

Nixonland Revisited: A History of Populist Communication

by

Tyler J. Fischer

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## AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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## ABSTRACT

The goal of this thesis was to validate journalist Rick Perlstein's assertion in *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America* (2008) that the foundational dialectic of the 1960s "has not yet ended." With Nixon as the principal cultural architect of modern American political discourse, Perlstein defined *Nixonland* as "the America where two separate and irreconcilable sets of apocalyptic fears coexist in the minds of two separate and irreconcilable groups of Americans." Perlstein's grand narrative for the inherited socio-political landscape of the 1960s has conceptually synthesized the nature of the "culture wars" of the 1960s based on Nixon's imposed hegemonic framework for political discourse through the theatre of television. The central argument of this thesis is shaped by the dialogue in the historiography in that Richard Nixon and Barack Obama appear to be "bookend presidents" of the limits of the modern American kulturkampf- the ongoing conflict between religious and secular elements in American society. While Nixon confined political discourse within the hegemonic framework of the images and rhetoric of modern American conservatism imbibed in the 1960s, Obama expanded the limits of political discourse through the motives and motifs of New Left rationalism established in the 1960s. Within this interpretative framework, this thesis illustrates the foundational dynamic of campaigning and governance within modern American political discourse by demonstrating how presidential elections are structured according to the Republican style of conservative "populist aggression" against the liberal Democratic substance of "fairness issues."

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## PREFACE

While modern American conservatism first entered political discourse through the rhetorical theatrics of the 1964 Republican National Convention, American postwar liberalism visibly witnessed its decline on television during the 1968 presidential election, isolating the New Left, and making it “blindingly clear that New Left universalism was fragile from the outset, that the category of citizen, or even human being, had long felt like a weightless abstraction.”<sup>1</sup> The 2008 Presidential election inaugurated the interjection of New Left rationalism\*, or liberal constructivism, into the modern American political discourse of conservative “populist aggression” since 1968 based on Barack Obama’s New Left cult of personality mass movement. Journalist Rick Perlstein’s *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America* (2008) has provided a definitive and illuminating piece to the puzzle of modern American culture by illustrating the formation of the socio-political dialectic for America’s modern political economy, with Nixon as the populist personification of modern American conservatism. Perlstein’s grand narrative for the inherited socio-political landscape of the 1960s has conceptually synthesized the nature of the “culture wars” of the 1960s based on Nixon’s imposed hegemonic framework for political discourse through the theatre of television. With Nixon as the principal cultural architect of modern American political discourse, Perlstein defined *Nixonland* as “the America where two separate and irreconcilable sets of apocalyptic fears coexist in the minds of two separate and irreconcilable groups of Americans.”<sup>2</sup> This thesis will illustrate Perlstein’s narrative for the institutionalization of *Nixonland* in the 1968 presidential election by demonstrating Nixon’s inauguration of the “populist communication” of modern American conservatism, found in the duality and polarization

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<sup>1</sup> Todd Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1995), 100.

\* The New Left student movement, or antiwar movement, including civil rights hero Martin Luther King Jr. and liberals such as Eugene McCarthy and Robert F. Kennedy Jr., was imbibed in the late 1960s in opposition to liberal paternalism and imperialism. While liberals believed in the power of the vote to give a voice to individualism, New Leftists promoted the rational extension of New Deal liberalism for the empowerment of the disenfranchised as the principal means to reform society.

<sup>2</sup> Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America* (New York: Scribner, 2008), 46.

of Nixon's cultural images of conservative "Cold War Manichaeism"<sup>3</sup> and liberal, or moderate, paternalism (conservatism).

The postwar "generation gap" in modern American culture - institutionalized within modern American political discourse during the 1968 presidential election - became inverted during the 2008 presidential election, marking a significant change in American political history. New Left sociologist Todd Gitlin identified the "generation gap" as a contest in which "the young insisted that their life situation was unprecedented (and therefore they had no one to follow); the older, that they did understand, so well, and with so many years' advantage, that they knew better (and therefore they should be followed)."<sup>4</sup> While Nixon's personification of the alienated paternal majority enabled him to win the 1968 presidential election, Barack Obama's embodiment of the alienated liberal majority enabled him to win the 2008 presidential election. *Time's* "Man and Woman of the Year" in 1967 were the forgotten middle-Americans who Nixon consciously personified during the 1968 Presidential election. Nixon became *Time's* and popular culture's "Man of the Year" in 1971 and 1972, resentfully sharing the honor the second time with his National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger. In 2008, *Time's* "Person of the Year"<sup>5</sup> symbolized the remaining forgotten Americans - or what Senator Hillary Clinton attempted to rhetorically appropriate as "invisible Americans"<sup>6</sup> - Barack Obama. While the Nixon presidency was the first time a president was met by organized opposition during his inauguration, the Bush II presidency was the first time a president was met by organized opposition during his inauguration and spontaneous opposition outside of the White House Gates the night the new President-elect won the election. The 2008 American presidential election symbolized the liberal democratic appropriation of the conservative movement's hegemony over American political discourse since 1968. The election personified the generational culture war of the conservative postwar generation and the liberal baby-boomer generation, between the "old" and "new" politics; the younger generation's black liberal Democrat against the older generation's white

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<sup>3</sup> Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1987), 339.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>5</sup> *Time*, January 5, 1968, pg. 10-17, "Man and Woman of the Year: The Middle Americans"; *Time*, "Person of the Year", December 29, 2008, 38-51.

<sup>6</sup> New Hampshire Democratic Primary Acceptance Speech, January 8, 2008.

liberal Republican who still had to publicly play by the party's old rules; a minority individual who opposed America's new international conflagration against a POW patriot from the country's old international conflagration.

The historic nature of the 2008 Presidential election presents visible allusions to the foundational socio-political dynamic of modern American culture imbibed in the 1960s. While the social effects or cultural resonance of the 1960s appear inescapable within modern American culture, there is not yet a consensus of the socio-political inheritance of the 1960s. This thesis contends that Nixon's politicization of the medium of television during the 1968 presidential election inaugurated America's modern political discourse founded on a McLuhan culture, with Reagan inaugurating the postmodern presidency\* within Nixon's paradigm of the "culture wars" of the 1960s: *Nixonland*. The aggregate media realities of *Nixonland* are premised upon Nixon's emulation of JFK's inauguration of America's modern basis of socio-political mobilization of the American electorate - "populist communication" - involving the marketing of substantive populist issues on television and in print through images and rhetoric. Nixon's instigation of the American public's increased consciousness of the media realities of modern politics was identified by cultural and academic commentary as the visible intensification of FDR's modern presidency, with the Nixon presidency inaugurating the "imperial presidency", comprised of a McLuhanesque ode to empire based on the media's inability to identify Nixon's media strategy for his political image without appearing partisan. Nixon's politicization of television infiltrated American political discourse with a McLuhan culture, wherein the image projected over the television screen is more important than the content of the message itself. Reagan subsequently institutionalized Nixon's inaugural McLuhan culture during the 1980s, inaugurating the postmodern presidency by using the presidential television image as the principal medium through which to aggregate public support for his

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\* In *The Post-Modern Presidency: The Office after Ronald Reagan* (1988) Professor Ryan Barilleaux argued that the postmodern presidency, created through a series of events and trends that culminated in the Watergate story and the end of the Vietnam War, is post-modern in nature because it is not an extension of FDR into the future, "but has been transformed into something substantively different." Barilleaux believed the postmodern presidency represented Reagan's personification of a conservative ideology that was substantively different from FDR's personification of the modern presidency. Barilleaux contended, "Post-modern presidents not only use public politics to govern, but also realize that the entire public face of the presidency affects their ability to do so."



ideological agenda. In *Tear Down This Myth: How the Reagan Legacy Has Distorted Our Politics and Haunts Our Future* (2009), Professor Will Bunch observed that Reagan “used television more often and better than any president who came before him and delivered more prime-time speeches- yet held far fewer formal press conferences than other chief executives, at least until George W. Bush aggressively mimicked the Reagan model.”<sup>8</sup>

Ronald Reagan inaugurated the postmodern presidency by reversing FDR’s portraits of “us” and “them” among the younger generation and institutionalizing the Republican Party as the political party of the “people”, representing small government and family values, with the liberal Democratic Party representing the protested failure of New Deal federalism. During the first of the three presidential debates on September 27, 2008, liberal Republican Senator John McCain asserted his identity as a “Reagan foot soldier”<sup>9</sup> of the 1980s in his attempt to consolidate the status quo of modern American political discourse: “We Republicans came to Washington to change government and government changed us.”<sup>10</sup> With similar intentions, Senator Obama responded to a comparison of him and Ronald Reagan for the Reno-Gazette Journal editorial board on camera on January 14 by acknowledging the inescapable popular consciousness in the “age of Reagan”, identified by professor Sean Wilentz (2008) as encompassing American political culture since 1974:

I don’t want to present myself as some kind of singular figure. I think part of what’s different is the times. I do think that, for example, the 1980 election was different. I think that Ronald Reagan changed the trajectory of America, in a way that Richard Nixon did not, and in a way Bill Clinton did not. He put us on a fundamentally different path because the country was ready for it. I think that they felt like, with all the excesses of the 60s and 70s, and government had grown and grown, but there wasn’t much sense of accountability in terms of how it’s operating. I think he tapped into what everyone was feeling. We want clarity. We want optimism. We want a return to that sense of dynamism

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<sup>8</sup> Will Bunch, *Tear Down This Myth: How the Reagan Legacy Has Distorted Our Politics and Haunts Our Future* (New York: Free Press, 2009), 27.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>10</sup> *YouTube.com*, “First 2008 Presidential Debate (Full Video)”, posted on September 27, 2008.

and opportunism that had been missing.<sup>11</sup>

Following liberal Democratic criticism, Senator Obama and his aides quickly clarified they were commenting on “Reagan’s skill in connecting with the public and not his actual policies.”<sup>12</sup> Thus, Obama was praising Reagan’s style, not Reagan’s substance. Bunch observed, “And so it seemed possible in 2008 that American voters might really have a clear choice, between a candidate who wanted to return the nation to an idealized and even partly fictionalized version of the 1980s, and one who would bring the country into the new millennium with policies that were not nostalgia-based.”<sup>13</sup>

The postmodern presidency in the television age - with the supremacy of image over substance - institutionalized the principal cultural importance of relatability over substantive content for the presidential image. Reaganism represented an ideological revolution insofar as Reagan read the zeitgeist of the stagflation of the 1970s similar to the way FDR read the zeitgeist of the Great Depression: by articulating a genuine set of values that were congruent with the circumstances. Professor John Kenneth White observed in *The New Politics of Old Values* (1990): “As time passed Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan appeared to be “bookend presidents”: one expanded and the other confined the limits of the federal government.”<sup>14</sup> In a similar parallel, Richard Nixon and Barack Obama appear to be “bookend presidents” of the limits of the modern American kulturkampf- the ongoing conflict between religious and secular elements in American society. While Nixon confined political discourse within the hegemonic framework of the images and rhetoric of modern American conservatism imbibed in the 1960s, Obama expanded the limits of political discourse through the motives and motifs of New Left rationalism established in the 1960s. While New Left populism of the 1960s was predicated upon protesting more

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<sup>11</sup> *YouTube.com*, “Obama’s Transparent Government”, posted on January 17, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Bunch, 207.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>14</sup> John Kenneth White, *The New Politics of Old Values* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1990), 132-33; While Reagan confined American federalism within public discourse through his rhetoric of small government, he enlarged the size of the federal government. This fundamental disjuncture between rhetoric and action speaks to the principal contradiction of the postmodern presidency of sight and sound.

than politics, New Right populism “was intensely political, focused on winning power by packaging new ideas for policy and feeding off the resentment of what Richard Nixon had called the “silent majority.””<sup>15</sup>

Before Senator Robert Kennedy’s campaign of New Leftist rationalism (or realism) – insofar as he adopted the language and style of the movement - was silenced on June 4, 1968, the Kennedy campaign attempted to counteract the activist conservative ideology of Cold War Manichaeism with the liberal rhetoric of New Left realism. The Kennedy campaign’s rhetoric of New Left rationalism was premised upon combating the pervading liberal culture motives and motif of ethnic militancy at the end of the decade by offering a moderate cultural alternative. Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. rationally outlined his dissenting argument against the Vietnam War within messianic language by identifying that absolutist perceptions of his position as an antipatriotic enemy of the United States, equating dissent with disloyalty, was actually dissenting from the “wisdom of our traditions.” King identified that the mirror domestic struggle of black nationalism to the national struggle in Vietnam was unified in the perversion of American values. Senator Kennedy appeared before a mostly black audience during a scheduled rally the night of April 4, 1968 in Indianapolis, Indiana, informing his audience of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. and exhorting them to refrain from conceding to their desire for revenge, only to result “in greater polarization.” Senator Kennedy demonstrated his empathy with his African-American audience by identifying that a white man also killed his brother. The next day he spoke to the City Club of Cleveland in Ohio, exhorting his audience of the necessity to heal the whole of America in order to cure the sickness:

We learn at the last to look at our brothers as alien. Alien men with whom we share a city but not a community. Men bound to us in common dwelling but not in a common effort. We learn to share only a common fear. Only a common desire to retreat from each other. Only a common impulse to disagree with force.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Sean Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan: A History, 1974-2008* (New York: HarperCollins Publisher, 2008), 85.

<sup>16</sup> *YouTube.com*, “Mindless Menace of Violence”, posted on April 20, 2008 (Robert F. Kennedy’s “Mindless Menace of Violence” speech, April 5, 1968).

President Reagan's era of reconciliation addressed this alienated sentiment among the public that intensified during the 1980s with the renewed threat of nuclear war, suggesting the only unifying answer to the United States and the Soviet Union's ideological nuclear war of attrition rested outside of humanity and this planet through an alien presence. Reagan first identified this abstract basis of unity on December 5, 1985 at Fallston High School in Fallston, Maryland; next, in front of the United Nations in New York on September 21, 1987; then, during a question and answer session with members of the National Strategy Forum in Chicago, Illinois on May 4, 1988.<sup>17</sup> Thus, in contrast to Senator Kennedy's attempt to bridge the gap of this alien sentiment between Democrats and Republicans, Reagan further annulled the concept of universalism in public discourse. On the night Senator Robert Kennedy was killed he thanked the black community for their efforts in his campaign at the beginning of his acceptance speech, rejecting the politics of division and embracing the popular sentiment for change through unity as an American rather than simply as a member of a political party.<sup>18</sup>

The visible liberal paternalism of the Democratic Party by the end of the 1960s, expressed through the ideology of "Cold War Manichaeism" ("us against "them"), converged with the radicalization of the Civil Rights Movement to centralize American political discourse, consolidating the status quo through Richard Nixon's moderate Republican paternalism (conservatism). Within the context of the Humphrey-Nixon presidential contest of 1968, Gitlin reminisced during the Reagan presidency of his participation in New Left activism during the 1960s: "To the campaign's end the vice president [Humphrey] was imprisoned by a Cold War Manichaeism that viewed every contraction of the American sphere of influence as a triumph of evil, every extension of American power, at whatever cost, as an unadulterated good."<sup>19</sup> As a result, the inherent dynamism of American culture became constrained within Nixon's static perception of the "other" in his ideological worldview of Cold War Manichaeism and his inauguration of the modern basis of news management in order to regulate his cultural identification of the adversarial liberal press corps. Within this modern paradigm of political theatre in the "television

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<sup>17</sup> Wilentz, 138, 261-262.

<sup>18</sup> California Democratic Primary Acceptance Speech, June 4, 1968.

<sup>19</sup> Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 339.

age”, visible confrontation between politicians and the press corps has eclipsed the substantive content of the politician’s discourse, or “talking point”, with the recognition of the adversarial dynamic between the politician and the reporter.

Professor David Greenberg confined this dynamic to the interaction between the president and the media in *Nixon’s Shadow: The History of an Image* (2003). Greenberg inaugurated the historiography on Nixon’s cultural image(s) as the interpretive vehicle for modern American culture during the Bush II presidency based on Nixon’s intensification of the “hyperaware[ness] of the construction and manipulation of images in politics.”<sup>20</sup> Greenberg’s interpretive framework was rooted in Daniel Boorstin’s seminal analysis of the apparatuses of advertising and public relations in the rise of mass media in *The Image, Or What Happened to the American Dream* (1961). Greenberg identified this work as the origins for how “celebrities replaced heroes, credibility superseded truth, invention eclipsed discovery, and personality was vaunted over character.”<sup>21</sup> Professor Matthew Dallek argued that the Hollywood actor Ronald Reagan obtained his political credibility during the 1966 California gubernatorial election due to his opponent’s misplaced negative campaigning against his character as an actor; the only time Reagan lost his composure during the campaign was during his March 6 town hall style debate with the liberal black Republican candidate George Christopher when Reagan was provoked to defend his personal integrity against implications of racism. By 2008, the celebrity of the black Kennedyesque New Left Senator Barack Obama eclipsed the culturally identified heroic patriotism of POW Vietnam veteran liberal Republican John McCain, whose patriotic biography during the 2008 Republican National Convention was delivered by the former Republican Senator from *NBC’s* award-winning television show *Law and Order*, Fred Thompson.

Greenberg emphasized the Boorstinian landscape of images dominating American culture over the explicit influence of Marshall McLuhan’s interpretation of the effects of the mass media on popular culture (“the medium is the message”) in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964). Perlstein

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<sup>20</sup> David Greenberg, *Nixon’s Shadow: The History of an Image* (New York; London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), xii.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, xix.

subsumed Greenberg's Boorstinian landscape for tracing the development of Nixon's image(s) in American culture within McLuhanism due to his perception of the causal paradigm shift in American culture. This shift was based on the exegesis of the Kennedy-Nixon television debates and Nixon's inaugural politicization of television during the 1968 Presidential election. While the centrality of Nixon's image(s) inescapably predominate modern American culture and consciousness, the inescapable medium that informs Americans of the war of images is television. Therefore, this thesis extends Greenberg's seminal interpretation of Nixon as the nucleus of modern American culture by illustrating Perlstein's adversarial dynamic of *Nixonland* as the encompassing interpretative framework for modern American culture.

But President Reagan's cultural image remains at the center of modern American culture and consciousness. Similar to Nixon, Professor Sean Wilentz identified that "Reagan was also a polarizing figure - a divider, not a uniter - beloved by Republicans but despised by Democrats."<sup>22</sup> Nixon and Reagan both projected a polarizing image due to the absolutism of their identities. The superimposition of Nixon's cultural images - or the multiplicity of Nixon's image due to its premise of evoking emotion - has caused American revisionist historiography to perpetually contextualize President Nixon's image within the developing cultural identification of the Nixon presidency. The difficulty with this basis of cultural and psychoanalytical history is that Nixon constructed the cultural framework of news management within the system of "populist communication" that rehabilitated his image. Nixon's form of news management - based on a system of professional rewards and incentives through patronage - was perpetuated by the visible adversarial culture confirmed by the Watergate story.

While the McLuhan culture of the "television age" quickly became as redundant as the age itself, the basis of campaigning and governance for Reaganism was an explicit emulation of Nixon's politicization of television to control his political image and Nixon's form of news management. Reagan's chief public relations strategist, Michael K. Deaver, identified the redundancy of the television age and the confidence of his candidate's hegemony over political discourse at the beginning of the 1984

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<sup>22</sup> Wilentz, 278.

election year in *The National Journal*: “Television elects Presidents.”<sup>23</sup> The visible centrality and clarity of Reagan’s cultural image within the history of American political theatre has caused cultural and academic commentary to perceive Reagan’s cultural rise during the 1960s and the institutionalization of conservative political culture during the 1980s as eclipsing Nixon’s formation of the cultural framework during the 1960s which enabled Reagan’s presidency.

In *The Right Moment: Ronald Reagan’s First Victory and the Decisive Turning Point in American Politics* (2000), Professor Matthew Dallek conceptualized Reagan’s 1966 gubernatorial victory in California within the paradigm shift of American federalism, with the election inaugurating the “Reagan Revolution.” Dallek argued that the California election most aptly personified the first generational confrontation on television between the instinctual civil libertarianism of Governor Pat Brown and the socially conservative messianic philosophy of Ronald Reagan. Dallek’s narrative effectively captured Nixon’s observation that culture forms consciousness by illustrating how both individuals defected from their opponent’s political philosophy in the context of their recognition of the new socio-political realities of the culture of New Deal politics in 1934 and the Cold War political culture in 1947. However, the fundamental disjuncture between Dallek’s narrative for the origins of modern American culture and the Reagan presidency is found in the fact that the Reagan campaign of 1980 was causally shaped by the adversarial cultural paradigm shift of the Nixon presidency. Although Reagan first identified “a conspiracy in the Eastern liberal press” during his GOP primary speech at the Biltmore Hotel for the 1964 Goldwater campaign<sup>24</sup>, Nixon nationalized this cultural perception associated with a liberal press corps. While the Goldwater campaign of 1964 polarized political discourse, causing conservative candidates such as Reagan and Nixon to project visibly moderate political images, the California gubernatorial contest of 1966 served as a microcosm for the nationalization of the recently centralized Republican strategy for campaigning; the inauguration of the present Republican Party policies on campaigning during the 1964 presidential election will be discussed in chapter two. Although Reagan’s

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<sup>23</sup> *The National Journal*, January 29, 1984, pg. 34.

<sup>24</sup> Matthew Dallek, *The Right Moment: Ronald Reagan’s First Victory and the Decisive Turning Point in American Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 2000), 65.

political credibility gained by the 1966 election provides a visible representation of the American electorate's shift to the right, Reagan's state-strategy was within the central framework of the Republican Party's modern basis of campaigning; in fact, Reagan relied on the new Eleventh Commandment ("Thou Shall Not Speak Ill of Any Republican"), enabling him to avoid public criticism from moderate Republicans and later to identify his party as the "big tent" political party during his presidential era of reconciliation. Reagan's cultural identity as a celebrity and a politician provides the centripetal image of modern American conservatism; however, this media strategy for modern political discourse was inaugurated by Richard Nixon.

Following 9/11, popular Hollywood action star Arnold Schwarzenegger's most recent film, *Collateral Damage*, was delayed from release based on its content, involving the story of a firefighter who watches his family die in a terrorist explosion and avenges their death by killing the Middle Eastern terrorists. Equipped with his historical action movie persona and his recent personification of America's heroic fight against terrorism, Schwarzenegger led a recall election as a conservative Republican anti-politician against the liberal Democratic Governor of California, Gray Davis. The Schwarzenegger campaign invoked the Republican Party's rhetoric and motif of small government imbibed in the 1960s through the dialogue of his popular action movie *The Terminator* (1989), asserting that the "tax-and-spend" liberal Democrat Gray Davis "has terminated jobs, he has terminated dreams. Gray Davis has terminated opportunity and now it's time to terminate Gray Davis." Schwarzenegger claimed he was an "optimistic person", leading the "fight of the people against the politicians" in order to reclaim the government for the people. After winning the election, Governor Schwarzenegger enthusiastically endorsed President George W. Bush two years later during the Republican National Convention by recounting watching the Humphrey-Nixon debates in which Humphrey sounded like a socialist from back home in Austria while listening to Nixon speak sounded "more like a breath of fresh air."

Schwarzenegger identified this event in political theatre as the moment in which he found his political identity: "Then I am a Republican too." During the convention Governor Schwarzenegger appeared on camera behind the podium amidst thunderous applause, telling his audience that being on



stage felt like winning an Oscar: “And speaking of acting, one of my movies was called *True Lies*. And that’s what the Democrats should have called their convention.” Following Schwarzenegger’s emphasis within his first two anecdotes of his ill-thought reputation as an actor, he reminisced about his childhood in the shadow of the Soviet Union in Austria, his immigration to the United States, and his triumphant personification of the American dream. Schwarzenegger then informed his fellow immigrants and Americans how they knew whether they were Republican:

If you believe that government should be accountable to the people, not the people to the government, then you are a Republican. If you believe that a person should be treated as an individual, not as a member of an interest group, then you are a Republican. If you believe that your family knows how to spend your money better than the government can then you are a Republican. If you believe that this country, not the United Nations, is the best hope for democracy then you are Republican. And ladies and gentlemen, if you believe that you must be fierce and relentless and terminate terrorism, then you are Republican.<sup>25</sup>

Governor Schwarzenegger, like Governor Reagan, campaigned in the spirit of the populist aggression of Goldwater conservatism. Hence, the California gubernatorial election of Ronald Reagan in 1966 was as much the culmination of a societal shift as was the 2004 Illinois Senatorial election of Barack Obama. It was merely the event during which each candidate earned their political credibility; in 1966, Reagan’s campaign represented the western inauguration of the Republican Party’s national strategy for what came to be known after 1976 as the New Right restoration of America’s archetypal spirit of the past.

While Dallek identified the paradigm shift in American political culture originating prior to the Nixon presidency, in *The Age of Reagan: A History, 1974-2008* (2008), Professor Sean Wilentz identified the formation of the conservative apotheosis during the Ford administration as the visible disjuncture between the New Deal Era and the inauguration of the Reagan Era. Wilentz argued that “conservatives in the age of Reagan learned how to seize and keep control of the terms of public debate.”<sup>26</sup> They achieved this control by displacing the New Left counterculture’s vision for the future with the New Right’s

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<sup>25</sup> *YouTube.com*, “Arnold Schwarzenegger Speech”, posted on March 31, 2008.

<sup>26</sup> Wilentz, 8.

restoration of America's original spirit of the past.<sup>27</sup> Although *Time* asserted the "Overturning of the Reagan Era" in August 1993 with an upside-down picture of Reagan on the cover, this perception was reversed three days prior to the midterm referendum on the Republican's "Contract with America" with Reagan's public disclosure of his Alzheimer's disease, and his journey into the sunset of his life amidst America's bright dawn.<sup>28</sup> The chief domestic legacy of the "age of Reagan" was the regressive tax cuts redistributed to the upper classes, precluding the introduction of liberal social programs and exerting pressure on the existing system of social programs<sup>29</sup>; the fundamental changes to America's constitutional order through the politicization of the federal judiciary process; and, the "unitary executive theory of presidential power"<sup>30</sup>, derived from "Nixonism." As Wilentz observed, "Instead of what now looked like a golden age of middle-class prosperity of the 1950s, the so-called Reagan boom brought inequalities of living standards reminiscent of the nineteenth-century robber barons' gilded age."<sup>31</sup> Wilentz argued that "by formally endorsing the evangelical conservative cause and cultivating its political support, Reagan brought into the Republican Party, especially at the state and local level, large cadres of indefatigable culture warriors who would battle hard for the party's soul and the nation's."<sup>32</sup> Wilentz illustrated the disintegration of the gilded age of the neoconservative Republican Party into its constituent elements during the 2008 presidential election as reminiscent of the liberal Democratic Party during the 1980 presidential election, interpreting George W. Bush's messianic "war on terror" as the radicalization of Reagan's Cold War Manichaeism.

The fundamental disjuncture between the "age of Nixon" - identified by *New York Times* columnist Anthony Lewis as encompassing postwar American history up to his resignation<sup>33</sup> - and the "age of Reagan" appears to rest in professors Rowland Evans and Robert Novak's original observation in

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>28</sup> Will Bunch, *Tear Down This Myth: How the Reagan Legacy has Distorted Our Politics and Haunts Our Future* (New York: Free Press, 2009), 140,144; *Time*, August 16, 1993, pg. 20.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 437.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 282.

<sup>33</sup> Greenberg, xviii.

*The Reagan Revolution* (1981). The authors argued that the Nixon presidency consolidated the status quo of FDR's modern presidency through Nixon's conservative "rhetoric of hyperbole" and his liberal policies, intimating Reagan's inauguration of the postmodern presidency through the balance of "moderate language" (strategically mixed with conservative "rhetoric of hyperbole") and conservative policy action committees to undo the institutional consensus of the modern presidency.<sup>34</sup> The common foundation of the opposing political images of Nixon and Reagan rests in their expedient personifications of the socio-political context. Both politicians knew they were selling images, only Reagan believed in his image. Based on the cultural framework for political discourse that Nixon imposed, the American public interpreted Watergate and any subsequent presidential scandal as a cultural reflection of partisanship rather than the cultural delegitimization of the presidency. Wilentz pinpointed ways in which Clinton's use of the presidential image imitated Nixon's foreign policy strategy of "triangulation." This involved the perceived abandonment of principle in accordance with substantive public opinion polls to project the "maximally advantageous position."<sup>35</sup>

While Wilentz provided a chronicle of American political history since 1974, this thesis chronicles the cultural extension of the "age of Nixon" into Wilentz's "age of Reagan" through the development and interpenetration of Nixon and Reagan's cultural image(s). Wilentz identified the rhetorical and ideological inheritance of Reaganism within the governance of George W. Bush's presidency but he did not identify the explicit use of Nixon's presidential image over Reagan's during President Bush's reelection campaign. During the 2004 American presidential election, the cultural perception of the Vietnam War was understood as a "noble cause" within the consciousness of the "age of Reagan" but this cultural perception was contextualized within the institutionalization of *Nixonland* during the 1968 presidential election. Wilentz testified to the authoritative force of the "age of Reagan" and modern American conservatism in its ideological recovery from the "age of Nixon"; however, the adversarial dynamic between the presidency and the press corps - institutionalized in the "age of Nixon" -

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<sup>34</sup> Rowland Evans & Robert Novak, *The Reagan Revolution* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1981), 245.

<sup>35</sup> Wilentz, 350.

dialogically produced Reaganism based on Nixon's dogmatic framework of opposition ("us" against "them"), which Carter and Reagan appropriated through the image of the anti-politician. The "age of Nixon" institutionalized the American Cold War cultural revolution in the 1968 presidential election while the "age of Reagan" institutionalized the modern American revolution through Nixon's strategy of news management to regulate his liberal opposition. Both of these revolutions were televised.

This thesis analyzes Nixon's inauguration of "populist communication" through a dialogue of the developing cultural and academic perceptions within America's modern political discourse of Cold War Manichaeism. In *Rebels All! A Short History of the Conservative Mind in Postwar America* (2008), Professor Kevin Mattson replaced what he identified as the cultural trend to label "the postwar conservative mind" as this thesis identifies populist conservative discourse in his analysis of the confrontational nature of the modern American political system.<sup>36</sup> Mattson identified the contrasts and similarities between the intellectual architect of the modern conservative movement, William F. Buckley, Jr., and the present cultural representation of an extreme conservative pundit, Ann Coulter, as indicative of how American conservatism evolved from Buckley's substantive rebelliousness of Edmund Burke's "politics of reality" to a "style" based strictly upon populist appeal to the political and popular culture of entertainment,<sup>37</sup> where Coulter's "extreme stance and performative style *constitute* her intellectual substance."<sup>38</sup> As Mattson observed, the "penchant for shock is part of the conservative mind and a central feature of its makeup"<sup>39</sup> due to the populist basis of political discourse in the "television age" as a form of entertainment. Consequently, within this cultural framework, presidential elections are structured according to the Republican style of conservative "populist aggression" against the liberal Democratic substance of "fairness issues."

Mattson intimated the originating duality of modern American conservatism in popular culture in his identification of Buckley as the conservative rebel as opposed to a defender of the status quo, such as

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<sup>36</sup> Kevin Mattson, *Rebels All! A Short History of the Conservative Mind in Postwar America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 3.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 10; italics in original.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

the image of the 1968 Nixon campaign, appearing “akin to student protesters of the 1960s who marched with self-righteousness and self-assuredness that they were bringing utopian transformation to America.”<sup>40</sup> This thesis illustrates that, as reflective of the polarizing dynamic of American popular culture, Buckley’s spirit of rebelliousness was in fact imbibed in his support of the conservative status quo against the liberal paternalism of Cold War Manichaeism and civil libertarianism. Buckley’s intellectualism served as the foundation of what would become known as the New Right culture following 1976, comprised of grassroots organizations, “think-tank policy mongering”, and sophisticated marketing techniques in opposition to the Eastern liberal establishment.<sup>41</sup> The superimposition of cultural images and rhetoric within the modern conservative movement - imbibed in the “age of Nixon” - was rooted in the reactionary basis of the party’s ideology of opposition to the New Deal coalition. Mattson observed, “The conservative mind acted on history, remaining steadfast, but it was also acted on *by* history, changing in certain ways.”<sup>42</sup> These changes proved to be contingent upon the readings of the popular zeitgeist by the conservative movement. Accordingly, Buckley’s intellectualism was perceived as visibly “re-formed as a force for progress as well as history”<sup>43</sup> on his PBS television show *Firing Line* during the 1970s through the convergence of the new counter-establishment rhetoric (new right counterculture) with conservative evangelical activists and Goldwater Republicans.

On July 2, 2009 Mattson appeared on stage with New Left comedian Stephen Colbert on Comedy Central’s *The Colbert Report* to promote and debate his book “*What the Heck are You Up to Mr. President?*” *Jimmy Carter, America’s Malaise, and The Speech That Should Have Changed the Country* (2009). Mattson asserted that Carter’s speech of July 15, 1979 - which was identified by Reagan as Carter’s “Malaise Speech” but the speech never included the word - attempted to inform the American public that the energy problem could not be solved unless America confronted its dependency on foreign natural resources and its domestic values of civic consumption. Colbert vehemently recanted that

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>41</sup> Wilentz, 85.

<sup>42</sup> Mattson, 11; italics in original.

<sup>43</sup> Wilentz, 91.

President Carter was “the original blame-America-firster”, making the mistake of proposing to wage “the moral equivalent of a war” without actually mobilizing the public to wage a war: “That’s what President Bush understood. Because that you don’t fight back against.” While Mattson attempted to endorse President Carter’s speech as marking the pivotal “wrong turn” in modern American politics, Colbert asserted that with the election of 1980, “the market had spoken”, before instigating chanting from his audience: “Reagan good! Carter bad!”<sup>44</sup> It was an entertaining confrontation, yet also one that reflected a popular view in America of Reagan’s triumph in 1980.

While Greenberg acknowledged the academic apprehension of the synthesis of “presidential” history, this was precisely the interpretative language identified in Kevin Phillips’ *The Emerging Republican Majority* (1969), considered by *Newsweek* as “The Political Bible of the Nixon Era.”<sup>45</sup> This divine revelation of the “southern strategy” will be discussed in chapter two. Greenberg argued, “The president’s symbolic power exerts material force”<sup>46</sup> insofar as the duality of Nixon’s cultural image shaped the framework for the discourse of modern American culture. Greenberg identified, “a pseudo-event became real; image created reality.”<sup>47</sup> His analysis was premised upon the interrelationship of Nixon’s creation of “populist communication” and the development of Nixon’s multi-faceted images within American political and popular culture. Greenberg analyzed the value of political symbols based on Nixon’s actions and meaning in American history. His methodology was based on enhancing the standard sources of historical analysis by using “cultural artifacts” to both assess the artistic representation of reality and its effect on American self-consciousness and to illustrate the multiple and superimposed perceptions evoked by Nixon’s image(s). Reflective of the inherent dynamic of culture, Nixon’s images were “superimposed on one another, each colored by its predecessors. The images overlapped, mingled, coexisted.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> <http://www.colbertnation.com/home>.

<sup>45</sup> Kevin Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1969), cover.

<sup>46</sup> Greenberg, xxv.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 294.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxi.

Greenberg's analysis of Nixon's cultural image was grounded in two loyalist Republican observations following Nixon's resignation in August 1974. While *New York Times* columnist Anthony Lewis identified Nixon's cultural centrality in American history since the Second World War as "the Age of Nixon"<sup>49</sup>, Nixon's manuscript editor for Simon & Schuster, Michael Korda, intimated the underlying dynamic of the polarization of *Nixonland* in his observation that Nixon was the only American president during the twentieth century of whom it was "absolutely impossible to be indifferent."<sup>50</sup> Greenberg concluded, "Cumulatively, through their experiences with Nixon, Americans came to believe that politics revolves around the construction and manipulation of images- a shadow that Nixon still casts upon our age."<sup>51</sup> Greenberg suggested the foundational dynamic of *Nixonland* in his identification that the age of Nixon in postwar American culture was premised upon a "fearful symmetry"<sup>52</sup> in which Nixon and his opposition inflated the hostility of the "other", perpetuating a cyclical basis of interaction by conflating fact with partisan assertion. The pervasiveness of paranoia which encircled Nixon's political image intensified during his presidency through the visible use of surveillance, fuelling "popular paranoia" among New Leftists.<sup>53</sup> As Greenberg identified, the cultural perception of an event was not determined by the facts of the event but rather through the lenses of each prism of paranoia.<sup>54</sup>

While the Watergate story "forced the mainstream to take the left seriously"<sup>55</sup>, Nixon's inauguration of the modern form of news management structured the cultural reaction to this event within Nixon's rhetoric of Cold War Manichaeism ("us" against "them") and his identification of the "adversary culture" and liberal elitism of the American press corps. Consequently, Greenberg argued, "politics has come to be seen as an illusion, a superficial contest of images, that, like the pseudo-event, has no intrinsic meaning."<sup>56</sup> In other words, "identity politics"- as the most apt description of each political party's

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., xviii.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., xviii.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., xxxii.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., xxiii.

representation of socio-political groups on television - imbibed in “the age of image-consciousness”<sup>57</sup>, was dialogically produced from Nixon’s recognition that consciousness was directly shaped by popular culture, inaugurating the modern political discourse of “populist communication.” The cultural recognition of “pseudo-events”, meaning the cultural identification of a media-generated depiction of reality, was inaugurated with American newspapers’ suggestions during June 1973 that Nixon’s global tour was a diversion from the centralizing cultural issue of the Watergate story.<sup>58</sup> Within the framework of the “culture wars” imbibed in the media realities of the 1960s, Greenberg observed, “Nixon had become a celebrity, well known for his well-knownness, a human pseudo-event.”<sup>59</sup> Perlstein has extended Greenberg’s analysis of modern American culture by identifying *Nixonland* as the synthesizing paradigm to encapsulate the dynamic and nature of the “pseudo-events” of modern American culture.

Greenberg’s interpretation of “Nixon’s Shadow” inferred Perlstein’s framework of *Nixonland* in its conceptualization within Plato’s cave analogy- indicative of how shadows, or artificial reflections of reality, can be “expressive of reality, yet also rooted in individual perspectives.”<sup>60</sup> Greenberg asserted that “Images reflect substance” because they are naturally produced “from a dialectical or collaborative process between politicians and their audiences.”<sup>61</sup> The Boorstinian landscape of American culture - identified by historian Stephen Whitfield in 1991 - was premised upon Boorstin’s observation of the primacy of images in mass culture and media over the traditional Enlightenment ideals of rationalism. The Boorstinian landscape of American culture is founded on the redundancy of identifying “the proliferation of pseudo-events”<sup>62</sup> due to the cultural identification of the redundancy of the Nixon mask and the “elusiveness of Nixon’s true self.”<sup>63</sup> Greenberg organized the development of this cultural framework into each decade’s pattern of image construction: “with makeup and lighting in the 1950s, refining polling methods in the 1960s, slick campaign ads in the 1970s, sound bites in the 1980s, focus

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., xxvi.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 283.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 303.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., xii.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., xxiv.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., xxi.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., xvii.



groups in the 1990s- public awareness kept pace, incorporating each innovation into its storehouse of knowledge.”<sup>64</sup>

During the 1990s, the revisionist period in the historiography on Nixon’s political image recontextualized Nixon’s policies during the repercussions of Reaganism. While the polarizing event of the Watergate story precipitated a polarizing basis of psychoanalytical commentary by American culture and academia during the 1970s, reflective of the cultural trend of inwardness during the decade, Nixon’s cultural image was imbibed in the consciousness of the inescapability of inference or the appearance of partisanship. The absolutism attributed to the cultural perception of partisan denials as the dynamic of the debate rather than analyzing the content of each perception consequently delegitimized the academic perception of the genuine contributions of psychoanalysis. The inherent cynicism of modern American culture - due to the dual consciousness of media strategies - can be found in Nixon’s inaugural cultural image of corruption. Accordingly, President Reagan’s falsehoods - his lies and half truths about American deaths in Lebanon, the Iran-Contra arms deals, the extent of U.S. intervention in Central America and his complicity in using the stolen Carter campaign strategy briefing book for the first debate of the 1980 presidential election – became reconciled within the adversarial modern American culture.

Reagan illustrated in his diaries the tactic of countering media allegations such as stealing Carter’s campaign briefing book for the debate. After Reagan’s attention to the media’s “scandal” for the first few days, he dismissed the confrontational “yelling” from the “press corps” within his perception of Cold War Manichaeism, delaying his response to the issue until his scheduled press conference seven days later.<sup>65</sup> The confrontational cultural dynamic between the Reagan administration and the president’s identification of the liberal media enabled public outrage - caused by contradictions in Reagan’s public image - to be reconciled in American culture. “Nixonism”<sup>66</sup> identified that integrity could not be maintained in the new media realities of modern American culture.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., xxii-xxiii.

<sup>65</sup> Douglas Brinkley (Editor), *The Reagan Diaries* (New York: HarpersCollins Publishers, 2007), 161-162.

<sup>66</sup> Greenberg, 211.

The academic revisionism of “Nixonism” as the final form of Great Society liberalism, representing an extension of liberal paternalism rather than the inauguration of conservative paternalism, is premised upon re-interpreting and “reconsidering” Nixon’s principal contribution to popular culture. This revisionism was premised upon the identification of a retrospective partisan liberal role rather than his widely observed centrist or moderate role at the time for his expedient perpetuation of Great Society populism. The cultural perception of Nixonian liberalism originated during the Reagan presidency through the parallels identified in the media and the Reagan administration of President Carter as a technocratic micromanager similar to President Nixon. This cultural reinterpretation of Nixon’s image was facilitated by the reconceptualization of Nixon’s image in popular culture and political discourse during the Reagan presidency. In early November 1981, following Reagan’s acquiescence to Haig’s suggestion for Nixon to accompany the delegation of former Presidents Ford and Carter to the ceremony in Egypt for President Sadat’s funeral, *Time* set for popular culture what Greenberg said was the tone for the decade by identifying Nixon as “the world’s unique and ubiquitous elder statesman without portfolio.”<sup>67</sup> While Nixon endorsed the pre-détente Reaganesque posture of toughness from the beginning, once Reagan aggregated media scrutiny for his posture, Nixon semantically altered his support for Reagan’s “hard-headed détente” in order to circumvent Reagan’s and his own image of confrontation.<sup>68</sup>

The visible reconciliation of Nixon’s image within liberal popular culture occurred following Nixon’s speech at the Associated Press luncheon on April 21, 1986, during which Nixon deflected references to the Watergate story through good-natured sarcasm and shook hands with the editor of *The Washington Post* Katherine Graham. Greenberg identified this cultural armistice as “superficial” based on Nixon’s abrasive response to the *Post*’s attempt several years later to authenticate the rumors of his death: “Mrs. Graham will go before I do.”<sup>69</sup> A month later, on May 19, the *Newsweek* headline read: “He’s

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 286; *Time*, November 2, 1981, pg. 30.

<sup>68</sup> Greenberg, 287.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 290n.

Back: The Rehabilitation of Richard Nixon.”<sup>70</sup> Greenberg contended that Nixon manufactured press releases and therefore political discourse following the media campaign to rehabilitate his image in 1986 by having media operatives release “secret” memos, principally *Time*’s Strobe Talbott, who President Clinton later appointed to oversee his Russia policy. These stories were published by *Time* following Nixon’s meeting with Gorbachev in 1986 and Nixon’s private memo to president Bush concerning Nixon’s China trip in 1990.<sup>71</sup>

During the summer of 1990, the privately owned - unlike other presidential libraries run by the National Archives - Richard M. Nixon Presidential Library was opened, with the exhibits not surprisingly depicting Nixon strictly in partisan terms as a victim of liberal vengeance, blaming the break-in on John Mitchell and the cover-up on John Dean.<sup>72</sup> Nixon staged his first return to Capitol Hill prior to the unveiling to meet with the Republican congressman who declared the recovery of Nixon’s image complete and later would become the Republican Presidential candidate in 1996, Bob Dole.<sup>73</sup>

By 2001, President Ford’s cultural image was still developing within the cultural dialectic of loyalists who were gracious for Nixon’s pardon and the others who were resentful of his pardoning Nixon. The Bush II presidency intentionally synthesized the cultural issue by historicizing Nixon’s presidential image in popular culture through the emulation of Reagan’s conservative awards of patriotism to the public by rewarding President Ford’s act in 1974 with a “Profile in Courage” from the liberal symbol of the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.<sup>74</sup> Greenberg argued that this represented a cultural recognition of the decreased perception of vindictiveness of Nixon’s image rather than his innocence: a cultural armistice. The Bush II presidency further vindicated Nixon’s Presidential cultural image by explicitly premising the Bush re-election campaign of 2004 on the imagery of Nixon’s “silent majority” during the 1968 presidential election. This positive strategy of associating patriotism with the Republican Party was coupled with a negative surrogate campaign of attacking New Left Vietnam veteran

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<sup>70</sup> Greenberg, 290; *Newsweek*, “Nixon’s Long Road Back”, May 19, 1986, 3ff.

<sup>71</sup> Greenberg, 292.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, xxiii.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 231.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

John Kerry's personal integrity and patriotism. The root of the duality of the Bush II presidency appears to rest in President Bush's personal image of Reagan's "citizen-politician", projecting the cultural image of Reagan's postmodern conservative presidency while also radicalizing this image by instrumentalizing Nixon's foreign policy of neorealism. The Republican Party's disingenuous denial of the exploitation of 9/11 during the inauguration of the New American Century was imbibed in the denial of the Republican exploitation of a "white backlash" during the 1960s to consolidate the status quo of the American Century\*: *Nixonland*.

In the first chapter, the formation of *Nixonland* will be illustrated through Perlstein's psychoanalytical narrative for how Nixon's central identity and political image of "us" against "them" re-entered the mainstage of political theatre. Nixon's politicization of television during the revolutionary year of 1968 - wherein numerous other societies were challenging the status quo - was facilitated by Nixon's subtle exploitation of Confederate nationalism<sup>+</sup> on television to ensure that his revolution was televised to the southern states. Nixon infiltrated political discourse after the midterm elections of 1966 by publicly accusing President Johnson of politicizing peace in Vietnam, which Nixon would later do throughout the 1968 presidential election. When the North Vietnamese seemed prepared to agree to a condition during the Paris peace talks, Nixon would have his agent, Anna Chenault, known as the Dragon Lady, dissuade the South Vietnamese from acquiescing to concessions because she promised them the election of her friend would provide them with a better deal.<sup>75</sup> While President Johnson was aware of

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\* The term "American Century", also identified as the "Oil Century", was introduced by *Time* publisher Henry Luce in a *Life* magazine editorial in 1941, exhorting American foreign policy to forsake isolationism for a missionary role as the harbinger of western democratic values and the epicenter of the twentieth century. The end of the Cold War - marked by Francis Fukuyama's "End of History"- became the realization of the American Century, with the neoconservative Project for the New American Century (2000) proposing America's hegemony for the twenty-first century through American access to oil resources on the Eurasian continent.

<sup>+</sup> Confederate nationalism will be referenced in this thesis within the post-World War II historiography of Professor Drew Gilpin Faust: "A central contention of Confederate nationalism, as it emerged in 1861, was that the South's effort represented a continuation of the struggle of 1776... They intended to claim American nationalism as their own, to give themselves at once an identity and a history." Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 14.

<sup>75</sup> Perlstein, 350.

Nixon's diplomatic pressure on Saigon, perceiving it at the time as treason<sup>76</sup>, Nixon accused LBJ of politicizing the American system of democracy by relying on the antiquated New Deal generation and consequently alienating conservative "outsiders." The reversal of this perception in modern American culture is the ultimate legacy of Nixon's cultural image(s).

The McLuhan nature of *Nixonland* is illustrated before providing a narrative of the McLuhan culture of the Reagan Revolution as the principal medium for Reaganism in chapter three- based on journalistic accounts and participant memoirs. The Reagan Revolution is illustrated as the modern American revolution by chronicling the private formation and public execution of Reagan's public relations apparatus, derived from Nixon's form of news management. This chapter illustrates the development of Reagan's populist conservative image in American culture by analyzing the historiography of the "new politics of old values" and Reaganite perceptions of modern American political and popular culture.

The conclusion illustrates the visible and tangible penetration of New Left rationalism into America's conservative political discourse alongside the polarizing cultural image of Nixon's "silent majority" during the Bush II presidency. This basis of cultural analysis was illustrated in *The Daily Show and Philosophy* (2007), comprising of nineteen essays edited by Jason Holt, which analyzed the philosophical foundations of the liberal parody of television news based on Neil Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (1985). Postman extended McLuhan's fundamental premise of the media ("the medium is the message") by observing that the politicization of television has reduced the substantive content of political discourse to entertainment.<sup>77</sup> While Postman argued that the medium of television constrained American political culture within the content of providing entertainment, both Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert, as well as Barack Obama, believe the

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<sup>76</sup> Greenberg, 194n.

<sup>77</sup> Jason Holt (Editor), *The Daily Show and Philosophy: Moments of Zen in the Art of Fake News* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2007), 7.

quality of political discourse can be improved through the New Left motive and motif of informing and educating the viewer of the nature of the system in order to reform it.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 13.

## CHAPTER 1: THE MODERN AMERICAN KULTURKAMPF, As Seen on Television

America's ensuing "culture wars" between the conservative depression era-postwar generation and the liberal baby-boomer generation since 1968 represents an artificial rhetorical dialectic coercively imposed through television. Nixon first instrumentalized the medium of television during the 1968 presidential election to implement the neorealist\* basis of modern American political discourse. While Ronald Reagan defined his ideology and identity in opposition to Richard Nixon's "era of negotiation", he emulated Nixon's form of populist communication during the 1980 presidential election and then subsequently regulated the content of the medium during the 1980s "era of reconciliation." New Left comedian George Carlin concisely observed the relationship between the politicized medium of television and its guiding discourse of "identity politics" within the formation of the conservative apotheosis during his 1988 HBO standup special "WTF: What Am I Doing in New Jersey?":

The FCC (Federal Communications Commission) decided, all by itself, that radio and television were the only two parts of American life not protected by the free speech provisions of the first amendment to the constitution. I'd like to repeat that because it sounds vaguely important. The FCC, an appointed body, not elected, answerable only to the president, decided on its own that radio and television were the only two parts of American life not protected by the first amendment to the constitution. Why did they decide that? Because they got a letter from a minister in Mississippi. A reverend Donald Wildman heard something in Mississippi that he didn't like. Well reverend, did anyone tell you there were two knobs on the radio? It's called freedom of choice and its one of the principles this country was founded upon. Look it up in the library reverend if ya have any of them left when you're finished burning the books...

On June 1, 2009 CNN reported the structure of the FCC debate as being between the fairness doctrine (eliminated in 1987, no longer requiring television networks to report public issues in an objective and

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\* Neorealism, or structural realism, developed mainly within the American political science tradition in Kenneth Waltz' *Theory of International Relations* (1979). Neorealist theories reformulated the classical realist tradition of determining state behaviour based on essentialist concepts such as "human nature" and individual dispositions and motivations by constructing a systemic approach premised upon structural constraints and the ordering principle of the distribution of capabilities. The underlying structure of the international system (unipolarity, bipolarity, or multipolarity) and the perpetuating basis of the security dilemma - due to individual state's requisite pursuit of its national interest and the resulting absence of trust because of this motivation - provides the main constraint on state behaviour.

nonpartisan, or fair and honest fashion) and government control of content. During the presidential election of 1984, which was arguably the high point of the Reagan ascendancy, the liberal Democrat Walter Mondale's campaign was premised upon "fairness issues", while President Reagan's campaign was premised upon controlling the presidential image on television.

Modern American conservatism is premised upon controlling its message more than the content of its message. The source for this nature of modern American culture is found in President Richard Nixon's inaugural politicization of television during the 1968 presidential election by instrumentalizing the medium as the principal means for campaigning and governance. *Newsweek* observed the neoconservative Republican Party's ideological perversion of William F. Buckley Jr.'s philosophical currents of American conservatism upon his death at the beginning of March 2008.<sup>79</sup> *The New Yorker* declared the end of the conservative apotheosis by the end of May when Obama's populist momentum ensured him the Democratic presidential nomination.<sup>80</sup> A week later, *The Nation*, a liberal institution of political culture, echoed this sentiment on their cover: "Is the Party Over?"<sup>81</sup> Obama was able to defeat Hillary Clinton because the Obama candidacy personified the actualization of hope and visible (racial) change within the history of populist communication. By combining Karl Rove's Nixonian campaign tactics with the injection of the emotional display of crying to obtain hegemony over public discourse, Clinton failed to counteract Obama's cultural image in her attempt to solidify the image of the "compassionate conservative" Democrat. The 2008 presidential election was premised upon the cultural image of liberal hope and rationalism of the younger generation in contrast to the cultural image of the moderate Republicanism of the "underdog" older generation. Senator Barack Obama managed to counteract the conservative hegemony over American political discourse by utilizing the medium of the Internet, primarily *YouTube.com*, to attain an unprecedented proliferation of the liberal democratic message. In its early stages, the Obama presidency appears to represent the desegregation of American political and popular culture in America's political discourse of "populist communication," also identified

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<sup>79</sup> *Newsweek*, March 10, 2008.

<sup>80</sup> *The New Yorker*, May 26, 2008.

<sup>81</sup> *The Nation*, June 2, 2008.



as “symbolic communication”, based on the use of symbols, brands, and identities, to create a story for a product on television. The visible shift in the American electorate from the Right to the Left in American political discourse has precipitated the Democratic Party’s attempt to inaugurate a liberal apotheosis based on the conservative mandate Reagan aggregated during the 1980 presidential election.

The 2008 presidential election has been interpreted by mainstream publications and media as an ideological collapse of conservatism that has produced economic disorder, compared to the ideological collapse of liberalism in 1968 that produced cultural disorder. However, postwar liberalism, or “liberal corporatism”, or liberal conservatism, or Cold War Manichaeism, is the synthesizing ideology which explains both these elections: “us” against “them”. Following the Second World War, the postwar socio-political dialectic between the socially progressive New Deal coalition and the fragmented Republican Party created an absolute rhetorical dialectic between democracy and communism, between good and evil, between New Deal social liberalism and Republican social conservatism, in order for hardline New Deal liberals to control American political discourse. The postwar ideology of Cold War Manichaeism dialogically produced a “we/they world” where binary oppositions consumed the American consciousness. New Left sociologist Todd Gitlin has identified that America’s triumph of 1945 spurred a “centrifugal cultural motion”<sup>82</sup>, creating a “tug-of-war team”<sup>83</sup> over American nationalism between the liberal Democratic Party and the Republican Party through an irreconcilable culture war. The modern American kulturkampf institutionalized on television in the 1968 presidential election between the liberal baby-boomer generation and the postwar conservative generation was personified by Richard Nixon’s consciously constructed television image of moderate paternalism to attract the alienated paternal majority of American society, the southern electorate. The nature of America’s “culture wars” has recently been identified as *Nixonland*, defined by journalist Rick Perlstein (2008) as “the America where

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<sup>82</sup> Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams*, 60.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

two separate and irreconcilable sets of apocalyptic fears coexist in the minds of two separate and irreconcilable groups of Americans.”<sup>84</sup>

Perlstein argued that *Nixonland* first entered the American psyche during Nixon’s “Checker’s Speech” on national television in 1952 - a speech he delivered with the sole intent of portraying himself as the victimized Republican against the Democrats and then somehow could not understand why the Democrats hated him for it. After being labelled as a campaign finance “crook”, Nixon volunteered to demonstrate the complete transparency of his finances while confessing to having received a dog from a supporter which he couldn’t think of taking away from his daughter. This episode in political theatre is how *Nixonland* began and this is the fundamental premise upon which Nixon’s artificial political dialectic was formed. American political culture and popular culture divided based on an interpretation of the message rather than the content of the message itself, illustrating Marshall McLuhan’s view of culture years before he coined the term. America became divided between those who didn’t see past Nixon’s disingenuous and sentimental attempt to play on America’s heart strings, and the “other” side who viewed Nixon’s attempt to reach out to American sympathies as what Walt Lippman observed as “the most demeaning experience my country has ever had to bear.”<sup>85</sup> As Nixon identified in *Six Crises* (1962), the “Checkers Speech” inaugurated the theatrical basis of modern political discourse by providing Nixon a televised platform “to tell [his] story directly to the people rather than funnel it to them through a press account.”<sup>86</sup> Perlstein observed, “Even after the Checkers Speech, coverage of Nixon was quite balanced.”<sup>87</sup>

The foundational McLuhan culture of *Nixonland* provides the regulatory medium for the modern American kulturkampf because the medium of television causes the viewer to feel what he or she perceives the picture to denote and what the words connote: what the image says speaks louder than the words we hear. This is why the viewer is inclined to subordinate the content of the message to the image

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<sup>84</sup> Perlstein, 46.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>86</sup> Richard Nixon, *Six Crises* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1962), 107.

<sup>87</sup> Perlstein, 58.

itself. Inherent to the medium, the ideal political strategy in *Nixonland* is to make your opponent feel as if he or she has leverage over you and then induce him or her to exploit an intentional mistake in order to make the person seem “unduly aggressive” while you garner “pity by making the enemy look like a self-righteous and hyperintellectual enemy of common sense.”<sup>88</sup> This political tactic is meant to exploit sentimentality within the candidate’s constituency of the “citizen-politician” while at the same time attracting sympathy from the opponents’ constituency for being disappointed in the actions of their presumed leader.

The term *Nixonland* was introduced into American political discourse by Adlai Stevenson and his speechwriter’s sarcastic attempt during the 1952 Democratic campaign to reduce the hardline anti-communist rhetoric and images of Nixon to a farcical reality. Nixon’s instinctual anti-communist crusades during the late 1940s aggregated the image of a hardline conservative Republican, enabling him to be recruited by General Eisenhower out of political expediency to his image as his vice-presidential candidate. While Nixon visibly moderated the “southern strategy” through his creation of “identity politics” on television during the 1968 presidential election to appropriate the hegemony of “Cold War Manichaeism”, the eroding liberal democratic coalition assumed the dependent identity of the ideological “outsider” within American political discourse. Gitlin defined the root of “identity politics” as the “cant of identity” in *The Twilight of Common Dreams* (1995):

Cant is the hardening of the aura around a concept...  
the cant of identity underlies the identity politics, which  
proposes to deduce a position, a tradition, a deep truth,  
or a way of life from a fact of birth, physiognomy, national  
origin, sex, or physical disability.”<sup>89</sup>

During the 1968 presidential election, the socio-political dialectic of the 1960s, between civil libertarians and social conservatives, transferred from America’s residual de jure social segregation to a de facto segregation and regulation of liberal popular culture by conservative political culture. Gitlin argued that

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 28

<sup>89</sup> Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams*, 126.

the “identity politics”, or “surrogate politics”<sup>90</sup> of the “culture wars” of the 1960s annulled the Left within American political discourse by abstracting universalism: “If there is no people, but only peoples, there is no Left.”<sup>91</sup> The visible cultural decline of the New Left caused “the fragmentation of the Idea of the Left.”<sup>92</sup> Gitlin philosophically implied the inherent artificiality of “identity politics” because they comprise

a set of false solutions proclaimed for real problems-  
false solutions that began with certain plausibility.  
The oddity is that the Left, which once stood for  
universal values, seems to speak today for select  
identities, while the Right, long associated with  
privileged interests, claims to defend the common  
good.<sup>93</sup>

Subsequently, “People lived, felt, desired, revolted as members of identity categories- not as citizens, let alone as human beings.”<sup>94</sup> Gitlin argued that the medium of this war and “the recognition of a collective hurt”<sup>95</sup> is perpetuated by “the desire to mimic the identity consciousness of others.”<sup>96</sup> Similar to the basis of volition for religious faith, individuals have been drawn to identities since the 1970s for a sense of belonging and inclusion. The cultural ideal of celebrity and fame appear to have become the quintessential identity for an individual to strive toward because it universalizes self-identity, visibly annulling an individual’s inherent feeling of alienation in America’s political discourse of “identity politics.”

*Nixonland* was established in 1968 through the polarized and demagogic presidential campaign of Richard Nixon, symbolizing the premature end to America’s process of racial reconciliation. *Nixonland* emerged from Nixon’s (neo)realist creation of an artificial political dialectic between the Democrats and Republicans. Perlstein argued that Nixon “brilliantly co-opted the liberals’ populism, channeling it into a white middle-class rage at the sophisticates, the well-born, the “best circles”- all those who looked down

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 121.

their nose at “you and me.”<sup>97</sup> Accordingly, his political discourse became the philology of modern American conservatism, with Goldwater conservatism acting merely as the socio-political catalyst. Nixon’s political discourse and *Nixonland* itself is premised upon a “new style of demagoguery, a kind of right-wing populism”, which emerged during the mid-1960s in convergence with the individualism afforded by the Civil Rights Movement and the decentralizing medium of television. *Nixonland* consists of a politics of mass consumption precipitated by the Republican Party in order to attract the increasing demographic and electorate that were becoming alienated by what Samuel Lubell observed was a shift in the inner dynamics of the Roosevelt coalition from those of getting to those of keeping.<sup>98</sup> Perlstein identified Nixon’s imposed rhetorical dialectic between the Democrats and Republicans but exempted Nixon from a devolving impact upon American political culture due to his belief that Nixon perceived his actions as saving the United States from the ramifications of racial reconciliation.

While the Nixon presidency inaugurated the concurrent shift of the American electorate with the American mass media toward New Right populism, the Obama presidency represents the symbolic inauguration within “populist communication” of postwar liberalism’s interjection of New Left rationalism into modern American conservatism’s hegemony over political discourse since 1968. This was facilitated by the media’s collective guilt for deference to the Bush II Administration, similar to the lessons learned from McCarthyism during the 1950s. Nixon’s politicization of television during the 1968 presidential election inaugurated the American electorate’s visible shift to the Right of the political spectrum in order to consolidate the status quo. Nixon inaugurated the modern American discourse of populist rhetoric and images of domestic realism (or centrism) and international neorealism by consciously forming his political image of moderate paternalism in accordance with the alienated paternal southern electorate, known as the “southern strategy.” This form of realpolitik was interrupted by Nixon’s corruption of the presidential image, enabling the Democratic Party and Southern Governor Jimmy Carter to project an authentic image of the “outsider” from the Washington Establishment during the 1976

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 747.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 42.

presidential election within the framework of the southern strategy. During the 1980 presidential election Reagan generalized the “southern strategy” by projecting an authentic image of conservative paternalism, institutionalizing the conservative apotheosis through his visible cultural restoration of American nationalism based on “identity politics” and the rhetoric of “shared values.” Reagan implemented his ideological agenda in accordance with substantive public opinion through deregulation and increased defense spending by inaugurating “supply-side economics” and his technological diplomatic leverage over the Soviets in the abstract form of the Strategic Defense Initiative; S.D.I. was dialogically produced from Nixon’s leverage of Sino-American collusion against the Soviets. Wilentz argued that Reagan “thought of SDI as neither a bargaining chip nor a means to intimidate the Soviet Union but as a genuine guarantor of world peace.”<sup>99</sup> Although Reagan may have genuinely perceived S.D.I. to provide a new hegemonic level to nuclear diplomacy, Reagan’s assurance that the U.S. was going to share the technology once it was developed did not answer Gorbachev’s question during the Reykjavik Summit of why S.D.I. would be necessary if all nuclear weapons were eliminated.<sup>100</sup>

The media realities of Reaganism gained increased attention during the Bush II presidency, with the historiography interpreting Reagan’s cult of personality and hardline nationalist ideology as the principal means for enlarging the conservative middleclass. By the end of the 1980s, Reaganism represented the visible reconciliation of the “culture wars” of the 1960s through Reagan’s populist cult of personality - as the personification of American Christian nationalism - moderating the American electorate by visibly synthesizing America’s conservative political culture and liberal popular culture. Wilentz observed, “Reaganism was its own distinctive blend of dogma, pragmatism, and, above all, mythology. Although it had tens of millions of followers, its theory resided not in a party, a faction, or a movement, but in the mind and the persona of one man: Ronald Reagan.”<sup>101</sup> Reaganism became premised upon an ideological zealotry born of the belief that the perpetual threat of the “other” required true

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<sup>99</sup> Wilentz, 256.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 129.

believers to “take matters into their own hands and execute.”<sup>102</sup> Wilentz identified the fundamental basis for political discourse outside of the principal medium which has structured modern American culture: “The rule of law, by those lights, would always be subordinated to, and as far as possible aligned with, the rule of politics.”<sup>103</sup>

While Nixon’s “imperial presidency” was premised upon emulating the Kennedy campaign’s populist tactics, Reagan’s postmodern presidency has been emulated based on Reagan’s politicization of television to emotionally connect with the viewing electorate. President Clinton is considered to have won the presidency in 1992 by instrumentalizing the postmodern presidency to visibly feel the public’s pain during the recession. A black female voter posed a question to the candidates concerning how the recession had personally affected each man. President Bush broadly claimed that the recession touched all of us. Clinton claimed when citizens lost their jobs in his state of Arkansas, he most likely knew them, and felt their pain. The woman visibly nodded in agreement. President Clinton won reelection through exploiting his popular cultural image and his semantic strategy of co-opting the conservative hegemony over political discourse by declaring “The Era of Big Government is Over.” However, the publicly revealed affair at the beginning of his second term, and the ensuing allegations and attempted impeachment proceedings organized by the conservative movement, culturally associated Clinton with an image of liberalism imbibed in the counterculture of the 1960s: a liberal enemy of family values. The instrumentality of the perjury charge to associate Clinton with a cultural image rooted in the counterculture was evoked during the formal televised hearings of the House Judiciary Committee. This included the irrelevant testimony from a former female coach from a women’s basketball team, who had testified to lying under oath about going to a lesbian bar called Puss ‘n’ Boots.<sup>104</sup> During the hearings, the visible partisanship of Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr was made most apparent when Starr “parenthetically” acknowledged that months earlier he had exonerated Clinton of the Whitewater affair and all other purported scandals he investigated. Democratic Representative Barney Frank questioned

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 286.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 397.

why Starr had not revealed this information prior to the midterm elections.<sup>105</sup> In the context of the proliferation of political adultery scandals by both parties in 2009, Reagan's former speechwriter and the architect of Vice President Bush's 1988 campaign image of the American cowboy reminiscent of Clint Eastwood ("Read my lips: no new taxes."), *Wall Street Journal* columnist Peggy Noonan traced the origins for such behaviour to the Clinton era. She asserted – almost pensively, looking into the distance as to elevate her idea – that it seemed it was during that time in which "a new devilishness was unleashed, especially in the media, in which a new meanness took style."<sup>106</sup>

Wilentz used the term "Clintonism" to describe and contextualize Clinton's presidency against the larger backdrop of presidential history. While Clinton's cultural image of moderation mediated the opposing forces of the Republican majority and the Democratic minority, the visible intensification of the "culture wars" during Clinton's tenure reflected the rhetorical "politics of rage" of New Right populism within *Nixonland*. The identification of the irreconcilable opposition between the right and left was articulated by First Lady Hillary Clinton when the event of the Lewinsky scandal was first revealed as a "vast right-wing conspiracy."<sup>107</sup> Similar to the accusations against Nixon of using foreign policy to deflect his domestic scandal of Watergate during the spring of 1973, Clinton's critics accused him of attacking Al Qaeda to distract attention from his domestic political problems.<sup>108</sup> Wilentz observed, "Clintonism came to stand not just for unprincipled political expediency but also for a political pathology, the pathology actually being politics itself- in Clinton's case, the politics of re-creating liberalism during a long conservative era."<sup>109</sup> The "pathology" of Clintonism was rooted in Clinton's image of moderation, promoting fiscal conservatism while not being able to substantively advocate liberal reform due to the institutional constraints of the political "age of Reagan." The mythical legacy of "Reaganomics", or "supply-side economics", or "trickle-down economics", and the end of the Cold War by the end of the "American Century", dialogically produced a paradigm shift from the "old politics" of the Cold War to

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> ABC News *The Roundtable*, hosted by George Stephanopoulos, June 28, 2009.

<sup>107</sup> Wilentz, 383.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 394.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 324.



the “new politics” of liberal Democratic globalization, causing what academics have identified as an “enemy crisis” in American political discourse. As Henry Kissinger observed in *Diplomacy* (1994), “The end of the Cold War produced an even greater temptation to recast the international environment in America’s image.”<sup>110</sup> The discourse of Cold War Manichaeism was consequently regulated during the 1990s era of Eastern European decolonization by neoliberal realism and economic modernization through the deregulation of the banking system.

America’s socio-political dialectic during the 1960s pushed public opinion and American political discourse to the moderate paternalism (conservatism) of the American Century while the neoconservatism of the New American Century has pushed American public opinion and political discourse to New Left rationalism. The George W. Bush presidency was founded upon the image of “compassionate conservatism” until the hardline neoconservative ideologues of George W. Bush’s Cabinet exploited the terrorist attacks of 9/11, tripling the size of the federal government to implement the Project for the New American Century (2000). While the Bush II administration aggregated public support for preemptive U.S. military action in Iraq<sup>111</sup>, the administration’s neoconservative intentions for access to oil resources on the Eurasian continent subsumed public opinion similar to Nixon’s neorealist foreign policy in Vietnam. By the end of the Bush II presidency, chief ideologue Vice-President Dick Cheney responded to a public opinion poll in which two-thirds of Americans opposed the Iraq War on March 20, 2008 during an interview on ABC’s *Good Morning America*. He responded, “So?” When asked by the interviewer if he cared what the American people think, he responded, “You cannot be blown off course by the fluctuations in the public opinion polls.” By December, Cheney reaffirmed Nixon’s neorealist perception of the presidency to *Fox News*’ Chris Wallace by asserting the powers of the president are unlimited. Neoconservatives, such as the daughter of former vice president Dick

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<sup>110</sup> Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1994), 805.

<sup>111</sup> Vice-President Dick Cheney, Speech to the Nashville Convention to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, August 26, 2002: “Simply stated there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein has weapons of mass destruction. There is no doubt that he is amassing them to use against our friends, against our allies, and against us.”; George W. Bush Speeches on October 5 and 7, 2002; January 28, 2003; State of the Union Address, March 13, 2003; Donald Rumsfeld press conference, March 30, 2003.

Cheney, Liz Cheney, argue that Obama's "September 10<sup>th</sup> mentality" - in conjunction with Clinton's political strategy of triangulation - prevents liberal diplomacy from assuming a viable option.<sup>112</sup> Similar to the causal entropy of New Deal liberalism during the 1960s, the pervasive threat provided by an external and internal enemy has focused political discourse within Cold War Manichaeism. In the "age of Reagan", the Gramscian intelligence of Reagan's postmodern presidency constrains the President's actions within the inspiration of the public will; this is why the Bush II administration, principally Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld, injected political discourse with the real fear of the Iraq threat.

Following the implementation of the neoconservative foreign policy agenda, President George W. Bush's absolutist approach relegated dissension against his foreign policy by attempting to personify Nixon's "silent majority" during the 2004 Presidential election. Following the 2008 election, Republicans Mitt Romney, Jeb Bush, and Eric Cantor attempted to rebrand the party against the backdrop of a small local pizza chain beginning the weekend after former Democratic Senator Arlen Specter's defection from the Republican Party (and back to the Democratic Party) on April 28, 2009. The rebranding campaign comprised of traditional rhetoric of what Specter asserted to the *Washington Post* was an attempt to simply reaffirm the party's antiquated representation of the "silent majority." The content of the Republicans' rebranding message was comprised of Jeb Bush's assertion that the Republican Party holds principles and values shared by the majority of Americans. Romney reiterated the Republican Party's socially conservative position on a fundamental issue of "identity politics": "Marriage is not an activity, it's a status, and there should be a national standard." Once again, liberalism was visibly threatening the conservative status quo.

In response to the Republican rebranding campaign to reclaim the cultural symbol of the average middle-American, President Obama went to a local DC burger chain on May 29 with his aides, the press corps, and NBC's Brian Williams, in order to visibly demonstrate Obama's personification of the average American. Brian Williams' Report *Inside the Obama White House* was televised from 8-10pm on June 5

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<sup>112</sup> *YouTube.com*, "Liz Cheney on Obama", posted on May 21, 2009.

(filmed on May 29, Day 130 of the Obama presidency) reminiscent of Nixon's creation of this one-hour format in 1969.

Modern American conservatism lost its hegemonic potency on television during the 2008 presidential election similar to the de facto referendum on American liberalism on television in 1968. While the Nixon campaign contained political discourse during the 1968 presidential election to obtain hegemony, the Obama campaign expanded the rational limits of political discourse by injecting New Left rationalism into American political discourse. President Obama continues to wage this rational culture war within *Nixonland* due to the foundational dynamics of the "culture wars" during the 1960s. Gitlin identified that the socio-political dialectic of the 1960s - expressed in American political discourse through the ideology of "Cold War Manicheism"<sup>113</sup> - is premised upon the rejection of liberal rhetoric for conservative action: "It was as if everyone were playing out a fantasy version of Vietnam: act tough, try to intimidate, win over the center with a show of force, draw the other side into acting every bit as monstrous as you said it was."<sup>114</sup> Gitlin identified this dialectic of appearance versus reality in the "television age" as caused by the entanglement of the New Left movement's motives and their "reform-through-polarization motif" to make the enemy reveal his own nature.<sup>115</sup> Senator Barack Obama personified the New Left motives and motif imbibed in the 1960s by visibly representing the reform of American liberal democracy through his polarizing identity as a liberal black man and his New Left rational rhetoric, identifying for the television audience during the third debate that Senator McCain's negative campaigning "says more about his campaign than it does about me."<sup>116</sup>

CNN senior political analyst John King introduced the term *Obamaland* into political discourse on the day Barack Obama received the unprecedented Democratic presidential candidacy by acclamation on August 27. However, King conceived the term within the media's effect on the strategy of the Obama campaign in CNN's release of the name of McCain's vice-presidential candidate during the climax of the

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<sup>113</sup> Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 339.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 319.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 289-90.

<sup>116</sup> *YouTube.com*, "Third 2008 Presidential Debate (Full Video)", posted on October 15, 2008.

Democratic National Convention: “Some times in Obamaland, as we saw, some things can change depending on what we do.” *Nixonland* has not transitioned to *Obamaland* because the New Left motives and motifs of the 1960s continue to structure American political discourse: liberal Democratic attempts to reveal the ideological irrationality or contradictions of New Right populism are deflected or negated by a visible display of emotion, due to the absolutism of American political discourse and the aloofness attributed to a “citizen-politician.”

Southern Democratic Senator Zell Miller demonstrated this strategy following his keynote address during the 2004 Republican National Convention by simply getting angry at ABC interviewer Chris Mathews and challenging him to a “duel” to deflect a question concerning his disingenuous and hyperbolic denigration of John Kerry’s personal character during his inflamed address. This tactic of using a Democrat to deliver the keynote address for the Republican National Convention - with Joe Liebermann assuming the role during the 2008 RNC - is symbolically rooted in sending a visible message to the American electorate of liberal Democratic disunity and ideological fragmentation reminiscent of the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Both Democratic politicians accused the Democratic presidential candidate of politicizing American foreign policy and questioned the candidate’s personal integrity and patriotism. Gitlin argued that the 1968 DNC represented the socio-political culmination of the decade: “the exhaustion of liberalism, the marauding vengefulness of the authorities, the resolve and recklessness of the movement, the disintegration of the Democratic Party.”<sup>117</sup>

Gitlin’s reduction of this cultural dialectic to the concept of “cant” provides a direct applicability to American society today in that the criticism of aloofness attributed to Republican vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin and President George W. Bush - and their inadequate knowledge of identity politics - is identified as the antithesis of “cant”: a lack of intellectual curiosity. Similar to the New Deal coalition’s internal entropy during the 1960s - in the attempt to collectively represent all of their constituency’s individual issues - modern American conservatism has attained a level of ideological systemic hegemony which has alienated the expanding constituency of the younger liberal generation.

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<sup>117</sup> Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 327.

The New Left motif imbibed in the 1960s of making the enemy reveal his or her own nature was illustrated by the women of NBC's partisan talk show *The View* during an interview on May 20, 2009 with conservative radio commentator and *Fox News* talk show host, Glenn Beck, the second most popular Fox personality since the 2008 presidential election. New Left African-American comedian Whoopi Goldberg and veteran presidential reporter Barbara Walters confronted Beck in regards to his depiction of their first meeting on the Amtrak train to the Correspondents Dinner in which Beck approached the two women to introduce himself. On his radio show, Beck embellished their meeting to portray the women as elite liberals by asserting that he approached four empty seats and was told by an employee that the seats were reserved for Goldberg and Walters, although it is a policy of Amtrak to not reserve seats. Beck defensively acquiesced that he had "misspoke" while asserting that Americans are "tired" of the Left-Right debate anyways because both the Republicans and Democrats have revealed themselves as "liars."<sup>118</sup> During this exchange, Beck demonstrated the present Republican strategy to deflect New Left populist hegemony over public discourse by universalizing accountability.

Glenn Beck, like many right-wing broadcasters before him, has fought his way to the front lines of the "culture wars" of the 1960s strictly through the partisan trade of rhetoric and emotion. Perlstein's assertion that *Nixonland* "has not yet ended"<sup>119</sup> is validated by the causal intensification of the foundational McLuhan culture of *Nixonland* following the 2008 presidential election by conservative political personality Glenn Beck - similar to Nixon's intensification of Kennedy's populist tactics to inaugurate the "imperial presidency." Beck's populist tactic was premised upon manipulating American political discourse through the combination of crying and a Television/Internet populist movement founded on the feeling of community the day after 9/11 ([www.9-12 Project.com](http://www.9-12 Project.com)). Based on this image, Beck has formed the Republican Party's new surrogate populist movement based solely on a feeling and sustained through Reagan's rhetoric of a "compassionate conservative." While Nixon instrumentalized television for his "Checker's Speech" by stylistically reducing his substantive message of economic

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<sup>118</sup> *YouTube.com*, "Glenn Beck on The View", posted May 20, 2009.

<sup>119</sup> Perlstein, 748.

transparency and family values to a father's paternal instincts or feelings to protect his daughter, Beck has attempted to obtain populist hegemony over American political discourse by offering a substance-free common feeling to communicate the feeling of belonging in his populist movement. Nixon attempted to obtain hegemony over the public discourse on the issue of his public accusations by injecting political discourse with a sense of misunderstood empathy with the Republican Party. Beck is visibly showing his empathy with his viewers through his inability to control his emotions over the issue of 9/11.

Senator Hillary Clinton injected the present basis of political discourse with the technique of crying on January 7 - at the beginning of the 2008 presidential election year. During a televised press conference with a fifteen-women panel at Café Espresso in Portsmouth prior to the New Hampshire Primary, Senator Clinton began weeping:

I just don't want to see us fall backwards. This is very personal for me. It's not just political. It's not just public. I see what's happening. We have to reverse it. And some people think elections are a game. They think it's like who's up or who's down. It's about our country. It's about our kids' future. It's really about all of us together.<sup>120</sup>

Clinton's emotional display was historically paralleled at the time by the media to Edmund Muskie's originating self-destructive display of emotion during the 1972 Democratic Primaries. Perlstein argued that Muskie's display of emotion (described by Dan Rather as he "began to weep" and by David Broder as "Tears streaming down his cheeks") was provoked by the *Union Leader's* "gutless" attack of his wife's image.<sup>121</sup> *New York Times* Op-Ed Columnist and culturally recognized feminist Maureen Dowd observed the "whiff of Nixonian self-pity about her choking up" in a January 9 article, "Can Hillary Cry Her Way Back to the White House?"<sup>122</sup>

Beck produced *You Are Not Alone: 9-12 Project* on Fox News on March 13 at 5pm - two weeks prior to President Obama's March 24 press conference on the economic crisis, informing the public of his comprehensive economic strategy. During the one-hour special Beck introduced the 9-12 Project,

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<sup>120</sup> *YouTube.com*, "Hillary Clinton Crying", posted on January 8, 2008.

<sup>121</sup> Perlstein, 629.

<sup>122</sup> *New York Times*, Maureen Dowd, "Can Hillary Cry Her Way Back to the White House?", January 9, 2008 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/09/opinion/08dowd.html>).

premiered upon recreating the feeling of community and individual autonomy of choice the day after 9/11. MSNBC's *Morning Joe* responded to the Beck announcement of the 9-12 Project by laughing at Beck's emotional theatrics while acknowledging that there was obviously nothing wrong with displaying one's emotion because it influenced public discourse. Joe Scarborough suggested that Beck was "parodying Colbert's parody of a conservative talk show host."<sup>123</sup> The special opened with Beck standing backstage, acknowledging that he sounded "like a fricking televangelist", to later visibly authenticate and verify his heartfelt pronouncement:

The real power to change America's course resides with you. You are the secret. You are the answer. [Beck emotionally broke down weeping] I'm sorry. I just love my country. And I fear for it. And it seems like the voices of our leaders, and special interests, and the media, they're surrounding us and it feels intimidating. But you know what? Pull away the curtain. There isn't anybody there. It's just a few people who are pushing the buttons and their voices are really weak. The truth is they don't surround us. We surround them.<sup>124</sup>

The juxtaposition in Beck's performance of weeping and then quickly smiling or laughing reflects the psychological after-effects of 9/11: emotional confusion. Beck asserted his reluctant role as the messenger of the people as the "underdog" and the true guardians of American freedom within the context of the post-9/11 world, romanticizing the socio-political context through messianic language of Cold War Manichaeism, "us" against "them":

Many in Washington want to convince you that they're the solution. I happen to believe that them being the solution is the problem. The system has been perverted and it has to be restored. Those who screwed up must be allowed to fail. Those who broke the law must go to jail. And those who have played by the rules need to be left alone to rebuild our nation. The answers have never come from Washington. We weren't told how to behave that day after 9/11. We just knew. It was right. It was the opposite of what we feel today. Let us find ourselves and our solutions together again with the nine founding principles and the twelve eternal values.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> *YouTube.com*, "Morning Joe Rips Into Glenn Beck", posted March 31, 2009.

<sup>124</sup> *YouTube.com*, "Glenn Beck weeps on air", posted March 13, 2008.

Beck has appropriated Reagan's messianic conservative rhetoric of small government and shared values by offering a populist image that is still compatible with the Republican Party's alienated constituency of realist neoconservatives. While President Nixon's cultural image was used to mobilize the American conservative electorate's support for the Iraq War, President Reagan's cultural image of a "compassionate conservative" was utilized following the liberal and black backlash election of 2008 to reinvigorate the populist Republican cultural image. On July 23, 2009 – in the middle of "Obama's Healthcare Offensive" – Beck identified the underlying impetus of President Obama's ideological agenda for his *Fox News* audience: reparations.

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid.



## CHAPTER 2: NIXONLAND

Perlstein's *Nixonland* has provided a narrative for the 1960s that unfolds from Nixon's self-perception as a peripheral martyr, enabling him to authentically personify America's alienated demographic majority following 1966. This research builds on Perlstein's *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* (2001) in which he traced the rise of the American conservative movement, culminating in Goldwater's presidential campaign in 1964. The identification of Goldwater conservatism became institutionalized within the Republican Party during the 1966 Republican National Convention, wherein 75 percent of the delegates identified themselves as conservatives.<sup>126</sup> During the convention of the 1962 California Republican Assembly, Nixon denounced the conservative John Birch Society as "nuts and kooks"<sup>127</sup>, without realizing that the institution had been consumed by what liberal historian Richard Hofstadter observed as the "paranoid style" of member Phyllis Schlafly, leader of the STOP ERA [Equal Rights Amendment] movement following 1972, arguing that the ERA would destroy the traditional family and women's legal protections.<sup>128</sup> During the universally recognized polarization of Republicanism during the 1964 Republican National Convention, Perlstein observed, "Nixon was one of the few outsiders to understand what was happening: that the delegates he addressed at the Cow Palace would be controlling the nomination in 1968, even if Barry Morris Goldwater didn't win a single electoral vote in 1964."<sup>129</sup> During the 1966 California gubernatorial election Ronald Reagan deflected his polarizing political affiliation with the radically conservative John Birch Society by asserting in late 1965 that he hoped their members would accept his philosophy rather than serving as a spokesman for an institution on the fringe. Nixon approached the 1968 presidential election with no illusions of the necessity of appeasing the John Birch Society. In spite of *National Review*'s condemnation of the institution in the October 1965 issue, Nixon observed the emerging zeitgeist of the fundamental constituency of Buckley's cultural followers: "the Birchers could be handled,

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<sup>126</sup> Perlstein, 131.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>128</sup> Wilentz, 93-94, 471n; Richard Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics", in *The Paranoid Style In American Politics and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA, 1996), originally published in 1965.

<sup>129</sup> Perlstein, 64.

but the real menace to the Republican Party came from the Buckleyites.”<sup>130</sup> As professor Kevin Mattson observed, the cultural origins of contemporary conservative television and radio pundits with the conservative renaissance philosophy of William F. Buckley Jr., Nixon identified Buckley’s cultural importance and necessary support because of the formation of popular consciousness and culture through television.

Perlstein has uncovered a central psychological identity of Richard Nixon - as well as the contingent influences that shaped this self-identity - by recognizing a pattern of behaviour that resonated throughout Nixon’s entire life and simplified it to his identification of “self” and “other”: Orthogonians and Franklins - the rural outsider who had to fight his way past the Establishment to reach the center of power. This dialectic originated between a minority social group, who ran the student body in Nixon’s high school, called the Franklins, and the majority of students who “seemed resigned to its exclusion.”<sup>131</sup> Nixon coined the term Orthogonians - defined as “upright” and a “straighter shooter”<sup>132</sup> - as an identity for the majority to gravitate towards. Academic and cultural commentary has heavily criticized Perlstein’s psychoanalytic extension of this social construct during Nixon’s high school years to national political discourse; however, Perlstein’s synthesis of Nixon’s basis of social interaction, solidifying at an early age, encompasses the nature of Nixon’s self-identity and that of his opponent as static - evident in *Six Crises* (1962) where Nixon provided an insight into his perception of “the other”:

Bigamy, forgery, drunkenness, thievery, anti-Semitism, perjury, the whole gamut of misconduct in public office, ranging from unethical to downright criminal activities- all these were among the charges that were hurled against me, some publicly and others through whispering campaigns that were even more difficult to counteract.<sup>133</sup>

The present trajectory of this dialectic is most aptly described by Senator Barack Obama’s quip during the 2008 American presidential election in which he observed that his opponent, Vietnam POW John

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 130, 764n; “Reporter, October 20, 1966.”

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Perlstein, 59; Richard Nixon, *Six Crises* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1962), preface.

McCain's "Straight Talk Express" had jumped the rails.<sup>134</sup> On September 30, 2008, during Senator John McCain's interview on camera with the Des Moines Register editorial board, the candidate responded to the interviewer's allegation that the McCain campaign's motif of the "Straight Talk Express" had been detoured.<sup>135</sup> In response to McCain's request for "examples of an assertion of that nature", the interviewer identified the McCain campaign's depiction of Senator Obama's promotion of sexual education in one of their television ads based on Obama's support of a recent education bill. McCain claimed that he respected the interviewer's "opinion" that McCain was fragmenting the truth by making disingenuous statements, but her opinion did not change the visible facts of his image: "I certainly respect your opinion but it's not the facts that changes my position and my honorable service to this country. So I respect your opinion but I strongly disagree with your assertion."<sup>136</sup> After all, in the "age of Reagan", as President Reagan identified during the 1988 Republican National Convention, "Facts are stupid things – stubborn things, I should say." Facts don't change denoted images.

In *The Emerging Republican Majority* (1969), Kevin Phillips attempted to disincorporate any partisan affiliation in his socio-political analysis by depicting his findings as "a portrait of American *presidential* voting behavior from Civil War days to 1968."<sup>137</sup> Phillips attempted to contextualize his grandiose assertion within his interpretative framework of "presidential cycles and regimes"<sup>138</sup>, propounding "no strategic or policy recommendations,"<sup>139</sup> but asserting that Nixon's election marked "the end of the New Deal Democratic hegemony and the beginning of a new era in American politics."<sup>140</sup> Serving as an administrative assistant to Republican U.S. Representative Paul A. Fino from 1964 to 1968, Phillips became special assistant to Nixon campaign manager John N. Mitchell during the 1968 presidential election and later became the special assistant to Attorney General Mitchell during the Nixon presidency,

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<sup>134</sup> *YouTube.com*, "Second 2008 Presidential Debate (Full Video)", posted on October 8, 2008.

<sup>135</sup> *YouTube.com*, "John McCain Defends Straight Talk Express", posted October 1, 2008.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> Kevin Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1969), 21; italics in original.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 23; italics in original.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

serving as the principal analyst for voting patterns and trends for the Nixon organization. Phillips concluded based on the election of 1968 that “The Future of Southern Politics” is found in the national alienation of the liberal Democratic Party in the south: “Expanding on the pattern of Richard Nixon’s 1968 victory, the South, Heartland and California together can constitute an effective national political majority.”<sup>141</sup>

The liberal apotheosis, which Perlstein asserted “had always been clouded,”<sup>142</sup> was essentially undone by the hierarchical dislocation between public and private perceptions. American civil society was ready for social change but the American polity as a whole was not. This became evident when orders were given from high up instructing the middle ranking officials to view all citizens as equal; they weren’t ready to do that. This became evident immediately during the riots of 1964. Perlstein asserted, “Southern political folk wisdom was receiving its vindication: that once civil rights bills started affecting North as much as South, it wouldn’t just be Southerners filibustering civil rights bills.”<sup>143</sup> The Civil Rights Bill attempted to make America flat for all the races and the majority of southern white males, especially the older generations, were not ready to be coercively divested of their higher legal status and consequently higher existential and historical status. So the majority of them lashed out against the race that threatened them. Accordingly, the status quo afforded all middleclass white men the right of equality in relation to African-Americans through the benign discourse of exclusionary populist white egalitarianism.

This political conversion explains why racial reconciliation was not accepted in the United States as a whole; both political parties had to balance the irreconcilable interests within their constituencies, causing American civil society and political culture to be powerless against the seemingly inertial force of the ramifications of racial reconciliation. Stability, deemed to be derived from a conservative status quo, was implicitly accepted as more valuable than civil rights; this sentiment resonated throughout the

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 289.

<sup>142</sup> Perlstein, 11.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 121.

philosophy of the principal intellectual architect for the modern American conservative movement, William F. Buckley Jr.

In the *National Review*'s obituary issue for its founder in March 2008, the magazine divided their founder's life into four periods: "The Picador", 1951-1958, during which Buckley established the magazine "to disrupt the operation of liberalism's iron triangle"<sup>144</sup> (liberal bureaucracies - liberal press - liberal Congress); "The Organizer", 1958-1965, during which time Buckley allied with the New Republicans "to fight the necessary culture wars of conservatism", taking "individualism to the extreme length of being an individual"<sup>145</sup>; "The Organizer", 1965-1981, developing a "fusionist conservatism" in relation to Samuel Huntington's 1957 definition as the reactionary defense of established institutions<sup>146</sup>, and believing that "if conservatism had any future, it had to be a hard political movement as well as a soft intellectual one"<sup>147</sup>; "The Guardian Angel", 1981-2008, during which time Buckley intellectually drifted away from politics and toward fiction and religion. John O'Sullivan concluded his glorifying portrait of Buckley by acknowledging that Buckley had "undoubtedly said some wrong and foolish things"<sup>148</sup> during the Civil Rights Movement but history exonerated the intellectual architect of the modern American conservative movement:

There had been two great moral choices facing America in the 1950s- segregation and Communism, oppressed black Americans and captive nations. Bill had initially stumbled, like half the nation, on the first, but he recovered himself and sought thereafter to reconcile civil equality with constitutional form. Many of Bill's enemies (and his most bitter ones) remained wrong or indifferent on the second until the Berlin Wall fell.<sup>149</sup>

Within the cultural perception of political redemption (imbibed in the "age of Nixon") and the ability to change (imbibed in the "age of Reagan"), *Newsweek* observed, "Buckley tolerated some

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<sup>144</sup> *National Review*, John O'Sullivan, "Man of Thought, Man of Action", March 24, 2008, pg. 18-26; p. 20.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

disreputable ideas, including segregation; but he had the capacity to change.”<sup>150</sup> *Newsweek* contextualized Buckley’s cultural contribution to modern political thought in their obituary issue by establishing the bourgeois landscape of Buckley’s lifestyle and intellectualism. Evan Thomas eulogized the man and the modern Conservative movement based on the degeneration of Buckley’s “tone and level of civilized discourse”<sup>151</sup> into “the conservatism spawned by talk radio and TV, [where] the haters and know-nothings are back, ranting about immigrants and liberals.”<sup>152</sup> Thomas asserted that the present absolutist “dark view of human nature” of social conservatives, perverting Buckley’s belief that an individual’s political views did not define his or her “essential person”, “But Buckley was as sunny and hopeful as the hero he created, Ronald Reagan.”<sup>153</sup> Conversely, the liberal editor and publisher of *The Nation*, Katrina Vanden Heuvel, acknowledged, “While he could deploy a sometimes vicious wit- which could descend into cruelty- Buckley disdained the kind of partisan shoutfests that too often pass for political debate on our TVs today.”<sup>154</sup> Michael Gerson, former speechwriter and policy advisor to President Bush, argued that Buckley exorcized the “tortured soul” of conservatism and “came to symbolize the tensions within conservatism” by personifying the intellectual crusade of modern American conservatism to defend its perception: “Buckley did not regard this struggle between freedom and order as a problem to be solved but as a fact, a given deep down in the nature of things. Conservatism, after all, is not an ideology demanding rational harmonization. It is a way of life we inherit and appreciate and defend.”<sup>155</sup>

In the same obituary issue, Evan Thomas also wrote an article on “The Myth of Objectivity” of the modern media realities of American politics, concluding that the mainstream media “are prejudiced, but not ideologically”, looking for narratives of conflict to reveal character.<sup>156</sup> Since the “press corps are romantics in disguise”, the media is more susceptible to fall for the fraternity-style charm of George W.

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<sup>150</sup> *Newsweek*, Evan Thomas, “He Knew He Was Right”, March 10, 2008, pg. 27-33, p. 28.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>154</sup> *Newsweek*, Katrina Vanden Heuvel, “Homage to a Civil Conservative”, March 10, 2008, pg.34-35, p. 34.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>156</sup> *Newsweek*, Evan Thomas, “The Myth of Objectivity”, March 10, 2008, pg. 37-38, p. 37.

Bush rather than the substantive rationalism of a politician because “the press lacks the capacity to understand and explain technical concepts.”<sup>157</sup>

The origins for the modern media realities of American politics was rooted in the media’s inability to identify Nixon’s media strategy of exploiting the sentiments of racial prejudice during the 1968 presidential election. Consequently, *Nixonland* is premised upon the rhetorical fusion of America’s founding religion of Judeo-Christianity and an expansionary American nationalism: Christian Nationalism. The foundation of *Nixonland* is predicated upon the dynamics of confederate nationalism due to the fact that the principal objective of Nixon’s rhetoric was premised upon attracting the southern electorate, known as the “southern strategy.” Confederate nationalism and modern American conservatism both rely upon a “purity of diction”, a “linguistic uplift and uniformity”, and a “hybrid of elite purpose and popular influence”<sup>158</sup>, expressing the purposes of the ruling class and the rhetorical role of nationalist thought in society.<sup>159</sup> Confederate nationalism scholar Drew Gilpin Faust argued,

A central contention of Confederate nationalism, as it emerged in 1861, was that the South’s effort represented a continuation of the struggle of 1776... They intended to claim American nationalism as their own, to give themselves at once an identity and a history.<sup>160</sup>

Faust claimed “interpretation must precede evaluation. We must begin to explore Confederate nationalism in its own terms - as the South’s commentary upon itself - as its effort to represent southern culture to the world at large, to history, and perhaps most revealingly, to its own people.”<sup>161</sup> Just as *Nixonland* cannot be understood without abandoning its identification as a partisan interpretation,

The study of Confederate nationalism must abandon the notions of “genuine” or “spurious”, of “myth” or “reality”. Such approaches are equivalent to embarking upon the study of religion by inquiring into the validity of its substantive claims, or to opposing “ideology” and

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>158</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 11.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 15-16.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

“truth” in order to dismiss the former as an object of analysis.<sup>162</sup>

Also, similar to the way the McLuhan culture of *Nixonland* is “shaped and constrained by its situation,”<sup>163</sup> both ideologies reflect the nationalist struggle between tradition and modernity; this manifested in 1968 as America’s transition from a liberal apotheosis to a conservative apotheosis; the threats of modernity - posed by American liberalism - provoked American society to retreat to traditionalism.

Gitlin observed the frailty of the postwar American liberal apotheosis in that American liberalism’s cultural image and message of commonality was personified by an individual rather than the liberal Democratic Party: “King alive was the refutation of separatism; King murdered was its rationale.”<sup>164</sup> Following King’s death, Perlstein observed, “Conservatives pronounced that Martin Luther King, with his doctrine of civil disobedience, was responsible for his own murder.”<sup>165</sup> Professor Will Bunch identified that, while black hostility was as real during the Reagan presidency as during the 1960s, Reagan reluctantly enacted the law declaring Martin Luther King’s birthday a national holiday in 1983 based on his recognition to a conservative supporter of King’s cultural identity: “I have the reservations you have but there the perception of too many people is based on an image not reality.”<sup>166</sup>

Within the national collective consciousness, the liberal consensus eventually eroded due to the gradual heightening of contradictions within American political culture, as revealed in American popular culture. American citizens turned on their television sets during the mid-1960s to increasingly observe riots within a supposedly racially reconciling society and an increase of American casualties in the Vietnam War. The mounting lack of trust in President Johnson during this time and LBJ’s personification of the eroding liberal apotheosis was best demonstrated when the president required gallbladder surgery and the media required him to show the scar to prove it. The liberal apotheosis of the 1960s was undone by the identification of a paradigm shift within the socio-economic structure of the United States; the shift

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<sup>162</sup> Perlstein, 16.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>164</sup> Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams*, 133-34.

<sup>165</sup> Perlstein, 257.

<sup>166</sup> Bunch, 110; Kyle Longley et al., *Deconstructing Reagan: Conservative Mythology and America’s Fortieth President* (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2007), 85.



did not produce *Nixonland*, it only facilitated it. Hence, *Nixonland* became premised upon an artificial solution to society's civil unrest because it was not a social solution to the conflict but rather a politicized solution that was framed to attract the electoral support of a simple majority. Perlstein observed, "The pundits' interpretation was myopic. The antiliberalism was downplayed."<sup>167</sup> While media strategies such as Nixon's would garner analytical attention following Reaganism, Greenberg identified, "in 1968 editors were loath to inject analysis into news articles, and the press scarcely mentioned Nixon's designs."<sup>168</sup>

While Reagan inaugurated the postmodern presidency and institutionalized modern American conservatism by restoring the efficacy of the presidential image, the instrumentality of Reagan's television image grew out of Nixon's rhetoric for "identity politics" and his institutionalized form of "populist communication." Nixon was not in the position to assume the leadership of the Republican Party following the 1964 Republican National Convention due to the ensuing tension of Nixon's apprehension of assuming a leadership role of the Goldwater wing and their distrust of Nixon. Perlstein asserted that Nixon built his ideology by identifying and encouraging Ronald Reagan as the "pre-eminent demagogic moralizer."<sup>169</sup> The institutional framework for this modern basis of political organization for the Republican Party was inaugurated by Dr. Gaylord Parkinson's transformation of the party's chairmanship role during the 1964 Goldwater campaign into a full-time position. After entering politics based on congressman Richard Nixon's advice during the HUAC hearings of the late 1940s, Parkinson created the Fair Campaign Practices Committee following the 1966 election to formally monitor internal party factionalism, regulating criticism from moderates of conservative candidates by introducing Robert Walker's idea of an Eleventh Commandment: "Thou Shall Not Speak Ill of Any Republican."<sup>170</sup> While the messianic and hyperbolic rhetoric of Goldwater conservatism polarized the American electorate, causing the Republican Party to moderate their rhetoric and images, Nixon, as well as most conservative Republicans, observed that the emerging "generation gap" where "the cultural war within which Ronald

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>168</sup> Greenberg, 137.

<sup>169</sup> Perlstein, 115.

<sup>170</sup> Dallek, *The Right Moment*, 179.

Reagan thrived was enveloping the nation.”<sup>171</sup> In the context of the polarizing atmosphere of Goldwater conservatism, Dallek observed that Reagan identified in his correspondence with Charles Zweng and Dudley Swim that the Eleventh Commandment “would lead him to the promised land.”<sup>172</sup>

The 1966 Reagan campaign’s acquisition of the public relations firm of Spencer-Roberts provided the principal impetus for Reagan’s popular political image by creating the modern cultural concept of a “citizen-politician.” The marketing concept was based on the inescapable recognition of Reagan’s inadequate knowledge and grasp of state government next to his personal recognition of a “citizen’s resentment” of the social order.<sup>173</sup> Dallek identified this strategy as “the beginning of the run-as-an-outsider trend that would sweep presidential politics.”<sup>174</sup> Reagan conceptualized this approach in the context of President Johnson’s “Great Society” by abstractly proposing “The Creative Society”, created by W.S. Birnie, a “right-wing preacher” and radio host.<sup>175</sup> While the historiography differs on the underlying intellectualism of Ronald Reagan and Reaganism, the inescapable reality of Reagan’s intellectual ability is founded on his ability to adapt political rhetoric into an effortless communication of the common middle-American’s concerns. Matthew Dallek identified that Reagan’s intellectual political image originated in the behavioral psychology of UCLA professor Kenneth Holden and San Fernando Valley State professor Stanley Plog, who both inserted into Reagan’s speeches quotations from Edmund Burke, Alexander Hamilton, John Adams, Abraham Lincoln, and Benjamin Disraeli.<sup>176</sup>

Although the cultural discussion of a “white backlash” surfaced during the 1964 presidential election, the cultural stirrings assumed the form of a public debate only after the August 1965 Watts riots<sup>177</sup>, during which time, Dallek asserted, Reagan “abandoned even the pretense” of mobilizing black voters.<sup>178</sup> Professor Will Bunch identified that Reagan’s political image “combined his small-town

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<sup>171</sup> Perlstein, 95.

<sup>172</sup> Dallek, *The Right Moment*, 185.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 174-175.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

heartland upbringing with a skill for storytelling that was honed on the back lots of Hollywood into a personal narrative that resonated with a majority of voters, but only after it tapped into something darker, which was white middle-class resentment of 1960s unrest.”<sup>179</sup> Conversely, the Watts riots were perceived by liberals such as Governor Brown as a visible impetus for the need to repair society’s social fabric. Social conservatives proved to be more connected with the cultural zeitgeist of a “white backlash” by observing the riots as evidence of the failure and entropy of New Deal liberalism. Although Governor Brown and Reagan mutually agreed not to make the riots a political issue, Dallek asserted that Reagan tactically exploited the event by deploring Negro unrest during rural rallies while denying the significance of a “white backlash” within the strategy of his campaign.<sup>180</sup> Dallek argued that Reagan’s public discourse was dialogically produced from Governor Brown’s opposition, Los Angeles Mayor, Sam Yorty, and police chief, Bill Parker, who “denounced social movements, fads, and ideologies for encouraging social rebellion and cultural upheaval, and adopted a Manichaeian worldview that pitted police and law-abiding citizens on one side of the social divide against criminals, social workers, and political liberals cowering on the other.”<sup>181</sup> Poignantly, Brown’s opposition, even within his own political party, perceived his defection to New Deal liberalism as political expediency, while Brown perceived his opposition as uniformed dogmatists of the new media realities of American politics. Due to these irreconcilable perceptions, the failure of Mayor Yorty’s challenge to Governor Brown’s candidacy in 1966 - within the similar margin that Nixon lost in 1962 - caused analysts to generalize the Democratic primary vote as “anti-Brown”, with Yorty further clarifying the result for the public as caused by a “black backlash.”<sup>182</sup>

The accusations of a “black backlash” underlying the 2008 Obama campaign was implicated by McCain during the third televised presidential debate on October 15. McCain demanded an apology and repudiation of the public statement released by Georgia Democratic Congressman John Lewis following his attendance of the October 11 campaign rally of Republican vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin in

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<sup>179</sup> Bunch, 17.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 170-171.

which the audience chanted “terrorist” and “kill him” in a racial tension reminiscent of the 1960s: “As one who was a victim of violence and hate during the height of the Civil Rights Movement, I am deeply disturbed by the negative tone of the McCain-Palin campaign. What I am seeing reminds me too much of another destructive period in American history. Sen. McCain and Gov. Palin are sowing the seeds of hatred and division, and there is no need for this hostility in our political discourse.”<sup>183</sup> McCain responded to Obama’s recognition of the public consensus of the cynicism of American politics by defending the integrity of his constituency: “I’m not going to stand for people saying that the people who come to my rallies are anything but the most dedicated, patriotic men and women that are in this nation and are great citizens.”<sup>184</sup>

While Reagan was the first individual to personify the political and moral outrage of the white majority in American society during the Reagan campaign rally of May 12, 1966<sup>185</sup>, Evans & Novak acknowledged in *The Reagan Revolution* (1981) that the Nixon presidency inaugurated the foundational dialectic between liberal activism of the big government of the New Deal era and the conservative individualism of the small government of the Reagan era: “In his successful campaign of 1968, Richard M. Nixon had made the Republican politician’s perfunctory obeisance to smaller government.”<sup>186</sup> Reagan and Nixon both had to deflect or benignly neglect the racial issue in order to prevent an ambiguous public image; Reagan vehemently denounced the issue as a baseless attack on his personality and integrity, while Nixon deemed the issue irrelevant to America’s future. During the 1966 Republican campaign to win back the Senatorial and Congressional majority, Nixon deflected the socio-political reality of racial tension resulting from the imposition of racial reconciliation by inaugurating the Republican Party’s new rhetorical emphasis on the contradictions of the New Deal coalition: between Johnson’s altruistic liberal rhetoric of “guns and butter” and the Republican Party’s depiction of a messianic malaise enveloping the

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<sup>183</sup> *The Huffington Post*, Nicholas Graham, “John Lewis Warns McCain: You’re ‘Sowing the Seeds of Hatred and Division’”, posted October 11, 2008 ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/10/11/john-lewis-warns-mccain-y\\_n\\_133903.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/10/11/john-lewis-warns-mccain-y_n_133903.html)).

<sup>184</sup> *YouTube.com*, “Third 2008 Presidential Debate (Full Video)”, posted on October 15, 2008.

<sup>185</sup> Perlstein, 75.

<sup>186</sup> Evans & Novak, 115.

nation. In 1966, Nixon's strategy was premised upon a backlash effect against American liberalism by campaigning "in traditionally Republican districts where a Democratic congressman had won in 1964 on Lyndon Johnson's coattails."<sup>187</sup> Nixon deflected the central issue of racial tension by redirecting the debate from the social level to the legal and federal level of "states' rights." The *New York Times* "was impressed" by Nixon's declaration that the racial issue was "a dead horse."<sup>188</sup>

To deflect the racial issue Nixon had to first publicly appease the Southern segregationists within his party before he proposed a greater priority within American political discourse. Nixon reined in control of the Southern Republican Party delegates by publicly rejecting any segregationist plank in the Republican platform. Perlstein asserted, "He then defended the Southern Republican segregationists against their critics by "accusing its critics of anti-Southern bigotry."<sup>189</sup> This served to unify his party while simultaneously garnering sympathy for Nixon's requisite Southern leaders by creating a perceived prejudice against Southern nationalism, understood by the Southern public as Confederate nationalism. While Nixon urged all political parties to cease using race in favor of the "issues of the future,"<sup>190</sup> Perlstein identified that the "new American conflagration was racial."<sup>191</sup> Nixon attempted to deflect the issue of race by emphasizing domestic and international security through the broader lens of a "Law & Order" motif. Dallek identified that Reagan personally "defined the nature of the new appeal" of the Republican "Law & Order" motif by structuring an encompassing morality theme.<sup>192</sup> Gitlin argued that the conservative America in need of protection through the Republican "law and order" motif was "abstract, offscreen."<sup>193</sup> On September 20, 1966 Gerald Ford staged a press conference during which he spoke out against Democrats as the party with big riots in the streets: "How long are we going to abdicate law and order – the backbone of any civilization - in favor of a soft social theory that the man who heaves

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<sup>187</sup> Perlstein, 142.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 148; *New York Times*, "Nixon on the Strump- an Old-Timer at 53", October 2, 1966.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 88; *New York Times*, "Nixon in the South, Bids GOP Drop Race Issue", May 7, 1966.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>192</sup> Dallek, *The Right Moment*, 185-86.

<sup>193</sup> Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 338.

a brick through your window or tosses a firebomb into your car is simply the misunderstood and underprivileged product of a broken home?”<sup>194</sup>

During 1967 Nixon fought to rhetorically infiltrate the political arena with President Johnson by publicly questioning his foreign policy for the Vietnam War. Perlstein argued, “Every Nixonian twist and turn on Vietnam fit a specific pattern: whatever he said, whenever he said it, was always exactly 180 degrees from the current line the president was taking. Nixon was endeavouring to drive the Texan crazy, and to make Nixon the public focus of his rage.”<sup>195</sup> Nixon accused President Johnson of politicizing peace and making the same “great blunder the Truman Administration [committed] during the Korean War”: “He has put politics ahead of policy so many times that leaders of both parties on Capital Hill are publicly asking today whether- in going to the far East- he is even playing politics with world peace.”<sup>196</sup> Derived from Nixon’s imposed framework for modern political discourse, Professor Will Bunch observed that, during the Reagan presidency, “The president’s message was the 180-degree opposite of what was happening behind the scenes.”<sup>197</sup>

During 1968’s Summer of Rage, only months prior to the presidential election, Nixon remained silent about the visible displays of police brutality in order to avoid appearing to endorse martial law or alienate victims of police brutality. Initially, while the media and the Johnson Administration were blaming the rioters, Nixon remained silent. This merely played into Nixon’s intended framework for political discourse.<sup>198</sup> By November 1, Nixon stated that his faith in the Southern vote had declined: “The reason is that the Democratic Party- in a desperate throw of the dice- has gambled upon racism, demagoguery, and backlash to win for it what the calibre of its candidates cannot. The gamble will pay off in some backwaters of the South. But the Democratic Party has made a fatal mistake. It has risked the next generation, just to win the next election.”<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Perlstein, 146; *New York Times*, “Right Backers Fear Backlash”, September 21, 1966.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 149; *New York Times*, “Nixon Scores Johnson for ‘Politics’ on Peace”, October 2, 1966.

<sup>197</sup> Bunch, 55.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 157; *New York Times*, “Nixon Bids 2 Parties Meet Johnson War”, November 1, 1966.

Nixon's centrist strategy was premised upon using rhetorical generalities to avoid alienating any demographic on top of the American southern electorate. Perlstein observed, "It was part of a strategy unprecedented in modern times. Never before had a candidate devoted so much to saying so little to so many."<sup>200</sup> Nixon's opponents and the prevailing conventional wisdom of the McLuhan culture predicted 1968 to be the year of "Republican Camelot."<sup>201</sup> Perlstein asserted that a *New York Times* dispatch indicated the perception that Nixon's depiction of his presidential image "as the Goldwater candidate of 1968" was "a tactical error of major importance."<sup>202</sup> However, Perlstein argued that Nixon triumphed as the Republican nominee in 1968 because the other candidates "were men who hardly noticed the ideological ground shifting beneath their feet."<sup>203</sup> Nixon's political "other" was not as self-conscious. Perlstein asserted, "Richard Nixon was gearing up to run for president in a different country from the one that had apotheosized Lyndon Johnson. The only consensus was that the consensus was long gone."<sup>204</sup> By 1968, "The hottest idea was that a mood of radical helplessness was blanketing the land- America was suffering an epidemic of "alienation."<sup>205</sup> Nixon chose to exploit this universal sentiment to the same advantage as Reagan's gubernatorial campaign by uniting the expanding middle class against the demonstrated ramifications of enacting minority rights.

Although Ronald Reagan paved the road to *Nixonland* in California and later consolidated a McLuhan culture in the White House, it did not become "Reaganland" because Nixon created the very premise upon which the road was built. In fact, Reagan thanked Nixon after his win in 1966 and Nixon "started paying a lot more attention to Reagan"<sup>206</sup> because he was still a political opponent at that time. Nixon acquiesced to Reagan's demands on antipoverty and welfare reform to prevent him from running in 1972. Evans & Novak argued, "Reagan took an overt tutorial role, using "reading sheets" prepared by

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 329.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>206</sup> Perlstein,

his staff to lecture the president on runaway government.<sup>207</sup> President Ford similarly sought Reagan's advice on appointments and hinted that he would be consulted following the end of his governorship.<sup>208</sup> This does not represent the guidance of the movement, only friendly overtures to prevent the future issue of competition. Meese revealed in an interview with Greenberg that the overtures to Nixon during the Reagan presidency were similarly just attempts to make Nixon feel good.<sup>209</sup>

Reagan consolidated the foundational psychology of *Nixonland* by choosing Alexander M. Haig Jr. as his Secretary of State based on Nixon's suggestion. Haig inferred in his memoir that his appointment by Reagan was based on Haig's association with the Nixon administration and his appearance in the media for apparently criticizing Carter's foreign policy, amounting to a competitive commercial appeal for Haig as a presidential candidate. Reagan first requested to meet Haig to discuss the "European scene" in the spring of 1979 after Haig had "made some comments [in Europe] about U.S. policy toward Soviets that the press had interpreted as being critical of the policies of my commander in chief, President Jimmy Carter."<sup>210</sup> Haig intimated in his memoir that Reagan acquired him on the team to eliminate the competition between their intersecting visions. Haig emphasized his acceptance of the position based on Reagan's suggested relationship of subordinating the National Security Advisor's role of spokesman or staff coordinator to the Secretary of State.<sup>211</sup>

Reagan's election reflected a public mandate for conservative realism, and Haig, like Reagan, believed that confrontation with the Soviet Union would provoke the inner migration of the demographic majority within the Soviet Union.<sup>212</sup> In his memoir, Haig implied Reagan's primary role as the spokesman for the Republican Party in his observation that Reagan had not intellectually impressed him prior to his taking office and he did not believe this quality was essential for the Reagan presidency.<sup>213</sup> Meese and

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<sup>207</sup> Evans & Novak, 37.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>209</sup> Greenberg, 285.

<sup>210</sup> Alexander M. Haig, Jr., *Caveat: Realism, Reagan, and Foreign Policy* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1984), 2.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.



Deaver quickly limited Haig's access to the president due to a continued suspicion of Haig's intentions; this ambiguity was found in Haig's immediate insistence on "NSDD1, the Presidential decision memorandum establishing the structure of foreign policy."<sup>214</sup> Haig handed in the document to Edwin Meese for Reagan to sign on Inauguration Day based on his moral belief to frame foreign policy within a legal framework; however, Reagan never saw the document: "The next day, the press contained gossip items suggesting that I had tried to thrust the paper into the President's hands and secure his signature only moments after he had taken the oath of office."<sup>215</sup> Haig was confounded to find that Meese "appeared to think that the Secretaries of State and Defense, the Director of Central Intelligence, and the National Security Advisor had to clear this paper with him."<sup>216</sup>

Prior to the Bush II presidency, professor William E. Pemberton argued in *Exit with Honor: The Life and Presidency of Ronald Reagan* (1998) that by the mid-1960s Republican actor Ronald Reagan emerged within American conservative political culture "at the center of the [culture] war, both as a product of it and as a general in it, commanding territory seized by Goldwater, Nixon, and Alabama governor George C. Wallace."<sup>217</sup> Three years earlier, Gitlin contended that Reagan personified a "Gramscian intellectual", focusing "diverse interests, or class fractions, into functioning "historic blocs" by enunciating their common cause."<sup>218</sup> Pemberton argued that the conservative opposition to Roosevelt's "relativistic moral values and a misguided belief in humankind's perfectibility"<sup>219</sup> was premised upon consolidating the status quo. The tension between civil libertarianism and hard-line social conservatism was resolved when the status quo was altered by "a third strain of postwar conservative thought, anticommunism."<sup>220</sup> Pemberton argued that the "common enemy" that communism afforded conservatives - mobilized by the admixture of Reagan's spokespersonship role for Goldwater conservatism -

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<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>217</sup> William E. Pemberton, *Exit with Honor: The Life and Presidency of Ronald Reagan* (New York; London: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1998), 54-55.

<sup>218</sup> Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams*, 77.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 47.

enabled the conservative movement to expand its base according to population and wealth increases and purge the Republican Party of “radicalism.” Pemberton contended, “Reagan’s conservative thought was founded on his absolute belief in American exceptionalism,”<sup>221</sup> with his conception of the United States abstracted into a messianic idea of historical providence. Pemberton attributed the inaugural leadership of modern American conservatism to Reagan due to the fact that Reagan’s “years with General Electric helped him direct his evolving populist brand of conservatism toward working-middle-class people. He added to his antitax, patriotic, and anticommunist themes a pro-business, antigovernment, essentially anti-New Deal message.”<sup>222</sup> Reagan perceived Kennedy’s “bold new imaginative program” as “old Karl Marx”, derivative of the age of “benevolent monarchy” and Hitler’s “State Socialism.”<sup>223</sup> Reagan proclaimed – prematurely - in 1964, and to the consternation of Goldwater’s closest advisers, Denison Kitchel and William Baroody, Sr., that American conservatism “will have no more of those candidates who are pledged to the same socialist philosophy of our opposition.”<sup>224</sup>

Pemberton argued that while Nixon reached the “head” of the voter in 1968, Reagan connected with the “heart” - in what Nixon described as a demagogic way.<sup>225</sup> Pemberton asserted that, as a result of the modern conservative movement, “virtually” all republicans held two core beliefs that encapsulated Reagan’s new postwar conservatism: “that flawed human nature was an unchanging mixture of both good and evil, and that an objective moral order existed, independent of humanity.”<sup>226</sup> Essentially, Reagan centralized the rhetorical focus of modern American conservatism. These beliefs explained the cohesion of conservative groups and the underlying tension within conservative thought, resulting from the opposing needs for authority and freedom, and the fact that secularism and pragmatism are perceived within the “culture wars” as providing the catalyst for the erosion of moral foundations.

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>224</sup> Rowland Evans & Robert Novak, *The Reagan Revolution* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1981), 30.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>226</sup> Pemberton, 45.

Although Pemberton illustrated the developing relationship between Reagan and Nixon following 1959, he failed to observe how Nixon's conservative populist advice to Reagan informed his developing self-identity. Pemberton, like most scholars, argued that Reaganism is the root of modern American conservatism because "Populist, antiestablishment feeling in the United States had traditionally directed its anger at big business. Reagan redirected that anger and identified the establishment as the government."<sup>227</sup> By the 1980s, "Conservatism retained its base of traditional, libertarian, and anticommunist adherents, and added a populist cast from the New Right and the Religious Right, and reestablished a profitable relationship with a newly mobilized corporate community."<sup>228</sup> While Pemberton argued that "conservatives saw the 1980 election as a giant step in the long swing toward conservatism that started in 1964"<sup>229</sup>, Nixon inaugurated the presidential swing through his form of centrist populist communication.

Pemberton acknowledged that Reagan balanced his disparate conservative movement during the 1984 presidential election by keeping "his Religious Right followers happy through rhetoric and symbolic gestures rather than through effective action on their agenda."<sup>230</sup> Although Reagan's presidential image was predicated upon a hardline conservative image - in accordance with the socio-political context and the authenticity of Reagan's self-identity - American political culture's inherited form of populist communication from Nixon was still constrained by centrist public opinion. Reagan inaugurated the postmodern presidency by instrumentalizing Nixon's neorealist populist rhetoric to affect public opinion. Accordingly, the strict implementation of Reaganism through the medium of Reagan's television image institutionalized the McLuhan culture in the postmodern presidency, which Nixon introduced in 1968.

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<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 137.

## 2.1 THE McLuhan Culture of the Television Age

The McLuhan culture of *Nixonland* has proved to be the regulatory medium for the American “culture wars” of the 1960s. Marshall McLuhan first observed the New Left belief in reforming the American political system through expansion of public knowledge before the “culture wars” of the 1960s were institutionalized in the 1968 presidential election:

The ultimate conflict between sight and sound, between written and oral kinds of perception and organization of existence is upon us. Since understanding stops action, as Nietzsche observed, we can moderate the fierceness of this conflict by understanding the media that extend us and raise these wars within and without us.<sup>231</sup>

McLuhan’s seminal interpretation of the effect of television on popular culture was the inaugural investigation into American consciousness through *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964). McLuhan’s analysis of the effect of television on popular culture, which in the electric age extended to *The Global Village* (1989), is encapsulated by the illumination of a light bulb- unless it advertises a product- insofar as it illustrates the characteristic of all media, where “the “content” of any medium is always another medium.”<sup>232</sup> Quite simply, a light bulb extends the sense of sight. McLuhan prophesized that technology is an extension of the human body and mind insofar as innovation extends existing processes or mediums. McLuhan argued that “any technology gradually creates a totally new human environment.”<sup>233</sup> This means “the personal and social consequences of any medium- that is, of any extension of ourselves- result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology.”<sup>234</sup> McLuhan claimed the residual disjuncture between the meeting of radio and television, between sight and sound, rhetoric and action, within American society as a whole, was inherent to the expansionary affluence of the 1950s: “In periods of new and rapid growth there is a

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<sup>231</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York and Scarborough: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), 30.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, viii.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

blurring of outlines. In the TV image we have the supremacy of the blurred outline.”<sup>235</sup> As a result of the extension of humanity into the television age, the causal “amputations” or modifications of existing processes, or extensions of humanity, are minimized or ignored because of their negative effects. McLuhan argued that the natural over-extension of new technology and the willing blindness to its inconvenient effects produces a relationship in which the challenges eventually outweigh the benefits. Television detracts children from reading and learning but does this have a long-term effect? Does television free us or bind us? Television naturally enhances our senses but are these senses therefore controlled by the programs we watch?

The most visible “amputation” during the transition from the mechanical age to the electric age was the centralization and urbanization of the railway system changing to the decentralization caused by electricity. McLuhan contended, “Print technology created the public. Electric technology created the mass.”<sup>236</sup> The electric age enabled the rise of the “mass man”, the middle-class. By the early 1960s, the politicization of “mass man” in the American political system had the Democratic Party attempt to reform “mass man” through the Civil Rights Movement while the Republican Party sought to simply mobilize “mass man” by 1968 to contain the ramifications of the Civil Rights Movement.<sup>237</sup> In *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (1984), Professor Allen J. Matusow argued this conceptual framework based on the fact that Kennedy and modern American liberalism entered the decade on the basis of exploiting class and social antagonisms without provoking them, while Nixon and modern American conservatism exited the decade by exploiting the fear of class and social antagonisms without provoking them. The impetus for this transition originated in the reversal in American counterculture during the 1960s from the “politics of love” to the “politics of rage.” Nixon sought to capitalize on the cultural decline of liberalism by exploiting the societal fear of this new “politics of rage” by projecting an image of moderate paternalism, consequently reversing his personification during the

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 280.

<sup>236</sup> Marshall McLuhan & Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1967), 68.

<sup>237</sup> Allen J. Matusow, *The Unravelling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1984), 303.

1960 presidential election as the antiquated mechanical age next to John F. Kennedy's visible personification of the new television age. For this reason, the electric age is aptly "the age of consciousness of the unconscious"<sup>238</sup> because we feel what we see but we don't see what we're told. By the 1960s television let Americans see what they were being told. The speed and intensity of the dissemination of television throughout America's consumer-based economy apparently caused the television "mass" to be numb to what they hear and only feel what they see.

In the "television age", humanity no longer has to visualize the message because we can see the message. Prior to the Electric Age, Western man had been extended by phonetic writing, which "has the power of separating and fragmenting the sense and sloughing off the semantic complexities."<sup>239</sup> McLuhan argued, "The TV reverses this literate process of analytic fragmentation of sensory life."<sup>240</sup> Television brings all of our senses together but subsumes every sense under the power of sight. The viewer is naturally swayed by what he or she sees more than what they hear because the "phonetic alphabet forced the magic world of the ear to yield to the neutral world of the eye."<sup>241</sup> By 1964, McLuhan lamented humanity's intellectual ear:

The new media and technologies by which we amplify and extend ourselves constitute huge collective surgery carried out on the social body with complete disregard for antiseptics... For in operating on society with a new technology, it is not the incised area that is most affected. The area of impact and incision is numb. It is the entire system that is changed. The effect of radio is visual, the effect of the photo is auditory. Each new impact shifts the ratios among all the senses.<sup>242</sup>

With radio, the listener visualizes the narrator's imagery. With a photograph, the pictorial speaks to the observer. With television, what you see and hear makes you feel what you perceive the picture to denote and what the words connote; what the image says speaks louder than the words we hear; this is

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<sup>238</sup> McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 56.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

why the viewer is inclined to subordinate the content of the message to the image itself. McLuhan argued that TV, as “an extension of the sense of touch” involves the “maximal interplay of all the senses.”<sup>243</sup> He organized the transition from the medium of radio to the medium of television by differentiating between “hot media”, involving low participation, and “cool media”, involving “participation or completion by the audience.”<sup>244</sup> In contrast to TV, literacy and radio extended psychically and socially “the power of detachment and non-involvement.”<sup>245</sup> Since television involves the viewer, McLuhan analyzed how TV is “cooling down”<sup>246</sup> America. Television fills in the holes of our fragmented reality. Television completes our picture of reality. For most people, television is their picture of reality. McLuhan determined that “the medium is the message”, or more directly, “the medium is socially the message”<sup>247</sup> in the electric age because the characteristics of a medium such as television overshadow the content of the medium itself. McLuhan contended, “Societies have always been shaped more by the nature of the media by which men communicate than by the content of the communication.”<sup>248</sup> In *The Medium is the Message* (1967), or “mass age”, or “message”, McLuhan asserted,

The medium, or process, of our time- electric technology— is reshaping and restructuring patterns of social interdependence and every aspect of our personal life. It is forcing us to reconsider and reevaluate practically every thought, every action, and every institution formerly taken for granted. Everything is changing- you, your family, your neighborhood, your education, your job, your government, your relation to “the others.”<sup>249</sup>

John Kenneth White argued in *The New Politics of Old Values* (1990) that during the 1980 presidential election, “The Republicans took custody of family, work, neighborhood, peace, and freedom.”<sup>250</sup>

Although Reagan institutionalized this image in the Republican Party by 1980, in 1968 Nixon first instrumentalized the medium of television to actualize his mythical paternal centrist image of shared

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 290.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 291.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 270.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>248</sup> Marshall & Fiore, *The Medium is the Message*, 8.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> White, 171.

values; this became visible in his administrative policy with the introduction of the Family Assistance Plan.

McLuhan argued that “organic myth is itself a simple and automatic response”<sup>251</sup> for the television medium: “Myth is contraction or implosion of any process, and the instant speed of electricity confers the mythic dimension on ordinary industrial and social action today. We live mythically but continue to think fragmentarily and on single planes.”<sup>252</sup> We live in a “television reality” in the “television age” but we cannot think outside of the box to realize this fact. By 1964, Kennedy’s election victory of 1960 was interpreted as “a pattern of TV reversal and upset.”<sup>253</sup> Nixon was more qualified and was said to have won the debate in the minds of radio listeners, but Kennedy looked better on television. McLuhan observed, “When the person presented looks classifiable, as Nixon did, the TV viewer has nothing to fill in. He feels uncomfortable with his TV image.”<sup>254</sup> McLuhan identified Kennedy’s image as a sheriff while Nixon projected the image of a “railway lawyer.”<sup>255</sup> Kennedy personified the younger television generation while Nixon personified the antiquated railway days of the older generation. Following the assassination and martyrdom of the younger generation, Kennedy became a “paradoxical feature of the “cool” TV medium” in that witnessing his death involved the viewer but it did not “excite, agitate, or arouse.”<sup>256</sup> Americans did not riot over disputed images in the media; they just went numb. Nixon’s politicization of the reversal in counterculture by the end of the decade became reflective of the natural inclination for the American polity to consolidate the conservative status quo because “innovation is for them not novelty but annihilation.”<sup>257</sup> Nixon reversed the technological innovation of the younger generation by instrumentalizing their medium to project a marketable image. This was done through the creation and control of the “photo opportunity” and Nixon’s “carrot and stick” approach to scheduling press conferences and bombing North Vietnam to project an image of strength.

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<sup>251</sup> McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 38.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 288.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, 287.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, 294.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.



In *The Selling of the President 1968* (1969), *Philadelphia Inquirer* columnist Joe McGinniss identified the Nixon campaign's explicit application of McLuhan's analysis of television to construct his presidential image: "Style becomes substance. The medium is the message and the masseur gets the votes."<sup>258</sup> McGinniss' account of Nixon's 1968 campaign became a number one bestseller following its release in October and the day after the January 17, 1972 Harris Poll, which indicated Nixon's 49 percent approval rating, became dramatized in popular culture with the announcement of its adaptation into a Broadway musical.<sup>259</sup> Greenberg argued that McGinniss' work enhanced the self-consciousness of American journalism by informing reporters of the media strategies in which they played a part, and confirming the liberal perception of the "Old Nixon's immutability."<sup>260</sup> While the victimized press corps felt deceived by Nixon's machinations, the frustrating tension of modern political discourse between politicians and the media was imbibed in the press corps' recognition of the realities of the McLuhan culture of American politics and the causal inability to identify the manipulation of reality independent of a partisan perspective.<sup>261</sup> Greenberg observed, "Although the press was forming a picture of Nixon as a pioneer of image management, they felt the rules of objectivity still obliged them to relay Nixon's own preferred view of himself instead of the one that they had formed."<sup>262</sup>

McGinniss recognized the Nixon campaign as a failure in 1960 "because he was too few of the things a President had to be- and, because he had no press to lie for him and did not know how to use television to lie about himself."<sup>263</sup> McGinniss illustrated Nixon's concisely managed public image through his narration of the multiple takes and semantic or visual adjustments necessary in Nixon and his staff's creative process for arranging a one-minute television message. Nixon's one-hour television programs were produced by Roger E. Ailes, the executive producer of the popular *Mike Douglas Show*,

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<sup>258</sup> Joe McGinniss, *The Selling of the President 1968* (New York: Trident Press, 1969), 30.

<sup>259</sup> Perlstein, 607; *The Selling of the President* debuted at the Shubert Theatre (225 W. 44<sup>th</sup> St. New York) on March 22, 1972 and ran a total of five performances until March 25, 1972. The production comprised of two acts with a fictionalized cast and songs such as "Something Holy", "If You like the People", and "Captain Terror." <http://www.ibdb.com/production.php?id=3648>.

<sup>260</sup> Greenberg, 143.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>263</sup> McGinniss, 32.

under his assumption that 1968 was the first electronic election: “TV has the power now.”<sup>264</sup> Nixon’s cultural image was further enhanced during his presidency by arranging for NBC to produce a prime-time special *Christmas at the White House* and for CBS to document *A Day in the Presidency*.<sup>265</sup> Ailes’ role as the media architect of the modern American conservative movement was confirmed in his construction of the television ad campaigns for President Reagan in 1984 and Vice President George H.W. Bush in 1988, injecting racial imagery to exploit racial feelings in the latter race through a photograph of black inmate William Horton - guilty of rape but exempted from the death penalty due to the supposedly passive policy of Democratic candidate Michael Dukakis’s being soft on crime in relation to the Republican “Law & Order” motif. During the 1990s, Ailes became president of NBC’s cable channel *Consumer News and Business Channel* (CNBC) and recruited a group of right-wing broadcasters (including Sean Hannity and Bill O’Reilly) in conjunction with Rupert Murdoch of *News Corporation* to anchor the *Fox News Channel* (FNC), launched on October 7, 1996. While the communications apparatus of the modern conservative movement proliferated into the television market during the 1990s, it was during the Nixon presidency that the White House office of communications was established, introducing the position of a “full-time PR director”, advertising executive Jeb Magruder<sup>266</sup>, which was separate from the press secretary’s operation in order to more efficiently distribute the administration’s positive message to the public.

Nixon’s television image was created by “men who knew television as a weapon: from broadest concept to most technical detail.”<sup>267</sup> William Gavin, a thirty-one-year-old high school English teacher, posing as a University of Pennsylvania professor, wrote a letter to Nixon in the spring of 1967, encouraging him to run for the presidency in 1968 by utilizing his access to television to suit his ends: “Instead of the medium using you, you would be using the medium.”<sup>268</sup> Soon after he was hired, “Gavin

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<sup>264</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>265</sup> David S. Broder, *Behind the Front Page: A Candid Look at How the News is Made* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 149.

<sup>266</sup> Greenberg, 154.

<sup>267</sup> McGinniss, 34.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid., 35.

began churning out long, stream-of-consciousness memos which dealt mostly with the importance of image, and ways in which Richard Nixon, through television, could acquire a good one.”<sup>269</sup> Also in 1967, Nixon’s campaign began under the former editorial writer for the *New York Herald Tribune* Raymond K. Price’s assumption that, “The natural human use of reason is to support prejudice, not arrive at opinions.”<sup>270</sup> The Nixon campaign explicitly attempted to create the ideal candidate rather than a real candidate to present as Nixon’s reading of the American zeitgeist. According to the public polls forming the Ideal President Curve, “The gaps between the Nixon line and the Ideal line represented personality traits that Nixon should try to improve.”<sup>271</sup> While Price asserted that Nixon represented “an open presidency”, he felt that voters naturally went with their “gut reaction” to the image rather than to the individual, diagnosing Nixon’s problem correctly as a personal rather than historical matter. McGinniss asserted that the “creative director of advertising” for the campaign, Harry Treleaven, appeared “intrigued” by the fact that issues did not have to be involved in the election because they were not involved in selling other products on television like Ford automobiles.<sup>272</sup> In *Tear Down This Myth* (2009), professor Will Bunch observed: “Going into the 1984 race, Reagan’s team, including Nancy Reagan, who took a keen interest in how her husband was portrayed on television, seemed to sense instinctively what few other politicians did, that Madison Avenue was latching on to new ways to use emotion rather than facts to sell products, and that these techniques could work just as well for a politician as they could for soda pop.”<sup>273</sup>

The penetration of Nixon’s multi-faceted conservative image into liberal popular culture solidified his intended visible identity of centrism: moderate paternalism (conservatism). Perlstein argued that Humphrey retrospectively lamented not appearing on the pop cultural parody of American society had cost him the election because “*Rowan & Martin’s Laugh-In* (think sit-in, teach-in, be-in) was a

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>273</sup> Bunch, 101.

deliberate attempt to harness insurgent new cultural energies for the mainstream.”<sup>274</sup> Nixon appeared on the show on September 16, 1968, participating in one of the most popular running gags of *Laugh-In*’s writer Paul Keyes, who was a former joke writer for Nixon. The other popular comedy show at the time was too subversive. Perlstein observed, “*The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* on CBS was intended as a generic variety show, until the younger Smothers brother, Tommy, began injecting New Leftist touches into the skits, to the great consternation of network executives.”<sup>275</sup>

On Day 17 of Nixon’s First One Hundred Days, Nixon questioned his staff on the progress of beginning the regulation procedure of television on the basis of “letters to the editor project and calls to TV stations.”<sup>276</sup> Prior to the scheduled State of the Union Address in March, Nixon’s regulation apparatus was in place based on the RNC and state and local Republican parties creation of loyalists lists- the “Nixon Network”- willing to write on their own or lend their names to ghostwritten missives on items of presidential concern. On Day 52, Perlstein observed, it was the *Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*:

They have a sequence in which one said to the other that he found it difficult to find anything to laugh about- Vietnam, the cities, etc., but ‘Richard Nixon’s solving those problems’ and ‘that’s really funny.’” Nixon told aides he wanted letters to the producers, stipulating their argument: the gag was inaccurate “in view of the great public approval of RN’s handling of foreign policy, etc., etc.” The show was cancelled one month later.<sup>277</sup>

Beginning in the spring, Nixon and Kissinger began wiretapping reporters, orchestrating a “Game Plan” for media manipulation by the end of the year to counter antiwar protests.<sup>278</sup> Following the release of McGinniss’ polemic on the new realities of political media strategies and Nixon’s November 3 televised speech to foment support from the “great silent majority” for his Vietnam policy, Greenberg argued that Nixon instructed Vice President Spiro T. Agnew to criticize the media during November with “high-

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<sup>274</sup> Perlstein, 332.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid., 363.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Greenberg, 145.

profile speeches.”<sup>279</sup> In the context of the expanding consciousness of media strategies, Nixon’s overture to his abstract constituency rather than announcing a substantive next step in his Vietnam policy proliferated the liberal perception that Nixon’s continued promise of a “secret plan” to end the war in Vietnam was simply an abstract form of leverage over his opponents.

The day after Nixon’s “Silent Majority” speech, press secretary Herb Klein reported opinion polls, some generated by the White House, which overwhelmingly indicated the public’s aversion to the after-speech punditry, while the Federal Communications Commission chairman Dean Burch requested post-address transcripts of each networks analyses.<sup>280</sup> During Agnew’s speech on November 13 in Des Moines, the vice president conceptually grounded the public opinion polls within the proliferation of elite liberal journalism as the source for the lack of “straight and objective news.”<sup>281</sup> Following the public support of his speech (reflected in an ABC poll indicating 51 percent of respondents favouring his speech), Agnew directly criticized *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* in his next speech on November 20 in Montgomery, Alabama<sup>282</sup>, which convinced the editor of the *Post* Ben Bradlee to appoint an ombudsman, Richard Harwood.<sup>283</sup> Greenberg concluded, “Nixon and Agnew were hoping to harness the rage of socially conservative Middle Americans and make the media heel to their concerns.”<sup>284</sup>

Nixon reversed the introspective cultural fad of dissecting political media strategies by the end of the first year of his presidency by turning the spotlight onto the media. This was despite the fact that by the end of the first year of the Nixon presidency the percentage of positive stories was the second highest behind Roosevelt (88.8 percent) at 81.2 percent.<sup>285</sup> As demonstrated during the interviewer’s apologetic and timid interview with Agnew on *Face the Nation* in February 1970, Greenberg identified, “Eager to ward off charges of bias, reporters resolved to be fairer.”<sup>286</sup> The perceptions of the Nixon administration

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<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid., 140n.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid., 150.

and the press corps polarized during visible cultural confrontations such as Defense Department official Daniel Ellsberg's release of the Pentagon Papers on June 13, 1971 in the Sunday *New York Times*, with the subsequent lawsuit by Nixon to prevent further publication and the rejection by the Supreme Court as an issue of national security; however, the press corps' reactions to the revelation of the Watergate break-in on June 17, 1972 reflected the pervading constraints of the consciousness of cultural media strategies, indicative of the fact that CBS, principally Dan Rather and Daniel Schorr, was the only television network which pursued the Watergate story during the summer of 1972, with Walter Cronkite reporting the findings of Woodward and Bernstein's *Post* coverage for fourteen minutes of the program's twenty-two minutes of news on October 27, a week away from the election.<sup>287</sup> Nixon's subsequent allegation of McGovern propaganda forced the producer of CBS to trim Cronkite's next report of the Watergate story to eight minutes. Gallup polls indicated Nixon's approval rating declining from 41 percent to 27 percent from January to November 1973, provoking the representative of the new Republican right, Senator James Buckley of New York, to call for Nixon's departure in March 1974 in what his father William F. Buckley, Jr. identified was an attempt to displace the cultural domination of liberal adversarialism rather than simply legitimize or appease liberal perceptions.<sup>288</sup>

Nixon's political strategy for television continued to shape the image of the presidency on television following his resignation and the initial rehabilitation of his public image during the David Frost interviews in 1978. The Reagan presidency was explicitly premised upon the news management techniques that were introduced during the Nixon presidency, including the "line of the day", "the morning conference calls among foreign and domestic agency press officers, the heartland journalist program, the weekly long-range communications strategy meetings."<sup>289</sup> In terms of Reagan's television image, Nixon can be attributed as a principal architect of the postmodern presidency. In Buckley's letter to Reagan, March 24, 1982, he recounted a recent meeting with Richard Nixon and Van Galbraith in Paris. While Nixon acknowledged that Reagan was "doing well", he recognized "deficiencies":

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<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

<sup>289</sup> Hertsgaard, 38.

--RR should not spend as much time as he currently does up front, defending his policies. He should devote that time to occasional big-time television appearances. E.g., when the subject of the budget is finally disposed of, RR should appear on television and announce the way it's going to be. He should limit himself to four or five press conferences per year.<sup>290</sup>

Reagan's Press Secretary, from 1981 to 1986, Larry Speakes, recounted in his memoir of how Reagan exited the aisle between the rows of reporters until the end of his first term: "That prompted Richard Nixon, who was watching on television, to make one of his occasional calls to the White House and suggest that the whole mob scene at the end of press conferences "looked un-presidential."<sup>291</sup> Similar to Nixon's political strategy in 1968 to say as little substance as possible, one of Reagan's image managers, Richard Darman, contended in his 1996 memoir, "The 1980 Reagan election campaign had been light on programmatic detail, heavy on generality and anecdote."<sup>292</sup> Nixon knew he was selling an image. Reagan knew this as well, but he believed in his image. This is why the Reagan Revolution was founded "wholeheartedly and certainly not self-consciously" upon Reagan's belief that Vietnam was "a noble cause"<sup>293</sup> within the history of American exceptionalism.

Within professor Ryan Barilleaux's conception of the Reagan presidency as the inauguration of the post-modern presidency (1988), he asserted the media age "has emphasized image and appearance in politics, but appearance has not overridden substance so as it has affected the way that substantive matters are presented."<sup>294</sup> Barilleaux seems to have not been able to identify that in a McLuhan culture, "Style becomes substance." In *The Post-Modern Presidency: The Office after Ronald Reagan* (1988), Barilleaux argued that the postmodern presidency, created through a series of events and trends that culminated in Watergate and the end of the Vietnam War, is post-modern in nature because it is not an extension of

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<sup>290</sup> William F. Buckley Jr., *The Reagan I Knew* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 163-64.

<sup>291</sup> Larry Speakes with Robert Pack, *Speaking Out: The Reagan Presidency from Inside the White House* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988), 239.

<sup>292</sup> Richard Darman, *Who's in Control: Polar Politics and the Sensible Center* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 45.

<sup>293</sup> Evans & Novak, 185.

<sup>294</sup> Ryan J. Barilleaux, *The Post-Modern Presidency: The Office after Ronald Reagan* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1988), 72.

FDR into the future, “but has been transformed into something substantively different.”<sup>295</sup> Barilleaux believed the postmodern presidency represented Reagan’s personification of a conservative ideology that was substantively different from FDR’s personification of the modern presidency.

Barilleaux contended, “Post-modern presidents not only use public politics to govern, but also realize that the entire public face of the presidency affects their ability to do so.”<sup>296</sup>

Based on Fred Greenstein’s conception of the “Traditional Presidency” in *Evolution of the Modern Presidency: A Bibliographic Survey* (1977), Barilleaux argued that American political history can be reduced to three periods of the presidency: traditional, modern, and postmodern. This comprised of Woodrow Wilson’s conception of the “rhetorical presidency”, reflective of the president’s role of chief policymaker and founded on the individual’s popular election and the public opinion of his leadership. The modern presidency, or the Rooseveltian presidency, is associated with governmental activism and a liberal agenda.<sup>297</sup> The trend toward president-centered government reached its height during the Nixon Administration, which was considered an “imperial presidency”, but it was still within the tradition of the modern presidency. While Nixon’s introduction of “going public” presents itself as a logical continuation of the rhetorical presidency, “it is also a radical intensification of it.”<sup>298</sup> The decline of the modern presidency was identified as a “protracted process” due to the congressional legislation passed to curb presidential power: the OMB director had to receive Senate confirmation for appointment (1973); the Impoundment Control Act of 1974; the Case Act (1972); and the War Powers Resolution (1973).<sup>299</sup> Reagan’s image of strength, however, restored power to the medium of the presidential image. Barilleaux argued that the presidency itself is an “artificial creation”: “What voters see on their televisions is something constructed, whether by the media or the president, for public consumption.”<sup>300</sup> While Barilleaux did recognize the fact that Reagan’s “activities were planned with an eye to the visual

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<sup>295</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid., 140.



impressions they would leave”<sup>301</sup>, he did not perceive Reagan’s instrumentalization of television originating from Nixon’s politicization of television in 1968. He recognized the increasing defection of the New Deal coalition to the ranks of the Republican Party but he believed it was because “the electorate is in flux”<sup>302</sup>, not because of the party’s television image of conservative paternalism, but rather because of Reagan’s cult of personality. The historiography on Reaganism generally fails to sufficiently recognize the instrumentalization of Reagan’s cult of personality through the medium of television as the primary medium for conducting the Reagan Revolution.

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<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

### CHAPTER 3: THE REAGAN REVOLUTION: The Modern American Revolution

Reagan's "primitive" instincts or his "inborn instinct"<sup>303</sup> for the dissolution of the Soviet Union coincided with reality; however, Reagan's political image required him to construct reality. The Reagan era coincided with the historical closure of Alexis de Tocqueville's prophesy from 1835 of the dialectic between Anglo-American and Russian imperialism. At the beginning of the Cold War both political systems were driven M.A.D. by the older generation's doctrine of nuclear diplomacy and the presumed inevitability of one national interest historically subverting the threat of the "other." While the Soviet-American détente process of the 1970s was contingent upon the convergence of analogous internal and external circumstances, as William E. Pemberton (1998) argued in his psychological analysis of Reaganism, "The cold war ended because by the late 1980s the interests of the superpowers coincided."<sup>304</sup> The returning focus of nuclear diplomacy and military superiority during the Reagan presidency was intentionally calculated by Reagan, coercing "open serious negotiations when American strength and Soviet vulnerability converged to bring Moscow to the bargaining table."<sup>305</sup> This convergence was precipitated by the "inner migration"<sup>306</sup> within the Soviet Union, involving the existential rejection of the communist system that resulted from the détente process. Conversely, William F. Buckley, Jr. historicized the dissolution of the Soviet Union in a lecture at Vanderbilt University, on September 18, 1991, as solely attributable to Reagan's historical image and leadership:

In the West there were, everywhere, steadfast friends of liberty, but by no means can it be said that they dominated the public policy of the West. That can be said of only one figure. It was Ronald Reagan, history is certain to confirm, who suddenly forced the leaders of Soviet Communism to look in the mirror, and what they beheld was their advanced emaciation.<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> William E. Pemberton, *Exit with Honor: The Life and Presidency of Ronald Reagan* (New York; London: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1998), 164.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>307</sup> WFB, *The Reagan I knew*, 185.

Gorbachev's appointment was in fact precipitated by the realist recognition by the old guard of the necessity for change by the new guard. Robert Gates - the principal Soviet analyst during the Reagan administration - asserted that the Soviet Union dissolved due to ethno-religious factionalism within its search for recognition of its superpower status. He recalled in his memoir of the system's psychological entropy: "Soviet defectors for many years had warned us that we had no real understanding of the narrow backgrounds and worldview of Kremlin leaders; how pedestrian, isolated, and self-absorbed they really were; how paranoid, fearful they were both of their own people and of a world they believed relentlessly hostile and threatening."<sup>308</sup> Reagan understood this immediately when he defected from his admiration of FDR's representation of the "people."

Similar to how the neorealist "balancing act" of "Nixinger diplomacy" produced a "process rather than a fixed policy"<sup>309</sup>, constraining coercive American rhetoric and action within the dialogue of Soviet-American relations, the militaristic basis of Reaganism shaped Reagan's rhetoric; however, in the television age, Reagan's image-managers were cautious to prevent associating Reagan with the image of militarism. Within the inaugural interpretation of *The Reagan Revolution* (1981), Rowland Evans & Robert Novak argued that Reagan was the "mirror image" of Richard Nixon:

While Nixon spoke in the contentious rhetoric of hyperbole, his policies as president were moderate if not downright liberal, careful not to disturb the national political consensus dating back to Franklin Roosevelt. In contrast, Reagan spoke in moderate language while pursuing policies whose only intent was to destroy that consensus.<sup>310</sup>

Reagan believed that Nixon's détente process "was born not out of reality but one of political pathology at home: defeatism, pessimism and appeasement."<sup>311</sup> The Soviet's rearmament program during the détente process of the 1970s – while hyperbolically exaggerated within Reagan's rhetoric - confirmed Reagan's belief that the Soviets could not be trusted. Nixon's neorealist diplomacy from a "position of

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<sup>308</sup> Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 259.

<sup>309</sup> Joan Hoff, *Nixon Reconsidered* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 185.

<sup>310</sup> Evans & Novak, 245.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

strength” rested upon Reagan’s technological leverage during the 1980s of the Strategic Defense Initiative. In *House of War: The Pentagon and the Disastrous Rise of American Power* (2006), professor James Carroll determined that Jimmy Carter’s failure to circumvent the conservative hawks’ Cold War orthodoxy was the impetus for Reagan’s 1980s: “It was Jimmy Carter, that moralistic liberal, who had paved the way for equally moralistic right-wingers, who deplored the tradition of Republican realists in foreign affairs (Nixon and Kissinger) as much as they hated the softness of Democrats.”<sup>312</sup> Carter questioned Cold War orthodoxy, contending that arms control was a cover for nuclear expansion without clearly identifying “he was instinctively trying to undo not just an institutional mindset but a mystical construct.”<sup>313</sup> Wilentz observed, “[Tip] O’Neill resented having the House and Senate of the United States likened to the Georgia state legislature, and he knew that Carter’s misunderstanding of reality in Washington could paralyze the legislative process, with politically fatal consequences.”<sup>314</sup> Consequently, Nixon’s “honor without victory” was supplanted with Reagan’s “honor with victory”, or what Nixon referred to by 1988 as “Victory without War.” Nixon’s “era of negotiation” dialogically produced Reagan’s “era of reconciliation” through Reagan’s faithful instrumentalization of “American Nationalist Globalism”<sup>315</sup> to synthesize America’s conservative political culture and liberal popular culture. This McLuhanesque ode to empire reconciled the conservative electorate of America’s socially homogenized society by providing the collective with a superior relative existential status to gravitate toward. While Reagan’s ideological rhetoric of Cold War Manichaeism was perceived as the most realistic medium to consolidate the international status quo through containment and deterrence, American liberalism shrunk.

Nixon instrumentalized television in the 1968 presidential election by creating a television image of paternalism in congruence with the socio-political context; Reagan repeated this strategy during the 1980 presidential election, institutionalizing a McLuhan culture by constructing his television image as the principal medium through which to aggregate public support for his ideological agenda. Reagan did

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<sup>312</sup> James Carroll, *House of War: The Pentagon and the Disastrous Rise of American Power* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006), 382.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, 364.

<sup>314</sup> Wilentz, 81.

<sup>315</sup> Professor William Walker III, University of Toronto, 2005-2006 HIS 344Y1.

this by attracting new voters, with an increase of 20 percent for the Republican Party in the 1980 presidential election, and 35 million voters changing party allegiance from May 1980 to January 1987, converting a majority of moderate Democrats.<sup>316</sup> Reagan reversed FDR's portraits of "us" and "them" among the younger generation by institutionalizing the Republican Party as the political party of the "people", representing small government and shared values, while the Democratic Party represented the failure of liberal bureaucracy.

Reagan overtly conserved the status quo through his conservative ideology and imagery while he covertly expanded presidential control over the media's ability to filter the presidential message, or image. Reagan's personification of America's sense of "shared values", through "the splicing together of Hollywood West, cowboy hero, citizen-statesmen, and Hollywood East"<sup>317</sup>, enabled him to acquire the titles of the Great Communicator, "the great storyteller of his generation"<sup>318</sup>, and "the master of the politics of symbolism."<sup>319</sup> Professor Will Bunch deduced Reagan's image of the Great Communicator as originating from his General Electric superior, Lemuel Boulware's communications strategy for GE to circumvent union leaders by selling the company's workers a "new politics" meant to convert employees as "mass communicators" of a new constituency.<sup>320</sup> Reagan romanticized the American zeitgeist to fit a "Hollywood version of reality"<sup>321</sup> out of his perceived duty to provide symbolic leadership and defend American traditionalism, culminating in the rhetorical use of the term "evil empire", introduced during a speech to the American Evangelical Society in early 1983<sup>322</sup>, which was identified by speechwriter Tony Dolan as a "semantic infiltration"<sup>323</sup> within international political discourse. Gerald Rafshoon, Carter's media advisor, articulated in an interview during Reagan's second term that Carter's failure to escape the

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<sup>316</sup> John Kenneth White, *The New Politics of Old Values* (Hanover and London: University Press of England, 1990), 87.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>318</sup> Pemberton, 19.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*, 95, 142.

<sup>320</sup> Bunch, 36-37.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>322</sup> National Association of Evangelicals, March 8, 1983.

<sup>323</sup> David Gergen, *Eyewitness to Power: The Essence of Leadership Nixon to Clinton* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 242.

hegemony the hardliners maintained over the discourse of the nuclear arms race was due to his inability to understand the television age: “he got into office and began thinking that good substance alone was enough, that style didn’t matter.”<sup>324</sup> During the 1980 presidential election, the Reagan campaign was governed under the assumption of Reagan’s chief strategist and image-manager, Michael K. Deaver, which he revealed at the beginning of the 1984 election year in *The National Journal*: “Television elects Presidents.”<sup>325</sup> Accordingly, the Reagan presidency inaugurated the “postmodern presidency” by basing the formulation and enactment of legislation and policy principles strictly according to the appearance of the personal popularity of the president and substantive public opinion polls.

The postmodern presidency in the television age, with the supremacy of image over substance, institutionalized the importance of relatability over substantive content. Reagan’s director of communications, David Gergen, admitted in his 2000 memoir, “Years ago, I didn’t realize that camaraderie mattered much to leadership. I now think that a leader can barely survive without it.”<sup>326</sup> Unlike Nixon’s politicization of American television in 1968, Reagan’s personification of orthodox conservative ideology was a reflection of his personal and historical identity. Reagan was inherently more ideological than Nixon’s new identity of paternal realist centrism. The Reagan presidency therefore extended Nixon’s inauguration of the “imperial presidency” by centralizing executive power within the communications apparatus of the president to effectively control the president’s message, which was acknowledged by Reagan’s image-managers as formulated and communicated solely in terms of images. Professor Will Bunch (2009) observed, “Reagan, and his skilled PR people such as Mike Deaver and David Gergen, revolutionized the presidency because they understood how words and images could create a story line that could change people’s mood and then change their minds.”<sup>327</sup> The “Reagan Revolution” was acknowledged among Reagan’s image-managers as a contrived marketing campaign founded upon Reagan’s cult of personality as a means to implement the ideological agenda of

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<sup>324</sup> Mark Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1988), 39.

<sup>325</sup> *The National Journal*, January 29, 1984, pg. 34.

<sup>326</sup> Gergen, 191.

<sup>327</sup> Bunch, 214.

Reaganism, comprised of deregulation and increased defense spending. In *Reagan and Public Discourse* (1992), Michael Weiler and W. Barnett Pearce observed that the political hegemony of Reaganism was premised upon rhetorically forging exclusion, disempowerment, and constraining public discourse within the “structures congenial to its own agenda”, conflating the relation between assertion and evidence in public debate.<sup>328</sup> This disjuncture proved to be imbibed in the ideological formulation and governance of Reaganism: unapologetically ideological in rhetoric and image on television yet dictated by the personal popularity of the president and substantive public opinion. Within Wilentz’ conception of the “age of Reagan”, this strategy for balancing constituencies was later identified as “triangulation” under the Clinton presidency.

Professor William E. Pemberton (1998) intimated Wilentz’s identification of the “age of Reagan” in his observation that Reagan “reiterated the central core of American mythology” insofar as “what he said struck people as right because it was based on beliefs handed down through the generations as simple truths”, enabling him to mount the “most effective public relations operation in history.”<sup>329</sup> The Reagan administration extended Reagan’s initial strategic triumvirate, comprised of Michael K. Deaver, a public relations architect responsible for the management of Reagan’s television image, Edwin Meese, responsible for daily campaign duties and later appointed Attorney General during the second term; and William Casey, a Cold Warrior at heart imbibed in his days with the Office of Strategic Services, the predecessor to the CIA, was responsible for semblance of administrative order and later convinced Reagan to appoint him as the Director of the CIA. The muse for Reagan’s ideological strategy was Dr. Richard Wirthlin, a pollster responsible for long-range strategy during the campaign and consulted regularly throughout the Reagan presidency.

Following his election, Reagan’s image-managers implemented Nixon’s form of news management by forming a communications apparatus consisting of image-managers who constructed Reagan’s presidential image with an eye toward the television screen as a basis of governance. As John

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<sup>328</sup> Michael Weiler and W. Barnett Pearce (eds.), *Reagan and Public Discourse* (Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, 1992), 5-6.

<sup>329</sup> Pemberton, 204-205.

Kenneth White observed in his analysis of *The New Politics of Old Values* (1990), “Reagan’s selling of traditional American values had two objectives: winning election to the presidency, and establishing a framework for governing thereafter.”<sup>330</sup> The Reagan presidency co-opted the residual “adversary culture” between the presidency and the press corps caused by the Watergate story and the Vietnam War by implementing a culture of “clique journalism.” This was comprised of partisan reporters recruited through the administration’s ability to sell the presidential image to the media through the proliferation of positive news and the regulation of negative news. Mark Hertsgaard asserted in *On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency* (1988): “Long after Ronald Reagan has left the White House, the model of news management introduced during his tenure will remain behind, shaping press coverage and therefore public perception.”<sup>331</sup> Hertsgaard claimed Reagan’s political hegemony over the press lured the American electorate to the right as “the television era equivalent of the Pied Piper of Hamelin; he played a tune so gay and skipped ahead so cheerily that others could not help but trust and follow him.”<sup>332</sup> The historiography on Reaganism during the Bush II presidency inferred a McLuhan culture as the source for the visible disjuncture between action and rhetoric, sight and sound, images and issues, assertion and evidence, during the 1980s and since; however, the concept of a McLuhan culture providing the principal medium of the Reagan Revolution has not yet been illustrated within the historical dialogue of Reaganism.

In his farewell address Reagan expressed his confidence that it was the content of his message rather than his “style” that resonated among the public. However, Reagan’s director of communications during the first term, David Gergen, contested in his 2000 memoir that, although Reagan was more than his image, “Style does count.”<sup>333</sup> In fact, all of Reagan’s image-managers, or public relations artists, knew “style” counted more than content in creating the outside cover for the inside story. While the story of Reaganism is central to the narrative of modern American conservatism, it was told in *Nixonland*.

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<sup>330</sup> White, 51.

<sup>331</sup> Hertsgaard, 7.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>333</sup> Gergen, 216.



### 3.1 REAGAN'S PUBLIC RELATIONS APPARATUS

*New York Times* columnist Elizabeth Drew's *Portrait of an Election: The 1980 Presidential Campaign* (1981) was dialogically produced from Kevin Phillip's "portrait" of the emerging Republican majority. Drew identified that "the great waves of discontent have been moving in Reagan's direction"<sup>334</sup>, and while Carter is "constantly blurring the picture"<sup>335</sup>, Reagan understood the zeitgeist: "His audience is the television camera."<sup>336</sup> Drew asserted that Reagan's famous popular line during the second debate in reaction to Carter's identification of Reagan's contradictions, "There you go again", was a "theatrical coup" within American political theatre.<sup>337</sup> Drew intimated the McLuhan culture of modern American political discourse during the 1980 presidential election by continuously identifying Reagan's anecdotes and imagery of the younger generation as "props"<sup>338</sup> in his campaign as the "genial grandfather."<sup>339</sup> While Reagan enlisted psychological and behavioral strategists during his California gubernatorial tenure, Drew identified that Carter "seems to undervalue the emotional and psychological links between people that make things happen, and he seems to believe that arguments speak for themselves- that if you've made your argument, that's all you need to do."<sup>340</sup> Wilentz observed, "Whereas Carter spoke philosophically of ambiguities and limits, Reagan spoke with splendid simplicity about an unbounded American future. Whereas Carter projected honesty, Reagan projected adventure."<sup>341</sup> Drew identified the politicization and the reactionary basis of governance for the Carter campaign during 1980 as the impetus for the style of the Reagan campaign: "This is a political fight, revolving around symbols more than substance."<sup>342</sup> Drew, as well as Reagan's pollsters, identified that it was the winning perception which provided substance to the debate rather than the substance of the debate itself: "Of course, the important thing in politics, when

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<sup>334</sup> Elizabeth Drew, *Portrait of an Election: The 1980 Presidential Campaign* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), 108.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*, 300.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*, 276.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, 324.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*, 266, 315.

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*, 322.

<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.

<sup>341</sup> Wilentz, 125.

<sup>342</sup> Drew, 245.

it comes to determining the behavior of politicians, is not necessarily what happened but what people think happened- what become the accepted truisms. The truisms guide behavior.”<sup>343</sup> As Drew observed, “Reagan’s pollsters did not find an increase in Reagan’s lead until two days after the debate”<sup>344</sup>, because the substance of television debates is derived from the dialogue between the candidate’s exchanges and the media’s interpretation of the event. Consistent with the network’s projection of Reagan over Bush during the primaries, *ABC News* declared Reagan the winner of the debate, imprinting this perception on the post-debate consciousness. In 2009, *ABC News* became the principal media ally of the Obama presidency.

The institutionalization of the McLuhan culture during the 1980s is implied in the historiography on Reaganism by illustrating the predominance of image as the impetus for the disjuncture between action and rhetoric, sight and sound. The McLuhan culture of the 1980s, or the artificiality of modern reality, is predicated upon what Gil Troy has described as the “media realities of modern politics.”<sup>345</sup> In *Morning in America: How Ronald Reagan Invented the 1980s* (2005), Troy observed the nature of the relationship between the administration and the media in the postmodern presidency: “Administration officials and reporters agreed: there was a new language to American politics, one more visual than verbal, more image-oriented than issue-oriented, more stylish than substantive.”<sup>346</sup> Professor Will Bunch asserted that “news people were equal co-conspirators with the politicians in creating the political allegory around Reagan.”<sup>347</sup> While all administrations establish a public relations apparatus to regulate the media’s portrayal of the presidency, Hertsgaard asserted in *On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency* (1988), that “few, if any, administration’s had exalted news management to as central a role in the theory and practice of governance as Reagan’s did.”<sup>348</sup> ABC News White House correspondent during the Reagan administration, Sam Donaldson, asserted in an interview with the author that Reagan’s

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<sup>343</sup> Ibid., 345.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid., 344.

<sup>345</sup> Gil Troy, *Morning in America: How Ronald Reagan Invented the 1980s* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 174.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>347</sup> Bunch, 2.

<sup>348</sup> Hertsgaard, 6.

communication apparatus understood “a simple truism about television: the eye always predominates over the ear when there is a fundamental clash between the two.”<sup>349</sup> One of Reagan’s image-managers, Richard Darman, reflected in his 1996 memoir upon his initial apprehensiveness of this new basis of “symbolic communication”, or “populist communication”:

I understood the political value of this substance-free approach, and in some significant respects contributed to it. But initially, I felt that it seemed somewhat cynical, treating the public a bit like fools. Gradually, however, I came to a different realization.<sup>350</sup>

Darman acquiesced to Reaganism based on his recognition of how America’s “television-centered democracy” was governed: “Whatever influences the perception of reality will also influence reality itself; therefore, the systemic management of illusion must be part of the effort to manage reality.”<sup>351</sup>

David Gergen admitted in his memoir, *Eyewitness to Power: The Essence of Leadership from Nixon to Clinton* (2000), that not only were television speeches the “staple” of the Reagan presidency and the “legend of his leadership” but “he also governed through it.”<sup>352</sup> The visible contradiction between Reagan’s strong conservative image and the reality of his team of strategists “fighting for his mind” was identified by the assistant managing editor of the *Washington Post* in 1981, William Greider, as being based on the visual approach of Reagan’s communications apparatus.<sup>353</sup> This was identified by former White House journalist David S. Broder as a “six-tier communications system: radio, television, weekly and monthly magazines, and books.”<sup>354</sup>

Hertsgaard identified that Reagan’s communications apparatus, or “propaganda apparatus”, was controlled by the “Gang of Four”, consisting of Richard Darman, David Gergen, Michael Deaver, and James Baker III. The principal strategists for generating positive press coverage of Reagan and managing daily PR duties were Gergen, who contacted the networks daily to influence news stories, and Deaver,

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<sup>349</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>350</sup> Darman, 142.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>352</sup> Gergen, 213.

<sup>353</sup> Broder, *Behind the Front Page: A Candid Look at How the News is Made*, 26.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid., 15.

who took over for Gergen when he left the administration at the end of 1983. Darman, the deputy chief of staff, boasted in his memoir that besides overseeing presidential speechwriting and attending most Cabinet and NSC meetings, he was the “last stop” for “all paperwork” to the president.<sup>355</sup> As his superior, and suggested as a candidate for the position by Deaver<sup>356</sup>, White House Chief of Staff Jim Baker presided directly over the communications apparatus, while Deaver ignored the substantive policy matters of the three “pragmatists” with a tacit veto power with his eye toward Reagan’s long-term strategy and Nancy’s short-term schedule. Deaver’s close relationship with the stereotypically private Reagan family originated during the Nixon presidency while Deaver worked as a public relations aide to Governor Reagan, and continued after 1974 with Reagan serving as the primary client of his public relations firm. Although Deaver was essentially an aide, as the Deputy Chief of Staff during the administration, Donald Regan, Reagan’s Secretary of the Treasury from 1981 to 1985 and Chief of Staff from 1985 to 1987, claimed Deaver’s title “in no way described the truly pervasive influence and power”<sup>357</sup> he maintained in the White House “to handle scheduling and imagery.”<sup>358</sup> Regan asserted, “It was Deaver’s job to advise the President on image, and image was what he talked about nearly all the time.”<sup>359</sup> Regan recounted in his memoir of how Deaver formulated public relations for television: “He saw-designed- each Presidential action as a one-minute or two-minute spot on the evening network news, or a picture on page one of the *Washington Post* or the *New York Times*, and conceived every Presidential appearance in terms of camera angles.”<sup>360</sup>

Darman launched the legislative Strategy Group shortly after the election.<sup>361</sup> Convinced that Reagan had to go on the offensive due to the fact that the bully pulpit had been abandoned to the television networks, Gergen asserted,

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<sup>355</sup> Darman, 39.

<sup>356</sup> Michael K. Deaver, *A Different Drummer*, 33.

<sup>357</sup> Donald Regan, *For the Record: From Wall Street to Washington* (New York: Harcourt Bracevich Jovanovich, Publishers, 1988), 227.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*, 248.

<sup>361</sup> Gergen, 181.

With the help of our Hundred Days Plan, we were off and running in those opening months. Or was it off and spinning, controlling, elbowing, and manipulating? It may depend on one's perspective.<sup>362</sup>

Reagan was the first president to be sworn in on the West side of the capital building under Darman's assumption that "symbolism was an important part of the three-month action plan", designed to "create a sense of motion and change."<sup>363</sup> In his memoir, Speakes asserted, "Almost no news item, no speech, no trip, no photo-op whatsoever was put on the President's schedule during 1981 unless it contributed to the President's economic program."<sup>364</sup> Reagan's economic program was interpreted within the framework of the Reagan Revolution by depicting Reagan and Stockman as doing more than just reducing federal outlays, they were "changing the nature of the federal government" based on the "tactical strategy of maintaining public support behind them."<sup>365</sup> By early March, only eight weeks into his presidency, Reagan's popularity was waning; this changed with his assassination attempt at the end of the month. As Reagan's director of communications, April 1981-December 31, 1983, David Gergen, observed in his memoir,

The public rallied to him, as one would expect, but there was now a different feeling about him. To a great many, especially working people, he was now the president who had taken a bullet- and smiled. He had guts.<sup>366</sup>

In *A Different Drummer: My Thirty Years with Ronald Reagan* (2001), Deaver recalled,

The remarkable acceptance of at least the first six years of his presidency and the astounding personal popularity Reagan was to enjoy began to take shape that day, I think- born out of his raw physical courage and the grace and aplomb he was to show under circumstances almost impossible to conceive. In his near end, to paraphrase T.S. Eliot, was his beginning.<sup>367</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> Ibid., 185.

<sup>363</sup> Darman, 41.

<sup>364</sup> Speakes, 220.

<sup>365</sup> Evans & Novak, 134.

<sup>366</sup> Gergen, 176.

<sup>367</sup> Michael K. Deaver, *A Different Drummer: My Thirty Years with Ronald Reagan* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), 140.

Visual representation and imagery were intrinsic to the decision-making process and the implementation of Reaganism. Although Reagan insisted on being presented with all the summarized perspectives of an issue, visual representation and imagery proved fundamental to Reagan's decisions for "policy options" and resolving ideological and personal conflicts among Reagan's decentralized Cabinet. In his 1986 memoir, *The Triumph of Politics: How the Reagan Revolution Failed*, former Director of the Office of Management and Budget (1981-1984), David A. Stockman, reflected on Caspar Weinberger's visual presentation for the president on September 9, 1981 to resolve the mounting estimated defense budget issue of \$1.46 trillion over the next five years. Weinberger argued for an increase of the defense budget, maintaining that a decrease in expenditures was not an option, by presenting "an overlay of a Soviet tank factory on top of a map of Washington", a chart comparing Warsaw Pact divisions with U.S. and NATO forces, and his penultimate illustration of a "blown-up cartoon" showing three soldiers. The first was a pygmy with a rifle, representing the Carter budget. The second was a "four-eyed wimp who looked like Woody Allen, carrying a tiny rifle", emasculating the OMB defense budget. The third image was "G.I. Joe himself, 190 pounds of fighting man, all decked out in helmet and flak jacket", representing the DOD budget.<sup>368</sup> Weinberger's strategy worked but Stockman could not believe a Harvard-educated cabinet officer would present cartoons to the president: "Did he think the White House was on Sesame Street?"<sup>369</sup>

Reagan's press secretary from April 1981 to February 1986, Larry Speakes, referred to by Hertsgaard as the "most visible member of the Reagan propaganda apparatus"<sup>370</sup>, reflected in his memoir on the predominance of the "picture" in the television age:

Underlying our whole theory of disseminating information in the White House was our knowledge that the American people get their news and form their judgments based largely on what they see on television. We knew that television had to have pictures to present its story. We learned very quickly that when we were presenting a story or trying to get our

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<sup>368</sup> David A. Stockman, *The Triumph of Politics: How the Reagan Revolution Failed* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1986), 291.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid.

<sup>370</sup> Hertsgaard, 20.

viewpoint across, we had to think like a television producer...  
We knew very quickly that the rule was no pictures, no  
television piece, no matter how important our news was.<sup>371</sup>

Most likely due to his position on the front lines, Speakes genuinely perceived the relationship between the Administration and the press corps as framed within Cold War Manichaeism: “For my six years as White House spokesman, it was Us against Them.”<sup>372</sup> The basis of “interpretive reporting”, which became amplified by the Watergate story, was identified by Broder as originating during the socio-economic and military-diplomatic complexities during the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>373</sup> The lessons learned by the American press of trust from McCarthyism during the 1950s caused an “adversary culture” during the 1960s and 1970s that culminated in America’s extrication from the Vietnam War.<sup>374</sup> Broder observed, following the Watergate story the “rapidly growing army of television reporters and technicians has inflated the size and, in turn, has brought with it an expansion in the ranks of government press agents.”<sup>375</sup>

During the Nixon presidency, Nixon broke from executive tradition by only holding a press conference on average every seven weeks, compared to the previous average since Eisenhower of two press conferences every month. Similarly, the media criticized the Reagan administration for its relatively small number of press conferences, conducting only three press conferences in his first eight months in office, the fewest in that period of the postwar presidency, even compared to Nixon’s seven during that period. Speakes asserted that the “theatre” of press conferences “no longer serve the presidency or the press”<sup>376</sup> because now “reporters come to create news, not to cover it.”<sup>377</sup> Although Lyn Nofziger agreed that Reagan should have held more press conferences, in his memoir he claimed this was because following Watergate the aim of “too many reporters” was not to cover a story but rather to get on television: “They do not want to cover the news or write the news; they want to be part of the news.”<sup>378</sup>

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<sup>371</sup> Speakes, 220.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid., 217.

<sup>373</sup> Broder, 137.

<sup>374</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>375</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>376</sup> Speakes, 234.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid., 309.

<sup>378</sup> Lyn Nofziger, *Nofziger* (Washington, D.C.: Tegnery Gateway, 1992), 4.

Consequently, Reagan held only 30 press conferences during his first term, compared to almost double that number by Carter, and reporters were required to raise their hands, sit down rather than traditionally stand, and address the President only when called upon.

The “visibility/accessibility paradox”<sup>379</sup> that pervaded the Reagan presidency culminated in the contradictions of both permitting the press unprecedented access to the White House but reducing the direct access to the President,<sup>380</sup> and Reagan’s assassination attempt, visibly reinforcing his image of strength while providing justification for “further isolating President Reagan physically from the press.”<sup>381</sup> Based on his initial background as a damage-control officer in the U.S. Navy, Gergen articulated this paradox within a military metaphor of sacrificing lower lieutenants and protecting the commander and chief from the front line fire of bad news.<sup>382</sup> Barilleaux argued that this underlying paradox of the Reagan presidency could only be overcome through civic education; essentially, Reagan’s manufactured image could only be dissuaded by informing the public of the contradictions of Reagan’s public image.

Donald Regan asserted in his memoir that this paradox originated from the fact that the Reagan presidency was the most open government in history but was premised upon “secret arrangements.”<sup>383</sup> Broder echoed this sentiment in lamenting American journalism’s “main function of serving the broad public” in his 1987 memoir, *Behind the Front Page: A Candid Look at How the News is Made*: “In recent years our reporting of government and national politics has narrowed to the coverage of insiders, by the insiders, and for the insiders.”<sup>384</sup> Since the Reagan presidency had to stimulate a positive public effect in the media, Regan contended that, while the administration was confrontational with the press, paradoxically, “the press, not the people, became the President’s primary constituency.”<sup>385</sup> If Reagan

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<sup>379</sup> Hertsgaard, 139.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid, 24.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>383</sup> Regan, 254.

<sup>384</sup> Broder, 18.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid., 246.



could sell it to them, he could trust to have them sell it to the people; the quintessential example of where your enemy becomes your friend through a mutual interest: television and cultural fame.

The Reagan administration controlled the American press corps on the basis of what Reagan's early Secretary of State Alexander Haig Jr. referred to as "intangible power", which was premised upon the proliferation of positive news and the regulation of negative news. Haig asserted in his memoir that the press provided "a powerful check upon the government, but the government has no tangible power over it."<sup>386</sup> The Reagan administration, however, exercised "intangible power" over the media and his own Cabinet by opening the doors to the White House and giving direct access to reporters, controlling the medium of information "in a way hitherto unknown in Washington."<sup>387</sup> Donald Regan asserted that the triumvirate "decided to control what it could not prevent, and in an action filled with meaning for the future, instituted a policy of leaking information to journalists on a systemic basis."<sup>388</sup> Since the 1960s, Haig confirmed, "Leaks constituted policy."<sup>389</sup> Haig recounted his initial "naïve" perception of the media and its ability to access sensitive memorandums that he had personally delivered to Reagan's Chief of Staff Edwin Meese: "At first, I did not realize that the *Times* and the *Post* and the networks and news magazines had let themselves be converted into White House bulletin boards."<sup>390</sup> Larry Speakes admitted, "our starting point was always the Washington Post"<sup>391</sup>, with the *Post*'s White House team consisting of David Hoffman and veteran Lou Cannon, whose main sources were Bill Clark and Edwin Meese. Cannon later wrote what is considered within cultural and academic commentary as the quintessential biography of Ronald Reagan in 1998.

The administration regulated the negative press of reporters, who they perceived to be attempting to steal the spotlight from Reagan, by planting friendly reporters, which Speakes pleaded *mea culpa*, or most commonly through the establishment of a patronage system among the press corps as a form of

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<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>388</sup> Regan, 251.

<sup>389</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>390</sup> Alexander M. Haig, Jr., *Caveat: Realism, Reagan, and Foreign Policy* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1984), 18.

<sup>391</sup> Speakes, 227.

status. This was identified by Broder in 1987 as “clique journalism”: “It is a form of journalistic corruption to which the current crop of Washington reporters- I include myself- is particularly susceptible.”<sup>392</sup> The consciousness and public image of American journalism, which emerged from Watergate as the champion of America’s national interests, were reversed by the end of the Reagan presidency. Broder observed, “Journalists have been made painfully conscious of the polls showing that our business suffers from its own credibility gap, that even as we give each other awards for excellence, there is substantial distrust from those we serve.”<sup>393</sup> Speakes illustrated this arbitrary administrative policy in his memoir by boastfully recounting how he put NBC’s Chris Matthews “out of business” for questioning the semantic complexities of his visibly disingenuous response: “You were unaware of any investigation, but you were aware that everybody was being asked to turn over information on contacts.”<sup>394</sup>

The Reagan presidency also structured a form of status among the press corps by glamorizing social engagements; due to the expansion of the press corps, the White House had to extend the annual Christmas party, the social engagement of the year, to two nights.<sup>395</sup> As part of the same technique, the criticism from the press corps of Reagan’s lack of press conferences was only counteracted during the 1984 election year when Baker and Deaver finally acquiesced to Speakes’ suggestion to meet with selective reporters over cocktails, among them Lou Cannon and David Broder, off the record.<sup>396</sup>

While the Reagan presidency reconciled the “adversary culture” with the press corps through creating a culture of “clique journalism”, the communications apparatus was also premised upon infiltration. David Gergen represents a direct example of how the public relations approach and public relations goals of the Reagan administration, which originated during the Nixon presidency, extended into the media during the 1980s. Speakes asserted: “During Reagan’s first term we devoted an inordinate

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<sup>392</sup> Broder, 16.

<sup>393</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>394</sup> Speakes, 226.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid., 232.

<sup>396</sup> Speakes, 303.

amount of time to the weekly news magazine, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report*.<sup>397</sup> The Reagan administration granted unprecedented access to selective magazines based on the anonymity of aides and members of the Cabinet, but “there was a feeling of ego, that you were writing history.”<sup>398</sup> Speakes illustrated the competition of egos within the Reagan administration by recounting his competition with the White House director of communications, David Gergen, until he officially left the administration on December 31, 1983 to become the editor of *U.S. News & World Report*.<sup>399</sup> Hertsgaard claimed the underlying impetus for factionalism was premised upon the polarizing lessons learned from the Nixon presidency of whether to assert a conciliatory or confrontational stance with the press.<sup>400</sup> In contrast to Reagan speechwriter Peggy Noonan’s defection, from a CBS television journalist to a partisan Republican, Gergen infiltrated journalism as a partisan Republican.

After the 1972 election, Gergen was promoted to chief of the White House research and writing team for his innovative work of scripting the Republican National Convention with an entertaining visual for television. Although he remained loyal during Watergate, he remained constantly criticized for “speaking too freely” with journalists.<sup>401</sup> In an interview with Hertsgaard after leaving the administration, Gergen asserted that the basic goal of the administration’s approach to the news media was “to correct the imbalance of power with the press so that the White House will once again achieve a ‘margin of safety’.”<sup>402</sup> During the interview, Gergen claimed the main limitation of the Carter administration was that it only had press secretary Pat Caddell to “philosophize about the nature of the administration.”<sup>403</sup> With this realization, the Reagan administration and its public relations philosophers were given an unprecedented historical actor to actualize their agenda.

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<sup>397</sup> Ibid., 231.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid., 245.

<sup>400</sup> Hertsgaard, 39.

<sup>401</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>402</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid., 22.

### 3.2 REAGAN'S PUBLIC IMAGE

Since the “Reagan narrative was an artificial creation posing as a natural phenomenon,”<sup>404</sup> in the words of Pemberton, the natural, or revolutionary transition to this artificial reality was facilitated by an actor portraying a role near to his heart, a “citizen-politician”, who believed in his product but did not believe he was selling mythical constructs. During Peggy Noonan’s first meeting with Reagan, after four months at the White House in 1984, she felt rejoiced to confirm that Reagan was “like a happy working-class American boy of the thirties.”<sup>405</sup> The “Reaganized America” of the 1980s - as Pemberton identified Reagan’s effect on society - disseminated the Hollywood reality by creating a “modern reality”, imbibed in “a television age”<sup>406</sup>, relegating issues to images, subordinating rationalism to nationalism, and causing negative press, such as Patti Davis’ tell-all, to have a negligible effect on Reaganism. After all, celebrities “lived in an alternative universe following their own rules where the only truly great shame was being ignored.”<sup>407</sup>

McLuhan asserted, “The fans of the cool TV medium want to see their star in role, whereas the movie fans want the real thing.”<sup>408</sup> With Reagan, the audience got both. Reagan’s conservative cult of personality was therefore created approximately when his movie persona met his anticommunist image on television during the 1964 Republican National Convention. Bunch observed that “from that day forward, Reagan was no longer a movie actor who dabbled in politics, but a politician who used to be in motion pictures.”<sup>409</sup> When asked after his 1966 victory how he was going to conduct state government Reagan responded with a “revelatory” quip: “I don’t know. I’ve never played a governor.”<sup>410</sup> Reagan articulated the difference between being a movie star and a politician during Johnny Carson’s 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the

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<sup>404</sup> Pemberton, 153.

<sup>405</sup> Peggy Noonan, *What I Saw at the Revolution: A Political Life in the Reagan Era* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1990), 67.

<sup>406</sup> Troy, 168-69.

<sup>407</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.*, 277.

<sup>409</sup> Bunch, 38.

<sup>410</sup> Wilentz, 133; Bunch, 39.

*Tonight Show* in October 1972 as maturing from an actor to a producer. Johnny Carson inquired whether Reagan missed the entertainment business and performing. Reagan responded:

Every once and awhile when I miss it a bit you just go up and look up at the legislature. No, I thought I would. And I loved it. The life I had in show business, I thought it was the most exciting and wonderful life in the world. But I must say, this has been so exciting, so challenging, and instead of just talking about it, to be able to get a hold of something and try to do something about it- just to help write the script. And to succeed in something like our welfare reforms. You know you're saving the people some money and you're doing some good at the same time.

This perception of politics as a form of entertainment was reiterated by Robert Gates, CIA head of Soviet analysis (Deputy Director for Intelligence) during the Reagan administration, in his claim that Reagan “was a hell of a lot better politician than actor- and uniquely combined the two arts.”<sup>411</sup> Gergen claimed Reagan “was director, producer, and star all rolled into one- the “communicator in chief” from the beginning to the end of his presidency.”<sup>412</sup> Similarly, while Donald Regan identified in his memoir that “celebrity and effectiveness are inseparable handmaidens in Washington”<sup>413</sup>, he conceptualized Reagan’s career as Reagan achieving a level of fame in acting that enabled him to produce his own material on a larger stage:

The Chief of Staff was a sort of producer, making certain that the star had what he needed to do his best; the staff was like the crew, invisible behind the lights, watching the performance their behind-the-scenes efforts had made possible.<sup>414</sup>

For some peripheral “Reaganauts” like Richard Darman the “Hollywood reality” of Reaganism became too artificial:

I was sick of living in an environment where people and issues were so often treated as if they were part of some fickle Hollywood world, where agents manipulated characters and scripts for the sole purpose of advancing

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<sup>411</sup> Gates, 573.

<sup>412</sup> Gergen, 210.

<sup>413</sup> Regan, 224.

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

their star. I had learned a bit about the world of populist communication. But I wanted to get away from the games of posturing and promoting, and back into a world of substance.<sup>415</sup>

In *Exit with Honor: The Life and Presidency of Ronald Reagan* (1998), Pemberton analyzed the psychological disjuncture between Reagan's self-identity and his public image. Pemberton concluded, "He was a masterly image manager, as children of alcoholics often are, a trait enhanced by his interest in acting and his sense of his "presence", his effect on other people."<sup>416</sup> Pemberton implied a McLuhan cultural reality where "the picture always overrides what you say,"<sup>417</sup> portraying Reagan as the representation of "the increasing dominance in the modern world of image over substance."<sup>418</sup> However, Reagan was more than a self-conscious actor, "more than a performer, his performance served his beliefs."<sup>419</sup> Reagan "understood that loneliness was a major problem for people living in modern urban, industrialized society and that he spoke directly to isolated individuals, enveloping them into a community based on a shared vision of the American past and its future."<sup>420</sup> Reagan consolidated his commercial spokesman role for the conservative movement by regulating his public interaction with a few rules that he would later provide to his White House professional speechwriters: Always avoid negatives, "use short sentences, do not use words of two syllables if one would do, never reach for eloquence at the cost of convolution, frame ideas in terms of striking images, use examples in place of sermons."<sup>421</sup> Haig asserted in his memoir that Reagan served primarily as the spokesman for the Republican Party in that Reagan had not intellectually impressed him prior to his taking office and he did not believe this quality was essential for the Reagan presidency.<sup>422</sup> Similarly, in a private conversation with Gates, the architect of Reagan's foreign covert strategy, William Casey, complained about "the

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<sup>415</sup> Darman, 139.

<sup>416</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>417</sup> Pemberton, 205.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid., 210.

<sup>420</sup> Ibid.

<sup>421</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>422</sup> Haig, 14.

President's lack of interest in specifics, his unwillingness to take hard decisions (especially between feuding cabinet members), and his rather simplistic view of the world."<sup>423</sup>

Reagan's strongest and most enduring public image was captured on the big screen in his 1940 movie role as the college football player, George Gipp, "The Gipper." Reagan's cultural image as the Gipper first entered political discourse during the 1996 gubernatorial contest in California when Reagan's recently hired public relations firm Spencer-Roberts were explicitly asked by *Newsweek* reporter Karl Fleming how they would win one for the Gipper.<sup>424</sup> Reagan's public spokesmen asserted that their strategy was premised upon replacing Reagan's foundational cultural image of a hardline conservative anti-communist with a less hyperbolic style of moderation: "Our toughest job is going to be proving that he isn't a right-winger."<sup>425</sup> During the 1980 election campaign, Reagan's association with his onscreen character caused many voters to believe that Reagan attended Notre Dame. Shortly following his election, on May 17, 1981, Reagan consolidated this image by accepting an honorary degree at Notre Dame, the alma mater of his extended caricature, which he described in his diary: "Every N.D. student sees the Rockne film and so the greeting for Pat & me was overwhelming."<sup>426</sup> During the 1984 election year, Reagan "sought refuge in the role once more" by requesting the United States Olympic team and the American electorate to "do it for the Gipper."<sup>427</sup> Within the Reagan administration, Gergen asserted that the competition imposed upon the Reagan staff, similar to the policy formulation structure of Roosevelt's New Deal coalition, was premised upon a desire that "we wanted to win one for the Gipper."<sup>428</sup> Even as Reagan left the White House, a sign in the crowd read, "Air Force One Flies Once More for the Gipper."<sup>429</sup>

White inaugurated the historiography on the mythical origins of Reaganism in *The New Politics of Old Values* (1990) by tracing Reagan's movie persona of George Gipp to an inauthentic tale

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<sup>423</sup> Gates, 218-219.

<sup>424</sup> Matthew Dallek, *The Right Moment*, 123.

<sup>425</sup> Ibid; Hubler, *Where's the Rest of Me?*, 224.

<sup>426</sup> Brinkley, *The Reagan Diaries*, 19.

<sup>427</sup> White, 11.

<sup>428</sup> Gergen, 183.

<sup>429</sup> Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: Public Affairs, 2000), 11.

embellished by the star football player's former coach, Knute Rockne. White claimed that "the myth of Gipp the paragon", comprising primarily of George Gipp's "parting words", was no more than "a product of Rockne's hyperactive imagination."<sup>430</sup> Although "Reagan well understood the power he held over audiences as the Gipper"<sup>431</sup>, the authenticity of his stories were negligible because he was conscious of the fact that it was "the moral of the stories, the values reaffirmed, that count with his listeners."<sup>432</sup> Gates retrospectively observed in his memoirs: "His stories were Lincolnesque and often would capture the point of the discussion with precision."<sup>433</sup> Gergen semantically explained that "his stories were in the nature of parables, their literal truth less important than the larger truths they captured."<sup>434</sup> This is why Reagan was able to recite a letter he claimed was sent to him but was published in *Scouting Magazine* in 1969, or proclaim "Facts are stupid things."<sup>435</sup> Reagan's image only suffered when the viewer couldn't feel the authenticity of what he or she saw. Accordingly, amidst the Iran-Contra Affair, "Ronald Reagan, in the starring role as the Gipper, was a less believable character."<sup>436</sup> White argued, "Like Rooney and Travolta, Reagan's image was bruised when he acted out of character."<sup>437</sup> Gates implied in his memoir that Reagan simply grew out of his image of strength:

...as the second term wore on, we would hear a story told over and over, often told with no point at all. I thought he was still on top of the issues, at least the major ones, but a quality I believed to be fairly magical was waning, day by day.<sup>438</sup>

In *Tear Down This Myth: How the Reagan Legacy Has Distorted Our Politics and Haunts Our Future* (2009), Will Bunch provided a narrative similar to Greenberg's analysis of modern political discourse but with Ronald Reagan as the mythological foundation. Bunch asserted that Reagan's symbolic character of the "Gipper" provides the ultimate allegory for American society through Reagan's

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<sup>430</sup> White, 8-9.

<sup>431</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>432</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>433</sup> Gates, *From the Shadows*, 573.

<sup>434</sup> Gergen, 225.

<sup>435</sup> White, 16.

<sup>436</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>437</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>438</sup> Gates, 573.



genuine rhetorical belief in the power of individual heroism to make a difference: “Perhaps it makes sense, in hindsight, that Reagan was nicknamed for a role in which he asked his teammates to “win one for the Gipper”- and not for themselves.”<sup>439</sup> Bunch illustrated the enactment of the Reagan Legacy Project, directed by right-wing activist Grover Norquist, three weeks after the public disclosure of “Monicagate” in the spring of 1997, and first identified by the media on October 23.<sup>440</sup> Bunch observed, “The Ronald Reagan myth didn’t die when the Gipper passed away in June 2004, it only grew stronger as it helped George W. Bush win reelection and then loomed over both parties in the 2008 race.”<sup>441</sup> Unfortunately for modern political discourse, as Bunch observed, “The only way to slay a myth is with those stubborn things- facts.”<sup>442</sup> Bunch described the present media realities of modern American politics based on a senior Bush aide’s identification of how journalists like Ron Suskind, the cultural derivative of Woodward and Bernstein, were part of the “reality-based community”: “That’s not the way the world really works anymore. We’re an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you’re studying that reality- judiciously, as you will- we’ll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that’s how things will sort out. We’re history’s actors...and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do.”<sup>443</sup>

### **3.3 RESTORATION AND RECONCILIATION: THE REAGAN REVOLUTION AND THE CULT OF PERSONALITY**

Reaganism can only constitute a revolution in terms of the effect of the personality cult of the presidency as the ideological personification of America’s national interests on political discourse. Nixon’s politically expedient personification on television of the older, paternal, moderately conservative generation in 1968 reflected his “southern strategy” of “identity politics.” By 1980, the “southern strategy” was generalized by what Darman identified as Reagan’s personification of a renewed “spiritual

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<sup>439</sup> Bunch, 217.

<sup>440</sup> Ibid., 151-154.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>442</sup> Ibid., 222.

<sup>443</sup> Ibid., 200.

appreciation of the virtue of shared sacrifice on behalf of the precious values our nation represents.”<sup>444</sup>

The identification of ideology was subordinated to the public’s perception of Reagan’s populist television image. Darman asserted in his memoir that from the beginning it was apparent to him that Reagan was “prepared to abandon the purists’ version of the Reagan Revolution in order to assure a popular Reagan presidency.”<sup>445</sup> However, the constant image of Reaganism was a “position of strength.” One of the principal architects of Reaganism, Robert Gates, asserted in his memoir that the Reagan Revolution was overtly premised upon three elements of Reagan’s strategy of economic pressure, which the administration pursued independently: a military buildup, economic sanctions and limits on western trade to the Soviets, and a continued prevention of the transfer of technology to the Soviets.<sup>446</sup> Reagan’s intensification of confrontational rhetoric, and his intangible leverage over the Soviets in the abstract form of his Strategic Defense Initiative, came to full fruition once he realized his public campaign for Weinberger’s unprecedented defense budget would not get past Congress.

By the end of 1981, once the public campaign for his economic program was actualized, Reagan intensified his rhetorical war on communism. On December 13, Reagan staged a formal press conference in the Oval Office to inform his American audience of the struggle for freedom in Poland on behalf of the courageous Solidarity Movement. In a diary entry on December 21, 1981, Reagan reflected on his European strategy: “I took a stand that this may be the last chance in our lifetime to see a change in the Soviet Empire’s colonial policy re Eastern Europe.”<sup>447</sup> The next day he proclaimed: “We can’t let this revolution against Communism fail without our offering a hand.”<sup>448</sup> On March 10, 1982 Reagan informed his audience of the “unsung heroes” of the Afghan people, combating communist carpet bombing and biological weapons. During Reagan’s diplomatic European tour in June he spoke in front of British Parliament, encouraging the members that while the West must be “cautious in forcing the pace of change, we must not be hesitant to declare our ultimate objectives and to take concrete actions to move

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<sup>444</sup> Darman, 122.

<sup>445</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>446</sup> Gates, 195.

<sup>447</sup> Douglas Brinkley (Editor), *The Reagan Diaries*, 57.

<sup>448</sup> Ibid., 58.

towards them.” Within two weeks he spoke before the UN General Assembly, informing his audience of the abuses and pervasiveness of Communist atrocities, and reminding them of the abuses of the détente process. However, by November 22, Reagan proposed a revisitation to the détente process with the “zero option.”

The defeat of Reagan’s legislation for the development of his mobile MX missile by Congress, 285 to 176, two weeks later on December 7 appears to have provided the impetus for SDI. Elizabeth Drew identified the specific institutional impetus for the SDI speech in her portrait of the 1984 presidential election: “It was to influence the [Senate Budget] committee that the President gave what became the “Star Wars” speech; the theory was that over the recess members of Congress would be importuned by their constituents to support the President.”<sup>449</sup> After procuring agreement among his council for SDI during a February 11, 1983 defense meeting, Reagan bypassed legislative procedures and requested SDI to be included in his next speech, without advanced notification of the Pentagon. While the historiography contends that Reagan came up with the idea he saw in a 1947 war movie as an abstract means of leverage, Reagan’s unsubstantiated paranoia at that point was recorded in his diary on June 28, 1982: “No question that Soviets have moved to a military priority in space. We must not be left behind.”<sup>450</sup> On March 23, 1983, Reagan formally addressed his audience to inform them of communist subversion in Central America and the Caribbean Basin, with extremely suspicious plans in Grenada. He finished his formal address to the nation on defense and national security by introducing the abstract possibility for the technological interception of nuclear weapons. With SDI, or what came to be identified simply as “Star Wars”, named after the popular movie trilogy, the strategic nucleus of the Reagan Revolution- of life imitating art, of Reagan’s television image and rhetoric producing substantive content and policy- was realized.

In Elizabeth Drew’s *Campaign Journal: The Political Events of 1983-1984* (1985), the media realities of American politics forecasted “[t]he left-right difference will be less important than the

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<sup>449</sup> Elizabeth Drew, *Campaign Journal: The Political Events of 1983-1984* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1985), 53-54.

<sup>450</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

forward-backward difference.”<sup>451</sup> Drew’s conversation with Carter’s pollster, Patrick Caddell, months after Reagan’s SDI speech revealed “the ever-increasing emphasis in our political system on style, verve, audacity; we are developing a political system in which substance means very little, he said. We don’t debate anymore – we react.”<sup>452</sup> Based on the unprecedented media coverage of the election and the anticipated fact by March 17, 1983 that “the rationales and the self-portraits will probably have more to do with style than with substance,”<sup>453</sup> the Republican reaction to Democratic criticism as unpatriotic guided public discourse. Wilentz identified the rhetorical power of Cold War Manichaeism reminiscent of the 1968 presidential election in a 1984 Republican campaign memo: “Paint Reagan as the personification of all that is right with or heroized by America. Leave Mondale in a position where an attack on Reagan is tantamount to an attack on America’s idealized image of itself.”<sup>454</sup> Accordingly, President Reagan’s reelection solidified this image in modern American political discourse.

Professors Rowland Evans and Robert Novak identified that *The Reagan Revolution* (1981) was predicated upon ideological “change”<sup>455</sup>, or “radical change.”<sup>456</sup> This conservative ideological agenda was comprised of two fundamental precepts: deregulation and military modernization. The main precept of the Reagan Revolution was that the United States stopped competing in the arms race and fell behind the Soviets, losing their “position of strength.” Reagan believed the Soviet’s rearmament program during the Carter years was because he was too soft on communism, not because Carter’s enforcement of human rights was provocative. The authors contended that Reagan “incorrectly” thought Nixon believed “that the American people were psychically and economically unable to bear the burden of outright competition with Moscow.” Evans and Novak asserted that the Reagan Revolution materialized because “The nation’s ability to compete with Moscow, therefore, was not yet measured.”<sup>457</sup> The failed assassination attempt on Reagan apparently dispelled the rumors of a figurehead presidency, causing Evans and Novak to

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<sup>451</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid., 139-140.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>454</sup> Wilentz, 173, 479n.

<sup>455</sup> Evans & Novak, 14.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid., 241.

<sup>457</sup> Ibid., 160.

determine that the “grisly events of March 30, 1981, bestow[ed] upon the former Hollywood actor a mythic quality that, whatever the future, he would never lose.”<sup>458</sup> The assassination attempt reinforced the authenticity of his projected image of strength.

In his 1996 memoir, Darman intimated that the event was merely an exercised opportunity. After the gunmen fired, Jerry Parr, the President’s lead Secret Service agent, pushed Reagan to the floor of the presidential limo. At 2:30, the president and Parr determined inside the limo that the blood coming from the President’s mouth was the result of a broken rib caused by Parr’s shove: “That was the President’s self-diagnosis as he started to walk into the hospital. Then his knees buckled as he gasped for air.”<sup>459</sup> Within ten minutes, Donald Regan’s security detail contacted the President’s Secret Service detail, who asserted that Reagan was not hit. Deaver then had his personal aide contact Secret Service, who confirmed the previous assessment that the problem was the President’s chest because he was having difficulty breathing. By 3:00, the Secret Service “confirmed” Deaver’s report: “The president had been hit. His condition was serious, but stable.”<sup>460</sup> While substantiating Reagan’s confusion in the limo, and his conscious attempt to appear strong in the eyes of the public before collapsing inside the hospital doors, Gergen recounted the event semantically different than Darman:

For hours, we labored inside the White House under the illusion that the President himself had not been gravely wounded. Only later, did we begin to piece together the story of what truly happened- and realize that the shooting transformed his presidency.<sup>461</sup>

In *A Different Drummer* (2001), Deaver recalled,

Thankfully, the agents were there to catch him and help him to a private room. I have always been grateful that the agents let Reagan walk in on his own. No one, not even a would-be assassin, was going to bring Ronald Reagan down.<sup>462</sup>

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<sup>458</sup> Ibid., 240.

<sup>459</sup> Darman, 48.

<sup>460</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>461</sup> Gergen, 175.

<sup>462</sup> Michael K. Deaver, *A Different Drummer*, 135.

President Reagan indirectly revealed in his diaries the fact that he observed the first polling numbers during his first Cabinet meeting since the shooting on Friday, April 24.<sup>463</sup> By the end of the Reagan presidency, White reiterated the scholarly consensus that the Reagan Revolution was more than just the cult of personality, more than an “ephemeral” basis of personal popularity. White argued that Reaganism represented an ideological revolution, with Reagan reading the zeitgeist of the stagflation of the 1970s similar to how FDR read the zeitgeist of the Great Depression: by articulating a genuine set of values that were congruent with the circumstances.<sup>464</sup> White argued that “the American polity is not a structure of government, but a contract between the government and its people whose clauses contain shared values.”<sup>465</sup> Since Reagan “understood that voters respond to symbols and phrases that evoke commonly held values”<sup>466</sup>, he presented himself as the leading spokesman for this political strategy due to his “ability to conjure for a willing, and eager, audience visions of values that have roots in our collective subconscious: family, work, neighborhood, peace, and freedom.”<sup>467</sup>

White intimated the Republican ideology of Cold War Manichaeism in his observation of the natural division of the politics of shared values into “one of us” and “one of them.”<sup>468</sup> The irreconcilable nature between the Democrat Party and the Republican Party was deduced as originating from America’s inaugural dialectic between Hamiltonian nationalism, comprising of liberty coupled with authority, and Jeffersonian democracy, liberty paired with local civic responsibility.<sup>469</sup> White observed, “As time passed Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan appeared to be “bookend presidents”: one expanded and the other confined the limits of the federal government.”<sup>470</sup> America’s visible preference for a Republican presidency and Democratic control of Congress was indicative of how “Voters were still trying to graft

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<sup>463</sup> Douglas Brinkley (Editor), *The Reagan Diaries*, 15.

<sup>464</sup> White, 78.

<sup>465</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>469</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>470</sup> *Ibid.*, 132-33.

Hamiltonian Nationalism onto Jeffersonian Democracy.”<sup>471</sup> This basis of grafting, however, is premised upon the perceived necessity for a conservative presidential image in the context of Cold War Manichaeism, with liberal democratic control of Congress to act as a check on power. The New Deal coalition intensified partisan politics by forcing politicians to choose between business and the people, delineating the contemporary connotations of the Republican Party with business and the Democratic Party with the people. LBJ had introduced a “new American consensus” and the “politics of consensus” to American society through the invocation of Jeffersonian democracy and the “common man.”<sup>472</sup> Following the Republican mandate and values imbibed in the 1980 presidential election, American political culture reconceptualized JFK’s inaugural address: “the Roosevelt version of American federalism was itself reversed.”<sup>473</sup> The Democrats lost again by the end of the decade because “Dukakis refused to play the role of chief warrior by arming himself with the accoutrements of Hamiltonian Nationalism or Jeffersonian Democracy.”<sup>474</sup>

White contended that the Democratic agenda in 1987 - comprised of the “pursuit of liberal ends by conservative means”<sup>475</sup> - represented the predominance of ideology; however, these conservative means were necessarily transmitted through a conservative presidential image. The necessary instrumentality of the cult of personality as a means to implement conservative ends reflects the paramount importance of Reagan’s television image. White acknowledged Reagan’s emulation of FDR’s “bully-pulpit” to convince the Congress and American people of his agenda, but he failed to sufficiently recognize that the “bully-pulpit” is founded upon the image of the president; this is why Gergen perceived the “bully-pulpit” to be weak by 1980, because Congressional measures to restrain and limit presidential power reduced the efficacy of the presidential image in the television age.

White argued that the ideological foundations- if not the political strategy- of Reaganism subverted Reagan’s cult of personality: “It was no Kennedy-Nixon race for best manager, but a struggle

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<sup>471</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>472</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>473</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>475</sup> Ibid., 136.

between two value systems and two different philosophies of governance.”<sup>476</sup> While Reagan did unquestionably revolutionize the presidency by culturally solidifying the separation of the image of the president from the institution of the presidency, this postmodern priority for the self-identification of citizens with a “citizen-politician” domesticated the Nixonian strategy of triangulation in foreign policy within American political discourse. After Reagan, every president has to appear as a “citizen-politician” by projecting an image congruent with shared values. White inferred that the projection of shared values takes precedence over the candidate’s political image, but a candidate’s personification of these shared values is inseparable from him or herself; similar to the medium of television, a candidate must embody or emulate what he or she projects. Reagan’s public image was the personification of his ideology: civic military nationalism. Reagan institutionalized the “New Politics of Old Values” by believing in his product and consequently personifying the embodiment of that product. Due to the medium of television, the image always outweighs the content, or substance. This is why Mondale’s choice of Geraldine Ferraro “to add substance to the Mondale values strategy”<sup>477</sup> was inconsequential. Reagan’s personification of paternal civic pride overpowered any substantive alternative.

While Nixon was a centrist to rationally avoid alienating the dissolving New Deal coalition and the shifting socio-political demographic, balancing the interests of the Sunbelt with the public’s aversion to the radical form of New Right populism, Reagan fomented a conservative revolution in a different context, enabling him to appear unapologetically ideological in his rhetoric and action. The disjuncture between sight and sound is what enabled Reagan to continuously assert that the two lines, representing the deficit and inflation, would eventually meet. The same verisimilitude - a willing suspension of disbelief - that the audience applied to Reagan’s movies was applied to his television appearances as the President of the United States. White acknowledged the power of television in the American discourse of military strength by recognizing the political effect of Reagan’s public image, but he did not analyze the effect of television on the American political system. White stopped short with his insinuation of the

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<sup>476</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>477</sup> Ibid., 64.



essence of Reaganism: “It is almost as if television provided the Great Communicator with the technology that gave coherence to his governing strategy of individual empowerment.”<sup>478</sup> The necessity of this television image was acknowledged by Mondale following his 1984 loss with the recognition of his “inability to master the art of television.”<sup>479</sup> Gergen asserted that Mondale’s claim was “an exaggeration but not without point.”<sup>480</sup> As a fundamental precept to the New Deal coalition, “The Democrats sought to sew more patches onto the American quilt.”<sup>481</sup> By 1984, the New Deal precept was reconceptualized in the context of the Reagan Revolution: “Mondale had a different conception of his audience, viewing it more like a quilt in need of mending.”<sup>482</sup> Hence, Ronald Reagan changed American political discourse directly through his public image.

In Darman’s 1996 memoir, *Who’s in Control: Polar Politics and the Sensible Center*, Darman contended that Clinton not only appropriated Reagan’s techniques but also “the substance of what he had to say.”<sup>483</sup> However, at the same time, Darman observed the disposal of substance to the metaphorical ash heap of history with the advent of Reaganism: “I was forced to learn that excessive attention to substance could be seen as actively harmful. Symbolic communication, demeanor, and one-liners were evidently more important.”<sup>484</sup> Although Reagan’s public relations philosophers recognized the supremacy of style over substance and image over issues, Darman and Gergen both interpreted Clinton’s declaration at the beginning of the 1996 presidential election year, that “The era of big government is over”, as Clinton’s substantive appropriation of a public concern since the Kennedy era and the consolidation of a new political regime rather than a means to co-opt a potential semantic strategy of the Republican Party.<sup>485</sup>

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<sup>478</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>479</sup> Ibid.

<sup>480</sup> Gergen, 215.

<sup>481</sup> White, 65.

<sup>482</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>483</sup> Darman, 13.

<sup>484</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>485</sup> Darman, 13-14; Gergen, 157.

Darman acknowledged that “in practice, the “Reagan Revolution” had been more a matter of rhetoric than reality”<sup>486</sup>, crediting the Reagan strategists with formulating a political agenda in congruence with the mainstream. Due to the fact that Reagan “understood well that pragmatic compromise was necessary in order to govern”<sup>487</sup>, Reaganism constituted a “restoration” more than a revolution because Reagan’s achievements were “largely consistent with the objectives of the American mainstream.”<sup>488</sup> Darman asserted that, in spite of the fact that the actual mandate was “highly abstract”, the “Reagan team artfully used the concept of a “mandate”, and supported it with a well-conceived legislative strategy and a disciplined approach to public relations.”<sup>489</sup> Although Darman acknowledged that Reagan’s supporters perceived the phrase “Reagan Revolution” to be “largely sloganeering or media hype”<sup>490</sup>, Reagan was reading the American zeitgeist according to the images that the public demanded: Reagan’s image-managers were simply supplying Reagan’s image with the accoutrements of public demand.

By 1996, Darman claimed the “choice” for the American people was between governing styles, similar to the 1960 election: “whether, on the one hand, to tolerate a continuation of polarized politics; or, on the other, to return a degree of power and legitimacy to the sensible center.”<sup>491</sup> Wilentz argued that Clinton’s reelection vindicated what liberal Democrat Arthur Schlesinger Jr. identified following Truman’s election victory as *The Vital Center* (1949); however, following Clinton’s reelection, Wilentz asserted that Schlesinger “now wondered whether Clinton knew the difference between creative moderation and the convenient middle of the road –between what he called the “vital center” and the “dead center.”<sup>492</sup> The difficulty with Darman’s analysis of the inheritance of Reagan’s political discourse and imagery is that the basis of socio-political mobilization in the United States is premised upon combating the reality of “identity politics” with a candidate’s projected centrist image on television; the balancing act - or superimposition - of cultural images appears to explain why a candidate changes his or

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<sup>486</sup> Darman, 10.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid.

<sup>488</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>489</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>490</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>491</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>492</sup> Wilentz, 370.

her position depending on their audience. The postmodern presidency appears to be mired in Evans and Novak's inaugural observation that Ronald Reagan represents the mirror image of Richard Nixon. While Nixon first instrumentalized television during the 1968 presidential election, Reagan "wholeheartedly and certainly not self-consciously"<sup>493</sup> institutionalized Nixon's McLuhan culture by implementing his ideological agenda solely through the marketing of his television image. However, both images rested on paternalism (conservatism).

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<sup>493</sup> Pemberton, 5.

## CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

President Nixon inaugurated the modern imperial presidency by imposing a hegemonic framework for news management that enabled him to polarize political discourse within Cold War Manichaeism. President George W. Bush inaugurated the postmodern imperial presidency within modern American culture by using Nixon's cultural image to illustrate the self-perceived providence of the Republican cause within the history of American exceptionalism. While the ideological purity of Goldwater conservatism during the 1964 presidential election required the image of moderate paternalism (conservatism) to symbolize change during the 1968 presidential election, the neoconservatism of the Bush II presidency required the image of moderate liberalism to symbolize change during the 2008 presidential election. The Obama campaign and presidency actualized America's faith in itself and the majority's hope for the future through the visible personification of racial change and the rhetoric of New Left rationalism to expand political discourse as representative of a "new politics", inaugurating the instrumentalization of the medium of the Internet. Following the election, President Obama created a website for the White House to keep the public informed and involved- and to consolidate the liberal Democratic electorate ([www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)). The unprecedented proliferation of the liberal Democratic message was also supplemented with the inaugural broadcast of political campaign commercials on MTV, announced on July 30 2008, as a public campaign entitled "Choose or Lose" to attract the "new generation" of youth voters who were also war veterans. The principal medium for the dissemination of Obama's liberal Democratic message was *YouTube.com*, activated on February 15, 2005. Following the election, the institutionalization of *YouTube.com* as a symbol of liberal Democratic transparency was injected into American political discourse on May 25, 2009 when CNN informed the American public during *The Situation Room* that America's enemy, the polar opposite ideology of the United States, the Iranian government, was blocking access to *YouTube.com* prior to Iran's national election on June 12. The externalized demonstration of American foreign policy's neorealist hegemony over international political discourse was illustrated in Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's explicit appropriation of Obama's populist liberal democratic message ("Yes We Can") while he blocked access to Obama's liberal means

of dissemination, *YouTube.com*. In terms of public visibility, President Ahmadinejad won reelection by appropriating the public image and means of American neorealist hegemony to visibly project an image congruent with the majority of Iranian society, the younger generation: two-thirds of the 39 million Iranian population are younger than thirty-three.

While the Clinton era witnessed the domestication of Nixon's foreign policy strategy of triangulation within the framework of Reagan's postmodern presidency, the inauguration of the postmodern imperial presidency during the George W. Bush era caused the internationalization of Nixon's hegemonic framework for the modern American kulturkampf. While protesters of President Ahmadinejad and the national Iranian election are universally vindicated as a democratic movement in the United States media, analogous liberal and New Left protests during the Bush II presidency and Nixon presidency were politicized as anti-patriotic and depicted as an enemy of the national democratic interest.

The younger New Left generation of the late 1960s was led by various organizations of radical protesters, primarily the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam (MOBE), led by student radicals Tom Hayden and Rennie Davis of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS); and the Yippies, led by Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, organized as a drug-induced Festival of Life to "dramatize a more fundamental internal conflict: the confrontation of a liberated, authentic culture with the phony, straitlaced, inhibited, greedy one that had brought on the war."<sup>494</sup> The New Left's multi-faceted "acts of guerilla theater,"<sup>495</sup> as Schulman observed was exhibited during the 1968 Democratic National Convention, represents the primary basis of progressing modern American political discourse due to the cultural identification of partisan viewpoints within the theatre of American political discourse rather than the substance of the "other" viewpoint. Since the final encroachment of entertainment on American political discourse during the Reagan era, the media realities in the political "age of Reagan" require what Elizabeth Drew identified during the 1980 presidential election as a "theatrical coup" to effect public discourse; however, that is not to say that "acts of guerilla theatre" are owned solely by

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<sup>494</sup> Bruce J. Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2002), 12.

<sup>495</sup> *Ibid.*

contemporary New Left radicals and rationalists. At the end of the George W. Bush era, Wilentz documented the Republican Party's intervention during the recount of the disputed ballots in Florida at the beginning of the era, comprising a group of fifty congressional Washington staffers financed by Senator Trent Lott and House majority whip Tom Delay with plane tickets and expense funds to stage a public protest to prevent the recount, assaulting members of the canvass board and blocking Democratic Party chairman Joe Geller from entering the courthouse.<sup>496</sup>

This tactic has become the principal means of dissemination for modern social movements (special interest groups) and television personalities to accumulate public support due to the fact that in the "age of Reagan" television and talk radio provide the primary mediums for perpetuating and consolidating political constituencies.

The interjection of New Left rationalism into American political discourse by the end of the George W. Bush era will be illustrated by documenting the increasing popularity of New Left constructivist comedians Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert during the Bush II presidency as the primary cultural source for the younger generation's news coverage due to the decreasing trust in network news coverage. The increased influence of New Left constructivism on public discourse will be illustrated within the first decade of the New American Century by providing a dialogue for the interpenetration of the political institutions of conservative political media, such as *CNN* and *Fox News*, liberal political media, such as *MSNBC*, and New Left constructivist media, such as Comedy Central's *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* and *The Colbert Report*. The interpenetration of opposites - between conservative political culture and liberal popular culture - was reflected in the theatrical interactions between liberal and conservative commentators and pundits during the Bush II presidency. New Left comedians culturally infiltrated public discourse during the Bush II presidency by identifying the media realities and nature of modern American culture, with Stephen Colbert assuming the role Bob Hope performed during the Nixon presidency in the early stages of the Obama presidency as the televised host of the USO Tour.

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<sup>496</sup> Wilentz, 424.

While Jon Stewart is a New Left constructivist commentator of the theatre of American political and popular culture, Stephen Colbert ironically emulates a Republican commentator in the American political theatre: “Colbert embodies the kind of bad reasoning that Stewart merely exposes.”<sup>497</sup> The dramatic increase in influence of *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* in liberal popular culture was reflected in Pew research polls in 2004, which indicated that 21 percent of 18-29 olds identified *The Daily Show* and *Saturday Night Live* as their predominant source for presidential campaign news (an increase from 9 percent in 2000), while the same polls indicated that respondents were less likely to get their news from network news (a decrease from 39 percent in 2000 to 23 percent in 2004).<sup>498</sup> Following Colbert’s cult popularity on *The Daily Show*, *The Colbert Report* debuted on *Comedy Central* on October 17, 2005. Colbert introduced the term “truthiness” into American popular culture to prescribe a cultural identification for the nature of *Nixonland*: a disingenuous statement of reality- and therefore reconstruction of reality- by eclipsing the truth with half-truths, which do not semantically represent false truths. The visible and tangible penetration by liberal popular culture into conservative political discourse was exemplified by New Left comedian Stephen Colbert’s 2008 presidential campaign.

While the cultural formation of CNN as an institution of conservative political culture was imbibed in the formation of the conservative apotheosis during the 1980s, Jon Stewart’s cultural personification of New Left rationalism, or liberal constructivism, was imbibed in opposition to the creation of *Fox News* by former Nixon image-manager and political advisor to Reagan and Bush, Roger Ailes, during liberal conservatism’s era of globalization. Similar to the increased cult popularity of talk radio host Rush Limbaugh during the 1990s, the “underdogs”, Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert increased in cult popularity during the neoconservative radicalization of the conservative apotheosis. Just as the liberal Democratic Party was ostracized from political discourse due to the domestic imposition of New Left rationalism during the 1960s, the neoconservative Republican Party was ostracized from political discourse for the international imposition of American neoconservatism. Gitlin’s observation of the

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<sup>497</sup> Jason Holt (Ed.), *The Daily Show and Philosophy: Moments of Zen in the Art of Fake News* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2007), 131.

<sup>498</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

orienting framework for American political discourse (liberal rhetoric vs. conservative action) was observed during the Bush II presidency in that during Bush's reelection campaign of 2004, premised upon conservative action committee attack ads, Stewart and Colbert shared the Peabody Award for journalism for *The Daily Show's* coverage, entitled *Indecision 2004*. CNN won the Peabody Award for their network coverage of the 2008 American presidential election in which Senator Obama's liberal Democratic New Left rhetoric deflected the conservative action committees' hegemony over American political discourse.

The centrality of the issues of a credibility gap and morality gap within the inaugural neoconservative era of the New American Century has visibly reinvigorated the foundational political culture and discourse of the 1960s. By 2004, the American presidential election drew explicit parallels between the political culture and discourse of the Vietnam War through Senator John Kerry's synthesizing personification of both anti-patriotism and the failure of public dissent. The Bush campaign delegitimized Kerry with attack ads to counteract any positive image he managed to present to the public. The liberal Democratic leverage of Kerry's military service was deflected by diminishing his Purple Heart. The Republican convention handed out bandaids with tiny purple hearts painted in the center for men to wear on their cheeks. The standard script wasn't hard to remember: "I woke up this morning and shaved. And I nicked myself a little. So I drew up a certificate and I awarded myself this Purple Heart cuz of what I went through." On top of that, the Republican Party handed out flip-flops for supporters to hold up (on camera) during the convention to visualize Senator Kerry's political expediency and presumed indecisiveness. Elizabeth Drew identified the origins for this "flip-flopper" strategy by the Carter campaign against Reagan in her portrait of the 1980 presidential election, identifying a revealing comment by a Carter campaign official, claiming "The 'flip-flop' approach is to get us away from the 'mean streak.'"<sup>499</sup>

Stewart appeared on CNN's *Crossfire* with Democrat Paul Begala and Republican Tucker Carlson on October 15, 2004, rejecting the framework of the "culture wars" by asserting that the hosts were "partisan hacks" of a "bad show", who were "hurting America" because they were part of

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<sup>499</sup> Elizabeth Drew, *Portrait of an Election: The 1980 Presidential Campaign*, 306.



politicians' strategy. Tucker Carlson attempted to compare the sophistication of questions between his show and *The Daily Show*, which Stewart deflected by pointing out the absurdity of comparing the integrity and contribution to the public discourse of *Crossfire* to a comedy show. Stewart acknowledged that "this is theatre", identifying Tucker's television image wearing a bowtie as an example of the show's artificial dishonesty and failure in contributing to public discourse. When asked by Begala which candidate provided Stewart with more material, Stewart corrected him, "We look at the absurdity of the system, which provides us with the most of our material. And that is provided by the theatre of it all, which, by the way, thank you both." By the end of the interview Stewart attempted to reiterate his point by identifying where the viewer was escorted following the debate, "Spin Alley": "Don't you think that people watching from home that that's kind of a drag. That you're literally walking to a place called deception lane. Don't you see that that's what I'm trying to talk to you about." Stewart concluded by observing the psyche of the postwar conservative generation: "What I believe is that they're not making honest arguments. In their minds, the ends justify the means." Gerald J. Erion observed that the cancellation of CNN's *Crossfire* following the election was identified by CNN President Jonathan Klein in the January 6, 2005 edition of the *Washington Post* as being directly attributable to Stewart's grievance: "I think [Stewart] made a good point about the noise level of these types of shows, which does nothing to illuminate the issues of the day."<sup>500</sup>

Stewart defended his rational basis of argumentation during the *Crossfire* debate while he appeared on CNN's *Larry King Live* on December 8, 2004 to promote the release of his attempted "counter-intuitive polemic" by *The Daily Show* entitled *America: A Study of Democracy Inaction*. In response to King's question of whether Stewart's sense of celebrity provoked his outburst, Stewart sarcastically responded, "I think the issues that finally were brought up finally started a discussion in the media if I'm too big for my britches." Stewart asserted that the culture wars are "real" but the politicization of cultural issues is "for show." Stewart identified Bush's historicizing of Kerry's image within the socio-political dialectic of the 1960s: "I really think if Kerry had just focused more he could

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<sup>500</sup> Holt, 12-13.

have defeated Nixon and had our troops out of Vietnam by '74." During the interview, Stewart observed the constraints of public discourse within the reality of the postmodern presidency:

I think that ultimately there is an authenticity problem that George Bush probably has conquered. There is a strange thing in our electoral process where candidates when they run for office decide that they have to be regular dudes. That they have to be us. There's this sort of general "I'm just like you, I'm a regular Joe." Really? You watch ten hours of TV a day? Cuz' I would think that you would want to work. I don't understand why they don't come out and say "I'm better than you, that's why I want to be president." Cuz' if you're just like me than I why am I voting for you? I should be president. It's this weird sense of "I'm gonna put on a red and black check jacket and go down to a factory and have a coffee and a donut with a joe and show him that I'm an idiot." There was an attempt on his part to dumb himself down which was disingenuous it seemed. Other than that he did get five million more votes than Gore got. I think Bush just beat him.

Prior to the 2006 midterm-elections in which the Democratic Party reclaimed majorities in the House and Senate, the Bush II administration had Stephen Colbert deliver the central monologue during the White House Correspondents Dinner (Roast). Colbert, in character, acknowledged his privilege to celebrate the Bush II presidency based on the fact that he was the same as President Bush:

We're not so different, he and I. We get it. Guys like us we're not some brainiacs on the nerd patrol. We're not members of the factinista. We go straight from the gut. Right sir? That's where the truth lies. Right down here, in the gut. Did you know that you have more nerve endings in your gut than you have in your head? Now I know some of you are gonna say, "I did look it up and that's not true." That's cuz' you looked it up in a book. Next time look it up in your gut. I did. My gut tells me that's how our nervous system works. Every night on my show, *The Colbert Report*, I speak straight from the gut. I give people the truth, unfiltered by rational argument. I call it the "No Fact Zone." *Fox News* I want a copyright on that term. I'm a simple man with a simple mind. I hold a simple set of beliefs that I live by. Number One: I believe in America. I believe it exists.

During Colbert's routine, he emphasized the Bush II presidency's neoconservative divergence from populist communication:

I know there are some polls out there that say that this man has a thirty-two percent approval rating. But guys like us don't pay attention to the polls. We know that polls are just a collection of statistics which reflect what people are thinking in reality. And reality has a well-known liberal bias.

Colbert also identified his support for President Bush's encapsulation of a "citizen-politician" based on his identification as a "good joe":

I stand by this man. I stand by this man because he stands for things. Not only for things, he stands on things. Things like aircraft carriers, and rubble, and recently flooded city-squares. And that sends a strong message. That no matter whatever happens to America she will rebound with the most powerfully staged photo-ops in the world.

Colbert emphasized President Bush's ideological agenda through the administration's primary cultural medium of *Fox News*: "Events can change, this man's beliefs never will. And excited as I am to be here with the president, I am appalled to be surrounded by the liberal media which is destroying America, with the exception of *Fox News*. *Fox News* gives you both sides of each story. The President's side, and the Vice-President's side. But the rest of you what are you thinking?"

The partisan basis of American political theatre was illustrated by Colbert in relation to the media's enhancement of the American celebration. Colbert asserted that the press should stop revealing "depressing" news: "Write that novel that you've been kicking around in your head. You know, the one about the intrepid Washington reporter with the courage to stand up against the administration. You know, fiction." When asked by MSNBC anchor Tim Russert what Colbert meant by the comment, Colbert responded,

I just have so much respect for the way the Press supported the goals of the Administration for the first four years. And I was just so distressed that at any point they started standing up to the Administration and asking questions. I just couldn't understand why they couldn't go back to the good old days of 2001 to mid-2004.<sup>501</sup>

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<sup>501</sup> MSNBC *Meet the Press*, hosted by Tim Russert, October 21, 2007.

Colbert appeared on MSNBC's *Meet the Press* during the Fall of 2007 to promote his book, *I am America (And So Can You)*, and publicly announce that he was running based on generalities: "I think our country is facing unprecedented challenges in the future. And I think that the junctures that we face are both critical and unforeseen, and the real challenge is how we will respond to these junctures, be they unprecedented or unforeseen, or God help us, critical." Colbert acknowledged the fact that people were questioning if his campaign was "real" but he dissuaded the belief that it was a "dream", informing the viewer, "You're not gonna wake up from this." Russert asked whether "authenticity" was important to him. Colbert responded, "You gotta convey to them that you mean what you say, and that you have put some thought into what you do."

At the beginning of the interview, Russert attempted to emphasize the media realities behind Colbert's public image by inquiring about the pronunciation of Colbert's surname - similar to *Fox News* Bill O'Reilly's tactic to reveal Colbert's inauthentic French pronunciation of his surname. Colbert claimed he was running only in the State of South Carolina to bring the focus back onto South Carolina and away from Florida, Ohio, and New Hampshire. Russert then failed to demonstrate Colbert's lack of knowledge of his home state during his common knowledge quiz. Russert referred his audience's attention to Colbert's past pictures as a bearded, long-haired counterculture persona, described by friend Chip Hill in *Esquire* magazine as having once communicated his desire to study mass-psychology and start a cult. Colbert responded, "I did want to be a cult leader but I find that being a TV pundit is much more powerful and you can be less reliable." Colbert asserted that he would like to lose twice: once as a Republican, and once as a Democrat. Russert then informed his audience of Colbert's fondness of Richard Nixon, which Colbert asserted was because "Nixon was the first president I was conscious of."

The centrality of the historicized issue of Vietnam in the discourse of the 2004 Presidential election visibly structured the rhetoric and imagery of the 2008 presidential election. While Richard

Nixon co-opted the Civil Rights Movement<sup>502</sup>, Barack Obama fomented a cult of personality populist movement which symbolized the closure of the Civil Rights Movement. Although the generational political discourse of the 1960s was sufficient to consolidate the Republican Party's 50 million voter base, Obama reinvigorated liberal populism through his cult of personality to interject New Left rationalism into political discourse. American liberal popular culture subordinated conservative political culture by relegating nationalism to rationalism, despite the Republican attempt to instrumentalize the Georgian border dispute through the discourse of Cold War Manicheism.

On the morning of August 8, CNN reported that the Russia military invaded Georgia in South Ossetia following the opening ceremonies of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. The Russian military was dispatched to key geopolitical strategic areas and bombed a southeastern Georgian military base near the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the pipeline itself. Russian soldiers also eventually took up post at Poti, the main seaport. On August 12, McCain cast himself as a Nixonian "Rocky" by entering a rally in his tour bus to the "Rocky" theme song, asserting during his speech that he relished the opportunity of playing the role of the "underdog", while emphatically warning Russia against attempting past ambitions. McCain informed his audience that Georgia was one of the first converts to Christianity, depicting the barbaric unilateralism of Russia and the patriotism of Georgia as the fight for western democracy: "Today we are all Georgians."<sup>503</sup> On the same day, the McCain campaign released a television commercial called "fan club", depicting Senator Obama strictly as being an attractive (liberal) celebrity, who is "young" and "not ready to lead", rather than a (conservative) politician.

The Russian government staged a formal public withdrawal of the majority of its military forces fourteen days after the initial invasion; twenty days after the invasion, on August 28, the final day of the DNC, Russian President Vladimir Putin made a public statement to the media, asserting that the U.S. government conducted their foreign diplomacy during the Georgian military conflict within the context of

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<sup>502</sup> Arguably a test case for later co-opting the accelerating European détente through an internationally imposed political discourse creating triangular diplomacy and Sino-American collusion against the evil Russian aggressor who couldn't be trusted- at least until it was necessary to the "national interest" of the United States.

<sup>503</sup> *YouTube.com*, "McCain: "Today We Are All Georgians"", posted on August 12, 2008.

the U.S. presidential election, and that he had evidence of U.S. personnel being on the ground during initial fighting between Russia and Georgia, which the Pentagon claimed was patently false.

The Obama presidency actualized America's faith in itself and the majority's hope for the future through the Obama Campaign's visible personification of change and the rhetoric of New Left rationalism to expand political discourse as representative of a "new politics." By June 2009, New Left comedians Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert became a central fixture of American political discourse due to their cult popularity, with *The Colbert Report's* USO Tour televised from Iraq, June 8-11. During the first show, Colbert's television character declared the United States' victory in the Iraq War within the cultural framework of Bush's declaration of "Mission Accomplished" in Iraq on May 1, 2003. On the first night, Colbert visually converted to the American Army Corps by having Obama appear on screen to order the commander who Colbert was interviewing to shave Colbert's head. On the final night, President George W. Bush appeared on the screen to wish his best to the troops while thanking them and applauding their patience, asserting that they we're gonna need it because he has "had to sit through Colbert's stuff before."

On June 8, *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* first illustrated the contrast between liberal political media and New Left constructivist media as well as the continued regulation of liberalism by conservative political culture. Stewart asserted, "Fox News uses insinuation. MSNBC uses misrepresentation. And CNN, desperation." Stewart opened the show by showing his audience how Joe Scarborough of MSNBC's *Morning Joe brewed by Starbucks* served him up "a helping of humble pie" that morning "over a pair of prominently displayed Starbucks drinks" in his response to Stewart's parody of the show's publicly announced sponsorship by Starbucks on June 3. Joe's claim that the show was being sarcastic and ironic through "shameless transparency" provoked Stewart's sarcastic revelation: "Sarcasm. I get it now. See at the time I thought your jokey manner was just the way you were sublimating your shame for your discomfort in your soul for extinguishing the last smoldering embers of any of your program's journalistic bonafides." Stewart pondered, "I wonder if Joe Scarborough's a real person or if he's playing a character too?"

While President Reagan intensified the messianic rhetoric of Cold War Manichaeism against the Soviet Union in order to implement his ideological agenda, President Obama has attempted to rebrand Cold War Manichaeism through the euphemistic restructuring of public rhetoric while subsequently expanding the federal communications and information infrastructure. On February 9, *Fox News* observed the Obama administration's conscious attempt to replace the conservative absolutist rhetoric of Cold War Manichaeism of the "War on Terror" with a "more hopeful message."<sup>504</sup> On May 29, CNN televised Obama's 11am press conference in which he identified the increased cyber threat of hackers for the public before announcing the formation of a digital infrastructure for Cyber Security. On June 22, following the televised accusations by the Iranian foreign minister of the American media's coordinated subversion of the Iranian government's communication apparatus through "cyber wars" (organized hacking and espionage), CNN released a public statement:

The accusations are completely false. CNN stands by its comprehensive coverage of the Iranian election and the protests that followed. CNN has been and will remain committed to continuing its efforts to bring news from Iran to the world in whatever way it can. The images and events coming in from Iran speak for themselves. CNN is beholden to no government in its reporting of international affairs.

President Obama injected political discourse with a proposal for détente with Iran - dialogically produced from Nixon's détente with the Soviet Union - based on equal superpower status in his speech directed to the Muslim world in Cairo, Egypt on June 4, immediately prior to the region's national elections. As part of the same strategy, CNN reported "U.S. Wrestlers in Iran" on March 11 (as opposed to Nixon's ping-pong players in China in 1969). In Obama's détente speech, the President contrasted American democracy and the universal need for transparent inclusive government with the violence of Hamas within his vision for leading America back to being a shining beacon on a hill.

CNN followed their panel discussion of Obama's speech in the early afternoon, discussing how "He was applauded and lauded but did Obama's speech reach the Muslim world?", with three polarizing

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<sup>504</sup> *YouTube.com*, "Obama drops the 'War on Terror' rhetoric", posted February 10, 2009.

stories before revisiting the news of the day: “Obama Speaks to the World.” The first story involved a doctor from Tampa, Florida, identified by CNN as “selling hope for \$25,000” based on medical procedures, “not miracles.” CNN correspondent, Drew Griffin, asked the doctor: “Aren’t you just pedaling hope?” The next story was introduced by the female anchor through witty word play and the graphics at the bottom of the screen reading, “Bring your gun to church day”: “A Kentucky pastor wants you to go in peace with your piece.” The Louisville pastor, Ken Pagano, identified himself as a “conservative Protestant Evangelical”, asserting that a religious man does not have an obligation to be a pacifist based on his core belief of American history: “Without a deep-seated belief in God and firearms we wouldn’t be here.” The third story involved an immediate threat to the United States along its southern borders. CNN reported that the violence along the Mexican border, which has “killed 60 people so far”, has “spilled over the border.” The female anchor intimated a state-by-state domino effect in her questions to the correspondent in El Paso, Mexico. CNN returned to discussion of Obama’s speech in Cairo by going live to correspondent Atia Abawi in Afghanistan. Abawi asserted that Obama’s speech did not demonstrate a significant effect upon Afghanistan because the majority of Muslim people did not know about it and will not be informed of its message until the evening news or by some other media (like most Americans). But Abawi asserted that there was one undeniable reality in Afghanistan, “Afghan people are doing what they do best: surviving.” CNN’s message: Afghanistan is just like U.S.

CNN has attempted to dilute Obama’s political hegemony over the Internet by using the Internet, primarily the social networks of *Twitter.com* and *Facebook.com*, to attract and empower their audience. By reporting news based on Internet opinions in order to attract the younger generation audience, Stewart observed, “CNN has basically given up. They’ve actually put the power of the news in your hands.”<sup>505</sup> Rick Sanchez’s broadcasts over what Stewart asserted looked like “a nanny cam”<sup>506</sup> are meant to visually dissociate Obama’s hegemony over direct broadcasts to the public on the Internet.

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<sup>505</sup> Comedy Central’s *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, June 8, 2009.

<sup>506</sup> *Ibid.*



The Obama administration has attempted to counteract the expansive audience of the conservative political media of *Fox News* and CNN through liberal political media. On June 15, *ABC Nightly News* in conjunction with the Obama Administration publicly announced the White House was hosting a primetime television conversation on healthcare scheduled for June 24. The next day *Fox News* reported that the Obama Administration decided to continue the Bush II Administration's policy of not documenting visitors to the White House. The following day *CNN* produced a partisan debate during *Lou Dobbs Tonight* on June 17: "Obama & the Media", featuring a conservative columnist for the *Wall Street Journal*, William McGurn, currently a Vice-President of News Corporation and serving as the speechwriter to the CEO for Fox television, Rupert Murdoch, after serving as chief speechwriter for President Bush II from 2005 to 2008; his opponent was the liberal columnist for *salon.com* and *The New York Observer*, Joe Conason. Dobbs opened the segment with a poll, indicating "Obama's Press vs. Clinton and Bush the First 60 Days, Percentage of Positive Stories": Obama 42%, Bush 22%, Clinton 27%.<sup>507</sup>

Stewart illustrated the liberal political media's demonization of Rush Limbaugh within Cold War Manichaeism as an "increasingly dangerous" and "un-American" voice in accordance with James Carville's and Stanley Greenberg's Democracy Corps polling studies from October 2008, indicating that Limbaugh was only viewed as 11 percent positively among respondents under 40, receiving a lower positive rating than the radical Rev. Jeremiah Wright from the 2008 presidential election.<sup>508</sup> During MSNBC's "Psycho Talk" segment with Ed Schultz on May 12, a liberal personality, who Stewart observed looked similar to Limbaugh, accused Limbaugh's hate speech as tantamount to being an ally of Osama bin Ladin.<sup>509</sup>

Clinton Democratic strategists Paul Begala, James Carville, Stanley Greenberg, and White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel implemented this strategy of negative symbiosis following what Begala identified was the "tripwire" four days before Obama was sworn in when Limbaugh asserted, "I hope he

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<sup>507</sup> Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, April 28, 2009.

<sup>508</sup> <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0309/19596.html>.

<sup>509</sup> Comedy Central's *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, June 8, 2009.

fails.” On January 21, Limbaugh appeared on *Fox News’ Hannity’s Headline* where he clarified his radio comment the previous week: “If he turns out to be a Reagan, if he adds Reagan to his resume of FDR and Lincoln, and if he does cut some taxes, if he does not eliminate the Bush tax cuts, I would call that success. Than yes I would hope he succeeds if he becomes like Reagan. But if he becomes like FDR, if he does the New New Deal over, why would I want him to succeed?” Rahm Emanuel identified Limbaugh as “the voice and intellectual force behind the Republican Party” for journalist Bob Scheiffer during his appearance on CBS’s *Face the Nation* on March 1 - evident in Limbaugh’s role of delivering the keynote address during the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) on Saturday February 28, broadcasted on *Fox News* and *CSPAN*.

On the Friday night, thirteen year-old-turning-fourteen on Sunday - Jonathan Krohn, a former child actor and recent author of *Define Conservatism* - offered a rhetorical dichotomy between Republicans and Democrats premised upon “principle” rather than “policy” by arguing during his three minute speech that “Conservatism is not an ideology of feelings or romanticism as some people like to say, but it’s an ideology of protecting the people and the people’s rights.” The next night Limbaugh argued that Americans are created equal but are fundamentally different. Limbaugh argued that while Reagan’s rhetoric of America being “a shining beacon on a hill” raised America to its position as the first truly global superpower, Obama was “portraying America as a soup kitchen”, fomenting class conflict and tearing America down. That night, on CNN’s *DL Hughley Breaks the News*, Steele rejected Hughley’s assertion that Limbaugh was the “de facto leader of the Republican Party” but rather “an entertainer” with an “incendiary” talk show compared to himself as the de facto leader of the GOP. During the morning of Monday March 2, Krohn appeared on *Fox & Friends* and CNN’s *Live Most News Morning* where both programs identified him as the new political prodigy of the 1980’s archetype of Alex P. Keaton. Later that evening Steele offered an implicit public apology to Limbaugh during an interview with *politico.com*:

My intent was not to go after Rush. I have enormous respect for Rush Limbaugh. I was maybe a little bit inarticulate...There was no attempt on my part to

diminish his voice or his leadership. I went back at that tape and realized words that I said weren't what I was thinking. It was one of those things where I [sic] thinking I was saying one thing and it came out differently. What I was trying to say was a lot of people... want to make Rush the scapegoat, the bogeyman, and he's not.<sup>510</sup>

Two days later Steele appeared on *Fox News' Hannity's Headline*, identifying the media strategy of the liberal Democrats by showing the entirety of the clip from January 21 as the impetus for the Democratic cultural campaign against the Republican Party. On March 7 and 8, Jonathan Krohn appeared on *Fox News' Huckabee*, rejecting Obama's and the liberal media's strategy to label Limbaugh as the de facto leader of the Republican Party. On March 9, a Rasmussen Reports poll was released, indicating that 68 percent of Republicans identified that the Republican Party does not have a clear leader. During the Saturday night show, former conservative governor Mike Huckabee retrieved a picture of an embryonic birth, Alicia Lancaster of Seattle Washington, from his wallet (which he has carried for two years) to illustrate his point "that frozen embryos are not just blobs of tissue": "I carry this as a reminder that when we start experimenting with embryonic stem cells we are really talking about destroying a life in order to save it." During Huckabee's appearance on *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* on June 19 to debate the issue of abortion, Stewart pointed out that artificial insemination, such as Alicia's, would not be possible without stem cell research.

Stewart's critique of *Fox News* revealed the instrumentalization of Nixon's inaugural technique during the 1968 presidential election: a disingenuous statement of reality- and therefore reconstruction of reality- by eclipsing the truth with half-truths which do not semantically represent false truths. Stewart illustrated this tactic by showing how *Fox News'* Sean Hannity accused Obama's speech in Cairo of "giving 9/11 sympathizers a voice on the world stage" and then showing a clip of Obama's speech in which he said "I'm aware that there are still some who question or even justify the offense of 9/11." Stewart then showed the entire excerpt of the clip: "I'm aware that there are still some who question or even justify the offense of 9/11. But let us be clear. Al Qaeda killed nearly 3000 victims on that day. The

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<sup>510</sup> *YouTube.com*,

victims were innocent men, women, and children. These are not opinions to be debated. These are facts.” Stewart responded, “Oh that’s why. Cuz’ if you play the rest of the clip you see Obama was doing the opposite of that.” Stewart observed, “While Sean Hannity uses moral certainty to decide and then report, his cohorts are less straight forward”, as he demonstrated in clips where Fox personalities identified how Obama’s actions and rhetoric were “odd”, “interesting”, “fascinating”, and “curious”, from what Stewart asserted seemed to be out of “Roget’s Guide to Insinuation.”<sup>511</sup>

Stewart showed a clip of *Fox & Friends* host Gretchen Carlson complaining on June 1 about MTV’s coverage during the 2009 MTV Movie Awards the previous night in which comedian Sacha Baron Cohen’s new character Bruno, a gay German VJ, fell from the ceiling to reveal his uncovered buttocks directly in rapper Eminem’s face at 9:50pm. The next clip showed the anchor questioning if it was for ratings that shows “cross over the line” and “feel like they have to go to the nth degree.” Stewart then demonstrated the hypocrisy of the Fox personality by showing a clip of the same *Fox News* show’s coverage of a relay course identified as “Bikini Bowl” at 8:48 am on June 4 between host Brian Kilmy and members of the Lingerie Football league. During the segment, the Fox personality was tackled by two females in bikinis. Stewart observed, “I guess it’s ok since it’s a woman having a man’s ass shoved in her face. The way God intended it.” Stewart next showed a clip where Carlson ran onto the course, giving high-fives to each woman in a bikini and declaring “I think this is about the best thing I’ve seen on TV.” Stewart concluded the segment: “To borrow a phrase, I think it’s interesting.”

On July 20, 2009, liberal corporate media confronted New Left constructivist media when the liberal anchor (corporate spokesman) and managing editor for *NBC’s Nightly News*, Brian Williams, appeared on stage with New Left constructivist Jon Stewart on Comedy Central’s *The Daily Show*. During the *Back in Black* segment with New Left political comedian Lewis Black, the comedian analyzed the cultural fronts on the healthcare reform issue, showing a clip of Peggy Noonan on *MSNBC’s Morning Joe brewed by Starbucks* on July 17 in which she historically framed the issue as a strictly liberal partisan

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<sup>511</sup> Comedy Central’s *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, June 8, 2009.

issue: “When I was a kid growing up we never talked about healthcare. Why has America become obsessed with healthcare the past twenty years or so?”

Stewart opened the interview with Williams by asking him how a network seduces a subject so that individuals like the latest political adulterer, Republican Mark Sanford, could come on the program so that its flattering to their interests. Williams responded: “You’re watching it right now.” Stewart then pretended to be an attentive child with Williams to co-opt his patronizing description of the process of network news in terms of superficial jargon such as Williams’ revelation that the big interviews were “gets.” Williams asked Stewart: “What way do you wanna go tonight, Jon?” Stewart responded that Williams should feel compelled to defend the integrity of his industry from “parasites” such as himself. Williams identified that his network does not agree to “preconditions” under the recognition that “this is big boy TV.” As Williams pointed to the vacant backdrop behind Stewart, he asserted, “Our news room has people working in it.” Stewart responded: “And when those people are done finding out where Michael Jackson’s brain is what do they do?” Stewart boasted to thunderous applause: “This is big boy comedy.” Williams then attempted to deflect the subject by referencing the greater priority of Walter Cronkite’s death the previous week. Williams asserted that Cronkite was the reporter that he strove to become, belittling Stewart by claiming, “It was like Carrot Top for you.” Williams motioned to Stewart with his palm to bring it on as Stewart once again responded with disdain: “So how does it feel to fall so short?” Williams acknowledged aloud: “I think that ended up about even.”

Williams responded to Stewart’s question concerning Cronkite’s perception of recent network news by identifying that through his contact with Cronkite he was aware that Cronkite was “genuinely happy that nightly news protected the news but he was not particularly happy with the trend in the industry of the encroachment of entertainment.” Stewart extinguished the adversarial perception of their cultural confrontation by feeding Williams a genuine line with comedic possibilities: “So if I were Mark Sanford [the latest adultery scandal involving the Senator flying down to Argentina on Father’s Day weekend to meet his proclaimed soulmate], who would you rather be right now? The wife or the girlfriend?” Williams responded with a genuine entertainer’s line: “Oh, I don’t know, but I’m on a flight

south.” Stewart comradely slapped his hand across the desk: “Brian Williams once again. Comes into the ring.” What great entertainers.

It appears the politicization of history within the visible dialectic of the “culture wars” of the 1960s constrains modern American political discourse based on the public debate over the opposing perceptions of the event rather than the factual content or substantive character of the event. *Nixonland*: the nature of modern American culture based on the duality of American conservative political culture and liberal popular culture, which is academically premised upon the development of Nixon’s inaugural politicization of television as the means of campaigning and governance during the postwar “age of Nixon” into professor Sean Wilentz’s contemporary “age of Reagan.”

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