organizations (Liberty Lobby and others) adopt Lind’s narrative of Cultural Marxism to rejuvenate earlier neo-Nazi theories about race and culture. In this sense, Mirrlees and Paul are correct to suggest that some neo-Nazis and white supremacists use Cultural Marxism as a new-and-improved version of “Cultural Bolshevism.” Yet, they do not offer a credible explanation for why the

214. Tanner Mirrlees, “The Alt-Right’s discourse of ‘Cultural Marxism’: A political instrument of intersectional hate,” *Atlantis*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (2018), 53.

215. Ari Paul, “‘Cultural Marxism’: The Mainstreaming of a Nazi Trope,” *FAIR*, June 4, 2019, <https://fair.org/home/cultural-marxism-the-mainstreaming-of-a-nazi-trope/>.

216. Lind’s first fleeting reference to “cultural Marxism”—the very first time that he combines the words “cultural” and “Marxism”—appears in a 1994 co-authored Marine Corps Gazette article called “Fourth Generation Warfare: Another Look.” Lind and his co-authors suggest that “multiculturalism” and “political correctness” are nothing more than “Marxism translated from economic into social and cultural terms.” They warn that this “new, cultural Marxism has had remarkable success in discrediting America’s common culture and substituting for it cultural fragmentation based on ethnic groups, gender, sexual identity, and class.”

217. DD2K, “File:Screen grab of Cultural Marxism articles on Wikipedia and Metapedia.png,” *Wikimedia Commons*, December 6, 2014, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Screen_grab_of_Cultural_Marxism_articles_on_Wikipedia_and_Metapedia.png.

LaRouche movement or the Free Congress Foundation initially produced these narratives about the Frankfurt School.

Similarly, a couple of writers exclaim that this myth of Cultural Marxism represents the uncanny return of the early twentieth-century antisemitic trope “Judeo-Bolshevism.” In his 2019 book *A Specter Haunting Europe*, Paul Hanebrink defines Judeo-Bolshevism as “the belief that communism was created by a Jewish conspiracy and that Jews were therefore to blame for the crimes committed by communist regimes.”²¹⁸ Those who spread this belief revived the conspiracist hoax *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* to portray the 1917 Russian Revolution, as well as the 1918 Aster Revolution in Hungary and the 1919 Spartacist Uprising in Germany, as the first maneuvers of a secret Jewish strategy to destroy Christendom. In a 2019 *Jacobin* article, the political commentators Ellen Engelstad and Mímir Kristjánsson argue that the British politician Winston Churchill and Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels drew on these prevailing antisemitic myths to justify their anticommunist stances. Yet, once they discuss these historical examples, Engelstad and Kristjánsson leap decades into the future to describe the references to Cultural Marxism in the Norwegian white supremacist terrorist Anders Behring Breivik’s 2011 manifesto as “almost an echo” of Goebbels’ speeches.²¹⁹ Likewise, the historian Samuel Moyn observes that the “wider discourses around cultural Marxism today resembles nothing so much as a version of the Judeobolshevik myth updated for a new age.”²²⁰

218. Paul Hanebrink, *A Specter Haunting Europe: The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 4.

219. Ellen Engelstad and Mímir Kristjánsson, “The Return of ‘Judeo-Bolshevism,’” *Jacobin*, February 16, 2019, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/02/antisemitism-judaism-bolsheviks-socialists-conspiracy-theories>.

220. Samuel Moyn, “The Alt-Right’s Favourite Meme is 100 Years Old.”

Although it is important to highlight the antisemitic connotations of Cultural Marxism, I do not think that these acts of historical leapfrogging reveal anything about how these narratives function in contemporary right-wing discourses. I expect that a comparative study of Judeo-Bolshevism and Cultural Marxism may yield helpful insights about the common structural features of fascist scapegoating, yet I do not think that these loose analogies provide a firm foundation for an analysis of Cultural Marxism.

Admittedly, most of these writers cannot spare much space on an involved investigation into the origin of Cultural Marxism. They must follow the standard word counts of journal articles, book chapters, and magazine pieces, which means they must explain why these distortions about the Frankfurt School gained currency in certain parts of the American Right in a succinct manner. Nonetheless, the phrasing of their one-sentence explanations implies that the root cause is straightforwardly identifiable. The framing procedures of conspiracy panic discourse convince these commentators that the “Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory” is a stable object that must have a clear and identifiable moment of origin. Yet, as they try to tell a simple story about the birth of Cultural Marxism, they divorce it from longer political and cultural trajectories. For instance, Jamin’s explanation does not even acknowledge the decades of New Right activism in the United States that pursued a staunchly conservative agenda on cultural issues long before the fall of the Berlin Wall. Other writers have contented themselves with simple identifications of cause-and-effect, i.e. Mirrlees insists that the end of the Cold War (cause) caused conservatives to revive a Nazi-era slur (effect). Whenever scholars propose an immediate cause for the emergence of Cultural Marxism, they isolate individuals from their historical contexts. They treat the propagators of this myth merely as “right-wingers”

who say and do “right-wing things” because they are “right-wing.” This is the sort of simplistic analysis that Stuart Hall describes as “a theory of the obvious,” because it repeats what we already know and provides us with a sense of satisfying, albeit hollow, wisdom.²²¹

Every ‘theory of the obvious’ reduces reality to a rigid and predetermined schema. Those who settle for the ‘obvious’ answer assume, as Gramsci quips, “that they can have the whole of history and all political and philosophical wisdom in their pockets at little cost and no trouble, concentrated into a few short formulae.”²²² They draw unqualified parallels between the propaganda of the Nazi party in interwar Germany and the polemics of the American New Right in the 1990s, as though right-wing politics remains identical in different national and cultural contexts. Matters of historical specificity and difference are often neglected in a ‘theory of the obvious.’

Identifying the proper relationship between an idea and its contexts is never an uncomplicated task. The field of intellectual history is notorious for its inability to settle what is known as the “text-context” question.²²³ What does it mean to situate an idea within a context? How can we judge the parameters of context? Where does one context border or overlap with another? What happens when ideas move between different

221. Stuart Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal*, 165.

222. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 164.

223 For more on this methodological debate, consult the following texts: Quentin Skinner, “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas,” *History and Theory*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1969), 3-53; Dominick LaCapra, “Rethinking Intellectual History and Reading Texts,” *History and Theory*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (October 1980), 245-276; Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 185-213; Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Citizens and Lords: A Social History of Western Political Thought From Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (New York: Verso, 2008), 1-27, and Martin Jay, *Genesis and Validity: The Theory and Practice of Intellectual History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022), 34-47.

contexts? Is the appropriate context for studying an idea or text psycho-biographical, discursive, institutional, epochal, national, global? To what extent do these different contexts affect the shaping and dissemination of an idea? Is it possible to distinguish between broader contexts that affect ideas indirectly and specific contexts that exert a much more direct influence? To answer these questions (particularly the last one), I turn to Gramsci for a method to map the multilayered contexts that shape the production and propagation of ideas: *conjunctural analysis*.

Conjunctural Analysis

Conjunctural analysis, as Hall defines it, is a historical methodology that magnifies “the specificity of a historical conjuncture: how different forces come together, conjuncturally, to create the new terrain on which a different politics must form up.”²²⁴ He attributes this kind of analysis to Gramsci, whose work emphasizes the concrete study of “politics, ideology and the state, the character of different types of political regimes, the importance of cultural and national-popular questions, and the role of civil society in the shifting balance of relations between different social forces in society.”²²⁵ As Hall reminds us, Gramsci’s theorizing operated on a specific and “historico-concrete” level of abstraction.²²⁶ The major concepts of Marxist theory, such as “the capitalist mode of production,” function at the most general level of abstraction to help us to grasp the “epochal” nature of capitalism (“the broad processes which organize and structure the capitalist mode of

224. Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal*, 163.

225. Stuart Hall, “Gramsci’s Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity,” *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1986), 8.

226. Hall, “Gramsci’s Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity,” 7.

production when reduced to its bare essentials, and at any stage or moment of its historical development”).²²⁷ Although Gramsci worked within a Marxist frame of reference, he directed his analysis towards the study of “specific historical social formations [and] particular societies at specific stages in the development of capitalism.”²²⁸ To put it a bit more directly, he shifted the focus of Marxist theorizing from level of the “epochal” to that of the “national.” And so, one can think of conjunctural analysis as a tool for identifying the particular relations between different economic, social, cultural and political forces in a nation in a specific historical period.

The central methodological principle of conjunctural analysis is the distinction between the organic and the conjunctural. Gramsci warns that a “common error in historico-political analysis consists in an inability to find the correct relation” between these two levels of movement.²²⁹ One must define these terms precisely before carrying out a conjunctural analysis.²³⁰

Organic movements are “relatively permanent.”²³¹ The level of the organic includes “wider social groups—beyond the public figures and beyond the top leaders.”²³² Gramsci

227. Ibid.

228. Ibid.

229. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 178.

230. Kate Crehan’s *Gramsci’s Common Sense* offers a succinct and clarifying distinction between the organic and conjunctural that links these terms to Gramsci’s education as a philologist: “To understand what *organic* signifies in the notebooks, it is helpful to remember [Gramsci’s] training in philology. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*, within philology, *organic* means ‘belonging to the etymological structure of a word; not secondary or fortuitous.’ The organic is inherent, structural. The conjunctural, while certainly real, could always be other than it is without changing the basic structural realities.”

231. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 177

232. Ibid.

theorizes that organic movements affect the fundamental patterns of a society more than the day-to-day to-and-fro of ordinary politics. Organic phenomena include the stable and regular practices of the State—in its expanded sense, i.e. the permanent institutions of civil and state intellectuality—and the economic structure. Organic forces and movements may shape the flows of everyday politics indirectly, but they are rarely “immediately operative.”²³³ Those who assume that the organic entirely determines the outcomes of social and political life commit what Gramsci calls “an exaggeration of mechanical causes.”²³⁴ The level of the organic may establish and maintain the ideological direction of the historical bloc, yet political contestation between different factions may still occur. The distinction between the organic and conjunctural levels refutes the vulgar Marxist assumption that “every fluctuation of politics and ideology can be presented and expounded as an immediate expression of the structure.”²³⁵ The indirectness of organic movements assures, as Filippini notes, that “the old social structure preserves a certain unity and strength, that is, as long as ‘regularities’ and ‘automatisms’ subsist in the majority of cases.”²³⁶ The *organic* defines the durable elements (regularities and automatisms) of the social fabric, such as those institutions and relationships that can endure fleeting moments of economic fluctuation and political revolt.

The organic retains its stability insofar as it “maintains *enough* of its institutions, organizations, routines, rituals, and practices alongside *a broad enough stratum* of functionally necessary roles, responsibilities, and relationships, that are still integrated into

233. Ibid., 178.

234. Ibid.

235. Ibid., 407.

236. Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, 95.

the economy.”²³⁷ As long as these organic elements remain within the parameters of this *enough*-ness, the ruling ideological direction will hold. Yet, as I acknowledged in the previous chapter, periods of intensified crisis—the destabilization of various elements—can weaken and interrupt the more permanent aspects of a society. During these shifts and disruptions, alternative or oppositional groups may seize certain political opportunities to modify organic elements. This is where the level of the conjunctural enters the analysis.

Readers of the 1971 edition of *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* may gain an incomplete understanding of ‘the conjunctural.’ In this text, Gramsci defines conjunctural movements as “occasional, immediate, almost accidental” phenomena that “give rise to political criticism of a minor, day-to-day character.”²³⁸ Although the conjunctural depends on organic movements, it does not have “any very far-reaching historical significance.”²³⁹ The editors and translators of this edition, Quintin Hoare and Gregory Nowell Smith, include two abridged Notes (from Notebook 6 and 15) in a footnote to show that Gramsci defined the conjuncture as “the set of immediate and ephemeral characteristics of the economic situation.”²⁴⁰ Consequently, the first-time (or even second- and third-time)

237. Carley, *Cultural Studies Methodology and Political Strategy*, 67.

238. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 177.

239. *Ibid.*

240. *Ibid.* This is the full footnote on pg. 177 in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*: “On PP. pp. 148-49 Gramsci wrote: “The conjuncture can be defined as the set of circumstances which determine the market in a given phase, provided that these are conceived of as being in movement, i.e. as constituting a process of ever-changing combination, a process which is the economic cycle . . . In Italian, the meaning of ‘favourable or unfavourable economic situation (*occasione*)’ remains attached to the word remains attached to the word ‘conjuncture.’ Difference between ‘situation’ and ‘conjuncture’: the conjuncture is the set of immediate and ephemeral characteristics of the economic situation . . . Study of the conjuncture is thus more closely linked to immediate politics, to ‘tactics’ and agitation, while the ‘situation’ relates to ‘strategy’ and propaganda, etc.”

reader of the *Selections* may get the impression that Gramsci considered the conjunctural to be something minor and unimportant. Yet, as Carley demonstrates, Hoare and Smith's footnote excises a crucial part of Gramsci's definition of the conjuncture. The third volume of Joseph Buttigieg's translation of the *Prison Notebooks* provides a full version of the second Note in Hoare and Smith's footnote:

<130>. *Encyclopedic notions. Conjuncture.* The origin of the word: it helps to understand the concept better. In Italian = economic fluctuation. Linked to very rapidly changing postwar phenomena. (In Italian, the term "conjuncture" still means "favorable or unfavorable [economic] opportunity." Difference between "situation" and "conjuncture": conjuncture is the ensemble of the immediate and transitory peculiarities of the economic situation, and one must therefore take this concept to refer to the most fundamental and enduring characteristics of the situation itself. The study of the conjuncture, then, is more closely related to immediate politics, to 'tactics' [and agitation], where 'situation' is related to 'strategy' and to propaganda, etc.)²⁴¹

What stands out in this unabridged quotation is the description of the conjunctural as "the most fundamental and enduring characteristics of the situation itself." Although the conjunctural may appear transitory or accidental, it represents the level at which certain political forces can shift the more permanent aspects of the social formation. The conjunctural denotes the level of political force at which parties, sects, and other associations carry out tactical maneuvers to either preserve or oppose the existing order. As Carley points out, this concept of the conjuncture "positions [it] as the most fundamental and enduring characteristic within the framework of the analysis of a situation that is prompted by the onset of an organic crisis."²⁴²

241. Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks, Volume III* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 105

242. Carley, *Cultural Studies Methodology and Political Strategy*, 54.

When the organic forces and facts of a society become unstable, various political forces can try to steer the reconfiguration of social, cultural and economic life. Carley writes that, not only is “the conjuncture . . . (in part) a rapid intensification and extreme fluctuation of (a *struggle* to conserve and defend) political, institutional, and policy-based attempts to maintain social order,” but it also “represents an opportunity structure for the organization and implementation of alternatives that begin to reorder relations that are constituent to and constitutive of social life.”²⁴³ As I discussed in the previous chapter, Gramsci saw crises as a continual process rather than a single event. A crisis can last for decades as the structural contradictions that frame capitalist society worsen. Different political forces may attempt to intensify, soften, or overcome these contradictions at different moments of conjunctural fluctuation. Conjunctures represent temporary opportunities to restructure the relations of force that constitute the organic levels.

How are these various levels of force constituted? Where do they belong in Gramsci’s distinction between the organic and the conjunctural? In the *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci introduces a series of analytical distinctions to define different levels or ‘moments’ in the relations of forces.

The first level is a relation of social force that remains closely linked to economic production. Gramsci describes these relations of production as “objective,” “independent of human will,” and quantifiable (i.e. “can be measured with the systems of the exact or physical sciences”).²⁴⁴ The development of production forms a basis for the emergence of “various social classes” that perform specific functions and occupy a certain position in the

243. Ibid., 75.

244. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 180.

structure.²⁴⁵ These classes absorb ways of living and customs—somewhat passively—from a mixture of state imperatives, economic routines, and cultural traditions. The measurement of these social forces is helpful for discussing whether “in a particular society there exist the necessary and sufficient conditions for its transformation . . . [and] to check the degrees of realism and practicability of the various ideologies which have been born on its own terrain.”²⁴⁶ Practical political strategies require an understanding of whether this relatively permanent level of social force can be redirected into a new historical bloc.

The second level is the relation of political force. Whereas social forces can be precisely measured, political forces need to be carefully evaluated according to their “degree of homogeneity, self-awareness, and organization.”²⁴⁷ The task of organizing these forces introduces the question of intellectuals who can perform mediating functions between the interests of social classes and the strategies of political associations. Intellectuals help to organize members of various social forces into a unified political force—a social bloc. The strength and coherence of these political forces reflects “various moments of collective political consciousness.”²⁴⁸ Gramsci identifies three main moments of political consciousness: economic-corporate, economic, and political.

The economic-corporate reflects the unity and self-awareness of a professional group, yet it does not indicate the development of class consciousness. As Gramsci describes it, “a tradesman feels *obliged* to stand by another tradesman, a manufacturer by another manufacturer, etc., but the tradesman does not yet feel solidarity with the

245. Ibid.

246. Ibid., 181.

247. Ibid.

248. Ibid.

manufacturer.”²⁴⁹ Consequently, economic-corporate forces demand benefits and concessions from their employers without grasping the link between their specific dispute and the antagonistic dynamics of the capitalist mode of production.

The second moment marks the point at which members of a social class reach a “solidarity of interests” in the purely economic sphere.²⁵⁰ They claim a right to participate in the legislation and administration of the State in a conciliatory manner, and propose reforms that do not threaten the fundamental economic structure. Organizations, such as trade unions and interest groups, may become incorporated into the superstructures of civil society, where they can bargain for a greater recognition of their interests within the existing historical bloc.

The third moment is the purely political phase where “one becomes aware that one’s own corporate interests, in their present and future development, transcend the corporate limits of the purely economic class, and can and must become the interests of other subordinate groups too.”²⁵¹ There is a high degree of organizational coherence to develop “a unison of economic and political aims,” as well as “intellectual and moral unity,” on a “universal” plane.²⁵² This is the phase at which a class—or class fraction—can propose an all-encompassing vision of an alternative society to direct a process of societal transformation. They generate a political force with an ideological direction that can reconfigure the permanent aspects of the historical bloc.

249. Ibid.

250. Ibid.

251. Ibid.

252. Ibid., 181-182.

The third level is *politico-military* force.²⁵³ Although I rarely address this level in my analysis, I must acknowledge that the processes of social hegemony occur within the national boundaries of a state that inhabits a larger geopolitical and military context. The strength of a nation's military can shape the possibilities for internal dissent and revolt. The armed forces (or even a militarized police force) may be deployed to defend the organic structure of a society from domestic or external threats. This is a fact that hints at the deeper meanings of Gramsci's observation that hegemony is "protected by the armor of coercion."²⁵⁴

How are these relations of force linked to the distinction between the organic and the conjunctural? Social forces are organic to the economic structure; politico-military forces, as well as civil and state institutions, are organic to the superstructure. These structural and superstructural forces comprise the organic elements of a historical bloc. They dictate the social, cultural, and institutional norms, patterns, and routines that permeate a society. The relations of political force lie between these two major permanent levels.

The level of political forces—parties, social movements, associations and organizations—belongs to the realm of the conjunctural. The potency of each political force springs from its degree of unity and autonomy, consciousness, and organization. Intellectuals perform an essential organizational and connective function within these political forces as they work to produce coherent ideologies that preserve or propose a *direzione* for a historical bloc. Periods of intensified disequilibrium present opportunities

253. Ibid., 183.

254. Ibid., 263.

for highly organized political forces to adjust and intervene in the permanent features of a society. They may reform existing institutions or build new ones to alter the superstructural composition of the expanded state. They can operate these institutions to reshape the educative functions of the state and reorganize organic forces according to a new ideological direction.

Conjunctural analysis can generate new insights about why ideas of Cultural Marxism became useful for the American Right. We must remember that Cultural Marxism is not a single narrative with a clear time and place of origin, but, rather, an ever-changing combination of narrative elements that possesses different meanings and functions for various political forces. Intellectuals, such as Minnicino and Lind, recombined these elements to produce narratives of Cultural Marxism that functioned to organize and mobilize different political forces. Conjunctural analysis illuminates the terrain on which these forces emerged and developed. Furthermore, it demonstrates how shifts in the broader societal context—fluctuations on the permanent levels of force—affected the production, promotion, and pertinence of these ideas. Consequently, we can think of conjunctural analysis as a method for situating the different articulations of Cultural Marxism within the specific contexts of certain political forces, as well as in the larger context of the relation of forces in American society.

In the rest of this chapter, I use conjunctural analysis to study the conditions for the formation of the political forces that would eventually propagate ideas of Cultural Marxism. I contend that these forces emerged during the realignment of political and cultural life that followed the slow destabilization of the brief equilibrium that the historian Godfrey Hodgson calls the *liberal consensus*. I characterize this liberal consensus as a

relatively robust and organic hegemonic order that guided the political, institutional, and cultural norms of the United States in the postwar period. I suggest that the disintegration of this order resulted from its failure to overcome a series of ideological and economic challenges (a failure of *direzione*). I borrow Andrew Hartman’s fruitful notion of *normative America* to describe the social and cultural mores that began to wane during this crisis. I demonstrate that various conjunctural forces saw the weakening of the liberal consensus as an opportunity to adjust the permanent features of society according to their own proposals. Finally, I argue that these forces saw *culture* as a key terrain on which to conduct their ideological struggles. And I insist that this conception of culture as a site of contestation informed the types of political projects that would eventually use Cultural Marxism as a polemical tool. The aftermath of the liberal consensus’ decline, as I demonstrate in later chapters, is key to understanding why Cultural Marxism functioned as such a compelling set of narratives for those on the American Right.

The Liberal Consensus and Normative America

In his 1976 book *America in Our Time*, Hodgson uses the term “liberal consensus” to describe the set of hegemonic assumptions that guided American political economy and foreign policy in the mid-twentieth century.²⁵⁵ Although Hodgson reflects that this idea was somewhat “schematic and oversimplified,” it remains a helpful term for characterizing the exercise of social hegemony in postwar America.²⁵⁶ The liberal consensus built on the

255. Godfrey Hodgson, *America in Our Time: From World War II to Nixon—What Happened and Why* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 491. Hodgson admits that the use of the adjective “liberal” may seem somewhat misleading, because this postwar consensus was ultimately a “fusion of certain elements from both liberal and conservative traditions.”

256. Godfrey Hodgson, “Revisiting the Liberal Consensus,” in *The Liberal Consensus Reconsidered: American Politics and Society in the Postwar Era*, ed. by Robert Mason and Iwan Morgan (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2017), 12. As Michael Heale notes in his contribution to the 2017

historical accomplishments and automatisms of the New Deal Order, which had shaped a national-Keynesian social democracy that incorporated various social and political forces—industrial unions, intellectuals, major manufacturing corporations, African Americans, immigrants, the urban working and middle classes—into a robust and sustainable bloc. Central to the liberal consensus was the management of a political compromise between liberals and conservatives. Whereas liberals accepted a fiercely anticommunist foreign policy, conservatives tolerated the practices of the New Deal domestic philosophy. Hodgson describes this settlement as a “strange hybrid” of “liberal conservatism.”²⁵⁷ The two main political parties, the Democrats and the Republicans, maintained careful control over the selection of candidates and the development of policy through their strong and hierarchical party machines.

Talk of consensus and compromise might suggest that this period was a time of ideological harmony. Yet, this consensus was built on a strict and continuous process of exclusion. Communists and ‘fellow travelers,’ on the one side of the political spectrum, were kicked out of the national debate, and subjected to intense scrutiny and punishment by the coercive institutions of internal security. On the other, ‘mainstream’ conservative publications chastised ‘extreme’ right-wing groups and excluded them from the boundaries

collection *The Liberal Consensus Reconsidered*, Hodgson clearly located this liberal consensus in the brief period between 1955 and 1963. Although I do not wish to spark a debate about the provisional and fragile nature of historical periodization, one could make a case for extending the timeline of Hodgson’s “liberal consensus” thesis from 1947 to 1976. Such a re-periodization would stretch from the onset of what Francis Stoner Sanders calls “the cultural cold war”—the CIA’s covert funding of cultural initiatives that promoted a liberal anticommunism—to Nelson Rockefeller’s quiet withdrawal from the position of Gerald Ford’s running mate in the 1976 Presidential election. Insofar as the liberal consensus embodied the values and ideals of what is often called “the Eastern Establishment,” these two events mark the ascendancy and dissipation of its hegemonic influence over American public and private life. See also Rick Perlstein’s four-book series on the rise of modern conservatism in American politics, which follows the long decline of the liberal consensus from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s.

257. Hodgson, *America in Our Time*, 73.

of permissible discourse.²⁵⁸ As Alex Goodall describes it, the liberal consensus was a moment of “forced homogenization” that united the force of juridical domination with the consent of social and cultural institutions.²⁵⁹ What may appear as “consensus” rested on a temporarily-secure and coercive distribution of who gets to speak and act, and what they get to say and do.

What did the liberal consensus represent? According to Hodgson, the ideology of the liberal consensus features six interrelated assumptions: that postwar American capitalism can generate abundance for all; that this capacity derives from its potential for endless economic growth; that this growth assures a natural harmony of interests as it provides the basis for a more equal society; that it furnishes the government with enough resources to solve social ills; that, as communism is the main threat to this beneficent capitalist system, America and its allies must engage it in a prolonged struggle, and that America’s destiny is to spread the values and ideals of this form of capitalism to the rest of the world.²⁶⁰ The ideological tenets of the liberal consensus matched the prosperity and power of postwar America. From 1946 to 1973, the United States enjoyed a period of tremendous economic buoyancy with high rates of growth as well as low unemployment and inflation. The gross national product soared 250 percent between 1945 and 1960. Spending on new construction projects multiplied nine-fold; consumption of personal

258. Samuel Brenner’s essay “Fellow Travelers: Overlap between ‘Mainstream’ and ‘Extremist’ Conservatives in the Early 1960s” in the 2012 collection *The Right Side of the Sixties* demonstrates that the ‘respectable’ American conservatives of William F. Buckley’s *National Review* and the so-called ‘lunatic fringe’ of Robert Welch’s John Birch Society were much more similar in ideology and practice than the distinction between ‘mainstream’ and ‘extreme’ conservatism suggests.

259. Alex Goodall, “Red-Hunting and Internal Security: Conflict in the Age of Consensus,” in *The Liberal Consensus Reconsidered: American Politics and Society in the Postwar Era*, ed. by Robert Mason and Iwan Morgan (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2017), 143

260. Hodgson, *America in our Time*, 67-98.

services, three-fold. A combination of extensive Federal investment and rapid technological innovation helped to increase productivity 200 percent per capita from 1945 to 1956. From 1945 to 1960, per capita income increased 35 percent. The postwar order established a compact between labor and capital that helped to raise the living standards of the American working class. As Mike Davis writes, “the stability of the wage-productivity trade-off between capital and organized labor allowed the US working class increasingly to reproduce itself as a collectivity of privatized consumers.”²⁶¹ Nearly 60 percent of the American population achieved “middle-class” standards of living by the mid-1950s through a “‘wage-led’ dynamic of mass consumption.”²⁶²

Of course, Hodgson acknowledges this guiding ideology obscured the contradictions in the social reality of the post-war United States. Even as the functionaries of the liberal consensus promoted this worldview, nearly one-fifth of the nation’s population lived in a state of poverty. In his critique of Hodgson’s thesis, Gary Gerstle remarks that millions of whites—in the North and the South—were “not ready to relinquish segregation, whether formal or informal, public or private, and its associated assumptions of racial ‘supremacy.’”²⁶³ The ranks of the Democratic Party were full of Southern politicians, such as George Wallace and Strom Thurmond, who wanted to preserve Jim Crow laws and obstruct the passage of Civil Rights legislation. Similarly, Helen Laville remarks that an “unquestioning acceptance of conservative understandings

261. Mike Davis, *Prisoners of the American Dream: Politics and Economy in the History of the US Working Class* (Thetford: Verso, 1986), 191.

262. Davis, *Prisoners of the American Dream*, 190.

263. Gary Gerstle, “The Reach and Limits of the Liberal Consensus,” in *The Liberal Consensus Reconsidered: American Politics and Society in the Postwar Era*, ed. by Robert Mason and Iwan Morgan (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2017), 60.

of gender roles was vital to the construction of the economic and ideological maxims that underlay liberal consensus.”²⁶⁴ The aim of equality for all did not necessarily include racial, gender, and class equality. “Even in the 1950s,” Hodgson concedes, “it was obvious that the consensus ignored many of the realities of American society.”²⁶⁵ The eventual demise of the liberal consensus stemmed from its failures to manage these contradictions, as well as its inability to combat ideological challenges from emerging political forces.

Michael Heale observes that Hodgson’s portrait of the liberal consensus is “almost Gramscian.”²⁶⁶ As Andrew Ross remarks in an essay on the links between the liberal consensus and Cold War containment policy, “never had there been a moment in American history when such a large body of prominent intellectuals could be so identifiably linked to the process of cultural legitimation that is central to Gramsci’s concept of hegemony.”²⁶⁷ What Gramsci categorizes as the moment of “hegemony” is the point at which a class or class-fraction can convincingly present its interests as “universal,” rather than particular or “corporate.”²⁶⁸ The intellectuals of the liberal consensus performed the task of developing a worldview that appeared to reflect the broader interests and aspirations of subordinate

264. Helen Laville, “Gender in an Era of Liberal Consensus,” in *The Liberal Consensus Reconsidered: American Politics and Society in the Postwar Era*, ed. by Robert Mason and Iwan Morgan (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2017), 246. In her analysis of the Women’s Association, Laville shows that women were permitted to enter public life within the framework of the liberal consensus insofar as they conformed to prevailing standards of femininity or presented themselves in their roles as mothers and wives.

265. Hodgson, “Revisiting the Liberal Consensus,” 25.

266. Michael Heale, “Historians and the Liberal Consensus,” in *The Liberal Consensus Reconsidered: American Politics and Society in the Postwar Era*, ed. by Robert Mason and Iwan Morgan (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2017), 32.

267. Andrew Ross, *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 55.

268. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 182.

groups within the American population. They packaged their ideology as a “non-ideology” or, as the title of Daniel Bell’s 1960 text expressed it, *The End of Ideology*. They organized widespread consent to a hegemonic project that seemed capable of addressing larger social problems—of supplying individual and group satisfaction and development. For instance, the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 represented major legislative reforms to address the demands of the Civil Rights Movements and the problem of large-scale poverty.

The defenders of the liberal consensus, as Hodgson notes, were primarily the functionaries of a ruling elite. The credo of this elite was not merely something that they carried about in their heads, as though their ideal of consensus was merely a shared fantasy or collective whim. The ideology of liberal consensus was produced and reproduced within and from a set of dominant cultural institutions that encouraged certain values and practices. As Gramsci writes in Notebook 3, Note 49, the ruling class of a society tends to establish an “ideological structure,” that is, a “material organization meant to preserve, defend, and develop the theoretical or ideological ‘front’.”²⁶⁹ The use of military language in this Note, from “the ideological ‘front’” to the “formidable complex of trenches and fortifications of the ruling class,” suggests that there is a continuous struggle to defend the dominant hegemony from various threats.²⁷⁰ And this struggle encompasses a variety of spheres and operates on a range of different levels within the ideological structure of the ruling class. “Everything that directly or indirectly influences or could influence public

269. Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks: Volume II*, 52.

270. *Ibid.*, 52-53.

opinion,” Gramsci observes, “belongs to it: libraries, schools, associations and clubs of various kinds, even architecture, the layout of streets and their names.”²⁷¹ The brief hegemony of the liberal consensus represented a period of control over many of the permanent structures that shaped public opinion. Gramsci’s remarks about ideological structure imply that the success of the liberal consensus was not simply based on a victory in a contest of ideas, but, rather, on the occupation of dominant institutions in American political culture. In short, there was an organic reciprocity—a *non-separation*—between ideology and force, ideas and institutions.

According to Hodgson, the ideological structure of the liberal consensus consisted of three main spheres. Prestigious American universities, which received extensive funding from the federal government and defense industries to support research in the sciences and humanities, promoted the ideals of ‘universalism’ and ‘objectivity’ insofar as they aligned with the cultural values of the liberal consensus.²⁷² Those who were educated at these elite universities sought employment in initiatives or institutions that were funded by the large, liberally-minded foundations. The main philanthropic foundations—Rockefeller, Ford, Carnegie—supported research projects, cultural endeavors, and policy groups that matched the public philosophy of the liberal consensus. Other proponents of this consensus occupied positions in the national media.²⁷³ In the middle of the twentieth-century, almost every major newspaper group was becoming a monopoly. Most newspapers aspired to reflect the ‘neutral’ and ‘objective’ values of the rising liberal consensus, otherwise they

271. Ibid., 53.

272. Henry Heller, *The Capitalist University: The Transformations of Higher Education in the United States Since 1945* (Northampton: Pluto Press, 2016), 42-45.

273. Hodgson, *America in Our Time*, 134-152.

would lose their credibility and damage their sales. Similarly, the major television networks—ABC, CBS, NBC—were bound to party neutrality by the regulator and hoped to maximize their ratings by portraying themselves as authoritative sources of reporting. These permanent ideological structures required a vast division and specialization of intellectual activities from the university professors who developed sophisticated philosophies that articulated the worldview of the consensus to reporters who framed daily events within the liberal vocabulary.

Hodgson summarizes the institutional basis and ideological worldview of the liberal consensus as a projection of “the values and interests of an elite based in New York, Boston, and Washington that emphasized anticommunism abroad and an optimistic, melioristic version of capitalism at home.”²⁷⁴ The implicit cooperation of these institutions served to protect the boundaries of liberal consensus and ensured that their ideological vocabulary defined the terms of political and cultural debate. Many of these institutions, as well as the intellectual ‘functionaries’ who occupied them, were firmly embedded in the organic superstructure of American society and remained relatively invulnerable to the to-and-fro of fleeting political tempers.

The superstructures of the liberal consensus affected the “molecular” textures of ordinary American life. They regulated the boundaries of what could be considered normal, natural and acceptable in a variety of spheres: education, consumption, high and popular culture, domestic life, etc. Not only did the liberal consensus exclude the ‘extremes’ of political opinion, but it also marginalized what was perceived as ‘other’ or ‘unacceptable’ culture(s). The permanent superstructures of the expanded State employed

274. Hodgson, “Revisiting the Liberal Consensus,” 19.

positive and negative sanctions—public opinion, criminalization, social taboos—to adapt “the morality of the broadest popular masses to the necessities of the continuous development of the economic apparatus of production.”²⁷⁵

In the 2019 edition of his book *A War for the Soul of America*, the historian Andrew Hartman coins the term *normative America* to characterize these “cluster of powerful conservative norms [that] set the parameters of American culture.”²⁷⁶ Hartman proposes this phrase as an analytical category that captures the “inchoate group of assumptions and aspirations shared by millions of Americans during the postwar years.”²⁷⁷ The ideal type of the *normative American*, as Hartman describes it, was supposed to prize the values of personal responsibility and individual merit, hold “stringent sexual expectations” about monogamy and heterosexuality, adopt the “strict gender roles” of the conventional family unit, profess faith in the teachings of Christianity, and celebrate national identity and heritage.²⁷⁸ Hartman argues that many Americans, especially in the newly-constructed and sprawling postwar suburbs, aspired to embody this ideal type in some way. He suggests that “such an extraordinary degree of conformity had to with Cold War imperatives.”²⁷⁹ The strength of the liberal consensus—seemingly the only alternative to rampant world communism—depended on “cultural and ideological stability.”²⁸⁰ The

275. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 242.

276. Andrew Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America: A History of the Culture Wars*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 5. Hartman suggests that the norms of *normative America* were dominant—or at least relatively stable and unthreatened—during “the nearly two decades between the end of World War II and the assassination of John F. Kennedy.”

277. Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 5.

278. *Ibid.*

279. *Ibid.*

280. *Ibid.*

rhythms and routines of normative America reflected the liberal consensus' key assumption that "everybody in America was middle class now or that American society was rapidly approaching economic equality."²⁸¹

The cultural values of normative America were linked to the family-wage system. The norm of the male breadwinner, whose regular paycheck covered his family's expenses, dominated American culture, law, and social policy. The automatism of the family wage assured the permanent patterns of household reproduction, which, in turn, depended on an uneven distribution of domestic labor as women were expected to assume the roles of homemaker and housewife. Although a sizeable fraction of married women entered the workforce in this period, they were subjected to intense social pressures and demands that discouraged them from pursuing independent lifestyles or demanding the basic rights of gender equality. As Nancy MacLean writes, a "women's lack of good job prospects, and of reproductive control with the stigmas attached to divorce and homosexuality [helped to] bolster the male breadwinner system."²⁸² In his notes on Americanism and Fordism, Gramsci remarks that the productive processes of modern capitalism regulates and reproduces monogamous and heteronormative sexual relationships to maintain the psycho-physical equilibrium of the male worker. The State, through the instruments of social policy and policing, aimed to reach a certain cultural and moral level—*normative America*—to match the economic necessities of postwar capitalism.

281. Hodgson, *America in our Time*, 82.

282. Nancy MacLean, "Postwar Women's History: The Second 'Wave' or the End of the Family Wage," in *A Companion to Post-1945 America*, ed. by Jean-Christophe Agnew and Roy Rosenzweig (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 238.

Not only did normative America perpetuate patriarchal and heteronormative cultural mores, but it also depended on the structures of racial inequality that were intrinsic to what George Lipsitz calls the “racialized social democracy” of the New Deal Order and the liberal consensus.²⁸³ The Federal Housing Association channeled “loans away from older inner-city neighborhoods and toward white home buyers moving into segregated suburbs, [which] aided and abetted the growth and development of increased segregation in U.S. residential neighborhoods.”²⁸⁴ The state-sanctioned segregation of the suburbs contributed to a racialized urban/suburban divide and a “conflict between upwardly mobile property-owning white ethnics and recently urbanized Black and Brown people over taxation and public spending.”²⁸⁵ Laura Renata Martin explains that the social and economic elements that upheld the ideals of normative America were largely inaccessible to most Black Americans. Martin writes that “the ideal of a single wage supporting an entire family was unachievable for many Black proletarians, who faced tremendous discrimination in the workplace.”²⁸⁶ Consequently, the seemingly natural and normal cultural practices of normative America sprang from a deeply racialized and gendered arrangement of social forces. Although the liberal consensus aspired to overcome the legacy of segregation, whiteness remained central to the vision of normative America. The contradiction between the liberal consensus’ commitment to racial integration and its

283. George Lipsitz, “The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: Racialized Social Democracy and the ‘White’ Problem in American Studies,” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (September 1995), 369.

284. Lipsitz, “The Possessive Investment in Whiteness,” 373.

285. Laura Renata Martin, “Historicizing White Nostalgia: Race and American Fordism,” *Blind Field: A Journal of Cultural Inquiry*, August 3, 2017, <https://blindfieldjournal.com/2017/08/03/historicizing-white-nostalgia-race-and-american-fordism>.

286. Martin, “Historicizing White Nostalgia.”

material dependence on segregation was partially what led to the white backlash of the 1960s and 1970s that I will discuss in Chapter 4.

From roughly the mid-1960s onwards, the liberal consensus suffered several major ideological, institutional, and cultural challenges. The setbacks of the Vietnam War and the rise of domestic unrest, such as the Watts Riots of 1965, triggered a waning of prestige as it became clear that the liberal consensus could not consistently provide firm solutions to social problems or preserve the limits of consent. Inflation and the loss of competitive position in many industries (as well as the 1973 Oil Crisis) contradicted the claim to endless economic growth and destabilized the automatism of the family wage. The flourishing of alternative political forces presented the liberal consensus with ideological rivals who aimed to reorder the permanent structures of American society.

[The Young Radicals and the Mass Culture of Rebellion](#)

The activists of the Freedom Movement and the New Left exposed volatile contradictions between the ideology of the liberal consensus and the social reality of the United States. Instead of producing a more equal society, American capitalism continued to reproduce the divisions—between skilled and unskilled labor, between production and reproduction, between capital and labor—that sustained multiple forms of racial, sexual, and socioeconomic inequality in the United States. The public and covert foreign military interventions of the United States, which were supposed to protect democracy and capitalism from the threat of global communism, often resulted in the overthrow of democratically-elected regimes in Southeast Asia and Latin America as well as the suppression and surveillance of antiwar activism. The leaders of this new radical spirit

argued that the United States could address its social ills only if it substituted the top-down institutional apparatus of the liberal consensus for more flexible and vibrant forms of ‘community control’ and ‘participatory democracy.’

Radicalism flourished within and beyond the dominant institutions. The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) formed in 1960 to challenge the leadership of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). The members of SNCC built a grassroots organization to propose radical alternatives to the NAACP and SCLC’s melioristic and incremental approach to the causes of civil rights and racial equality. Students joined other formal organizations, such as the Students for a Democratic Society, to protest the Vietnam War and push the Democratic Party to the left. The second-wave of the feminist movement critiqued the conformity and repressiveness of traditional gender roles (as well as the persistence of male chauvinism within such ostensibly egalitarian organizations as SDS and SNCC). These movements also fought for the establishment of Women’s Studies, Black Studies and Ethnic Studies departments in American universities.²⁸⁷ Cornel West suggests that the “inclusion of African Americans, Latino/a Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans and American women into the culture of critical discourse” led to a partial “shattering of male, WASP, cultural homogeneity and the collapse of the short-lived liberal consensus.”²⁸⁸ The American academy became a major site for what West calls “the cultural politics of difference.”²⁸⁹ Racial, sexual, and gender

287. Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 18-31.

288. Cornel West, *Keeping Faith: Philosophy and Race in America* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 14

289. West, *Keeping Faith*, 3.

identities were embraced and celebrated as they formed an epistemological basis for developing new forms of knowledge that could identify the multiple dimensions of power and oppression in American society. The affirmation of these identities exposed and challenged the cultural homogeneity that underpinned the liberal consensus and normative American identity. The result of these maneuvers was a shift in some of the permanent elements in the ideological structure, such as the university, to include perspectives and methodologies that were previously excluded from what was once deemed ‘objective’ or ‘neutral.’ Yet, as some scholars point out, the inclusion of these perspectives and politics within hegemonic institutions represented an *incorporation* and *containment* of radicalism. The scholar Ellen Messer-Davidow argues that the vibrant feminist activism of the 1960s was successfully “disciplined” through the institutionalization of feminist theory and criticism within American academia.²⁹⁰

The popularization of the counterculture, with its alternative forms of sociability and sexuality, partially displaced dominant normative American values. Postwar America experienced an extraordinary level of population growth known popularly as “the baby boom.” The national population increased by 19 million in the 1940s, more than twice the growth of the 1930s. The 1950s saw a population increase of 30 million people. Whereas school enrollments in the 1940s increased by only a million, they skyrocketed by 10 million in the 1950s. The growing demographic of teenagers and young adults produced something of a generational split between older and younger generations. Many younger Americans craved an alternative to the conformity and alienation of their parents’ generation. They experimented with drug use, explored alternative personal relationships,

290. Ellen Messer-Davidow, *Disciplining Feminism: From Social Activism to Academic Discourse* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

and rejected puritan values. The rise of rock music and hippie culture altered conventional habits of dress, speech, and behavior. The invention and legalization of the contraceptive pill empowered women to exercise reproductive control and enjoy non-marital sexual relationships. Mainstream media and cultural enterprises—television, the fashion and music industries, cinema—worked to incorporate these “countercultural expressions” and turn them into effective commodities that could entice the vast baby boomer market.²⁹¹ Although the counterculture was incorporated into commercial endeavors, it delivered a powerful blow to the stability and ‘naturalness’ of normative America. In Chapter Three, I demonstrate that this mass culture of rebellion formed the context from which the political force of the LaRouche movement emerged. Although the LaRouche and his followers would drift into ideological reaction, they drew on intellectual practices and postures that were incubated in the 1960s student movement.

The Cultural Turn of the Right

Not only did the liberal consensus encounter criticism from the left, but it also faced challenges from the right.²⁹² In the early 1970s, several influential figures within the American conservative movement called for the construction of a new right-wing ideological offensive on the fraying liberal consensus. Lewis Powell, a prominent lawyer and jurist, issued a well-known memo in 1971 that urged the business community to finance national political organizations to counter the ideological “assault on the enterprise

291. Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 16.

292. Jason Stahl, *Right Moves: The Conservative Think Tank in American Political Culture since 1945* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 47-94.

system.”²⁹³ The president of the conservative thinktank American Enterprise Institute William F. Baroody Jr. echoed Powell’s recommendation in a 1972 speech to the Business Council, in which he advised his audience to support “those corporations and foundations [that are] concerned with preserving the basic values of this free society and its free institutions.”²⁹⁴ In a 1972 memo, Patrick Buchanan—then a presidential aide to Nixon—suggested that the Republican Party needed to “construct institutes that will serve as the repository of its political beliefs” to contest the “ideological bias” of the dominant liberal institutions and fledging left-wing movements.²⁹⁵ Each of these interventions articulated a firm opposition to a ‘liberal elite,’ and recommended a range of strategies that might further the conservative cause. They reframed the purported ‘neutrality’ and ‘objectivity’ of the liberal consensus as markers of an anti-capitalist mentality that stifled the full flourishing of American capitalism. They saw an opportunity to embed a series of permanent organizations in the superstructure to contest and weaken the durability of the liberal consensus. And they sought to replace the political compromise between liberals and conservatives—the cornerstone of the liberal consensus—with a potent, albeit contradictory, blend of unabashed neoliberal individualism and moralistic conservatism.

From the 1970s onwards, new conservative institutions emerged to displace the influence of the liberal consensus in the ideological structure of the United States. The number of highly partisan ‘think tanks’ in Washington, D.C. rose sharply. Prominent conservatives, as Heale explains, started to realize that their favored political causes “could

293. Lewis Powell, “The Lewis Powell Memo: A Corporate Blueprint to Dominate Democracy,” *Greenpeace*, accessed on August 25, 2022, <https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/democracy/the-lewis-powell-memo-a-corporate-blueprint-to-dominate-democracy/>.

294. Quoted in Stahl, *Right Moves*, 63.

295. Quoted in Stahl, *Right Moves*, 68.

often be better pursued through community and single issue bodies than through the major parties.”²⁹⁶ Campaigners established political action committees, or PACs, to push their own specific agenda and aims through the legislature. “The number of PACs,” Heale documents, “increased phenomenally from 113 in 1972 to 4,178 in 1989 . . . [and] reflected the proliferation of single-interest groups.”²⁹⁷ He notes that the “number of registered lobbyists in Washington more than doubled to 72,000 in the ten years after 1975, and according to one estimate nearly 90 percent of them worked for business, commercial and professional bodies.”²⁹⁸ As the hegemony of the liberal consensus declined, the conservative movement acquired a level of institutional permanence within the superstructures of the United States.

The aspirations of the New Right were not limited only to the spheres of politics and economics. The New Right launched a social and cultural agenda to tackle what it saw as the increasing permissiveness of American society. The organizers of the New Right would frame this effort as a backlash against a series of liberalizing Supreme Court decisions in the 1960s and 1970s: the barring of school prayer from public schools (1962), making prosecution of obscenity more difficult (1964), the legalization of the birth control pill (1965), and the legalization of abortion in *Roe vs. Wade* (1973).²⁹⁹ The weaponization of normative American values resulted in the grassroots mobilization of Evangelical Christians—the social base of what would eventually be called the Religious Right or

296. Michael Heale, *The United States in the Long Twentieth Century: Politics and Society since 1900*, 2nd edition (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 193.

297. Heale, *The United States in the Long Twentieth Century*, 196.

298. *Ibid.*

299. Edmund Neill, *Conservatism* (Croydon: Polity, 2021), 119-120.

Moral Majority. The historian Lisa McGirr explains that, by the early 1970s, the “package of conservative concerns [had] shifted from a discursive preoccupation with public, political and international enemies (namely, communism) to enemies within [America’s] own communities and families (namely, secular humanists, woman’s liberationists, and, eventually, homosexuals).”³⁰⁰ The change in focus from external geopolitical foes to domestic cultural woes preceded the fall of the Berlin Wall by nearly two decades, and reveals (contra Jamin) that the New Right was already preoccupied with matters of culture before the end of the Cold War. In Chapter Four and Chapter Five, I will demonstrate that this conservative reaction to the crisis of liberal consensus shaped the contexts and concerns of right-wing political forces in the United States up to the early twenty-first century.

Cultural Crossfire: Culture Wars as Polemics

The crisis of the liberal consensus was not a sudden event, but, rather, a continual process of disrupting the major ideological and institutional elements that sustained this hegemonic order. The practices and discourses of neoliberalism, which worked to displace the social responsibilities of the State onto the individual, dismantled some of the automatisms that sustained the temporary equilibrium of this liberal consensus. Although it claimed to support small business and manufacturing, American neoliberalism pursued an ambitious project of financialization that cut corporate taxes, curtailed labor rights, and orchestrated the “free movement” of capital. Working class and middle-class households saw a decline in living standards as Republicans and Democrats redistributed the wealth of the nation to

300. Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 15.

the richest strata of society. The New Democrats of the Bill Clinton era (1993-2001) introduced a superficially egalitarian and emancipatory ethos of recognition that paid lip service to the aims of women's empowerment, multiculturalism, and environmentalism insofar as they did not conflict with the economic goals of financialized capitalism. The political theorist Nancy Fraser coins the term "progressive neoliberalism" to characterize this combination of "an expropriative, plutocratic economic program" and "a liberal-meritocratic politics of recognition."³⁰¹ Although Clinton's neoliberalism may superficially appear to be a continuation of the New Left's politics of identity and equality, it functioned as little more than a parody of progressive values.

Contrary to the proposition that neoliberalism formed a new historic bloc in late twentieth-century America, it might be more accurate to define it as a *passive revolutionary* process that managed the crisis of the liberal consensus without entirely replacing or overcoming it. Many permanent features of the liberal consensus, as Heale points out, remained somewhat "in place—the social security system (only the 'welfare' parts of it revised along conservative lines), Medicare, the financial and banking structures, the labor relations system, farm price supports, pan-industrial regulations, as well as the civil and voting right acts."³⁰² Instead of constituting a wholly new balance of forces, neoliberalism simply weakened certain elements and strengthened others. Although a more in-depth discussion of the role of American neoliberalism in the crisis of the liberal consensus remains outside the scope of this dissertation, it certainly contributed to the reshaping of the relationship between the organic and conjunctural.

301. Nancy Fraser, *The Old is Dying and the New Cannot Be Born* (Croydon: Verso, 2019), 11-12.

302. Heale, *The United States in the Long Twentieth Century*, 199.

The major institutions of the State may have continued with a certain degree of regularity, yet there was significant fluctuation on the level of political forces. The conjunctural forces of the New Left and the New Right seized opportunities to reconfigure the relations that order the fabric of social life. Although the New Left and the counterculture did not fully implement their visions of social transformation, they still introduced previously marginalized or neglected perspectives and lifestyles into mainstream American culture. The New Right challenged the perceived neutrality of the liberal consensus and championed a more forthrightly conservative cultural agenda. The proliferation of think tanks and political actions committees permitted further leverage over the ideological structure, or superstructure, of civil society. These shifts and reconfigurations formed what Gramsci might call “the terrain of the ‘conjunctural’” of post-liberal consensus politics.³⁰³ This is the terrain on which conflicting political forces could plan and stage their interventions. Parties, organizations, and movements must assess and navigate the new relations of social and political force, and figure out the possibilities for societal transformation and redirection. At the immediate level (or the to-and-fro of ordinary politics), the intellectuals of these political forces may engage in what Gramsci describes as a “series of ideological, religious, philosophical, political and juridical polemics, whose concreteness can be estimated by the extent to which they are convincing, and shift the previously existing disposition of social forces.”³⁰⁴ In fact, what we encounter on the terrain of the post-liberal consensus conjuncture is an increasing tendency for political forces to address social and cultural issues.

303. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 178.

304. *Ibid.*

The crisis of the liberal consensus constituted a crisis of *direzione*. The social, cultural, and economic dislocations of the 1960s and 1970s, as Michael Omi and Howard Winant observe, resulted in a state where “[c]ommonly held concepts of nation, community, and family were transformed, and no new principle of cohesion, no new cultural center, emerged to replace them.”³⁰⁵ The following decades saw a proliferation of battles to occupy this cultural center and provide a new principle of cohesion. Conjunctural forces worked to develop a form of economic, political, and cultural leadership that could remake the state and redirect the development of the historic bloc.

The waning of the liberal consensus coincides with the onset of what has come to be known as the “culture wars.” In his 1991 study *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*, the sociologist James Davison Hunter proposed the “culture war” hypothesis as a framework for understanding recent American history. Hunter suggests that late-twentieth century skirmishes over the key issues of American public culture—the family, education, law, and electoral politics—intimate a larger struggle between two polarizing impulses: the *progressive* and the *orthodox*. Whereas the orthodox appeals to an “objective and transcendent authority for a consistent, unchangeable measure of value, purpose, goodness, and identity,” the progressive follows a “tendency to resymbolize all historic faiths according to the prevailing assumptions of modern life.”³⁰⁶ These tendencies reflect different attitudes towards the assumptions of normative America. The orthodox expects that the restoration (and perhaps even the intensification) of normative American standards

305. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 3rd edition (New York: Routledge, 2015), 191.

306. James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York: BasicBooks, 1991), 44-45.

will address the multiple dilemmas of social, cultural, economic, and political life. The progressive wants to establish new norms that recognize the importance of different identities and that redistribute resources to previously marginalized groups.

Hall observes that crises of *direzione* raise “a whole range of issues which do not necessarily, in the first instance, appear to be articulated with politics in the narrow sense at all.”³⁰⁷ Rock music and non-martial sexual relationships may seem entirely unrelated to the task of running a government. Yet, Gramsci’s concept of the expanded state, with its dense ideological structure and superstructure, reveals the profound entanglements of politics and culture. As Hall puts it, Gramsci’s work shows that “the nature of power in the modern world . . . is also constructed in relation to political, moral, intellectual, cultural, ideological, and sexual questions.”³⁰⁸ Consequently, culture becomes a major arena of contestation between conflicting political forces.

Following the long decline of the liberal consensus and normative American values, a variety of political forces engaged in the polemics of the culture wars to debate an array of moral, intellectual, cultural, ideological, and sexual questions. The functionaries of these forces addressed everything from heavy metal music to high school history textbooks, from abortion to the AIDS crisis, and from Martin Scorsese’s *The Last Temptation of Christ* to Andres Serrano’s *Piss Christ*. These cultural polemics took place on a terrain that stemmed from the crisis of the liberal consensus.

Cultural polemics were a valuable ideological tool for the political forces of the New Right. They produced a notion of normative American identity that resonated with a

307. Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal*, 168.

308. *Ibid.*, 170.

variety of social forces that felt dislocated in the crisis of the liberal consensus could identify. Instead of acknowledging the structural contradictions that accelerated the crisis, they blamed cultural fragmentation on a recognizable enemy (cultural radicals, secular humanists, permissive liberals). They also implied a new ideological direction for the American State and society that promised to revitalize the mores of normative America. The practices of developing and disseminating cultural polemics became integral to the New Right's political forces, because they promoted a specific vision of intellectual and moral reform that could guide the building of a conservative State.

In this chapter, I demonstrated that Cultural Marxism narratives have little to do with the end of the Cold War. In fact, I argue that it is impossible to attribute the origin of these narratives to a single cause or date and time of birth. The multiple articulations of Cultural Marxisms sprang from a diffuse and variegated process that I have broadly identified as the crisis of the liberal consensus and normative America. During this process, a range of political forces battled on various ideological fronts to adjust the conjunctural and organic elements of society. The continuing effect of these processes and struggles was the formation of a terrain of the conjunctural, where different political forces engaged in cultural polemics to defend and promote their visions for remaking the State and society. Consequently, I stress that Cultural Marxism narratives stem from this contest between forces on a wider conjunctural terrain, rather than a single cause.

The terrain of the conjunctural defines the broader context in which one can locate the specific political forces that I discuss in the next three chapters. Of course, this broader context does not mechanically and rigidly determine the acts and ideologies of these political forces. As Gramsci points out, the actions of certain political forces often stem

from “internal necessities of an organizational character, that is, they are linked to the need to give coherence to a party, a group, a society.”³⁰⁹ Not only do the polemics of Cultural Marxism satisfy this need to increase the coherence of a political force, but they also propose—explicitly or indirectly—societal alternatives that might “reorder relations that are constitutive to and constitutive of social life.”³¹⁰ In the rest of this dissertation, I investigate the meaning and functions of these polemics in three different organizations. How did these Cultural Marxisms help to produce a specific organizational or political identity? How did they portray the nature and scale of their enemy (the Frankfurt School and others)? How did these different articulations reflect a certain vision of a new society, a new relation of organic and conjunctural forces?

309. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 408.

310. Carley, *Cultural Studies Methodology and Political Strategy*, 75

Chapter 3: Lyndon LaRouche: From the New Left to the New Dark Age

“‘Vanguards’ without armies to back them up, ‘commandos’ without infantry or artillery, these too are transpositions from the language of rhetorical heroism—though vanguard and commandos as specialised functions within complex and regular organisms are quite another thing. The same distinction can be made between the notion of intellectual élites separated from the masses, and that of intellectuals who are conscious of being linked organically to a national-popular mass. In reality, one has to struggle against the above-mentioned degenerations, the false heroisms and pseudo-aristocracies . . .” – Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*

“Likewise disastrous was the tendency to confer vanguard status on a party because it espoused a sanctioned version of Marxism-Leninism rather than because it actually has won the allegiance of workers and the oppressed. Indeed, the very proposition that there is one and only one correct, revolutionary doctrine—and that this doctrine finds expression in one pure tradition that has defeated a series of deviations since Lenin’s time—is flawed. The proposition that maintaining a revolutionary stance above all meant hewing to the orthodox road was a time bomb for all those who turned to Leninism at the end of the 1960s.” – Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao and Che*

“I still like to think that some of my research was validly conducted and useful. However, I see very clearly that the whole enterprise—and especially the conclusions—was hopelessly deformed by self-censorship and the desire to in some way support Mr. LaRouche’s crack-brained world-view. So, in that sense, I do not stand by what I wrote, and I find it unfortunate that it is still remembered.” – Michael J. Minnicino

“Oh my God, Lyndon LaRouche was right!” – Homer Simpson, *The Simpsons*

On June 17, 1969, the French-German student radical Daniel Cohn-Bendit interrupted Herbert Marcuse’s lecture at the Teatro Eliseo in Rome with some pressing questions:

“Herbert, why have you come to the theatre of the bourgeoisie? Herbert, tell us why the CIA pays you?”³¹¹ Newspapers reported that Marcuse ignored these abrasive questions and fled the theatre. The historian Marvin Menniken conjectures that Cohn-Bendit stumbled across the claim that Marcuse was a clandestine CIA agent in an issue of the West German New Left publication *Berliner Extra-Dienst*. The peddler of this paranoid claim was the

311. “Obszöne Welt,” *Der Spiegel*, June 29, 1969, <https://www.spiegel.de/kultur/obszoene-welt-a-03307f32-0002-0001-0000-000045549323>.

German journalist Leo Matthias, who believed that “Marcuse’s time with the O.S.S. during World War II and his subsequent employment at the State Department had established a lasting government relationship, which once again flowered following his involvement with the New Left.”³¹² In an open letter to the German magazine *Der Spiegel*, Marcuse condemned these allegations as “shabby tricks” that tarnished the New Left’s reputation.³¹³ Seventeen members of the West German student movement, including Rudi Duschke and Oskar Negt, signed another open letter to urge “all socialists to resist those who participate in the witchhunt started by reactionaries of all shades against Herbert Marcuse.”³¹⁴ As it turns out, the instigator of this witchhunt was the American Maoist organization Progressive Labor Party (PL).³¹⁵

“Marcuse: Cop-out or Cop?,” an anonymous article in the February 1969 issue of *Progressive Labor* magazine, accused the German philosopher of helping the CIA to dampen the revolutionary fervor of student protest.³¹⁶ Of course, criticism of Marcuse was not uncommon in PL publications.³¹⁷ For instance, PL’s National Student Organizer Jeff

312. Marvin Menniken, “Herbert Marcuse: Media and the making of a cultural icon,” in *The Global 1960s: Convention, Contest and Counterculture*, ed. by Tamara Chaplin and Jadwiga E. Pieper Mooney (New York: Routledge, 2018), 286

313. Quoted in Peter-Erwin Jansen (ed.), *Zwischen Hoffnung und Notwendigkeit. Texte zu Herbert Marcuse* (Frankfurt: Neue Kritik, 1999), 58. Translated by Marvin Menniken.

314. Quoted in Paul Breines, “Editor’s Notes,” in *Critical Interruptions: New Left Perspectives on Herbert Marcuse*, ed. by Paul Breines (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), xi.

315. It is possible that PL members may have learnt about Marcuse’s past government positions from the Soviet journalist Yuri Zhukov’s 1968 *Pravda* article “Werewolves.” In this article, Zhukov discloses a “significant biographical detail” about Marcuse: “during the war Marcuse worked for the American Intelligence, and later he spent many years in the well-known Russian Institute at Harvard. The result of this activity was the anti-Soviet book *Soviet Marxism*, Marcuse’s ‘first best-seller’.” Regardless, Zhukov is not listed as a source in the PL article.

316. “Marcuse: Cop-out or Cop?,” *Progressive Labor*, Vol. 6, No. 6, February 1969, 61-66.

317. Jared Israel and William Russel, “Herbert Marcuse and His Philosophy of Copout,” *Progressive Labor*, Vol. 6, No. 5, October 1968, 59-72.

Gordon argued that Marcuse's 1964 text *One-Dimensional Man* was part of a "mass-media selling drive" to convince students that the American working class was irredeemably reactionary and passive.³¹⁸ Gordon's criticisms were linked to a broader theoretical debate between factions in the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)—the largest organization of the American New Left—about the strategy of building a "worker-student alliance."³¹⁹ Yet, the seriousness of this debate is not reflected in "Marcuse: Cop-out or Cop?," which advances the spurious allegation that Marcuse's apparent support of "love-ins" was part of a CIA plot to distract students from the urgent tasks of protesting the Vietnam War and seizing state power.³²⁰

PL's conspiratorial accusations attracted scathing criticism. Murray Bookchin compared the article to the Stalinist "Moscow trials and the annihilation of the Old Bolshevik cadre."³²¹ Paul Breines, the editor of the 1970 collection *Critical Interruptions: New Left Perspectives on Herbert Marcuse*, diagnosed PL's outburst as a worrying symptom of the student movement's disintegration into sects, factions, and tendencies.³²² The Socialist Worker's Party-affiliated newspaper *The Militant* published a letter that

318. Jeff Gordon, "SDS: An Analysis," *Progressive Labor*, Vol. 6, No. 5, October 1968, 107. The historian Kirkpatrick Sale contends that Progressive Labor's criticism of Marcuse was often shallow. As he writes in his 1973 book *SDS*, Progressive Labor "picked up on a one-line quotation from Herbert Marcuse and ridiculed him for his 'misunderstanding' of the working class."

319. PL theorized that the students could not perform the same revolutionary tasks as the traditional industrial working class. They argued that members of the student movement needed to proletarianize themselves, join the workers on the factory floor, and form a firm political alliance to overthrow capitalist power in the United States.

320. "Marcuse: Cop-out or Cop?," 64.

321. Murray Bookchin, *Listen, Marxist!*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/bookchin/1969/listen-marxist>.

322. Paul Breines, "From Guru to Spectre: Marcuse and the Implosion of the Movement," in *Critical Interruptions: New Left Perspectives on Herbert Marcuse*, ed. by Paul Breines (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 9.

debunked the article's claims and reasoned that "if the radical movement is not to witchhunt itself to death, the burden of proof for such spy charges must be on the accusers not on the accused."³²³ And in his 1973 book *Marcuse et la nouvelle gauche: philosophe et révolution*, Jean-Michel Palmier acknowledges that Marcuse performed research at such CIA-funded institutions as the Russian Research Center at Harvard, yet argues that most of the article's other assertions were insipid.³²⁴ Consequently, it appears that various pockets of the relatively pro-Marcuse left perceived PL's anti-Marcuse stance as merely an instance of juvenile sectarianism.

Following the split of SDS at its 1969 annual convention, PL rushed to lead the American student movement. Yet, many rank-and-file members of SDS were unenthusiastic about PL's strategy of the worker-student alliance and objected to its dogmatic opposition to the Black Panther Party and the Viet Cong. Other students simply disrelished PL's puritanical stances on drug use and sexual promiscuity.³²⁵ Whatever their reasons, students abandoned the PL-led SDS. As Jim Dann and Hari Dillon document in their 1977 *The Five Retreats: A History of the Failure of the Progressive Labor Party*, "SDS went from 304 chapters to 10 in 18 months of PL stewardship."³²⁶ Ironically, PL was more culpable for the collapse of the organized student movement in the United States than

323. A.M., "How PL 'defeats' opponents' ideas," *The Militant*, Vol. 33, No. 8, February 21, 1969, 2.

324. Jean-Michel Palmier, *Marcuse et la nouvelle gauche: philosophe et révolution* (Paris: Belfond, 1973), 40.

325. PL decreed that the Black Panther Party and the Viet Cong were revisionists, because they advocated for forms of Marxist nationalism. Additionally, PL discouraged the use of marijuana and the pursuit of free love as they were petit-bourgeois recreational indulgences.

326. Jim Dann and Hari Dillon, *The Five Retreats: A History of the Failure of the Progressive Labor Party*, <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/1960-1970/5retreats/chapter4>.

the supposed CIA collaborator Marcuse.

As PL fizzled slowly into political irrelevance, former student activists drifted into other vanguard organizations. In his memoir “PL and Me,” Ed Morman recalls that some students severed ties with PL to join “a new faction that had developed in the New York SDS Labor Committee.”³²⁷ The leader of this new faction, known as “L. Marcus,” dazzled these bright recruits with the “theoretical and strategic superiority” of his political thought.³²⁸ Morman was so impressed that he worked in Seattle to enlist more members for Marcus’ fledgling organization. During the early 1970s, this faction would develop into the National Caucus of Labor Committees, and Marcus would acquire a strange kind of notoriety as the pseudo-Leninist-turned-crypto-fascist cult leader Lyndon LaRouche.

In 1974, LaRouche and the National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC) recycled PL’s old claims about Marcuse to discredit their opponents and assert that they were the only revolutionary organization that could rescue humanity from what they called “Rockefeller Fascism.” Marcuse and other Frankfurt School thinkers—along with a revolving cast of co-conspirators like Queen Elizabeth and Henry Kissinger—popped up repeatedly in LaRouche’s writings in the subsequent decades. Why did LaRouche and his followers believe that the Frankfurt School was part of a plot to implement a global fascist regime? Why were these conspiratorial polemics so integral to their ideology? What historical circumstances and conditions gave rise to this disciplined and authoritarian cult of personality that churned out these narratives of suspicion at such a prolific rate? In his

327. Ed Morman, “PL and Me,” in *You Say You Want a Revolution: SDS, PL, and Adventures in Building a Worker-Student Alliance*, ed. by John F. Levin and Earl Silbar (San Francisco: 1741 Press, 2019), 186.

328. Morman, “PL and Me,” 187.

2020 *Cosmonaut* article “Cults of our Hegemony: An Inventory of Left-Wing Cults,” the writer and activist Gus Breslauer argues that one can answer these questions by looking at “how organizations [like LaRouche’s NCLC] are structured and what they functionally do.”³²⁹ LaRouchean polemics were not simply the inventions of a charismatic crank, but, rather, the ideology that emerged from NCLC’s organizational structure and its political practice. As I demonstrate in this chapter, “Cultural Marxism” originated in the LaRouche cult as part of what Gramsci would call an “arbitrary ideology.”

For Gramsci, arbitrary ideologies spring from the “formally constructive will of one personality or of a group that is driven to propose it by its own fanatical philosophical or religious convictions.”³³⁰ Cults, like NCLC, are embodiments of arbitrary ideologies. The leader, such as LaRouche, constructs a totalistic and rationalistic doctrine that must be followed and fulfilled. The adherents become attached to the charismatic leader and feel compelled to absorb and implement this doctrine. Those who join these cults tend to devote extraordinary amounts of time to learning the content of the leader’s doctrine and carrying out the various daily chores that sustain this kind of organization (selling newspapers, recruiting new members, fund-raising etc.). The ideology of these cults normally fails to win the support of the wider public, because it is often too esoteric or extreme. In his 1973 position paper “Anatomy of the Microsect,” the Trotskyist activist Hal Draper describes these kinds of political groups as a “membership organization whose boundary is set more or less rigidly by the points in its political program rather than by its relation to the social

329. Gus Breslauer, “Cults of Our Hegemony: An Inventory of Left-Wing Cults,” *Cosmonaut*, November 18, 2020, <https://cosmonaut.blog/2020/11/18/cults-of-our-hegemony-an-inventory-of-left-wing-cults>.

330. Gramsci, *Subaltern Social Groups*, 86.

struggle.”³³¹ In the life of political cults, purity of doctrine always prevails over pragmatism.

In their 2000 book *On the Edge: Political Cults Left and Right*, Dennis Tourish and Tim Wohlforth argue that these arbitrary ideologies perform a socializing function within cult-like groups. The members of a cult must demonstrate familiarity with, and fidelity to, their leader’s doctrine. They are taught to distrust all other sources of information and engage in only the forms of knowledge that the leader permits. The members’ vocabulary starts to shift as they integrate “cult-sanctioned words and expressions” into their everyday speech.³³² As Tourish and Wohlforth explain, these cult members find it difficult “to communicate with non-members since both sides lack a common vocabulary with which to exchange ideas.”³³³ Gramsci identifies the distance between a commitment to cultic doctrine and an involvement in social struggle (or the practice of everyday life) as the essential limitation of arbitrary ideologies: “they only create individual ‘movements,’ polemics, and so on.”³³⁴ The activities and routines of these individual movements often produce what could be called an *arbitrary intellectual*: an individual who devotes their energies to preserving and propagating a set of cultic convictions. For instance, NCLC’s ranks of arbitrary intellectuals penned articles for various LaRouchean publications to develop and disseminate LaRouche’s ideas.

331. Hal Draper, “Anatomy of the Microsect,” <https://www.marxists.org/archive/draper/1973/xx/microsect>.

332. Dennis Tourish and Tim Wohlforth, *On the Edge: Political Cults Left and Right* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), 6

333. Tourish and Wohlforth, *On the Edge*, 6.

334. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 377.

In this chapter, I try to understand how the structure of the LaRouche movement accommodated forms of arbitrary intellectual practice. I agree with Radhika Desai's Gramscian analysis of sectarian and cultic groups as "intellectual sub-societies" that function as "emotional refuges" for people who wish to "preserve the coherence of their views."³³⁵ Their marginality and relative isolation is celebrated as a mark of virtue, militancy, and legitimacy.³³⁶ According to Desai, such a "purely spiritual/intellectual conviction imparts to sects their most conspicuous psychological attribute—*zeal*."³³⁷ Gramsci and Desai are uniquely attentive to the affective character of arbitrary ideologies, which stems from certain organizational arrangements, relations, and activities.

Gramsci contrasts these "arbitrary, rationalistic, 'willed' ideologies" with organic ideologies.³³⁸ As Filippini explains, Gramsci plots different ideologies across a spectrum of historical efficacy. When an ideology obtains a deep psychological 'validity,' it becomes organic to a given social structure. An organic ideology can forge links between various social strata and organize them into a new historical bloc. An arbitrary ideology reflects the will of "'individual' movements that does not organize or mobilize people, but merely serve[s] the interests of individuals and small groups."³³⁹ All ideologies 'organize'

335. Desai, "Second-Hand Dealers in Ideas," 40.

336. When I write about LaRouche and NCLC, I tend to use the terms 'sect' and 'cult' relatively interchangeably. I recognize that not all sects are cults and vice versa, yet no other scholar has attempted to distinguish them in a technical sense. I judge that political cults represent an *intensification* of certain sectarian dynamics, in which a charismatic leader establishes a total dominance over the activity and ideology of the organization. I would argue that NCLC started as a sect in the late 1960s and steadily became more cultic as LaRouche produced his control over the group.

337. Desai, "Second-Hand Dealers in Ideas," 40.

338. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 377.

339. Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, 16.

social life, even if some of them never organize anything larger than the organizational structure of a small sect.³⁴⁰ Whereas the organic intellectual is embedded in various struggles that it works to organize into a coherent political force, the arbitrary intellectual seeks to perpetuate specific “fanatical philosophical or religious convictions” that do not resonate with other groups or strata.³⁴¹ The diffusion of an arbitrary ideology depends entirely on the “formally constructive will” of these arbitrary intellectuals.³⁴² It reflects a purely ‘willed’ force, rather than “a political force that corresponds to ‘the conditions that are present or are in the course of formation.’”³⁴³

What is the arbitrary ideology of the LaRouche movement? What is the nature of their fanaticism and zeal? What kinds of organizational structure and social practice embody their intellectual convictions? And, more importantly, where do their accusations about the Frankfurt School fit into the ideology of this cult?

The central organizing element of LaRouchean ideology is the notion of an “elite.” Whether he refers to them as a Marxist-Leninist “revolutionary intelligentsia” or Neoplatonist “philosopher-kings,” LaRouche always maintains that his followers constitute a political and intellectual elite. They are capable of “creative mentation” and “Socratic Reason,” which prepares them for the task of leading humanity into a New Age. Furthermore, LaRouche believes that his movement needed to defeat an oligarchical conspiracy that wanted to reverse technological progress, eradicate most of the world’s

340. Rocco Lacorte, “Arbitrio,” in *Dizionario gramsciano: 1926-1937*, ed. Guido Liguori and Pasquale Voza (Rome: Carocci, 2009), 46.

341. Gramsci, *Subaltern Social Groups*, 86

342. Ibid.

343. Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks, Volume III*, 277.

population, and destroy Western Civilization. According to LaRouche, the Frankfurt School is part of this counter-elite that inspires protofascist groups, brainwashes the masses, and imposes a genocidal regime of global fascism. Various allegations about the Frankfurt School litter the pages of LaRouchean publications: Marcuse turned Angela Davis into a protofascist “zombie;” Adorno masterminded the rock-drug-sex counterculture of the 1960s, and Horkheimer invented the concept of the “authoritarian personality” to undermine Judeo-Christian culture. Although these claims may seem farcical to an outside observer, they contributed to the ideological coherence of the LaRouchean sect and bolstered NCLC’s zeal for saving humanity from an oligarchical conspiracy. As this chapter unfolds, I try to grasp the conditions and circumstances that gave rise to the LaRouche movement’s self-conception of themselves as an elite and demonstrate why these polemics about the Frankfurt School become a component of their practice.

I start this chapter by examining Tourish and Wohlforth’s claim that LaRouche is “a grotesque product of the sixties ferment.”³⁴⁴ I chart his transformation from a frustrated Trotskyist into the “communist guru” of an emerging faction in the radical student movement. Drawing on the work of Thomas Bender and Henry Heller, I demonstrate that the postwar expansion of the American university system provided the conditions for a certain style of student radicalism that LaRouche could incorporate into his ‘pseudo-Leninist’ conception of a revolutionary intelligentsia. I link LaRouche and his followers’ criticism of Marcuse and Adorno to the development of NCLC’s arbitrary ideology and organizational structure. I show how NCLC’s right-wing turn in the 1970s and 1980s

344. Tourish and Wohlforth, *On the Edge*, 81.

altered the kind of accusations that the LaRouchites made about the Frankfurt School. I explain how this history of polemics about the Frankfurt School in the LaRouche movement culminated in Minnicino's 1992 essay "The New Dark Age: Frankfurt School and 'Political Correctness.'"

Many of these anti-Frankfurt School writings do not resemble what contemporary readers may recognize as the 'classic' Cultural Marxism narrative. In fact, the LaRouchites never used the phrase "Cultural Marxism." Yet, the history of Cultural Marxism/s is a story of adaptations, recombinations, recontextualizations, and borrowings. The term "Cultural Marxism" homogenizes these different iterations under a seemingly simple and straightforward label. Of course, I do not want to commit the interpretive sin that the historian Quentin Skinner calls the "mythology of prolepsis" and argue that NCLC's allegations about Marcuse and Adorno in the 1970s were always-already Cultural Marxism (i.e. retrospectively reading the narrative of Cultural Marxism/s into statements that had an entirely different meaning at the time).³⁴⁵ On the contrary, I am studying the various contexts in which certain elements or aspects of Cultural Marxism emerged as available material that Minnicino would later rearticulate as a more coherent narrative about the Frankfurt School's pivotal role in the rise of political correctness. Before I continue, I want to state the main claim of this chapter as clearly as I can. Without NCLC's attacks on the Frankfurt School, the ideas of Cultural Marxism/s as they stand today would simply not exist. And one cannot understand these attacks without first learning about the history of the LaRouche movement.

345. Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1969), 22.

The Rise of a Pseudo-Leninist

In 1965, a spindly and bearded forty-three-year-old Trotskyist named Lynn Marcus—LaRouche’s Marxist *nom de guerre*—penned an Internal Discussion Bulletin for the Socialist Worker’s Party (SWP) entitled “The Coming American Socialist Revolution” to propose the strategy of recruiting a group of “Leninist ‘boomers’” from the radical student movement.³⁴⁶ Under his direction, the SWP would organize these student activists into a revolutionary intelligentsia that could transform the consciousness of the American proletariat. He urges party members to “‘get back’ to Leninism,” to re-read Lenin’s *What Is to Be Done?* (which LaRouche describes as “the cornerstone of our victory in the Coming American Socialist Revolution”), and to immerse themselves in the “active practice of real Marxist theory.”³⁴⁷ For LaRouche, only a party with a disciplined cadre of young theoretically-minded intellectuals could hope to lead a successful socialist revolution in the United States.

Yet, other Trotskyists interpreted LaRouche’s proposal as little more than a recipe for a pseudo-revolutionary and pseudo-intellectual cult of personality. “Spartacist and Leninist Politics: The Flight of the Middle-Class Intellectual,” an anonymous article in the August-September issue of the Socialist Worker’s League’s *Bulletin*, featured an acerbic critique of LaRouche’s notion of the “radical intelligentsia.”³⁴⁸ The author condemned LaRouche’s call for the leadership of left-wing intellectuals over the working class as “the

346. L. Marcus and C. Lawrence, “The Coming American Socialist Revolution: A Draft Resolution on Strategic Perspectives,” Vol. 25, No. 6, 1965, *SWP Discussion Bulletin*, xv.

347. Marcus and Lawrence, “The Coming American Socialist Revolution,” 29-xvi.

348. Anonymous, “Spartacist and Leninist Politics: The Flight of the Middle Class Intellectual,” *Bulletin*, Vol. 2, No. 34 (August-September 1966), 16. SWL was formed through a split with SWP in 1964, which might prejudice the author’s approach to Marcus’ work.

very essence of petit-bourgeois arrogance.”³⁴⁹ Whereas Trotskyists sought to include the proletariat in “the leadership of the party,” LaRouche wanted the “subordination of the party to the rule of the intellectual.”³⁵⁰ In other words, LaRouche desired followers rather than comrades. Although this critique is slightly uncharitable, the author was prescient in identifying LaRouche’s ambition to become the leader and ideologue of his own organization.³⁵¹ By the summer of 1966, LaRouche had left the fringes of the Trotskyist movement to build his own following in the New Left’s blossoming activist subculture in New York City.

The New Left represented a politics of protest, voluntarism, and nonconformity. Inspired by the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and the non-hierarchical structure of the Students Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, SDS embraced the egalitarian principle of “participatory democracy” that was “purposely counter-posed to the ‘bureaucratic’ Old Left ideal of democratic centralism.”³⁵² The fluid and non-exclusionary nature of SDS gave rise to what Jack Newfield describes as a “new ethical-rooted politics” that rebelled against racial inequality, social alienation, and U.S. imperialism.³⁵³ Strangely

349. Anonymous, “Spartacist and Leninist Politics,” 16.

350. *Ibid.*, 17.

351. The author of this *Bulletin* article appears to have anticipated LaRouche’s condescending attitude towards the masses: “Thus for Marcus it is the working class leadership of a working class party which leads it to its degeneration. If only our free spirit intellectuals like . . . Marcus can grab hold of the party’s reigns (*sic*), then we will be saved from degeneration and bureaucracy. It is the task of the workers to follow and of the Marcus-es to lead. Ah, but no one follows when Marcus leads. What dumb brutes the workers are!”

352. Paul Buhle, *Marxism in the United States: A History of the American Left*, Third Edition (New York: Verso, 2013), 231.

353. Jack Newfield, *A Prophetic Minority* (Toronto: Signet, 1967), 15.

enough, this style of ethical politics was a contradictory by-product of the very society that these students condemned.

“It is difficult today,” the historian Thomas Bender suggests, “to grasp the magnitude of the influence of new funds into the university, especially the most select research universities, in the quarter-century following World War II.”³⁵⁴ Substantial public and philanthropic investment in the higher education system, as well as bold government legislation (the G.I. Bill, for instance), spurred an unprecedented surge in college enrollment. During the so-called Golden Age of postwar prosperity, many upwardly-mobile and financially-secure families could afford full-time study for their offspring. Such overlapping factors contributed to a 120 percent rise in college enrollment in the 1960s. By 1969, the number of college students amounted to 35 percent of the eighteen-to-twenty-four-year-old population. And this demographic surge compounded the sense that students were an inchoate historical subject that could be organized into an active political force. As Barbara and John Ehrenreich opine, “few kinds of communities can undergo a severalfold increase in population without profound qualitative changes.”³⁵⁵

Nonetheless, the expansion of the university system and the enlargement of the student population does not wholly explain the rise of the New Left. The historian Henry Heller argues that the student revolt in the 1960s was a consequence of the “contradiction between the university as a site of critical knowledge and as an adjunct to capitalism.”³⁵⁶

354. Thomas Bender, “Politics, Intellect, and the American University, 1945-1995,” *American Academic Culture in Transformation: Fifty Years, Four Disciplines*, ed. Thomas Bender and Carl E. Schorske (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 23.

355. Barbara and John Ehrenreich, *Long March, Short Spring: The Student Uprising at Home and Abroad* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969), 168.

356. Heller, *The Capitalist University*, xiii.

The administrators of postwar American universities welcomed corporate and government funding for research that served the interests of business and the National Security State, such as reports on “the ideologies, strategies, and tactics required to suppress social change in the increasingly restless underdeveloped counties as well as at home.”³⁵⁷ The general social function of the university was the “provision of plentiful supplies of educated managers, supervisors, professionals, teachers, and salaried workers.”³⁵⁸ Drawing on Gramscian terminology, Heller characterizes this postwar university system as “an integral part of the non-coercive element of the capitalist state.”³⁵⁹ In other words, the university was part of the material apparatus for maintaining the hegemony of American capitalism and imperialism.

Yet, as I noted in Chapter One, the apparent equilibrium of the bourgeois hegemonic order is always somewhat unstable, insufficient, and incomplete. Contradictions within this order can generate sites for alternative projects. And there was a persistent and unassailable contradiction between the ideological function of the university and the subversive promise of the liberal arts education that many American students received. Professors and administrators assumed that a humanistic education would teach students to respect their national institutions and procedures, yet it tended to expose the horrifying discrepancies between the normative claims of American democracy and the realities of American society. The predominantly ethical politics of the student movement

357. *Ibid.*, 92.

358. *Ibid.*

359. *Ibid.*, 10.

derived from this realization that the United States was failing to live up to its purported ideals of freedom and equality.

A handful of writers and activists anticipated that students would come to play a significant role in the social movements of the 1960s. C. Wright Mills' memorable 1960 "Letter to the New Left" insists that the most pressing issue of political reflection was the "problem of the historical agency of change."³⁶⁰ Whereas traditional Marxist thinkers continued to place their misguided hopes in the diminishing revolutionary potential of the working class, Mills urges leftists to abandon this "labor metaphysic" of "Victorian Marxism" and acknowledge that the young intelligentsia were becoming "a possible, immediate, radical agency of change."³⁶¹ For instance, four black students sat at a whites-only counter in Greensboro, North Carolina in February 1960 to protest the practices of segregation and inspired a nationwide sit-in movement that fought for the desegregation of public places. To pick another example, South Korean students organized the April 19 Movement in 1960 to oppose the corruption and autocratic rule of the American-selected President Syngman Rhee (who resigned during the April 19 protests). Mills concluded that the radical activism of these earnest student-intellectuals signified the emergence of a leading political force.

In June 1962, fifty-nine members of SDS gathered at a labor union resort on the shores of Lake Huron to draft a manifesto for their generation. Tom Hayden, the lead author of what would become known as *The Port Huron Statement*, was deeply inspired by Mills' conception of a New Left. The final version of the *Statement* offers an invigorating

21 360. C. Wright Mills, "Letter to the New Left," *New Left Review*, No. 5 (September-October 1960),

361. Mills, "Letter to the New Left," 22.

critique of American society as an impersonal, bureaucratic, and militaristic system that stifles individual fulfillment and democratic participation. The authors of the *Statement* wanted to replace this grey and alienating mass society with a participatory democracy that provided people with a meaningful sense of purpose, community, and creativity. Like Mills, the members of SDS believed that students and young intellectuals could use the university as “a potential base and agency in a movement of social change,” that is, a site on which to build a new American left.³⁶² They wanted to release the critical impulses of the university from the stifling pressures of the “academic bureaucracy,” from “huge foundations and other private financial interests,” from “the compartmentalization of study and understanding.”³⁶³ The New Left, as imagined in the *Statement*, would use the resources of the university to build and organize a “left with real intellectual skills, committed to deliberativeness, honesty, reflection as working tools.”³⁶⁴ The *Statement* appeared to answer Mills’ call for a generation of student-intellectuals who hoped to remake society.

Central to SDS’s strategy of social transformation was the printed word. The historian John McMillan asserts that the “chief accomplishment of SDS’s print culture in the early 1960s is that it nurtured democratic sentiments that were already germinating among the student intelligentsia.”³⁶⁵ SDS members wrote position papers, letters, poems,

362. Students for a Democratic Society, *The Port Huron Statement*, (New York: Students for a Democratic Society, 1964), 61.

363. Students for a Democratic Society, *The Port Huron Statement*, 10.

364. *Ibid.*, 62.

365. John McMillan, “‘Our Founder, the Mimeograph Machine’: Participatory Democracy in Students for a Democratic Society’s Print Culture,” *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2008), 87.

speeches, chants, reports, essays, comic strips, and lyrics that were published in such ‘movement’ publications as *New Left Notes* and *Radical America*. The availability of cheaper printing devices and services—the slogan ‘Our Founder, the Mimeograph’ was a hand-written motto on the walls on the SDS national office—facilitated the widespread production and dissemination of political knowledge throughout the movement. The cylinders of SDS’s mimeographs, in other words, were the cogs that powered the motor of their social revolution. “The New Left’s inclusive style of decision making,” McMillan insists, “also grew out of the social processes surrounding the production, distribution, and transmission of its written texts.”³⁶⁶ And so, SDS student-intellectuals felt that their print culture represented an alternative way of life that would eventually supplant the alienation of American mass society.

Not everyone was convinced that these student-intellectuals could function as a new revolutionary agent. As the historian Eric Hobsbawm observes, the average SDS activist “stood . . . at an awkward angle to the rest of society.”³⁶⁷ Despite their opposition to the values and practices of normative America, many SDS members came from relatively affluent and conventional backgrounds. The ambivalent class position of these student radicals produced a sense of guilt about their predominantly white petit-bourgeois origins and generated a feeling of frustration about their structural isolation from the working class. Some students sought to reconcile their political commitments with the fact of their social standing. And some of them even decided that they needed to serve as an auxiliary to the real revolutionary subject: the working class, the anti-imperialist guerilla

366. McMillan, “‘Our Founder, the Mimeograph Machine,’” 87.

367. Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: 1914-1991* (London: Abacus, 2006), 301.

fighters, black militants, etc. Paul Buhle explains that “the desperate combination of white guilt and perverse workerism” triggered a pseudo-Leninist turn in SDS as “young would-be American Bolsheviks hitched their energies to outworn ideas.”³⁶⁸ Those who turned to pseudo-Leninist strategies wanted to shed their class status (and discard their class schedules) and ‘proletarianize’ themselves. PL urged students to join workers on the factory floor and form a worker-student alliance; the ‘Revolutionary Youth Movement’ (RYM) encouraged their cadres to fraternize with working class youth to rap about revolution and armed insurrection. Each of these SDS factions ached to be part of the revolutionary vanguard, even though, as a former member of PL recalls, their efforts were essentially misguided attempts to “shoehorn the square pegs of theory into the round holes of reality.”³⁶⁹

What distinguishes pseudo-Leninism from more advanced varieties of Marxist-Leninism is its failure to respond to the conjunctural forces, determinations, and tempos of a concrete situation. As the sociologist Janja Lalich recalls, “the conditions specific to the USSR at the time were rarely taken into consideration with any seriousness by the U.S. activists who adopted the Marxist-Leninist organizational model for their own purposes.”³⁷⁰ The absence of any serious political analysis prevented pseudo-Leninist radicals from developing a useful strategic perspective on what needed to be done to prepare for revolution in the United States. In fact, as Max Elbaum retorts, these pseudo-

368. Buhle, *Marxism in the United States*, 244-252

369. Eddie Goldman, “PL, the Struggle at Columbia, and the Road to Irrelevance,” in *You Say You Want a Revolution: SDS, PL, and Adventures in Building a Worker-Student Alliance*, ed. by John F. Levin and Earl Silbar (San Francisco: 1741 Press, 2019), 200.

370. Janja Lalich, *Bounded Choice: True Believers and Charismatic Cults* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004), 116.

Leninists were guilty of the very myopia that Lenin condemned in his “*Left-Wing Communism*”—*An Infantile Disorder*: “[they used] strategies and tactics that are out of touch with popular sentiment, rel[ie]d on revolutionary rhetoric rather than effective participation in political campaigns, and shun[ne]d compromises and alliances as threats to revolutionary purity.”³⁷¹ Instead of overcoming these strategic limitations, the cadres of late sixties pseudo-Leninists cultivated a “dogmatic mindset” that “reduced the complex task of building a mass-based radical party into the more formulaic process of building political sects.”³⁷² Worryingly, these sects were always a charismatic individual away from degenerating into intense and fearful cults.³⁷³

LaRouche entered the orbit of the student movement during the initial stirrings of this lurch towards Old Left ideologies and strategies. And he was ready to become the pseudo-Lenin of SDS’s pseudo-Leninist turn. Contrary to Progressive Labor’s dogmatic workerism and the RYM’s quixotic actionism, LaRouche offered to mold student radicals into a revolutionary intelligentsia that could enlighten and emancipate the working class. Central to LaRouche’s promise was the assumption that one could be a Leninist and a student-intellectual simultaneously (no proletarianization required!). The charismatic LaRouche persuaded a small group of students that he was the sole possessor of the only correct revolutionary doctrine—the roadmap to the coming American socialist revolution. And so, he started to train a cadre of intellectuals and build the membership of what would

371. Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao and Che* (Croydon: Verso, 2018), 7.

372. Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air*, 8.

373. For more on how some left-wing organizations in the 1960s became authoritarian cults, I recommend Lalich’s personal account of the Democratic Worker’s Party in her book *Bounded Choice*.

become his National Caucus of Labor Committees at a class called the “Elementary Course in Marxist Economics” at the Free School of New York.

The Free School, known as FUNY, was established and operated by members of the May Second Movement, PL’s student organization, in a run-down loft above a café on East 14th Street in Manhattan. The school’s founders felt that American universities were spinelessly complicit in the Vietnam War and fiercely hostile to socialist thought. Although many student activists felt that the university could be a base for social change, they recognized that American colleges were still deeply embedded in the ideological structure of the liberal consensus. The radical left-wing magazine *Ramparts* revealed “in 1966 that Michigan State University had assisted counter-insurgency efforts in Vietnam and in 1967 that the CIA was secretly funding the National Student Association.”³⁷⁴ Furthermore, Heller notes that the humanities and the social sciences in the postwar American university exhibited “consistent bias in teaching against Marxism—and, indeed, against a historically based understanding of culture and society—in favour of defending liberalism, capitalism, and American imperialism.”³⁷⁵ Students were desperate for a real political education that encouraged them to critique and resist the ideological function of the capitalist university and the oppressive nature of American society. FUNY satisfied this need and served as a haven for renegade left-wing intellectuals, such as LaRouche, who could teach classes on radical history, Marxist theory, and revolutionary praxis.

FUNY’s summer 1966 catalogue lists LaRouche’s class as a seminar “designed to equip the beginner . . . with a working mastery of the basic methods, concepts, and

374. Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air*, 22.

375. Heller, *The Capitalist University*, viii.

practical applications of Marxist economics.”³⁷⁶ The syllabus for this course includes all three volumes of Marx’s *Capital*, Ludwig Feuerbach’s *The Essence of Christianity*, Hegel’s *Science of Logic*, Rosa Luxemburg’s *The Accumulation of Capital*, Emile Durkheim’s *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Lawrence Kubie’s *Neurotic Distortions of the Creative Process*, the mathematical ideas of Kurt Gödel, and arguments about the influence of cybernetics on American labor. LaRouche’s idiosyncratic and polymathic approach to Marxist economics captivated his students.³⁷⁷ As the then-PL student organizer Steve Fraser reminisces, LaRouche’s classes were “mind-boggling and thrilling” and demanded “a higher intellectual effort . . . and a certain moral rigor.”³⁷⁸

At first glance, it may seem implausible to posit this seminar as the start of

376. Quoted in Hylozoic Hedgehog, “Chapter One: FUNY Business,” *LaRouchePlanet*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20160827001449/http://laroucheplanet.info/pmwiki/pmwiki.php?n=Library.HIABChapter1FUNYCIPA>.

377. LaRouche’s Marxism is often difficult to summarize succinctly. I will insert the two most compressed and accurate accounts of LaRouchean economics that I have encountered into this footnote. The first is from Tim Wollforth: “The second strand of LaRouche’s thought was his Theory of Reindustrialization. He began with a rather orthodox theory of capitalist crisis derived from Marx’s *Capital* and Luxemburg’s *The Accumulation of Capital*. He was convinced that capitalism had ceased to grow, or to grow sufficiently to meet the needs of poor Americans. This created an economic crisis that would only worsen. In order to overcome stagnation at home and revolution abroad, the metropolitan countries needed a new industrial revolution in the Third World. LaRouche expected this to take place in India. The advanced nations would use their unused capacity to make capital goods and export them to India, to be combined with the surplus work force to carry through this worldwide transformation. LaRouche called this the “third stage of imperialism.” Today it remains at the heart of his economic theory. LaRouche believed his program to reindustrialize America - and, through capital exports to the Third World, the world as a whole - would draw popular support so that he could personally resolve the crisis of capitalism. During the Vietnam war his idea was to reconvert the war industries to this peaceful reindustrialization process. This scheme, which shaped LaRouche writings and agitation in the late ‘60s and early ‘70s, was presented in an increasingly frenetic manner, bolstered by predictions of economic doom. LaRouche was a crisis-monger of the highest order. LaRouche and his followers became increasingly convinced that the fate of the world rested with their group and their great leader.” The second comes from *Cosmonaut* editor Donald Parkinson: “LaRouche imagined that a (*sic*) intensifying capitalist crisis would lead to increasing quantities of mass strikes, which would eventually form workers councils out of strike committees that formed to coordinate the strikes. This strategy relied heavily on a conception that the strength of the proletariat was its ability to withdraw its labor power. Hence de-industrialization robbed the proletariat of its strength, meaning for LaRouche that the rational response was to fight for a reindustrialization of the United States.”

378. Dennis King, *Lyndon LaRouche and the New American Fascism* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 14.

conspiratorial mutterings in the LaRouchean sect.³⁷⁹ After all, many people read Marx, Feuerbach, and Hegel without suddenly propagating dubious narratives about the Frankfurt School. Yet, as Gramsci understood, the “doctrinal” character of a group springs more from their “concrete activity” than the “abstract content” of their doctrine.³⁸⁰ Regardless of the texts on the syllabus, the purpose of LaRouche’s seminar was the selection and preparation of a sect. What appeared to be a pedagogical relation between teacher and student gradually evolved into an ideological bond between guru and disciple. Lalich notes that this experience of “charismatic authority” stems from an “interactive relationship between leader and follower.”³⁸¹ The leader issues a call to those who aspire to embody a certain political or spiritual ideal; the follower responds to this appeal by helping to turn this ideal into a practical reality. Consequently, these followers start to perceive their submission to the leader and his ideal as the truest expression of their highest aspirations. The phenomenon of *charismatic commitment* explains how conviction can turn arbitrary ideologies into a material, albeit ‘limited,’ reality (or what Gramsci would describe as the product of a group’s formally constructive will).

379. Incidentally, Dennis King speculates that LaRouche volunteered to teach the class at FUNY because he hoped to attract “key members” from “SDS’s most ideological element—the campus cadre of the Progressive Labor Party.” I worry that King’s chronology is a little wonky. Although Progressive Labor decided to disband the May Second Movement and encourage its members to join SDS in late 1965/early 1966, PL’s influence was not felt in SDS until the SDS annual convention in August 1966. As King believes that LaRouche’s first class at FUNY took place in the summer semester of 1967, he assumes that LaRouche planned to target PL-affiliated SDS members. Yet, as I have already pointed out, LaRouche was already teaching at FUNY in April 1966. Nonetheless, King is right to observe that many PL organizers became the early followers of LaRouche. As the May Second Movement was closely affiliated with FUNY, it is more likely that LaRouche’s appeal to these PL members was more incidental than intentional. In other words, I suppose that LaRouche appears to have targeted PLers mainly because they were the people who attended classes at FUNY.

380. Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks: Volume III*, 277.

381. Lalich, *Bounded Choice*, 223.

Building on Lalich's conception of charismatic commitment, Breslauer notes that the figure of the "communist guru" is a common feature of left-wing cults.³⁸² The communist guru derives his or her authority from their oratory powers, talent for political leadership, (perceived) mastery of Marxist doctrine, and program for revolutionary action. Yet, the charisma of this guru is irreducible to the magnetism of an individual personality. The status and power of the guru derives from his control over the relationship between leader and follower. The formation of this interactive relationship is never a one-time event with clear chronological markers of 'before' and 'after,' but, rather, a continual process whereby the leader directs the follower's will. Of course, the follower does not become a mere 'brainwashed' automaton who believes everything that the leader proclaims. These followers exercise a limited degree of freedom within the ideological framework that the guru constructs—what Lalich calls *bounded choice*. The guru aims to unify his followers' wills and organize them into a material fulfilment of an arbitrary ideology. As the history of NCLC demonstrates, the formation of these arbitrary intellectuals—the promoters of, and participants in, the guru's doctrine—is a long and complicated process.

LaRouche selected his recruits carefully. He filled his syllabus with complex and demanding texts to deter the undedicated. He set an upper age limit of twenty-five, because he felt that many older graduate students had already fallen victim to "the mind-destroying features of most liberal PhD training."³⁸³ The older the student, the more integrated into the state apparatus of the capitalistic university. Once LaRouche had attracted a "superior sort of university undergraduate or graduate student" to his seminar, he aimed to transform

382. Gus Breslauer, "Cults of Our Hegemony."

383. L. Marcus, "The Conceptual History of the Labor Committees," *The Campaigner*, Vol. 7, No. 10 (October 1974), 14.

them from “an inwardly frightened, alienated petit-bourgeois into a person of self-conscious moral identity and enhanced powers of general intelligence.”³⁸⁴ LaRouche promised to free these students from the psychological constraints of their petit-bourgeois backgrounds and prepare them for the task of mobilizing the masses during a period of crisis. When he decided that his recruits were ready, LaRouche coordinated organizing efforts, or “laboratory work,” to test whether they could put his revolutionary theories into practice.³⁸⁵ Yet, what counted as “readiness” in this case was a commitment to LaRouche’s interpretation of Marxist doctrine. Only those who accepted this highly cerebral and pseudo-Leninist version of Marxism were treated as ideal candidates for LaRouche’s revolutionary intelligentsia. Although this LaRouchite sect would not develop into a full-blown cult until the early 1970s, LaRouche was already establishing himself as a communist guru and converting his disciples into arbitrary intellectuals. Other activists in the student movement even started to refer to his followers as “Marcusites.” And so, it seems that LaRouche had finally found his Leninist boomers.

As most of the early Marcusites were graduate students at Columbia University, the famous 1968 “Columbia Strike” became a defining event in the mythos of the LaRouche movement. In April 1968, student radicals at Columbia protested the university’s links with the Pentagon, especially its Institute for Defense Analysis, and its plan to construct a new gymnasium in Morningside Park in the working class Black neighborhood of Harlem. Demonstrations turned into occupations as students decided to seize several campus buildings. Tony Papert, chairman of the local PL chapter and acolyte of LaRouche, led the

384. Marcus, “The Conceptual History of the Labor Committees,” 18.

385. *Ibid.*, 16.

occupation of the Low Library, where, according to Kirkpatrick Sale, he spoke to his fellow occupiers about “class conflict and a prerevolutionary society and the necessity of revolutionary change.”³⁸⁶ Following the strike, LaRouche lectured on Marxism at a frat-house turned “Summer Liberation School” near the Columbia campus to recruit some of the students who barricaded themselves in the Low Library with Papert.

“Columbia quickly became the symbol of all campus protest,” writes Sale, “and it energized the news media, angered the politicians, terrified the academics, and inspired the students.”³⁸⁷ Although LaRouche planned to use the strike to boost recruitment for the nascent Labor Committees, none of the major news outlets acknowledged Papert’s role in the occupation. The *New York Times* and several other newspapers portrayed Mark Rudd—the then-Chairman of the Columbia SDS—as the poster-boy of the strike. Yet, multiple accounts recall that Rudd fled the Low Library as soon as he heard that the university administrators had called the police.

According to former LaRouchite Kevin Coogan, LaRouche and his supporters were intensely suspicious about Rudd’s abrupt rise to revolutionary stardom. A few people speculated that Marcuse might have had something to do with it. After all, it did not take much digging to unearth connections between Rudd and Marcuse. The *New York Times*’ profile of Rudd mentions that “Mike Neumann, stepson of Herbert Marcuse,” introduced him to the leaders of the Columbia SDS chapter.³⁸⁸ When the reporter asks Rudd about his intellectual development, he replies that he read a lot of Lenin and Marcuse during his first

386. Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS* (New York: Random House, 1973), 437.

387. Sale, *SDS*, 441.

388. Steven V. Roberts, “Leader of S.D.S. Unit: From a Jersey Suburb to the Picket Lines,” *The New York Times*, May 19, 1968, 84.

year or so at Columbia. He even remarks that “Marcuse was very important to me.”³⁸⁹ Eventually, Rudd would become a leading member of a violent left-wing faction called the ‘Weathermen’ (later renamed the Weather Underground) that used confrontational tactics and guerilla warfare techniques to protest the Vietnam War and attack the institutions of American imperialism. LaRouche and his followers would see Rudd’s transformation into a domestic terrorist as proof that Marcuse turned members of the student movement into proto-fascist shock troops.

In 1968, LaRouche’s Labor Committee published critical articles about the politics of the New Left in the first few issues of their theoretical journal *The Campaigner*. “New Left, Local Control, and Fascism,” co-authored by LaRouche and his then-partner Carol Larrabee/LaRouche, denounces the various currents of the student movement as proto-fascist and petit-bourgeois tendencies that aimed to fragment the working class. LaRouche and Larrabee theorize that fascism originates as a “popular movement” with a “pseudo-revolutionary appeal to a new community spirit” that splinters the masses into “the local control forms so absolutely indispensable to fascist tyranny by the ruling class.”³⁹⁰ Organizations, such as the Ford Foundation, bankrolled New Left activists to import ideas about community control into working class neighborhoods. LaRouche and Larrabee’s claims about the Ford Foundation were not entirely unfounded. Moderate groups at Columbia welcomed Ford Foundation grants to fund a reformist initiative called Students for a Reconstructed Society; the Ford Foundation financed a few experiments in “community control” in New York City. After a year or so, the Ford Foundation lost

389. Roberts, “Leader of S.D.S. Unit,” 84.

390. C. LaRouche and L. Marcus, “New Left, Local Control, and Fascism,” *The Campaigner*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (September 1968), 30.

interest in these progressive causes and withdrew their support. LaRouche treated the shallow corporate and philanthropic cooptation of the student movement as a sign that anyone who did not trust or accept his revolutionary doctrine was an unwitting apologist or conscious agent of a nascent fascist takeover of the United States. Only his disciplined cadre of Marcusite intellectuals were immune to the bribery of wealthy aspiring tyrants and the barbarism of the protofascist New Left. LaRouche and his Marcusites' disdain for other student factions compounded their perception that they were the uncorrupted vanguard of the imminent American socialist revolution.

According to Sale, the New York SDS Labor Committee “developed serious differences in the Fall with the actionist leadership at Columbia SDS [my note: Rudd] – chiefly over the Labor Committee’s support for New York City school teachers on strike against community control of schools in black neighborhoods.”³⁹¹ Whereas the Marcusites decided to support the United Federation of Teachers, the Columbia SDS perceived the strike as a racist backlash to the Black community’s demands to gain some control over their children’s education. Consequently, the New York Regional Committee voted to dissolve the Labor Committee as a faction within SDS.

News of this expulsion reached the pages of the SDS newspaper *New Left Notes*. LaRouche’s New York Labor Committee issued a press statement to claim that their expulsion “violates the anti-exclusionary clause of SDS” and to insist that “SDS is falling into the trap carefully laid by the government in supporting the sabotage of the Ford Foundation . . . against working people, black and white, in the city.”³⁹² Bernardine Dohrn,

391. Sale, *SDS*, 514.

392. N.Y. Students for a Democratic Society Labor Committee, “Press Release: Issued Dec. 16 by NY Labor Committee,” *New Left Notes*, Vol. 3, No. 38, 4.

SDS inter-organizational secretary and future member of the Weather Underground, denounced the statement as “pure and simple trash,” and disparaged the Labor Committee for seeing “itself as the intellectual vanguard which will bring ideas to the working class . . . not as a movement which will ally with the working class.”³⁹³ Dohrn and others judged that the Marcusite sect represented the wrong kind of pseudo-Leninism. Their official expulsion from SDS resulted in a seemingly irreparable cleavage between the Marcusites and the rest of the student movement. Yet, as Coogan reflects, “even if sections of SDS had looked on the Marcusites with contempt, pariah status still remains a kind of status.”³⁹⁴ In the coming years, LaRouche would continue to portray this pariah status as a mark of virtue.

Several months after their expulsion from SDS, the Marcusites became a target of government harassment. From 1956 to 1971, the FBI carried out a vicious counterrevolutionary campaign known as COINTELPRO (Counter Intelligence Program) to infiltrate, derail, and neutralize radical and subversive organizations. The disciplinary actions of the FBI display the role of coercion in preserving the hegemonic limits of an organized consensus. Various FBI field offices used “news leaks, anonymous letters, and derisive cartoons” to promote factionalism between different groups in the New Left.³⁹⁵ They understood that aggravating internal conflict would hasten the demise of the student

393. Bernardine Dohrn, “Labor Committee statement: pure and simple trash,” *New Left Notes*, Vol. 3, No. 38, 4.

394. Hylozoic Hedgehog, “Appendix B: The “Bavarians” Versus the “PPT”: Trying to Make Sense of the 1970-71 Faction Fight,” *LaRouchePlanet*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20160827003136/http://laroucheplanet.info/pmwiki/pmwiki.php?n=Library.HIABChapter6Appendix2Bavarians-PPT>.

395. James Kirkpatrick Davis, *Assault on the Left: The FBI and the Sixties Antiwar Movement* (Westport: Praeger, 1997), 51.

movement. Operatives in the New York field office produced a leaflet called *The Mouse Crap Revolution*—written in what an FBI agent called “the jargon of the New Left”—to discredit Papert and exacerbate the schism between the Labor Committees and the rest of the student movement.³⁹⁶ The ostracization of the Marcusite sect seemed to confirm LaRouche’s growing belief that he was the victim of an increasingly brazen proto-fascist conspiracy. Although other New Left organizations were subject to even more severe forms of FBI surveillance and suppression, LaRouche and his followers fell for the COINTELPRO trap and decided to distance themselves from the student movement. And, as the sixties morphed into the seventies, LaRouche planned to turn the Labor Committees’ isolation to his strategic advantage.

During the third national NCLC conference in January 1971, LaRouche introduced his “Statement of Founding Principles of the National Caucus of Labor Committees.”³⁹⁷ The 25-point Statement represents LaRouche’s pseudo-Leninist twist on Lenin’s *What Is to Be Done?* Each point intersperses classic Leninist insights—the need for a secret and centralized apparatus of professional revolutionary intelligentsia who can transmit political consciousness to the working class *from without*—with LaRouche’s idiosyncratic interpretations of Hegel, Feuerbach, and Marx. LaRouche insists that only those who have attained a mastery of philosophy, economics and dialectics can act as the “outside agency” that will transform the working class from a passive class-in-itself into a revolutionary

396. Special Agent in Charge, New York to Director, FBI, April 10, 1969, Federal Bureau of Investigation, “COINTELPRO – NEW LEFT,” accessed on: <https://web.archive.org/web/20160909011419/http://laroucheplanet.info/pmwiki/pmwiki.php?n=Library.HIABChapter3Appendix1TextsUFTSDS>

397. The first National Conference of the New York and Philadelphia Labor Committees took place on March 29, 1969—several months after their expulsion from SDS—at the University of Philadelphia. During the conference, the organization voted to change their name to the National Caucus of SDS Labor Committees (which was later changed to National Caucus of Labor Committees or NCLC).

class-for-itself.³⁹⁸ Yet, this strategy betrays the elitist mentality that pervaded the LaRouche movement—that the working class could not organize themselves without the paternalistic guidance of college-educated Marcusite student-intellectuals. Such an elitist attitude reveals LaRouche’s failure to grapple with the limitations of Lenin’s proposal for a revolutionary party. As Jerome Karabel points out, “Leninists have tended to neglect the contradiction between the notion of bringing consciousness to the working class from without and the ideal of proletarian self-emancipation.”³⁹⁹ The outside agency of the revolutionary intelligentsia threatens to ossify into the external authority of a totalitarian party that imposes its stiff and austere doctrine on an allegedly passive working class. In fact, LaRouche’s Statement resembles a blueprint for turning his sect into a machine that could transmit his arbitrary ideology to the seemingly clueless masses.

Additionally, LaRouche proposes a pseudo-Leninist model of organization that would preserve the purity of his doctrine. He insists NCLC must remain “politically and organizationally centralized” to ensure that no “alien political ideas” will interfere with his ideological vision and political will.⁴⁰⁰ The National Committee, which LaRouche chaired, exercised complete executive and policy-making duties and powers over the activity of every local Labor Committee. LaRouche wanted to prevent any local committee from forming alliances with other post-New Left organizations, because the strategy of a “popular front” would deprive him of control over the lives and minds of his followers.⁴⁰¹

398. National Caucus of Labor Committees, “Statement of Founding Principles of the National Caucus of Labor Committees,” *The Campaigner*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Winter 1971), 59.

399. Jerome Karabel, “Revolutionary Contradictions: Antonio Gramsci and the Problem of Intellectuals,” *Politics & Society*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (June 1976), 140.

400. National Caucus of Labor Committees, “Statement of Founding Principles of the National Caucus of Labor Committees,” 59.

The disciplined centralization of NCLC reflected what the Marxist writer Donald Parkinson calls *theoretical centralism*: “an organization uniting around one ‘correct’ vision of Marxist theory or interpretation of history, rather than political centralism, or centralism around a concrete political program.”⁴⁰² In other words, LaRouche formalized NCLC’s organizational structure to support his ‘communist guru’ status and thus maintain his control over the direction of the group’s arbitrary ideology. Those who questioned his strategic or theoretical judgement needed to shut up and listen or leave the organization. As he phrased it in the Statement, “the less-developed consciousness of socialist principles must be subordinated to the most-advanced consciousness within the organization.”⁴⁰³

The Statement formalizes the boundary between the “Promethean elite” of the NCLC and the “Malthusian” counter-elite of both the post-New Left (which was starting to be known as the “New Communist Movement”) and the conspiratorial ruling classes. LaRouche celebrates the former as the “embryonic representatives of a new human species, a Promethean species which seeks to reproduce its own kind from the ranks of the working class.”⁴⁰⁴ He holds that the latter wish to condemn humanity to a “baboon-like” existence of fear and scarcity.⁴⁰⁵ LaRouche’s Manichean vision of politics would later inform NCLC’s portrayals of the Frankfurt School.

401. Ibid., 60.

402. Donald Parkinson, “LaRouche: A Warning for Us All,” *Cosmonaut*, March 19, 2019, <https://cosmonaut.blog/2019/03/19/larouche-a-warning-for-us-all>.

403. National Caucus of Labor Committees, “Statement of Founding Principles of the National Caucus of labor Committees, 59.

404. Ibid.

405. Ibid, 57.

During the early 1970s, NCLC centralized itself into an alternative political universe. Members quit their jobs, dropped out of school, and cut ties with family and friends to devote their lives to LaRouche's mission—to become a Promethean elite. They worked twelve to sixteen hour shifts—writing articles for *The Campaigner*, printing and distributing leaflets, recruiting new members—and lived on paltry stipends that were rarely paid. As Elbaum clarifies, this level of commitment was relatively common among Marxist-Leninist cadres in the 1960s and 1970s.⁴⁰⁶ What was relatively uncommon, however, were LaRouche's methods for exerting complete domination over the internal culture of NCLC.

According to former NCLC member Molly Kronberg, LaRouche launched a program of “psychological and physical violence” in 1973.⁴⁰⁷ He ordered his followers to disrupt the meetings of rival left-wing organizations, such as the Communist Party of the United States of America, with nunchucks, chains, and baseball bats in a violent campaign called “Operation Mop Up.” Reportedly, NCLC's combative “mini-phalanxes” assaulted various groups sixty times between April and September in 1973. Operation Mop Up represents the willingness of certain NCLC members to follow where LaRouche led them.

Although Operation Mop Up demonstrated that NCLCers would sacrifice their physical safety for the cause, LaRouche demanded more. He wanted their psyches. When a follower named Chris White suffered a mental breakdown and proclaimed that the KGB and M15 had ‘brainwashed’ him into assassinating the NCLC leader, LaRouche became

406. Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air*, 38-39.

407. Molly Kronberg, “Pawns of His Grandiosity: Psychological and Social Control in the Lyndon LaRouche Cult,” paper presented at symposium “Speaking with Forked Tongues: The Rhetoric of Right-Wing Extremism Today,” University of Northampton, June 26, 2009.

convinced that he needed to ‘cleanse’ the minds of his supporters. In his 1973 pamphlet *Beyond Psychoanalysis*, LaRouche claimed that he needed to cure his followers’ political impotence to turn them into effective socialist organizers.⁴⁰⁸ He subjected them to long, traumatizing “ego-stripping” sessions, in which he forced them to renounce their petit-bourgeois ‘little-me’ ego-ideal, surrender their libidinal investment in their ‘Mother-image,’ and embrace LaRouche as their father figure.⁴⁰⁹ He assured them that these approaches were “indispensable auxiliary means for directly overcoming the fatal internal flaw of all socialist organizations, Lenin’s included, up to this time.”⁴¹⁰ LaRouche may have promised to rid his followers of their petit-bourgeois personas, yet the former NCLC members Christine Berl and Harry Weinfield write that “what was stripped away was their very identities.”⁴¹¹

LaRouche’s psychologization of politics tightened his control over NCLC’s group mentality. The objective of these ego-stripping sessions was the remolding of member’s identities according to LaRouche’s ideal of the Promethean elite. Many NCLC members acquiesced to, or were complicit in, this treatment simply because they felt that any deviation from LaRouche’s demands would hinder the progress of the organization. In fact, as Coogan points out, “LaRouche effectively depoliticized any objections to his actions by arguing that ‘so-called’ political objections really were based on the fears of a ‘little-me’

408. L. Marcus, “Beyond Psychoanalysis,” *The Campaigner*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (September-October 1973).

409. Kronberg, “Pawns of His Grandiosity.”

410. Marcus, “Beyond Psychoanalysis,” 41.

411. Christine Berl and Harry Weinfield, “Letter of Resignation,” *LaRouchePlanet*, April 2, 1974, <https://web.archive.org/web/20160826222457/http://laroucheplanet.info/pmwiki/pmwiki.php?n=Library.BerlWeinfieldResignatiuon2>.

persona.”⁴¹² LaRouche would later elaborate on this theme and claim that anyone who opposed him was the victim of CIA “brainwashing.” There was no other explanation for their opposition. What needed to be explained, however, was the identity of the ‘brainwashers.’ This is where the Frankfurt School, as I will demonstrate in the following sections, figured in NCLC’s increasingly conspiratorial vision of politics.

LaRouche constructed his movement on the turbulent conjunctural terrain of late-1960s-to-early-1970s American radical politics. He gained a reputation as a communist guru among the members of an unravelling student movement and promised young radicals that he possessed the only true revolutionary program. The first generation of NCLCers dedicated themselves to LaRouche’s arbitrary ideology and organized themselves as his ideal of a Promethean elite to fend off their ‘Malthusian’ enemies. The strict centralization of NCLC prevented LaRouche’s devotees from criticizing his decisions or questioning his theories. Instead of voicing their objections, NCLC members participated in ‘ego-stripping’ sessions to shed their individual personas and fully embrace the identity of ‘Marcusites’—the living embodiments of LaRouche’s arbitrary ideology. Although Gramsci held that “arbitrary constructions are wiped out rather quickly by historical competition,” he stipulated that “sometimes they manage to enjoy some sort of popularity thanks to a combination of immediately favourable circumstances.”⁴¹³ The conditions and circumstances of the sixties ferment enabled LaRouche to construct a

412. Hylozoic Hedgehog, “CHAPTER 13 One Man Coup by the Philosopher King: The Chris White Affair in Context,” *LaRouchePlanet*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20160826155305/http://laroucheplanet.info/pmwiki/pmwiki.php?n=Library.UnityNow>.

413. Gramsci, *Subaltern Social Groups*, 86.

purely ‘willed’ movement that ran on nothing more than the energy of his followers’ commitment.

The early history of the LaRouchites serves as a prelude to their ideological attacks on the Frankfurt School. They regarded the other radical factions in the post-New Left as ‘brainwashed’ collaborators in an elite-engineered project of controlling and suppressing the masses. Hostility to the activism and legacy of the New Left remained a consistent feature of NCLC’s narratives of Cultural Marxism. After all, these narratives helped to police the boundaries between LaRouchite ideology and ‘petit-bourgeois’ ideas. In the next section, I demonstrate that LaRouche reinforced this boundary by arguing that only NCLC’s alternative apparatus of knowledge production could expose and conquer the ‘brainwashing’ of the Frankfurt School.

[Rockefeller Fascism: Zombies in America, Brainwashers in Frankfurt](#)

On January 20, 1974, the *New York Times* published an article on the LaRouche movement entitled “How a Radical-Left Group Moved Toward Savagery.” Paul Montgomery, the journalist who penned the report, tried to explain the “steady progression of a committed far-left organization from theoretical writing to repellent descriptions of sadism, from praise of humanism to physical violence against opponents, from hopeful debate about ideas to an embittered conviction that nearly the entire world is engaged in a conspiracy against it.”⁴¹⁴ Montgomery interviewed several former members who attested that LaRouche’s technique of “ego-stripping” was essentially a tactic of silencing dissent

414. Paul Montgomery, “How a Radical-Left Group Moved Toward Savagery,” *New York Times*, January 20, 1974, 1.

within NCLC.⁴¹⁵ Unsurprisingly, LaRouche dismissed these claims as “wild slanders and libels.”⁴¹⁶ He sensed that Montgomery’s article might have been part of an orchestrated attack to discredit the only organization that possessed a “program and strategy for establishing a new age for mankind.”⁴¹⁷ And LaRouche thought that he knew exactly who was behind this affront to NCLC’s public reputation: the Rockefellers.

From roughly 1974 onwards, LaRouche and his followers were convinced that the Rockefeller family controlled a vast counterinsurgency establishment that would impose a Malthusian “genocidal zero-growth project” on the global population.⁴¹⁸ In his 1974 *Campaigner* article “The Real CIA: The Rockefeller’s Fascist Establishment,” LaRouche claims to expose the “far-flung interlocking financial, political, professional, and military establishment variously participating in the leadership and support of the family’s fascist plot.”⁴¹⁹ According to LaRouche, the New Left was an instrument of Rockefeller’s counterinsurgency apparatus. The agents of Rockefeller Fascism invented the New Left in the 1960s to “pre-empt the radicalization of college youth.”⁴²⁰ They aimed to “prevent the established socialistic parties” from recruiting student organizers, and planned to funnel

415. Montgomery, “How a Radical-Left Group Moved Toward Savagery,” 51.

416. Marcus, “The Conceptual History of the Labor Committees,” 9.

417. Ibid.

418. L. Marcus, “The Real CIA: The Rockefeller’s Fascist Establishment,” *The Campaigner*, Vol. 7, No. 6 (April 1974), 7. Coogan conjectures that Bob Cohen, a close disciple of LaRouche, was responsible for NCLC’s fanatical obsession with the apparent threat of “Rockefeller Fascism.” According to Coogan, Cohen held that “corporate liberalism”—a term common to SDS critiques of mass society—was the most significant threat to the left and dabbled in the conspiracist literature of the John Birch Society. In this sense, LaRouche’s ideological crusade against “Rockefeller Fascism” was part New Left idealism and part Radical Right conspiracism.

419. Marcus, “The Real CIA,” 5.

420. Ibid., 11.

these young radicals into the groupscules of an “expanding counterinsurgency apparatus.”⁴²¹ LaRouche revives PL’s rumors about Marcuse to argue that the so-called Father of the New Left devised a protofascist ideology that would convert potential revolutionaries into Rockefeller’s fascist goons. For instance, LaRouche alleges that Rudd’s “faction of self-styled crazies” received funding from the Ford Foundation through a “nephew of former CIA operative Dr. Herbert Marcuse.”⁴²² Consequently, LaRouche reframes NCLC’s expulsion from SDS and dispute with Rudd and Dohrn as part of a mighty conflict between his Promethean elite and the Rockefeller-Marcuse Malthusian counter-elite.

In his anti-Rockefeller Fascism screeds, LaRouche invokes the language of his psychologized politics to dismiss his opponents as victims of CIA brainwashing. He warns his followers about “the CIA’s capability of playing on the neurotic terrors of human beings and turning them into programmed zombies.”⁴²³ Whereas his closest devotees are immune to the CIA’s psychic manipulation, LaRouche’s critics—anyone who doubts his byzantine allegations—suffer from a “psychoneurotic blockage.”⁴²⁴ LaRouche adapts the student movement’s critique of the capitalist university to declare that nearly every humanities and social sciences department in the United States is a “CIA branch operation.”⁴²⁵ Whenever a tenured historian, sociologist or philosopher derides the

421. Ibid., 11-12.

422. Ibid., 12.

423. Lyn Marcus, “Will You Eat Shit for Rockefeller’s CIA?,” *New Solidarity*, Vol. IV, No. 38 (January 11, 1974), 11.

424. Marcus, “The Real CIA,” 7.

425. Ibid., 8.

“conspiratorial theory of history,” they are merely concealing their own participation in Rockefeller’s counterinsurgency apparatus.⁴²⁶ None of these CIA establishment intellectuals want the masses to know that the agents of Rockefeller fascism are plotting a global genocide. Unlike these academic lackeys, LaRouche’s revolutionary intelligentsia plan to function as an outside agency that will free people from the CIA’s psychic control and inspire them to overthrow their fascist controllers. Whereas “the last resort of the muddle-headed academic or journalist is to denounce the . . . conspiratorial theory of history,” NCLC aspired to “rip apart publicly the easily-demonstrated ideological content and outright objective incompetence of authoritative academic views.”⁴²⁷ LaRouche understood that NCLC needed to construct a durable alternative apparatus of knowledge production that would support their efforts to contest these ‘authoritative’ views. Consequently, NCLC established a counterintelligence division that would report on what LaRouche saw as the sprawling counterinsurgency activities of Rockefeller Fascism.

The New Solidarity International Press Service, which produced the glossy and expensive weekly news-magazine *Executive Intelligence Review (EIR)*, operated as an intellectual laboratory for LaRouche’s expansive conspiratorial vision of politics. The pages of *EIR* blended genuine reporting—LaRouche’s operatives gained White House press accreditations and participated in many presidential press conferences during the Ford and Carter administrations—with wild rumours about the malignancy of Rockefeller Fascism. LaRouche hoped that this publication, as well as such other NCLC periodicals as

426. Ibid., 19. To put it somewhat differently: Whenever a *New York Times* journalist called Paul Montgomery ridicules a group for believing a “conspiracy” against it, he is simply concealing his own role within that conspiracy.

427. Ibid.

New Solidarity and *The Campaigner*, would demonstrate that his movement was the only political force that could identify, expose, and defeat the true enemy of the masses—the Malthusian counter-elite.

LaRouche's intense faith in the political impact of the published word may have been another inheritance from Lenin.⁴²⁸ In *What Is to Be Done?*, Lenin recommends a form of propaganda known as 'exposure literature' (pamphlets, newspaper articles, etc.) that publicizes all instances of political repression and oppression in capitalist society. The revolutionary intelligentsia must publish and disseminate these "political exposures" to transform the working class' economic battle against their employers into a larger counter-hegemonic struggle against the bourgeois state.⁴²⁹ The intelligentsia exposes the government's corruption and cruelty; the working class converts "this knowledge into active struggle."⁴³⁰ As Lenin puts it, "political exposures in themselves serve as a powerful instrument for *disintegrating* the system we oppose."⁴³¹ Yet, NCLC's 'exposure literature' did less to reveal the political scandals and injustices of capitalist society and more to articulate LaRouche's disdain for whatever individual or group he identified as part of the Rockefeller-allied elite.

Whereas SDS's print culture exuded an open and participatory spirit, LaRouche's publishing apparatus was strictly centralized. NCLC members had to revise and rework

428. Incidentally, the *Washington Monthly* journalist Avi Klein claims that LaRouche developed passion for print during his time in SWP: "Like socialist movements of every era, the SWP put a high premium on agitprop pamphlets, newspapers, and denunciatory internal memoranda. LaRouche had found his medium."

429. V. I. Lenin, *Essential Works of Lenin: "What Is to Be Done?" and Other Writings* (New York: Dover, 1987), 120.

430. Lenin, *Essential Works of Lenin*, 119.

431. *Ibid.*, 120.

their writings constantly to satisfy LaRouche's demands for theoretical uniformity. He chose trusted disciples to serve as editors of NCLC publications. Overbearing editorial pressure compelled NCLC members to incorporate LaRouchean jargon into their prose and insert assertions about Rockefeller's fascist plot into their reports. LaRouche's obsessive control over their theoretical output produced a kind of arbitrary intellectual practice—a form of intellectual activity that struggled to communicate beyond the limits of an 'individual' movement. The practices of the LaRouchean intellectuals served to elaborate, expand, and disseminate LaRouche's grander philosophy of politics. The organizational structure of NCLC became a mechanism for insulating members from the corrupt outside world and filling them with zeal—sincere or forced—for LaRouche's revolutionary goals. They felt a desire to protect LaRouche's arbitrary ideology from internal criticism or deviations ("alien political ideas"), because his theoretical framework secured their special status as members of a Promethean elite.

Ironically, other organizations in the post-New Left milieu suspected that this strange and insular cult was itself a CIA front—a Secret Service-funded *agent provocateur* to disrupt the fledging New Communist Movement. Mike Zagarell, the author of the 1975 article "Phony 'Labor' Party Exposed as CIA Front" in the CPUSA-affiliated newspaper *Daily World*, speculates that the CIA was paying the LaRouchites through secret trust funds and loans to gather information about left-wing radicals.⁴³² Furthermore, Zagarell stressed certain contradictions between LaRouche's pronouncements and NCLC's

432. Mike Zagarell, "Phony 'Labor' Party Exposed as CIA Front," *Daily World*, September 18, 1975, 1. A 1997 *Executive Intelligence Review* article claims that Zagarell's 'expose' was based on information from a former NCLC Gregory F. Rose, who later turned out to be an FBI informant. Mary Jane Freeman, the author of this *EIR* article, argues that the FBI hoped that this *Daily World* hit-piece would isolate NCLC on the American Left. Of course, it is very unlikely that NCLC was ever a "CIA front." I mention the Zagarell piece simply to point out that associating an organization with the CIA was a common and potent delegitimizing tool of the American Left in this period.

practices. For instance, LaRouche may rant about the danger of Rockefeller Fascism, yet his organization seemed more than eager to solicit loans from the Rockefeller-owned Chase Manhattan Bank. Not only did Zagarell highlight the inconsistencies in NCLC's activities, he noted that the LaRouchites had "prepared a dossier" on the prominent CPUSA leader Angela Davis.⁴³³ In particular, NCLC were concerned about Davis' association with two German philosophers: Marcuse and Adorno.

According to a 1974 *EIR* Special Report, Marcuse and Adorno belong to an "international nexus of CIA intellectuals" that aims to disrupt communist parties in Europe and the United States.⁴³⁴ Marcuse and Adorno, described in the report as "CIA intellectuals," trained Davis to infiltrate the CPUSA and splinter the organization into a rabble of fascist gangs.⁴³⁵ When Davis was their student, Marcuse and Adorno subjected her to a "CIA zombie brainwash program" to convert her into an agent of "protofascist nihilism."⁴³⁶ Additionally, the report insists that "Marcuse's cronies in the CIA academic social democracy" orchestrated Davis's ban from teaching philosophy at UCLA and her subsequent imprisonment to boost recruitment for the CPUSA, which, in turn, diverted young radicals from such genuinely revolutionary organizations as NCLC.⁴³⁷

The trope of 'brainwashing,' as I noted earlier, functioned to discredit opposition (or even indifference) to LaRouche. Yet, it also served to generate commitment for

433. Zagarell, "Phony 'Labor' Party Exposed as CIA Front," 1.

434. Executive Intelligence Review, "Angela Davis: The Offer the CPUSA Could Not Refuse," *Executive Intelligence Review*, Vol. 1, No. 17, August 26, 1974, 31.

435. Executive Intelligence Review, "Angela Davis," 32.

436. *Ibid.*, 32-33.

437. *Ibid.*, 33.

LaRouche's arbitrary ideology. The rhetorical psychologization of politics divided people into two groups: LaRouche's supporters and Rockefeller's brainwashed victims (and their brainwashers). Consequently, NCLC was compelled to produce more 'exposure literature'—pamphlets, leaflets, journals—to uncover these enemies and enlighten the masses. NCLC needed to spread 'consciousness' to the working class to save them from the Frankfurt School's 'zombie brainwashing' and Rockefeller's 'genocidal policies.' None of the other left-wing organizations in the United States, according to LaRouche, were immune to the Frankfurt School's psychological manipulation. The members of other Marxist groups had not undergone rigorous 'ego-stripping' sessions to protect themselves from the constant threat of CIA brainwashing. Only LaRouche and his devoted followers, then, were psychologically fit enough to rescue the workers of the world.

The theme of the Frankfurt School as a secret brainwashing operation continued in a 1977 *EIR* Counter-Intelligence report entitled "Fascist Wave of 'New Left' Terrorism Under Way." The first half of the report features an article, penned by LaRouche, that characterized the recent acts of left-wing terrorism—the Red Brigades in Italy, the Red Army Faction in West Germany—as skirmishes in an incipient "pro-environmentalist" fascist takeover.⁴³⁸ The second half of the report, which was subtitled "New Left Journals Shape Fascist Debates," claims that the journals *New German Critique* (*NGC*) and *Radical America* (as well as the Washington D.C.-based progressive think tank Institute for Policy Studies) were engaging in an "open debate" about "the creation of a belief structure appropriate to a new fascist movement."⁴³⁹ The evidence for this assertion is meagre. *NGC*

438. Lyndon LaRouche, "Fascist Wave of 'New Left' Terrorism Under Way," *Executive Intelligence Review*, Vol. IV, No. 49 (December 6, 1977), 1.

had put out a special issue on Ernst Bloch; *Radical America* had printed an article on the New England-based anti-nuclear coalition Clamshell Alliance. Nonetheless, LaRouche declared that the editors of these publications must be fascists because they are “the heirs of the Frankfurt School tendency.”⁴⁴⁰ LaRouche’s targeting of post-New Left publications represents a continuation of the sectarian tension between NCLC and the student movement. Ironically, as founding editor of *NGC* Andreas Huyssen notes in a 2020 conference presentation, *NGC* was “founded in the spirit of countering the sectarianism of the time.”⁴⁴¹ Of course, LaRouche was less interested in countering sectarianism and more concerned about finding enemies towards whom he could direct his followers’ angst.

The report goes on to claim that “Anglo-American intelligence agencies” established the Frankfurt School in the 1920s.⁴⁴² Apparently, the Frankfurt School consisted of “leading British-agent intellectuals,” such as Marcuse and Adorno, who were instructed to develop an ideology that would inspire a “protofascist” New Left.⁴⁴³ During their exile in the United States, the Frankfurt School conducted “intensive profile studies of the German Nazi and Italian fascist models” to identify techniques for turning the youth into protofascist gangs.⁴⁴⁴ The report may be referring to the Frankfurt School’s involvement in the American Jewish Committee’s *Studies in Prejudice* series, which

439. Counterintelligence, “New Left Journals Shape Fascist Debates,” *Executive Intelligence Review*, Vol. IV, No. 49 (December 6, 1977), 6.

440. Counterintelligence, “New Left Journals Shape Fascist Debates,” 6.

441. Andreas Huyssen, “Critical Theory and the Digital Media,” talk presented at: *The Forty-Fourth Annual Conference of German Studies Association*, October 4, 2020, virtual conference.

442. Counterintelligence, “New Left Journals Shape Fascist Debates,” 6.

443. Counterintelligence, “New Left Journal Shape Fascist Debates,” 6.

444. Ibid.

resulted in the publication of such ground-breaking texts as *The Authoritarian Personality* and *Prophets of Deceit*. Although the editors of this series—Max Horkheimer and Samuel H. Flowerman—hoped that these studies would help to reduce the problem of “intergroup prejudice and hatred,” LaRouche and his followers assert that the Frankfurt School wanted to import European-style fascism into the United States.⁴⁴⁵ Consequently, anyone who was even remotely associated with the Frankfurt School—Rudd, Davis, *NGC*, *Radical America*—was nothing more than a fascist-in-training.

The deliberate reinterpretation of a text’s meaning—that a study of prefascist tendencies was in fact a blueprint for fascism—is common to all LaRouchite conceptions of the Frankfurt School. What may appear to be an absurd misunderstanding, however, is the result of a special kind of LaRouchean reading. Whereas the ‘brainwashed’ reader may simply skim the surface of a text, LaRouchites were allegedly capable of deciphering the ‘hidden’ meaning that lay behind the ‘apparent’ content. The application of geometry to historical events, LaRouche averred, enabled the interpreter to “judge which of the apparent facts are real and which represent illusion.”⁴⁴⁶ The method of LaRouchean analysis may sound impressive, yet they tend to yield the same result: the reinforcement of the boundary between the NCLC elite and their enemies. The distorted portrayals of the Frankfurt School, through these special ‘geometric’ readings of texts, morphed into an image of ‘the enemy’ against which the LaRouche movement could continually define itself as an intellectual elite. In the 1970s and 1980s, NCLC would expand this notion of an elite to include their new radical right-wing and conservative allies. As I show in the next

445. Max Horkheimer and Samuel H. Flowerman, “Foreword to Studies in Prejudice,” in *The Authoritarian Personality* (Croydon: Verso, 2019), lxx.

446. Marcus, “The Real CIA,” 6.

section, their changing political affiliations would affect the tone and scale of their polemics against the Frankfurt School.

Aristotle's Secrets: Adorno, Marcuse, and the Rock-Drug-Sex Counterculture

During the 1970s, LaRouche took his followers on what Dennis King calls “the most extraordinary odyssey in the history of American extremism [from] the farthest limits of the left . . . to the outermost reaches of the right.”⁴⁴⁷ As the decade dragged on, the political activity of NCLC started to revolve less and less around the objective of building hegemony on the terrain of the American left. NCLC did not want to be perceived as an ally of the so-called proto-fascist rabble of post-New Left groups. Yet, in their efforts to distance themselves from the Left, they strayed into unexpected ideological territory. LaRouche began to fraternize with leaders of radical right organizations and mainstream Republican groups. What were the reasons for NCLC’s drastic ideological leap? How did this cadre of self-professed Leninist radicals rebrand itself as a respectable outfit of right-leaning, white-collar professionals?

Tourish and Wohlforth speculate that LaRouche “felt a deep bitterness towards the left because of its lack of appreciation of his brilliance.”⁴⁴⁸ He fancied that his style of leadership and oratory might find more admirers on the right-hand side of the political spectrum. And so, he decided to court a “new group of parishioners” in the broad church of American reactionary politics.⁴⁴⁹

447. King, *Lyndon LaRouche and the New American Fascism*, 18.

448. Tourish and Wohlforth, *On the Edge*, 82.

449. *Ibid.*

In his 1979 *National Review* tell-all expose of the LaRouche movement, a former NCLC-er (and FBI informant) Gregory F. Rose mentions a 1975 internal “Security Memorandum” that recommended the plan of working with radical right and Republican groups.⁴⁵⁰ LaRouche and his closest disciples believed that such an alliance might help them to raise more money for their sweeping ideological struggle against Rockefeller Fascism. The plan was a success. From 1975 onwards, the NCLC enjoyed a range of profitable collaborations with right-wing groups. For instance, the leader of the neo-Nazi and anti-Rockefeller Liberty Lobby Willis Carto contributed \$90,000 to LaRouche’s first presidential campaign as a candidate for the U.S. Labor Party in 1976.⁴⁵¹

LaRouche recognized that NCLC needed to alter their terminology to attract potential right-wing financial backers and political allies. After all, no Republican representative in the 1970s would want to consort with an organization of ‘professional revolutionary socialist cadres.’ As NCLC members tried to cultivate ties with both mainstream and fringe conservative groups, they started to sanitize their cult-sanctioned vocabulary. They changed “revolutionary intelligentsia” to “NeoPlatonist elite,” and turned the “working class” into “the sheep.” In his keynote address at the first International Caucus of Labor Committees conference in 1979, LaRouche informed his followers that they were the “shepherds of humanity” who would rescue the masses from their “pitiful state of sheep-likeness.”⁴⁵² Although LaRouche and his disciples may have shed their

450. Gregory F. Rose, “The Swarmy Life and Times of the NCLC,” *National Review*, March 30, 1979, 409-413.

451. Rose, “The Swarmy Life and Times of the NCLC,” 411.

452. Lyndon LaRouche Jr., “What are the Labor Committees Today?,” *The Campaigner*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (March 1980), 51.

pseudo-Leninist pretensions, the underlying structure of their arbitrary ideology (and organizational form) remained the same. NCLC was an “elite” that needed to save the passive masses and vanquish a sinister counter-elite. And, most importantly, NCLC members could accomplish these objectives only if they mimicked LaRouche’s manner of thinking and embodied his ideal of the Promethean/Neoplatonist elite.

In his 1978 *The Campaigner* article “The Secrets Known Only to the Inner Elites,” LaRouche depicts the history of Western Civilization as a titanic struggle between two clandestine elite forces: The Platonic/Neoplatonic elite and “the Aristotelians and their heirs.”⁴⁵³ Whereas the Neoplatonic elite works to steer “the course of history away from rule through mythology,” the Aristotelians are “committed to strengthen their rule by mythology for the purpose of establishing a permanent, feudal-like utopia of obedient, simple-minded folk ruled by a tenured neo-Aristotelian oligarchy.”⁴⁵⁴ The membership of this Aristotelian elite, which had prevailed for more than two thousand years, included such famous figures as St. Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbes, Isaac Newton, David Hume, Woodrow Wilson, T. S. Eliot, Noam Chomsky, Ernst Cassirer, Louis Althusser, and many more. These Aristotelian conspirators, according to LaRouche, opposed technological progress and feared “the power of human reason.”⁴⁵⁵ They operated “under a variety of guises” to conceal their role in the suppression of human potential.⁴⁵⁶ LaRouche’s ‘secret history’ of Western thought implies that NCLC would

453. Lyndon H. LaRouche Jr., “The Secrets Known Only to the Inner Elites,” *The Campaigner*, Vol. 11, No. 3-4 (May-June 1978), 7.

454. LaRouche, “The Secrets Known Only to the Inner Elites,” 7.

455. *Ibid.*, 58.

456. *Ibid.*

uncover the various nodes of this Aristotelian network to bring an end to this multi-millennia-long conspiracy.

In his 1983 book *Architects of Fear*, the writer George Johnson wonders why LaRouche replaced the opposition between Leninist revolutionaries and Rockefeller fascists with the conflict between Platonists and Aristotelians. Johnson speculates that LaRouche and NCLC may have been attracted to Plato's concept of "philosopher-kings."⁴⁵⁷ To put it briskly, Platonists favor the metaphysical over the empirical.⁴⁵⁸ They hold that there is a sphere of eternal Ideas or Forms that transcends the material world of ephemeral objects. As such, the concrete and worldly instantiations of beauty and justice—a handsome young man, the constitutional documents of a nation—are only pale shadows of the pure, Absolute Ideas of Beauty and Justice. In the *Republic*, Plato proposes that a group of wise and specially-trained philosopher-kings should govern societies because they can grasp the true essence of Justice. Johnson reckons that something about this notion of philosopher-kings must have appealed to the LaRouchites, because they claimed "to be rightful rulers . . . [and] possessors of unquestionable wisdom."⁴⁵⁹

Aristotelians, as Johnson explains, deal with things that exist in the tangible world rather than Ideas that inhabit some eternal realm. Johnson writes that while Plato "preferred to contemplate absolutes," Aristotle "concentrated on gathering specimens and classifying them."⁴⁶⁰ LaRouche held that this favoring of the empirical over the

457. George Johnson, *Architects of Fear: Conspiracy Theories and Paranoia in American Politics* (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 1983), 193.

458. I grant that this is a simplification, but it helps to identify the main difference between Plato and Aristotle that informed LaRouche's thinking.

459. Johnson, *Architects of Fear*, 193.

460. *Ibid.*, 194.

metaphysical was the mark of an anti-human relativism. The charge of relativism introduces strains of cultural racism into the structure of LaRouchean ideology. As NCLC gravitated towards the radical right, LaRouche and his followers started to “glorify Western Christianity and European civilization—especially the classical German culture of Beethoven, Schiller, and Leibniz—over the ‘barbarism’ of non-Europeans.”⁴⁶¹ The elitist mentality of NCLC—a vocal celebration of European high culture and the demonization of other ‘lower’ cultures—aligned in surprising ways with the nascent New Right’s organized backlash against the 1960s counterculture. In a certain sense, LaRouche’s overarching narrative about a long-lasting conflict between two elites offered a complex alternative explanation for the rise of rock music, the increased visibility of LGBTQ+ groups, and the achievements of the women’s movement.

According to LaRouche, the Aristotelian oligarchy spearheaded the “rock-drug counterculture.”⁴⁶² He alleges that the Frankfurt School’s promotion of the school of Schoenberg was part of a scheme to destroy music, which, in turn, would “destroy the concept of a qualitative distinction between men and the lower beasts.”⁴⁶³ No longer were Adorno and Marcuse perceived as simply a couple of CIA operatives who brainwashed some New Left activists. LaRouche’s new version of world history recast these two German thinkers as the semi-magical practitioners of an Aristotelean “secret knowledge” and the architects of mythologies—rock music, free love, drug consumption—that dehumanized the masses.⁴⁶⁴ NCLC’s disdain for popular culture manifested in a kind of

461. Chip Berlet and Matthew N. Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort* (The Guilford Publications: New York, 2000), 275.

462. LaRouche, “The Secrets Known Only to the Inner Elites,” 24.

463. *Ibid.*, 22.

LaRouchean cultural criticism that condemned every mainstream form of music and art as Aristotelean ‘brainwashing.’

Various NCLC writers worked to ‘uncover’ the exact nature of the Frankfurt School’s role in the Aristotelean plot. Drawing on the techniques of LaRouchean reading, NCLCers reinterpreted Adorno’s writings on music, mass culture, and authoritarianism. Each NCLC piece on Adorno refashioned this masterful critic of the culture industry into the mastermind of the 1960s counterculture. They plucked quotations from Adorno’s work and twisted their meaning to complement LaRouche’s description of the Aristotelean conspiracy. As NCLC authors charted this plot, they displayed what Michael Barkun calls a “fondness for reciprocal citation.”⁴⁶⁵ Most of the endnotes in these articles refer the reader to another LaRouchite publication. The overall effect of this insular citational practice is a kind of “pseudoconfirmation” that reinforces the intellectual and organizational boundaries of NCLC’s arbitrary ideology.⁴⁶⁶ Over a decade or so, a series of articles in *New Solidarity*, *The Campaigner*, and *Executive Intelligence Review* produced a pseudoconfirmed image of ‘Adorno’ that dominated LaRouchean conceptions of the ‘Frankfurt School.’

In his 1977 *New Solidarity* article “The Frankfurt School’s Assault on Music,” Peter Wyer characterizes heavy rock as an “open expression of fascist ideology.”⁴⁶⁷ The distorted guitar riffs and suggestive lyrics of popular rock bands represent nothing more than a “mindless repetitive celebration of bestiality,” a tasteless outburst of musical

464. Ibid., 11.

465. Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy*, 28.

466. Ibid., 28.

467. Peter Wyer, “The Frankfurt School’s Assault on Music,” *New Solidarity*, March 8, 1977, 4.

relativism.⁴⁶⁸ Wyer insists that the popularity of this genre is the result of “an extensive operation [that] has been carried out against music.”⁴⁶⁹ The leaders of this operation wanted to accomplish two objectives: 1) “to subvert existing forms,” and 2) “to convert music into an instrument of psychological warfare.”⁴⁷⁰ The British intelligence-created and Rockefeller-controlled Frankfurt School was chosen to fulfill these tasks.

The “Frankfurt School conspiracy,” as Wyer describes it, infiltrated a broad range of intellectual fields, such as philosophy and musicology, during the twentieth century.⁴⁷¹ As the co-conspirators of the Frankfurt School were expanding their influence, they promoted “the notion of the inevitable collapse of the individual’s potential to determine the course of history through the exercise of the creative faculties of mind, to alter society, to master nature without destroying nature.”⁴⁷² Wyer dulls the dialectical edge of Adorno, Marcuse, and Horkheimer’s writings on individuality, reason, and the natural environment, and flattens their theoretical output into a basic anti-individual, anti-creativity, anti-technology, and anti-Enlightenment philosophy. According to Wyer’s account, this philosophy became the basis for the Frankfurt School’s development of techniques for mass brainwashing.

The responsibility for developing these brainwashing techniques fell to Adorno. Wyer suggests that Adorno hoped to turn the atonal music of his mentor, the Austrian composer Arnold Schoenberg, into a tool of psychological manipulation. Whereas the real

468. Wyer, “The Frankfurt School’s Assault on Music,” 4.

469. Ibid.

470. Ibid.

471. Ibid.

472. Ibid.

Adorno theorized that Schoenberg's compositions conveyed the dialectical force of negativity, Wyer's 'Adorno' hypothesized that "atonality" could help to control the masses psychologically. Wyer contrasts this notion of "atonality" with a LaRouchean conception of tonality: "the concrete property of musical ordering which establishes the correspondence between the perception of musical development of ideas and the powers of creative mentation itself."⁴⁷³ Appreciation of tonality, as exemplified by LaRouche's passion for Beethoven, was what distinguished the Neoplatonic elite from the bestial masses. Those who exposed themselves to the chaos of atonal music—Schoenberg's 1910 song cycle *The Book of the Hanging Garden* or Led Zeppelin's 1975 album *Physical Graffiti*—suffered a terrible "affective response" like "that associated with the perception of disorder, confusion, anxiety."⁴⁷⁴ Adorno and his Frankfurt School co-conspirators promoted this atonality to trigger a widespread "breakdown of cognitive control."⁴⁷⁵

According to Wyer, Adorno decided to use the medium of radio to carry out his psychological assault on the listening public. During his exile in the United States, Adorno joined the Rockefeller-funded Princeton Radio Project to devise a method of disseminating atonal music. Wyer insists that Adorno's classification of different "listener types" in the 1962 *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, which drew on his Princeton Radio Project research, became the blueprint for turning commercial radio stations into "instruments of mass psychological manipulation."⁴⁷⁶ For Wyer, Adorno exercised total control over the production and dissemination of music in the United States.

473. Ibid.

474. Ibid.

475. Ibid.

476. Ibid.

Wyer's brief article in *New Solidarity* introduced an image of Adorno that persisted in the pages of LaRouchean publications. Whenever NCLC writers needed to find someone to blame for the popularity of rock music, they chose Adorno. A year or so later, Wyer speculated in an article in *The Campaigner* that Adorno invented the concept of an "authoritarian personality" to discourage parents from controlling their children's radio.⁴⁷⁷ *The Authoritarian Personality*, Wyer claims, argued that strict childrearing practices were tantamount to fascism. As parents worried about being perceived as repressive or tyrannical, children were exposed to "Top 40 cultural programming" and "the pornographic filth of rock music" (which had been "suitably flavored with the drones of Ravi Shankar and the still more primitive degradation of 'Latin music'.").⁴⁷⁸ The erosion of parental authority caused a decline in cultural standards. Adorno's assault on music and the traditional family eventually reduced the American and European population to the "cultural status of aboriginal peoples."⁴⁷⁹

Elements of cultural racism pervade Wyer's writings on Adorno and music. He implies that LaRouche and the NCLC are the arbiters of a superior Western cultural tradition, and that any musical genre or style that deviates from this traditional heritage—jazz, blues, atonal composition—reflects a mental regression in the state of humanity. Of course, it is implausible to draw a straightforward line of causality from Schoenberg to Adorno to Chuck Berry. Yet, the sheer expansiveness of the imagined Aristotelian plot allows Wyer and others to blame a range of so-called cultural regressions on a unified

477. Peter Wyer, "Draft Proposal for a Heinrich Schenker Foundation for Musical Science," *The Campaigner*, Vol. 11, No. 6 (August 1978), 25.

478. Wyer, "Draft Proposal for a Heinrich Schenker Foundation for Musical Science," 25.

479. *Ibid.*

antagonistic force. Wyer even claimed that Adorno's writings on music "went hand in hand with another operation: the drug trade."⁴⁸⁰

In the late 1970s, LaRouche commissioned a 100-member research team from his political party—the U.S. Labor Party—to document the involvement of the British Royal Family in the global drug trade. In 1978, he published the results of their inquiry, *Dope, Inc.: Britain's Opium War Against the U.S.*, which identified both Adorno and the Beatles as participants in a shadowy British plot to disorient Americans. According to *Dope, Inc.*, the British Royal Family weaponized the music of the Beatles to promote drug consumption in America. Yet, the Fab Four would never have succeeded without the musicological theories of Adorno. LaRouche and his acolytes distort a quote from *Introduction to the Sociology of Music* to insinuate that he wanted Americans to become hopelessly addicted to pop music.⁴⁸¹ The apparent link between Adorno and the Beatles permitted LaRouchites to argue that the Frankfurt School orchestrated the rise of the 1960s counterculture, the increase in the use of narcotics, and the dominance of the mass media.

In his 1981 *The Campaigner* piece "John Lennon and the Cult of Rock Music," Ira Liebowitz declared that the Frankfurt School participated in a "well-planned project to create a rock culture, including the blueprints for the role played by the Beatles and other superstar bands."⁴⁸² He writes that the goal of this project was "the transformation of entire generations of American youth away from a commitment to progress and towards a bestial

480. Wyer, "The Frankfurt School's Assault on Music," 4.

481. U.S. Labor Party, *Dope, Inc.: Britain's Opium War Against the U.S.* (New York: The New Benjamin Franklin Publishing Company, 1978), 373.

482. Ira Liebowitz, "John Lennon and the Cult of Rock Music," *The Campaigner*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (February 1981), 51.

‘do your own thing’ anti-science subculture.”⁴⁸³ Like Wyer, Liebowitz named Adorno as a leading figure in a “conspiracy to destroy music.”⁴⁸⁴ The popularization of “increasingly more degraded forms of music” functioned as a widespread form of psychological manipulation.⁴⁸⁵ Famous bands, like the Beatles, weakened the reasoning capacities of the American youth and turned them into a consumerist mass. The LaRouchites claimed to expose rock and roll music as a mythology that helped the Aristotelean elite to maintain their control over the global population.

Not only did the LaRouchites think that Adorno’s influence could be felt in popular music, but they also claimed that he shaped television-viewing habits. In 1982, Christina Nelson Huth— then the Features Editor of *EIR* and a one-time candidate for the Virginia House of Delegates—published an essay in *EIR* claiming that Adorno undermined the morality and morale of the American people through the promotion of soap operas.⁴⁸⁶ According to this theory, Adorno and the Princeton Radio Research Project planned the production of soap operas to brainwash American audiences into the passive acceptance of destructive and oligarchical policies. The transformation of the American people into a docile and weak-minded mass would allow the ‘European oligarchy,’ which founded and funded the Frankfurt School, to take over the United States without resistance.⁴⁸⁷

483. Liebowitz, “John Lennon and the Cult of Rock Music,” 51.

484. *Ibid.*, 53.

485. *Ibid.*

486. Christina Nelson Huth, “How soap opera was designed to undercut America’s morality,” *Executive Intelligence Review*, Vol. 9, No. 31 (September 7, 1982), 59-61.

487. The term “European oligarchy” was a relatively common synonym for the Aristotelean elite in LaRouchian jargon.

Ironically, many of these articles in LaRouchite publications about Adorno's role in the shaping of mass media echo his critiques of the culture industry. For instance, Adorno argues that the culture industry constitutes a "means for fettering consciousness" that "impedes the development of autonomous, independent individuals who judge and decide consciously for themselves."⁴⁸⁸ Adorno was not a thinker who wanted to dull the critical capacities of 'the masses,' but, rather, desired "the emancipation for which human beings are as ripe as the productive forces of the epoch permit."⁴⁸⁹ The method of LaRouchean reading dismisses these critiques as irrelevant ephemera, and suggests that Adorno's brief (and deeply ambivalent) involvement in the Princeton Radio Project shows that manipulating the masses was the overall goal of his career. The only true reading of Adorno, according to these LaRouchite publications, is the one that confirms his place in an overarching Aristotelean plot. The constant practice of reciprocal citation—a mark of arbitrary intellectual production—elevated this claim to the level of an accepted truth in LaRouchean lore.

What distinguishes Adorno's critique of the culture industry from the LaRouchean notion of Aristotelean 'brainwashing' is the question of agency. Adorno observes that "television as ideology is not the result of evil intentions, perhaps not even of the incompetence of those involved, but rather is imposed by demonic objective spirit."⁴⁹⁰ The consciousness-numbing effects of commercial television reflect the functioning of a social

488. Theodor W. Adorno, "Culture Industry Reconsidered," in *The Culture Industry*, ed. J. M. Bernstein (Padstow: Routledge, 2001), 106.

489. Adorno, "Culture Industry Reconsidered," 106.

490. Theodor W. Adorno, *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 69.

totality that pursues commodification, standardization, and pseudo-individuality. The tools of Enlightenment rationality, which Adorno and Horkheimer characterized as the domination of nature and the dispelling of traditional myth, have forged a rationalistic order of mass deception.⁴⁹¹ Although it is possible to temporarily resist the weight of this objective pressure, no one can assume control of the totality—it can never become the instrument of individual will. Unlike Adorno, LaRouchites search for the conscious manipulators behind the culture industry’s psychological manipulation. The notion that a secret elite governs the world implies that a different and benevolent elite could conceivably gain control of this ruling apparatus. Essentially, LaRouchean cultural criticism serves to reaffirm the belief that NCLC represents a leading organization of philosopher-kings that could rescue the masses from a twisted and objectionable mass culture.

In the 1987 edition of his autobiography *The Power of Reason*, LaRouche argues that the New Left was “an internationally coordinated project, which had been created by intelligence agencies, from the top down.”⁴⁹² Marcuse was chosen to become the famed Guru of the New Left and to promote the “left-fascist character” with his 1964 book *The One-Dimensional Man*.⁴⁹³ LaRouche claims that the New Left fascists used this text to “break the will of those vacillating between traditional values and the proffered hedonistic delights of the rock-drug-sex counterculture.”⁴⁹⁴ As soon as these victims of left-fascism

491. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 94-136.

492. Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., *The Power of Reason: 1988 An Autobiography* (Washington: Executive Intelligence Review, 1987), 115.

493. LaRouche, *The Power of Reason*, 122.

494. *Ibid.*, 123.

were reduced to their bestial urges, they would be recruited into “sensitivity cults” and compelled to participate in “lesbian and male-homosexual practices.”⁴⁹⁵ LaRouche believes that the European oligarchy introduced these practices of ‘sexual perversion’ to cull the population of the bestial masses. And so, the European oligarchy created the perfect conditions for what LaRouche calls the Apocalypse.

LaRouche incriminates Adorno and Marcuse as two of the masterminds behind the rock-drug-sex counterculture that purportedly gave rise to what he calls “the apocalyptic peril of AIDS.”⁴⁹⁶ As Timothy Stewart-Winter writes, “political responses to AIDS were shaped by fear and disgust [and p]eople with AIDS were viewed as vectors of contamination.”⁴⁹⁷ Many homophobic conservatives interpreted the AIDS crisis, according to Hartman, as “evidence that public health concerns, even God, sanctioned their homophobic prejudices.”⁴⁹⁸ In fact, LaRouche actively stigmatized LGBTQ people during the crisis. In 1986 and 1987, LaRouche’s organization sponsored ballot initiatives in California that would have quarantined people with AIDS and sanctioned mandatory HIV testing for the general population.⁴⁹⁹ Consequently, LaRouche’s writings and campaigning reframed the historic accomplishments of radical feminist groups and the gay liberation movement as trivial byproducts of a genocidal and oligarchical conspiracy to make America vulnerable to infectious disease.

495. Ibid.

496. Ibid., 182.

497. Timothy Stewart-Winter, “AIDS and the Urban Crisis: Stigma, Cost, and the Persistence of Racism in Chicago, 1981-1996,” in *Beyond the Politics of the Closet: Gay Rights and the American State since the 1970s*, ed. by Jonathan Bell (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 87.

498. Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 156.

499. Berlet and Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism in America*, 284.

The 1970s and 1980s saw a strategic and intellectual convergence between LaRouche's NCLC and the forces of cultural conservatism. The LaRouchites blamed the Frankfurt School (and other so-called Aristotelean elites) for the same cultural trends—rock music, free love, feminism, LGBTQ+ activism, the waning of the patriarchal family—that the New Right lamented in their illiberal jeremiads. Of course, the LaRouchites had always been somewhat hostile to the cultural and political expressions of the 1960s counterculture. Nonetheless, this hostility had become almost indistinguishable from the rhetoric of the Religious Right. Many of these similarities were opportunistic efforts to secure more supporters, donors, and allies during the nation's rightward turn under the presidency of Ronald Reagan. Although the core structure of LaRouche's arbitrary ideology remained the same (an elite versus a counter-elite), the surface level of their arguments catered increasingly to conservative concerns and themes. Consequently, criticism of the Frankfurt School in LaRouchite publications became more palatable to a conservative audience. And, in the final section of this chapter, I demonstrate that an interweaving of LaRouchean 'exposure literature' and New Right polemic gave rise to the narrative that the Frankfurt School produced 'political correctness' to undermine the United States.

[The Authoritarian Personality and the New Dark Age](#)

In 1988, LaRouche was taken to trial on charges of mail fraud, conspiracy to commit mail fraud and tax evasion. During the court proceedings, the Assistant U.S. Attorney Kent Robinson demonstrated that LaRouche and his staff solicited \$34 million in loans that they

never intended to repay.⁵⁰⁰ Although NCLC staff told lenders that their loans would support political campaigns, Robinson proved that most of this money was used to maintain and renovate LaRouche's 172-acre estate in Leesburg, Virginia. LaRouche was sentenced to fifteen years in prison. He was released on parole in 1994.

Unsurprisingly, something rather noteworthy happened on the first day of LaRouche's trial. In his opening statement, LaRouche's defense lawyer Odin P. Anderson warned the jury that the prosecution would attempt to portray LaRouche as a "so-called authoritarian personality."⁵⁰¹ The prosecution, Anderson insisted, wanted to indict LaRouche as "the kernel of the conspiracy" to commit mail fraud. The prosecution's case, Anderson seemed to imply, was nothing more than a conspiracy theory.⁵⁰² "It [the conspiracy theory] was formerly called the Authoritarian Personality," Anderson told the courtroom, "and was developed in Europe during the 1930s by a bunch of disgruntled Marxists."⁵⁰³ At this point, Robinson cried, "Objection, your Honor."⁵⁰⁴ The judge, Albert V. Bryan Jr., responded, "Objection sustained. This is not a proper opening statement. I am not going to go back to the early thirties in opening statement [*sic*] or in the testimony of witnesses."⁵⁰⁵

500. Caryle Murphy, "LaRouche Convicted of Mail Fraud," *The Washington Post*, December 17, 1988, A01.

501. Don McCoy, "Transcript of Opening Statements and testimony of ELISABETH SEXTON on the first day of trial," United States of America v. Lyndon LaRouche, et al, The United States District Court Eastern District of VI Alexandria Division, November 21, 1988, Alexandria, Virginia, 82

502. Don McCoy, "Transcript of Opening Statements and testimony of ELISABETH SEXTON on the first day of trial," 82.

503. Ibid.

504. Ibid.

505. Ibid.

Three days before Anderson made this opening statement, *EIR* had published the first installment of Michael J. Minnicino's three-part essay entitled "The 'authoritarian personality': an anti-Western hoax." The editorial in that issue (Volume 15, Number 46, November 18, 1988) informed readers that "the real object of the anti-LaRouche court cases [was to continue] the Marxist-inspired war to destroy what they call 'the authoritarian personality'."⁵⁰⁶

Minnicino's essay implicates other Frankfurt School members, such as Erich Fromm and Max Horkheimer, in this Marxist-inspired war. He labels the Frankfurt School as Soviet Russia's "most important cultural warfare operation against the West," which was established to "undermine Judeo-Christian culture and make Western civilization susceptible to being overthrown."⁵⁰⁷ The essay implies that LaRouche has become a target of this covert Marxist project, because he stands as a defender of Western values. Minnicino implies that the West needs such authoritarian personalities as LaRouche to protect itself from the "unproven (and unprovable) cult nonsense" of the Frankfurt School.⁵⁰⁸

The whole essay is rife with strange mistakes and exaggerations. Minnicino decontextualizes a sentence from Georg Lukacs 1962 preface to *The Theory of the Novel*—"Who will save us from Western Civilization?"—and claims that this proposition served as a statement of purpose for the Frankfurt School in 1922.⁵⁰⁹ He defines the authoritarian

506. Nora Hamerman, "From the Editor," *Executive Intelligence Review*, Vol. 15, No. 46 (November 18, 1988), 1.

507. Michael Minnicino, "The 'authoritarian personality': an anti-Western hoax," *Executive Intelligence Review*, Vol. 15, No. 46 (November 18, 1988), 28-29.

508. Minnicino, "The 'authoritarian personality,'" 29.

personality as “anyone who thinks that scientific and technological progress can and should occur under capitalism,” even though none of the scales in the 1950 study *The Authoritarian Personality* measure this belief.⁵¹⁰ Despite the well-known fact that Adorno and Horkheimer were forceful critics of mass culture, Minnicino insists that the Frankfurt School “manufactured forms of culture—they called their enterprise a ‘culture industry’—to undermine Western civilization and the power of reason itself.”⁵¹¹ The LaRouchean reading of the Frankfurt School promises to expose a subterranean anti-Western force that wants to overthrow moral traditions and capitalist enterprise. Minnicino appears to brand LaRouche as a figure who can resist this effort and who deserves the respect of conservatives.

The concept of the authoritarian personality, according to Minnicino, is a device to dismiss strong-willed and rational political leaders like LaRouche. The “vicious Dr. Horkheimer,” Minnicino writes, conceived of the “authoritarian personality hoax” to “discredit republicanism” and “protect Marxism.”⁵¹² The Frankfurt School wanted to portray anyone who defended capitalist technological progress and reason as a fascist-in-disguise, because they planned to induce a state of ‘cultural pessimism’ in the American population to provoke them into a revolutionary rage. Horkheimer’s hoax managed to convert Americans into “pliant liberals” who did not have the capacity to resist the anti-Western threat. These liberals merely absorbed what Minnicino calls the lesson of

509. Ibid., 31. Ironically, this preface features Lukacs’ famous characterization of the Frankfurt School as the guests of a “Grand Hotel Abyss” who remain detached from politics and favor merely aesthetic enjoyments.

510. Ibid., 28.

511. Ibid., 31.

512. Ibid., 28.

Marcuse's *liberating tolerance*: "intolerance against movements from the Right, and tolerance of movements from the Left."⁵¹³

Minnicino contends that the Frankfurt School's work operated as a blueprint for the 1960s social revolution. He asserts that "almost every concept and catch-phrase of the 1960s . . . can be found verbatim" in the school's 1936 study *Studies on Authority and the Family*.⁵¹⁴ His claim implies that the sixties ferment was a coordinated project to distance the youth from the heights of Western culture and the goals of capitalism, rather than a genuine revolt against social conformity, racial and gender inequality, and American militarism. LaRouche's court case was simply another skirmish in this war against the West. He represents an "authoritarian personality" who wants to resuscitate cultural tradition and technological progress—a savior who could rescue the United States from the coming catastrophe.

While he was serving jail time in Federal Prison in 1989, LaRouche proclaimed that he represented the only barrier standing between Western Civilization and the European oligarchy's "New Dark Age" (the phrase that served as the title of Minnicino's 1992 essay).⁵¹⁵ According to LaRouche, Lukács was the grandfather of this New Dark Age, because he conspired to undermine the cultural confidence of the West and create a World Communist State. Once the forces of the New Dark Age had demoralized and degraded the American people, the European oligarchy could impose a Malthusian regime of government to reduce the world's population to one billion. LaRouche reveals that this

513. Ibid., 30.

514. Ibid., 29.

515. Lyndon H. LaRouche Jr., "The battle to save our civilization," *Executive Intelligence Review*, Vol. 16, No. 23 (June 2, 1989), 24.

oligarchy established the Frankfurt School to eliminate the “immunological factor against Bolshevism from Western European Civilization.”⁵¹⁶ To satisfy the wishes of his oligarchical paymasters, Adorno developed a Satanic Cultural Paradigm Shift doctrine that succeeded in creating a “sex, drugs, and rock ’n’ roll” counterculture from 1964 onwards. For LaRouche, promiscuity damaged morality, drugs impaired intelligence, and rock ’n’ roll corroded cultural standards. Only the virtuous intellectual elite of the LaRouche movement could reverse the deleterious effects of this cultural regression, and instigate a glorious New Renaissance of Western Civilization.

Until the debates over political correctness in the 1990s, these LaRouchean readings of the Frankfurt School remained confined to the boundaries of NCLC’s arbitrary intellectual practice. In 1992, Minnicino took advantage of this polarizing ideological conflict over political correctness and revised these LaRouchean readings for a broader conservative audience. Three best-selling books—Allan Bloom’s 1987 *The Closing of the American Mind*, Roger Kimball’s 1990 *Tenured Radicals*, and Dinesh D’Souza’s 1991 *Illiberal Education*—largely defined the terms of the national debate over campus-based political correctness. Each of these books scorned the apparently high status of “theory” in humanities departments across the country, especially deconstruction and feminist theory. For instance, Kimball argued that “tenured radicals” in literature departments use literary theory to inject non-existent political subtexts into the allegedly apolitical texts of the Western canon.⁵¹⁷ Minnicino may have felt that this hostility towards theory and the LaRouchean account of the Frankfurt School’s legacy were compatible.

516. LaRouche, “The battle to save our civilization,” 24.

517. Roger Kimball, *Tenured Radicals: How Politics Has Corrupted our Higher Education* (Chicago: Elephant Books, 1998), 13-50.

In his now-notorious 1992 *Fidelio* article “The New Dark Age: The Frankfurt School and ‘Political Correctness’,” Minnicino writes that the Frankfurt School was “the single, most important organizational component of [the] conspiracy” to weaken “the soul of Judeo-Christian civilization.”⁵¹⁸ He claims that a “tyranny of ugliness” condemns most ordinary Americans to a life of psychological impotence.⁵¹⁹ The Frankfurt School, according to Minnicino, developed an enormous “means of social manipulation,” such as “the vast sister industries of radio, television, film, recorded music, advertising, and public opinion polling,” to induce “passivity” and “pessimism” in the population of the United States.⁵²⁰ Political correctness, Minnicino avers, is a central part of this manipulative agenda.

Minnicino explains that Adorno and Walter Benjamin combined their theoretical efforts to ground aesthetics in materialism, rather than metaphysics or religion. They planned to “strip away the belief that art derives from the self-conscious emulation of God the Creator,” and encouraged new cultural forms to increase “the alienation of the population in order for it to understand how truly alienated it is to live without socialism.”⁵²¹ Minnicino stresses Benjamin’s friendship with Brecht and characterizes the Brechtian technique of *verfremdungseffekt* (‘distancing’ or ‘estrangement’ effect) as a malicious attempt to “make the audience leave the theatre demoralized and aimlessly angry.”⁵²² This technique for effecting alienation became a common practice in a media-

518. Michael J. Minnicino, “The New Dark Age: The Frankfurt School and ‘Political Correctness’,” *Fidelio*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Winter 1992), 5.

519. Minnicino, “The New Dark Age,” 4.

520. *Ibid.*, 5.

521. *Ibid.*, 10.

saturated age. Cinemas and television sets played graphic images of sex and violence to agitate American audiences in a state of frustrated frenzy. The constant exposure to such shocking stimuli dulled people's capacity to think for themselves. Of course, Minnicino's critique of *verfremdungseffekt* shows a complete misunderstanding of Brecht. The 'distancing effect' worked to provoke spectators into a moment of critical consciousness, rather than alienate or anger them. This is another instance of LaRouchean reading, where the writer claims to uncover the secret meaning or purpose behind the apparently factual surface.

According to Minnicino, the purpose of the Princeton Radio project "is to test empirically the Adorno-Benjamin thesis that the net effect of the mass media would be to atomize and increase lability—what people would later call 'brainwashing.'"⁵²³ The tools of this brainwashing included the pseudo-science of public opinion polling and the incongruous playlists on FM radio. As Minnicino argues, "the techniques of mass media and advertising developed by the Frankfurt School now effectively control American political campaigning."⁵²⁴ Although it is unlikely that many media executives, advertisers, and political campaigners have labored over the pages of *Aesthetic Theory* or *The Authoritarian Personality*, Minnicino contends that it is irrelevant whether they have actually read Adorno. He opines that, "even if they (the people who run the networks, ad agencies, and polling stations) have never heard of Theodor Adorno," they "firmly believe in Adorno's theory that the media can and should turn everything into 'football.'"⁵²⁵ While

522. Ibid.

523. Ibid., 15.

524. Ibid., 21.

525. Ibid.

it is true that Adorno noted capitalism's tendency to reduce culture and politics to consumable entertainment, he never actively endorsed it. Instead of faithfully rendering the work of the actual Adorno, Minnicino perpetuates the pseudoconfirmed image of 'Adorno' that belongs almost exclusively to the repertoire of NCLC's arbitrary intellectual output.

Minnicino claims that, just as Adorno and Benjamin were assaulting cultural standards, Marcuse and Fromm were targeting sexual and moral norms. He attributes the "adolescent sexual rebellion" of the 1960s to Marcuse and Fromm's celebration of "polymorphous perversity."⁵²⁶ Yet, he notes that the Frankfurt School were not able to encourage ordinary Americans to indulge in perversion without altering their mental states. According to Minnicino, the Frankfurt School proposed the distribution of hallucinogens—the school's interest in drugs apparently started with Benjamin's writings on hashish—to incline American youth towards promiscuity. Building on classic PL and NCLC tropes, Minnicino exaggerates Marcuse's employment in the State Department and O.S.S. to insinuate that he played a major role in the CIA's notorious project MKUltra, in which hallucinogens were administered to (both knowing and unwitting) test subjects to experiment with different forms of psychological warfare. Marcuse later used his influence over the New Left to promote the consumption of psychedelics that would inspire people to indulge in permissive sexual adventures. As Minnicino puts it, "hallucinogens instantaneously achieve[d] a state of mind identical to that prescribed by the Frankfurt School thinkers."⁵²⁷

526. *Ibid.*, 26.

527. *Ibid.*, 25. Minnicino's linking of the Frankfurt School to drug consumption relies heavily on LaRouchean reading. In an unconventional reading of Benjamin's essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," Minnicino argues that psychedelic drugs, such as LSD, endowed objects with an "aura." Minnicino goes on to imply that Benjamin promoted the "aura" to discourage people from engaging with objective reality. Although Minnicino claims that he was pro-psychedelia, Marcuse writes

The purpose of this Frankfurt School-planned media manipulation, drug consumption, and sexual indulgence was the long-standing Aristotelean objective of lowering humans to the status of animals. Under the influence of the Frankfurt School's pessimism, people started to perceive themselves as "objects."⁵²⁸ Minnicino claims that the "importance of the individual as a person gifted with the divine spark of creativity, and capable of acting upon all human civilization, was replaced by the idea that person is important because he or she is black, or a woman, or feels homosexual impulses."⁵²⁹ Political correctness, according to Minnicino, reflects a fundamental dehumanization of humanity. Instead of encouraging people to understand themselves as unique individuals endowed with a divine spark of rationality and creativity, political correctness trains them to think of themselves merely as products of historical and biological forces: genders, races, ethnicities.

Minnicino supplies his potential conservative readers with a convenient target—the Frankfurt School—to blame for the rise of political correctness on college campuses. He writes that the "students of the Frankfurt School [have] now become the professors of women's studies and Afro-American studies."⁵³⁰ From these positions of apparent authority, they indoctrinate their students in the ideas of the Frankfurt School. Benjamin's

specifically about the consumption of psychedelic drugs in *An Essay on Liberation*. He reflects on the popularity of the hippie movement, and suggests that "awareness of the need for such a revolution in perception, for a new sensuousness, is perhaps the kernel of truth in the psychedelic search." Nonetheless, he clarifies that dropping acid does little more than produce temporary "artificial paradises". For Marcuse, taking narcotics and hallucinogens distracted the youth from the task of liberation. Whereas Minnicino insists that Marcuse is responsible for the psychedelic revolution, a brief perusal of his work reveals that he objected to drug consumption as a mode of rebellion.

528. Ibid., 27.

529. Ibid.

530. Ibid.

theory of language, Minnicino argues, forces readers to “seek the racist and phallogocentric subtext” of classic literary works. Instead of enjoying Shakespeare, students are subjected to the “alienated prose” of “modern Black and feminist authors.”⁵³¹ Professors and students alike conduct witch-hunts on campus by implementing the golden rule of Marcuse’s “repressive toleration” (“tolerance for movements from the left, but intolerance for movements from the right”).⁵³² Minnicino’s remarks ignore real instances of discrimination on college campuses, histories of white supremacy and patriarchy, and the struggle to include previously marginalized perspectives in established institutions. He dismisses the notion that the social facts of identity—race, gender, sex, sexuality—form a meaningful terrain for political mobilization to contest genuine oppression. For Minnicino, these efforts represent little more than a continuation of the age-old conflict between two elites. And this dualistic mentality, which contrasts a “Western Civilization” with a uniform “anti-Western” force, resonates with American right-wing portrayals of political correctness as a simple assault on Judeo-Christian culture.

Minnicino’s article, which rearticulates classic LaRouchean ideas for the wider debate on political correctness, functions as what Barkun describes as a *bridging mechanism* to link the “domain of stigmatized knowledge to accepted forms of political expression” and to cultivate a crossover audience between LaRouchites and cultural conservatives.⁵³³ The main themes of NCLC’s attacks on the Frankfurt School—the inauthenticity of the New Left, brainwashing and the psychologization of politics, the rock-

531. Ibid., 11.

532. Ibid., 27.

533. Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy*, 181.

drug-sex counterculture, the ‘secret’ meanings of Frankfurt School theory—converge with the New Right’s reactions to political correctness. The unique history of the LaRouche movement, from its pseudo-Leninist beginnings to its right-wing reorientation, shaped this specific narrative of Cultural Marxism. Minnicino weaved existing LaRouchite claims and assertions about the Frankfurt School—the old PL rumor about Marcuse as a CIA agent, Adorno’s control over the culture industry, Horkheimer’s motivation for coining the term “the authoritarian personality,” the endorsement of drug use—into a narrative that might appeal to NCLC’s potential right-wing and conservative allies. Although Minnicino’s narrative continues to fulfil the organizational necessities of the LaRouchite movement (the preservation of the ideological boundary between two elites), it contains elements that other intellectuals in other political forces can extract and rework into different narratives. As I show in the next chapter, New Right intellectuals took several elements from Minnicino’s rendition of Cultural Marxism and inserted them into a narrative to defend the cause of cultural conservatism. Despite their similarities, the difference in context between the LaRouche movement and the New Right led to differences between the meanings and functions of their articulations of Cultural Marxism.

Sometime in the mid-1990s, Raymond V. Raehn, the co-founder of the Washington D.C.-based Global Strategy Council, stumbled across Minnicino’s *Fidelio* article. The proposition that a group of German-Jewish Marxist emigres was entirely responsible for the rise of political correctness must have appealed to Raehn, because he decided to do some of his own research on the Frankfurt School. In 1996, he finished an unpublished manuscript entitled “Critical Theory: A Special Research Report.”⁵³⁴ He shared his

534. My friend Dr. Ian Gardner interviewed Raehn’s daughter and was told that this manuscript was not among his final papers.

findings with a friend named William S. Lind, the then-Director of the Institute of Cultural Conservatism at the Free Congress Foundation. We will turn to this context in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Free Congress Foundation: A War for the Soul of America

“To right-wing conspiracy theorists, the children couldn’t have conceived of such things as Columbia or Paris on their own; the likes of ‘Marcuse—a Dangerous Guru with a Bad Seed’—as one headline called him—had to be behind it.”

– *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America*, Rick Perlstein

“You’ll be surprised to find that it may be the 1990s, but the Frankfurt School is still very much in session.”

– “Political Correctness: The Dirty Little Secret,” National Empowerment Television.

In a 2020 online discussion for the right-wing Charlemagne Institute, William S. Lind—a former director of the Institute for Cultural Conservatism at the Free Congress Foundation—reflects on the rhetorical effectiveness of labelling something as “Cultural Marxism.”⁵³⁵ For Lind, most political battles are fights for legitimacy. If one plans to turn people against something like “political correctness” or “social justice,” one must associate it with something they dislike or fear. Lind senses that the phrase “Cultural Marxism” works as a potent delegitimizing tool in the United States, because many Americans regard anything even remotely Marxist as illegitimate. There is no need to quibble over definitions of Marxism or prove that “political correctness” is genuinely Marxist, because, as Lind claims, the American public does not generally care about these academic questions. Do not waste your time on research and reflection, Lind counsels. Only pure and hard “praxis” is needed in the right-wing offensive against liberalism in the United States.⁵³⁶ Consequently, Lind enjoins conservatives to enter the political battlefield with the weapon of Cultural Marxism to delegitimize whatever they perceive as illegitimate or

535. *Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture*, “Paul Gottfried and Bill Lind discuss ‘What is Cultural Marxism?’,” November 24, 2020, video, 1:02:45, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=843200876478528>.

536. *Chronicles*, “Paul Gottfried and Bill Lind discuss ‘What is Cultural Marxism?’.”

unnatural (Black Lives Matter, gender-neutral public washrooms, Critical Race Theory, etc.).

Lind first deployed the term “Cultural Marxism” in the 1990s during the ongoing ideological battles over political correctness. Numerous scholars trace the origins of right-wing complaints about political correctness to the efforts of conservative think tanks, foundations, and publications to reclaim the academy in the 1980s. “As early as 1986,” Ellen Messer-Davidow writes, “right-wingers had laid out the argument that ‘tenured radicals’ had embarked on a wholesale demolition of the Western cultural tradition and the U.S. universities charged with preserving it.”⁵³⁷ Conservative authors argued that the dreams of 1960s radicalism had degenerated into a nightmare of 1980s left-wing McCarthyism as progressive academics schemed to restrict their students’ freedom of thought and speech.⁵³⁸ A search of the NEXIS database shows that the number of print media articles that mention political correctness surged in the early 1990s: 1989, 15; 1990, 65; 1991, 1,570; 1992, 2,835; 1993, 4,914, and 1994, 6,985.⁵³⁹ Such pieces as Richard Bernstein’s 1991 *The New York Times* “The Rising Hegemony of the Politically Correct” popularized the idea that college campuses were flooded with hypersensitive radicals who punished anyone who violated the unspoken tenets of political correctness.⁵⁴⁰ The debate

537. Ellen Messer-Davidow, “Manufacturing the Attack on Liberalized Higher Education,” *Social Text*, No. 36 (Autumn 1993), 41.

538. Stephen H. Blach and Herbert London, “The Tenured Left,” *Commentary*, Vol. 82, No. 4 (October 1986), 41-51, and John P. Roche, “Academic Freedom: The New Left Vigilantes,” *National Review*, December 8, 1989, 34-35.

539. John K. Wilson, *The Myth of Political Correctness: The Conservative Attack on Higher Education* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 8.

540. Richard Bernstein, “The Rising Hegemony of the Politically Correct,” *New York Times*, October 28, 1990, 1-4.

over this so-called campus chaos encompassed such issues as affirmative action, canon wars, free speech, gender and racial equality, and multiculturalism.

Moira Weigel points out that the phrase “political correctness” functions as an *exonym*: “a term for another group which signals that the speaker does not belong to it.”⁵⁴¹ Those who deploy this label enact a “highly effective form of crypto-politics” that “transforms the political landscape by acting as if it is not political at all.”⁵⁴² Critics of political correctness position themselves as withdrawn from politics, and accuse the “politically correct” of injecting politics into inappropriate areas, such as the family, literature, or casual conversation. In short, the opponents of political correctness represent themselves as defenders of non-political spheres that various unnamed radicals wish to politicize. Yet, as I demonstrate later in this chapter, many of these claims to ‘non-politicalness’ and ‘naturalness’ are saturated with political and historical assumptions. In other words, these critics fail to discern the already-political nature of what they deem to be non-political realms.

Whereas the Right feared that political correctness would politicize hitherto non-political zones, several left-wing critics argued that speech codes and affirmative action did not threaten existing structures and hierarchies. In her critique of the limits of political correctness, Valerie Scatamburlo suggests that these efforts are “intended to avoid offending individuals in particular contexts according to liberal notions of politeness, sensitivity, and tolerance,” rather than “pose serious challenges to hegemonic assumptions,

541. Moira Weigel, “Political correctness: how the right invented a phantom enemy,” *The Guardian*, November 30, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/30/political-correctness-how-the-right-invented-phantom-enemy-donald-trump>.

542. Moira Weigel, “Political correctness: how the right invented a phantom enemy.”

material conditions, and structural arrangements.”⁵⁴³ Removing offensive terms and phrases from institutional vocabularies is entirely compatible with preserving the underlying structures of white supremacy, patriarchy, and class struggle. As Scatamburlo quips, “never hearing a racist or sexist comment . . . does not mean that racism, sexism, and the like will cease to exist as structural arrangements.”⁵⁴⁴ Political correctness, as presented in Scatamburlo’s sharp critique, is a false cure for the social and historical problems that it claims to remedy.

Similarly, Barbara Ehrenreich worries that college political correctness exhibits an overreliance on “administration-enforced rules.”⁵⁴⁵ Challenging sexist and homophobic attitudes, according to Ehrenreich, requires proper “persuasion, education, and organizing,” rather than the imposition of bureaucratic codes.⁵⁴⁶ Political correctness, especially in the forms that it assumes on elite college campuses, represents a subsumption of emancipatory discourses into the managerial structures of university governance.⁵⁴⁷ It becomes little more than a set of norms that the capitalist university must instill into students to prepare them for an increasingly integrated and diverse white collar workforce. In this light, political correctness was nothing more than a mechanism of the “progressive neoliberalism” that I discussed in Chapter 2. Yet, right-wing critics mistook the

543. Scatamburlo, *Soldiers of Misfortune*, 102.

544. *Ibid.*, 175.

545. Barbara Ehrenreich, “The Challenge for the Left,” in *Debating P.C.: The Controversy over Political Correctness on College Campus*, ed. Paul Berman (New York: Laurel, 1992), 335.

546. Ehrenreich, “The Challenge for the Left,” 335.

547. For more on this argument, consult Christopher Newfield, “What Was Political Correctness?: Race, the Right, and Managerial Democracy in the Humanities,” *Critical Inquiry*, Vol 19, No. 2 (Winter 1993), 308-336.

“progressive elements of the neoliberal consensus” for “an imagined left-wing political ensemble.”⁵⁴⁸ For instance, Lind insists that political correctness was undoubtedly a new potent form of Marxism. This confusion between progressive neoliberalism and revolutionary Marxism, Justin Gilmore claims, underlies most New Right narratives of Cultural Marxism.⁵⁴⁹

In this chapter, we will contextualize Lind’s attacks on political correctness and Cultural Marxism within the rise of the New Right as a political force. From the 1970s onwards, the New Right launched a counterrevolution against what they perceived as the liberal excesses of the sixties. The strategists of the New Right aimed to rejuvenate the American conservative movement, inspire polemics about the crisis of normative American values, and transform the Republican Party into a vehicle for cultural politics. In their struggle for hegemony, they spearheaded an array of single-issue campaigns—abortion, school prayer, busing—to promote a conservative cultural agenda. The ideologists of the New Right constituted an intellectual bloc to shape, organize, and lead a project of reshaping the relations, structures, and automatisms of the historical bloc. They invoked the phantom of political correctness to justify their counterrevolutionary assault on higher education in the United States.

In this chapter, I dissect the ideological and institutional elements that comprise the political force of the New Right. Central to the New Right is an ideology of *elite populism* that splits the American population into “the People” and “the Groups/the New Class.” The New Right claims to articulate and defend the true interests of the People against the

548. Justin Gilmore, “Neo-Authoritarianism and the Contestation of White Identification in the US,” *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (March 2021), 4.

549. Gilmore, “Neo-Authoritarianism and the Contestation of White Identifications in the US,” 3-5.

corrosive and illegitimate demands of the Groups and the New Class. I argue that the New Right's institutional infrastructure produced a specific kind of intellectual—the *New Right think tank intellectual*—that could orchestrate and organize a project of redirecting the educative function of the State. I demonstrate that this context informed Lind's narratives of Cultural Marxism.

The Elite Populists

What was so *new* about the New Right? The term itself evokes a sense of reorientation.

The chief architects of the New Right—Paul Weyrich, Morton Blackwell, Howard Phillips, Richard Viguerie, Terry Dolan—wanted to revitalize the conservative movement. They felt that the Old Right was too aristocratic, pessimistic, and intellectualistic. Weyrich identified four shortcomings of this “blue blood” conservatism: 1) it failed to speak in “the language of the ordinary man;” 2) it appealed to purely cerebral principles, rather than traditional working middle class *values*; 3) it refrained from working with the ‘mass media’ to amplify its message, and 4) it was more interested in being right than winning power.⁵⁵⁰

Although Weyrich's assessment may overestimate the extent of the differences between Old and New Rights, it does reflect a genuine shift in the priorities and practices of the conservative movement.⁵⁵¹ While they claimed to be nominally nonpartisan, the New Right

550. Paul Weyrich, “Blue Collar or Blue Blood? The New Right Compared with The Old Right,” in *The New Right Papers*, ed. by Robert W. Whitaker (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 48-62.

551. In his book *To the Right: The Transformation of American Conservatism*, Jerome L. Himmelstein stresses the continuities, rather than the differences, between the Old and New Rights: “The most common image of the New Right as a neopopulist or right-wing populist revolt quite different from earlier conservatism, and as a result more effective, is quite misleading on this score. The leaders of the New Right were not newcomers to politics with a political agenda and strategy distinct from those of the old conservatism; they were men and women with deep roots in the conservative movement and a solid commitment to conservative ideology, whose greatest innovations involved reinvigorating established conservative principles and extending time-honored conservative strategies. Conservatism triumphed in the

saw the Republican Party as a vehicle for implementing a conservative agenda on the electoral level. They latched onto the diffuse ‘white backlash’ of the 1960s, and promoted firm conservative positions on such sensitive domestic issues as abortion, homosexuality, and equal rights. Their sophisticated and strategic use of media technologies helped them to market their ideology to targeted audiences in the American population.⁵⁵² From the early 1970s onwards, the New Right succeeded in winning over ‘blue collar’ elements from the classic New Deal Democratic coalition for the Republican Party.

Whereas the Old Right, as Viguerie puts it, “tended to see the conservative movement as a pie with a fixed size,” the New Right wanted to expand the movement.⁵⁵³ The New Right pioneered a “new approach to conservative organization that distinguished itself by envisioning and building a large and interconnected network of organizations.”⁵⁵⁴ They courted donations from conservative philanthropists and foundations to establish a panoply of ideological non-profit organizations. The growth of the New Right depended on a flourishing of think tanks, foundations, political action committees, magazines and newsletters, training programs, study groups, TV shows, regular strategy and planning meetings, legal centers, and advocacy groups. The result of this institutional and ideological reorientation—this shift from Old to New—was the packaging of an *elite*

late 1970s and early 1980s not by changing but by staying mostly the same. What changed in multiple ways was the social context in which it acted.”

552. Madison Social Text Group, “The New Right and Media,” *Social Text*, No. 1 (Winter 1979), 169-180.

553. Richard A. Viguerie and David Franke, *America’s Right Turn: How Conservatives Used New and Alternative Media to Take Power* (Chicago: Bonus Books, 2004), 127.

554. Alex DiBranco, “Conservative News and Movement Infrastructure,” in *News on the Right: Studying Conservative News Cultures*, ed. by Anthony Nadler and A. J. Bauer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 124.

populism: the top-down, Washington, D.C.-based construction of an agenda that purportedly reflected the true interests of the American people.

In an incisive 1981 *Radical America* essay “In the Wings: New Right Ideology and Organization,” the Marxist writer Allen Hunter dissects the nature of this elite populism.⁵⁵⁵ The New Right’s ideology, Hunter contends, rests on an essential mystification that replaces economic explanations for social instability with purely cultural ones. The economic recession of the 1970s saw runaway inflation and high unemployment affect standards of living for working-class and middle class households. The decline of the family wage system, as well as the rise in divorce rates, pushed many women into the paid workforce.⁵⁵⁶ Instead of acknowledging the pressures of economic uncertainty on the American family, the New Right blamed this crisis on the catch-all cultural sin of *permissiveness*—an infinitely elastic diagnosis that seemed to encompass everything from government welfare spending to feminism, from hippies to Hollywood cinema, from single mothers to pornographers.

The ideology of the New Right retroactively naturalized the cultural patterns of normative America. Conservatives once assumed that “this traditional moral and social order was . . . permanent.”⁵⁵⁷ Yet, as the continual crisis of capitalism disturbed the political balance of the liberal consensus and destabilized the conditions of normative America, this cultural order started to appear as something that needed to be “consciously

555. Allen Hunter, “In the Wings: New Right Ideology and Organization,” *Radical America*, Vol. 15, No. 1&2 (Spring 1981), 113-138.

556. Matthew Lassiter, “Inventing Family Values,” in *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s*, ed. by Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 13-28.

557. Hunter, “In the Wings,” 128.

and explicitly defended.”⁵⁵⁸ The New Right’s framing of this social turbulence as a primarily cultural dilemma—an essentially mystifying gesture—shaped its restricted notion of ‘the people.’

According to Hunter, the New Right’s elite populism is a “diffuse, petit-bourgeois ideology.”⁵⁵⁹ It is *diffuse* enough to “draw together people from many strata into a social bloc.”⁵⁶⁰ The composition of this bloc is *petit-bourgeois*, because it opposes a “broad middle strata” against “the extremes.”⁵⁶¹ Hunter writes that New Right organizations worked to incorporate various strata into their vision of a *legitimate middle*: small business owners, permanently employed members of the ‘white working class,’ production-oriented managerial strata, the suburban middle class. They excluded and marginalized other groups that appeared to threaten the naturalized cultural expectations of this middle: blacks, immigrants, feminists, homosexuals, students, single mothers, and so on. They also discounted certain parts of the American professional middle class—the so-called New Class of government bureaucrats, professors, journalists, teachers, and other seemingly illegitimate professions—because these fractions either used their control of the State to assist excluded groups or voiced their opposition to the conservative movement.⁵⁶² Neither of these “extremes”—the New Class and the underclass—were viewed as legitimate

558. Ibid.

559. Ibid., 127.

560. Ibid.

561. Ibid.

562. In her 1989 book *Fear of Falling: The Inner life of the Middle Class*, Barbara Ehrenreich highlights the contradiction between the New Right’s “populist pretensions” and the fact that its organizational infrastructure serves as a “vast forcing ground for professional middle class personnel.” The most vociferous right-wing critics of the “New Class,” it seemed, were often prominent members of that class themselves. This is part of the contradiction that underpins the New Right’s elite populism.

political rivals, but, rather, as bearers of cultural decay. Consequently, as Hunter points out, the New Right “suppresses class distinctions and highlights social distinctions as relevant criteria for excluding and including groups among ‘the people.’”⁵⁶³ This procedure produced an ideological division within the American population between “the People” and “the Groups.” The New Right’s cross-class appeals often blamed the woes of “the People” on “the Groups.”

The New Right’s nostalgic cultural politics revolved around a certain idea of the ‘traditional family.’ The image of the family served as what Hunter calls a “condensation symbol” that gathered a wide range of issues under a single label: *family values*.⁵⁶⁴ This symbol “combines a defense of men in the market and women in the home” against “feminism, youth culture and drugs, black music, homosexuals, abortion, pornography, liberal educators, liberal divorce laws, contraception, and a melange of other phenomena.”⁵⁶⁵ As the New Right conceives of the family as “the primary unit of society . . . essentially outside of history,” they perceive any alteration to the basic makeup of the traditional family as an artificial intrusion.⁵⁶⁶ They regarded multiple social shifts and state-led initiatives as unnatural perversions of traditional life. For instance, the desegregation of schools, pejoratively known as ‘busing,’ was not seen as an attempt to reduce racial inequality, but, rather, as a violation of a parent’s right over the education of their children. The cross-class appeals of the New Right reached people who sensed that

563. Hunter, “In the Wings,” 128.

564. *Ibid.*, 129.

565. *Ibid.*, 128.

566. *Ibid.*

the traditional cultural order was eroding and who felt that social problems could be resolved only through the restoration of older familial norms.

It should not be forgotten that the New Right was intervening in a tense and conflictual conjuncture. The 1960s—that densely symbolic decade—witnessed what Michael Omi and Howard Winant describe as an immense “politicization of the social.”⁵⁶⁷ The new social movements of the 1960s revealed the links between seemingly personal experiences and wider political issues. The feminist tactic of ‘consciousness-raising’ sessions taught thousands of American women that what they previously experienced as personal failings or traumas were effects of the patriarchal system. Black Americans, Latino/as, Asian-Americans and Native Americans built vibrant grassroots protest movements to challenge structurally racist institutions and to celebrate their racial identities and heritages. Under the banner of the Gay Liberation Front, many gays and lesbians ‘came out’ and campaigned to end discrimination against, and the stigmatization of, non-heteronormative sexual orientations. Not only did this politics of identity contest the ‘naturalized’ family values of normative America, but it also—to borrow Omi and Winant’s phrase—introduced “a new depth to political life.”⁵⁶⁸

Whereas the social movements of the 1960s politicized the social, the New Right claimed to launch a campaign of *depoliticization* that was nevertheless deeply political. Although the New Right wished to remove what they saw as ‘undue’ government intervention into the social fabric, they planned to implement a state-led project of monitoring and managing society. As Sara Diamond observes, the New Right may have

567. Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 3rd edition, 185.

568. *Ibid.*, 186.

“opposed statist moves to increase social equality by redistributing wealth and power via legislation or by the funding of new agencies,” but they also “supported the state in its role as enforcer of ‘law and order,’ traditional morality, and U.S. hegemony abroad.”⁵⁶⁹ They wanted state institutions to impose a certain vision of the social that refused the demands of ‘the Groups.’ Instead of depoliticizing the social, the New Right engaged in a *counter-politicization* of the social.

The ambitious program of the New Right demanded different specializations and varieties of intellectual practice. The New Right needed organizers to shape and maintain alliances between multiple institutions and movements. They needed legal experts to draft new legislation that might be supplied to government officials. They needed technicians to operate and oversee their media operations as they propagated their ideas through different technological forms. And they needed intellectuals to weave disparate ideas and issues into an ideology and program that would integrate various strata into a social bloc.

As Gramsci reminds us, the formation of intellectuals is a long and complex historical process.⁵⁷⁰ Likewise, political forces do not emerge from nowhere. In the next section, I chart the longer trends and tendencies that shaped the political forces of the New Right. These overlapping processes formed the figure that I call the *New Right think tank intellectual*. Studying the history of the New Right and its intellectuals will help us to better understand the broader context behind the FCF’s attacks on “Cultural Marxism.” I conceive of my approach to the New Right think tank intellectual as part of what the historian Kim Phillips-Fein calls *the new intellectual history of conservatism*, which

569. Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1995), 139.

570. Gramsci, *Pre-Prison Writings*, 336.

“treat[s] conservative intellectuals as part of a social movement, [and] look[s] at how their ideas contributed to activism and vice versa, at the political and institutional context for conservative ideas, and at conservatives’ attempts to build an alternative intellectual infrastructure.”⁵⁷¹

The Long Histories of the New Rights

I admit that the term *New Right* is something of a convenient abstraction. It would be more accurate to borrow a phrase from the Marxist writer Mike Davis to describe “a confusing cluster of New Rights.”⁵⁷² Davis’ expression recognizes that the New Right is a combination of forces that cannot be reduced to a single point of origin or essence. Of course, this ‘clustering’ of various Rights was neither coincidental nor predestined. The leaders of the New Right worked to unify different philosophies, technologies, movements, and strata into a more coherent political force. In this section, I discuss the ensemble of ideological and institutional elements that comprised the New Right.

Drawing on Gramsci’s work, Desai observes that “[a]lready existing components of the national intellectual tradition almost invariably provide the materials for even highly innovative ideologies.”⁵⁷³ The New Right’s elite populism incorporated components from various reactionary traditions in the United States, such as postwar intellectual conservatism and Southern segregation. These borrowed elements were the defense of the

571. Kim Phillips-Fein, “Conservatism: A State of the Field,” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 98, No. 3 (December 2011), 730.

572. Davis, *Prisoners of the American Dream*, 170.

573. Desai, “Second-Hand Dealers in Ideas,” 41.

free market, respect for ‘traditional values,’ anticommunism or anti-liberalism, and a restricted notion of ‘the People.’

Postwar American intellectual conservatism was a compound of different and occasionally contradictory impulses: *libertarianism*, *traditionalism*, and *anti-communism*. What united these tendencies was a “deep antipathy to twentieth-century liberalism.”⁵⁷⁴ Libertarians, such as Friedrich Hayek and Frank Chodorov, warned that the federal bureaucracy of New Deal liberalism would steadily and inexorably expand into a modern totalitarian state. Russell Kirk and Richard Weaver, the tenacious defenders of traditionalism, excoriated liberalism as a disintegrative philosophy that eroded the organic foundations of Western civilization and produced a secular mass society vulnerable to the temptations and terrors of totalitarianism. The evangelists of Cold War anti-Communism—Whittaker Chambers, James Burnham, Frank Meyer—preached that liberalism was too rationalistic, relativistic, and quasi-socialistic to resist the threat of a predatory Soviet Communism. As the historian George H. Nash explains, this notion of a “philosophical continuity of the left” was an enduring theme of postwar conservatism.⁵⁷⁵ During the Cold War, conservatives felt that they were fighting on two fronts. Whereas Soviet Communism was *the enemy without*, New Deal liberalism was *the enemy within*. The McCarthyist Red Scare of the 1950s targeted many liberals who seemed a little too sympathetic to socialist causes. The conflation of liberalism and communism remained a common rhetorical tactic in right-wing discourse to delegitimize progressive changes, such as civil rights and social welfare.

574. George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement Since 1945*, Thirtieth-Anniversary Edition (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2017), 360.

575. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement Since 1945*, 101.

Several conservative thinkers, such as Meyer, labored to orchestrate a ‘fusion’ between libertarianism and traditionalism. They wished to reconcile free market economics with a concern for ‘traditional’ social order. The resultant doctrine, known as “fusionism,” provided an explicitly moral defense of “pristine capitalism” to argue that individual freedom and free markets proceeded from an objective Judeo-Christian moral tradition.⁵⁷⁶ The fusionist hypothesis prompted conservatives to portray “a capitalism in which the pursuit of profit and worldly success led neither to the decline of individual entrepreneurship and the market nor to the decay of belief in transcendent moral values” and to argue that, “if the ideal did not match reality, the blame fell on liberal policies that unnecessarily encouraged the growth of the state and liberal ideas that fostered a secular, materialist orientation to the world.”⁵⁷⁷ Although fusionism offered only an intellectual solution to the contradiction between capitalist freedom and moral tradition, it equipped conservatives with an excuse to deflect the blame for social fragmentation onto ‘cultural’ issues rather than economic causes.

During the postwar period, conservative intellectuals fueled the growth of a lively right-wing print culture. Regnery Publishing, a prominent right-wing publishing house, printed an array of classic conservative works in the 1950s to cater to a burgeoning public of readers. Ten to fifteen books—enough to fill a single bookshelf—would come to form what Michael J. Lee calls “American conservatism’s secular canon.”⁵⁷⁸ This collection of canonical texts, which included Kirk’s austere tome *The Conservative Mind* and William

576. Jerome L. Himmelstein, *To the Right: The Transformation of American Conservatism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 59.

577. Himmelstein, *To the Right*, 62.

578. Michael J. Lee, “The Conservative Canon and Its Uses,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2012), 1.

F. Buckley's polemical 'campus expose' *God and Man at Yale*, functioned as a stable repository of shared ideas and arguments that conservative activists could use to defend their beliefs. As Lee points out, "in such a text-savvy movement culture, recitations of Kirk or Buckley demonstrated . . . expertise in conservative political thought and . . . membership within the conservative community."⁵⁷⁹ The New Right intellectuals wished to convert these cerebral principles into simple messages that would resonate with the value systems of ordinary Americans. As Crehan notes, these attempts at popularization and dissemination are "crucial if the narratives produced by sophisticated, specialized intellectuals are to be transmuted into easily graspable" soundbites.⁵⁸⁰

New Right elites may have found a common creed in the classics of the conservative canon, yet they still needed to articulate a fervent brand of popular conservatism. According to Joseph E. Lowndes, the New Right borrowed their cultural populist stance from the rhetoric of Southern segregationists.⁵⁸¹ Many Southern politicians, such as the Dixiecrat Strom Thurmond and the Alabama governor George Wallace, argued that the Federal government's desegregation efforts represented an assault on the traditional lifestyles of ordinary white southerners. Instead of using explicit racial appeals, Wallace and others employed code words—"average citizen" and "the common man"—to conflate the interests and demands of whites Southerners with those of the entire American population.

579. Lee, "The Conservative Canon and Its Uses," 8.

580. Crehan, *Gramsci's Common Sense*, 122.

581. Joseph E. Lowndes, *From the New Deal to the New Right: Race and the Southern Origins of Modern Conservatism* (Dexter: Yale University Press, 2008).

In his 1969 book *The Emerging Republican Majority*, the Nixon campaign strategist Kevin Phillips recommended the use of ‘coded’ anti-black rhetoric to appeal to white Southern voters who resented the Democratic Party’s championing of Civil Rights.⁵⁸² Building on the rhetorical legacy of the Dixiecrats and Wallace, Nixon weaved together “racism, conservatism, and populism in a coherent political identity that could claim majoritarian status.”⁵⁸³ He spoke to this “invented political demographic” of the “Silent Majority” on the basis of white racial resentment.⁵⁸⁴

The New Right latched onto this “new subtextual approach to politics” to rearticulate “white resentment against blacks . . . [and] other insurgent groups” as the natural grievances of the *legitimate middle*—‘the People.’⁵⁸⁵ “Instead of defending segregation, institutionalized discrimination, and white supremacy,” Omi and Winant write, “the new right invoked the code words of ‘law and order’; instead of advocating for systemic patriarchy and justifying male chauvinism, it upheld ‘family values.’”⁵⁸⁶ The use of code words—an ideological inheritance from Southern cultural populism—served to mask the structural racial and gendered exclusions that underpinned the New Right’s notion of “the People.” The practices of the New Right intellectuals integrated these diverse elements into a coherent ideology. Those who carried out this task—the subjective element of the New Right—came from a young generation of right-wing activists who

582. Kevin P. Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority* (New Rochelle: Arlington House, 1969), 187-289.

583. Lowndes, *From the New Deal to the New Right*, 9.

584. Ibid.

585. Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 197.

586. Ibid.

absorbed the philosophies of the conservative canon and turned them into the basis for a new political force.

Many New Right activists started their political careers in one of the various conservative youth organizations that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s. The Intercollegiate Society of Individualists, founded by Frank Chodorov in 1953, disseminated anti-statist ideas on college campuses. William F. Buckley, the co-founder of the conservative periodical *National Review*, established the Young Americans for Freedom (YAF) in 1960. The formation of YAF, Scatamburlo writes, “marked a definitive shift in conservatism, from a focus on abstract economic and legal theory to a concrete interest in practice.”⁵⁸⁷ YAFers drew on the philosophies of the conservative canon to inform their own methods of organizing and mobilization. Their founding document, known as “The Sharon Statement,” declared that only a government that affirmed individual liberty, private enterprise, and law and order could rescue the nation from its “moral and political crisis.”⁵⁸⁸ YAF members transmitted this fusionist creed through local chapters on college campuses, magazines and newsletters like *The New Guard*, and public lectures and speeches.

In his even-handed 1997 book *The Other Side of the Sixties: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of Conservative Politics*, the historian John A. Andrew III reflects on the aims of the YAF activists. YAFers, Andrew claims, advanced “an ideological criticism [of political power in America], not a structural one,” and thus

587. Scatamburlo, *Soldiers of Misfortune*, 35

588. Young Americans for Freedom, “The Sharon Statement,” in *Takin’ It to the Streets’: A Sixties Reader*, Third Edition, ed. Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 289.

“sought primarily to substitute a conservative elite for a liberal one.”⁵⁸⁹ Organizations like YAF functioned as training grounds for this future conservative elite who wished to reorient the Republican Party and obtain powerful positions in the American expanded state.

In 1964, YAF activists signed up to support the conservative senator Barry Goldwater’s run for presidency. According to Davis, Goldwater’s campaign represented a significant shift in the political aspirations and class composition of the Republican Party. Whereas the Republican old guard was largely a “network of court-house cliques,” the Goldwaterites were “a cadre of middle-class, mostly college-educated, activists with a transcendental commitment to right-wing ideology and political agenda rather than to the Republican Party *per se*.”⁵⁹⁰ Although Goldwater failed to win the presidency, his campaign encouraged the future leaders of the New Right to embrace and promote an unabashed conservative politics. Many of these activists adopted tactics of fundraising, coalition-building, and political mobilization from the Goldwater effort and used them in New Right organizing. Without this generation of young and committed conservative activists, the New Right would not exist. By the 1980s, they would become an established elite within and alongside the Reagan presidency.

Although the New Right was a conspicuously elite movement, it borrowed many themes from grassroots conservative organizing. During the 1950s and 1960s, the cause of anticommunism attracted plenty of support from middle-class suburban families. In her ground-breaking 2001 book *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*,

589. John A. Andrew III, *The Other Side of the Sixties: Young Americas for Freedom and the Rise of Conservative Politics* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 58.

590. Mike Davis, *Prisoners of the American Dream*, 167.

the historian Lisa McGirr documents the role of such organizations as the Christian Anti-Communism Crusade and the John Birch Society in shaping conservative activism in America's rapidly growing suburbs. Middle-class and professional parents protested 'progressive' educators on local school boards, and feared that their children would be indoctrinated by liberal-leaning textbooks and curricula. These suburban warriors embraced the anti-statist ethos of conservatism, because they saw the federal government as intrusive and semi-communistic (even though the affluence of these mid-century suburbs stemmed primarily from federal state investment in infrastructure and industry).

As McGirr points out, these conservatives exhibited a selective acceptance of modernity. Although they embraced the advanced lifestyle of the "new modern suburban consumer," they abhorred "secularism, relativism, and egalitarianism."⁵⁹¹ They did not link the expansive and innovative nature of capitalist development to the erosion of moral and cultural traditions, so they sought other possible causes—the threat of communism—to blame for the aspects of modernity they disdained. Yet, it is not correct to say that they were mere passive victims of a bourgeois 'false consciousness' that blinded them to the true reality of their existence. To put it in Gramscian terms, they maintained a "contradictory consciousness" that allowed them to participate in the dislocating practices of capitalist modernity and still declare their verbal commitment to traditionalism.⁵⁹² The essential mystification of the New Right—to neglect economic causes for social fragmentation and favor cultural explanations—resonated with this 'contradictory consciousness' of American conservatives.

591. Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 94.

592. Gramsci, *Subaltern Social Groups*, 81.

One of the New Right's major successes was the political mobilization of Evangelical Christians. During the 1970s, the congregations of Evangelical churches grew rapidly. The historian Paul Boyer suggests that this growth was "part of a larger reaction against the social upheavals, radical politics, and counterculture of the 1960s."⁵⁹³ Many Americans were unsure about how they should react to the tumult that drastically altered the social life of the nation. The Evangelical Church addressed this cultural uncertainty by taking "unambiguous stances on contentious moral issues."⁵⁹⁴ It equipped people with a clear sense of good and evil that was grounded in a fundamentalist reading of the Bible. Controversial Supreme Court rulings, such as *Roe v. Wade*, compelled Evangelicals to enter the political sphere and demand a return to "traditional values" in public life. "The central theme of the fundamentalist foray into politics," Nancy T. Ammerman observes, "was to protect the traditional family."⁵⁹⁵ Evangelical leaders warned that the spread of secular humanism would result in a godless society where individuals depended on the State for moral and material support rather than the Christian family.⁵⁹⁶

The leading activists of the New Right, such as Phillips and Weyrich, organized these conservative religious constituencies by building on the pre-existing and "dense organizational infrastructure of an evangelical and fundamentalist subculture that had been

593. Paul Boyer, "The Evangelical Resurgence in 1970s American Protestantism," in *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s*, ed. by Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 34.

594. Boyer, "The Evangelical Resurgence in 1970s American Protestantism," 35.

595. Nancy T. Ammerman, "North American Protestant Fundamentalism," in *Media, Culture, and the Religious Right*, ed. by Linda Kintz and Julia Lesage (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 97.

596. Chip Berlet and Matthew N. Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism in America*, 209-212.

growing for several decades.”⁵⁹⁷ The most popular and influential element of this subculture was television evangelism or *televangelism*. In 1960, the Federal Communications Commission decreed that paid religious broadcasts could fulfil a station’s public-service requirement. The FCC’s decision inspired evangelicals to create a new kind of religious broadcasting that stressed fundamentalist themes and sustained itself financially through on-the-air fundraising.⁵⁹⁸ Jerry Falwell’s *Old Time Gospel Hour* and Pat Robertson’s *700 Club* attracted millions of viewers. When Phillips and Weyrich started to mobilize evangelical Christians for the conservative movement in the mid-1970s, they reached out to prominent televangelists. As Himmelstein points out, “each of the major organizations of the New Religious Right was initially associated with a major television preacher: The Moral Majority with Jerry Falwell; Christian Voice with Pat Robertson; and the Religious Roundtable with James Robison.”⁵⁹⁹ The New Right’s alliance with the growing Religious Right confirmed the importance of embracing new media technologies to mobilize conservative groups.

In a draft of a 1954 ‘selling memo’ for a potential conservative magazine, Buckley argues that the “nearest thing we have to a ‘ruling class’ in America is the ‘opinion makers’—newspapermen, publishers, commentators, educators, ministers, and members of the various professions.”⁶⁰⁰ He saw these opinion makers as advocates of a liberal consensus that excluded conservative ideas. Anyone who wanted to produce conservative

597. Himmelstein, *To The Right*, 98.

598. *Ibid.* 116.

599. *Ibid.*, 117.

600. Quoted in Sam Tanenhaus, *The Death of Conservatism: A Movement and Its Consequences* (New York: Random House, 2010), 46.

media would have to displace this liberal monopoly over the means of communication. This is the essential premise of what has come to be known in the subfield of conservative news studies as “the ‘liberal media’ critique.” Although there is still some scholarly disagreement about the origins of this critique, the concept of a pervasive “liberal media” supported the oppositional posture of postwar conservatives.⁶⁰¹ The founders and functionaries of right-wing media in postwar America assumed the role of what Mark Major calls a “conservative countersphere” that positioned itself alongside and against the “liberal media.”⁶⁰²

Gramsci acknowledges the importance of media in building a coherent political force. Newspapers, magazines, and other outlets can function to “modify the average opinion of a particular society, criticizing, suggesting, admonishing, modernizing, introducing new clichés.”⁶⁰³ The intellectuals of the conservative countersphere wanted to dislodge the influence of the ‘liberal media’ over the mentality of the American public. They built an apparatus of magazines, newspapers, television shows, book clubs, literary reviews, radio programs, newsletters, and publishing houses that disseminated conservative

601. For more on this debate, see David Greenberg, “The idea of ‘the liberal media’ and its roots in the civil rights movement,” *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics, and Culture*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (December 2008): 167-186; William Gillis, “The Anti-Semitic Roots of the ‘Liberal News Media’ Critique,” *American Journalism*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (2017): 262-288; A.J. Bauer, “Journalism History and Conservative Erasure,” *American Journalism*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (2018): 2-26; Julie B. Lane, “Cultivating Distrust of the Mainstream Media: Propagandists for a Liberal Machine and the American Establishment,” in *News on the Right: Studying Conservative News Cultures*, ed. by Anthony Nadler and A. J. Bauer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 157-173; Mark Major, “Building the Marginal and the Mainstream: Methodological Considerations for Conservative News as a Subfield,” in *News on the Right: Studying Conservative News Cultures*, ed. by Anthony Nadler and A. J. Bauer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 213-231; Mark Major, “Why the South Prevailed: Civil Rights, Anticommunism, and the Origins of the ‘Liberal Media’,” *New Political Science*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (2020): 18-41.

602. Major, “Building the Marginal and the Mainstream,” 216-217.

603. Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks: Volume I* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992),

opinions, perspectives and interpretations to a growing right-wing audience. *The National Review*, in particular, worked to draw “a clean line of distinction between conservatism . . . and liberalism, which emerged as a monolithic ‘enemy’ where once there had been many points of opposition.”⁶⁰⁴ The New Right would argue that they needed to develop their own forms of media technology to counter the hegemony of this ‘monolithic’ liberal media.

“The conservative movement as we’ve known it over the past 25 years would not exist without direct mail,” according to Richard A. Viguerie and David Franke.⁶⁰⁵ Although Viguerie and Franke’s claim downplays other significant causes for conservative political success, they are correct to note that direct mail helped the New Right to promote and fund their project. Direct mail is a marketing strategy that targets potential customers and solicits money for products and services. Viguerie—a former YAF member, ex-Goldwaterite, and co-founder of Moral Majority—succeeded in adapting this strategy to American politics. Following Goldwater’s defeat in 1964, Viguerie copied 12,500 names and addresses from the list of people who donated more than \$50 to the Arizona senator’s presidential campaign. When Viguerie founded his own direct mail company, he continued to accumulate names and addresses until he had compiled an enormous database of around fifteen million Americans who supported conservative candidates and causes.

Direct mail, as Viguerie conceives of it, is essentially a form of political advertising. He took techniques from “marketing books,” “psychology books,” and “studies of what causes a person to buy or not buy something,” and incorporated them into

604. Carol Mason, “Right-Wing Literature in the United States since the 1960s,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature*, January 24, 2018, <https://oxfordre.com/literature/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.001.0001/acrefore-9780190201098-e-34>.

605. Viguerie and Franke, *America’s Right Turn*, 107.

his approach to political direct mail.⁶⁰⁶ He road-tested various kinds of fundraising letters to figure out which ideas and appeals attracted greater support. The key to a successful direct mail campaign, according to Viguerie, is “*stick[ing] to your brand.*”⁶⁰⁷

Viguerie’s branding of the New Right’s elite populism collapses the distinction between persuasion and advertising. Political direct mail serves to sell existing ideas, arguments, and themes to potential customers. As Viguerie notes in his 1980 book *New Right: We’re Ready to Lead*, the conservative direct mail activist needs to be someone who can “take the ideas, the writings, and the books and market them to the people.”⁶⁰⁸ Although this task may not appear to warrant the title of “intellectual,” Crehan points out that Gramsci’s definition of intellectuals “include not only the producers of knowledge, but its distributors.”⁶⁰⁹ Arguably, New Right technicians, such as Viguerie, function primarily as “the divulgators . . . of [the] pre-existing, traditional, accumulated intellectual wealth” of American conservatism.⁶¹⁰

Direct mail was an ideological weapon against the “liberal media.” Viguerie saw direct mail as the “conservatives’ vehicle to carry their message to the voters without going through the filter of the liberal leaning news media.”⁶¹¹ The populist premise of direct mail—the posture of speaking directly to the People—suggests a certain immediacy, a

606. Ibid., 94-95.

607. Ibid., 95.

608. Richard A. Viguerie, *The New Right: We’re Ready to Lead* (Falls Church; The Viguerie Company, 1981), 33.

609. Crehan, *Gramsci’s Common Sense*, 122.

610. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 13.

611. Viguerie and Franke, *America’s Right Turn*, 110-111.

filterless mode of expression. The scholar R. Kenneth Godwin argues that political direct mail employs the technique of personalization to create the impression of unmediated communication. The use of “highly emotive rhetoric” and “appeals to personal efficacy” was designed to mobilize the recipient of direct mail to join the ideological battle against an opponent that was portrayed with “strong negative descriptions.”⁶¹² For instance, an item of direct mail from Senator Steve Symms for the Heritage Foundation warns that “the National Education Association” is planning to “seize total control of public education in America . . . [u]nless you and I take IMMEDIATE ACTION on this EMERGENCY situation...”⁶¹³ The clever use of branding and personalized rhetoric functioned to unify individual Americans into a consistent conservative constituency that could be trusted to provide donations and assistance to New Right initiatives.

Single-issue campaigns were another technique for mobilizing the New Right’s popular base. Davis observes that the most effective single-issue causes were linked to “the defense of the sanctity of white suburban family life.”⁶¹⁴ This reconfiguration of conservative ideology attracted widespread support from the blue-collar elements of the traditional New Deal coalition.

Conservative activists framed the expansion of civil rights as an assault on normative America. They built on the rhetorical motifs of Southern cultural populism to contrast the ‘rights’ of white families with the ‘special rights’ of excluded groups. Corey Robin argues that these campaigns also absorbed and inverted the “deeper categories and

612. R. Kenneth Godwin, “The Structure, Content, and Use of Political Direct Mail,” *Polity*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (Spring 1988), 530-538.

613. Quoted in Godwin, “The Structure, Content, and Use of Political Direct Mail,” 527.

614. Davis, *Prisoners of the American Dream*, 170.

idioms of the left, even when these idioms [ran] directly counter to their official stance.”⁶¹⁵ In other words, reactionary single-issue campaigners parroted the grammar of the Civil Rights Movement even as they undermined Civil Rights legislation. They marketed certain ideas about ‘familial rights’ against ‘special rights’ to organize suburban families against the progressive gains of the 1960s and 1970s. Single-issue campaigns were a technique for organizing different communities into the bloc of “the People” that remained key to New Right ideology.

In Miami, Florida, the former pop singer Anita Bryant founded an organization called Save Our Children to challenge the introduction of laws that would prevent discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Bryant collected signatures to repeal these laws and told voters that gay people were “asking to be blessed in their abnormal lifestyle.”⁶¹⁶ Bryant’s campaign reframed this legislation as a violation of “children’s rights to grow up in a healthy, decent society,” rather than a well-meaning attempt to guarantee equal treatment for gay people.⁶¹⁷

The desegregation of schools, or “busing,” was another polarizing issue. In his rich account of the antibusing movement in Charlotte, North Carolina, the historian Matthew Lassiter describes a “collective politics of a white, middle-class ideology that defined ‘freedom of choice’ and ‘neighborhood schools’ as the core privileges of homeowner rights and consumer liberties and that rejected as ‘reverse discrimination’ any policy designed to provide collective integration remedies for past and present policies that

615. Corey Robin, *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Donald Trump*, 2nd Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 49.

616. Quoted in Lassiter, “Inventing Family Values,” 22.

617. *Ibid.*

reinforced systematic inequality of opportunity.”⁶¹⁸ White, middle-class suburban parents refused to accept that comprehensive two-way integration was meant to overcome Charlotte’s history of systematically displacing and ghettoizing black families. They experienced the pursuit of racial equality as a form of juridical tyranny that trampled on their children’s rights. As Lassiter points out, these anti-busing activists “coopted the rhetoric and imitated the tactics of the civil rights movement” to portray their children as victims of a diffuse authoritarianism.⁶¹⁹

The most notorious and successful single-issue campaigns of the 1970s was Phyllis Schlafly’s STOP ERA. The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was a proposed amendment to the Constitution that would end all legal distinctions between men and women in terms of divorce, property, employment, and other matters. Schlafly led a powerful antifeminist backlash to oppose the ERA, which she portrayed as an amendment that pleased only an influential, albeit unrepresentative, feminist minority. In a 1972 issue of her newsletter *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, she described ‘Women’s Liberation’ movements as a “total assault on the role of the American woman as wife and mother, and on the family as the basic unit of society.”⁶²⁰ Schlafly argued that the ERA undermined the ‘special privileges’ of American women within a patriarchal society.

Although these campaigns claimed to depoliticize the social, they obscured the deeply political nature of normative America. They naturalized the form of the white

618. Matthew D. Lassiter, “The Suburban Origin of ‘Color-Blind’ Conservatism: Middle-Class Consciousness in the Charlotte Busing Crisis,” *Journal of Urban History*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (May 2004), 550.

619. Lassiter, “The Suburban Origin of ‘Color-Blind Conservatism,” 558.

620. Phyllis Schlafly, “What’s Wrong with ‘Equal Rights’ for Women? (February 1972),” in *The American Conservative Movement: 1945 to the Present*, ed. by Donald T. Critchlow and Nancy MacLean (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 200.

suburban family without examining the historical circumstances that produced it. As Gramsci perceives, what is perceived as ‘natural’ is often an “ensemble of social relations [that] is contradictory at any time [and that, in turn, shapes] a contradictory consciousness.”⁶²¹ The New Right claims that the white suburban family must be protected from state intervention, even though this mode of familial life was a product of postwar federal planning and investment. George Lipsitz explains that the Federal Housing Administration channeled loans towards white home-buyers who were moving into segregated suburbs, which “helped turn European Americans into ‘whites’ who could live near each other and intermarry with relatively little difficulty.”⁶²² Such “white unity,” as Lipsitz describes it, “rested on residential segregation and on shared access to housing and life chances largely unavailable to communities of color.”⁶²³ The so-called naturalness of this social arrangement was simply a consequence of what Gramsci would describe as “the objective necessity of civil technique.”⁶²⁴ The New Right’s counter-politicization of the social was ultimately a campaign to restore a direction to the historical bloc that preserved racial and sexual inequality. Yet, these single-issue campaigns were relatively fleeting interventions. The New Right required a range of permanent institutions to support their project of reordering social life.

From the early 1970s onwards, the New Right founded several major think tanks that served to bind these single-issue strands into a coherent multi-issue agenda. In his 2016 study *Right Moves: The Conservative Think Tank in American Political Culture*,

621. Gramsci, *Subaltern Social Groups*, 126.

622. Lipsitz, “The Possessive Investment in Whiteness,” 374.

623. *Ibid.*

624. Gramsci, *Subaltern Social Groups*, 127.

Stahl defines right-wing think tanks as “research and public relations institutions, populated by conservative intellectuals and policymakers” that are “designed for theorizing and selling conservative public policies and ideologies to both lawmakers and the public at large.”⁶²⁵ As Stahl documents, conservative think tanks and policy-makers in the 1950s and 1960s remained within the boundaries of the liberal consensus that dominated Washington circles. They were committed to an ostensibly objective, scientific, and unbiased approach. Policy was an area of disinterested planning, rather than a terrain for ideological crusades.

The rise of the New Right think tank in the early 1970s disrupted the liberal consensus ideal of technocratic policy-making. The founders of New Right think tanks, such as Edwin Feulner and Weyrich, hoped to balance the “liberal intellectual monolith” of the Washington establishment with conservative institutions.⁶²⁶ Instead of striving to present their policy goals and proposals as ‘objective,’ these organizations claimed that their conservative bias offered a counterweight to the monopoly of liberal institutions over Washington. The “populist institutional positioning” of the Heritage Foundation, for instance, implied that the New Right was defending the true conservative interests of the American People—the alleged victims of Washington’s blind commitment to liberalism.⁶²⁷ The liberal technocratic paradigm of policy debate slowly gave way to a ‘marketplace of ideas’ model, where right-wing think tanks could produce, package, and promote

625. Stahl, *Right Moves*, 3

626. Jason Stahl, “From Without to Within the Movement: Consolidating the Conservative Think Tanks in the ‘Long Sixties,’” in *The Right Side of the Sixties: Reexamining Conservatism’s Decade of Transformation*, ed. Laura Jane Gifford and Daniel K. Williams (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 104.

627. Stahl, *Right Moves*, 74.

conservative ideas, identities, and ideologies. The New Right intellectual was a lively combatant in this fray of ideological competition that fought to displace the dominance of the liberal consensus and change the political orientation of the American state.

In her 1993 article “Manufacturing the Attack on Liberalized Higher Education,” the scholar Ellen Messer-Davidow argues that New Right think tanks represent a specific model of knowledge production. The New Right’s organizational infrastructure functions as a manufacturing apparatus that shapes and supports a type of entrepreneurial intellectual who generates and packages products—op-eds, books, policy documents, speeches—that circulate through various channels of distribution and consumption—television, newspapers, symposia, etc. The functionaries of this apparatus engage in what Messer-Davidow calls “vertical articulatory practices,” which “involve constructing institutional nodal points to leverage changes in national and local institutions, which in turn can be used to (re)constitute individuals as subject and agents of a conservative society.”⁶²⁸ Ideology is not a purely mental or cerebral construct; it is an organizing principle of social life. The New Right endeavored to turn their conception of the world—elite populism—into “a norm of collective action.”⁶²⁹ They wanted to revise school curricula to produce patriotic American citizens, prohibit abortions to shape compliant American women, and dismantle affirmative action to build a ‘colorblind’ (albeit racially unequal) American workforce. Despite the contradictions in this vision, it remains the direction that New Right intellectuals wished to impose on the historical bloc.

628. Messer-Davidow, “Manufacturing the Attack on Liberalized Higher Education,” 68.

629. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 345.

Messer-Davidow contends that these New Right intellectuals blur the distinction between scholarly knowledge and think tank ‘expertise.’ New Right think tanks imbue their product with an “academicized ‘aura’ of authority” to compete among different knowledges in policy debates and public discourses.⁶³⁰ As Messer-Davidow suggests, “the competing ‘scientific’ knowledges are likely to be readily consumed by policy-makers and other publics without much critical analysis to differentiate them.”⁶³¹ Complex, peer-reviewed theories are often not the most marketable and digestible ideas. The output of the New Right intellectual needs to be effective, rather than merely innovative or verifiable. If their ideas manage to shape policy and opinion, then the New Right intellectual does not need to worry about attaining standards of scholarly rigor. Their job titles—director of institutes, researchers, resident scholars—serve to further confuse the distinction between universities and think tanks.

The tax status of New Right think tanks—501(c)(3)—shaped and circumscribed the parameters of their political activity. 501(c)(3) organizations are exempt from corporate income tax and eligible to receive deductible contribution from their supporters. Yet, these organizations must follow a set of requirements to maintain their tax-exempt status. They are prohibited from supporting or participating in any political campaign on behalf of a candidate for public office. They may inform politicians about the details of certain policy issues, yet they cannot explicitly propose specific legislative changes. They must demonstrate that they serve the public interest of the American people, rather than the private desires of their benefactors. And they need to prove that most of their

630. Messer-Davidow, “Manufacturing the Attack on Liberalized Higher Education,” 54.

631. *Ibid.*

organizational activities are devoted to the production and dissemination of “educational” material, rather than partisan propaganda.

The leaders of New Right think tanks work within these legal boundaries to form what could be called a right-wing *tax-exempt politics*. As the legal scholar Laura Brown Chisolm points out, political advocacy think tanks must stick to the Treasury’s broad definition of “educational purposes.”⁶³² According to the Treasury regulations, the accepted modes of educational activity include research and study of policy issues, publication and dissemination of information, conduct of workshops and conferences, and public lectures and debates. Additionally, these regulations state that “the fact that an organization, in carrying out its primary purpose, advocates or presents opinions on controversial issues with the intentions of moulding public opinion or creating public sentiment to an acceptance of its own views does not preclude such organization from qualification under Section 501(c)(3).”⁶³³ Consequently, the New Right constructed their partisan positions on social and cultural issues as though they were simple reflections of popular interest.

The New Right’s tax-exempt politics illustrates Gramsci’s concept of the expanded State. Gramsci understands the State and Civil Society as an organic dialectical unity or unity-in-distinction. As he put it quite explicitly, “in concrete historical life, political society [i.e. the State] and civil society are a single entity.”⁶³⁴ According to Liguori, this concept of the integral State demonstrates that what are ordinarily perceived as the

632. Laura Brown Chisolm, “Sinking the Think Tanks Upstream: The Use and Misuse of Tax Exemption Law to Address the Use and Misuse of Tax-Exempt Organizations by Politicians,” *University of Pittsburgh Law Review*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (Spring 1990), 581.

633. Chisolm, “Sinking the Think Tanks Upstream,” 601.

634. Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks: Volume II*, 182.

“private” organizations of civil society—or non-governmental organizations—constitutes a “fully-fledged part of the State.”⁶³⁵ The legal thinker Douglas Litowitz notes that the Gramscian conception of law emphasizes the State’s “power to authorize and legitimate—indeed, to produce—a set of social institutions and practices.”⁶³⁶ The hegemonic apparatuses of the New Right—foundations, think tanks, political action committees—remain with the legal coercive prowess of the State. Contrary to some writers who portray the agenda of the New Right as an assault on the State, a Gramscian analysis demonstrates that this tax-exempt politics is embedded within the permanent superstructure of the American state.

The founding of right-wing think tanks reflects a strategy to reorient the educative function of the State. The New Right planned to redefine the parameters of “collective life” and “individual relations,” and “to eliminate certain customs and attitudes and to disseminate others.”⁶³⁷ They hoped to remake subjectivities to match their political notion of normative America. Although they positioned themselves as populists, the New Right was a thoroughly elite project. Instead of forming democratic or grassroots organizations, the New Right established a series of institutions that were unaccountable to the people that they claimed to represent. The material apparatus of the New Right fostered a “paternalistic, instrumental attitude towards the masses which is a mark of intellectuals in capitalist society because they are not an organic expression of them.”⁶³⁸ This is the

635. Guido Liguori, *Gramsci's Pathways*, 9.

636. Douglas Litowitz, “Gramsci, Hegemony, and the Law,” *BYU Law Review*, Vol. 2000, No. 2 (2000), 530

637. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 246.

638. Anne Showstack Sassoon, *Gramsci and Contemporary Politics: Beyond Pessimism of the Intellect* (London: Routledge, 2000), 36.

institutional framework that fashioned the mentality of the *New Right think tank intellectual*.

The New Right think tank intellectual performs a *mediating function* between “a cross-section of American business”—primarily single-family foundations—and the spheres of public opinion and government policy.⁶³⁹ They do not represent the narrow or corporate interests of individual sectors of American capital. Whereas the functionaries of political action committees may lobby for specific legislative changes that might benefit an individual corporation, the New Right think tank intellectual elaborates a ‘universal’ worldview that emphasizes free enterprise and traditional values. The production of this worldview functions to rearrange the educative role of the State to adapt “the morality of the broadest popular masses to the necessities of the continuous development of the economic apparatus of production.”⁶⁴⁰ Consequently, the New Right think tank intellectual is responsible for orchestrating and operating the type of state that would be most favorable for the expansion of American entrepreneurial capital.⁶⁴¹

The *oppositional* stance of the New Right think tank intellectual results from their perceived role in intra-New Class conflict. Stephen Schryer writes that “American conservative intellectuals imagined themselves as defectors from this ‘New Class’ of symbolic specialists.”⁶⁴² The psychological thrill of betraying the presumed interests of

639. Himmelstein, *To the Right*, 150. I have drawn on Gramsci’s analysis of rural intellectuals in his essay on the Southern Question as a model for my discussion of the New Right Think Tank intellectual’s mentality.

640. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 242.

641. Davis, *Prisoners of the American Dream*, 171-176.

642. Stephen Schryer, “Writers for Goldwater,” *Post45 Journal*, No. 4, January 20, 2020, <https://post45.org/2020/01/writers-for-goldwater/>.

this ‘New Class’ permitted New Right intellectuals to picture themselves as the tribunes of the besieged American people. Although the early conservative movement contested the ideological dominance of the liberal consensus, they failed to form organic links with the people they claimed to represent. The institutions of the New Right are simply platforms for ideological competition between the intellectuals of established political forces, rather than a forum for the expressions and values of a true grassroots populist movement. Nonetheless, a populist positioning remained key to the messages of the New Right think tank intellectual (even if the New Right’s elite populism was more elite than populism).

The third defining characteristic of the New Right think tank intellectual’s mentality is *opportunism*. The New Right’s conception of knowledge production as ideological competition prioritizes ideas and narratives that can be deployed and circulated quickly. The New Right think tank intellectual must design and market their messages to intervene in momentary debates, struggles, and realignments. None of their work possesses any lasting philosophical or scholarly significance. As Gramsci might put it, they instrumentalize their intellectual skills to develop “a series of ideological, religious, philosophical, political and juridical polemics, whose concreteness can be estimated by the extent to which they are convincing, and shift the previously existing disposition of social forces.”⁶⁴³ The task of the New Right think tank intellectual is limited to this process of shifting social forces to develop support for a larger agenda of political transformation—the reconfiguration of civil society and the state. Marketing and effectiveness are the main criteria for judging New Right intellectual practice.

643. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 178.

The practices, techniques, and institutions of the New Right formed the context in which Lind and FCF produced narratives of Cultural Marxism. Drawing on the classics of the conservative canon, Lind stressed the essential continuity between the post-Marxist theory of the Frankfurt School and the mildly liberal measures of political correctness in the 1990s. He claimed to promote the interests of “the People” in what amounted to a single-issue campaign against the apparent threat of Cultural Marxism. The FCF employed a variety of media technologies—mail, magazines, op-eds, television shows, novels—to market and disseminate Lind’s narratives. Ultimately, the purpose of these narratives was the reconfiguration of society and the State to implement an agenda of what Lind called cultural conservatism (or retroculture). The remaining sections of this chapter will demonstrate how different contexts affect the articulations of Cultural Marxism. Although Lind borrows elements from Minnicino’s 1992 *Fidelio* essay, they acquire a different meaning and function in these New Right narratives. Only when we examine the contexts in which Lind operated can we understand the significance of these differences.

Free Congress Foundation

Paul Weyrich, the founder of FCF, was what the scholar Alex DiBranco calls a New Right *network entrepreneur*: someone who founded a range of interconnected organizations to build an infrastructure for the conservative movement.⁶⁴⁴ From 1973 onward, Weyrich helped to establish many influential right-wing organizations, including the Heritage Foundation and Moral Majority. In 1974, the Colorado beer baron Joseph Coors supplied Weyrich with ample funds to start a political action committee called the Committee for

644. DiBranco, “Conservative News and Movement Infrastructure,” 128.

the Survival of a Free Congress (CSFC). CSFC supported the electoral campaigns of Republican congressional candidates who opposed abortion, promoted free-market economics, and advocated right-to-work laws. With help from Viguerie, CSFC designed a direct mail campaign to raise \$194,000 for thirty-seven congressional candidates. Several years later, Weyrich reorganized the Committee into a think tank called the Free Congress Foundation (FCF) for the purposes of formulating a unified cultural agenda for the New Right. With the beer-soaked bucks of the Coors family on tap, FCF eventually became a prominent ‘inside-the-beltway’ hub of cultural conservatism.

In 1986, Weyrich hired William S. Lind as Director of the FCF’s Institute for Cultural Conservatism. Lind may have seemed like an unusual candidate for a top position at a think tank devoted to social and cultural issues. At the time, his publication record consisted mainly of writings on military strategy. He had served as president of the Military Reform Institute, and advised Senator Robert Taft Jr. and Senator Gary Hart on matters of defense policy. Yet, Lind’s background in military strategy proved to be a transferable skill during the culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s. During his tenure at FCF, Lind devised a campaign of cultural conservatism that would supposedly defend the ramparts of “traditional culture” from the advancing forces of 1960s-style radicalism.

The Institute’s first major publication, a 1987 pamphlet entitled *Cultural Conservatism: Toward a New National Agenda*, outlined a strategy for restoring America’s traditional cultural values. Building on such conservative canon classics as Kirk’s *The Conservative Mind*, this pamphlet presents the case for a staunch cultural conservatism. Lind and his co-author William H. Marshner observe that “both parties have had to reach out to activist movements built around values, lifestyles, and other non-economic

issues.”⁶⁴⁵ Whereas other pundits and policy analysts may dismiss this grassroots activism as the fleeting tremors of “one-issue interest groups,” Lind and Marshner suggest that “these movements are in fact the vanguards of a profound political change.”⁶⁴⁶ They interpret this shift to single-issue campaigning as a sign that the “politics that [will] carry us into the twenty-first century will be based not on economics, but on culture.”⁶⁴⁷ They propose a project of “cultural conservatism” that will organize these single-issue campaigns into a unified force. Whereas the single-issue campaigns of the New Right had previously registered opposition to some legislative change, Lind and Marshner’s conception of cultural conservatism offers a broader positive vision for the future of right-wing politics in America.

Central to this cultural conservatism is the belief that there is a necessary and unbreakable relationship between traditional Judeo-Christian values and the freedom and prosperity of Western societies. Culture, as Lind and Marshner understand it, is a “collective conscience” that informs a nation’s modes of thought, ways of life, standards of behavior, perceptions and experiences, morals, habits, obligations, duties and responsibilities, and common values.⁶⁴⁸ Those who listen to the collective conscience of traditional culture—the ethical norms of an idealized American society—will experience the joys of political freedom, economic affluence, and individual fulfillment.

For Lind and Marshner, the health of a nation’s culture springs from the strength of the patriarchal family. The loving parents of stable households raise their children to

645. Lind and Marshner, *Cultural Conservatism*, 1.

646. *Ibid.*, 1.

647. *Ibid.*

648. *Ibid.*, 4.

respect the imperatives of the collective conscience, which, in turn, secures the continuation of a traditional culture. In short, the family is the bedrock of a robust cultural order and a successful capitalist society. Family values are the lifeblood of any true cultural conservatism.

Yet, Lind and Marshner proclaim that America is suffering from potentially fatal case of *cultural drift*: “the gradual emptying of a nation’s values of their content.”⁶⁴⁹ The rising rates of divorce, abortion, pre-marital sex, and out-of-wedlock pregnancy represents the breakdown of the family’s conventional function in American culture. The erosion of the family encourages a “‘me-first’ ethic” that worsens cultural drift.⁶⁵⁰ According to Lind and Marshner, the symptoms of this cultural drift include increased suicide rates, hedonism, the scenes of rock music videos, the widespread toleration of homosexuality, and so on.

Lind and Marshner argue that *cultural radicalism*—a catch-all phrase to inculcate a single antagonist for a variety of social trends—accelerates this drift. The major institutions of the United States, according to Lind and Marshner, have capitulated to the poisonous ideas of literary critics and legal theorists. Professors in English literature departments and law schools at elite universities across the country are using the methods of “deconstruction” and “Critical Studies” to indoctrinate their students with “the view that Western societies are sinkholes of racism, exploitation, and inhumanity.”⁶⁵¹ As more and more students succumb to this ideology, they become brainwashed mercenaries in a

649. Ibid., 5.

650. Ibid., 6.

651. Ibid., 7.

cultural war against the traditional culture. Environmentalism, calls to eliminate homophobia and racism, and the establishment of women's studies departments are merely skirmishes in this devastating assault on the West. The rise of cultural radicalism, Lind and Marshner contend, presages the decline of Western Civilization.

The rejuvenation of education is key part to Lind and Marshner's national agenda. They claim that a "strong family policy is inherently part of education policy"⁶⁵² They encourage the reintroduction of "strong discipline" to schools, including "reasonable corporate punishment," to help students from "economically disadvantaged communities" to "climb out of poverty."⁶⁵³ They recommend the steady integration of schools and universities into a free market of competition and commodification (broad-based voucher plans, private accrediting agencies, and private funding) to break "the monopoly influence of educational ideologues."⁶⁵⁴ They propose regulations that will guarantee the requirement of a classical education at universities. And they conclude that "education is more likely to perform its cultural duties when it is controlled by parents than when it is directed by a central state apparatus."⁶⁵⁵

Lind and Marshner's recommendations reflect the New Right's contradictory relationship with the economy and the state. They want to expose educational institutions to the whims of the market, yet they demand that the state should guarantee higher levels of order and discipline in schools and universities. They plan to deregulate teacher recruitment procedures, yet expect higher teaching standards. The uneasy fusionism of

652. Ibid., 51.

653. Ibid.

654. Ibid., 52.

655. Ibid., 135.

Lind and Marshner's agenda is another instance of the New Right's failure to fully grasp the economic and historical basis of social problems. Consequently, they need to locate convenient scapegoats—cultural radicals—to explain what they see as larger patterns of cultural decline.

The FCF's agenda of cultural renewal posits the classic New Right populist strategy of opposing “the People” to the “New Class” and “the Groups.” Whereas the New Class caters to the demands of the Groups and exacerbates cultural drift, conservatives should plan to redirect the relationship between the state and society to preserve the culture of the People. Yet, Lind and Marshner overlook the structural exclusions that formed the traditional culture of normative America. They suggest that cultural radicals are simply fabricating the problems of white supremacy and patriarchy with their dubious methods of deconstruction and critical studies. According to Lind and Marshner, the restoration of a traditional culture requires the banishment of the cultural radicals from the superstructures of American society. Lind would draw on this populist framework of cultural renewal in his later writings on Cultural Marxism.

Lind's first fleeting reference to “cultural Marxism” appears in a 1994 co-authored *Marine Corps Gazette* article called “Fourth Generation Warfare: Another Look.”⁶⁵⁶ Lind and his co-authors contend that cultural radicals in academia, the media, and the entertainment industry have coerced the American public into rejecting the values of Western Civilization. They suspect that these radicals are hiding a darker agenda behind the relatively bland and bureaucratic phrases of “multiculturalism” and “political

656. William S. Lind, John F. Schmitt, and Gary I. Wilson, “Fourth Generation Warfare: Another Look,” *Marine Corps Gazette* (December 1994), 34-37. I will examine Lind's theory of Fourth Generation warfare later in this chapter.

correctness.” When Lind and his co-authors peel off these deceptive labels, they claim to find nothing other than “Marxism translated from economic into social and cultural terms.”⁶⁵⁷ As this camouflaged form of Marxism creeps across the nation, it divides the American people into conflicting sexual and racial groups. It even threatens to fragment the U.S. Marines into a “white Marine corps, black Marine corps, Christian Marine corps, possibly even a gay Marine corps[!].”⁶⁵⁸ If no one heeds Lind et al.’s warning, it seems, then America will degenerate into a state of civil war.

This 1994 essay lacks any detail about *who* translated Marxism from economic into social and cultural terms. A year or so later, Lind would learn about a group of German Marxist thinkers that might function as a plausible scapegoat for the rise of political correctness in the United States: the Frankfurt School. He would eventually produce a series of documents—op-eds, speeches, documentaries, novels—to promote vaguely conspiratorial narratives about the threat of Frankfurt School-inspired Cultural Marxism. Despite their similarities, Minnicino and Lind’s essays about the Frankfurt School and political correctness possess notably different meanings and functions. Whereas LaRouche’s arbitrary ideology informed NCLC’s attacks on the Frankfurt School, the New Right’s elite populism and the FCF’s cultural conservatism formed the context for Lind’s narratives of Cultural Marxism.

657. Lind, Schmitt, and Wilson, “Fourth Generation Warfare,” 36.

658. *Ibid.*, 36.

Weyrich and William in Washington

According to DiBranco, New Right intellectuals understood “the importance of . . . *marketing* . . . ideas through multiple venues.”⁶⁵⁹ They were constantly testing new ideas and narratives that might attract American voters and policy-makers to conservative causes. The scholar-activist Chip Berlet explains that this process of spreading ideas took place within an established right-wing infrastructure. Berlet writes that “many of the conceptual frameworks and arguments used to marginalize left and liberal ideas are first developed at think tanks founded by right-wing foundations.”⁶⁶⁰ Once “these ideas are shaped through feedback at conferences and other meetings,” Berlet argues, “they are cooperatively field-tested within right-wing alternative media such as small-circulations newsletters and journals.”⁶⁶¹ Ideas that resonate with these audiences would be marketed to the wider public through mainstream newspaper op-eds, magazine articles, television and radio interviews, direct mail, and so on. This process aided the production and circulation of catchwords, soundbites, and slogans that New Right intellectuals could use to communicate their ideas more effectively. The narrative of “Cultural Marxism,” as told by Weyrich and Lind, underwent this multi-stage process.

Lind first heard about the Frankfurt School from his friend Raymond V. Raehn, who allegedly borrowed material from Minnicino’s 1992 *Fidelio* article to produce an

659. DiBranco, “Conservative News and Movement Infrastructure,” 130.

660. Chip Berlet, “Who is Mediating the Storm? Right-Wing Alternative Information Networks,” in *Media, Culture, and the Religious Right*, ed. by Linda Kintz and Julia Lesage (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 252.

661. Berlet, “Who is Mediating the Storm?,” 252.

unpublished manuscript entitled “Critical Theory: A Special Research Report” in 1996.⁶⁶² A year later, Lind, Raehn, and other conservative authors penned articles for the FCF’s journal series *Essays on Our Times* that attributed the rise of “political correctness” to the malign influence of the Frankfurt School. Lind’s own 1997 essay “What is Political Correctness?” features many of the memorable turns of phrase that he would use to describe Cultural Marxism in his later op-eds, speeches, interviews, and documentaries. This first essay offers some hints about how Lind wanted to market this idea of Cultural Marxism.⁶⁶³

According to Lind, political correctness has “taken over” America.⁶⁶⁴ College professors, student activists, and Democrat politicians overrule the First Amendment, and impose restrictive speech codes on the American people. The “totalitarian nature of Political Correctness” is visible on every college campus, where “freedom of speech, of the press, and even of thought are eliminated.”⁶⁶⁵ Formerly prestigious Ivy League institutions are now nothing more than “small, Ivy-covered North Koreas.”⁶⁶⁶

Although liberals assure the naïve masses that speech codes exist to spread tolerance, sensitivity, and respect, Lind reveals that Political Correctness “is in fact

662. Lind acknowledges Minnicino’s article as a relevant source on the history of the Frankfurt School: “One of the few looks at the Frankfurt School by someone not a sympathizer, this long journal article explains the role of the Institute for Social Research in creating the ideology we now know as “Political Correctness.” Unfortunately, its value is reduced by some digressions that lack credibility.”

663. William S. Lind, “What is Political Correctness?,” *Essays on our Times*, Free Congress Foundation, Number 43, March 1997. Republished in *The Resister* as: William S. Lind, “What is Political Correctness?,” *The Resister*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Spring 1998), 66-68. In the following citations, I will be quoting from *The Resister* publication, which is available online.

664. Lind, “What is Political Correctness?,” 66.

665. *Ibid.*, 67.

666. *Ibid.*

Marxism in a different set of clothes”—it is Marxism “translated from economic into cultural terms.”⁶⁶⁷ According to Lind, the thinkers of the Frankfurt School blended Marxism, Freudianism, and linguistics to create a discipline called “Critical Theory” that promoted a “society of radical egalitarianism enforced by the power of the state.”⁶⁶⁸ Followers of the Frankfurt School then used this Cultural Marxism to “lay penalties on white men and others who disagree with them, and give promotion to the groups they favor.”⁶⁶⁹

Lind urges the American people to defy the rules of Cultural Marxism. He encourages cultural conservatives to “use the words that [political correctness] forbids, and refuse to use the words it mandates.”⁶⁷⁰ Not only does he suggest that people should use offensive language, he tells them to adopt traditional lifestyles. He insists that “ladies should be homemakers and housewives . . . children should not be born out of wedlock, [and] open homosexuals should be shunned.”⁶⁷¹ *Defiance* is the only way to rid the country of political correctness.

The same three claims are propounded in every iteration of the FCF’s “Cultural Marxism” narrative: 1) that “political correctness” is Marxist totalitarianism, 2) that the Frankfurt School invented this form of totalitarianism, and 3) that conservatives can only resist Cultural Marxism by withdrawing from the mainstream of American life. The scale

667. Ibid., 66-68.

668. Ibid., 66-67.

669. Ibid., 67.

670. Ibid.

671. Ibid.

and nature of this ‘totalitarianism’ is never precisely defined. Lind’s overreliance on hyperbole prevents him from constructing a cogent argument about the ‘totalitarian’ quality of political correctness. The term is merely invoked to connote repression and terror. There are never any statistics in Lind’s work to prove that what he understands as ‘political correctness’ is ubiquitous in American institutions. Lind simply builds on classic New Right rhetorical tactics to reframe moderate social reforms—affirmative action, the removal of ‘the n-word’ from public vocabulary, efforts to increase equality between the genders—as devious mechanisms for disturbing white suburban family life.⁶⁷²

In this initial essay, Lind does not clarify how the Frankfurt School was responsible for these changes. His portrait of critical theory remains conveniently vague. Of course, he does not need to describe Adorno and Horkheimer’s work faithfully if he can associate them with Karl Marx. The ‘m-word’ is enough to turn the Frankfurt School into the villains of Lind’s history of political correctness.

It is unclear whether Lind believes that America’s major institutions are salvageable. Is it simply a matter of replacing progressive educators with cultural conservatives? Is there even a need for new institutions? Lind refrains from proposing structural reform, and promotes lifestyle changes as the most appropriate mode of political action. “At one level,” Ehrenreich remarks, “the New Right’s ‘social issues’ boil down to the issue of which commodity ensemble—and accompanying lifestyle—should prevail: maple furniture, home freezers, and prayer, or butcher-top counters, scuba diving, and

672. Lind imagines the teleportation of a “1950s family” into the ‘degenerate’ culture of the 1990s. Although he uses entirely color-blind language, the reader can deduce that Lind is talking about a white family who can no longer say “Negro” or enter “certain parts of the city.” Lind’s descriptions suggest that “Cultural Marxism” is a direct assault on the freedom of white family life.

abortion.”⁶⁷³ Lind claims to have located a realm that escaped the 1960s politicization of the social, and encourages people to follow the “old rules of our culture.”⁶⁷⁴ Lind’s recommendations constitute a kind of individualized activism that promises a smooth return to the seemingly non-political sphere of 1950s-era America.

Lind appears to believe that merely telling people that political correctness is Cultural Marxism will compel them to accept cultural conservatism. He suggests that conservatives should engage in educational activities to expose the secret history of political correctness to their friends, neighbors, and families. This initial field-testing of Cultural Marxism helped Lind to figure out whether it was a narrative that could successfully delegitimize left-wing and liberal ideas. In the following years, Weyrich and Lind marketed the idea of Cultural Marxism to a variety of audiences.

In February 1999, Weyrich issued his famous ‘Letter to Conservatives’ to FCF’s supporters (which was based on his speech at the 1998 Conservative Leadership Conference and later republished in abridged form in a brief article entitled “The Moral Minority” in *Christianity Today*). He lamented that the New Right had “probably lost the culture war.”⁶⁷⁵ The overwhelming majority of Americans did not appear to share the values of cultural conservatism. Despite the right-wing campaign to impeach President Bill Clinton for lying about his affair with Monica Lewinsky, “Slick Willie” remained in the Oval Office. Weyrich muses that, “if there really was a moral majority out there, Bill

673. Barbara Ehrenreich, *Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class* (New York: Twelve, 2020), 224.

674. Lind, “What is Political Correctness?,” 66.

675. Paul Weyrich, “Letter to Conservatives,” <https://nationalcenter.org/ncppr/1999/02/16/letter-to-conservatives-by-paul-m-weyrich>.

Clinton would have been driven out of office months ago.”⁶⁷⁶ He felt that the average American was too immersed in “MTV culture” to care about the violation of such old-fashioned taboos as infidelity and perjury.⁶⁷⁷

For Weyrich, decades of cultural drift had eroded “traditional culture.” Although the Gingrich Revolution of 1994 represented a serious political breakthrough for the Republican Party, Weyrich warned his conservative associates that their loss of influence over the culture would be catastrophic. He stressed that purely political and legislative solutions would not restore traditional American culture. Yet, if the conservative movement does nothing to repair this collapse, they would suffer at the hands of a new barbarism.

Weyrich describes this cultural disintegration as the result of an ongoing assault on American institutions. He claims that “Cultural Marxism is succeeding in its war against our culture,” because the “ideology of political correctness . . . has so grasped the body politic [and our] institutions . . . [and] threatens to control literally every aspect of our lives.”⁶⁷⁸ He identifies the Frankfurt School and Herbert Marcuse as the perpetrators of this totalitarian ideology. According to Weyrich, these Marxist thinkers are responsible for implanting the idea of political correctness into American universities to prepare for the transformation of the United States into an “ideological state.”⁶⁷⁹

As Weyrich sees it, the growing tyranny of “Cultural Marxism” demonstrates the failure of the New Right’s strategy. The New Right assumed that there was a pre-existing

676. Weyrich, “Letter to Conservatives.”

677. *Ibid.*

678. *Ibid.*

679. *Ibid.*

conservative constituency—a Moral Majority—that could be mobilized to enact social and cultural change through political institutions. Nearly three decades after he helped to found the New Right, Weyrich concedes that conservatives need a different strategy to rescue the remnants of a Moral Minority.

The only option left for cultural conservatives, according to Weyrich, is an escape route. He reasons that “a legitimate strategy for us to follow is to look at ways to separate ourselves from the institutions that have been captured by the ideology of Political Correctness.”⁶⁸⁰ Weyrich modifies Timothy O’Leary’s catchy countercultural catechism—*tune in, turn on, drop out*—into a new slogan for cultural conservatism. He advises families to “turn off” their televisions, video games, and computers to protect their children from propaganda and pornography.⁶⁸¹ They should “tune out” of the dominant culture, and learn to cultivate a little stillness and silence in their lives.⁶⁸² Finally, Weyrich urges them to “drop out” of the defunct culture of contemporary America and seek new avenues for leading “godly, righteous, and sober lives.”⁶⁸³ The inversion of O’Leary’s acid-trip quip symbolizes a strange mimicking of sixties-style rebellion to imply that cultural conservatism has become the new counterculture.

Weyrich’s “Letter to Conservatives” condemns political correctness as a totalitarian ideology. Whenever conservatives dare to voice what Weyrich considered to be “the truth,” they are branded as “‘racist,’ ‘sexist,’ ‘homophobic,’ ‘insensitive,’ or

680. Ibid.

681. Ibid.

682. Ibid.

683. Ibid.

‘judgmental.’”⁶⁸⁴ Weyrich interprets this as a sign that conservatives lack recognition in mainstream American culture. As Jodi Dean points out, Weyrich’s “Letter to Conservatives” expresses an “experience of unfreedom” that gives rise to criticism of “an ideology that fails to establish a subject position to those to and for whom he speaks.”⁶⁸⁵ Yet, Weyrich does not view the erosion of conservative subjectivities as the outcome of “corporate capital, consumerism, or globalization.”⁶⁸⁶ On the contrary, he seeks to incriminate “the alien ideology of political correctness as a product of academia, and as extending out from universities with a controlling, gripping, dominating power.”⁶⁸⁷ His references to Marcuse and the Frankfurt School continues the New Right’s mystifying gesture of blaming societal change on individual deviants rather than structural causes. Although Weyrich intuits the importance of institutions in reproducing social and cultural norms, he opts for moralizing criticism over institutional critique. Consequently, he latches onto a conservative strategy that stresses moral purity rather than political action.

Whereas the New Right once promoted a counter-politicization of the social, Weyrich proposes the gradual shaping of a separate society. He favors the tactic of boycotting over the tired methods of electoral politics. Instead of transforming the existing institutions, he encourages the building of “parallel structures.”⁶⁸⁸ He urges families to join the Home School movement rather than jockey for position on local school boards. The act

684. Ibid.

685. Jodi Dean, “Introduction: The Interface of Political Theory and Cultural Studies,” in *Cultural Studies and Political Theory*, ed. by Jodi Dean (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 9

686. Dean, “Introduction,” 9.

687. Ibid.

688. The Heritage Foundation, “Cultural Renewal,” C-SPAN Video, 2:00:09, April 13, 1999, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?122465-1/cultural-renewal>.

of setting oneself apart from a corrupted American culture, Weyrich claims, will protect conservatives from impending civilizational collapse. If political correctness continues to be the prevailing ideology of American's major institutions, then "cultural disintegration" is inevitable.⁶⁸⁹ As Weyrich writes in a 1999 *Washington Post* op-ed, conservatives needed to be ready to "build a new nation among the ruins of the old."⁶⁹⁰ Only a truly conservative cultural revival would free the United States from the gripping ideology of Cultural Marxism.

From newspaper op-eds to appearances at think tank roundtable events, Weyrich marketed this strategy of separation. The notion of a pervasive Cultural Marxism works to convince Weyrich's readers and listeners that a total reinvention of society is necessary. Yet, Weyrich never clarifies how Cultural Marxism infiltrated and overpowered American society. He left this explanatory task to Lind.

In July 1998, Lind delivered a talk entitled "The Origins of Political Correctness" at an Accuracy in Academia conference on academic freedom. Founded in 1985, Accuracy in Academia (AIA) aimed to expose instances of political bias and indoctrination on American campuses. Although the organization claimed to respect and uphold the ideal of academic freedom, it instigated several quasi-McCarthyist witch-hunts against left-leaning professors. They recruited classroom spies, compiled databases of progressive academics, and harassed countless college professors. Ironically, the ideologues of AIA were bemoaning ideological conformity on American campuses as they were actively trying to

689. Weyrich, "Letter to Conservatives."

690. Paul M. Weyrich, "Separate and Free," *The Washington Post*, 7 March, 1999, B07.

punish anyone who did not conform to their own conservative standards of correct thinking.

As Lind took to the podium, he told his audience that Americans are afraid to say what they think. He evokes imagery of innocent citizens who are tried in “kangaroo courts” on college campuses for violating the commandments of political correctness.⁶⁹¹ He promises that his speech will reveal the murky Marxist past of political correctness. As Lind understands it, political correctness is nothing more than a sheep disguise for the Marxist wolf. It is “Marxism translated from economic into cultural terms.”⁶⁹²

According to Lind, the parallels between Classical Marxism and Cultural Marxism are “very obvious.”⁶⁹³ The first parallel is their *totalitarian nature*. Political correctness has transformed American campuses into what Lind describes memorably as “small, ivy-covered North Koreas.”⁶⁹⁴ Just as communist bureaucrats censor and imprison dissidents, college activists penalize anyone who utters an offensive or insensitive comment. The second similarity is their *single-factor explanation of history*. Whereas Classical Marxism insists that economics determines history, Cultural Marxism holds that that *power*—defined primarily in racial and sexual terms—is the sole determining force of history. The third shared trait is an *inflexible definition of good and evil*. The villainous bourgeoisie and heroic proletariat of Classical Marxism becomes the infamous white male—the oppressor—and innocent minority—the oppressed—of Political Correctness. Lind draws

691. Accuracy in Academia, “Social and Political Issues on College Campuses,” C-SPAN video, 4:02:24, July 10, 1998, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?108496-1/college-campus-social-political-issues>.

692. Accuracy in Academia, “Social and Political Issues on College Campuses.”

693. Ibid.

694. Ibid.

an absurd analogy between Soviet dekulakization and affirmative action to claim that *expropriation* is the fourth link between Classical and Cultural Marxism. For Lind, ‘diversity quotas’ expropriate college admissions from talented white students and redistribute them to undeserving black and Hispanic applicants. The fifth and final likeness is *a self-confirming method of analysis*. Classical Marxists obey the laws of Marxist economics; Cultural Marxists wield the weapons of deconstruction. According to Lind, these deconstructionists slice open the literary texts of the Western canon, gut them of their original meaning, and stuff them with an immaculate politically correct message. As Lind claims, deconstructionism “finds” that “all of Shakespeare is about the suppression of women, or the Bible is really about race and gender.”⁶⁹⁵

Of course, these parallels rely on caricatures of the practices that Lind associates with political correctness. Despite the superficiality of Lind’s analysis, his list of comparisons serves an implicit rhetorical strategy. He assumes that ordinary Americans would refuse to accept affirmative action or literary theory if they believed that these things were new incarnations of the old Marxist claptrap. He remarks that that these “parallels are not accidents” to hint that Marxists manufactured the ideology of political correctness to infiltrate and weaken the United States.⁶⁹⁶ He constructs a timeline of personalities and events to defend this assertion.

For Lind, political correctness emerged from the chaos of post-World War I Europe. He claims that European Marxists were shocked to find that the working classes were more willing to don military uniforms and follow the orders of their superiors in the

695. Ibid.

696. Ibid.

war than unite with proletarians in other nations and overthrow the bourgeoisie. Several Marxists thinkers devoted themselves to the task of understanding what prevented the European proletariat from developing revolutionary class consciousness. According to Lind, the Hungarian Marxist theorist Georg Lukacs and Italian communist leader Gramsci concluded that the Judeo-Christian values of Western civilization thwarted any attempt to jolt the proletariat into revolutionary action, because it supplied the working class with a cohesive worldview. They supposed that communists needed to develop a strategy for eliminating the cultural norms of Western culture. Following Lukacs and Gramsci's recommendation, Felix Weil established a "think tank" in Frankfurt, Germany called the Institute for Social Research to elaborate a program for destroying Western Civilization.⁶⁹⁷ Just as the innocuous term "political correctness" obscures the true nature of Cultural Marxism, Weil aimed to conceal the Marxist agenda of the Institute by adopting the name of "social research."

Under the directorship of "renegade Marxist" Max Horkheimer, the Frankfurt School transposed the economic science of Marxism into the cultural agenda of political correctness.⁶⁹⁸ Horkheimer mixed Marxist and Freudian ingredients to brew a noxious philosophical concoction called Critical Theory, which Lind misconstrues as "the most destructive criticism possible, in every possible way, designed to bring the current order down."⁶⁹⁹ As Lind understands it, Horkheimer's corrosive critical theory became the intellectual basis for "the women's studies departments, the gay studies departments, the

697. Ibid.

698. Ibid.

699. Ibid.

black studies departments.”⁷⁰⁰

Lind implies that the thinkers of the Frankfurt School drew on critical theory to assemble a series of left-wing single-issue campaigns. Erich Fromm criticized traditional gender roles to argue that sexual difference was a social construct, which gave rise to the feminist movement. Marcuse celebrated “polymorphous perversity” as a form of sexual liberation, which inspired the gay liberation movement. Lind even tosses together a sprinkling of Horkheimer quotations and a sentence from Martin Jay’s 1972 *The Dialectical Imagination* to suggest that the Frankfurt School engineered the environmental movement. Within the realm of Lind’s historical imagination, the Frankfurt School’s Cultural Marxism becomes almost a dark reflection of the New Right’s cultural conservatism.

When young college radicals started to protest the Vietnam War in the 1960s, they fumbled for some sort of theory that might rationalize their revolt. Lind describes these sophomoric subversives as not “deep” enough to understand the volumes of Marx’s *Capital*, so they used Marcuse’s 1955 *Eros and Civilization* as a source of accessible intellectual stimulation.⁷⁰¹ *Eros and Civilization*, Lind avers, became the “bible of the SDS.”⁷⁰² Marcuse urged the young radicals to indulge their sexual desires, resist the compulsions of the Protestant Ethic, and refuse to conform to existing society. Just as Marcuse was teaching students to rebel against sexual repression, he was also telling them to engage in political repression. Lind plucks a sentence from Marcuse’s “A Critique of

700. Ibid.

701. Ibid.

702. Ibid.

Pure Tolerance” to imply that he planted the seed that would grow into the censorious of political correctness on campus: “intolerance against movements from the Right, and toleration of movements from the Left.”⁷⁰³ According to Lind, Marcuse freed the sexuality of these students from the confines of family life and procreation, and replaced parental authority with a kind of paternalistic political authoritarianism.

The New Right’s polemics against outbursts on college campuses in the sixties is strangely tied to their defense of “family values.” As Melinda Cooper points out in her 2017 book *Family Values*, New Left activists revolted against *in loco parentis* rules on university campuses. Cooper describes how these rules “transplanted the intimate normativity of the Fordist family into a wider institutional context, radiating its disciplines well beyond the confines of the family home into the liminal social space of the college campus, where students were considered neither complete adults nor children.”⁷⁰⁴ The regime of *in loco parentis* permitted administrators and dorm officials to regulate behavior, dress codes, and alcohol consumption, and to monitor and restrict sexual activity. Female students were subject to strict curfews and dress rules. Students could be expelled for homosexuality. Southern black students saw *in loco parentis* rules as a form of “institutional infantilism” that resembled Jim Crow laws, and that could be used to suppress civil rights activism on campus.⁷⁰⁵ The enforcement of *in loco parentis* served to adapt the morality of these students to the requirements of the new knowledge economy. These students would graduate into employment in the “emerging generation of knowledge

703. Herbert Marcuse, “Repressive Tolerance,” *A Critique of Pure Tolerance* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), 109.

704. Melinda Cooper, *Family Values: Between Neoliberalism and the New Social Conservatism* (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2017), 230.

705. Cooper, *Family Values*, 231.

workers [who] would primarily be of service to the petrochemical, agrochemical, and defense industries, the agents of America's neocolonial wars in Southeast Asia."⁷⁰⁶ The sociological imagination of student radicals managed to link the paternalistic rules of *in loco parentis* to the perpetuation and preservation of a hegemonic order that staged imperialistic military interventions into countries in Southeast Asia. For Lind, the student revolt of the 1960s was tied to an assault on the social unit that guaranteed the transmission of traditional culture: the family.

Unless the New Right can restore the logic of the family to the capitalist university, Lind warns that America will become a totally "ideological state."⁷⁰⁷ The ideology of political correctness, Lind claims, will "eventually destroy . . . everything that we have ever defined as our freedom and our culture."⁷⁰⁸ The totalitarianism of the Frankfurt School will displace the family-based cultural order that the New Right seeks to defend.

Lind's talk attributes all-encompassing and almost unstoppable cultural power to the ideas of the Frankfurt School. As far as Lind is concerned, there are no broader social and material forces that might explain the contested status of free speech on campuses, the heated debates about revising and expanding the canon, and the introduction of new perspectives into certain academic disciplines. The only possible cause of political correctness in the United States, according to Lind, is the arrival of the Frankfurt School's ideas in the 1930s. The notion that "bad ideas" are the principal engine of societal decline underpins most of the New Right's historical narratives. The thinkers of the postwar

706. Ibid., 229.

707. Accuracy in Academia, "Social and Political Issues on College Campuses."

708. Ibid.

American right, as Nash explains, were convinced of “the potency of ideas.”⁷⁰⁹ Nash senses that many conservatives settled for this position, because it feels “easier to resist one’s age if ‘only’ ideas and not ‘forces’ seem to be the foe.”⁷¹⁰ If “bad ideas” cause social disorder, then “good ideas” can presumably restore order to society. The production and popularization of so-called good ideas is the whole purpose of the New Right intellectual. And Lind even believes that, if he can spread his narrative of Cultural Marxism to a large enough audience of ordinary Americans, then they would have no choice but to reject political correctness and embrace cultural conservatism.

That 1998 AIA conference was only one of the venues where Lind marketed his ideas about Cultural Marxism. Lind’s speech contains several elements that would appeal to a larger audience. He reduces the Frankfurt School’s theories to soundbites and buzzwords, because these compressed forms circulate more efficiently through the infrastructure of the New Right. His positions can be summarized in op-eds and quoted in interviews. Consequently, what Lind’s work lacks in depth of research or rigor of analysis is compensated by its sheer communicability and marketability. A year later, Lind would transmit these ideas about Cultural Marxism to a nationwide audience on FCF’s National Empowerment Television.

“Political Correctness: The Dirty Little Secret”

In 1993, Weyrich launched the Washington D.C.-based satellite television network National Empowerment Television (NET) to offset ‘liberal media’ bias and transmit FCF’s

709. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America since 1945*, 52.

710. *Ibid.*

ideas into the living rooms of America. He judged that New Right think tanks were failing to capture the minds of the American population, because they had not adapted to televisual culture. Although Americans in the 1990s were increasingly receiving their political news from television and talk radio, Weyrich complained that too many New Right think tankers were continuing to publish monograph after monograph. Unlike his relatively unadaptable colleagues, he sensed that “alternative media” had the power to “reach lots and lots of more people.”⁷¹¹ NET, which Weyrich described as “a network for the movement,” would invite viewers to become active and informed members of a conservative majority.⁷¹²

NET, a twenty-four-hour “interactive television” channel, offered a wide variety of programming.⁷¹³ Newt Gingrich, the Republican Speaker of the House of Representatives, co-hosted a political talk show called *The Progress Report* to interview politicians and pundits from a conservative perspective. Likewise, Arianna Huffington hosted a show on social issues called *Critical Mass*. Several right-wing organizations produced their own shows for NET, such as the anti-gun control National Rifle Association’s *On Target with the NRA*, the anti-abortion group American Life League’s *Putting Families First*, and the anti-liberal bias watchdog Accuracy in Media’s *The Other Side*. Each show featured a viewer call-in segment. NET viewers could call a toll-free number to speak with the

711. C-SPAN, “Conservative Leadership Conference,” C-SPAN video, 3:35:06, November 12, 1993, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?52279-1/conservative-leadership-conference>.

712. C-SPAN, “Conservative Leadership Conference.”

713. NET operated on an estimated annual budget of \$2.1 million. Not only did it depend on subscription fees, but it also received support from other conservative institutions. For instance, Gingrich’s Progress and Freedom Foundation contributed \$125,000 to the NET coffers to pay for *The Progress Report*. NET also sold advertising slots to boost revenue. The products that were advertised on the network include a VHS Collector’s Edition of the classic 1970s sitcom *All in the Family*, a compilation of popular musical hits from the 1950s, and a subscription to the *Wall Street Journal*’s *National Business Employment Weekly*.

show's host and to voice their own questions and concerns. In a 1993 *Washington Times* article, Weyrich characterized these live telephone calls as “an unfettered link between the American electorate and their representatives in Washington.”⁷¹⁴

Who was NET's audience? An estimated fourteen million households—predominantly located in the Sunbelt—subscribed to the network. These viewers were not imagined to be passive consumers of NET's programming. In a C-SPAN interview, NET's General Manager Brian Jones promoted the network as a “populist” enterprise that would empower “the American people” to “talk back” to Washington officials.⁷¹⁵ In her 1998 essay “Conservative Media Activism: The Free Congress Foundation and National Empowerment Television,” the theorist Anna Williams argues that “NET begins with the premise that there is a vast unrepresented conservative public that is excluded from national government and that is dominated by an out-of-touch liberal elite . . . [and] it addresses potential viewers as members of this excluded group.”⁷¹⁶ Only those viewers who picked up their phone and called in to such shows as *The Progress Report* could overcome this exclusion. Consequently, NET presented itself “as the only hope for political expression.”⁷¹⁷ Despite its promise to deliver unmediated access to Washington, NET offered a mode of participation that was thoroughly mediated by New Right technologies and discourses. In other words, the opinions of viewers counted—or were

714. Paul Weyrich, “Welcome to the Birth of the New Media Age,” *Washington Times*, December 15, 1993, 4.

715. C-SPAN, “National Empowerment Television,” C-SPAN video, 50:03, December 13, 1994, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?62168-1/national-empowerment-television>.

716. Anna Williams, “Conservative Media Activism: The Free Congress Foundation and National Empowerment Television,” in *Media, Culture, and the Religious Right*, ed. by Linda Kintz and Julia Lesage (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 288.

717 Williams, “Conservative Media Activism,” 288.

perceived as legitimate—only insofar as they matched NET’s idealized conception of their audience.

Although NET claimed to represent the voice of “the people,” it catered to a “solidly conservative” public.⁷¹⁸ The populist positioning of NET’s audience reflects the New Right’s tendency to brand right-wing constituencies as the majority or “the People” (the Silent Majority, the Moral Majority, etc.) and dismiss everyone else as “the Groups” (special interests, liberals, homosexuals, welfare mothers, blacks, etc.). Critiques of political correctness—the so-called Marxist ideology of the Groups—helped to bolster NET’s definition of itself as a defender of the majority.

In 1999, NET aired a Special Edition of its call-in investigative news program *American Investigator* entitled “Political Correctness: The Dirty Little Secret.” In this Special Edition, Lind repackages his earlier output on Cultural Marxism for a broader conservative public. He invites a handful of guests onto the program to share their thoughts on the Frankfurt School. These interviewees include *Tenured Radicals* author Roger Kimball, the New-Leftie-turned-Neocon David Horowitz, the Hungarian Nazi collaborator Laszlo Pasztor, and the prominent historian of the Frankfurt School Martin Jay. Many years after appearing on this NET program, Jay reflected on his role as Lind’s ‘useful idiot’ in his essay “Dialectic of Counter-Enlightenment: The Frankfurt School as Scapegoat of the Lunatic Fringe.” He remarks that “interweaving [his] edited testimony into the larger narrative may have given it an unearned legitimacy.”⁷¹⁹ Although I share Jay’s belief that “the effect [of the documentary] would have been pretty much the same without [his]

718. Ibid.

719. Jay, *Splinters in Your Eye*, 155.

participation,” his presence was used effectively as a prop to seemingly corroborate Lind’s whole story.⁷²⁰ Of course, Lind did not need the help of a left-leaning historian from Berkeley—a suspiciously New Class profession—to appear trustworthy to NET’s audience. Whenever the viewer sees Lind, he is wearing a suit and smoking a pipe—a visual epitome of traditionalism. Even these small details convey a certain faith that the old ways are superior to the new ones. He offers a neat conservative contrast to the unruliness of the ‘politically correct’ protestors that turn up occasionally in the program’s footage. As such, he functions as a seemingly reliable guide for NET audiences.

The episode kicks off with a slick and fast-paced montage. An orchestra performs a suspenseful score as a narrator warns viewers about the wrongs of “politically correct America.”⁷²¹ “Black activists” on an “Ivy League campus” burn “hundreds of copies” of the “conservative newspaper;” Reggie White says “different races have different talents” and loses “millions in endorsements,” and the Boy Scouts of America are sued for “discrimination” for refusing to hire an “openly homosexual” Scoutmaster.⁷²² The narrator poses a rhetorical question: “has political correctness taken over America?”⁷²³ When a black-and-white image of the Institute for Social Research building in Frankfurt appears onscreen, the narrator asks, “and what does it have to do with this small school in 1920s

720. Ibid.

721. National Empowerment Television, “The History of Political Correctness Part 1 of 3,” Youtube video, 10:37, posted by “Theriomachus,” November 11, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73nzRnhpqog&t=36s>.

722. National Empowerment Television, “The History of Political Correctness Part 1 of 3.”

723. Ibid.

Germany?”⁷²⁴ As the montage unfolds, the viewer learns that “it” has *everything* to do with this “small school.”⁷²⁵

The montage combines footage from American college campuses, photographs of Frankfurt School thinkers, and clips from interviews. The result is a jarring patchwork of allusion and insinuation. The narrator starts a sentence “The agenda of political correctness may not be a secret,” which is interrupted by a clip of Horowitz saying “Attack America,” then the line continues “but it didn’t start in the 1960s.”⁷²⁶ “You’ll be surprised to find that it may be the 1990s,” the narrator insists, “but the Frankfurt School is still very much in session.”⁷²⁷ The mixing of these elements reinforces the overarching argument of the episode. The montage flattens different temporalities—1920s Germany, 1960s student revolt, 1990s campuses—into a single timeline of simple cause and effect. It is a visual analogue of Lind’s claim that the “Frankfurt School” are entirely responsible for fabricating the ideology of “political correctness.”

The first segment of this episode features three anecdotes that allegedly demonstrate the ubiquity of political correctness in the United States. Lind uses these anecdotes to support his claims that the Frankfurt School successfully imported political correctness into the country. NET visits Cornell University to interview an editor of the conservative student publication *The Cornell Review*. At the time, the *Review* had published a racist parody of *Ebonics* to satirize the Africana Studies department. According to Lind, a group of black students protested the article and decided to burn “every copy of

724. Ibid.

725. Ibid.

726. Ibid.

727. Ibid.

The Cornell Review that they could find.”⁷²⁸ They even disrupted an honorary event for the leading Civil Rights activist Thomas Jones. *The Cornell Review* editor claims the university administration did nothing to denounce the actions of these black students and even conceded to their demands.

The second anecdote relays the story of Reggie White to prove that “being black is no protection against political correctness.”⁷²⁹ As Lind tells it, White—a former Green Bay Packers defense player and ordained minister—was invited to speak at the Wisconsin State legislature, where he talked about the sinfulness of homosexuality and the differences between the races. Although White did not apparently say anything offensive, he lost a potential contract as a sports commentator on NBC.

Finally, Lind discusses the case of an “openly homosexual” Scoutmaster who was suing the Boy Scouts of America for discrimination.⁷³⁰ NET interviews a long-time Scoutmaster named Lou Doty who says that he cannot imagine that parents would want their son to spend any time with a homosexual. Lind implies that Doty sees this attack on the Boy Scouts as “part of a larger agenda.” Doty then remarks that “society deteriorates” if the “wrong people tear down the right institutions.”⁷³¹ This is precisely the agenda, Lind insists, that the Frankfurt School planned for the deterioration of American society.

Each of these stories exemplifies what John K. Wilson describes as the conservative technique of “myth-making by anecdote.”⁷³² The reporting in this segment

728. Ibid.

729. Ibid.

730. Ibid.

731. Ibid.

732. Wilson, *The Myth of Political Correctness*, 20.

fails to provide a balanced perspective on these incidents. They do not interview any black students or college administrators at Cornell. They do not ask why White's speech was so poorly received. And they do not delve into the details of the Boy Scouts of America v. Dale case. In fact, Cornell University administrators did denounce the actions of the black students and affirmed the right to free speech on campus. White was invited to deliver a brief five-minute presentation on his charity work, which devolved into an hour-long diatribe against homosexuality. The framing of these anecdotes reflects what Nicole Hemmer calls conservative media's "alternative way of knowing the world" that substitutes "the legitimacy of objectivity" for "ideological integrity."⁷³³ Lind and NET promote a wholly conservative perspective to counter what they see as the perceived dominance of the liberal media. The use of anecdotes reinforces this perspective, because it tends to favor the storyteller's point of view.

Arguably, the form of the anecdote—a brief story about something happening to a specific person—opposes the supposed logic of political correctness. The anecdote prioritizes the life of the individual over the structure of the social group, and shrinks societal issues down to single incidents. Whereas "Cultural Marxism" turns everything into a political conflict, the conservative anecdote shields the individual from politics. Each anecdote in this Special Edition of *American Investigator* hints at the intrusions of politics into hitherto protected areas. How can a joke be political? What is so political about the beliefs of an ordained minister? Why would someone dare to politicize the Boy Scouts?

733. Nicole Hemmer, *Messengers on the Right: Conservative Media and the Transformation of American Politics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), xiii.

The realm of the anecdote becomes a comforting refuge for a conservative worldview that excludes sociological or historical explanations for events.

In their study of right-wing think tanks, the theorists Jean Stefancic and Richard Delgado claim that conservatives prefer telling anecdotes over sharing statistics. Statistics may provide (often underwhelming) empirical data about the scale of the supposed attack on free speech in the United States, but they are too impersonal to elicit or trigger any strong emotional reaction. As Stefancic and Delgado put it, conservative activists deploy anecdotes about political correctness to tap into the listeners' fear that "one day he or she, too, will be a victim" of progressive censoriousness.⁷³⁴ Consequently, they turn a relatively abstract threat into an urgent and concrete reality. They recast the conservative majority as potential victims.

Lind's anecdotes follow what Lee Bebout calls the discursive/ideological strategy of *weaponized victimhood*.⁷³⁵ Bebout argues that "assertions of victimhood" in right-wing media tend to "flatten out or invert social hierarchies and make them illegible."⁷³⁶ For instance, the framing of the *Cornell Review* anecdote obscures the history of discrimination and marginalization that black people have traditionally faced on American college campuses. The true victim of this story, according to Lind, is the conservative student who experienced a backlash for publishing racist stereotypes. Such a "strategic obfuscation" proceeds from the following premise: "the oppressed are not really oppressed, but if they

734. Jean Stefancic and Richard Delgado, *No Mercy: How Conservative Think Tanks and Foundations Changed America's Social Agenda* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 149.

735. Lee Bebout, "Weaponizing Victimhood: Discourses of Oppression and the Maintenance of Supremacy on the Right," in *News on the Right: Studying Conservative News Cultures*, ed. by Anthony Nadler and A. J. Bauer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 64.

736. Bebout, "Weaponizing Victimhood," 75-76.

are, the privileged are oppressed in equal or greater ways.”⁷³⁷ Lind’s strategy of weaponized victimhood portrays political correctness as a means to oppress conservatives, rather than a (sometimes inadequate and unsuccessful) attempt to mitigate historical injustices. Political correctness, Lind insists, is simply an excuse for “the Groups” to oppress “the People.” Members of NET’s public may identify with the subjects of Lind’s anecdotes, and feel that they belong to a larger bloc of conservative victims. In this NET documentary, Lind gives them someone to blame for their perceived sense of victimization: the Frankfurt School.

The basic argument of Lind’s documentary is that the Frankfurt School ‘invented’ political correctness and ‘injected’ it into the United States.⁷³⁸ Lind produces a slanted interpretation of the Frankfurt School to retroactively read elements of political correctness into their work. Erich Fromm pioneered “gender politics;” Marcuse encouraged “gay liberation,” and Adorno and Horkheimer inspired “environmentalism.”⁷³⁹ Lind even suggests that the Frankfurt School was instrumental in “creating the ‘victim groups’ that constitute the politically correct coalition.”⁷⁴⁰ None of the social movements that emerged in the 1960s, according to Lind, were protesting genuine injustices, inequalities, or abuses. The scholars of Black Studies, Women’s Studies, and LGBTQ+ Studies are not studying real problems, but, rather, inventing victim groups and fabricating causes of oppression.

737. *Ibid.*, 76.

738. Lind’s narrative of “Cultural Marxism” remains almost identical to the AIA speech.

739. National Empowerment Television, “The History of Political Correctness (Complete)”, Youtube video, 22:26, posted by “GBPPR2,” March 30, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EjaBpVzOohs>.

740. National Empowerment Television, “The History of Political Correctness. Part 3 of 3,” Youtube video, 7:35, posted by “Theriomachus,” November 11, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vec1dPg2dKY>.

The claim that the Frankfurt School essentially fooled Black Americans, women, and LGBTQ+ people into resisting and researching systems of oppression invalidates the collective agency and consciousness of these groups. Lind's argument reaffirms the obfuscating logic of weaponized victimhood as it denies the existence of social hierarchies and claims that attempts to remedy inequality are designed merely to oppress conservatives.

There is a firm, albeit unspoken, distinction between nature and politics in Lind's work on Cultural Marxism. What is natural is 1950s American society; what is political is anything that deviates from that image of "sanitized America."⁷⁴¹ Consequently, Lind can portray 'political correctness' as an unnatural intrusion on the natural state of American life. In an *Intelligence Report* article, Bill Berkowitz quotes social psychologist Richard Lichtman of the Berkeley-based Wright Institute, who explains that "by grounding their critique (of political correctness) in Marxism and using the Frankfurt School (Lind and others) make it seem like it's quite foreign to anything American."⁷⁴² People who are not familiar with the work of Adorno, Benjamin, or Fromm, and hear about the Frankfurt School from Lind or similar sources will see it as "an incomprehensible, anti-American, foreign movement that is only interested in undermining the U.S."⁷⁴³ Lind portrays political correctness as a foreign pathogen that the Frankfurt School needed to "inject" into the United States.⁷⁴⁴ He divides the American population into the People, who remain

741. Bernard von Bothmer, *Framing the Sixties: The Use and Abuse of a Decade from Ronald Reagan to George W. Bush* (Amherst & Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 18.

742. Berkowitz, "'Cultural Marxism' Catching On."

743. Ibid.

744. National Empowerment Television, "The History of Political Correctness (Complete)."

faithful to an abstract and Americanized notion of human nature, and the Groups, who have succumbed to an artificial and delusional ideology.

The NET documentary does not propose any concrete solutions or strategies for resisting the spread of political correctness. Lind seems convinced that merely ‘revealing’ the true nature of political correctness will jolt his conservative public into some sort of collective action. He would sketch out a possible method of collective action in a handful of fictional texts, where he implied that resorting to violence might be the only way to eliminate “Cultural Marxism.”

Victoria

On April 30, 1995, the *Washington Post* printed a brief “futuristic fantasy” entitled “Understanding Oklahoma.” The title refers to an event known as the Oklahoma City Bombing: a devastating attack on the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building that killed 168 people. The perpetrator of the bombing, former U.S. army soldier Timothy McVeigh, had ties to the far-right, anti-government Patriot Movement. “Understanding Oklahoma” features an editor’s note that describes this movement as a loose confederation of militant groups that advocate “armed resistance to the federal government and all it represents.”⁷⁴⁵ The note continues, “these apocalyptic visions are not restricted to isolated pockets of rural America, but are also found in Washington.”⁷⁴⁶ What follows this editorial note is a work of speculative fiction that imagines the violent takeover of the United States by a right-

745. William S. Lind, “Understanding Oklahoma,” *The Washington Post*, April 30, 1995, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1995/04/30/understanding-oklahoma/a03eb6e2-14df-434a-b6cb-d355aaf5f587>.

746. Lind, “Understanding Oklahoma.”

wing militia. As it turns out, the author of “Understanding Oklahoma” is none other than Lind, who wrote this short story to “show how high a price we may pay for a government that has become a New Class, contemptuous of the common culture, unwilling or unable to make things work, and concerned primarily with maintaining its own privileged status.”⁷⁴⁷ In this tale, Lind warns that the abandonment of a common culture—an unavoidable consequence of the New Class’ addiction to its own status—would lead inexorably to the disuniting of the United States.

The anonymous narrator of this story addresses the reader from the “Year of our Lord 2050” in a nation called Victoria that occupies the northeastern regions of what was once the United States (and the Maritime provinces of Canada). He recalls the events of America’s Second Civil War to warn future generations about “what happens when a people forget who they are.”⁷⁴⁸ According to the narrator, 1965 marked the end of the “American century” and the start of the slow fragmentation of the *E Pluribus Unum* into “blacks, whites, Hispanics, womyn, gays, victims, oppressors, left-handed albinos . . .”⁷⁴⁹ In the 2000s, the United States suffered from uncontrollable hyperinflation and an uncontrollable AIDS epidemic. The New Class could neither overcome these crises nor maintain its control over the apparatus of the Federal government. By the end of the decade, various states were breaking away from the union to form independent nations.

Each new nation symbolizes a different culture or ideology. “Deep Greeners” founded a totalitarian environmentalist state in Oregon. The Azanian Republic—a coalition

747. Ibid.

748. Ibid.

749. Ibid.

of radical feminists, Maoist guerillas and militant vegetarians—took over Northern California. The “Reconquista” reclaimed Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and Southern California, and ejected the Anglo-American population. The South even rebuilt the Confederacy. The strongest of these emerging nations, according to the narrator, was the Northern Confederation (later renamed Victoria), which experienced a revival of traditional Victorian culture. The Deep Green regime and the Azanian Republic—those last outposts of New Class smugness and social justice—fell apart within a few years.

Unlike the cultural radicals of the West Coast, the Northern Confederation enjoyed the flourishing of something called a “retroculture.” The “Retroculture movement” rejected the follies of multiculturalism and embraced the old ways of patriarchy, public religiosity, and parental authority. “The Recovery,” as the citizens of Victoria called it, describes this period of rebuilding traditional “Judeo-Christian culture” on “rocky New England soil” and the displacing of “savagery with civilization.”⁷⁵⁰ And the narrator rejoices that finally, “after so many years of humiliation, the majority had taken back the culture.”⁷⁵¹

“Understanding Oklahoma” dramatizes a critique of multiculturalism. No government can rule, according to Lind, without a strong common culture. The presence of such a culture regulates and preserves the proper relationship between man and women, between whites and blacks, and between family and society. Different cultures cannot exist on the same territory peacefully. A multicultural society is always on the brink of civil war. The culprits for this situation are the obnoxious and effete New Class, who replaced the enduring tenets of traditional culture with the mumbo-jumbo of 1960s-style cultural

750. Ibid.

751. Ibid.

relativism. The restoration of Western Civilization, as outlined in Lind's narrative, requires the violent overthrow of this defunct elite. "Understanding Oklahoma," in this sense, represents the fusion of Lind's military theorizing and culture war rhetoric. When he expanded this short story into his 585-page 2014 novel *Victoria* (under the self-aggrandizing pseudonym Thomas Hobbes), he reimagined the Second Civil War of the United States as a conflict between Western Civilization and Cultural Marxism.

Victoria epitomizes the genre that literary theorist Peter Fitting calls *apocalyptic right-wing utopian fiction*.⁷⁵² In his 1991 article "Utopias Beyond Our Ideals: The Dilemma of the Right-Wing Utopia," Fitting disputes the proposition that there is a necessary link between utopianism and socialism. Building on the insights of Fredric Jameson, Fitting contends that "the utopian may be found in all forms of class consciousness, including fascism and racism."⁷⁵³ Even when right-wing authors are mistaken in their "understanding of the cause of the current situation," Fitting suggests that the utopian character of their work may be measured by "their refutation of the current system" and their portrayal of an alternative social order.⁷⁵⁴

Fitting's argument echoes Gramsci's observations on the ideological ambivalence of utopian fiction. Although Gramsci perceives that many literary utopias are "unwitting reflection[s] of the most basic and most profound aspirations of subaltern social groups," he concedes that "some of this literature expresses the interests of the dominant or deposed groups and has a backward-looking or reactionary character."⁷⁵⁵ He is keenly aware that

752. Peter Fitting, "Utopias Beyond Our Ideals: The Dilemma of the Right-Wing Utopia," *Utopian Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1-2 (1991), 98-99.

753. Fitting, "Utopias Beyond Our Ideals," 107.

754. *Ibid.*

literature can act as a repository for the fantasies of different social groups. Literary utopias must be understood as social phenomena that reflect a certain group's historical experiences. They represent possibilities—distinct or distorted—for collective social action. Consequently, the authors of literary utopias aim to reconfigure a group's deeper wishes and hopes into a more coherent political vision.

Nonetheless, Gramsci stresses that these utopias also function as “the political manifestos of intellectuals whose goal is to reach the perfect state.”⁷⁵⁶ Every fictional utopia reveals how certain intellectuals understand their own connection to “the People.” They may conceive of “the People” as a passive and defenseless entity that requires the guidance of an intellectual. Oftentimes, literary utopias can become detached blueprints that authors impose on their notion of “the People.”

The central conceit of *Victoria* is Lind's belief that his utopia represents an organic cultural expression of “the People,” even though it is largely a manifestation of his major ideas. Within the fictional universe of *Victoria*, Lind becomes the West's most influential intellectual. In it, he is proven right about the causes of civilizational decline (Cultural Marxism), the only possible strategy for social change (Fourth Generation Warfare), and the nature of an ideal Western state (retroculture). In fact, the novel's protagonist Captain John Rumford learns about Cultural Marxism from a “video history of political correctness on TraditionalRight.Com.”⁷⁵⁷ He even speculates that “if every American watched this video, then political correctness would be in real trouble.”⁷⁵⁸ The video is Lind's NET

755. Gramsci, *Subaltern Social Groups*, 12.

756. *Ibid.*, 13.

757. Thomas Hobbes, *Victoria: A Novel of 4th Generation War* (Kouvola: Castalia House, 2014), 18.

documentary on the Frankfurt School; the website is Lind's personal blog. I contend that one could reasonably interpret *Victoria* as Lind's fantasy about what would happen if people simply listened to his warnings about Cultural Marxism. As such, the plot of *Victoria* is the logical culmination of the FCF's campaign to escape Cultural Marxism and establish a perfect state based on the principles of Cultural Conservatism—a fulfillment of Weyrich's 'strategy of separation.'

Victoria is not intended as a work of pure entertainment. *Victoria*'s subtitle markets the book as "A Novel of 4th Generation War."⁷⁵⁹ The blurb explains that the novel is "a dramatization of a new form of modern war that is taking shape as the state gradually loses its four-century monopoly on violence."⁷⁶⁰ The novel operates indirectly as a teaching manual that trains the reader in the mental attitudes and strategic maneuvers of what Lind calls "Fourth Generation Warfare."

A prevailing feature of *Victoria* is the constant discussion of tactics. The planning and execution of military operations, from the reclaiming of Boston from the Islamic Expeditionary Force to the invasion of the radical feminist Azanian Republic, supplies the reader with models that they may replicate in real-life combative scenarios. As the Americanist Carol Mason observes, this kind of right-wing apocalyptic fiction performs an "articulatory practice" that "articulates readers who imagine themselves as actors in, rather than observers of, a Manichean social drama."⁷⁶¹ In *Victoria*, Lind articulates a reader who senses that they are participating in "a war between those of us who still believe in our own

758. Hobbes, *Victoria*, 18.

759. Ibid.

760. Ibid.

761. Mason, "Right-Wing Literature in the United States since the 1960s."

Western culture . . . and the people who are trying to destroy it.”⁷⁶² The persistent references to a new kind of warfare function to instill certain habits of thought in the reader and, in turn, produce the new subject-position of the “Fourth Generation warrior.”

What exactly is Fourth Generation warfare? In his work on military strategy, Lind divides the history of modern warfare into four generations. He argues that the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 marks the birth of First Generation warfare. The treaty established the state’s monopoly on war. Before 1648, conflict occurred primarily between different entities—families, tribes, religions, cities, enterprises—rather than formal national armies and navies. Consequently, the emergence of the modern state resulted in a complete transformation of warfare.

First Generation warfare reflects a military culture of order. Generals deployed line-and-column tactics, which turned battles into formal and orderly affairs. There was a clear distinction between military and citizenry through the introduction of formal uniform, rank, and conduct. Lind writes that First Generation warfare lasted from 1648 to 1860 until it started to face the “growing contradiction between [its] military culture and the increasing disorderliness of the battlefield.”⁷⁶³

Second Generation warfare arrives with World War One. The synchronized use of mass firepower was intended to weaken and defeat the enemy through sheer attrition. Generals were regarded as conductors who orchestrated grand and meticulous battle plans that infantry, tanks, and artillery had to follow diligently. Military discipline was top-down and imposed; initiative was discouraged. Yet, the reality of World War One exposed the

762. Hobbes, *Victoria*, 9.

763. William S. Lind, “Understanding Fourth Generation War,” *Military Review*, September-October 2004, 12.

shortcomings and weaknesses of a military culture obsessed with order. The two subsequent generations must be understood as adaptations to the increasing disorder of the battlefield.

Third Generation warfare was the German response to World War One. They pioneered a form of maneuver warfare, or blitzkrieg, that emphasized speed, surprise, and mental and physical dislocation. Unlike earlier generations, Third Generation warfare stressed nonlinearity and aimed to “get into the enemy’s rear areas and collapse him from the rear forward.”⁷⁶⁴ Changes in tactics demanded a transformation of military culture: self-discipline over imposed discipline, initiative over obedience, flexibility over process. Orders specified the result to be achieved without prescribing the method or tactic to be used. Soldiers were trained and trusted to adapt to ever-changing combat situations.

Fourth Generation warfare continues this trend of nonlinear combat. Its defining characteristics are decentralization and initiative. The proliferation of non-state actors (al-Qaeda, Hamas, the Patriot Movement) purportedly shows that the State’s monopoly on war is diminishing. Lind interprets this decline as a return to world of cultures, a “return to the way war worked before the rise of the state.”⁷⁶⁵

Lind implicitly celebrates the “universal crisis of legitimacy of the state,” because it produces an opening for cultural restoration.⁷⁶⁶ Fourth Generation warfare liberates the art of warfare from all the unnecessary elements that encumber modern militaries. It embodies a purer form of conflict that springs from a commitment to cultural bonds that run deeper

764. Lind, “Understanding Fourth Generation War,” 13.

765. *Ibid.*, 16.

766. *Ibid.*, 14.

than state allegiances. Lind speculates that America, whose “closed political system” is riddled with the “poisonous ideology of multiculturalism,” may be one of those states that falls at the hands of a “homegrown variety of Fourth Generation warfare.”⁷⁶⁷ He states clearly that “the 21st century will offer a war between the forces of Fourth Generation war and those of the Brave New World.”⁷⁶⁸

The plot of *Victoria* traces the transition from the dystopia of the late United States to the right-wing utopia of the Northern Confederation. Lind inserts a blunt critique of early 21st century America into the narrative to indirectly persuade the reader that they must engage in Fourth Generation warfare to save traditional culture. He suggests that the New Class, and their ideology of Cultural Marxism, replaced “real life” with a “‘virtual reality’ devoid of all virtue.”⁷⁶⁹ Lind’s narrator, Rumford, complains that everything in that period was politicized: words, clothes, entertainment. What had disappeared, according to Rumford, was “husband and wife and children, home and household and community, field and farm and village, the age-old lines and limits of our lives.”⁷⁷⁰ The arrangement of these things into threes (*x and y and z*) conveys a sense of balance and proportion—the true relationship between the personal and the political. He contrasts this harmony with the “collective madness” of the New Class America. Elections were futile, because “all the candidates were from the same party, the New Class.”⁷⁷¹ The home was no longer a refuge, because technology—television and computers—transmitted “Satan’s regurgitation into

767. Ibid.

768. Ibid., 15.

769. Hobbes, *Victoria*, 53.

770. Ibid.

771. Ibid., 54-55.

our souls.”⁷⁷² The economy became a spectacular and precarious delusion as America “stopped making things” and trusted in the “New Class on Wall Street.”⁷⁷³ Those who found “dignity and security by being reduced to commodities” labored fruitlessly in an almost slave-like condition. New Class America, as Rumford describes it, seems entirely detached from everything “natural to mankind.” What is natural to mankind, Lind insists, is culture.⁷⁷⁴

Crucial to Lind’s utopian vision is his distinction between ideology and culture. Whereas the New Class imposes the ideology of “Cultural Marxism “on the People, culture is the natural expression of an “organic society.”⁷⁷⁵ Lind holds that an ideal state must allow a common culture, which he subtly links to ethnic and national categories, to flourish naturally. Unlike culture, ideology is an entirely unnatural product. Ideology turns a philosopher’s ideas into an abstract blueprint for a future society. When the supporters of an ideology gain political power, they use “methods of compulsion” to enforce widespread compliance with their ideological beliefs.⁷⁷⁶ The need for coercion reflects what Lind sees as the intrinsic falsity of all ideologies. Every ideology must suppress some aspect of reality (“economic or racial or sexual”) and replace it with a “false reality.”⁷⁷⁷ Yet, Lind

772. *Ibid.*, 54.

773. *Ibid.*

774. *Ibid.*, 53.

775. *Ibid.*, 369.

776. *Ibid.*, 368.

777. *Ibid.*, 56.

claims that “reality itself does not change.”⁷⁷⁸ All ideologies inevitably fail, according to Lind, because “reality always wins.”⁷⁷⁹

Lind conceives of ideology primarily as false consciousness. Those who subscribe to an ideology are blind to the constancy of human nature and the sheer factuality of reality. Lind’s comments on ideology clarify his opposition to “Cultural Marxism.” The ideology of “Cultural Marxism,” Lind suggests, ignores differences between man and woman, between whites and other races, and between the West and other cultures. What is so damaging about “Cultural Marxism” is that it teaches women, Blacks, and other Groups to overcome these differences and demand equality. Whereas Lind regards these differences as natural, they are often products of historical processes of patriarchy, white supremacy, and imperialism. Those who protest this inequality are not rejecting reality, but, rather, attempting to transform the manmade conditions that shape their lives. Lind’s hope for a return to the ‘reality’ of a pre-1960s America reveals a desire to restore the traditional hierarchies that secured the proper relations between these racial and gender ‘differences’—the hierarchies of *normative America*.

Fitting observes that the main beneficiaries of right-wing utopias are usually “white males, while society’s ‘others’ are relegated to their traditional roles.”⁷⁸⁰ Whereas white men occupy positions of power and prestige in the Northern Confederation, the ‘others’ are portrayed as happy with their own subordination. Retroculture, which Lind describes as “an escape from ideology,” realizes the New Right’s dream of depoliticizing the social.⁷⁸¹

778. Ibid., 369.

779. Ibid., 55.

780. Fitting, “Utopias Beyond Our Ideals,” 97.

781. Hobbes, *Victoria*, 369.

The members of the so-called Retroculture movement pretend to inhabit various historical periods before 1965, i.e. the year that “marks the beginning of the cultural revolution that destroyed America.”⁷⁸² Some households imitate the dress, furniture, and manners of a romanticized Victoria Era; others return to the normative American ‘bliss’ of the 1950s. Essentially, retroculture cultivates a sort of moral consumerism that remains compatible with the New Right’s favored social and moral values. The only criterion for selecting a suitably retrocultural period is whether it was “a time when traditional American culture was strong.”⁷⁸³ In other words, these retrocultures must sustain the structures of patriarchy and white supremacy.

In *Victoria*, women and Black people are said to renounce their ‘victimhood’ status and accept their oppression. For instance, the avid retroculturalist Mrs. Kraft denounces the claim that women were “oppressed and mistreated in the past” as a “modern lie.”⁷⁸⁴ Lind distinguishes between “Responsible Negros” and “bad blacks,” and praises the former for abandoning their “professional victim hokum.”⁷⁸⁵ He imagines these ‘responsible’ Black characters as grateful for the histories of slavery, dislocation, and discrimination in the United States: “I’m thankful for that slave ship that brought my ancestors over here, cause otherwise I’d be livin’ in Africa, and I don’t think there’s a worst place on Earth.”⁷⁸⁶ The Northern Confederation experienced what can only be described as a voluntary revival of segregation, where “Black and white . . . mostly keep to themselves socially, as is only

782. Ibid., 61.

783. Ibid.

784. Ibid., 62.

785. Ibid., 238-247.

786. Ibid., 238.

natural.”⁷⁸⁷ Lind’s vision of retroculture naturalizes historical patterns of gendered and racial discrimination, as though they were not outcomes of political and ideological processes. The subordination of women and the segregation of the races, Lind claims, reflects human nature. Consequently, he must portray “Cultural Marxism” as a delusional ideology that tricks women and Black people into denying their natural inequality.

Lind’s notion of ideology does not address the issue of consent. *Victoria* lacks any real explanation of why someone might be drawn to “Cultural Marxism.” Everything that the reader of *Victoria* is told about “Cultural Marxism” comes from the mouths of favored characters—Rumford, Professor Gottfried Sanft, the head of the Northern Confederation Governor Bill Kraft. None of the “Cultural Marxists” in the novel—the New Class of Washington, the Deep Greeners, the radical feminists of the Azanian Republic, the last few “politically correct” professors—are permitted to defend their beliefs in direct speech. Even when a character is said to “offer a stirring defense of cultural Marxism,” Lind does not bother to share any details about it with the reader.⁷⁸⁸ These omissions reveal the utter narrow-mindedness of Lind’s writings on Cultural Marxism. Although *Victoria* is a work of fiction, Lind seems entirely incapable of imagining why someone might believe in what he understands as the noxious ideas of “political correctness.” “Cultural Marxists” are an unfathomable enemy, whose concern for minorities masks a base craving for power and status. They are the deluders and the deluded. And they must be eliminated.

The most violent scene in *Victoria* is the Dartmouth College Massacre, which occurs slightly after the founding of the Northern Confederation. Rumford explains that the

787. *Ibid.*, 247.

788. *Ibid.*, 258.

hyperinflation of the late United States decimated college budgets and forced the closure of all higher education institutions. Yet, a Zurich-based organization called the Foundation for Higher Learning donated a hundred million Swiss Francs to reopen Yale, Harvard, and Dartmouth in the Northern Confederation. These universities, which quickly fill up with “Cultural Marxist” professors, soon start to spread the ideology of political correctness. They offer such courses as “Women in Judeo-Christian Societies: Three Thousand Years of Phallic Oppression and the Symbolism of the Bagel” and “Salons in the Camp: Lesbian Contributions to Line and Column Tactics in 18th Century European Warfare.”⁷⁸⁹ Rumford learns that Dartmouth College is organizing a faculty workshop on Columbus Day to “discover means for reversing Eurocentrism and white male domination over the North American Continent.”⁷⁹⁰ In response, the leaders of the Northern Confederation hatch a plan to eliminate these “Cultural Marxist” educators.

Governor Kraft and his troops interrupt the workshop to expose the true nature of “Cultural Marxism.” Television crews are present to broadcast Kraft’s revelations to the people of the Northern Confederation. Kraft’s speech regurgitates Lind’s writings on Cultural Marxism. He accuses the “Cultural Marxist” professors of betraying “every man and woman who for three thousand years has labored and fought and died for Western culture, the culture you sought to sacrifice to your own pathetic egos.”⁷⁹¹ The punishment for this crime is public execution.

789. Ibid., 283.

790. Ibid.

791. Ibid., 292.

Lind's description of this scene is thick with heavy-handed references. Kraft's troops wear a "white surplice with the red Crusader cross emblazoned on a shield over the heart" and wield a "Roman gladius."⁷⁹² A choir of monks accompanies the troops and starts to sing *Dies Irae* to commence the massacre. In less than five minutes, 162 "politically correct luminaries" are killed.⁷⁹³ The Ancient Roman and Crusader imagery implies that these troops are combating barbarians and infidels. *Dies Irae*, or "The Days of Wrath," is a medieval Latin poem and Gregorian chant that depicts the Last Judgement, where sinners are condemned to Hell. These symbols are meant to signify a lasting, coherent and unified Western tradition. The bloody and gruesome slaughter of the "Cultural Marxists" appears to represent the triumphant revenge of the West against political correctness.

The Dartmouth College Massacre proposes violence as a strategy of depoliticization. After all, Fourth Generation Warfare blurs the distinction between culture war and military conflict. Defense of traditional culture, according to Lind, requires the physical extermination of cultural subversives. In this scene, Lind appears to claim that simply killing all "Cultural Marxists" will bring an end to what he sees as "Cultural Marxism." The Groups would no longer protest social inequality, because no one would be telling them that they were oppressed. Women and 'good blacks' would simply accept their place in the natural hierarchies of retroculture. The restoration of traditional culture, Lind implies, requires violence, otherwise the corrosive influence of "Cultural Marxism" will linger.

792. Ibid.

793. Ibid., 293.

The belief that deadly violence will eliminate “Cultural Marxism” is not confined to the pages of *Victoria*. On July 22, 2011, the Norwegian white supremacist Anders Behring Breivik killed seventy-seven men, women, and children in a spree of mass shooting and bombing. Breivik targeted teenagers at a summer camp held by the centre-left Arbeidspartiet’s youth wing, as well as government officials in Oslo. Before he commenced the attacks, he released a 1,500-page manifesto-cum-compendium *2083: A European Declaration of Independence* that blamed “Cultural Marxism” for the Islamification of Europe. Nearly the entire text was copied and pasted from other sources with small amendments and erasures to adapt them to Breivik’s European context.⁷⁹⁴ One of Breivik’s major sources was an online FCF pamphlet that compiled writings on political correctness and Cultural Marxism by Lind, Raehn, and others. It is striking that Breivik’s solution to the problem of “Cultural Marxism” was essentially identical to what Lind imagines in *Victoria*. In fact, Breivik embodies the ideal Fourth Generation warrior as he combines cultural and military warfare and assaults a ‘defunct’ state on behalf of an imagined white European/Western Christian culture. Instead of insinuating that Lind ‘inspired’ Breivik’s attacks, I claim that there is something about this idea of Cultural Marxism that invites violence. “Cultural Marxists,” according to this understanding, cannot be redeemed or accommodated. Unless they—the living human beings that Lind and Breivik identify as “Cultural Marxists”—are eradicated, Western Culture will disintegrate. Violence is the only method for establishing the right-wing utopia. And, as we will see in the brief final section of this chapter, this violence against “Cultural Marxists” can easily turn into violence against Jewish people.

794. Vincent W.J. van Gerven Oei, “Anders Breivik: On Copying the Obscure,” *continent*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (2011), 213-223.

That 2002 Conference: Cultural Marxism as Coded Antisemitism

During his talk at *The Barnes Review*'s Third International Conference on Authentic History and the First Amendment, Lind made a startling admission: "I do want to make it clear for the foundation and myself that we are not among those who question whether the Holocaust occurred."⁷⁹⁵ Later in his talk, Lind mentions that the Frankfurt School thinkers were all "Jewish."⁷⁹⁶ Readers who are familiar with the history of antisemitic organizations in the United States may recognize *The Barnes Review* as the publication that the prominent neo-Nazi Willis Carto founded to serve as an outlet for "historical revisionism," i.e. Holocaust denial. The scholar Sara Diamond describes Carto's "populist" politics as a blend of "racism, anti-Semitism, anticommunism, and a conspiracist interpretation of history" that draws on the work of the notorious postwar neo-Nazi writer Francis Parker Yockey.⁷⁹⁷ What was a New Right think tank intellectual like Lind doing in a room full of known antisemites and white supremacists? Although Lind claims that he was simply following FCF's policy of working with other groups on an "issue-by-issue basis," his appearance at this conference is somewhat revealing.⁷⁹⁸ Of course, it is debatable whether Lind is personally an antisemite. What is undebatable, however, is the influence of Lind's

795. Intelligence Report, "Ally of Christian Right Heavyweight Paul Weyrich Addresses Holocaust Denial Conference," *Intelligence Report*, September 30, 2002, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2002/ally-christian-right-heavyweight-paul-weyrich-addresses-holocaust-denial-conference>

796. Intelligence Report, "Ally of Christian Right Heavyweight Paul Weyrich Addresses Holocaust Denial Conference."

797. Diamond, *Roads to Dominion*, 149.

798. Intelligence Report, "Ally of Christian Right Heavyweight Paul Weyrich Addresses Holocaust Denial Conference."

ideas of Cultural Marxism/s on the uses of coded antisemitism in contemporary fascist propaganda.

Since 1945, open antisemitism has been considered unacceptable in mainstream American political discourse. The legacy of World War Two and the memory of the Holocaust cemented the association between antisemitic beliefs and German Nazism. Far-right groups in the United States developed allusive rhetorical strategies to blame Jewish people for social and economic problems without explicitly referring to them as “Jews.” In response to the successes of the Civil Right movements, the far-right drew on the code words of the New Right to defend ‘white’ identity and demonize other racial groups without deploying racist rhetoric. As Berlet and Lyons explain, this kind of coded racism was an adaptation to a “political culture and legal system that discouraged explicit bigotry.”⁷⁹⁹ Similarly, neo-Nazi writers and groups borrowed the FCF’s narratives of Cultural Marxism/s to inform their messages of coded racism and antisemitism. Consequently, they reinterpreted and reused these narrative as a coded critique of “the Jews.”

In his 2002 book *The Death of the West: How Dying Populations and Immigrant Invasions Imperil Our Country and Civilization* (which mentions Lind in the Acknowledgements), the paleoconservative Patrick Buchanan—former advisor to Nixon and Reagan, and perennial ultranationalist presidential candidate—warns that declining birth rates in the United States and Europe is causing the demise of Western Civilization.⁸⁰⁰ He claims that the Frankfurt School, especially Adorno, targeted the patriarchal family in

799. Berlet and Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism in America*, 267.

800. Patrick J. Buchanan, *The Death of the West: How Dying Populations and Immigrant Invasions Imperil Our Country and Civilization* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 2002).

The Authoritarian Personality to abolish the primary unit of traditional American society, and create the preconditions for a totalitarian communist regime. According to Buchanan, feminists embraced Marcuse's concept of "polymorphous perversity" from his 1955 book *Eros and Civilization*, and abandoned their duties as wives and mothers to indulge their unbridled sexual desires. He even quips that "the pill and condom have become the hammer and sickle of the cultural revolution."⁸⁰¹ In a barely-concealed version of what has come to be known as the notorious Great Replacement Theory, Buchanan speculates that NAFTA was negotiated to increase economic immigration to offset the irreversible decline of white birthrates in the United States. Although his book is not explicitly antisemitic, Buchanan's rhetoric employs, as one commentator put it, "subliminal appeals to prejudice."⁸⁰² And it is plausible that some readers may encounter Buchanan's description of the Frankfurt School as "Jewish" and deduce that Jews are responsible for "white genocide."⁸⁰³

In 2002, Lind contributed to an *American Free Press* pamphlet—another Carto publication—entitled *Cultural Communism: The Vivisection of America*. The pamphlet features coded and overt antisemitic messages. F.C. Blahut, an ally of Carto, accuses the Frankfurt School of burdening the German people with "eternal guilt" for the Holocaust,

801. Buchanan, *The Death of the West*, 88.

802. Jake Tapper, "Who's Afraid of Patrick Buchanan?," *Slate*, September 4, 1999, <https://www.salon.com/1999/09/04/pat/>.

803. Western University's copy of *The Death of the West* contains a series of virulently antisemitic and racist marginalia. These handwritten notes highlight that Susan Sontag is "Jewish," describe racial groups as "incompatible and unequal," refer to Jewish people as "the source of this curse" (i.e. the decline of white birthrates), and reveal that Buchanan is discussing "genocide against whites." I grant that it is hardly fair to blame Buchanan for the ways in which his books are read, but this anecdotal example shows that *The Death of the West* invites openly antisemitic readings.

which, he claims, “is evidenced most clearly in the ‘anti-hate’ laws of that benighted country.”⁸⁰⁴ Carto’s brief essay attributes the success of ‘Western Civilization’ to the accomplishments of the “Aryan Races,” and brands “Cultural Communists as “Neanderthals” who inhabit a “sick intellectual ghetto of sex-obsessed and parasitic Freudian Talmudist[s].”⁸⁰⁵

The name of “Cultural Marxism” is also a popular tool of coded antisemitism in white supremacist online spaces. In his 2010 essay, Jay quotes a comment in the neo-Nazi forum Stormfront:

Talking about the Frankfurt School is ideal for not naming the *Jews as a group* (which often leads to a panicky rejection, a stubborn refusal to listening anymore and even a “shut up”) but naming the *Jew by proper names*. People will make their generalizations by themselves—in the privacy of their own minds. At least it worked like that with me. It was my lightbulb moment, when confusing pieces of an alarming puzzle suddenly grouped to a visible picture. Learn by heart the most important proper names of the Frankfurt Schoolers—they are (except for a handful of minor members and female “groupies”) ALL Jews. One can even quite innocently mention that the Frankfurt Schoolers had to leave Germany in 1933 because “*they were to a man, Jewish,*” as William S. Lind does.⁸⁰⁶

Similarly, the fascist online encyclopedia Metapedia deploys the term “Cultural Marxism” and the Nazi canard “Cultural Bolshevism” interchangeably.⁸⁰⁷ Metapedia’s article on the topic of “Cultural Marxism” even cites Lind and Buchanan as credible sources on the history of the Frankfurt School.

804. F. C. Blahut, “Communism Isn’t Dead, It’s Just Been Renamed,” in *Cultural Communism: The Vivisection of America*, edited by F.C. Blahut (American Free Press: 2002), 4-5.

805. Willis F. Carto, “The Significance of Cultural Communism,” in *Cultural Communism: The Vivisection of America*, edited by F.C. Blahut (American Free Press: 2002), 6-7.

806. Jay, *Splinters in Your Eye*, 156-157.

807. Metapedia, “Cultural Marxism,” *Metapedia: The alternative encyclopedia*, accessed August 2, 2022, https://web.archive.org/web/20100726172432/https://en.metapedia.org/wiki/Cultural_Marxism.

Contrary to claims that white supremacists resurrected the old idea of “Cultural Bolshevism” and renamed it “Cultural Marxism,” it seems that neo-Nazi encounters with Lind’s ideas helped to revive older reactionary and antisemitic ideas about culture and race. Just as far-right groups mimicked the code words of the New Right to exhibit a more respectable form of racism, white supremacists and neo-Nazis adapted Lind’s narratives of Cultural Marxism/s to develop new and seemingly non-antisemitic arguments about who was responsible for the decline of “Western Civilization” in the twenty-first century. This is a symptom of the phenomenon that the scholar David Renton calls “convergence,” where the boundaries between traditional conservatism and fascism become blurred.⁸⁰⁸

Lind cannot be isolated from the longer histories of the New Right. His narratives of Cultural Marxism/s remain tied to the practices and priorities of the New Right as a political force. He blames “Cultural Marxists” and “the Groups” for the decline of normative America without considering more structural or economic factors. Instead of recognizing that women and Black people continue to face discrimination, Lind claims that “Cultural Marxists” are tricking “the Groups” into believing that they are oppressed. The strategy of weaponized victimhood—the claim that white people are the most maligned group in the United States—connects Lind’s ideas to the fears and worries of his conservative audiences. His gift for marketing ideas helps him to produce narratives of Cultural Marxism/s that circulate more easily than the LaRouche movement’s esoteric tracts on the Frankfurt School. Although he believed that simply telling Americans that political correctness was ‘Marxist’ would convince them to reject speech codes and affirmative action, Lind speculates that it would be necessary to use force and violence to

808. David Renton, *The New Authoritarians: Convergence on the Right* (Chicago: Haymarket Book, 2019), 1-22.

rid the American State of “Cultural Marxism.” The white supremacist and antisemitic readings of Lind’s narratives expose the buried racial assumptions that pervade his conception of normative America. And, Lind’s op-eds, speeches, novels, and documentaries on “Cultural Marxism/s” lays the groundwork for more virulent reactionary forces—and we will examine one of these forces in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: The Tea Party Movement: Red Smoke, Blue Donkey

“Religious, economic, social, political, and legal tracts endlessly attack all revolutionary ideas and action for change as immoral, fallacious and against God, country, and mother. These literary sedations by the status quo include the threat that, since all such movements are unpatriotic, subversive, spawned in hell and reptilian in their creeping insidiousness, dire punishments will be meted out to their supporters. All great revolutions, including Christianity, the various reformation, democracy, capitalism, and socialism, have suffered these epithets in the times of their birth. To the status quo concerned about its public image, revolution is the only dark force which has no image, but instead casts a dark, ominous shadow of things to come.”

– Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*

“Can it be doubted that if you polled the crowds at Tea Party rallies about the influence of ‘cultural Marxism’ on the decline of American culture, which they want to ‘take back’ from immigrants, recent and otherwise, you would find significant familiarity with this discourse?”

- Martin Jay, *Splinters in Your Eye: Frankfurt School Provocations*

Following Barack Obama’s inauguration in January 2009, sales of Ayn Rand’s 1957 novel *Atlas Shrugged* shot up. Fans of Rand’s work reinterpreted the book as a cautionary tale about the collectivist policies of the incoming Obama administration. As the Wisconsin State Representative Paul Ryan pronounced, “we are right now living in an Ayn Rand novel.”⁸⁰⁹

Atlas Shrugged is set in a dystopian America where the prodding fingers of government bureaucrats meddle incessantly with the affairs of private business. The tyrants of Washington, D.C. force inventors to surrender their creations, coerce the wealthy into paying extortionate taxes, and command producers of raw materials to divert their supplies to undeserving crony capitalists. As the plot drags on, the upper classes—the millionaires, the manufacturers, the magnates—start to realize that they are the wronged victims of a

⁸⁰⁹. “Paul Ryan on Ayn Rand,” Youtube video, 1:09, posted by gallicho1, April 26, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WmW19uoyuO8>.

rigged political and economic system. In a startling reversal of the Marxist worldview, it turns out that the pols and proles have been sucking—vampire-like—value from the ingenuity and perseverance of the wealthy. As soon as these tycoons reach a level of solidarity, they retreat into a mountain hideout built by the genius inventor John Galt. The withdrawal of their entrepreneurial might causes civilization to unravel. Galt, the leader of the strike, delivers their ultimatum over the radio: “If you desire ever again to live in an industrial society, it will be on *our* moral terms.”⁸¹⁰

Many conservatives found comfort in the simplistic moral terms of *Atlas Shrugged* during the aftermath of the Financial Crisis of 2007-2008. As the Rand biographer Jennifer Burns explains, *Atlas Shrugged* “is a throwback to socialist realism, with its cardboard characters in the service of an overarching ideology.”⁸¹¹ The novel features stilted and unconvincing dialogue between flat characters that often devolve into long-winded and didactic monologues about the virtue of selfishness and the cravenness of government intervention. The heroes are stainlessly virtuous; the bad guys are unrepentantly villainous. Thomas Frank quips that Rand’s fiction provides a “sort of Marxism for the master class, a hard-times story in which business is a force of pure light and the ‘looters’ in the government are responsible for every last little disaster.”⁸¹²

When Tea Party rallies started in 2009, observers noticed that protestors were brandishing Rand-themed placards: “Ayn Rand was Right,” “Atlas is Shrugging,” “We are

810. Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged* (New York: Signet, 1996), 937.

811. Jennifer Burns, *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 179.

812. Thomas Frank, *Pity the Billionaires: The Hard-Times Swindle and the Unlikely Comeback of the Right* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012), 147.

John Galt,” “Read *Atlas Shrugged*.”⁸¹³ The Tea Partiers drew parallels between the scenes of *Atlas Shrugged* and their own plight to imply that a tyrannical government was draining the wealth from the productive middle classes. They saw Obama’s bank bailouts and healthcare reforms as precursors to a total socialist takeover of the United States. Those who drew on this Randian mythos saw the Tea Partiers as heroes of a new American Revolution and demonized Obama as the epitome of worldly evil (the Antichrist, Hitler, the Joker, and a whole assortment of racist stereotypes).⁸¹⁴ Although it would be a caricature to describe the Tea Party as little more than an Ayn Rand reading group gone amok, many Tea Partiers shared this conception of politics as a simple conflict between individualism and collectivism, between objectivism and irrationalism, and between the producers and the parasites.

The ideology of the Tea Party presumes “an antagonistic relationship between, on the one hand, the poor and an elite class of intellectual do-good social engineers who craft and defend the policies that serve the poor, and, on the other hand, the hardworking independent Americans who will be made to foot the bill.”⁸¹⁵ Various segments of the Tea Party—patriot groups, Christian ideologues, right-wing media entrepreneurs—rearticulated existing right-wing narratives about the Frankfurt School to identify an ultimate culprit for what they saw as the parasitic social engineering of the Obama administration. According

813. Anthony DiMaggio, *The Rise of the Tea Party: Political Discontent and Corporate Media in the Age of Obama* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2011), 44.

814. Joseph Lowndes, “The Past and Future of Race in the Tea Party Movement,” in *Steep: The Precipitous Rise of the Tea Party*, ed. by Lawrence Rosenthal and Christine Trost (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012), 164-166.

815. Lisa Disch, “The Tea Party: A ‘White Citizenship’ Movement?,” in *Steep: The Precipitous Rise of the Tea Party*, ed. by Lawrence Rosenthal and Christine Trost (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012), 137.

to these new narratives, the Tea Partiers needed to develop alternative forms of media to contest “Cultural Marxism’s” near-totalitarian dominance over the major institutions of knowledge production—universities, the film and music industries, newspapers, television networks—in the United States. In the next section, I examine the main ideological and institutional components of the Tea Party and explain how certain intellectuals built on different ideas to elaborate coherent political narratives and identities.

The Tea Party Movement

In 2009, the Tea Party movement emerged from what seemed to be an impromptu speech by the CNBC reporter Rick Santelli on the floor of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange. As he panders to the surrounding stock traders, Santelli espouses what Frank describes playfully as the “Bad Neighbor Doctrine.”⁸¹⁶ Instead of blaming the financial crisis on market deregulation or reckless trading, Santelli alleges that ‘your neighbors,’ especially those lazy ones who own a fancy house and refuse to repay their debts, caused the recession. Obama’s bank bailout, as Santelli portrays it, was simply subsidizing “the loser’s mortgages.”⁸¹⁷ He exclaims that prudent Americans should not be forced to bear the cost of their neighbors’ irresponsibility. As he bantered with his co-hosts on-air, Santelli issued an invitation to “all you capitalists out there” to attend a “Chicago Tea Party” on the shores of Lake Michigan.⁸¹⁸ A handful of leading conservative organizations latched onto this throwaway comment and scrambled to organize the first Tea Party rally in

816. Frank, *Pity the Billionaires*, 55

817. The Heritage Foundation, “CNBC’s Rick Santelli’s Chicago Tea Party,” Youtube video, 4:36, posted by “The Heritage Foundation,” February 19, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zp-Jw-5Kx8k&t=90s>.

818. The Heritage Foundation, “CNBC’s Rick Santelli’s Chicago Tea Party.”

Washington, D.C. The sociologist Clarence Y. H. Lo describes this Washington gathering on February 27, 2009 as a “test marketing” phase during which conservative leaders tried to figure out whether the concept of an anti-Obama ‘Tea Party’ “would take hold in a variety of locales.”⁸¹⁹

Nearly every academic or journalistic account of the Tea Party indulges in a circular debate about whether it was a top-down “AstroTurfed” operation or a genuinely “grassroots” social movement. In their 2012 work *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, the political scientists Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson suggest that this debate is reductive, because it assumes that the Tea Party is a single organization or homogenous bloc. Contrary to this assumption, Skocpol and Williamson argue that the Tea Party consists of three interweaving forces: local grassroots activists, well-funded think tanks and political organizations, and right-wing media purveyors.⁸²⁰

Each of these forces works in tandem, on various institutional and organizational levels, to direct the activity of the Tea Party. According to Skocpol and Williamson’s research, the average Tea Party activist is older, whiter, wealthier, and more conservative than most Americans. They form a dispersed network of local and regional groups that meet regularly in church halls and other community venues. Local organizations receive support, guidance, and leadership from a “panoply of national funders and ultra-free market advocacy groups,” such as FreedomWorks and the Tea Party Express.⁸²¹ The

819. Clarence Y. H. Lo, “Astroturf versus Grass Roots: Scenes from Early Tea Party Mobilization,” in *Steep: The Precipitous Rise of the Tea Party*, ed. by Lawrence Rosenthal and Christine Trost (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012), 100.

820. Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 12-13.

821. Skocpol and Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 12.

decentralized and federated nature of the Tea Party allowed smaller groups to exercise a degree of what Lo describes as “*marginal autonomy*” from these professionalized institutions.⁸²² Yet, these established political bodies labored to channel the energies of the initial Tea Party gatherings into a project of remaking the Republican Party and lobbying for libertarian policies on taxation, healthcare, and government regulation. The third force—a rabble of conservative media hosts from Fox News television anchors to right-wing radio jocks and bloggers—attempted to mold these scattered groups into a shared political identity. For instance, the chalkboard-assisted rants of Glenn Beck and the online pranksterism of Andrew Breitbart helped to portray the Tea Party as a popular rebellion against the ‘creeping socialism’ of Obama and his Democratic party machine.

In his 2012 book *The Tea Party: A Brief History*, the historian Ronald P. Formisano observes that “the Tea Party can just as accurately be called the Tea Parties . . . because it exists on several levels and incorporates sometimes-competing factions as a loose confederation of sorts.”⁸²³ The relatively decentralized structure of the movement prevented it from producing an entirely unified and coherent ideological message. None of the competing Tea Party factions, such as Tea Party Nation and Tea Party Patriots, ever succeeded in gaining complete control over the ideological direction of the movement. Even when conservative activists Ryan Hecker and Dick Armey tried to unite these various groups with their libertarian manifesto “Contract from America,” the Tea Party remained what Chip Berlet describes as “an awkward amalgam of ideological positions.”⁸²⁴

822. Lo, “Astroturf versus Grass Roots,” 99.

823. Ronald P. Formisano, *The Tea Party: A Brief History* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2012), 7-8.

824. Chip Berlet, “Taking Tea Parties Seriously: Corporate Globalization, Populism, Resentment,” *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology*, Vol. 10, No. 1, January 2011, 15.

The three main threads of Tea Party ideology—social conservatism, economic libertarianism, constitutional originalism—were rarely tied together neatly. Disagreements between traditionalist conservatives and free-market libertarians would sometimes cause local groups to fracture. Those who wanted the Tea Party to focus exclusively on economic matters, such as taxation, believed that social and cultural issues distracted the movement from its core agenda. Yet, other Tea Partiers felt that the subprime mortgage crisis stemmed from a deeper national moral decay. The organizers of Tea Party Nation, for instance, asked Republican legislators to oppose abortion, same-sex marriage, and immigration, and defend the interests of the white suburban family. Several observers judged that the tension between free-marketers and culture warriors threatened to tear the Tea Party apart.

Constitutional originalism often served to bridge these two contradictory ideological impulses. Attendees and organizers at local Tea Party meetings, as the political scientist Anthony DiMaggio reports, “continually spoke of the importance of linking support for the trio of ‘free markets,’ the Founding Fathers, and Constitutional originalism.”⁸²⁵ Many of their complaints were directed at the ‘unconstitutionality’ of Obama’s healthcare reform. Whenever politicians exhibited a lack of familiarity with the Constitution, they became targets of Tea Partier scorn and derision. Within the moral universe of the Tea Party, the Constitution was less of a legal document to be interpreted and more of a sacred text to be revered. The twenty-seven amendments acquired the same hallowed status as the Ten Commandments. In fact, the 1981 book *The Five Thousand Year Leap*, written by former John Birch Society ideologue W. Cleon Skousen,

825. DiMaggio, *The Rise of the Tea Party*, 51.

experienced a revival in Tea Party circles, because it argues that the Founding Fathers extracted certain beliefs from the Bible and transplanted them into the Constitution.

Invocations of the Constitution managed to satisfy the social conservative's traditionalist sentiments and the libertarian's desire for unconstrained freedom. Miscellaneous right-wing intellectuals learnt that references to the Founding Fathers, as well as encomiums to the family and the free market, played well with Tea Party audiences around the United States. Unlike the LaRouchites and New Right think tankers, these Tea Party intellectuals did not promote a rigid doctrine (LaRouche's arbitrary ideology) or offer a clearly formulated worldview (elite populism). On the contrary, the ideologues of the Tea Party fashioned a kind of opportunistic cultural politics that mirrored the contradictory impulses of the movement.

Building on Gramsci's work, the theorist Robert F. Carley uses the term *conjunctural intellectual* to describe intellectuals that are "semi-attached to movements . . . of dubious origins" and "opportunistic in their designs."⁸²⁶ Conjunctural intellectuals treat the initial stages of popular political movements as timely opportunities to boost their own reputation. During the first few months of Tea Party mobilization, conservative bloggers and local talk radio hosts latched onto the notion of a 'grassroots insurgency' to promote their own platforms and programs.⁸²⁷ Although they pose as the "harbingers of a new movement," these conjunctural intellectuals tend to fade into obscurity.⁸²⁸ In other words,

826. Carley, *Cultural Studies Methodology and Political Strategy*, 64.

827. Skocpol and Williamson acknowledge that bloggers, such as Matt Drudge and Michelle Malkin, and local talk show hosts, such as Eric Von Haessler and Mike Gallagher, were the first media figures to frame the "Santelli rant" as a right-wing call to arms. For more on the relationship between the Tea Party movement and the media, read 121-153 in Skocpol and Williamson's *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*.

828. Carley, *Cultural Studies Methodology and Political Strategy*, 65.

they express a purely momentary force that often fails to stabilize into a more permanent form.

Conjunctural intellectuals, as Carley defines them, emerge from realignments of sociopolitical life. Changes in the existing relations of force can generate new openings for emergent forms of political expression. The rumbling aftershocks of the financial crisis, as well as the internal conflict of the Republican Party and the polarizing election of the first African-American president, formed a political terrain on which a variety of conjunctural intellectuals could insert themselves into the temporary quasi-institutional forms of the Tea Party movement. Consequently, these semi-attached and opportunistic intellectuals developed a range of practices, expressions, and meanings that matched the scattered nature of the Tea Party.

The lack of centralization in the Tea Party movement favoured a proliferation of conjunctural intellectuals. “This is a movement of manifestoes, blogs, and small-press books,” quips Frank in his caustic critique of the Tea Party’s sundry intellectual offerings, “in which thousands of self-taught Montesquieus spin theories of government villainy they dreamed up using only the information provided by the Bible, the Constitution, and *The Glenn Beck Program*.”⁸²⁹ These semi-professional and self-professed right-wing philosophes hoped to flourish in the emerging online ecosystem of conservative content creation. The wide availability of technological devices (affordable camera-phones, microphones, editing equipment), as well as the popularization of user-friendly social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter) and content sharing websites (WordPress, Youtube, and Blogger), helped to spawn a new generation of minor right-wing

829. Frank, *Pity the Billionaires*, 83.

personalities and pundits—a fresh battalion of culture warriors that could continue the counter-revolutionary maneuvers of the New Right.⁸³⁰

How did these media practices fit into the life of the Tea Party? Someone could record a heated exchange between Tea Partiers and their Democratic representative at a tense Town Hall meeting on their smartphone, upload the footage to the Internet, and share a link to the video on various conservative forums and mailing lists. Someone else might embed that clip in a blogpost, along with a commentary about the ‘grassroots’ energy of the Tea Party.⁸³¹ Local talk radio hosts may play audio from the clip on-air; a Fox News anchor might discuss the video in a segment on ‘grassroots’ opposition to the Obama administration. Skocpol and Williamson observe that this “active relaying” of ideas and stories was a common Tea Party practice.⁸³² The Tea Partiers were not mere “passive recipients of media output,” but, rather, semi-active participants who could “fire up their computers to talk back and spread information (or misinformation) to many others.”⁸³³ The emergence of opportunistic right-wing conjunctural intellectuals, as well as the Tea Partiers’ dependence on online media, contributed to the Tea Party’s *media populism*.

Many Tea Partiers felt that the established media favored liberal perspectives and demonized conservative values. The Tea Party’s conjunctural intellectuals portrayed the “establishment” media, such as CNN and the *New York Times*, as a hostile force that

830. Anthony Nadler, “Populist communication and media environments,” *Sociology Compass*, Vol. 13, No. 8 (August 2019), 5.

831. The Tea Party Patriots website lists over two hundred Tea Party-affiliated blogs. “Tea Party Patriots Blog Roll,” *Tea Party Patriots*, accessed August 15, 2022, <https://web.archive.org/web/20110709211121/http://www.teapartypatriots.org/blogroll.aspx>.

832. Skocpol and Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 128.

833. *Ibid.*, 129.

sought to stifle free expression and indoctrinate the American public.⁸³⁴ Various bloggers, freelance journalists, and amateur filmmakers marketed themselves as right-wing rebels who exposed the lies of elite media institutions. Skocpol and Williamson write that “both the constant refrain of ‘us versus them’ and the everyday flow of political information and misinformation reinforce the sense of an embattled community of conservatives—whose latest effort to fight back valiantly is embodied in the Tea Party.”⁸³⁵ Even Fox News, a prominent and well-funded television network, reiterated this self-perception of the Tea Party as the victim of a media elite. The Fox host Bill O’Reilly, for instance, once commented that the “American media will never embrace the Tea Party [because] they look down on the folks . . . they think you are dumb.”⁸³⁶ Just as LaRouche’s *EIR* and FCF’s NET branded themselves as truthful alternatives to a lying ‘mainstream’ or ‘elite,’ the Tea Party’s informational network expressed a kind of naïve media populism—an intensely felt need to develop sources of information and knowledge to counter the perceived dominance of liberal institutions.

The Tea Party’s media populism complemented the relatively decentralized and localized character of the smaller movement groups. As Skocpol and Williamson document, Tea Party organizers discovered that they needed to arrange “a constant flow of

834. Chapter Three of Anthony DiMaggio’s *The Rise of the Tea Party* demonstrates that the Tea Party’s claims about mainstream media were false. DiMaggio’s comparative analysis of reporting in various “mainstream” media outlets found that they “adopt a sympathetic line toward the group, similar to, but less blatant than that seen in right-wing media.” In fact, DiMaggio argues that that these outlets helped to legitimate the Tea Party’s image of itself as a purely ‘grassroots’ social movement. Although the tenets of the Tea Party’s media populism are mistaken, they operate as a set of seemingly ‘non-ideological’ or ‘taken-for-granted’ assumptions that pervades the practices and pronouncements of the group’s conjunctural intellectuals.

835. Skocpol and Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 137.

836. Quoted in Skocpol and Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 137.

programming, such as “an entertaining speaker or visual presentation,” to increase donations and recruitment.⁸³⁷ The Tea Party Patriots urged local activists to host “Patriot and Popcorn” nights to screen documentaries that would introduce prospective recruits to the beliefs of the Tea Party. Other members, especially those in remote areas, were encouraged to invite their friends and relatives into their homes for “House Party” events. According to the Tea Party Patriot’s website, “House Parties” were an opportunity “to show a film that expresses our values in an easy to understand, easy to digest format.”⁸³⁸ Once the film was over, Tea Partiers could “explain what the Tea Party movement is all about, our core values, and why we exist.”⁸³⁹ The ongoing demand for political documentaries benefited those conjunctural intellectuals, such as Stephen Bannon and James Jaegar, who were already producing right-wing movies. Filmmakers like Bannon and Jaegar functioned to organize the ideological outlook of the Tea Partiers. This is how “conspiratorial visions,” Skocpol and Williamson claim, started to “percolate quietly in networks of local Tea Parties.”⁸⁴⁰ Certain documentaries, especially Jaegar’s *Cultural Marxism: The Corruption of America*, recycled the New Right’s polemics about the Frankfurt School (Buchanan’s *The Death of the West*) to assert that the Tea Party was fighting a hidden Marxist network. Just as LaRouche used narratives about the Frankfurt School to define the ranks of NCLC as an “elite,” the conjunctural intellectuals of the right

837. Ibid., 114-115.

838. “House Party DVD Request,” *Tea Party Patriots Action*, accessed August 15, 2022, <https://www.teapartypatriots.org/archive/house-party-dvd-request/>.

839. “Patriots and Popcorn,” *Tea Party Patriots Action*, accessed August 15, 2022, <https://www.teapartypatriots.org/archive/patriots-and-popcorn/>.

840. Skocpol and Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 115-116

drew on the enduring right-wing folklore of Cultural Marxism to construct a sort of Tea Party identity.

In the next few pages, I clarify the relationship between these conjunctural intellectuals and their Tea Party audiences. Furthermore, I specify how some of these figures—Jaegar, Curtis Bowers, and Andrew Breitbart—adapted pre-existing conservative truisms and clichés and integrated them into their narratives of “Cultural Marxism.” Before I delve into these questions, I want to address some claims about hegemony and affect in two relevant texts on the Tea Party: Anthony DiMaggio’s 2011 *The Rise of the Tea Party: Political Discontent and Corporate Media in the Age of Obama* and Arlie R. Hochschild’s 2016 *Strangers in a Strange Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*. Engaging with these thinkers will help to advance a Gramscian analysis of intellectual activity and political forces within the Tea Party movement.

The political scientist DiMaggio borrows Gramsci’s concept of hegemony to inform his analysis of the Tea Party. Although the Tea Party may claim to represent the needs and demands of the American public, DiMaggio asserts that it relies on “top-down elite organizing” and “serves the interests of the Republican Party and business power.”⁸⁴¹ According to DiMaggio, the Tea Party is a “mass-mediated force” that promulgates “pro-business ideology” in the guise of populist rhetoric.⁸⁴² Consequently, he understands the movement as “merely the most recent chapter in a process whereby public discourse is dominated by market fundamentalist voices.”⁸⁴³

841. DiMaggio, *The Rise of the Tea Party*, 9.

842. *Ibid.*

843. *Ibid.*, 13.

Building on Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman's 1988 study *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, DiMaggio argues that corporate media restricts the terms of public debate to the opinions of business elites and their functionaries. He identifies this manufacturing of consent as the basic element of Gramsci's concept of hegemony. He characterizes the hegemony of corporate media as "the ability of business entrepreneurs and political officials to exercise 'leadership' over the public by cultivating public support for capitalist values."⁸⁴⁴ The overseers and operatives of media corporations work to guarantee that "the perceived benevolence and virtue of the capitalist ideology . . . is seen as common sense by the general public, with alternative socialistic and other leftist ideologies deemed unworthy of consideration."⁸⁴⁵ The faux-populist leaders of the Tea Party take advantage of the pro-business slant of mass media to intensify the "false consciousness" of the American public on such issues as healthcare reform.⁸⁴⁶

According to DiMaggio's reading of Gramsci, the forces of corporate hegemony manipulate subordinate groups into acting against their own interests. Yet, DiMaggio does not explain why certain sections of the American public are so receptive to this manipulation. Apart from vague claims about the exploitation of fear and emotion, he appears to assume that they are passive dupes who merely accept the messages of corporate propaganda. While the mainstream media portrays the followers of the Tea Party as authentic grassroots activists, DiMaggio regards them as helpless puppets controlled by business interests and political elites.

844. Ibid., 14.

845. Ibid.

846. Ibid.

Although DiMaggio manages to debunk the myth that the Tea Party was a ‘spontaneous’ popular rebellion against the Obama administration, he does not address the manifold nature of the movement’s ideology. He reduces Gramsci’s concept of hegemony to a matter of mere manipulation, and insists that the structures of corporate media exist simply to impose the ideas of the ruling classes onto the rest of society. Yet, if, as Raymond Williams observes, hegemony “were merely an imposed ideology . . . or only the isolable meanings and practices of a ruling class . . . which gets imposed on others, occupying merely the top of our minds, it would be . . . a very much easier thing to overthrow.”⁸⁴⁷ Whereas DiMaggio understands hegemony as an instrument for coercing others into obeying the interests of the business class, Gramsci sees hegemony as an ongoing process whereby leading groups or classes form and maintain an “unstable equilibria” between their own interests and the interests of subordinate groups.⁸⁴⁸ As Gramsci describes it, “the fact of hegemony presupposes that account be taken of the interests and tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised.”⁸⁴⁹ DiMaggio’s portrayal of Tea Party ideology does not acknowledge how it organizes the desires, needs, and practices of the white American middle class. The followers of the Tea Party are not acting against their own interests, but, rather, following their own interests in the form that they have taken in the ideology of the movement.

Ultimately, DiMaggio falls into the trap of what Gramsci calls *economism*. Simply put, economism holds that politics and ideology are determined purely by narrow

847. Raymond Williams, *Culture and Materialism* (Croydon: Verso, 2005), 37.

848. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 182.

849. *Ibid.*

economic concerns. As Gramsci puts it, this economistic superstition treats political activity as nothing more than a “*marché de dupes*, a matter of conjuring tricks and sleight of hand.”⁸⁵⁰ Economistic interpretations of political events and tendencies often follow simplistic lines of reasoning. For instance, DiMaggio tries to figure out who profits from the pro-business agenda of the Tea Party and settles on the most obvious answer: business elites. Yet, as Gramsci remarks, “this kind of certainty . . . comes very cheap.”⁸⁵¹

DiMaggio’s economistic analysis fails to demonstrate why members of the white middle class believe that the Tea Party movement represents their own desires, interests, and values. For DiMaggio, they are merely fools who have fallen for the cheap conjurer’s tricks of the corporate media. He forgets that “‘popular beliefs’ or widespread tenets are material forces” that are not immediately reducible to economic interests, yet take the form of political and cultural practices.⁸⁵² In this case, the messages of well-funded national organizations and media outlets, such as FreedomWorks and Fox News, mobilized popular beliefs about socioeconomic status and patriotism to inform local efforts of right-wing organizing.

DiMaggio’s shallow economism also ignores the affective force of hegemony. Whereas economistic hypotheses are satisfied with locating “an immediate element of strength—the availability of some direct or indirect financial support,” a Gramscian investigation seeks the popular beliefs—that sense of hegemony as actively felt and lived—that permeate the life of the movement.⁸⁵³ Gramsci urged those who were studying

850. Gramsci, *Subaltern Social Groups*, 101.

851. *Ibid.*, 102.

852. *Ibid.*, 101.

853. *Ibid.*, 103.

the rise of right-wing politics (“a movement of the Boulangist type”) to ask “what is the political and social significance of the demands that are put forward by the leaders and gain consent? What active needs do they correspond to?”⁸⁵⁴ Other scholars try to identify these needs—social, cultural, emotional, economic—that draw people to the Tea Party. They aim to track the popular beliefs and emotional investments that animate participation in the movement.

In her sympathetic 2016 ethnographic work *Strangers in a Strange Land*, the sociologist Arlie Hochschild senses that she needs to understand the *feeling rules* that govern the emotional lives of the Tea Partiers. Unlike DiMaggio, Hochschild senses that, “as an explanation for why any of us believe what we do, duping—and the presumption of gullibility—is too simple an idea.”⁸⁵⁵ Whereas other academic studies and journalistic narratives examine the explicit ideological and political claims of the Tea Party, she argues that they lack a “full understanding of emotion in politics.”⁸⁵⁶ What Hochschild calls *feeling rules* concern what people want to feel, what they think they should or should not feel, and what they do feel about a range of issues. According to Hochschild, people on opposite ends of the political spectrum follow different sets of feeling rules. She suggests that this emotional divergence is the source of the American public’s failure to sympathize with people who support a different political party. Liberals (Democrats) conform to certain expectations about *how* one should feel in response to *what*: grief for the police murder of unarmed black men, pride in legislation for same-sex marriage, joy for the

854. Ibid., 102.

855. Arlie R. Hochschild, *Strangers in a Strange Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* (New York: The New Press, 2016), 14.

856. Hochschild, *Strangers in a Strange Land*, 15.

symbols of ethnic and sexual diversity in public life. As Hochschild understands them, conservatives (Republicans and Tea Partiers) want to be released from these liberal expectations and left alone to pursue their own preferred set of feeling rules. For Hochschild, this desire for a kind of emotional autonomy gave rise to the Tea Party revolt.

At the core of right-wing emotional life is what Hochschild calls a “deep story.”⁸⁵⁷ As she puts it, a *deep story* is a “feels-as-if story—it’s the story feelings tell, in the language of symbols. It removes judgement. It removes fact. It tells us how things feel. Such a story permits those on both sides of the political spectrum to stand back and explore the subjective prism through which the party on the other side sees the world.”⁸⁵⁸ Knowledge of someone else’s deep story is key to understanding their political positions or ideological affiliations.

Hochschild splits the deep story of the Tea Partiers into two parts: “waiting in line” and “the line cutters.”⁸⁵⁹ Right-wingers feel that they have been waiting in line patiently: working diligently, paying their taxes, caring for their families, staying friendly with the neighbors, serving as a responsible member of the community. They feel that they are deserving recipients of the American Dream. Yet, they sense that this line has ceased to move forward. It seems that they have been stuck in the same spot for nearly a decade. Events, such as the financial crisis, introduce feelings of uncertainty. When will they reach that golden destination of the American Dream?

857. Ibid., 135.

858. Ibid.

859. Ibid., 136-139.

Not only do they feel stagnant, they sense that ‘others’ are cutting in line ahead of them. Various programs and policies, such as affirmative action, welfare, and asylum, have distorted a fair system of ‘waiting in line’ into an unfair system of distributing privileges to protected groups. This perception of the situation sours into a sense of betrayal, which curdles into a mood of suspicion: “someone must be *helping* them.”⁸⁶⁰ Some right-wingers target President Obama as a usurper who interferes with the natural order of American life. They think that he might be the agent of some larger plan to sap America’s prosperity, eliminate the middle class, and establish a socialist state.

Hochschild admits that “the deep story of the right, the feels-as-if story, corresponds to a real structural squeeze” that followed the financial crisis of 2007-2008.⁸⁶¹ Yet, their deep story distorts the realities of race, gender and class in contemporary American life. It fails to articulate the uneven and discriminatory structural arrangements that upheld their vision of the American Dream as the act of waiting patiently and patriotically in line. Nonetheless, the Tea Partiers believe that “their deep story is the real story and that there is a false PC [politically correct] cover-up of that story.”⁸⁶² Not only does the ‘politically correct’ liberal narrative deny the validity of the right-wing deep story, it tries to replace it with another deep story (or is it a shallow story?) that directly contradicts what conservatives feel to be true. What attracts American right-wingers to the Tea Party’s media populism is its promise to expose the false ‘cover-up’ and tell the ‘real story.’

860. Ibid., 139.

861. Ibid., 146.

862. Ibid., 227.

Although Hochschild is right to investigate the emotional life of the Tea Party, I do not think that her account of the right-wing deep story captures the contradictory nature of popular American conservatism. The common sense of the Tea Party cannot be summarized in a neat fable. Moreover, I suspect that the word-for-word testimony of Hochschild's ethnographic subjects—a group of Tea Partiers and conservatives in Louisiana—reveals little about the impulses that drive their political affiliations. In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Marx writes that “as in private life one distinguishes between what a man thinks and says of himself and what he really is and does, still more in historical struggles must one distinguish the phrases and fancies of the parties from their real organism and their real interests, their conception of themselves from their reality.”⁸⁶³ In other words, Hochschild's notion of a deep story fails to grasp the deeper histories that shape the interests, ideologies, and identities of the Tea Party.

The phrases and fancies of the Tea Party derive from a heterogeneous and multiform entity that Gramsci categorizes as *senso comune*. Kate Crehan clarifies that the standard rendering of *senso comune* as “common sense” is a mistranslation.⁸⁶⁴ Influenced by the Aristotelean notion of *koinè aisthèsis*, the English term “common sense” refers to those simple truths, pieces of conventional wisdom, and shared perceptions that everyone is supposed to regard as self-evident. The term carries strong positive connotations. No one can disagree with what is common sense.

Senso comune, as Gramsci describes it, does not have the same immediate association with truthfulness. *Senso comune* denotes a conception of the world that, “even

863. Marx, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,” 344-345.

864. Crehan, *Gramsci's Common Sense*, 43.

in the brain of one individual, is fragmentary, incoherent, and inconsequential, in conformity with the social and cultural position of those masses whose philosophy it is.”⁸⁶⁵ Common sense is taken to be universal; *sensu comune* is specific to certain social groups. Common sense is an uncountable noun; *sensu comune*, “a collective noun.”⁸⁶⁶

Sensu comune receives and preserves a variety of clichés, ideas, and beliefs from external intellectual and political forces, which limit the original thought of the popular masses. *Sensu comune* is a “chaotic aggregation of disparate conceptions” that certain groups have inherited from different intellectual tendencies, political forces, and hegemonic apparatuses over time.⁸⁶⁷ The members of various social groups may display an entirely passive relationship with their *sensu comune*, as though they are the mute recipients of a traditional wisdom that must never be questioned. Yet, as Gramsci demonstrates, this ‘naturalized’ knowledge can be rearticulated into new ideologies. Building on Gramsci’s concept of *sensu comune*, Hall observes that “it is the already formed and ‘taken-for-granted’ ground on which more coherent ideologies and philosophies must contend for mastery.”⁸⁶⁸ Accordingly, the most successful conjunctural intellectuals of the Tea Party managed to shape the fragmentary *sensu comune* of the white American middle class into more coherent political and ideological expressions.

The *sensu comune* of the Tea Party encompasses a confused and haphazard jumble of intuitions, impressions, affects, myths, prejudices, clichés, habits, and beliefs. The

865. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 419.

866. *Ibid.*, 325.

867. *Ibid.*, 422.

868. Stuart Hall, *Cultural Studies 1983: A Theoretical History* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), 165.

poetry of the Revolutionary War clashes with the anti-communist rhetoric of the Red Scares. The solemn Nixonian figure of the Silent Majority wrestles with the steely Randian archetype of the self-interested individualist. The hallelujahs of televangelists mix with the rebel yells of Confederate Soldiers. Memories of mid-century middle class affluence and stability bleed into romanticized visions of the Frontier spirit. The soundbites of Fox News anchormen seep into half-memorized passages of the Constitution. And so on and so on and so on. The ideologues of the Tea Party, as Crehan describes them, draw on this vast repository of conservative clichés and truisms to fashion an ideology that “appeal[ed] not merely to the beneficiaries of the current economic order, but also a self-identified “middle-class” that s[aw] itself as under threat.”⁸⁶⁹

Central to this reactionary ideology is the enduring and contradictory notion of *deservingness*. The Tea Party’s conjunctural intellectuals extract the idea of “deservingness” from this *senso comune* and place it at the centre of the movement’s ideology. According to Skocpol and Williamson, this notion derives from a long-standing dichotomy between “deservingness” and “dependency.”⁸⁷⁰ They write that “a well-marked distinction between workers and nonworkers—between productive citizens and freeloaders—is central to the Tea Party worldview and conception of America.”⁸⁷¹ Yet, this *senso comune* distinction has a surprising lineage in American politics.

In her essay “The Tea Party: A White Citizenship Movement,” the political scientist Lisa Disch advances the counterintuitive hypothesis that the supporters of the Tea

869. Crehan, *Gramsci’s Common Sense*, 191.

870. Skocpol and Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 74.

871. *Ibid.*, 65.

Party “are a constituency formed by the powerful framework for in-group/out-group politics that is an inheritance of liberal social welfare policy, and that has grouped individuals by race.”⁸⁷² Despite their official propaganda that impugns the “collectivism” of the New Deal, the members of the Tea Party defend “interests and identifications that they have inherited from the New Deal.”⁸⁷³ According to Disch, older white Americans have grown so accustomed to the benefits of social security, what Suzanne Mettler terms “the submerged state,” that these advantages have become imperceptible and naturalized.⁸⁷⁴ As Disch writes, *white citizenship* is “constituted by an independence that seems to have been personally earned when it is, in fact, publicly subsidized.”⁸⁷⁵ She notes that the spirit of this white citizenship was epitomised in the famous Tea Partier rant at a Town Hall meeting in South Carolina: “Keep your government hands off my Medicare!”⁸⁷⁶ Liberal commentators mocked this slip as a sign that Tea Partiers were ignorant about the structures and services of the government that they claimed to protest. In fact, it reflects the contradictory and varied prism of *senso comune* through which Tea Partiers understand social reality.

“Deservingness” is a residual popular belief that derives from the legislative and material infrastructure of the United States.⁸⁷⁷ The Social Security Act of 1935 excluded

872. Disch, “The Tea Party,” 134.

873. Disch, “The Tea Party,” 133.

874. Suzanne Mettler, “Reconstituting the Submerged State: The Challenges of Social Policy Reform in the Obama Era,” *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (2010), 803-824.

875. Disch, “The Tea Party,” 140.

876. Quoted in Disch, “The Tea Party,” 133.

877. Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon, “A Genealogy of ‘Dependency’: Tracing a Keyword of the U.S. Welfare State,” *Signs: A Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Winter 1994), 307-336.

agricultural laborers and domestics—who at the time were predominantly Black—from its definition of the “deserving” worker, and thus “invested whiteness with standing but made it invisible as race privilege.”⁸⁷⁸ Similarly, the Federal Housing Administration mortgages were “disproportionately approved for white borrowers and structured to encourage purchase in redlined suburbs.”⁸⁷⁹ The symbolic difference between “deservingness” and “dependency,” which may seem like a colour-blind distinction, became a material force that maintained a firm hierarchical division between racial groups (whites as deserving recipients of ‘invisible’ government support, blacks as ‘visible’ dependent burdens on the state). What I described in Chapter Two as *normative America*, that kind of sociality to which many American right-wingers want to return, represents this racialized organization of resources and recognition. The ideology of “white citizenship,” then, is wrapped up in the practices, activities, and environments of the white American middle class, not just an element of “false consciousness” that occupies the tops of Tea Partiers’ minds. The deeply felt sense of “deservingness” that animates Tea Party resentment stems from “material benefits that (while seemingly neutral) have perpetuated racial inequality.”⁸⁸⁰ This is not a result of “top-down” or “Astroturfed” organizing in the twenty-first century, but, rather, a trace of the historical processes that informed the *senso comune* of the white American middle class.

For Disch, the Tea Party represents a white citizenship movement: “action in defense of material benefits that confer ‘racial standing’ in a polity that purports to deny

878. Disch, “The Tea Party,” 140.

879. *Ibid.*, 140.

880. *Ibid.*, 142.

precisely that—special standing based on race.”⁸⁸¹ It is a racialized politics that claims to speak the language of universality. Deservingness, even though its liberal heritage may seem to contradict its conservative usage, is a potent tool for constructing a seemingly non-racial Tea Party identity. Conjunctural intellectuals promote certain phrases and fancies about “tax payers” and “producers” that—to finish the Marxian paraphrase—are ultimately the white American middle class’ conception of themselves.

In the rest of this chapter, I examine how three conjunctural intellectuals—James Jaegar, Curtis Bower, and Andrew Breitbart—drew on this *senso commune* to produce new narratives of Cultural Marxism for Tea Party audience. They use the ideological cliché of *deservingness* to organize the factions of the Tea Party into a more coherent political force. The notion of ‘Cultural Marxism’ serves to mobilize and unify Tea Partiers against a common antagonist (despite the contradiction in their doctrinal commitments). According to these narratives, the Tea Party must overcome Cultural Marxism’s domination of the media and restore the status of the ‘deserving’ white family.

Cultural Marxism: The Corruption of America

In 2010, the right-wing film-maker and head of the Matrix Entertainment Corporation (MEC) James Jaegar released his documentary *Cultural Marxism: The Corruption of America*. Between 2006 and 2015, Jaegar wrote, directed, and produced a series of films in collaboration with the libertarian constitutional lawyer Edwin Vieira to promote Christian traditionalism, originalism, and market fundamentalism. According to the MEC’s webpage, *Cultural Marxism* is an abridged version of Jaegar’s 2008 three hour and fifteen

881. Ibid., 133-134.

minute-snoozefest *Original Intent*. Presumably, Jaegar shortened the film's running time to appeal to programming-hungry Tea Party organizers.

Jaegar and his coterie of right-wing interviewees—former Republican primary candidate and long-time conservative culture warrior Patrick Buchanan, the Republican congressman Ron Paul, the anti-Federal Reserve writer G. Edward Griffin, the Christian media critic Ted Baehr, and Vieira—allege that the Frankfurt School's "Cultural Marxism" and the Federal Reserve's "Corporate Fascism" represent a double-pronged attack on the constitutional foundations of the United States. Whereas the Frankfurt School encouraged "cultural pessimism" to undermine the conventional family unit, the Federal Reserve imposed unfair taxes on the productive middle class to fund collectivist policies. As Griffin remarks, the Frankfurt School aimed to eradicate the family and thus force people to depend on government support. Jaegar attributes the decay of family life to the selfish hedonism of the baby boomer generation who indulged their lust for quick cash and free love, ignored the wisdom of the Founding Fathers, and initiated America's downfall. Briefly put, the baby boomers betrayed the Constitution because they could not resist the easy temptations of "Cultural Marxism."

The debut screening of *Cultural Marxism* took place at an Oath Keepers meeting in Bozeman, Montana.⁸⁸² According to the scholar Sam Jackson, the Oath Keepers belong to the "patriot/militia movement" and believe that "foreign ideas and actors pose a threat to America and American values."⁸⁸³ Although they are not official representatives of the Tea

882. "What's New at MEC," MEC Films, August 2010, accessed on August 15, 2022, <http://www.mecfilms.com/updates/upd08-10.htm>.

883. Sam Jackson, *Oath Keepers: Patriotism and the Edge of Violence in a Right-Wing Antigovernment Group* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020), 37.

Party movement, there are documented affiliations between Oath Keepers and Tea Partiers.⁸⁸⁴ Both groups feared that Obama was a socialist tyrant who planned to disenfranchise deserving white citizens. They opposed gun control legislation and held that the Second Amendment empowered them to use paramilitary force to enact the next American restoration-revolution.

Jaegar assumes that his documentaries will attract new citizens to this project of nationalistic restoration. The online version of *Cultural Marxism* entreats viewers to buy a DVD copy of the film and recommend it to friends, relatives, and acquaintances. The final credits warn the viewer that the “mainstream media and distributors” will ignore this documentary, because they do not want the public to know about the Frankfurt School’s influence on the television and film industries.⁸⁸⁵ Instead of trusting the mainstream media, the audience should educate others about “Cultural Marxism” by hosting public screenings of *Cultural Marxism*, recommending the documentary for programming at public-access television stations, and including references to the film in their “websites, blogs, and periodicals.”⁸⁸⁶ Jaegar’s repeated appeals to his audience reflect the Tea Party’s reactionary media populism, which contrasts the decadence of the mainstream media and Hollywood with the authenticity of word-of-mouth recommendations to friends and family members (and “Patriots and Popcorn” and “House Party” events).

In one scene, Jaegar directs a film crew to ask average white Americans—a *vox pop* in a parking lot—whether they know anything about “Cultural Marxism.” Someone replies,

884. Jackson, *Oath Keepers*, 117.

885. MEC Films, “Cultural Marxism: The Corruption of America,” Youtube video, 1:38:38, posted by OriginalIntentDoc, August 30, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gIdBuK7_g3M&t=1114s.

886. MEC Films, “Cultural Marxism.”

“I am not familiar completely with Marxism;” someone else confesses, “that kind of talk is gibberish to me.”⁸⁸⁷ The scene portrays those who know nothing about the Frankfurt School’s evil schemes. Jaegar wants to cure these bewildered citizens of their mainstream media-induced ignorance, and recruit them into the project of restoring the American republic.

Anyone who watches *Cultural Marxism* will find out almost immediately that Jaegar is not a particularly talented film-maker. Various titles are misspelt (critical theory is rendered as “CRITICAL THEORY”).⁸⁸⁸ The sound design is sloppy and disorienting. Jaegar may own a professional editing studio at MEC, but it seems that he cannot use it very professionally. Yet, Jodi Dean theorizes that this lack of technical polish adds to the appeal of these amateurish documentaries. The absence of “slickness,” as Dean calls it, is a visual manifestation of Jaegar’s “rejection of the mainstream,” because the “slick” denotes “a mindset and aesthetic overattuned to the deceptions of the mainstream.”⁸⁸⁹ Counterintuitively, the sheer amateurishness of *Cultural Marxism* may function as a mark of its reliability for an audience that distrusts the mainstream media.

Jaegar uses the technique of superimposition to underscore his argument about the Frankfurt School’s infiltration of America. Superimposition places one image over another in the same frame to create a layering effect. Often, film-makers will use superimposition to combine or contrast different scenes and visual metaphors in the same shot. The main motif of Jaegar’s superimposed shots, for instance, is an animated cloud of red smoke. In

887. Ibid.

888. Ibid.

889. Jodi Dean, *Democracy and other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 155.

the opening montage of the documentary, Jaegar superimposes a sequence of images—a stock photo of a divorce decree, a portrait of the Supreme Court justices, the U.S. Capitol building—over a gently drifting, albeit menacing, wisp of red smoke. The sequence implies that these institutions of American political and private life have fallen under the shadow of a malevolent force. Just as the “powers of Old Europe” wished to exorcise “the spectre of communism,” Jaegar hopes that his documentary will expose the red smoke of “Cultural Marxism” that hovers over America like a foul smog.⁸⁹⁰

In their 2020 article “Conspiracy Theory and Visual Culture,” Ute Caumanns and Andreas Önnorfors observe that visual representations of conspiracy often exhibit an “associative logic” that communicates intuitively to viewers.⁸⁹¹ Whereas the written word or verbal testimony attempts to convince the reader or listener with a linear and “rational-argumentative” model, the associative logic of the conspiracy image tries to persuade the viewer with a series of impressionistic juxtapositions, connections, and allusions.⁸⁹² Caumanns and Önnorfors may overestimate the inherent rationality of the written and spoken word, yet they are right to point out that the conspiracy image employs a dream-like logic of cultural associations and connotations. The imagery of the Red Smoke evokes an array of pseudo-Gothic tropes, such as ghosts, hellfire, and Satan. Literally speaking, smoke is a collection of airborne particles and gases that can change form, seep into various spaces through cracks and gaps, and suffocate people in the middle of the night. It

890. Karl Marx and Freidrich Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party,” *Karl Marx: Selected Works in Two Volumes*, ed. Vladimir Adoratsky (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1943), 204.

891. Ute Caumanns and Andreas Önnorfors, “Conspiracy Theory and Visual Culture,” in *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories*, ed. by Michael Butter and Peter Knight (London: Routledge, 2020), 447.

892. Caumanns and Önnorfors, “Conspiracy Theory and Visual Culture,” 447.

seems that Jaegar exploits these implications to instil a sense of dread about the elusive presence of “Cultural Marxism.”

The Red Smoke symbolizes the Frankfurt School’s grasp on American life—the result of Gramsci’s alleged strategy of the ‘long march through the institutions.’ One scene projects black-and-white footage of a college graduation ceremony from the 1960s over red smoke. The narrator tells us that the Frankfurt School infiltrated American universities to indoctrinate the impressionable ‘boomer’ college students with something called “critical theory:” a doctrine that challenges “all previously accepted standards in every aspect of life from a Marxist perspective.”⁸⁹³ Critical theory, as portrayed in the documentary, becomes little more than a puerile anti-Americanism that wishes to tarnish the legacy of the Founding Fathers. The narrator reports that these “consciousness-challenged baby boomers” absorbed and “internalized the criticism” that “the Establishment” was a “bunch of racist, overly religious, and sexually-deprived sexists, who were xenophobic Indian killers and antisemites.”⁸⁹⁴ Once they were completely brainwashed, college radicals injected the reflexes of the Frankfurt School’s critical theory into the mass media of the American youth culture.

According to Jaegar, Hollywood took the critique of the patriarchal family from the Frankfurt School’s 1950 study *The Authoritarian Personality* and inserted it into screenplays to portray nuclear families as dysfunctional and repressive. Various films, such as *The Graduate* and *Harold and Maude*, taught American youth to disrespect their parents and dismiss the Christian institutions of marriage as an outdated relic from an oppressive

893. MEC Films, “Cultural Marxism.”

894. Ibid.

past. Furthermore, the “invalidation” of traditional parental roles—the man and his wife, the father and the mother—in Hollywood movies contributed to a rise in divorce rates. Divorce splits families into separate households that must file separate tax forms, which, in turn, finances the Federal Reserve’s corporate fascism. Children struggle to cope with the stress and sorrow of their parent’s divorce, and require therapy sessions and medications that gradually drain their sense of individuality. This is what Jaegar sees as the denouement of the Frankfurt School’s cultural subversion: the total dependence of atomized victims on the government.

Jaegar represents this disintegration of the family unit in a sequence that blends sped-up footage of network news, the motif of red smoke, and a scene from a sadomasochistic pornographic film of a blonde dominatrix in a red leather bodysuit whipping a man in a black gimp costume with a cat o’ nine tails. The layering of images produces a nauseating impression of causality. The Frankfurt School (red smoke) constructed the mainstream media (news footage) to destroy the sacred marital bond and break apart the family (pornographic scene). According to the narrator, the baby boomers have inhaled the intoxicating red smoke of “Cultural Marxism,” which causes them to languish in a haze of “cultural pessimism” like “fish in a bowl of muddy water.”⁸⁹⁵ The average television viewer can no longer see the degradation of the patriarchal family that serves as the subtext of twenty-first century mainstream media. The Father has become a cowering and effeminate submissive; the Mother, a sadistic and domineering nymphomaniac. For Jaegar, America has lost the masculine ideal that granted coherence and structure to the national project. The white working male, as Disch puts it, is “held up

895. Ibid.

as paradigmatic of independence,” even though his affluence is predicated on the unwaged labor of his wife and the naturalized support of the submerged state.⁸⁹⁶ In this sense, Jaegar mystifies the genuine social conditions that underpin the ideology of white citizenship that he promulgates.

Cultural Marxism espouses a certain brand of American exceptionalism that resonates with the constitutional originalism of the Tea Party. Just as Tea Partiers link “their present-day activities to a constantly-stated reverence for the country’s founding documents,” Jaegar represents the fight against Cultural Marxism as a struggle to redeem the Constitution.⁸⁹⁷ He superimposes an image of the U.S. Capitol building over footage of a burning American flag as the narrator declares that “the success of Cultural Marxism represents the demise of the U.S. constitution.”⁸⁹⁸ Drawing on the premises of originalism, Jaegar portrays the American citizenry—a true “We the People”—as a virtuous embodiment of deservingness that must be protected from European tyranny. For him, the People are innocent victims of the Frankfurt School’s European-style cultural gloom and the Federal Reserve’s European-style banking system.

According to Jaegar, the American People is a precious and unique organism. The People is composed of families, which are built on the sturdy and honorable foundation of holy matrimony between a man and a woman. The traditional family unit is the component that supports the prosperity of the middle class. The enterprising members of the middle class generate the wealth of the nation, and this economic engine sustains the political

896. Disch, “The Tea Party,” 139.

897. Skocpol and Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 42.

898. MEC Films, “Cultural Marxism.”

structure of the United States. Vieira suggests that this harmonious and perfectly functioning society is the result of the Founding Father's original intention for the Constitution. The meddling forces of Cultural Marxism and Corporate Fascism—a secret invasion of European-style socialism—have disrupted the natural balance of forces in American and turned a constitutionally-guaranteed paradise into a totalitarian and depraved dystopia.

Building on the New Right's legacy of coded racism, Jaegar portrays the American people in implicit racial terms. He contrasts the white citizenship of the United States with the coded "Jewishness" of the Frankfurt School. During one sequence, the narrator tells the audience that they will "hear from some of the Frankfurt School graduates themselves."⁸⁹⁹ The following scene features grotesque impersonations of Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, and Gramsci with heavy, stereotypical antisemitic accents.⁹⁰⁰ The script appears to attribute "quotations" to these thinkers that are actually taken from Buchanan's *The Death of the West*. The device of stereotypical accents permits Jaegar to associate Cultural Marxism with "Jewishness" without explicitly naming the Frankfurt School thinkers as "Jews." This is precisely how, as Martin Jay notes, "a certain anti-Semitic subtext could easily creep into the discourse."⁹⁰¹

The use of "coded racism" can result in two separate interpretations of the film.⁹⁰² As one scrolls through the Youtube comments for *Cultural Marxism*, one sees comments

899. Ibid.

900. Incidentally, Gramsci was not Jewish.

901. Jay, *Splinters in Your Eye*, 158.

902. Berlet and Lyons, *Right-wing Populism in America*, 277.

that describe “the Jewish voiceovers [as] hilarious” and others which state that Marcuse sounds like “Oscar the Grouch.”⁹⁰³ Whereas some naïve viewers may interpret the documentary as a straightforward critique of un-American ‘dependency,’ several ‘in-the-know’ watchers may recognize it as a call to cleanse the American body politic from decidedly ‘Jewish’ others.

Cultural Marxism issues a bold call for the “restoration” of the Republic. The narrator urges “citizens” to “get familiar with the original intent of the Founders” and learn more about how “the forces of Cultural Marxism have been raping and pillaging the United States for decades.”⁹⁰⁴ Jaegar even proposes a three-stage plan for restoration: “1) Disconnect from all sources of Cultural Marxist propaganda, media, and lifestyles, 2) Don’t patronize the largest Fed-national banks and fascist multi-national corporations, and 3) Connect up with the original intent of the Founders and get active applying the U.S. constitution.”⁹⁰⁵ Just as Weyrich encouraged conservatives to separate themselves from politically correct institutions, Jaegar wants his audience to “disconnect” from Cultural Marxism and reconnect to a Constitution-based form of right-wing politics. It seems that Jaegar and the Tea Partiers would agree that faithful adherence to the Constitution is the answer to the crisis of American life.

What is the nature of this promise of restoration in *Cultural Marxism*? When Gramsci searches for a criterion to distinguish between progressive change and reactionary

903. Aset Anu, comment on “Cultural Marxism: The Corruption of America,” August 30, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gIdBuK7_g3M&t=1114s, and mynameisawesomeman, comment on “Cultural Marxism: The Corruption of America,” August 30, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gIdBuK7_g3M&lc=UgwS9WJo4xD711v7m-h4AaABAg.

904. Ibid.

905. Ibid.

backlash, he senses that “the problem is to see whether in the dialectic ‘revolution/restoration’ which predominates.”⁹⁰⁶ He adds that, “in the movement of history there is never any turning back, and that restorations *in toto* do not exist.”⁹⁰⁷ Forms of reactionary politics may promise the restoration of a former national ideal, yet it often turns out that the conditions that gave rise to this ideal have dissipated. Those who support reactionary movements desire to restore the conditions that secured their ascendancy and supremacy. As Marx observes in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* (a text that significantly influenced Gramsci), the Bonapartist coup d’état promised to restore the Napoleonic ideal even though the conditions for it no longer pertained. And so, the *idées napoléoniennes*—those “ideas of the undeveloped small holding in the freshness of its youth”—became “hallucinations of its death struggle, words reduced to phrases, spirits reduced to ghosts.”⁹⁰⁸

The dreams and ideals of the Founding Fathers, as Jaegar articulates them, have withered into the delusions and fancies of the Tea Party. The scattered and commercialized Tea Party protests were parodies of the American Revolution. Balding and bloated businessmen donned tricorne hats and embarrassed themselves by adopting faux-colonial accents and parading down the street with antique muskets. They may have borrowed the poetry of the War of Independence, yet they represented the hallucinations of a white American middle class in distress. Mike Davis, the sardonic analyst of American class and crisis, was right to diagnose the Tea Party movement as nothing more than “the gangrene

906. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 219.

907. *Ibid.*, 219-220.

908. Marx, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,” 422.

of imperial decline.”⁹⁰⁹ The imagery and rhetoric of Jaegar’s documentary is an effort to repackage the downward mobility of the white middle class—who received their racial privilege and economic security from the long gone legacy of the New Deal—as an epochal revolutionary moment. It is a reactionary vision with revolutionary pretensions, a restoration of outworn cultural norms with a revolution of aggressive financial deregulation.

Cultural Marxism offers a certain vision of the hegemonic apparatus, where films and television shows are the most powerful tool for transforming society. Instead of blaming the decline of *normative America* on structural trends, Jaegar accuses the Frankfurt School-dominated Hollywood of producing too many negative portrayals of family life. Jaegar senses that right-wing film-makers need to produce conservative movies to organize patriotic Americans into a potent political force. And so, *Cultural Marxism* reinforces the Tea Party’s belief in media populism, and reflects the use of right-wing documentaries as a mobilizing tool to forge a clear political identity.

Agenda: Grinding America Down

“This story really begins for me in the summer of 1992,” remarks the right-wing filmmaker Curtis Bowers in one of the introductory scenes of his 2010 documentary *Agenda: Grinding America Down*.⁹¹⁰ According to Bowers, an old friend asked him to attend a meeting of the Committees of Correspondence (CoC)—an organization of former CPUSA

909. Mike Davis, “The Last White Election?,” *New Left Review*, No. 79 (January-February 2013), 52.

910. Curtis Bowers, “獨家：震撼紀錄片《蠶食美國1：碾碎美國的圖謀》 | Agenda: Grinding America Down | 新唐人亞太電視台,” Youtube video, 1:29:43, posted by 新唐人亞太電視台NTDAPT, January 18, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jw8s_kVGXw&t=2437s.

members—in 1992 to learn more about what these communists were planning to do after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the apparent demise of world communism. Bowers expected to enter a lecture hall full of rowdy, long-haired college radicals, yet he was surprised to discover that most of the attendees were well-dressed, well-spoken, and well-into-their-fifties-and-sixties. Bowers listened attentively to their discussion. Allegedly, the CoC wanted to take over the feminist, environmentalist, and “homosexual” movements to destroy the family, suffocate the free market, and erode America’s faith in Christian morality. At the time, Bowers dismissed these aims as unrealistic. Yet, when he was appointed as a Representative in the Idaho state legislature in 2008, he recalled that meeting and decided that CoC had succeeded in accomplishing their objectives. He penned a letter to the *Idaho Press* entitled “Communist Agenda Makes its Way to Our Mainstream,” in which he claims that “many mainstream politicians and activist judges [share] the same agenda that just sixteen years ago was that of communist strategists.”⁹¹¹ Bowers ends his letter with a plea for “patriotic Americans to wake up and get involved.”⁹¹²

Two years later, he turned this letter into a full-length documentary that won the Jubilee Prize at the Vision Forum Ministries’ San Antonio Christian Film Festival: *Agenda: Grinding America Down*. The film continues Bowers’ effort to alert American citizens and encourage them to enlist in movements that resist the slow socialist takeover of the United States. Drawing on W. Cleon Skousen’s 1962 book *The Naked Communist*,

911. Curtis Bowers, “Communist agenda makes its way to our mainstream,” *Idaho Press*, January 14, 2008, https://www.idahopress.com/bestread/communist-agenda-makes-its-way-to-our-mainstream/article_6740861e-0b59-5a0e-8e4d-0724bea87f7f.html.

912. Bowers, “Communist agenda makes its way to our mainstream.”

Bowers claims that twenty-first century America is the victim of a decades-long agenda to destroy capitalism. Bowers and his impressive roster of right-wing celebrities—David Noebel, Phyllis Schlafly, Trevor Loudon, Edwin Meese—argue that Barack Obama’s “microwaved communism” is the result of a vast coordinated effort, which includes the Frankfurt School and Gramsci, to destroy capitalism.⁹¹³ Bowers’ vision of this communist agenda is a quilt-like narrative that stitches together patches of rumor and allegation from the various anti-leftist polemics of the Old Right, New Right, and Religious Right. Like the Tea Party, Bowers’ project represents an effort to unify the contradictory impulses of the American Right.

Bowers casts himself as the heroic protagonist of this documentary. The arc of the documentary follows Bowers’ personal mission to “find out the truth of what had happened to our country.”⁹¹⁴ He portrays himself as a truth-seeker who can be trusted, because he is a genuine patriot who wants to defend the nation from untrammelled government tyranny. Various scenes depict Bowers at notable monuments in Washington, D.C. to demonstrate his respect for the Founding Fathers and the fallen soldiers of the Vietnam War. Other scenes show Bowers at home with his family to represent his commitment to the sanctity of marriage and parenthood. He tells the audience that he loves “spending time with his family” over footage of his children waving American flags as they run across a green field.⁹¹⁵ Like Jaegar, Bowers implies that exposing the sinister plot of Cultural Marxism is inseparable from protecting the patriarchal family. As I noted in Chapter Four, the leaders

913. Bowers, “Agenda.”

914. Ibid.

915. Ibid.

of the New Right often packaged their stances on social issues in the rhetoric of “family values.”

Bowers performs an identification with the audience through what Bjørn Sørenssen calls a *phatic rhetorical style*: direct address to establish an emotional connection.⁹¹⁶ At the start of the documentary, Bowers states that “the left wants *you* [my emphasis] to think that the cultural changes that have taken place in America since the 1960s have done nothing but progress us forward towards a brave new world.”⁹¹⁷ This ironic statement—already the audience knows that what the left wants is wrong—foreshadows the main themes and arguments of the film. According to Bowers, the left wants to delude and confuse *you* about what has happened in *your* country since the 1960s. Whereas the left wants *you* to believe that these cultural changes were a series of a happy accidents, Bowers wishes to demonstrate that they have been part of an agenda to promote the decline of *your* America. The allusion to Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* implies that what may appear to be a paradise of pleasure and plenty will be exposed as a dystopia of social engineering and ideological control. The phatic address of this statement establishes Bowers’ role as the trustworthy guide who will reveal the truth behind the left’s veil of indoctrination. What pulls the viewer into Bowers’ narrative is what Dean calls “the attitude of certainty.”⁹¹⁸ As she puts it, films like *Agenda* “present [themselves] as already knowing what the subject will find out. [They are] certain and [manifest] this certainty straightforwardly in the

916. Bjørn Sørenssen, “Digital Diffusion of Delusions: A World Wide Web of Conspiracy Documentaries,” in *New Documentary Ecologies: Emerging Platforms, Practices and Discourses*, ed. by Kate Nash, Craig Hight, and Catherine Summerhayes (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 213.

917. Bowers, “Agenda.”

918. Dean, *Democracy and other Neoliberal Fantasies*, 156.

evidence presented, the information shared.”⁹¹⁹ Bowers’ firm attitude of certainty implies that he will not waste his audience’s time with any counterarguments or differing interpretations. As he established in the first scene, the left will deceive *you* and fill *your* mind with uncertainty about the truth. Bowers—that pleasant Christian fellow who loves his country and cares for his family—is promising to provide absolute certainty about ‘what is really going on.’

Whereas Jaegar uses the motif of red smoke to symbolize the Frankfurt School’s infiltration of American life, Bowers constructs a gigantic chart of left-wing intellectuals, politicians, and organizations to display the scale and complexity of the communist plot to conquer America. At the base of the chart is a large red box labelled “Karl Marx” with arrows that branch out to other boxes named the “Frankfurt School,” the “Fabian Society,” “Antonio Gramsci,” and the “Communist Party of the United States.” Countless arrows stem from these four boxes to form a sprawling and convoluted web of associations, connections, and relations. Bowers assures the viewer that “you will find connections to about every left-leaning person and organization in America.”⁹²⁰

The main effect of this chart lies in what Caumanns and Önnersfors would describe as its “pseudo-informative impact.”⁹²¹ Like the motif of red smoke in *Cultural Marxism*, Bowers’ chart expresses an associative logic that has more to do with satisfying the urge to ‘connect the dots’ than explaining the exact relationship between these groups. Although Bowers depends on his interviewees to supply more information about the role of certain

919. Ibid.

920. Bowers, “Agenda.”

921. Caumanns and Önnersfors, “Conspiracy Theory and Visual Culture,” 448.

figures in the communist agenda, their knowledge is often shallow and mistaken.⁹²² Many of these connections are simple absurdities or mistruths. For instance, Bowers repeats the false claim that Bill Ayers—a former member of the Weather Underground—was the ghostwriter for Barack Obama’s memoir *Dreams from my Father*.

The chart is little more than a device for signifying influence without proving it. In fact, it seems that Bowers’ concept of influence is simplistic and ahistorical. The logic of his chart forces him to believe that, as soon as two people or organizations are discovered to be linked (and many of his links are pure fabrications), these figures must be instigators of a unified agenda. The ultimate purpose of the chart is to incriminate the modern-day Democratic Party. Each arrow flows inexorably from Karl Marx (at the bottom) to Barack Obama (at the top). As such, Bowers supplies the Tea Partiers with a genealogy of influence that justifies their perception of Obama as the agent of a secret communist agenda.

Yet, Bowers does not limit himself to suggesting that Obama is a communist asset. He continues the New Right’s project of sixties-bashing to suggest that “1960s radicals” have infiltrated the major “institutions of influence” to manipulate the lives and minds of the American public.⁹²³ Bowers suggests that these radicals incorporated the lessons of Gramsci—that long march through the institutions to enact a slow transformation of the culture—to take over the main centres of power in American political and cultural life to convert the nation to communism. According to Bowers, these radicals have settled into

922. One of his interviewees even quotes the hoax document “The 11 Aims of the Frankfurt School,” as though it was a credible source for understanding the work of the Institute for Social Research. The “11 Aims” was a fabricated list originated on a blog called politicallyincorrect.me.uk.

923. Bowers, “Agenda.”

lucrative careers of subverting the American popular mind in the spheres of Hollywood, non-profits, media, labor, education, and government. As he describes the impact of the 1960s radicals, new arrows sprout from countless boxes on the chart to form new layers of influence. For Bowers, this is where influence becomes infiltration, where the communist virus inserts itself into the body politic of the United States. It is almost impossible for the viewer to properly grasp the increasingly elaborate and confusing connections of influence that supposedly confirm Bowers' claims. The pseudo-informative impact of the chart intensifies into a kind of pseudo-information overload that frazzles the viewer's capacity for critical response.

Nonetheless, there is something affectively compelling about the scale and complexity of Bowers' chart. As von Moltke observes, these types of semi-conspiratorial charts seem to adopt a "fundamental critical posture: things are not as they seem."⁹²⁴ What may appear to the average American as the twenty-first century Democratic Party is essentially the culmination of a deep and persistent conspiracy that stretches back to Karl Marx himself. One cannot underestimate the pleasure or gratification of this secret knowledge. Although it is laughably untrue, there is something thrilling about Trevor Loudon's claim that "Obama is all the things that Gramsci wanted to use for social change."⁹²⁵ The hunt for these hidden connections is ultimately a search for meaning. And, as Dean recognizes in her reflections on conspiracy thought, "everything is meaningful by virtue of pointing to something else . . . enjoyment is produced by the very drive to link, connect, and document, by the intensity of detail and specificity."⁹²⁶ Not only do Tea

924. Moltke, "The Meme is the Message."

925. Bowers, "Agenda."

Partiers require the ideological category of deservingness to assure their status, they seek the enjoyment of “being in the know” (in contrast to those other indoctrinated Americans who cannot penetrate ideological appearances).

Just as *Cultural Marxism* encourages viewers to become familiar with the Constitution and participate in patriotic social movements, *Agenda* tries to turn its audience into a new cohort of conservative activists. Near the end of the documentary, each of Bowers’ interviewees offers some advice about how ordinary citizens can stem the tide of communism. Like Jaegar, Bowers urges his viewers to “arrange a monthly movie night with family and friends” to “watch one of the great documentaries out there about what is going on in our country.”⁹²⁷ Noebel recommends watching *Agenda* a “dozen times” to “master this documentary.”⁹²⁸ For Noebel, the information in the documentary is enough to equip people for the responsibilities of conservative activism. The interviewees also encourage viewers to spread information on social media platforms. Noebel recommends getting a blog; Loudon tells viewers to exploit “the power of Youtube.” If, as Bowers argues, 1960s radicals dominate the media networks, then conservatives must construct their own alternative platforms and forums. As Dean understands it, “skepticism towards the mainstream news, then, is combined with an increased division between who watches what and who trusts whom.”⁹²⁹ Bowers and his interviewees’ advice exacerbates this

926. Dean, *Democracy and other Neoliberal Fantasies*, 150.

927. Bowers, “Agenda.”

928. Ibid.

929. Dean, *Democracy and other Neoliberal Fantasies*, 163.

division and teaches conservatives that they can trust only those people who produce their own content outside the mainstream media.⁹³⁰

Agenda's recommendations express an alternative media literacy. Instead of urging viewers to verify claims or deconstruct arguments, Bowers invites them to participate in the creation of staunchly conservative media. He builds on the populist branding of social media companies to suggest that these platforms can become useful venues for such right-wing political forces as the Tea Party.⁹³¹ The only relevant criteria for judging the reliability of these documentaries, blogs, and Youtube videos is no longer 'objectivity,' but, rather, fidelity to conservative ideology. The Tea Party's media populism demands the development of forms and expressions to mobilize conservatives in a politics of restoration.

Righteous Indignation: Excuse Me While I Save the World!

In his 2020 essay "Pioneering Countercultural Conservatism: Limbaugh, Drudge, Breitbart," the scholar Anthony Nadler tries to identify the affective dynamic that pervades contemporary right-wing media. What Nadler calls "a countercultural style of conservative news" is an "affective style that promotes loyalty and identifications through hailing audiences as members of an embattled cultural identity."⁹³² Countercultural conservatives package *conservativism* as a personal identity that must be protected from the incursions

930. "A Special Showing of 'AGENDA Grinding America Down' at Pickens Tea Party," *KnowPickens.com*, October 16, 2012, <https://www.knowpickens.com/pressrelease.asp?PressRelease=1356>.

931. Nadler, "Populist communication and media environments," 7.

932. Anthony Nadler, "Pioneering Countercultural Conservatism: Limbaugh, Drudge, Breitbart," in *Affective Politics of Digital Media: Propaganda by Other Means*, ed. Megan Boler and Elizabeth Davis (Exeter: Routledge, 2020), 154.

and insults of an increasingly liberal media and government elite. Those who employ this style, such as Rush Limbaugh and Matt Drudge, invert the “cultural hierarchy of hipness” and reframe conservatism as a lively and punk-like subculture that prizes authenticity, rebellion, and swagger.⁹³³ The stylized posturing of countercultural conservatism is a symptom of a media landscape in which “entertainment values are just as central as ideological or informational values.”⁹³⁴ As Crehan suggests, “the aggressive, take-no-prisoners persona” of these right-wing pundits reflects the intensifying commercialization of journalism and news media.⁹³⁵ To entertain their audiences, the countercultural conservative media hosts must play the role of a trickster figure that dares to embarrass and offend the traditional media establishment. And no one embodied this spirit of right-wing trickery with as much panache and arrogance as Andrew Breitbart.

Breitbart’s 2011 autobiography-cum-manifesto *Righteous Indignation: Excuse Me While I Save the World!* chronicles his career-long rampage against what he dubs the “Democratic-Media Complex.”⁹³⁶ According to Breitbart, the networks and newspapers of the mainstream media serve the interests of the Democratic Party and demonize the supporters of the Republican Party. CNN, *The New York Times* and *The Huffington Post* control “the narrative” and force ordinary Americans to imbibe the discredited ideas and permissive values of the left.⁹³⁷ The Prodigal Son-esque narrative of *Righteous Indignation* follows Breitbart as he strays from the traditional middle-class values of his parents in his

933. Nadler, “Pioneering Countercultural Conservatism,” 154.

934. *Ibid.*, 156.

935. Crehan, *Gramsci’s Common Sense*, 143.

936. Breitbart, *Righteous Indignation*, 4.

937. *Ibid.*

teenage years, wanders around New Orleans and Los Angeles in his early twenties as a hypocritical and hedonistic liberal, and rediscovers his authentic conservative self by listening to Rush Limbaugh's talk radio show.

Inspired by "Professor Limbaugh's" talk radio tantrums, Breitbart decides to take on the mission of combating the leftist bias of American cultural and media institutions.⁹³⁸ Following stints of working at *The Drudge Report* and *The Huffington Post*, he founded his eponymous media platform *breitbart.com* in 2007 to offer a conservative spin on the daily events of government, journalism, and Hollywood. He characterizes *Breitbart.com* as part of the rise of right-wing New Media—"the constellation of AM talk radio, the Internet (Drudge Report, plus countless bloggers), and Fox News"—that poses a threat to the Democrat-Media Complex.⁹³⁹ In an inversion of the New Left counterculture, Breitbart claims that these right-wing media platforms represent the resurgence of "investigative journalism and participatory democracy."⁹⁴⁰ Whereas the Democrat-Media Complex stands for censorship and repression, Breitbart's countercultural conservatism promises joyful rebellion, free expression, and authentic living. Like Jaegar and Bowers, Breitbart hopes that this portrayal of the mainstream media as a force of tyranny will persuade conservatives to support this emergence of right-wing New Media.

Breitbart built his persona by following what I call the Rush Limbaugh School of right-wing Gramscianism (as opposed to the GRECE School of right-wing Gramscianism).⁹⁴¹ What became known as the "Breitbart doctrine"—politics is

938. *Ibid.*, 35

939. *Ibid.*, 5.

940. *Ibid.*, 9.

downstream from culture—is essentially a pithy rendition of Limbaugh’s interpretation of Gramsci. In his 1993 book *See, I Told You So*, Limbaugh claims that Gramsci proposed a strategy of cultural warfare—a long march through the institutions—to change the values and beliefs of a nation. According to Limbaugh, the sixties radicals swallowed Gramsci’s ideas and regurgitated them as Clintonism in the nineties. He urges his conservative readers to learn from the example of the Democratic Party’s Gramscianism to launch their own “fight to reclaim and redeem our cultural institutions with all the intensity and enthusiasm we use to redeem our political institutions.”⁹⁴² For Limbaugh and Breitbart, the Right needed to imitate this strawman effigy of Gramsci if they wanted to change the opinions of the American electorate.

Whereas Limbaugh blames Gramsci for the excesses of Clinton-era liberalism, Breitbart traces the origins of the twenty-first century Democrat-Media Complex to the arrival of the Frankfurt School in America. He brands mainstream journalists as “partisan critical theory hacks” who pose as “objective observers of reality.”⁹⁴³ Breitbart may pretend to abhor the hypocrisy of liberal media, yet he remains conveniently blind to his own hypocritical behaviour. As Andreas Huyssen puts it in his 2019 essay “Behemoth Rises Again,” the American Right’s “over-the-top attack on the Frankfurt School points to

941. The French New Right think tank GRECE, or Groupement de recherche et d’études pour la civilisation européenne, was founded in 1968. The founder of GRECE, Alain de Benoist, developed a practice of “metapolitics” through on his reading of Gramsci’s concept of “hegemony.” Roger Griffin specifies that the “right-wing Gramscianism” of the French New Right involves “an extraordinary output of high quality ideological material associated with the ‘think-tank’ GRECE and the periodicals *Nouvelle École* and *Éléments*.” The French New Right believes that they can use this ideological struggle to insert far-right ideas into the cultural and intellectual life of mainstream European discourse. For more on the GRECE School of right-wing Gramscianism, I recommend Tamir Bar-On, *Where Have All the Fascists Gone?* (Bodmin: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007).

942. Rush Limbaugh, *See, I Told You So* (New York: Pocket Books, 1993), 88.

943. Breitbart, *Righteous Indignation*, 58.

the fact that they themselves are doing what they falsely accuse their opponents of doing.”⁹⁴⁴ Breitbart is not offering a proper critique of the ideological framing of “objectivity” in American journalism, but, rather, mirroring his portrait of “the enemy” and dressing up his partisanship as objective reporting. Like Jaegar and Bowers, Breitbart believes that the ideological slant of the Right offers a transparent and authentic view of social reality. This attitude of countercultural conservatism and media populism is key to understanding Breitbart’s rendition of Cultural Marxism.

The Democratic-Media Complex, as Breitbart portrays it, is the lovechild of American progressivism and the Frankfurt School. Whereas the Founding Fathers drew on the history and philosophy of Western Civilization to compose the Constitution, American progressives, such as Ted Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, and the Frankfurt School adopted a warped view of human nature from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Georg W.F. Hegel, and Marx. The progressive-Frankfurt School alliance criticized and rejected the transcendent authority of the Constitution as part of their project to remake America according to their left-wing blueprint. Consequently, the Democratic-Media Complex’s Cultural Marxism represents a total rejection of the Constitution.

According to Breitbart, the Institute of Social Research received a warm welcome at Columbia University during their period of exile. As soon as the members of the Frankfurt School arrived in the United States, they started to creep “into every crevice of American culture.”⁹⁴⁵ Horkheimer implanted his deranged brand of critical theory—an “infinite and unending criticism of the status quo, adolescent rebellion against all

944. Huyssen, “Behemoth Rises Again.”

945. Breitbart, *Righteous Indignation*, 117.

established rules and norms”—into the curricula of Philosophy, History, and English departments across the country.⁹⁴⁶ Drawing on the psychoanalytic theory of Wilhelm Reich, Fromm told American parents never to discipline their children to avoid bruising their offspring’s egos. Adorno disparaged the popular cultural forms of television and cinema, and called for a true art that reflected the barbarity of an exploitative American system of capitalism (*Piss Christ* is apparently an ode to Adorno). In his 1955 *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse encouraged young people to be sexually promiscuous and transgress the repressive sexual norms of marriage and family. For Breitbart, the Frankfurt School wanted to slowly erode the sexual, social and artistic customs of normative America to prepare them for the ideological assaults of the nascent Democrat-Media Complex.

The thinkers of the Frankfurt School, as Breitbart portrays them, assume the role of orchestrating what the New Right perceive as America’s moral breakdown—a descent into “permissiveness.” As I noted in Chapter Four, the moralists of the New Right grouped together a range of unspeakable sins—abortion, homosexuality, promiscuity, pornography, drug abuse, godlessness, feminism—into the catch-all crime of permissiveness. The moral universe of the American Right dictated that the ‘permissive’ attitudes of the liberal elite—the willingness to set up and support a functioning welfare state, for example—contributed directly to the lawlessness of ‘the poor.’ Breitbart’s narrative adapts this New Right truism, which would have been familiar to Tea Party audiences, and rearticulates it as the notion of a broad and coordinated Marxist offensive against traditional values. Yet, as Barbara Ehrenreich might point out, Breitbart’s pro-business leanings prevents him from identifying the “one source of genuinely permissive ideology in American culture.”

946. Ibid., 113.

consumerism.⁹⁴⁷ Arguably, the waning of traditional values had less to do with the arrival of the Frankfurt School in the United States and more to do with what Ehrenreich brands “the marketers’ goal . . . to convince Americans to spend, not save, and . . . to spend *now*, on oneself.”⁹⁴⁸ Although Breitbart’s Tea Party readers may not identify the right cause for this spread of ‘permissiveness,’ they still experience this crisis—this loss of *normative America*—as a threat to their status of white citizenship. And Breitbart manages (or tries to...) to persuade Tea Partiers that anything that they feel as an assault on their white citizenship must be attributed to the plots of the Frankfurt School.

The civil rights movements of the sixties, according to Breitbart, were designed to turn racialized minorities against the white American population. He portrays Marcuse’s celebration of oppositional political forces, such as African-American activists and students, as a deliberate ploy to foment frustration among various “victim groups.”⁹⁴⁹ He interprets affirmative action, diversity initiatives, and multiculturalism as outcomes of Marcuse’s scheme to fragment and dishearten the American people. Marcuse’s nightmarish vision of a balkanized America was implemented in academia, where left-wing professors in the departments of “Gender Studies, LGBT/“Queer” Studies, African-American Studies, Chicano Studies, etc.” taught generations of young students that Western Civilization deserved to be destroyed to make way for a Marxist egalitarian utopia.⁹⁵⁰

Those who dares to criticize this glorious regime of political correctness will be subjected to Marcuse’s strategy of “partisan tolerance,” i.e. would be “forcefully shut

947. Ehrenreich, *Fear of Falling*, 225.

948. *Ibid.*, 221.

949. Breitbart, *Righteous Indignation*, 121.

950. *Ibid.*

up.”⁹⁵¹ Like Minnicino and Lind, Breitbart declares that college campuses have become subversive archipelagos of totalitarian repression where the First Amendment has been substituted for the alleged golden rule of Marcuse’s 1965 essay “Repressive Tolerance:” “intolerance against movements from the right, and toleration of movements from the left.”⁹⁵² Very few people noticed that the Frankfurt School was weakening the cultural immune system of the United States: “our allegiance to the Constitution and to freedom of speech and opinion.”⁹⁵³ Like many Tea Partiers, Breitbart believes that the cause for America’s social and economic decline is the nation’s ever-increasing distance from the original intent of the Constitution.

Yet, Breitbart suggests that the Frankfurt School needed a popularizer to translate their abstruse philosophical ideas into a clear American vernacular. Apparently, the community organizer Saul Alinsky engaged in an act of “trickledown intellectualism” to transmit the ideas of Marcuse to the American public in his accessible and riveting 1971 handbook *Rules for Radicals*.⁹⁵⁴ Breitbart insists that “every successful interest group and social movement in the United States since the 1960s has used Frankfurt School ideology and Alinsky rules.”⁹⁵⁵ According to Breitbart, *Rules for Radicals* was essentially an instruction manual for playing dirty politics. Alinsky abandoned all principles and ideals to construct a raw style of activism that sought victory at any cost. As Breitbart puts it, Alinsky turned the Frankfurt School’s drab academicism into a strategy of cultural warfare

951. Ibid., 122.

952. Marcuse, “Repressive Tolerance,” 109.

953. Breitbart, *Righteous Indignation*, 123.

954. Ibid., 124.

955. Ibid., 135.

and used “the methodologies of political correctness . . . to frighten people into submission and create an informal anti-First Amendment regime.”⁹⁵⁶ For instance, the Democrat-Media Complex exhibit their fidelity to Alinsky’s rules whenever they brand the Tea Party as a “racist” organization.

Breitbart’s leap from Marcuse to Alinsky had always puzzled me. Why not focus on Angela Davis or Abbie Hoffman, two famous American left-wing activists who studied under Marcuse? Yet, it seems that Alinsky is the radical that the Tea Party loves to hate (and imitate). The organization FreedomWorks ran numerous training workshops for fledging conservative activists and taught them to follow Alinsky’s rules. As Frank puts it, “the prescription for activist conservatives was obvious: do exactly as those nefarious, successful liberals (are imagined to) do.”⁹⁵⁷ In this sense, Breitbart’s linking of the Frankfurt School with Alinsky justifies the same methods for countercultural conservatives.

Breitbart even applies Alinsky’s thirteenth rule—Pick the target, frame it, personalize and polarize it—to single out Obama as the new tyrant of Cultural Marxism. He characterizes Obama as a “Frankfurt School scholar” and a “community organizer in the Alinsky mould” who wants to “turn America into a Frankfurt School dystopia.”⁹⁵⁸ Whereas the Tea Party are faithful to the spirit of the Constitution, Obama is either the unwitting puppet or conscious agent of an anti-American conspiracy to implement socialism. Yet, the pro-Obama propaganda of the Democrat-Media Complex hides this

956. Ibid.

957. Frank, *Pity the Billionaires*, 115.

958. Breitbart, *Righteous Indignation*, 139.

reality from the American public. Breitbart insists that the Tea Party needs to sharpen and refine their media strategy to expose this truth.

According to Breitbart, the Tea Partiers are the only people in America who can perceive the contours of the Democrat-Media Complex. They have shed the superficiality of liberalism and embraced the authenticity of this countercultural conservative movement. He encourages Tea Partiers to buy a digital recorder or Blackberry, and produce alternative media to spread the truth about Obama's creeping socialism.

The rise of the Tea Party symbolizes what Breitbart calls the "counterrevolution" of "the American bourgeoisie."⁹⁵⁹ Just as Jaegar and Bowers borrow the poetry of the Revolutionary Era to articulate their vision of cultural restoration, Breitbart weaponizes the phrases of Constitution to praise the Tea Party's counterrevolution. As he describes his brief time as a Lincoln Fellow at the Claremont Institute, he compares his own career to the struggles of the Founding Fathers. Just as beleaguered Americans fought the War of Independence to free themselves from the tyranny of the British Crown, Breitbart wants to use the tools of the New Media to resist the "unitary, tyrannical organism" of the Complex.⁹⁶⁰ As he puts it, he "has the same opportunity, at a critical time in our nation's history, to go against the grain and to fight a revolution against the Complex."⁹⁶¹ For Breitbart, the Tea Party movement is a political force that could defeat the liberal elites "who trample on the First Amendment with their Frankfurt School philosophy and Alinsky

959. Ibid., 215.

960. Ibid., 172.

961. Ibid., 171.

tactics” by harnessing alternative media to communicate news and information outside the channels of the mainstream media.⁹⁶²

The founding of *Breitbart.com* represents Breitbart’s contribution to this media struggle against the Complex. As Jason Roberts and Karin Wahl-Jorgensen point out, the rise of *Breitbart* “cannot be understood as an isolated occurrence but should be situated within the context of the growth in partisan media, ranging from Fox and Sinclair to Gab, Twitter and Reddit.”⁹⁶³ These media platforms are not mere competitors who wish to attract the customers and consumers of traditional news outlets. *Breitbart* and other partisan news sites reproduce an alternative journalistic paradigm that aspires to replace the values and norms of a currently-hegemonic mainstream media. Mark Davis observes that “Breitbart.com does not routinely follow the conventional news reporting practice of providing views from multiple countervailing sources, or quote and counter-quote, to create a sense of ‘balance,’” but, rather, develops a discourse that “draws a clear, contrastive distinction between the authorized ‘self’ and the ‘other’, who is presented in negative terms as alien, undesirable and even dangerous, and who is dehumanized as not worthy of empathy or a legitimate viewpoint.”⁹⁶⁴ Breitbart’s narrative of Cultural Marxism vindicates this stylistic choice to demonize the ‘other side,’ because those who associated with the Democrat-Media Complex are the heirs of an insidious ideological project to destroy Western Civilization. The webpages of *Breitbart* are full of incendiary articles that

962. Ibid., 172.

963. Jason Roberts and Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, “Strategies of Alternative Right-Wing Media: The Case of *Breitbart News*,” in *The Routledge Companion to Political Journalism*, ed. by James Morrison, Jen Birks, and Mike Berry (Abington: Routledge, 2022), 165.

964. Mark Davis, “A new, online culture war? The communication world of Breitbart.com,” *Communication Research and Practice*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 246.

use what Roberts and Wahl-Jorgenson call the *strategy of vilification* to portray “the left” as a wholly illegitimate and incomprehensible political enemy.⁹⁶⁵ For instance, Gerald Warner’s 2015 *Breitbart* article “For the First Time in history, ‘Conservatives’ Are at the Forefront of Cultural Revolution” condemns the “evil” and “destructive” plans of the Frankfurt School, especially Adorno’s apparent promotion of “degenerate atonal music to induce mental illness, including necrophilia, on a large scale.”⁹⁶⁶ Such vilifying rhetoric serves to organize the boundaries of a right-wing media populism that splits people into a virtuous ‘us’ and a demonic ‘them.’

The Tea Party’s narratives of Cultural Marxism adapted and reinforced the *sensu comune* of the white American middle class. They confirmed the vague affective suspicion that hidden social engineers were indulging the wants of the ‘dependent’ and wasting the wealth of the ‘deserving.’ Conjunctural intellectuals, such as Jaegar and Bowers, deployed evocative images to capture the feeling that Obama’s Democratic Party were complicit in this secret and elusive plot. They borrowed the poetry of the Revolutionary Era to inspire the fantasy that these suburban warriors could recover their nostalgia dreams of normative America. Yet, this vision of restoration was incoherent and contradictory. It could not solve the problems that it claimed to identify. The notion of “Cultural Marxism/s” provided Tea Partiers with the comforting illusion that, if they wanted to restore normative America, they simply had to produce more blogs, more Youtube videos, and more podcasts to expose the Frankfurt School’s plot. If one believes that the “Cultural Marxist” mainstream

965. Roberts and Wahl-Jorgensen, “Strategies of Alternative Right-Wing Media,” 170.

966. Gerald Warner, “For the First Time in History, ‘Conservatives’ Are at the Forefront of the Cultural Revolution,” *Breitbart*, February 4, 2015. <https://www.breitbart.com/europe/2015/02/04/for-the-firsttime-in-history-conservatives-are-at-the-forefront-of-the-cultural-revolution/>

media is the cause of societal decline, then the construction of an alternative media is the only real alternative. The Tea Party's fanatical celebration of capitalist values demonstrates their incapacity to understand the relationship between the disintegration of normative America and the continual crisis of capitalism. Like Rand, they would rather invent a one-dimensional enemy than consider that the problem was more structural or inherent. They were unable to confront the processes of racialization and displacement that constructed their own political identity as a 'deserving' American. The narratives of Cultural Marxism/s supplied them with a reassuring alternative to the new 'deep stories' about the need to face America's long histories of white supremacy, patriarchy, and settler colonialism. And so, they decided to stay in the storm.

Concluding Remarks

The ideas of Cultural Marxism/s were not generated in a historical vacuum. Michael J. Minnicino did not wake up one morning and think that it would be fun to blame the Frankfurt School for political correctness. William S. Lind did not craft his narratives of Cultural Marxism/s in some isolated haven beyond the realm of politics. The films of James Jaegar and Curtis Bowers are not merely harmless educational flicks that the whole family can enjoy. Each of these intellectuals inhabits a matrix of relations between social classes, political forces, and superstructural institutions. They personify larger historical forces and processes of knowledge production. As Crehan observes, “no intellectual ever completely escapes his or her historical moment.”⁹⁶⁷

None of these figures cultivated an interest in the Frankfurt School out of pure curiosity. They devised their specific narratives of Cultural Marxism/s to perform clearly-defined political tasks and functions. When I started to write this dissertation, I decided that I should examine what differentiated these separate narratives. For instance, I wanted to understand Lind’s ideas and arguments not as examples of a generic “Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory,” but, rather, as products of the histories of the Free Congress Foundation, the New Right, and the American conservative movement. I found that this emphasis on specificity—a commitment to the vaguely Jamesonian injunction to *always contextualize*—offered sharper insights about why certain intellectuals produced different narratives of Cultural Marxism/s to respond to, and potentially transform, their historical moment. And so, I turned to Antonio Gramsci to adopt a methodological approach that

967. Crehan, *Gramsci's Common Sense*, 193.

combined concrete and contextualist analyses of the “immediate, direct, and vivid impression” with a broader theoretical vision that revealed the multifaceted nature of political and ideological struggle in the conjunctures of a modern capitalist society.⁹⁶⁸

In Chapter One, I reflected on what it means to think in this “Gramscian way.” I argued that one needs to gain a philological familiarity with the ‘pathways’ of Gramsci’s thought before one can use his concepts to guide a concrete study of contemporary politics. I oriented my exploration of these pathways around the central theme of intellectuals. As I explained, Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks* introduces an expanded concept of intellectuals to account for the proliferation of intellectual practices and functions in a modern bourgeois state. Gramsci’s expansion of this concept recognizes the actual conditions and practices that shape the consciousness and products of different groups of intellectuals. I built on this analytical framework to identify what is specific about the practices and conditions of the intellectuals who produced and propagated ideas of Cultural Marxism/s. Yet, the broader sociohistorical terrain on which these intellectuals operate is constantly shifting as the State struggles to mediate and manage the “continual crisis” of capitalism.⁹⁶⁹ Periods of intensified disequilibrium produces openings for the intellectuals of various political forces to propose solutions to the crisis and advance their visions for reordering or overcoming the current organization of society. Consequently, it became necessary to understand the proponents of Cultural Marxism/s as both *resulting* from crisis (the ascendant intellectuals of political forces that emerged from the cracks of a fragmenting ideological consensus) and *responding* to crisis (the intellectuals that offered diagnoses of what caused the crisis

968. Gramsci, *Letters from Prison: Volume I*, 233.

969. Gramsci, *Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 220.

and prescribe cures to correct the imbalance). Of course, this observation raised the question of which crisis/crises provoked the narratives of Cultural Marxism/s—a question that I answered in Chapter Two.

Chapter Two started with a critique of existing explanations for the origin of the “Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory.” Most accounts are content to outline a simple sequence of cause-and-effect, i.e. the end of the Cold War caused American conservatives to revive a Nazi-era slur. I argue that these interpretations tended to divorce the individual proponents of Cultural Marxism/s from their historical contexts and to efface the variations in their modes of knowledge production. Drawing on the work of Carley, Filippini, and Hall, I used the Gramscian method of conjunctural analysis to identify and magnify the overlapping contexts that shaped the intellectuals who produced narratives of Cultural Marxism/s. I contended that a set of crises destabilized the institutional relations of the liberal consensus, as well as the social and economic elements that underpinned normative American values. I theorized that this reconfiguration of social and superstructural forces formed a terrain of the conjunctural on which emergent political forces could agitate and promote their ideological visions. The intellectuals of these forces latched on *culture* as an immediate arena of contestation and mobilization, and developed cultural polemics to propose a new *direzione* for the American State. Consequently, Cultural Marxism/s must not be understood as a single object with a clear time and place of origin, but, rather, as a set of ideological responses to a range of dramatic conjunctural shifts. In the following three chapters, I conducted concrete analyzes of how intellectuals in different forces developed and disseminated these responses.

Since Martin Jay dismissed the LaRouchites as “too confused in their ideology to be taken seriously,” they have been severely overlooked in most histories of Cultural Marxism/s.⁹⁷⁰ In Chapter Three, I charted the historical trajectory of this ‘confused’ ideology to understand how it informed LaRouchean articulations of Cultural Marxism/s. I demonstrated that NCLC’s polemics about the Frankfurt School were tightly linked to the arbitrary ideology that structured the LaRouche movement. According to this ideology, LaRouche and his followers constituted an intellectual elite that needed to save humanity from an oligarchical conspiracy—a counterelite that included the Frankfurt School. Whereas this counterelite wanted to subdue the masses with ‘mythologies’ and ‘brainwashing’ techniques, the LaRouchean vanguard were determined to reveal this plot and rescue human civilization with their centralized apparatus of alternative knowledge production. The practices of NCLC’s arbitrary intellectuals—theoretical centralism, exposure literature, LaRouchean reading—produced narratives of Cultural Marxism/s that reinforced the organizational boundary between “the elite” and “the counterelite” and affirmed the supposed redemptive power of LaRouche’s ideological vision and leadership. As NCLC developed closer ties to the New Right, these LaRouchean polemics overlapped with the concerns of cultural conservatism. The growing ideological convergences and connections between LaRoucheanism and American conservatisms helped to propel NCLC’s writings about the Frankfurt School into the territory of New Right agitation.

In Chapter Four, I argued that Weyrich and Lind recontextualized these LaRouchean narratives into an easily-digestible and marketable New Right polemic about the rise of political correctness, the fading of normative American values, and the decline

970. Jay, *Splinters in Your Eye*, 154.

of the conservative movement. I traced the long histories of the New Right to explain the formation of the *New Right think tank intellectual* who markets ideas and arguments to promote a conservative *direzione* for the American State. The New Right's ideology of *elite populism*, embodied in its practices and institutions, represented American politics as a struggle between "the People" and "the Groups/New Class." Weyrich and Lind's articulations of Cultural Marxism/s portrayed the Frankfurt School as a destructive agent that tricked "the Groups" into eroding the 'common culture' of "the People" through the ideology of political correctness. I argue that the FCF deployed such a wide variety of media (op-eds, letters, television shows, novels, conference lectures) to popularize these narratives partially because Lind believed that simply telling "the People" that political correctness was 'Marxism' would be enough to eliminate left-wing and liberal ideas in the United States. Yet, as I pointed out, Lind's narratives would occasionally encourage the use of violence to execute the humans that he labelled as "Cultural Marxists." Although Weyrich and Lind constructed their ideas of Cultural Marxism/s within the terrain of the New Right, the FCF's methods of idea-marketing communicated these narratives to vocally antisemitic and white supremacist circles.

In Chapter Five, I investigated the uses of Cultural Marxism/s in the Tea Party movement. The relatively loose and federated structure of the Tea Party favored the proliferation of conjunctural intellectuals who could draw on the *senso comune* of the white American middle class to form political identities and narratives. I argued that the Tea Party's articulations of Cultural Marxism/s reflected and reinforced its ideology of *media populism*. The proponents of these narratives sought to mobilize and direct a force

of alternative media production that could rival and overcome what they saw as a “Cultural Marxist” mainstream.

To quote Gramsci’s insight once more, these ideas of Cultural Marxism/s were “not spontaneously ‘born’ in each individual brain.”⁹⁷¹ They had their centers of “formation, of irradiation, of dissemination, of persuasion.”⁹⁷² The nature of these centers, as well as the types of intellectuals who occupied them, deeply affected the ways in which ideas of Cultural Marxism/s were formed, disseminated, and received. Instead of aspiring to tell a complete history of the “Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory,” I chose to closely analyze the practices and conditions in these centers that produced the specific articulations of Cultural Marxism/s.

Although my dissertation has addressed the need for closer contextualizations of Cultural Marxism/s, I should address some of the limits of a conjunctural and contextual analysis. I recognize that my project is somewhat constrained by a sort of methodological nationalism, as though these American contexts were not entangled in larger global and transnational processes. The method of conjunctural analysis is primarily designed to assess the relations of force within existing nation-states. Although Gramsci acknowledges that “international relations intertwine with the internal relations of nation states,” the primary focus of conjunctural analysis is the level of the national.⁹⁷³ Yet, as I complete this dissertation and contemplate future research, I reflect that it will be necessary to deepen and broaden the terms of conjunctural analysis to apprehend the transnational nature of

971. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 192.

972. *Ibid.*

973. *Ibid.*, 182.

both the contemporary Right and Cultural Marxism/s narratives. Why, for instance, do Conservative Party MPs in the United Kingdom decry “Cultural Marxism”?⁹⁷⁴ Why does the Brazilian New Right oppose what they call “Marxismo Cultural” in a nation that the members of the Frankfurt School never visited?⁹⁷⁵ Why does the Canadian psychologist Jordan Peterson proclaim that something called “postmodern Neo-Marxism” (a cognate of Cultural Marxism/s discourses) threatens to the individualistic values of Western Civilization?⁹⁷⁶ I would argue that it is not as simple as suggesting that American-style culture wars have been imported elsewhere or merely adapted to other national contexts.

In her 2021 article “Defending ‘Western’ Values: Reactionary Neoliberalism in the Americas,” the scholar Gabriela Segura-Ballar argues that the common element of the transnational Right in Europe and the Americas is a conviction that “Western Civilization” or “Judeo-Christian tradition” needs to be defended. Segura-Ballar points out that this rhetorical defense of “Western” values often serves “not only to justify racist, discriminatory, and exclusive discourses and actions, but also to legitimize even more authoritarian neoliberalization processes.”⁹⁷⁷ When we examine the narratives of Cultural Marxism/s, we discover that not only do they mourn the loss of normative American values, but they also demand the protection and restoration of a mythic Western

974. “BREXIT No Ifs No Buts 26 03 19 Suella Braverman MP,” Youtube Video, 16:54, posted by “Bruges Group,” March 26, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jiFIM-3X6eM>.

975. Andrew Woods, “The Cultural Marxism Conspiracy Thrives in Bolsonaro’s Brazil,” *Fair Observer*, October 16, 2019, <https://www.fairobserver.com/insight/cultural-marxism-conspiracy-far-right-jair-bolsonaro-brazil-latin-america-news-00054/>.

976. Luke Savage, “Jordan Peterson’s ‘Postmodern Neomarxism’ is Pure Hokum,” *Jacobin*, March 16, 2022, <https://jacobin.com/2022/03/jordan-peterson-postmodernism-marxism-philosophy-zizek>.

977. Gabriela Segura-Ballar, “Defending ‘Western’ Values: Reactionary Neoliberalism in The Americas,” *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (March 2021), 7.

Civilization. The transnational articulations of Cultural Marxism/s may reveal that these narratives are part of a larger ‘civilizational’ discourse, rather than a merely national one. In sense that drawing on the resources of post-colonial and decolonial theorists may uncover the deeper processes and relations of coloniality and white supremacy that underpin Cultural Marxism’s transnational uses and appeals. This is an area of inquiry that I would like to pursue in my future research.

Higher education remains the main target of these transnational attacks on “Cultural Marxism.” In a 2021 interview, Fox News reporters asked the Republican senator Marco Rubio—whose 2010 campaign was Tea Party-endorsed—about a Graduate Certificate in “Social Justice in Public Service” that was offered at University of Central Florida (UCF). He replied forthrightly that American colleges should not teach students “Cultural Marxism.”⁹⁷⁸ Without referring to the actual content of the course, Rubio proclaimed that UCF was teaching students to “hate America . . . hate everything about our history, and how to divide and hate one another.”⁹⁷⁹ He claimed that universities should focus on teaching “technological fields,” such as engineering, biology, and math, to ensure that more people will “find a good paying job, contribute to their community, their family, and country.”⁹⁸⁰ This is an expression of what Heller calls the seemingly implacable contradiction between “the university as a site of critical knowledge and as an adjunct of capitalism.”⁹⁸¹ It is a sign of the struggle to limit educational institutions to the

978. NRSC, “Sen. Marco Rubio: “Social Justice” and “wokeness” are really just nice names for Cultural Marxism,” May 26, 2021, video, 1:18, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=821764785107387>.

979. NRSC, “Sen. Marco Rubio.”

980. Ibid.

981. Heller, *The Capitalist University*, xiii.

reproduction of an efficient and compliant workforce. The purpose of the university, according to Rubio and his ilk, is the preservation of the capitalist economy and the normative American community. Although the proponents of Cultural Marxism/s pay lip service to the ideals of humanism and “Western Civilization,” they seek to enforce an impoverished notion of education that subjects all learning and knowledge to the exploitative and exclusionary logics of an invasive late capitalism. Even when they act as defenders of free speech, they hope to silence forms of critique and types of political intervention that try to address and overcome the inherent inequalities and oppressions of the current capitalist system. A proper response to this coercive and reactionary vision of education requires the formation of organic intellectuals who can establish mutually educative relationships within and beyond the college campus. As Gramsci reminds us, the forming of these intellectuals is a long, difficult, and often frustrating process. Yet, we cannot surrender the future to the reactionary dreams of right-wing utopias. The outcome of this struggle is not predetermined. We must not listen to those who tell us that hierarchies and inequalities are innate or ‘natural.’ We can find a new way out of the storm.

Bibliography

- “A Special Showing of ‘AGENDA Grinding America Down’ at Pickens Tea Party.” *KnowPickens.com*. October 16, 2012. Accessed August 2, 2022. <https://www.knowpickens.com/pressrelease.asp?PressRelease=1356>.
- “BREXIT No Ifs No Buts 26 03 19 Suella Braverman MP.” Youtube Video, 16:54. Posted by “Bruges Group,” March 26, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jiFIM-3X6eM>.
- “House Party DVD Request.” *Tea Party Patriots Action*. Accessed August 15, 2022. <https://www.teapartypatriots.org/archive/house-party-dvd-request/>.
- “Marcuse: Cop-out or Cop?.” *Progressive Labor*. Vol. 6, No. 6, February 1969: 61-66.
- “Obszöne Welt.” *Der Spiegel*. June 29, 1969. Accessed May 12, 2022. <https://www.spiegel.de/kultur/obszoene-welt-a-03307f32-0002-00010000000045549323>.
- “Patriots and Popcorn.” *Tea Party Patriots Action*. Accessed August 15, 2022. <https://www.teapartypatriots.org/archive/patriots-and-popcorn/>.
- “Paul Ryan on Ayn Rand.” Youtube video. 1:09. Posted by gallicho1. April 26, 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WmW19uoyuO8>.
- “Tea Party Patriots Blog Roll.” Tea Party Patriots. Accessed August 15, 2022, <https://web.archive.org/web/20110709211121/http://www.teapartypatriots.org/blogroll.aspx>.
- “What’s New at MEC.” MEC Films. August 2010. Accessed August 15, 2022. <http://www.mecfilms.com/updates/upd08-10.htm>.
- A.M. “How PL ‘defeats’ opponents’ ideas.” *The Militant*. Vol. 33, No. 8. February 21, 1969. 2.
- Accuracy in Academia. “Social and Political Issues on College Campuses.” C-SPAN video. 4:02:24. July 10, 1998. <https://www.c-span.org/video/?1084961/college-campus-social-political-issues>.
- Achcar, Gilbert. “Morbid Symptoms: What Did Gramsci Really Mean?” *Notebooks: The Journal for Studies on Power*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (February 2022): 379-387.
- Adorno, Theodor W. “Culture Industry Reconsidered.” In *The Culture Industry*, edited by J. M. Bernstein, 98-106. Padstow: Routledge, 2001.

- Adorno, Theodor W. *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.
- Adorno, Theodor. *Aspects of the New Right-Wing Extremism*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020.
- Ammerman, Nancy T. "North American Protestant Fundamentalism." In *Media, Culture, and the Religious Right*, edited by Linda Kintz and Julia Lesage, 55-113. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.
- Andrew III, John A. *The Other Side of the Sixties: Young Americas for Freedom and the Rise of Conservative Politics*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997.
- Anonymous. "Spartacist and Leninist Politics: The Flight of the Middle Class Intellectual." *Bulletin*, Vol. 2, No. 34 (August-September 1966), 12-18.
- Anu, Aset. Comment on "Cultural Marxism: The Corruption of America." August 30, 2011. Accessed August 1, 2022. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gIdBuK7_g3M&t=1114s.
- Barkun, Michael. *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006.
- Bar-On, Tamir. *Where Have All the Fascists Gone?* Bodmin: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007.
- Bauer, A.J. "Journalism History and Conservative Erasure," *American Journalism*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (2018): 2-26.
- Bebout, Lee. "Weaponizing Victimhood: Discourses of Oppression and the Maintenance of Supremacy on the Right." In *News on the Right: Studying Conservative News Cultures*, edited by Anthony Nadler and A. J. Bauer, 64-83. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Bender, Thomas. "Politics, Intellect, and the American University, 1945-1995." In *American Academic Culture in Transformation: Fifty Years, Four Disciplines*, edited Thomas Bender and Carl E. Schorske, 17-54. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.
- Berkowitz, Bill. "'Cultural Marxism' Catching On." *Intelligence Report*. August 13, 2003. Accessed August 2, 2022. <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligencereport/2003/cultural-marxism-catching?page=0%2C0>.
- Berl, Christine and Weinfield, Harry. "Letter of Resignation." *LaRouchePlanet*. April 2, 1974. Accessed March 4, 2022. <https://web.archive.org/web/20160826222457/http://laroucheplanet.info/pmiki/pmwiki.php?n=Library.BerlWeinfieldResignatiuon2>.

- Berlet, Chip and Lyons, Matthew N. *Right-Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort*. The Guilford Publications: New York, 2000.
- Berlet, Chip. "Taking Tea Parties Seriously: Corporate Globalization, Populism, Resentment." *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology*. Vol. 10, No. 1, January 2011: 11-29.
- Berlet, Chip. "Who is Mediating the Storm? Right-Wing Alternative Information Networks." In *Media, Culture, and the Religious Right*, edited by Linda Kintz and Julia Lesage, 249-273. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.
- Bernstein, Richard. "The Rising Hegemony of the Politically Correct." *New York Times*, October 28, 1990: 1-4.
- Bianchi, Alvaro. *Gramsci's Laboratory: Philosophy, History and Politics*. Leiden: Brill, 2020.
- Blach, Stephen H. and London, Herbert. "The Tenured Left." *Commentary*, Vol. 82, No. 4 (October 1986): 41-51.
- Blahut, F.C. "Communism Isn't Dead, It's Just Been Renamed." In *Cultural Communism: The Vivisection of America*, edited by F.C. Blahut, 2-5. American Free Press: 2002.
- Bobbio, Norberto. "Gramsci and the conception of civil society." In *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*, edited by Chantal Mouffe, 21-47. Whitstable: Routledge, 1979.
- Bookchin, Murraray. *Listen, Marxist!*. Accessed February 26, 2022. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/bookchin/1969/listen-marxist>.
- Boothman, Derek. "A note on the evolution—and translation—of some key Gramscian terms." *Socialism and Democracy*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (2000): 115-130.
- Bothmer, Bernard von. *Framing the Sixties: The Use and Abuse of a Decade from Ronald Reagan to George W. Bush*. Amherst & Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010.
- Bowers, Curtis. "Communist agenda makes its way to our mainstream." *Idaho Press*. January 14, 2008. Accessed March 13, 2022. https://www.idahopress.com/bestread/communist-agenda-makes-its-way-to-our-mainstream/article_6740861e-0b59-5a0e-8e4d0724bea87f7f.html.
- Bowers, Curtis. "獨家：震撼紀錄片《蠶食美國1：碾碎美國的圖謀 Agenda: Grinding America Down | 新唐人亞太電視台》" Youtube

video, 1:29:43. Posted by 唐人亞太電視台NTDAPTV. January 18, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jw8s-_kVGXw&t=2437s.

- Boyer, Paul. "The Evangelical Resurgence in 1970s American Protestantism." In *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s*, edited by Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer, 29-51. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008.
- Bratich, Jack. *Conspiracy Panics: Political Rationality and Popular Culture*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008.
- Breines, Paul. "Editor's Notes." In *Critical Interruptions: New Left Perspectives on Herbert Marcuse*, edited by Paul Breines, ix-xiii. New York: Herder and Herder, 1970.
- Breines, Paul. "From Guru to Spectre: Marcuse and the Implosion of the Movement." In *Critical Interruptions: New Left Perspectives on Herbert Marcuse*, edited by Paul Breines, 1-21. New York: Herder and Herder, 1970.
- Breitbart, Andrew. *Righteous Indignation: Excuse Me While I Save the World!* New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2011.
- Brenner, Samuel. "Fellow Travelers: Overlap between 'Mainstream' and 'Extremist' Conservatives in the Early 1960s" In *The Right Side of the Sixties: Reexamining Conservatism's Decade of Transformation*, edited by Laura Jane Gifford and Daniel K. Williams, 83-99. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012.
- Breslauer, Gus. "Cults of Our Hegemony: An Inventory of Left-Wing Cults." *Cosmonaut*, November 18, 2020. Accessed December 1, 2020. <https://cosmonaut.blog/2020/11/18/cults-of-our-hegemony-an-inventory-of-left-wing-cults>.
- Buchanan, Patrick J. *The Death of the West: How Dying Populations and Immigrant Invasions Imperil Our Country and Civilization*. New York: St Martin's Press, 2002.
- Buci-Glucksmann, Christine. *Gramsci and the State*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980.
- Buhle, Paul. *Marxism in the United States: A History of the American Left*, Third Edition. New York: Verso, 2013.
- Burns, Jennifer. *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Busbridge, Rachel; Moffitt, Benjamin; and Thorburn, Joshua. "Cultural Marxism: far-right conspiracy theory in Australia's culture wars." *Social Identities*, Vol. 26, No. 6 (2020): 722-738.

- Butter, Michael and Knight, Peter. "The History of Conspiracy Theory Research: A Review and Commentary." In *Conspiracy Theories and the People Who Believe in Them*, edited by Joseph Uscinski, 33-46. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Buttigieg, Joseph A. "Antonio Santucci and Antonio Gramsci: An Open Dialogue." In *Antonio Gramsci*, edited by Lelio La Porta, 9-19. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2010.
- Carley, Robert F. *Cultural Studies Methodology and Political Strategy: Metaconjuncture*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021.
- Carley, Robert F. *Culture and Tactics: Gramsci, Race, and the Politics of Practice*. New York: State University of New York, 2019.
- Carto, Willis F. "The Significance of Cultural Communism." In *Cultural Communism: The Vivisection of America*, edited by F.C. Blahut, 6-7. American Free Press: 2002.
- Caumanns, Ute and Önnersfors, Andreas. "Conspiracy Theory and Visual Culture." In *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories*, edited by Michael Butter and Peter Knight, 441-456. London: Routledge, 2020.
- Chisolm, Laura Brown. "Sinking the Think Tanks Upstream: The Use and Misuse of Tax Exemption Law to Address the Use and Misuse of Tax-Exempt Organizations by Politicians," *University of Pittsburgh Law Review*, Vol. 51, No. 3 Spring 1990: 577-640.
- Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture. "Paul Gottfried and Bill Lind discuss 'What is Cultural Marxism?'" November 24, 2020. Video, 1:02:45. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=843200876478528>.
- Cooper, Melinda. *Family Values: Between Neoliberalism and the New Social Conservatism*. Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2017.
- Cospito, Giuseppe. *The Rhythm of Thought in Gramsci*. Leiden: Brill, 2016.
- Counterintelligence. "New Left Journals Shape Fascist Debates." *Executive Intelligence Review*. Vol. IV, No. 49 (December 6, 1977): 6-8.
- Crehan, Kate. *Gramsci's Common Sense: Inequality and its Narratives*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016.
- C-SPAN. "Conservative Leadership Conference." C-SPAN video, 3:35:06. November 12, 1993, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?52279-1/conservative-leadership-conference>.
- C-SPAN. "National Empowerment Television." C-SPAN video, 50:03. December 13, 1994. <https://www.c-span.org/video/?62168-1/national-empowerment-television>.

- Dainotto, Roberto. "Introduction." In *Gramsci in the World*, edited by Roberto Dainotto and Fredric Jameson, 1-15. Durham: Duke University Press, 2020.
- Dann, Jim and Dillon, Hari. *The Five Retreats: A History of the Failure of the Progressive Labor Party*. 1977. Accessed May 20, 2022. <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/1960-1970/5retreats/chapter4>.
- Davidson, Alastair. "The Uses and Abuses of Gramsci." *Thesis Eleven*, Vol. 95, No. 1 (November 2008): 68-94.
- Davis, James Kirkpatrick. *Assault on the Left: The FBI and the Sixties Antiwar Movement*. Westport: Praeger, 1997.
- Davis, Mark. "A new, online culture war? The communication world of Breitbart.com." *Communication Research and Practice*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 241-254.
- Davis, Mike. *Prisoners of the American Dream: Politics and Economy in the History of the US Working Class*. Thetford: Verso, 1986.
- Davis, Mike. "The Last White Election?" *New Left Review*, No. 79, January February 2013: 5-52.
- DD2K. "File:Screen grab of Cultural Marxism articles on Wikipedia and Metapedia.png." *Wikimedia Commons*, December 6, 2014. Accessed August 12, 2022. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Screen_grab_of_Cultural_Marxism_articles_on_Wikipedia_and_Metapedia.png.
- Dean, Jodi. "Declarations of Independence." In *Cultural Studies and Political Theory*, edited by Jodi Dean, 285-304. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000.
- Dean, Jodi. *Democracy and other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.
- Dean, Jodi. "Introduction: The Interface of Political Theory and Cultural Studies." In *Cultural Studies and Political Theory*, edited by Jodi Dean, 1-19. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000.
- Denning, Michael. "Why No Gramsci in the United States?" In *Gramsci in the World*, edited by Roberto Dainotto and Fredric Jameson, 158-164. Durham: Duke University Press, 2020.
- Desai, Radhika. "Second-Hand Dealers in Ideas: Think Tanks and Thatcherite Hegemony." *New Left Review*, No. 203, February 1994: 27-64.
- Diamond, Sara. *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States*. New York: The Guilford Press, 1995.

- DiBranco, Alex. "Conservative News and Movement Infrastructure." In *News on the Right: Studying Conservative News Cultures*, edited by Anthony Nadler and A. J. Bauer, 123-140. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- DiMaggio, Anthony. *The Rise of the Tea Party: Political Discontent and Corporate Media in the Age of Obama*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2011.
- Disch, Lisa. "The Tea Party: A 'White Citizenship' Movement?" In *Steep: The Precipitous Rise of the Tea Party*, edited by Lawrence Rosenthal and Christine Trost, 133-151. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012.
- Dohrn, Bernardine. "Labor Committee statement: pure and simple trash," *New Left Notes*, Vol. 3, No. 38, December 18, 1968: 4.
- Draper, Hal. "Anatomy of the Microsect." Accessed August 2, 2022. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/draper/1973/xx/microsect>.
- Ehrenreich, Barbara and Ehrenreich, John. *Long March, Short Spring: The Student Uprising at Home and Abroad*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969.
- Ehrenreich, Barbara. "The Challenge for the Left." In *Debating P.C.: The Controversy over Political Correctness on College Campus*, edited by Paul Berman, 333-338. New York: Laurel, 1992.
- Ehrenreich, Barbara. *Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class*. New York: Twelve, 2020
- Elbaum, Max. *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao and Che*. Croydon: Verso, 2018.
- Engels, Frederick. "Engels to Joseph Bloch." In *Karl Marx: Selected Works in Two Volumes, Vol. 1*, edited by Vladimir Adoratsky, 381-283. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1943.
- Engelstad, Ellen and Kristjánsson, Mimir. "The Return of 'Judeo-Bolshevism.'" *Jacobin*, February 16, 2019. Accessed May 2, 2022. <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/02/antisemitism-judaism-bolsheviks-socialists-conspiracy-theories>.
- Executive Intelligence Review. "Angela Davis: The Offer the CPUSA Could Not Refuse." *Executive Intelligence Review*, Vol. 1, No. 17, August 26, 1974: 30-34.
- Fenster, Mark. *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.
- Filippini, Michele. *Using Gramsci: A New Approach*. London: Pluto Press, 2017.

- Fitting, Peter. "Utopias Beyond Our Ideals: The Dilemma of the Right-Wing Utopia." *Utopian Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1-2 (1991): 95-109.
- Formisano, Ronald P. *The Tea Party: A Brief History*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2012.
- Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980.
- Frank, Thomas. *Pity the Billionaires: The Hard-Times Swindle and the Unlikely Comeback of the Right*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012.
- Fraser, Nancy. *The Old is Dying and the New Cannot Be Born*. Croydon: Verso, 2019.
- Fraser, Nancy and Gordon, Linda. "A Genealogy of 'Dependency': Tracing a Keyword of the U.S. Welfare State." *Signs: A Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. Vol. 19, No. 2 (Winter 1994): 307-336.
- Gerstle, Gary. "The Reach and Limits of the Liberal Consensus." In *The Liberal Consensus Reconsidered: American Politics and Society in the Postwar Era*, edited by Robert Mason and Iwan Morgan, 52-66. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2017.
- Gillis, William. "The Anti-Semitic Roots of the 'Liberal News Media' Critique," *American Journalism*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (2017): 262-288.
- Gilmore, Justin. "Neo-Authoritarianism and the Contestation of White Identification in the US." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*. Vol. 23, No. 1 March 2021: 1-14.
- Giroux, Henry. *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope: Theory, Culture, and Schooling*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1997.
- Godwin, R. Kenneth. "The Structure, Content, and Use of Political Direct Mail." *Polity*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (Spring 1988): 527-538.
- Goldman, Eddie. "PL, the Struggle at Columbia, and the Road to Irrelevance." In *You Say You Want a Revolution: SDS, PL, and Adventures in Building a Worker-Student Alliance*, edited by John F. Levin and Earl Silbar, 189-201. San Francisco: 1741 Press, 2019.
- Goodall, Alex. "Red-Hunting and Internal Security: Conflict in the Age of Consensus." In *The Liberal Consensus Reconsidered: American Politics and Society in the Postwar Era*, edited by Robert Mason and Iwan Morgan, 127-147. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2017.
- Gordon, Jeff. "SDS: An Analysis." *Progressive Labor*, Vol. 6, No. 5, October 1968: 73-110.
- Gramsci, Antonio. *Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1995.

- Gramsci, Antonio. *Letters from Prison: Volume I*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- Gramsci, Antonio. *Letters from Prison: Volume II*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- Gramsci, Antonio. *Pre-Prison Writings*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Gramsci, Antonio. *Prison Notebooks: Volume I*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992.
- Gramsci, Antonio. *Prison Notebook: Volume II*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.
- Gramsci, Antonio. *Prison Notebooks: Volume III*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.
- Gramsci, Antonio, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. New York: Lawrence & Wishart, 1980.
- Gramsci, Antonio, *Subaltern Social Groups: A Critical Edition of Prison Notebooks 25*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2021.
- Greenberg, David. "The idea of 'the liberal media' and its roots in the civil rights movement." *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics, and Culture*. Vol. 1, No. 2 (December 2008): 167-186.
- Griffin, Roger. "Interregnum or endgame? The radical right in the 'post-fascist' era." In *The Populist Radical Right: A reader*, edited by Cas Mudde, 15-27. New York: Routledge, 2017.
- Grossberg, Lawrence. "Cultural Studies in Search of a Method, or Looking for Conjunctural Analysis." *new formations: a journal of culture/theory/politics*, Vol. 96-97 (2019): 38-68.
- Hall, Stuart. "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity." *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1986): 5-27.
- Hall, Stuart. *Cultural Studies 1983: A Theoretical History*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016.
- Hall, Stuart. *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left*. London: Verso, 1988.
- Hamerman, Nora. "From the Editor," *Executive Intelligence Review*, Vol. 15, No. 46 (November 18, 1988): 1.
- Hanebrink, Paul. *A Specter Haunting Europe: The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018.

- Hartman, Andrew. *A War for the Soul of America: A History of the Culture Wars*, 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019
- Heale, Michael. "Historians and the Liberal Consensus." In *The Liberal Consensus Reconsidered: American Politics and Society in the Postwar Era*, edited by Robert Mason and Iwan Morgan, 29-51. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2017.
- Heale, Michael. *The United States in the Long Twentieth Century: Politics and Society since 1900*, 2nd edition. New York: Bloomsbury, 2015.
- Hedgehog, Hylozoic. "Appendix B: The "Bavarians" Versus the "PPT": Trying to Make Sense of the 1970-71 Faction Fight." *LaRouchePlanet*. Accessed August 12 2022, <https://web.archive.org/web/20160827003136/http://laroucheplanet.info/pmwiki/pmwiki.php?n=Library.HIABChapter6Appendix2Bavarians-PPT>.
- Hedgehog, Hylozoic. "CHAPTER 13 One Man Coup by the Philosopher King: The Chris White Affair in Context." *LaRouchePlanet*. Accessed August 12, 2022. <https://web.archive.org/web/20160826155305/http://laroucheplanet.info/pmwiki/pmwiki.php?n=Library.UnityNow>.
- Hedgehog, Hylozoic. "Chapter One: FUNY Business." *LaRouchePlanet*. Accessed August 12, 2022. <https://web.archive.org/web/20160827001449/http://laroucheplanet.info/pmwiki/pmwiki.php?n=Library.HIABChapter1FUNYCIPA>.
- Heer, Jeet. "Trump's Racism and the Myth of 'Cultural Marxism.'" *The New Republic*, August 15, 2017. Accessed August 2, 2022. <https://newrepublic.com/article/144317/trumps-racism-myth-cultural-marxism>.
- Heller, Henry. *The Capitalist University: The Transformation of Higher Education in the United States since 1945*. London: Pluto Press, 2016.
- Hemmer, Nicole. *Messengers on the Right: Conservative Media and the Transformation of American Politics*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.
- Himmelstein, Jerome L. *To the Right: The Transformation of American Conservatism*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990.
- Hobbes, Thomas. *Victoria: A Novel of 4th Generation War* Kouvola: Castalia House, 2014.
- Hobsbawm, Eric. *The Age of Extremes: 1914-1991*. London: Abacus, 2006.
- Hochschild, Arlie R. *Strangers in a Strange Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*. New York: The New Press, 2016.

- Hodgson, Godfrey. *America in Our Time: From World War II to Nixon What Happened and Why*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Hodgson, Godfrey. "Revisiting the Liberal Consensus." In *The Liberal Consensus Reconsidered: American Politics and Society in the Postwar Era*, edited by Robert Mason and Iwan Morgan, 12-28. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2017.
- Horkheimer, Max and Adorno, Theodor W. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002.
- Horkheimer, Max and Flowerman, Samuel H. "Foreword to Studies in Prejudice." In *The Authoritarian Personality*. Croydon: Verso, 2019.
- Hunter, Allen. "In the Wings: New Right Ideology and Organization." *Radical America*, Vol. 15, No. 1&2 (Spring 1981): 113-138.
- Hunter, James Davison. *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*. New York: BasicBooks, 1991.
- Husting, Ginna and Orr, Martin. "Dangerous Machinery: 'Conspiracy Theorist' as a Transpersonal Strategy of Exclusion." *Symbolic Interaction*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Spring 2007): 127-150.
- Huth, Christina Nelson. "How soap opera was designed to undercut America's morality." *Executive Intelligence Review*, Vol. 9, No. 31 (September 7, 1982):59-61.
- Huyssen, Andreas. "Behemoth Rises Again." *n+1*, July 29, 2019. Accessed July 14, 2022. <https://www.nplusonemag.com/online-only/online-only/behemoth-rises-again/>.
- Huyssen, Andreas. "Critical Theory and the Digital Media." Talk presented at: *The Forty-Fourth Annual Conference of German Studies Association*. October 4, 2020, virtual conference.
- Intelligence Report. "Ally of Christian Right Heavyweight Paul Weyrich Addresses Holocaust Denial Conference." *Intelligence Report*, September 30, 2002. Accessed August 3 2022. <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2002/ally-christian-right-heavyweight-paul-weyrich-addresses-holocaust-denial-conference>.
- Israel, Jared and Russel, William. "Herbert Marcuse and His Philosophy of Copout." *Progressive Labor*, Vol. 6, No. 5, October 1968: 59-72.
- Jackson, Sam. *Oath Keepers: Patriotism and the Edge of Violence in a Right-Wing Antigovernment Group*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2020.

- Jameson, Fredric. "Preface: Gramsci in the World." In *Gramsci in the World*, edited by Roberto Dainotto and Fredric Jameson, xi-xiv. Durham: Duke University Press, 2020.
- Jamin, Jérôme. "Cultural Marxism: A Survey." *Religion Compass*, Vol. 12, No. 1-2 (2018): 1-12.
- Jansen, Peter-Erwin. *Zwischen Hoffnung und Notwendigkeit. Texte zu Herbert Marcuse*. Frankfurt: Neue Kritik, 1999.
- Jay, Martin. *Genesis and Validity: The Theory and Practice of Intellectual History*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022.
- Jay, Martin. *Splinters in Your Eye: Frankfurt School Provocations*. Croydon: Verso, 2020.
- Jay, Martin. "The Authoritarian Personality and the Problematic Pathologization of Politics." *Polity*, Vol. 54, No. 1, (January 2022): 124-145.
- Johnson, George. *Architects of Fear: Conspiracy Theories and Paranoia in American Politics*. Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 1983.
- Karabel, Jerome. "Revolutionary Contradictions: Gramsci, Antonio and the Problem of Intellectuals." *Politics & Society*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (June 1976): 123-172.
- Karabel, Jerome. "Towards a Theory of Intellectuals and Politics." *Theory and Society*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (April 1996): 205-233.
- Kimball, Roger. *Tenured Radicals: How Politics Has Corrupted our Higher Education*. Chicago: Elephant Books, 1998.
- King, Dennis. *Lyndon LaRouche and the New American Fascism*. New York: Doubleday, 1989.
- Kronberg, Molly. "Pawns of His Grandiosity: Psychological and Social Control in the Lyndon LaRouche Cult." Paper presented at symposium "Speaking with Forked Tongues: The Rhetoric of Right-Wing Extremism Today." University of Northampton, June 26, 2009.
- LaCapra, Dominick. "Rethinking Intellectual History and Reading Texts." *History and Theory*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (October 1980): 245-276.
- Lacorte, Rocco. "Arbitrio." In *Dizionario gramsciano: 1926-1937*, edited by Guido Liguori and Pasquale Voza, 46. Rome: Carocci, 2009.
- Lalich, Janja. *Bounded Choice: True Believers and Charismatic Cults*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004.
- Lane, Julie B. "Cultivating Distrust of the Mainstream Media: Propagandists for a Liberal Machine and the American

- Establishment.” In *News on the Right: Studying Conservative News Cultures*, edited by Anthony Nadler and A. J. Bauer, 157-173. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).
- LaRouche Jr., Lyndon H. “The battle to save our civilization.” *Executive Intelligence Review*, Vol. 16, No. 23 (June 2, 1989): 24.
- LaRouche Jr., Lyndon H. “The Secrets Known Only to the Inner Elites.” *The Campaigner*, Vol. 11, No. 3-4 (May-June 1978): 5-72.
- LaRouche, C. and Marcus L. “New Left, Local Control, and Fascism.” *The Campaigner*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (September 1968): 10-33.
- LaRouche Jr., Lyndon. “What are the Labor Committees Today?” *The Campaigner*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (March 1980): 42-51.
- LaRouche, Jr., Lyndon H. *The Power of Reason: 1988 An Autobiography*. Washington: Executive Intelligence Review, 1987.
- LaRouche, Lyndon. “Fascist Wave of ‘New Left’ Terrorism Under Way.” *Executive Intelligence Review*, Vol. IV, No. 49 (December 6, 1977): 1-5.
- Lassiter, Matthew D. “The Suburban Origin of ‘Color-Blind’ Conservatism: Middle Class Consciousness in the Charlotte Busing Crisis.” *Journal of Urban History*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (May 2004): 549-582.
- Lassiter, Matthew. “Inventing Family Values.” In *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s*, edited by Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer, 13-28. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008.
- Laville, Helen. “Gender in an Era of Liberal Consensus.” In *The Liberal Consensus Reconsidered: American Politics and Society in the Postwar Era*, edited by Robert Mason and Iwan Morgan, 245-261. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2017.
- Lee, Michael J. “The Conservative Canon and Its Uses.” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2012): 1-40
- Lenin, V. I. *Essential Works of Lenin: “What Is to Be Done?” and Other Writings*. New York: Dover, 1987.
- Liebowitz, Ira. “John Lennon and the Cult of Rock Music.” *The Campaigner*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (February 1981): 51-53.
- Liguori, Guido. *Gramsci Contested: Interpretations, Debates, and Polemics, 1922-2012*. Leiden: Brill, 2022.
- Liguori, Guido. *Gramsci’s Pathways*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015.
- Limbaugh, Rush. *See, I Told You So*. New York: Pocket Books, 1993.
- Lind, William S. “Understanding Fourth Generation War,” *Military Review*, September-October 2004: 12-16.

- Lind, William S. "Understanding Oklahoma," *The Washington Post*, April 30, 1995, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1995/04/30/understanding-oklahoma/a03eb6e2-14df-434a-b6cb-d355aaf5f587>.
- Lind, William S. "What is Political Correctness?" *Essays on our Times*, Free Congress Foundation, Number 43, March 1997.
- Lind, William S. "What is Political Correctness?" *The Resister*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Spring 1998): 66-68.
- Lind, William S. and Marshner, William H. *Cultural Conservatism: Toward a New National Agenda*. Washington, D.C.: Free Congress Research and Education Foundation, 1987.
- Lind, William S.; Schmitt, John F.; and Wilson, Gary I. "Fourth Generation Warfare: Another Look." *Marine Corps Gazette* (December 1994): 34-37
- Lipsitz, George. "The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: Racialized Social Democracy and the 'White' Problem in American Studies." *American Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (September 1995): 369-387.
- Litowitz, Douglas. "Gramsci, Hegemony, and the Law." *BYU Law Review*, Vol. 2000, No. 2 (2000): 515-551.
- Lo, Clarence Y. H. "Astroturf versus Grass Roots: Scenes from Early Tea Party Mobilization." In *Steep: The Precipitous Rise of the Tea Party*, edited by Lawrence Rosenthal and Christine Trost, 88-129. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012.
- Lowndes, Joseph E. *From the New Deal to the New Right: Race and the Southern Origins of Modern Conservatism*. Dexter: Yale University Press.
- Lowndes, Joseph. "The Past and Future of Race in the Tea Party Movement." In *Steep: The Precipitous Rise of the Tea Party*, edited by Lawrence Rosenthal and Christine Trost, 152-170. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012.
- MacLean, Nancy. "Postwar Women's History: The Second 'Wave' or the End of the Family Wage." In *A Companion to Post-1945 America*, edited by Jean Christophe Agnew and Roy Rosenzweig, 235-259. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002.
- Madison Social Text Group, "The New Right and Media." *Social Text*, No. 1 (Winter 1979): 169-180.

- Major, Mark “Building the Marginal and the Mainstream: Methodological Considerations for Conservative News as a Subfield.” In *News on the Right: Studying Conservative News Cultures*, edited by Anthony Nadler and A. J. Bauer, 213-231. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Major, Mark. “Why the South Prevailed: Civil Rights, Anticommunism, and the Origins of the ‘Liberal Media.’” *New Political Science*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (2020): 18-41.
- Marcus, L. “The Conceptual History of the Labor Committees.” *The Campaigner*, Vol. 7, No. 10, October 1974: 5-53.
- Marcus, L. “Beyond Psychoanalysis.” *The Campaigner*, Vol. 7, No. 1, September-October 1973: 40-92.
- Marcus, L. “The Real CIA: The Rockefeller’s Fascist Establishment.” *The Campaigner*, Vol. 7, No. 6 (April 1974): 5-34.
- Marcus, L. and Lawrence, C. “The Coming American Socialist Revolution: A Draft Resolution on Strategic Perspectives.” *SWP Discussion Bulletin*. Vol. 25, No. 6, 1965: 1-xvi.
- Marcus, Lyn. “Will You Eat Shit for Rockefeller’s CIA?” *New Solidarity*, Vol. IV, No. 38 (January 11, 1974): 11.
- Marcuse, Herbert. *An Essay on Liberation*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.
- Marcuse, Herbert. “Repressive Tolerance.” In *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1965.
- Martin, Laura Renata. “Historicizing White Nostalgia: Race and American Fordism.” *Blind Field: A Journal of Cultural Inquiry*, August 3, 2017. Accessed July 30, 2022. <https://blindfieldjournal.com/2017/08/03/historicizing-white-nostalgia-race-and-american-fordism>.
- Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich. “Manifesto of the Communist Party.” In *Karl Marx: Selected Works in Two Volumes, Vol. 1*, edited by Vladimir Adoratsky, 189-241. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1943.
- Marx, Karl. “Marx’s Theses on Feuerbach.” In *Karl Marx: Selected Works in Two Volumes, Vol. 1*, edited by Vladimir Adoratsky, 471-473. London: Lawrence and Wishart Limited, 1943.
- Marx, Karl. “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.” In *Karl Marx: Selected Works in Two Volumes, Vol. 2*, edited by Vladimir Adoratsky, 311-426. London: Lawrence and Wishart Limited, 1943.
- Marx, Karl. *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*. London: Penguin, 1993.

- Mason, Carol. "Right-Wing Literature in the United States since the 1960s." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature*, January 24, 2018. Accessed July 1, 2022. <https://oxfordre.com/literature/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.001.0001/acrefore-9780190201098-e-34>.
- McCoy, Don. "Transcript of Opening Statements and testimony of ELISABETH SEXTON on the first day of trial." United States of America v. Lyndon LaRouche, et al, The United States District Court Eastern District of VI Alexandria Division. November 21, 1988, Alexandria, Virginia.
- McGirr, Lisa. *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- McMillan, John. "'Our Founder, the Mimeograph Machine': Participatory Democracy in Students for a Democratic Society's Print Culture." *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2008): 85-110.
- MEC Films. "Cultural Marxism: The Corruption of America." Youtube video, 1:38:38. Posted by OriginalIntentDoc, August 30, 2011. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gIdBuK7_g3M&t=1114s.
- Menniken, Marvin. "Herbert Marcuse: Media and the making of a cultural icon." In *The Global 1960s: Convention, Contest and Counterculture*, edited by Tamara Chaplin and Jadwiga E. Pieper Mooney, 273-292. New York: Routledge, 2018.
- Messer-Davidow, Ellen. "Manufacturing the Attack on Liberalized Higher Education." *Social Text*, No. 36, Autumn 1993: 40-80.
- Messer-Davidow, Ellen. *Disciplining Feminism: From Social Activism to Academic Discourse*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.
- Metapedia. "Cultural Marxism." *Metapedia: The alternative encyclopedia*, Accessed August 2, 2022, https://web.archive.org/web/20100726172432/https://en.metapedia.org/wiki/Cultural_Marxism.
- Mettler, Suzanne. "Reconstituting the Submerged State: The Challenges of Social Policy Reform in the Obama Era." *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (2010): 803-824.
- Mills, C Wright. "Letter to the New Left." *New Left Review*, No. 5 September-October 1960: 18-23.
- Minnicino, Michael J. "The New Dark Age: The Frankfurt School and 'Political Correctness'." *Fidelio*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Winter 1992): 4-27.

- Minnicino, Michael. "The 'authoritarian personality': an anti-Western hoax." *Executive Intelligence Review*, Vol. 15, No. 46 (November 18, 1988): 28-31.
- Mirrlees, Tanner "The Alt-Right's discourse of 'Cultural Marxism': A political instrument of intersectional hate." *Atlantis*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (2018): 49-69.
- Moltke, Johannes von. "The Meme is the Message: Alt-Right/Neue Rechte and the Political Affordances of Social Media." Lecture. John F. Kennedy Institute at Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany, July 4, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7e7lSGlSWs>.
- Montgomery, Paul. "How a Radical-Left Group Moved Toward Savagery." *The New York Times*, January 20, 1974: 1, 51.
- Morera, Esteve. *Gramsci's Historicism: A Realist Interpretation*. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Morfino, Vittorio. "The Layers of History and the Politics in Gramsci." In *A Companion to Gramsci, Antonio: Essays on History and Theories of History, Politics and Historiography*, edited by Davide Cadeddu, 47-56. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2020.
- Morman, Ed. "PL and Me." In *You Say You Want a Revolution: SDS, PL, and Adventures in Building a Worker-Student Alliance*, edited by John F. Levin and Earl Silbar, 177-187. San Francisco: 1741 Press, 2019.
- Moyn, Samuel. "The Alt-Right's Favorite Meme Is 100 Years Old." *The New York Times*, November 13, 2019. Accessed August 2, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/13/opinion/cultural-marxism-anti-semitism.html>.
- Murphy, Caryle. "LaRouche Convicted of Mail Fraud." *The Washington Post*, December 17, 1988: AO1.
- Mynameisawesomeman. Comment on "Cultural Marxism: The Corruption of America." August 30, 2011. Accessed August 1, 2022. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gIdBuK7_g3M&lc=UgwS9WJo4D711m-h4AaABAg.
- N.Y. Students for a Democratic Society Labor Committee. "Press Release: Issued Dec. 16 by NY Labor Committee." *New Left Notes*, Vol. 3, No. 38, December 18, 1968: 4.
- Nadler, Anthony. "Pioneering Countercultural Conservatism: Limbaugh, Drudge, Breitbart." In *Affective Politics of Digital Media: Propaganda by Other Means*, edited by Megan Boler and Elizabeth Davis, 153-169. Exeter: Routledge, 2020.

- Nadler, Anthony. "Populist communication and media environments." *Sociology Compass*, Vol. 13, No. 8 (August 2019): 1-10.
- Nash, George H. *The Conservative Intellectual Movement Since 1945*, Thirtieth Anniversary Edition. Wilmington: ISI Books, 2017.
- National Caucus of Labor Committees. "Statement of Founding Principles of the National Caucus of Labor Committees." *The Campaigner*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Winter 1971): 57-60.
- National Empowerment Television. "The History of Political Correctness Part 1 of 3." Youtube video, 10:37. Posted by "Theriomachus," November 11, 2009.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73nzRnhpqog&t=36s>.
- National Empowerment Television. "The History of Political Correctness (Complete)." Youtube video, 22:26. Posted by "GBPPR2," March 30, 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EjaBpVzOohs>.
- National Empowerment Television. "The History of Political Correctness. Part 3 of 3." Youtube video, 7:35. Posted by "Theriomachus," November 11, 2009.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vec1dPg2dKY>.
- Neill, Edmund. *Conservatism*. Croydon: Polity, 2021.
- Neiwert, David. "How the 'cultural Marxism' hoax began, and why it's spreading into the mainstream." *Daily Kos*, January 23, 2019. Accessed August 2, 2022.
<https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2019/1/23/1828527/-How-the-cultural-Marxism-hoax-began-and-why-it-s-spreading-into-the-mainstream>.
- Newfield, Christopher. "What Was Political Correctness?: Race, the Right, and Managerial Democracy in the Humanities." *Critical Inquiry*, Vol 19, No. 2 (Winter 1993): 308-336.
- Newfield, Jack. *A Prophetic Minority*. Toronto: Signet, 1967.
- NRSC. "Sen. Marco Rubio: "Social Justice" and "wokeness" are really just nice names for Cultural Marxism." May 26, 2021, video, 1:18.
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=821764785107387>.
- Oei, Vincent W.J. van Gerven. "Anders Breivik: On Copying the Obscure." *Continent*. Vol. 1, No. 3 (2011): 213-223.
- O'Kane, Chris. "Critical Theory and the Critique of Capitalism: An Immanent Critique of Nancy Fraser's 'Systematic' 'Crisis-Critique' of Capitalism as an 'Institutionalized Social Order.'" *Science & Society*, Vol. 85, No. 2 (April 2021): 207-235.

- Oliver, Scott. "Unwrapping the 'Cultural Marxism' Nonsense the Alt-Right Loves." *Vice*, February 23, 2017, Accessed August 2, 2022. <https://www.vice.com/en/article/78mny/unwrapping-the-conspiracy-theory-that-drives-the-alt-right>.
- Omi, Michael and Winant, Howard. *Racial Formation in the United States*, 3rd edition. New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Palmier, Jean-Michel. *Marcuse et la nouvelle gauche: philosophe et révolution*. Paris: Belfond, 1973.
- Parkinson, Donald. "LaRouche: A Warning for Us All." *Cosmonaut*, March 19, 2019. Accessed December 2, 2021. <https://cosmonaut.blog/2019/03/19/larouche-a-warning-for-us-all>.
- Paternotte, David and Verloo, Mieke. "De-democratization and the Politics of Knowledge: Unpacking the Cultural Marxism Narrative." *Social Politics*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (Fall 2021): 556-578.
- Paul, Ari. "'Cultural Marxism': The Mainstreaming of a Nazi Trope." *FAIR*, June 4, 2019. Accessed on August 1, 2022. <https://fair.org/home/cultural-marxism-the-mainstreaming-of-a-nazi-trope/>.
- Phillips, Kevin P. *The Emerging Republican Majority*. New Rochelle: Arlington House, 1969.
- Phillips-Fein, Kim. "Conservatism: A State of the Field." *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 98, No. 3 (December 2011): 723-743.
- Powell, Lewis. "The Lewis Powell Memo: A Corporate Blueprint to Dominate Democracy." *Greenpeace*. Accessed on August 25, 2022. <https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/democracy/the-lewis-powell-memo-a-corporate-blueprint-to-dominate-democracy/>.
- Rand, Ayn. *Atlas Shrugged*. New York: Signet, 1996.
- Renton, David. *The New Authoritarians: Convergence on the Right*. Chicago: Haymarket Book, 2019.
- Richardson, John E. "'Cultural Marxism' and the British National Party: a transnational discourse." In *Cultures of Post-War Fascism*, edited by Nigel Copsey and John E. Richardson, 202-226. Croydon: Routledge, 2015.
- Roberts, Jason and Wahl-Jorgensen, Karin. Strategies of Alternative Right Wing Media: The Case of *Breitbart News*." In *The Routledge Companion to Political Journalism*, edited by James Morrison, Jen Birks, and Mike Berry, 164-173. Abington: Routledge, 2022.

- Roberts, Steven V. "Leader of S.D.S. Unit: From a Jersey Suburb to the Picket Lines." *The New York Times*, May 19, 1968: 1, 84.
- Robin, Corey. *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Donald Trump*, 2nd Edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Roche, John P. "Academic Freedom: The New Left Vigilantes." *National Review*, December 8, 1989, 34-35.
- Rose, Gregory F. "The Swarmy Life and Times of the NCLC." *National Review*. March 30, 1979: 409-413.
- Rosenburg, Paul. "A user's guide to "Cultural Marxism": Anti-Semitic conspiracy theory, reloaded." *Salon*, May 5, 2019, Accessed August 2, 2022. <https://www.salon.com/2019/05/05/a-users-guide-to-cultural-marxism-anti-semitic-conspiracy-theory-reloaded>.
- Ross, Andrew. *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1989.
- Sale, Kirkpatrick. *SDS*. New York: Random House, 1973.
- Savage, Luke. "Jordan Peterson's 'Postmodern Neomarxism' is Pure Hokum." *Jacobin*, March 16, 2022. Accessed August 20, 2022. <https://jacobin.com/2022/03/jordan-peterson-postmodernism-marxism-philosophy-zizek>.
- Scatamburlo, Valerie. *Soldiers of Misfortune: The New Right's Culture War and the Politics of Political Correctness*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1998.
- Schlafly, Phyllis. "What's Wrong with 'Equal Rights' for Women? (February 1972)." In *The American Conservative Movement: 1945 to the Present*, edited by Donald T. Critchlow and Nancy MacLean, 197-200, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009.
- Schryer, Stephen. "Writers for Goldwater." *Post45 Journal*, No. 4, January 20, 2020. Accessed June <https://post45.org/2020/01/writers-for-goldwater/>.
- Segura-Ballar, Gabriela. "Defending 'Western' Values: Reactionary Neoliberalism in The Americas." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (March 2021): 1-23.
- Showstack Sassoon, Anne. "The People, Intellectuals and Specialized Knowledge." *boundary 2*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Spring 1986):137-168.

- Showstack Sassoon, Anne. *Gramsci and Contemporary Politics: Beyond Pessimism of the Intellect*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- Skinner, Quentin. "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas." *History and Theory*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1969): 3-53.
- Skocpol, Theda and Williamson, Vanessa. *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Sørenssen, Bjørn. "Digital Diffusion of Delusions: A World Wide Web of Conspiracy Documentaries." In *New Documentary Ecologies: Emerging Platforms, Practices and Discourses*, edited by Kate Nash, Craig Hight, and Catherine Summerhayes, 201-218. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014.
- Sotiris, Panagiotis. "Gramsci and the Challenges for the Left: The Historical Bloc as Strategic Concept." *Science & Society*, Vol. 83, No. 1 (January 2018): 94-119.
- Special Agent in Charge, New York to Director, FBI, April 10, 1969, Federal Bureau of Investigation. "COINTELPRO – NEW LEFT." Accessed August 11, 2022: <https://web.archive.org/web/20160909011419/http://laroucheplanet.info/pmwiki/pmwiki.php?n=Library.HIABChapter3Appendix1TextsUTSDS>
- Stahl, Jason. "From Without to Within the Movement: Consolidating the Conservative Think Tanks in the 'Long Sixties.'" In *The Right Side of the Sixties: Reexamining Conservatism's Decade of Transformation*, edited by Laura Jane Gifford and Daniel K. Williams, 101-118. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012.
- Stahl, Jason. *Right Moves: The Conservative Think Tank in American Political Culture since 1945*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016.
- Stefancic, Jean and Delgado, Richard. *No Mercy: How Conservative Think Tanks and Foundations Changed America's Social Agenda*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996.
- Stewart-Winter, Timothy. "AIDS and the Urban Crisis: Stigma, Cost, and the Persistence of Racism in Chicago, 1981-1996." In *Beyond the Politics of the Closet: Gay Rights and the American State since the 1970s*, edited by Jonathan Bell, 83-99. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020.
- Students for a Democratic Society. *The Port Huron Statement*. New York: Students for a Democratic Society, 1964.

- Tanenhaus, Sam. *The Death of Conservatism: A Movement and Its Consequences*. New York: Random House, 2010.
- Tapper, Jake. "Who's Afraid of Patrick Buchanan?" *Slate*, September 4, 1999. Accessed August 4, 2022. <https://www.salon.com/1999/09/04/pat/>.
- Thalmann, Katharina. *The Stigmatization of Conspiracy Theory Since the 1950s: "A Plot to Make Us Look Foolish."* New York: Routledge, 2019.
- The Heritage Foundation. "CNBC's Rick Santelli's Chicago Tea Party." Youtube video, 4:36. Posted by "The Heritage Foundation," February 19, 2009. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zp-Jw-5Kx8k&t=90s>.
- The Heritage Foundation. "Cultural Renewal." C-SPAN Video, 2:00:09, April 13, 1999. <https://www.c-span.org/video/?122465-1/cultural-renewal>.
- Thomas, Peter D. *The Gramscian Moment*. Leiden: Brill, 2009.
- Tourish, Dennis and Wohlforth, Tim. *On the Edge: Political Cults Left and Right*. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2000.
- U.S. Labor Party, *Dope, Inc.: Britain's Opium War Against the U.S.* New York: The New Benjamin Franklin Publishing Company, 1978.
- Uscinski, Joseph E. "Section I: What is a Conspiracy Theory?" In *Conspiracy Theories and the People Who Believe Them*, edited by Joseph E. Uscinski, 47-52. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Viguerie, Richard A. and Franke, David. *America's Right Turn: How Conservatives Used New and Alternative Media to Take Power*. Chicago: Bonus Books, 2004.
- Viguerie, Richard A. *The New Right: We're Ready to Lead*. Falls Church: The Viguerie Company, 1981.
- Warner, Gerald. "For the First Time in History, 'Conservatives' Are at the Forefront of the Cultural Revolution." *Breitbart*, February 4, 2015. Accessed July 17, 2022. <https://www.breitbart.com/europe/2015/02/04/for-the-firsttime-in-history-conservatives-are-at-the-forefront-of-the-cultural-revolution>.
- Weigel, Moira. "Political correctness: how the right invented a phantom enemy." *The Guardian*, November 30, 2016. Accessed August 21,

2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/30/political-correctness-how-the-right-invented-phantom-enemy-donald-trump>.
- Weigel, Moira. "Hating Theory: The Cultural Marxism Conspiracy and Right Cyberutopianism." Paper presented at *The Authoritarian Personality: Annual Conference of the Yale Program for the Study of Antisemitism*. Yale University, February 15, 2020.
- Weigel, Moira. "The Authoritarian Personality 2.0." *Polity*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (January 2022): 146-180.
- West, Cornell. *Keeping Faith: Philosophy and Race in America*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Weyrich, Paul M. "Separate and Free." *The Washington Post*, 7 March, 1999: B07.
- Weyrich, Paul. "Blue Collar or Blue Blood? The New Right Compared with The Old Right." In *The New Right Papers*, edited by Robert W. Whitaker, 48-62. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982.
- Weyrich, Paul. "Letter to Conservatives." Accessed July 12, 2022. <https://nationalcenter.org/ncppr/1999/02/16/letter-to-conservatives-by-paul-m-weyrich>.
- Weyrich, Paul. "Welcome to the Birth of the New Media Age." *Washington Times*, December 15, 1993: 4.
- Williams, Anna. "Conservative Media Activism: The Free Congress Foundation and National Empowerment Television." In *Media, Culture, and the Religious Right*, edited by Linda Kintz and Julia Lesage, 275-294. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.
- Williams, Raymond. *Culture and Materialism*. New York: Verso, 2020.
- Williams, Raymond. *Culture and Materialism*. Croydon: Verso, 2005.
- Wilson, Jason. "'Cultural Marxism': a uniting theory for rightwingers who love to play the victim." *The Guardian*, January 19, 2015. Accessed August 2, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jan/19/cultural-marxism-a-uniting-theory-for-rightwingers-who-love-to-play-the-victim>.
- Wilson, John K. *The Myth of Political Correctness: The Conservative Attack on Higher Education*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1995.
- White, Hayden. *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987.

- Wood, Ellen Meiksins. *Citizens and Lords: A Social History of Western Political Thought From Antiquity to the Middle Ages*. New York: Verso, 2008.
- Woods, Andrew. "Cultural Marxism and the Cathedral: Two Alt-Right Perspectives on Critical Theory." In *Critical Theory and the Humanities in the Age of the Alt-Right*, edited by Christine M. Battista and Melissa R. Sande, 39-59. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.
- Woods, Andrew. "The Cultural Marxism Conspiracy Thrives in Bolsonaro's Brazil." *Fair Observer*, October 16, 2019, Accessed August 20, 2022. <https://www.fairobserver.com/insight/cultural-marxism-conspiracy-far-right-jair-bolsonaro-brazil-latin-america-news-00054/>.
- Wyer, Peter. "Draft Proposal for a Heinrich Schenker Foundation for Musical Science." *The Campaigner*, Vol. 11, No. 6 (August 1978): 16-41.
- Wyer, Peter. "The Frankfurt School's Assault on Music." *New Solidarity*, March 8, 1977: 4.
- Young Americans for Freedom. "The Sharon Statement." In *'Takin' It to the Streets': A Sixties Reader*, Third Edition, edited by Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines, 289-290. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Zagarell, Mike. "Phony 'Labor' Party Exposed as CIA Front." *Daily World*, September 18, 1975: 1-4.
- Zhukov, Yuri. "Oborotni." *Pravda*, May 30, 1968: 4.

C.V. | Andrew Woods

EDUCATION

- Ph.D. Theory and Criticism
Western University, 2022, London, ON, Canada.
- M.A. Critical Theory and Creative Research
Pacific Northwest College of Art, 2016, Portland, OR, United States of America.
- B.A. First Class Honours in Performing Arts (Theatre Performance)
University of Chichester, 2014, Chichester, United Kingdom.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- 2022 “Was ist der Bolsonarismo? Autoritäre Herrschaft in Brasilien,” *WeltTrends*, 190.
- 2020 “Why is the Brazilian Right afraid of Paulo Freire?,” *Open Democracy*.
- 2019 “The Cultural Marxism Conspiracy Thrives in Bolsonaro’s Brazil,” *Fair Observer*.
- 2019 “Cultural Marxism or The Cathedral: Two Alt-Right Theories about Critical Theory,” *Critical Theory and the Humanities in the Age of the Alt-Right*. Edited by Christine M. Battista and Melissa R. Sande. Palgrave Macmillan.
- 2019 “The American Roots of a Right-Wing Conspiracy,” *Commune Magazine*.

SELECTED RESEARCH GRANTS, SCHOLARSHIPS, AND FELLOWSHIPS

- 2021 The Raymond Williams Foundation, ‘Centenary Explainers Project’ Grant.
- 2020 University of Western Ontario, Mary Routledge Fellowship.
- 2015-2016 Pacific Northwest College of Art, CT+CR Fellowship, Dorothy Annetta Scholarship, and Graduate Merit Scholarship.

SELECTED TALKS AND CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- 2022 “Marxismo Cultural/Cultural Marxism: Transnational Conspiracy Theories and the Brazilian New Right,” paper presented at: *Populism and Conspiracy Theories in the Americas: Second International Conference of the ‘Populism and Conspiracy Theories’ Project*, University of Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany.

- 2022 “The Conspiracy Theorist and the Intellectual: The History of a Boundary,” paper presented at: *The 1st International Conference on the Philosophy of Conspiracy Theory*, Pitzer College, Claremont, CA.
- 2021 “The Copy-and-Paste Conspiracy Theory: On ‘The 11 Aims of the Frankfurt School,’” paper presented at: *The Big Hoax: The Anatomy of Anti-Intellectualism @ Toronto International Festival of Authors*, Humber College, Toronto, ON.
- 2019 “That Struggle for the Soul of America: Cultural Marxism, Conspiracy Theories, and Culture Wars,” paper presented at: *Canadian Association for American Studies Symposium*, Concordia University, Montreal, QC.
- 2019 “The Braverman Incident: Cultural Marxism and the Metapolitical Creep,” Theory Session, Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism, Western University, London, ON.