

Imagination Movers: The Construction of Conservative Counter-Narratives in Reaction to
Consensus Liberalism

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore what exactly bound post-Second World War American conservatives together. Since modern conservatism's recent birth in the United States in the last half century or more, many historians have claimed that both anti-communism and capitalism kept conservatives working in cooperation. My contention was that the intellectual founder of postwar conservatism, Russell Kirk, made imagination, and not anti-communism or capitalism, the thrust behind that movement in his seminal work *The Conservative Mind*.

In *The Conservative Mind*, published in 1953, Russell Kirk created a conservative genealogy that began with English parliamentarian Edmund Burke. Using Burke and his dislike for the modern revolutionary spirit, Kirk uncovered a supposedly conservative seed that began in late eighteenth-century England, and traced it through various interlocutors into the United States that culminated in the writings of American expatriate poet T.S. Eliot. What Kirk really did was to create a counter-narrative to the American liberal tradition that usually began with the French Revolution and revolutionary figures such as English-American revolutionary Thomas Paine.

One of my goals was to demystify the fusionist thesis, which states that conservatism is a monolithic entity of shared qualities. I demonstrated that major differences existed from conservatism's postwar origins in 1953. I do this by using the concept of textual communities. A textual community is a group of people led by a privileged interpreter—someone such as Russell Kirk—who translates a text, for example Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, for followers. What happens in a textual community is that the privileged interpreter explains to followers how to read a text and then forms boundaries around a particular rendering of a book. I argue that conservatism was full of these textual communities and privileged interpreters. Therefore, in consecutive chapters, I look at the careers of Russell Kirk, John Lukacs, Christopher Lasch, and Paul Gottfried to demonstrate how this concept fleshed out from 1953 and well into the first decade of the new millennium.

Dedication

For Mom, Ashley, Caroline, Ella Grace, and George

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Chapter 1: Introduction: The Complex World of Postwar Conservatism

Overview: George Nash Defines Conservatism

In 1976, historian George Nash published *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America since 1945* (CIM).¹ Nash's tome was the first attempt to explain the significance of conservatism in postwar America. CIM holds a special place among conservatives because it remains the only scholarly effort at synthesizing the entirety of conservative intellectualism in America.² Nash's opus was influential for two specific reasons. First, Nash was one of the few scholars who sympathized with the conservatives and was willing to write about them. Second, Nash painted a picture of conservatism as a monolithic entity. Nash offered a readable and clean narrative that made CIM accessible to many. Nash's study brought together various anti-liberal schools—groups of intellectuals who rejected certain, most, or all aspects of modern liberalism—under the banner of *conservatism*.³

¹ George Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America since 1945* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2006). Basic Books originally published CIM in 1976. Intercollegiate Studies Institute bought the copyright to CIM decades after the original publication date.

² There are books that deal with conservative intellectuals. However, none attempts the wide synthesis that Nash did in 1976. For examples of recent literature on conservative intellectuals see, Patrick Allitt, *The Conservatives: Ideas and Personalities Throughout American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); David Farber, *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Gregory Schneider, *The Conservative Century: From Reaction to Revolution* (Lanham, MD.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009); Donald Critchlow, *Debating the American Conservative Movement: 1945 to the Present* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009); Ronald Story, *The Rise of Conservatism in America, 1945-2000: A Brief History with Documents* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2007); Jerry Muller, *Conservatism: An Anthology of Social and Political Thought from David Hume to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

³ Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 266-283. The grouping of these various conservative schools together became known as "fusionism." Nash explains fusionism through its originator Frank Meyer who believed that conservatism was torn between the anti-authoritarianism of classical liberalism and the authoritarianism of traditionalism. These two philosophies were fused together in return for intellectual viability. Fusionism was also associated with thinking about conservatism as a harmonious entity. I plan to develop and analyze the "fusionist" argument later in the study. For further treatments of this concept see, Frank Meyer, *What is Conservatism?* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964); George W. Carey, "Conservatives and Libertarians View Fusionism: It's Origins, Possibilities, and Problems," *Modern Age* 26 (1982): 8-18.

In hindsight, Nash's thesis seems bold because he painted conservatism with such broad strokes. This, however, may partially be excused because he was the first to attempt such an undertaking. Recently, historians have chided Nash over his methodology and for using sympathetic broad strokes.⁴ Understanding the nature of this debate over Nash's methodology is a key into the recent historiographical shift concerning research on American conservatism. Nash's belief was that American conservatism came to fruition after the Second World War because of a wider rejection of liberal ideas contained in the New Deal and elsewhere.⁵ From Nash's chair, it appeared that conservatives, of all stripes, were reacting against liberalism despite their theological and philosophical differences.

Like any scholar, Nash was a product of his age and his vision was limited by unforeseen circumstances. What happened following the publication *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America* in 1976 was that conservatism rapidly expanded beyond its original postwar borders.⁶ Before the middle of the 1970s, conservatism's boundaries were limited to traditionalist conservatives and libertarians.⁷ However, by 1980, evangelical Protestants and neo-conservatives had taken the reigns of conservatism. The Republican Party eventually absorbed the conservative mantle once Reagan took office for his second term. In response, a vigorous

⁴ Jennifer Burns, "In Retrospect: George Nash's *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America* Since 1945," *Reviews in American History* 32 (2004): 447-462; Kim Phillips-Fein, "Conservatism: A State of the Field," *The Journal of American History* 98 (2011): 723-743. For an alternative view of Nash's methodology see, Andrew Hartman, "Do You Still Read George Nash?," *U.S. Intellectual History*, March 18, 2011, <http://us-intellectual-history.blogspot.com/2011/03/do-you-still-read-george-nash.html>, accessed December 1, 2013.

⁵ Nash, xvii-xxii.

⁶ D.G. Hart, *From Billy Graham to Sarah Palin: Evangelicals and the Betrayal of American Conservatism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 1-40. Peter Berkowitz ed., *Varieties of Progressivism in America* (Palo Alto: Hoover Institution Press, 2004). This group of essays speaks to the changing majorities within the Democratic and Republican parties from the 1970s forward. Nash, 555-574.

⁷ Carl T. Bogus, *Buckley: William F. Buckley Jr. and the Rise of American Conservatism* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2011), 109-124. Bogus tells the story of how Russell Kirk and William Buckley created a loose coalition between cultural conservatives and libertarians during a meeting at Kirk's home in Mecosta, Michigan. It is possible that both thinkers, including many of the founding postwar conservatives, never expected the movement to expand beyond its immediate Cold-War circumstances of the mid-1950s. These parameters were, for the most part, in place until the 1970s.

debate started to take place among conservatives about how to return conservatism back to the intellectuals that founded it.⁸

Nash admitted that conservatism often defied definition, but still could be thought of as an “identifiable resistance to certain forces perceived to be leftist, revolutionary, and profoundly subversive of what conservatives at the time deemed worth cherishing, defending, and perhaps worth dying for.”⁹ From Nash’s historical perspective, presenting conservatism as a resistance movement was an academically respectable position.¹⁰ Most conservative writers published in the magazine *National Review* (NR); and nearly all things conservative went through NR and William F. Buckley Jr. first.¹¹ One could verifiably think of the conservative movement, as Nash did, as a coalition of dissenting opinion.¹² Unforeseen electoral victory brought to surface long-ignored divisions among conservatives. Thereafter, fierce debates ensued during Reagan’s tenure concerning the question of conservatism’s identity.

⁸ Hart, *From Billy Graham to Sarah Palin*. Hart’s book is the most recent treatment of the controversies between conservative’s traditionalists and Protestant evangelicals. For an example of this controversy from an evangelical perspective, see James Davidson Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). For more treatments of these debates see, Charles W. Dunn, ed., *The Future of Conservatism: Conflict and Consensus in the Post-Reagan Era* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2007); Kenneth L. Deutsch, ed., *The Dilemmas of American Conservatism* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2010); Joel D. Aberbach, ed., *Crisis of Conservatism?: The Republican Party, the Conservative Movement, and American Politics After Bush* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁹ Nash, xix.

¹⁰ Nash, ix-xi. Hartman, “Do You Still Read George Nash?,” *U.S. Intellectual History*, March 18, 2011, <http://us-intellectual-history.blogspot.com/2011/03/do-you-still-read-george-nash.html>. Hartman says that Nash’s account was acceptable, even successful, because he was correcting the view sociological view that thinkers like Richard Hofstadter and Daniel Bell made so popular.

¹¹ Jeffrey Hart, *The Making of the American Conservative Mind: National Review and Its Times* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2006); William Buckley, *Miles Gone By: A Literary Autobiography* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2004). NR was the only semi-popular publication where conservatives could publish in the postwar era. While other outlets like *Christianity Today* presented similar opportunities, it was not considered a conservative publication of accord like NR.

¹² For an example of how conservative dissent looked in the 1960s see, Matthew Dallek, *The Right Moment: Ronald Reagan’s First Victory and the Decisive Turning Point in American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, c2000, 2004). Dallek tells the story of how Reagan shocked the country by beating a popular incumbent liberal governor in the 1960s. It was the accumulation of dissenting conservative opinion that shocked the country, especially, as Dallek highlights, in what was supposed to be the dawn of a new age of liberalism in America. At the same time, he says, few would have predicted a serious growth of conservative ideas in the political spectrum.

Electoral triumph brought to the fore long-ignored divisions among conservatives. While the Republican Party was celebrating “morning in America,” conservative intellectuals were at blows with each other.¹³ Even before Ronald Reagan propelled American conservatism into the national and international spotlight, Nash wondered whether the future of conservatism was bright. In the final chapter of the first edition of CIM titled “Can the Vital Center Hold?” there was already a note of pessimism about conservative’s future.¹⁴ Nash realized that, even when and if the Cold War concluded, the war for conservatism’s heart was just beginning.

The State of Research on Conservatism

Beyond Nash and his renowned history, it has been the job of historians to figure out what held the vital center of conservatism together. It was decades before scholars began to unearth these debates. Critics of American conservatism often followed Nash and made the mistake of supposedly finding political commonality among conservatives.¹⁵ In reality, these detractors rarely moved beyond Nash’s mid-1970s perspective on conservatism. If critics had studied the pages of conservatism’s key academic journals—*The University Bookman*, *The Intercollegiate Review*, *Modern Age*—they would have found round disagreement and key

¹³ It is important to note that sectarian debates about the nature of conservatism took place within the ranks of conservative publications such as *Modern Age*, *The Intercollegiate Review*, *Chronicles*, *The World and I*, and *National Review*. To demonstrate the ferocity of these debates see, Paul Gottfried and Thomas Fleming, *Conservatism in America* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988); Stephen Tonsor, *Equality, Decadence, and Modernity: The Collected Essays of Stephen J. Tonsor*, ed. Gregory Schneider (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2005); Paul Gottfried, *Conservatism in America: Making Sense of the American Right* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009).

¹⁴ Nash, 507-554. Nash highlighted key issues and debates that were yet to be worked out among conservatives.

¹⁵ Examples of critics finding the one issue that defines all conservatives include Thomas Frank, *What’s the Matter with Kansas?: How Conservatives Won the Heart of America* (New York: Henry Holt and Co.: 2004). A classic portrayal of postwar conservatives as a fringe movement is Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics: And Other Essays* (New York: Vintage Books, c1965, 2008). For a similar interpretation see, Arnold Forster and Benjamin R. Epstein, *Danger on the Right* (New York: Random House, 1964). Progressive critiques of conservatism include, Charles A. Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: MacMillan, 1913); James Weinstein, *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State, 1900–1918* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968).

differences among postwar conservatives. The great shift in recent literature reflects the fact that mainstream academics have now delved into conservatism's complexity.

A recent trend among historians is the discovery of complexity in American conservatism. The new complexity thesis has brought about an abundance of literature. Most of it has been published within the decade.¹⁶ The *Journal of American History* released a roundtable on these new conservative currents in 2011. It was the first major issue dedicated to American conservatism since 1994.¹⁷ In those seventeen years since the *American Historical Review* roundtable, Kim Phillips-Fein argues that there is still plenty of room for research on American conservatism. In her lead article, "Conservatism: A State of the Field," she insists that historians should historicize—place conservatism in the context of its historical surroundings instead of showing it as an intellectual and political aberration—their research on conservatism. Conservatism, she posits, should be studied in a multiplicity of ways including as reaction, as politically and intellectually ascendant in a liberal age, and through its ties to economic elites.¹⁸

¹⁶ This is short list of the major monographs concerning intellectual conservatives published recently, Corey Robin, *The Reactionary Mind: From Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Jennifer Burns, *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Michael L. Ondaatje, *Black Conservative Intellectuals in Modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); Michael Kimmage, *The Conservative Turn: Lionel Trilling, Whittaker Chambers, and the Lessons of Anti-Communism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009); Steven M. Teles, *The Rise of the Conservative Legal Movement: The Battle for Control of the Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Brian Doherty, *Radicals for Capitalism: A Freewheeling History of the Modern American Libertarian Movement* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007); Paul V. Murphy, *The Rebuke of History: The Southern Agrarians and American Conservative Thought* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Patrick Allitt, *Catholic Intellectuals and Conservative Politics in America, 1950-1985* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

¹⁷ The three main articles that came from the 1994 roundtable were, Alan Brinkley, "The Problem of American Conservatism," *American Historical Review*, 99 (April 1994), 409–29; Susan Yohn, "Will the Real Conservative Please Stand Up? Or, the Pitfalls Involved in Examining Ideological Sympathies: A Comment on Alan Brinkley's 'Problem of American Conservatism,'" *ibid.*, 430–37; Leo P. Ribuffo, "Why Is There So Much Conservatism in the United States and Why Do So Few Historians Know Anything about It?," *ibid.*, 438–449.

¹⁸ Phillips-Fein, "Conservatism: A State of the Field," 740-743.

While Phillips-Fein correctly approves of the breadth of new research, some conservative intellectuals are not convinced about the so-called progress of the complexity narrative. In a response to Phillips-Fein's article, conservative historian Wilfred McClay applauds the discovery of complexity with reservations.¹⁹ McClay agrees with Phillips-Fein that conservatism must be understood as a serious component in American intellectual life. That should not be the limit, however. The new complexity thesis, McClay argues, is not always without an ideological stamp:

“(W)hy do conservative political coalitions seem so much more worthy of criticism for their inconsistencies than liberal ones? There is certainly much that is intellectually and politically tense about the political union of free marketers and social traditionalists, neoconservatives and Buchananites, Catholics and evangelical Protestants, and others gravitating toward the present-day Republican party. Even so, has there ever been a union more ungainly than the most powerful coalition in American political history: Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal coalition, made up of northern liberals, organized labor, urban Catholics, blacks, and white southerners (including all of the most notorious segregationists)? The ungainliness of that coalition does not lead historians to take it less than seriously, and neither should they be led to treat the conservative coalitions of the more recent past in a similar manner.”²⁰

McClay's argument is that the recent discovery of conservative complexity by liberal scholars does not necessarily mean that understanding of conservatism is congruent. He claims that Phillips-Fein, who is considered a first-rate historian of conservatism, makes similar errors

¹⁹ Wilfred McClay, “Less Boilerplate, More Symmetry,” *The Journal of American History* 98 (2011): 744. McClay, here, is most likely referring to Phillips-Fein's own research, which includes linking American conservatism to economic elites. He did not state this explicitly but he is implying that this is not a sufficient emphasis for understanding conservatism. From a methodological standpoint, McClay seems to suggest the necessity of the insider's point of view in understanding the nature of American conservatism.

²⁰ McClay, “Less Boilerplate, More Symmetry,” 745.

as those like Richard Hofstadter whom she derides as unnecessarily harsh critics of conservatism. McClay explains what he considers Phillips-Fein's somewhat shadowy intentions: "She (Phillips-Fein) praises historians who have tried to break down the distinction between moderates and extremists on the Right, and she hints at a possible connection between the John Birch Society, the Ku Klux Klan, and the "mainstream politicians of the Republican party,"" he declares. He adds: "This is essentially the same move that right-wingers made when they tried to equate the liberalism of Hubert Humphrey (or Barack Obama) with communism. Such talk is fair game for pundits and commentators, but it ought to be the business of honest scholars to insist on honoring precisely those distinctions that political combatants seek to obscure."²¹ McClay implies that many historians who tackle the subject of conservatism still lack the genuine impetus of finding conservatism as it exists in the moment of history.

So, then, where is the debate concerning conservatism? It is safe to say that much work is still needed when it comes to separating conservatism's intellectual core from the Republican Party, or from an extremist attitude that has little or nothing to do with the aforementioned. Few books actually tackle the complicated lives of American conservatism's intellectual founders. A student seeking knowledge of conservative intellectuals would find plenty of primary source material, but scant secondary sources, even with in the new literature.²² Too many general treatments of American conservatism seek to demonstrate its inconsistencies instead of

²¹ McClay, "Less Boilerplate, More Symmetry," 745.

²² For instance, Russell Kirk, who had the most profound impact of any postwar conservative intellectual, has garnered two monographs. See, Gerald Russello, *The Postmodern Imagination of Russell Kirk* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007); W. Wesley McDonald, *Russell Kirk and the Age of Ideology* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004). The Intercollegiate Studies Institute publishes a series on the thought of a few postwar conservative thinkers (including émigré conservatives) including Michael Polanyi, Whitaker Chambers, Robert Nisbet, Eric Voegelin, Bertrand De Jouvenel, Ludwig Von Mises, and others. The exception to the rule is William Buckley Jr., see, Bogus, *Buckley: William F. Buckley Jr. and the Rise of American Conservatism*; Lee Edwards, *William F. Buckley Jr.: The Maker of a Movement* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2010); Linda Bridges, et. al., *Strictly Right: William F. Buckley Jr. and the American Conservative Movement* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2007); John Judis, *William F. Buckley, Jr.: Patron Saint of the Conservatives* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988).

understanding why conservative intellectuals took the stands they did.²³ However, the debate is alive through newly formed independent scholarly societies such as the Society for U.S. Intellectual History and The Historical Society, and media such as *Modern Intellectual History* and *The Journal of the Historical Society*.

Of all the puzzling elements concerning scholarship on conservatism, three are especially bewildering. 1. There is not yet a significant study of the diversity of reactions to liberalism within the first two generations (1953-1970) of conservative intellectuals. Within the collective are important disagreements that speak to the complexity of conservatism. 2. The terminology of “conservatism” is rarely challenged, despite the fact that many of conservatism’s intellectuals often abandoned this terminology because it lost its meaning.²⁴ In other words, when key intellectuals in the movement like Russell Kirk and Paul Gottfried stop calling themselves conservatives, and use various other terminologies such as *reactionary*, this change deserves further inspection. Neither have scholars delved into the thick layers of conservative terminology and sought to understand its interchangeability. Is the term conservative interchangeable with other terminology, such as reactionary, Old Right, neo-conservative, paleo-conservative, populist, New Right, isolationist, traditionalist, etc.? This complexity needs elucidation. 3. Postwar conservatives formed communities around re-covered and re-discovered texts. These

²³ An extreme example is, Shadia Drury, *Leo Strauss and the American Right* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 1999). Other examples include, Dan Carter, *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1995); Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Thomas Frank, *Pity the Billionaire: The Hard-Times Swindle and the Unlikely Comeback of the Right* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012). One of the shared faults of this literature is its flattening effect towards conservatism and conservatives.

²⁴ I think Drew Maciag’s recent book—*Edmund Burke in America: The Contested Career of the Father of Modern Conservatism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013)—considering the ways American conservatives revised Edmund Burke’s legacy is instructive on this point. As I will explain in the chapter on John Lukacs—depending on one’s starting place for conservatism (Burke, Tocqueville, Brownson, etc)—it changes the entire framework. In other words, because American conservatism was a product of imagination, its meaning was bound to change through successive generations of conservative intellectuals.

communities formed the core of various conservatisms. This third and final point is a major key to understanding what holds a big disjointed movement together. The answer, surprisingly or not, is not politics. It is my goal to reorient the discussion of conservatism from one primarily about hegemony—the powerful instructing weak-willed followers—to one concerning method. The method (the imaginative counter-narrative) was what conservative intellectuals agreed upon with variations on it. The overarching contention of this study is that what bound postwar conservatism together was imagination or the ability to mimic the past in the present. I will expound upon this argument in the following chapters of this dissertation.

What bound the first postwar conservatives together was not the dream of political power, although some obviously desired that. Evidence might seem to prove that religion is the common binding factor. But it is not the key to understanding conservatism either.²⁵ Conservatism's intellectuals believed that they found something as powerful as religion without the dogmatism of it. This new powerful idea was imagination.

Imagination bound conservatives and conservatism together from the beginning of the postwar generation because it was the fulcrum of *The Conservative Mind* (TCM). Russell Kirk defined imagination in TCM and I will explain in detail his definition in the chapter dedicated to him. In simple language, imagination is both a linguistic and textual device utilized by conservatives to see hope amidst the supposed ruins. For example, imagination is similar to a person who repairs old homes. The buyer sees the home in its past glory and the opportunity to restore it back to its magnificence in the present-day. Regarding American conservatism,

²⁵ For examples of this type of literature see, Hart, *From Billy Graham to Sarah Palin*; Darren Dochuck, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010); Daniel Williams, *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart*.

imagination was historical in that it took something worth conversing from the past, while also keeping the best from the present. The imagination was a realization that custom—practiced ways of doing things in local, communal and regional settings—was a better way to govern than relying on an ever-growing bureaucracy they felt would eventually abandon local ways of doing things.

Imagination was also a kind of religious experience as well. There was a mystical element to it because it spiritualized the past and present simultaneously. Before Kirk ever converted to Catholicism, he gave conservatism a catholic (small c is intended) flavored imagination minus the dogmatism. In other words, Kirk saw history as being present in every aspect of life, and made imagination a type of sacrament.²⁶ In history conservatives saw possibility where many American liberals saw decadence.

Russell Kirk, recognized as postwar conservatism's first scholar by the likes of historians George Nash and Lee Edwards, built a career demonstrating how the imagination could be conservatism's *sword*.²⁷ Imagination relied on the otherness of conservative thinking; it was set apart from the legacy of Enlightenment rationalism, as Kirk envisioned it. Imagination was the centrifugal force that opened up conservatism to possibility. Because conservative intellectuals

²⁶ An excellent brief explanation of the Catholic Imagination can be found in Bethanie Ryan's "Catholic Imagination and Hebraic Thinking," *Take & Read Blog (Patheos Portal)* December 11, 2013, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/takeandread/2013/12/catholic-imagination-and-hebraic-thinking/>, accessed January 1, 2014.

²⁷ Most of Kirk's work deals with the imagination's relationship to conservatism. These particular works are representative of the imagination's profundity to Kirk's scholarship. Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, c1953, 1995); Russell Kirk, *The Sword of Imagination: Memoirs of a Half-Century of Literary Conflict* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995); Russell Kirk, *Eliot and His Age: T. S. Eliot's Moral Imagination in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Random House, 1971); Russell Kirk, *Enemies of the Permanent Things: Observations of Abnormality in Literature and Politics* (New Rochelle: Arlington House, 1969); Russell Kirk, *Confessions of a Bohemian Tory: Episodes and Reflections of a Vagrant Career* (New York: Fleet Publishing Corp, 1963); For a secondary source treatment of Kirk and imagination see, Russello, *The Postmodern Imagination of Russell Kirk*; Mark Henrie, "Russell Kirk and The Conservative Heart," *The Intercollegiate Review* 39 (2003): 14-23.

believed that the mechanism of the state stifled free-thinking, and that this mechanism was stabilized by a belief in unlimited human progress, imagination provided the only path out. Very basically, the past provided more promise for conservative intellectuals than the future did.²⁸

While Kirk imparted imagination as a vital part of American conservatism, he did not own the genre. As we will see in chapter three, he borrowed the terminology of imagination from Edmund Burke, and mentor Irving Babbitt.²⁹ Kirk also put himself in a position to pass on the British imaginative element to conservatives, as he was a companion of T.S. Eliot's after the poet's conversion to Anglicanism. Kirk was familiar with the work of other English imaginative writers, such as G.K. Chesterton, C.S. Lewis, and J.R.R. Tolkien. This legacy of imaginative writing spurred Kirk to dabble in literature; he even published some children's literary books to demonstrate the importance of imagination to moral living.³⁰ Kirk was especially fond of lecturing on what he termed the moral imagination.³¹ The moral imagination was a tool for learning, like reading great books of Western literature, and for seeing the world anew. Later, imagination came to serve as a kind of holy spirit for conservatives. It was a guiding force rooted in Anglo-European humanism. Its most potent element, however, was that Kirk made

²⁸ See, J.G. Lloyd, *New Deal and Modern American Conservatism: A Defining Rivalry* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2013).

²⁹ MacDonald, *Russell Kirk and Age of Ideology*, 10-11, 42-54; Russello, 56-60; Gerald Russello, "Postmodern Burke," *The American Conservative*, January 19, 2012, <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/blog/postmodern-burke/>, accessed January 22, 2012.

³⁰ Russell Kirk, *Watchers at the Strait Gate: Mystical Tales* (Sauk City: Arkham House Publishers, 1984); Russell Kirk, *Ancestral Shadows: An Anthology of Ghostly Tales* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2004).

³¹ Russell Kirk. "The Moral Imagination," in *The Essential Russell Kirk: Selected Essays*, ed. George A. Panichas (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2006), 206-218.

imagination a mimetic function and a lifestyle. Kirk was an avid hiker; he marveled at gothic architecture and the ways of an age long past.³²

While Kirk wrote and spoke of the moral imagination often, his greatest contribution to postwar conservatism was what I am terming the historical imagination or the imaginative counter-narrative.³³ The imaginative counter-narrative is a way to think about the past and enter into it by acting out certain elements in reaction to the present.³⁴ This attitude is most vivid in religious texts that call for imitation.³⁵ Kirk also taught conservatives that an imaginative kind of mimesis was an acceptable and, in fact, exceptional way of thinking about the past.

Imagination opened up the conservative movement to many who were disillusioned with the fruits of modernity. Ex-communists, Roman Catholics, Protestants, humanists, evangelicals, agnostics, all believed something had gone horribly wrong in the history of Western Civilization; and that Enlightenment, science, and secularism were usually the main culprits.³⁶ The migration of thinkers toward conservatism from the 1950s onward was astounding. Ex-communists such as Whitaker Chambers and Frank Meyer gravitated into the conservative camp without issue. Later, conservatives opened their doors to ex-socialists who came to be known as neo-conservatives. Protestant evangelicals also joined the movement in the 1970s. A host of late coming neo-traditionalists flocked to conservatism's ranks again in the 1980s and 1990s. This happened

³² Kirk, *Confessions of a Bohemian Tory*, passim. A recent take on the possibility of the imaginative life see, James Matthew Wilson, "Passion and the Pursuit of Truth," *Big Questions Online*, last modified January 13, 2011, <http://www.bigquestionsonline.com/features/passion-and-the-pursuit-of-truth>, accessed December 31, 2013.

³³ Paul Gottfried, *The Search for Historical Meaning: Hegel and the Postwar American Right* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1986), esp. chapter seven. He notes the importance of history to the original conservative founders.

³⁴ Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 394-395, quoted in Russello, 89.

³⁵ Eph. 5:1. This biblical passage calls for Christian believers to be "imitators of Christ." Postwar conservatives often imitated other historical figures such as Edmund Burke and Alexis de Tocqueville.

³⁶ Gregory Schneider ed., *Conservatism in America since 1930* (New York: New York University Press, 2003). Schneider demonstrates how these dissidents flocked to conservatism from the 1930s to the 1990s. A commonality among all these thinkers was they that rejected an aspect of modernity and liberalism.

because imagination made it possible to visualize a world that was different from the one these thinkers inhabited.³⁷ In other words, living a parallel existence was appealing to anyone displeased with the world as it stood.

Scholars have not yet discovered the profundity of the relationship between imagination and conservatism's success. It is the imaginative qualities that Kirk first deployed that have kept conservatism alive. We can look to popular culture to demonstrate imagination's relevance. The success of C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* and Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* in both the printed word and film, especially among conservatives, continues to show how important the element of imagination is to this movement (not that everyone who enjoys these are conservatives).³⁸ Their books are still in print and the film portrayals of those works were hits. The imaginative element

³⁷ For personal accounts by conservatives that demonstrate the importance of imagination to conservatism see, William Buckley, *God and Man at Yale; The Superstitions of Academic Freedom* (Chicago: Regnery, 1951); Whittaker Chambers, *Witness* (New York: Random House, 1952); Peter Viereck, *The Unadjusted Man: A New Hero for Americans; Reflections on the Distinction Between Conforming and Conserving* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1956); Frank Meyer, *In Defense of Freedom: A Conservative Credo* (Chicago: H. Regnery Co., 1962); Jeffrey Hart, *The American Dissent; A Decade of Modern Conservatism* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966); Henry Regnery, *Memoirs of a Dissident Publisher* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979); John Chamberlain, *A Life With the Printed Word* (Chicago: Regnery Press, 1982); Irving Kristol, *Reflections of a Neoconservative: Looking Back, Looking Ahead* (New York: Basic Books, 1983); Norman Podhoretz, *The Bloody Crossroads: Where Literature and Politics Meet* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986); Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Moral Imagination: From Edmund Burke to Lionel Trilling* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006); Rod Dreher, *Crunchy Cons: The New Conservative Counterculture and Its Return to Roots* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2006); David Horowitz, *A Point in Time: The Search for Redemption in This Life and the Next* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2011).

³⁸ These works are written by conservatives on Tolkien and Lewis. Bradley Birzer, J.R.R. Tolkien's *Sanctifying Myth: Understanding Middle-Earth* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2003); Ralph C. Wood, *The Gospel According to Tolkien: Visions of the Kingdom in Middle-Earth* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003); Peter Kreeft, *The Philosophy of Tolkien: The Worldview Behind the Lord of the Rings* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005); Alan Jacobs, *The Narnian: The Life and Imagination of C. S. Lewis* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008); James T. Como, *Branches to Heaven: The Geniuses of C.S. Lewis* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2008); Douglas Wilson, *What I Learned in Narnia* (Moscow: Canon Press, 2010). For other conservative views on the importance of imaginative literature see, Peter Lawler, "Walker Percy, Catholic Socratic?" *Modern Age* 40 (1998): 226-231; Myron Magnet, *Dickens and the Social Order* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2004); Henry T. Edmondson III, *Return to Good and Evil: Flannery O'Connor's Response to Nihilism* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2005); Anthony Esolen, *Ironies of Faith: The Laughter at the Heart of Christian Literature* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2007); John Lukacs ed., *American Austen: The Forgotten Writing of Agnes Repplier* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2009); Mark T. Mitchell, ed., *The Humane Vision of Wendell Berry* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2011).

flows from this literature into the histories and communities that America's conservatives created.

Discussion of Methodology

In order to answer the question “What holds conservatism together?” I utilize a method that allows me to demonstrate how conservatism's postwar intellectuals used imagination to define conservatism. In particular, I want to show how postwar conservative intellectuals used imagination to create communities of followers. Intellectual historian Brian Stock developed a method for studying intellectuals and the communities that gather around their ideas. In *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, Stock showed how literacy changed social life in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and eventually throughout the modern world.

The spread of the first stages of literacy made it possible for intellectuals to redefine texts for a particular social response. Stock calls these hierarchies a “textual community.” Textual communities are “groups of people whose social activities are centered around texts, or more precisely, around a literate interpreter of them.”³⁹ These hierarchies exist where intellectuals translate a text for others.⁴⁰ In the eleventh and twelfth century, this often meant that literate interpreters translated a text for the illiterate (those who could not read). This relationship was not limited to the literacy-illiteracy relationship, however. Despite literacy's growth centuries later, there were still interpreters who defined the “inner” meaning of texts or what the text *really* meant. These translators' power was exclusive because they decided membership or exclusion in

³⁹ Brian C. Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 522.

⁴⁰ Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980). Fish in a similar fashion to Stock, argues that texts rarely having meaning without social construction.

a textual community. For instance, a translator would decide who was a heretic or true believer.⁴¹ Postwar conservatism in the United States was laden with the kind of textual communities that Stock describes.

The background for Stock's research was an explanatory account of the formation of modern literacy in the pre-modern world of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. What he terms "textual communities" originally formed around interpreters who could read the Bible in Latin, and translated it for those who were illiterate in the learned languages.⁴² The process began around language—those who could read the Bible and communicate it to others. The interpretation did not end with a literal translation of text for others to decide for themselves. These interpreters essentially created the narrative and truthfulness of the text.

In this study, I take Stock's idea of textual communities a couple of steps further. One key step includes a thicker description of the translator's relationship to the text. The translator often personifies the historicity and biography of the text that he or she translates for others. A next step includes the way that the created communities re-invent the original interpreters posthumously.⁴³ This reinvention often takes on a life of its own, possibly different from what the translator would have preferred. For example, few of Christopher Lasch's textual community members embraced his late-career populism.

There is another dimension to the concept of textual communities that travels along with the additions or steps listed above. An implicit understanding of the relationship between textual communities and postwar conservatism is that of reality-making. In a sense, the inconsistencies

⁴¹ Stock, *The Implications of Literacy*, 151.

⁴² Stock, 78-79.

⁴³ Matthew Gabriele, *An Empire of Memory: The Legend of Charlemagne, the Franks, and Jerusalem before the First Crusade* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 6. Gabriele elucidates further on the two-way process of interpretation and re-interpretation within textual communities.

in conservatism—or the belief that America does not have a singular conservative tradition—do not matter because these intellectuals chose to make conservatism an actuality in the present. Whether or not America is historically a “conservative” nation does not answer the question of why these thinkers chose conservative ideas.⁴⁴ What must be understood is the history surrounding the choice of texts, and why one reaction was chosen over another in a seemingly liberal age.⁴⁵

Discussion of Textual Communities and the Geography of Conservatism

In this dissertation, I am studying four postwar/Cold War era conservative intellectuals: Russell Kirk, John Lukacs, Christopher Lasch, and Paul Gottfried. The choice of these four thinkers is purposive. Each meets some key criteria for demonstrating the importance of historical imagination to conservatism through various stages or epochs. They re-interpreted important historical figures for the present; they formed textual communities, and they sought to realign the terminology of conservatism according to their views of the past. Each thinker is also a transitional figure in the history of American conservatism. All four historians published the bulk of their work during the Cold-War period from 1953-1994, although two of these thinkers are still writing. Each of these thinkers would eventually abandon the label of conservative (the exception was Lasch because he never thought of himself as a conservative) despite their affiliation with the conservative movement. Each scholar also represents an important stage in

⁴⁴ Jim Garrison, *Dewey and Eros: Wisdom and Desire in the Art of Teaching* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1997), 25. Garrison demonstrates that intellectuals are always reconstructing and restructuring ideas. All thinkers participate in creating and re-inventing. Many critics of conservatism have demonstrated that America never had a conservative past. Similarly, during the prime of American pragmatism, Arthur Lovejoy tried to show that there was no such thing as genuine American pragmatism, it was only British utilitarianism warmed over. Now it is accepted that America is a “pragmatic” nation. A better method is to understand why these intellectuals chose these ideas.

⁴⁵ Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), esp. chapter 8.

conservatism's terminological shifts, and the movement that would eventually separate itself from Republican Party politics.

As we saw above, Russell Kirk was the key intellectual founder of modern conservatism.⁴⁶ He published his magnum opus *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot* in 1953. From 1953 onward, Kirk was the most revered conservative thinker of the postwar period.⁴⁷ Not only was his work inspirational to many conservatives, but he brought many thinkers to the movement in his stead.⁴⁸ He helped found The Intercollegiate Society of Individualists (now called the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, or ISI) and the academic journals *Modern Age* and *The Intercollegiate Review*. He wrote volumes of books and articles that firmly set American conservatism in relation to the past.⁴⁹ Kirk lived out a Burkean existence, and was seminal in giving American conservatism a Burkean flavor.⁵⁰ He opened the gates for reactions, not just against liberalism, but also for other conservatives to take issue with his own Burkeanism. For the first time in the modern era, Kirk made conservatism potable and

⁴⁶ The fall 1994 issue of *Intercollegiate Review* included twenty articles on Kirk's importance to postwar conservatism. Also, see, Stephen J. Tonsor, "Russell Kirk (1918-1994)," *Modern Age* 37 (1995): 99-101.

⁴⁷ Bradley Birzer, "Reviewing The Conservative Mind, Part I," *The Imaginative Conservative*, November 13, 2011, <http://www.imaginativeconservative.org/2011/11/reviewing-conservative-mind-part-i.html>, accessed October 8, 2012. Birzer wrote a five-part series on the largesse of supporters and critics concerning the release of *The Conservative Mind* in 1953.

⁴⁸ The paeans to Kirk are nearly limitless. These few are representative. Charles C. Brown, *Russell Kirk: A Bibliography* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2011); John Pafford, *Russell Kirk* (New York: Continuum, 2010); James E. Person, *Russell Kirk: A Critical Biography of a Conservative Mind* (New York: Madison Books, 1999). The Kirk Center in Mecosta, Michigan is solely dedicated to promoting Kirkean ideas.

⁴⁹ Brown, *Russell Kirk: A Bibliography*. This is the newest edition, released in 2011, that contains everything Kirk ever wrote.

⁵⁰ For Kirkean linkages to Burke and America see, Russell Kirk, *Edmund Burke: A Genius Reconsidered* (Wilmington: ISI Books, c1967, 2009); Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*; Russell Kirk, *The American Cause* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1957); Russell Kirk, *The Politics of Prudence* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 1993); Russell Kirk, *Rights and Duties: Reflections on Our Conservative Constitution* (Dallas: Spence Publishing Company, 1997).

consumable.⁵¹ His textual community remains today the largest and most powerful of the conservative movement as a result.⁵²

Kirk was friends with Jewish Hungarian émigré historian John Lukacs. Lukacs represents the émigré wing of American conservatism, which was great in number.⁵³ Unlike many other postwar émigré intellectuals in America, Lukacs was not an economist or a scientist. He participated with postwar American conservatives as they were figuring out the place of conservatism in the United States. Lukacs was trained as an intellectual historian; he, like Kirk, was seminal in introducing another European thinker into the conservative canon. That thinker was French diplomat and writer Alexis de Tocqueville.⁵⁴ Lukacs saw himself as the twentieth-century Tocqueville blessed with the ability to show American conservatives the correct way to react against modern liberalism.

⁵¹ Schneider, *The Conservative Century*, 1-38. Schneider shows that “conservatives” before the postwar era never had institutions to filter their ideas. The Old Right was often sympathetic with European fascism and other tenets that postwar conservatives rejected. Social Darwinism, not humanism, was prevalent in the Old Right.

⁵² Here are the main organizations and textual communities that keep the Kirkean legacy alive. The Intercollegiate Studies Institute, The Kirk Center, and the website *The Imaginative Conservative* specifically promote the Kirkean legacy. Housed within the institutes are the journals *The Intercollegiate Review*, *Modern Age*, *First Principles*, and *The University Bookman*. There are many individual scholars that consider themselves heavily influenced by Kirk, too—people like poet/academic James Matthew Wilson, Bradley Birzer, John Pafford, Mark Henrie, Gerald Russello, W. Wesley MacDonald, Claes Ryn, Bruce Frohen, Vigen Guroian, and many others. Kirk was also integral to the formation of The Philadelphia Society. He served as its president for a term.

⁵³ Nash, 116-125, 235-286, 341-394. Nash was well aware of the contribution of European émigrés to American conservatism. Consequently, there are many scholarly societies in America dedicated to the intellectual legacy of these émigrés including the Ludwig Von Mises Institute, The Leo Strauss Center, The (Michael) Polanyi Society, and the Eric Voegelin Institute. European émigrés also formed seminal institutions like The Mont Pelerin Society, which included Milton and Rose Friedman, and F.A. Hayek. In December 2011, *The University Bookman* published an online symposium that considered Lukacs’ legacy, too.

⁵⁴ Matthew Mancini, *Alexis de Tocqueville and American Intellectuals: From His Times to Ours* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006). Alexis de Tocqueville, *“The European Revolution” and Correspondence with Gobineau*, trans. John Lukacs (Westport: Greenwood Press, c1959, 1974).

Lukacs was the first important critic of the New Right from within the movement.⁵⁵

Lukacs had the ability to perform the duties of insider critic because he held two advantages over the new American conservatives: first, he was a European who understood the relationship between aristocracy and conservatism; and, second, from a historical vantage point, he witnessed the death of the European Bourgeois Age in his home of Budapest.⁵⁶ Aristocracy and conservatism held a long historical relationship in Europe, one that American conservatives could never forthrightly claim. In other words for Lukacs, America was a product of the revolutionary and post-modern age, and well outside of the confines of the Aristocratic age. Lukacs' status as an émigré and an Old World conservative furthered the overall belief that there was never an authentic American conservatism.⁵⁷ Lukacs' textual community is not nearly as large as Kirk's because of Lukacs' reactionary attitude and his criticisms of the conservative movement. The fact that Lukacs has been more of an individual and less of a team player has diminished his impact further. Yet, he is not without influence as his followers often filter through organizations such as ISI. Other important conservative thinkers like Paul Gottfried, Mark Malvasi, and Lee Congdon also claim Lukacs as influential to their thinking about conservatism.

Lukacs helped bring conservatism's terminological problem to the forefront too. In the early 1950s, just as Kirk published his opus, there was already a large debate about whether

⁵⁵ In the postwar era, conservatives were referred to as the "new conservatives." However, this should not be confused with the term neo-conservative or the term New Right, which refers to conservatism in Europe.

⁵⁶ Lukacs addressed the coming of a post-liberal age in these books. John Lukacs, *A New History of the Cold War* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1966); John Lukacs, *The Passing of the Modern Age* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970); John Lukacs, *The Last European War, September 1939/December 1941* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1976); John Lukacs, *1945: Year Zero* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1978).

⁵⁷ John Lukacs, "The Problem of American Conservatism," in *Remembered Past: John Lukacs On History Historians & Historical Knowledge*, ed. Mark Malvasi et. al (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2005), 572-585.

America ever had a conservative tradition.⁵⁸ Lukacs chimed in, as a supposed member of the New Right, and agreed with detractors that America was not an inherently conservative nation.⁵⁹ Although Lukacs dwelled in conservative circles, and befriended conservatives, he called himself a *reactionary*.⁶⁰ The reactionary tag was a better label than conservative according to Lukacs because most conservatives only wanted to topple an ideology with another ideology. An intellectual reactionary, on the other hand, was a more precise term because it denied the perfectibility of human nature and progress in all its forms.⁶¹ Reactionary, Lukacs believed, was the only befitting label because American conservatives did not have the benefit of a great conservative tradition like Europe. America was without royalty or long-entrenched gentry. If anything, the American liberal tradition was seminal in destroying aristocratic institutions, he opined.

Lukacs' use of the term reactionary led to a transitional phase in conservatism from the postwar period to the Cold War/late-modern generation of conservative thinkers.⁶² Reactionary

⁵⁸ For a good summary of this debate see, Nash, 197-233. For other critics of American conservatism during this period see, Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1955); Clinton Rossiter, *Conservatism in America* (New York: Knopf, 1955); Samuel Huntington, "Conservatism as an Ideology," *American Political Science Review* 51 (June 1957) 454-473; Morton Auerbach, *The Conservative Illusion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959).

⁵⁹ John Lukacs, "American History: The Terminological Problem," in *Remembered Past: John Lukacs On History Historians & Historical Knowledge*, ed. Mark Malvasi et. al (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2005), 102-117. Lukacs believes Americans have a predilection towards science, progress, and future thinking. However, he believes that Americans have become more nostalgic in the post-modern age.

⁶⁰ John Lukacs, *Confessions of an Original Sinner* (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1990), xiv-42. This is Lukacs' best explanation of what it means to be a reactionary, as opposed to a conservative.

⁶¹ Lukacs, *Confessions of an Original Sinner*, xiv-5. The Republican Party had trumped the conservative movement, he thought, and most Republicans (especially the neo-conservatives), like their liberal counterparts, believed in progress too.

⁶² For a few example of conservatives using the term reactionary interchangeably with conservatism see, Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*, passim; John Lukacs, *Decline and Rise of Europe; a study in recent history, with particular emphasis on the development of a European consciousness* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965); Tonsor, *Equality, Decadence, and Modernity*; Paul Gottfried, *Conservative Millenarians: The Romantic Experience in Bavaria* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979); Gottfried, *The Search for Historical Meaning*; Paul Gottfried, *Encounters: My Life with Nixon, Marcuse, and other Friends and Teachers* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2009); Thomas Molnar, *Bernanos: His Political Thought & Prophecy* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1997); Thomas

language reveals something deeper about the divisions among conservatives.⁶³ Christopher Lasch is a transitional figure in this dissertation because he gravitated into conservatism, intellectually, without becoming an activist in the Republican Party.⁶⁴ Lasch introduced populist language into conservatism through his later works. It took Lasch and a later generation of paleo-conservative thinkers to work out these terminological and historical intricacies that Kirk and Lukacs left unanswered.

Christopher Lasch has never been included in the canon of postwar conservatives because of his early affiliation with the New Left. However, now that historians have begun to re-evaluate Lasch's career, we can see that his late-career shift to populism deserves another look.⁶⁵ Lasch began his professional career about a decade after Kirk and Lukacs, and was an avowed member of the New Left until the 1970s when he turned his back on radicalism for good. In that seminal decade, he published two books that signaled a lasting change in his worldview. *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged*, released in 1977, was followed two years later by

Molnar, *The Counter-Revolution* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1969); M.E. Bradford, *The Reactionary Imperative: Essays Literary & Political* (Peru: Sherwood Sugden, 1990); Bill Kauffman, *Look Homeward America: In Search of Reactionary Radicals* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2005); Allan Carlson, *Third Ways: How Bulgarian Greens, Swedish Housewives, and Beer-Swilling Englishmen Created Family-Centered Economies - And Why They Disappeared* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2007); Lee Congdon, *Seeing Red: Hungarian Intellectuals in Exile and the Challenge of Communism* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001). For critic perspectives on the reactionary element within conservatism see, Lionel Trilling, *Liberal imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* (New York: New York Review Books, c2008), xv; Robin, *The Reactionary Mind*; Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and its Critics* (New York: Norton, 1991); Christopher Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites: And the Betrayal of Democracy* (New York: W.W. Norton, c1995). In addition, in an interview with conservative academic, James Matthew Wilson, he said that many conservatives at ISI began referring to themselves as reactionaries after the 2008 election.

⁶³ Kirk, *Confessions of a Bohemian Tory*. It is worth noting that T.S. Eliot, whom Kirk idolized, called himself a political reactionary. At least once Kirk penned an article where he called for "reactionary radicalism." Russell Kirk, "Simplicity and Audacity in Reform: A Call for Reactionary Radicalism," *Modern Age* 23 (1979): 226-232.

⁶⁴ David Horowitz, *The Art of Political War and Other Radical Pursuits* (Dallas: Spence Publishing, 2000). Horowitz's book is not a comprehensive picture of conservative political language. However, Horowitz chides cultural conservatives for not wanting to win the language battle of politics.

⁶⁵ Eric Miller, *Hope in a Scattering Time: A Life of Christopher Lasch* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2010). Miller considers Lasch's intellectual life, but not his relationship with other American conservatives. Also see, Christopher Shannon, "Stuck in the Middle with Lasch," *U.S. Intellectual History blog*, November 15, 2013, <http://s-usih.org/2013/11/stuck-in-the-middle-with-lasch.html>, accessed December 22, 2013.

bestseller *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*.⁶⁶

Conservatives responded positively to both books.⁶⁷

Both works were critical of Americans who filled spiritual and communal voids with other things like exercise, mood-altering drugs, therapy, adultery, etc. *Haven* and *The Culture of Narcissism* especially appealed to traditionalist conservatives because they were effronteries to consumer capitalism and libertarianism for upending mores such as the church and family. If Lasch had ceased his publishing career in 1979, he would merely have joined the circle of other leftists who eventually derided liberalism for its ill-fated cultural radicalism. But Lasch was aiming for something more than a return to civic humanism.⁶⁸ His goals were not altogether different from Kirk's because he came to lament the loss of tradition and history to the life of communities. For that reason, almost two decades after his death, conservatives pen most of the paeans to this former Marxist converted right-wing populist.⁶⁹

Lasch also provides a window into not only the changing nature of American liberalism, but also an often unnoticed transformation in American conservatism that followed the election

⁶⁶ Christopher Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged* (New York: Basic Books, 1977); Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York: Norton, 1979).

⁶⁷ George McKenna, "A Reluctant Conservative: Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in An Age of Diminishing Expectations*," *Modern Age* (1980): 86-87.

⁶⁸ Two representative works of this shift towards civic humanism were, Robert Bellah, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) and Michael Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996). A recent book that considers civil religion is Raymond Haberski, Jr., *God and War: American Civil Religion Since 1945* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012).

⁶⁹ Examples of these accounts include, Jeremy Beer, "On Christopher Lasch," *Modern Age* 47 (2005): 330-343; Gottfried, *Encounters*, 171-204; Patrick Deneen, "When Red States Get Blue," *The American Conservative*, August 1, 2010, <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/article/2010/aug/01/00033/>, accessed January 14, 2012. For recent accounts from the left see, Andrew Hartman, "Christopher Lasch: Critic of Liberalism, historian of its discontent," *Rethinking History* 13 (2009): 499-519. Hartman views Lasch as a "populist moralist." Hartman's larger claim is that Lasch's historiography shifted to a conservative intellectual trajectory by career's end. David S. Brown, *Beyond the Frontier: The Midwestern Voice in American Historical Writing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009). Brown squares Lasch in the middle of what he claims in the Midwestern voice in American. Lasch appears as a localist, traditionalist, and agrarian in Brown's telling.

of Ronald Reagan.⁷⁰ Lasch never voted for a Republican as far as we know, and neither was he an anticommunist. However, he shared many qualities with the new wave paleo-conservatives who formed the reaction against neo-conservatism and the absorption of intellectual conservatism into the Republican Party.⁷¹ More importantly, Lasch foreshadowed the paleo-cons and served as a kind of intellectual godfather to paleo-conservatism through his friendship with the founder of paleo-conservatism—Paul Gottfried.

Lasch deserves to be included in a history of modern American conservatism for several reasons, notwithstanding his eventual disavowal of liberalism. He agreed with conservatives on a majority of cultural issues, including a preference for nuclear families.⁷² Like Kirk and Lukacs, most importantly, he wrote counter-narratives to the liberal tradition, as he objectified American populism. Whereas Kirk mimicked the aristocratic Burke, and Lukacs sought to emulate that of Tocqueville, Lasch revered the place of the public intellectual as the last bastion of public morality. Lasch was never readily included next to postwar conservatives, probably because he was not easily categorized since his politics did not necessarily match his complaints against his liberal colleagues.⁷³ Still, I will show in this dissertation that Lasch's populism influenced paleo-

⁷⁰ Timothy W. Luke, "The "Americanization" of Critical Theory: Legacies and Paul Piccone and Telos," in *A Journal of No Illusions: Telos, Paul Piccone, and the Americanization of Critical Theory* ed. Timothy W. Luke and Ben Agger (New York: Telos Press Publishing, 2011), 1-22. In this essay, Luke shows how the journal *Telos* changed from its founding in 1968, and how that journal fostered a platform for intellectuals who rejected the mainstream political conversation of the late Cold-War era.

⁷¹ Beer, "On Christopher Lasch," 341; John Lukacs, "The Poverty of Anticommunism," in *Remembered Past*, 562-571; Russello, 113.

⁷² For an ongoing debate between the liberal historian Michael Kramer and conservative historian (and former student of Christopher Lasch) Christopher Shannon concerning Lasch and liberalism see, Michael Kramer, "Reflections on Christopher Lasch's Reflections," *U.S. Intellectual History blog*, November 7, 2013, <http://s-usih.org/2013/11/reflections-on-christopher-laschs-reflections.html>, accessed December 22, 2013.

⁷³ Miller, *Hope in a Scattering Time*. Miller addresses the fact that Lasch appreciated intellectual honesty more than political expediency. He portrays Lasch as a pilgrim who did not make light of his choices as a scholar. Paul Gottfried, "Up From Liberalism? From Anti-Communism to Democratic Globalism and GOP Drift," (paper presented at the annual meeting of The HL Mencken Club, Baltimore, Maryland, November 5, 2011). Gottfried addressed the question of the conservative canon in this presentation.

conservatism through participation in the Telos group, which put him in contact with the likes of Gottfried, and Telos scholars such as Paul Piccone and Timothy Luke.⁷⁴

Lasch's textual community has grown tremendously since his death in 1994. His daughter Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn and many others have continued to carry out Lasch's legacy in their scholarship and through the formation of defecting scholarly organizations.⁷⁵ The Laschian textual community has formed the most renowned scholarly organizations aimed at rebirthing intellectual history in reaction to what they consider bastardized forms of historical thinking. Lasch's textual community, as I argue, is methodologically conservative because of their efforts to return intellectual history back to its past prominence.⁷⁶ Ironically, Lasch's textual community has ignored the right-wing aspect of Lasch's populism in return for prowess in the academy. Like Lasch, they desire to redeem the era when public intellectuals held sway over the masses.

If Lasch is a path into the changing characteristic of conservatism decades after Russell Kirk published his opus, then Paul Gottfried represents a synthetic moment for postwar conservatism as it returned to the atomism of the prewar Old Right. Gottfried was a late second-generation postwar conservative who began his professional career during a time of great upheaval for conservatism. He began writing just as the Reagan era dawned, and as the neo-

⁷⁴ Paul Gottfried, "Remembering Paul Piccone," *Telos* (2005): 65-74. Timothy W. Luke, "The "Americanization" of Critical Theory: Legacies and Paul Piccone and Telos," 19-22. Both Gottfried and Luke address Piccone's conservative turn and abandonment of the traditional lines of conservative/liberal discourse. This came about as Piccone rejected neo-liberalism and corporate capitalism. His views, as editor of *Telos*, obviously reflected the kinds of scholarship *Telos* solicited.

⁷⁵ Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, *Black Neighbors: Race and the Limits of Reform in the American Settlement House Movement, 1890-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn ed., *Women and the Common Life: Love, Marriage, and Feminism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997); Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, *Race Experts: How Racial Etiquette, Sensitivity Training, and New Age Therapy Hijacked the Civil Rights Revolution* (New York: Norton, 2001); Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn ed., *Reconstructing History: the Emergence of a New Historical Society* (New York: Routledge, 1999). Most of Lasch-Quinn's research challenges liberalism dictated from elites, a subject her father mastered.

⁷⁶ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn ed., *Reconstructing History*, especially the essays by Daniel Littlefield, Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Rochelle Gurstein, Gertrude Himmelfarb, Russell Jacoby, and Phillip M. Richards.

conservatives gradually took away the conservative crown from the New Right.⁷⁷ Gottfried had the benefit of knowing many members of the New Right, and the unfortunate pleasure of eventually reacting against the conservatism that William Buckley Jr. steered for decades.⁷⁸ Gottfried also found himself in the precarious position of simultaneously criticizing neo-conservatives and the New Right because he sought to return conservatism to its original state as formulated by the American Old Right. Given his strange arrival into the conservative movement, Gottfried also had the ability to witness and understand the theoretical weaknesses of successive generations of conservative thinkers.

Gottfried is a controversial master of the historical imagination.⁷⁹ He came to oppose, and even reject, much of the Burkean narrative that Kirk wove together. He also took more from Lukacs's reactionary conservatism that views conservatives as outsiders. Later, Gottfried became one of the few conservatives openly to question the conservatism espoused by Leo Strauss and his Straussian followers.⁸⁰ In opposition to both of these narratives, Gottfried, mirroring Lasch, reintroduced the forgotten concept of historicism back into conservatism. Gottfried's refusal to

⁷⁷ For a general history of neo-conservative intellectuals during the Reagan era see, David Hoeveler, *Watch On The Right: Conservative Intellectuals In The Reagan Era* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991). For a more recent account see, Paul V. Murphy, "The Age of (Scoop) Jackson," *Reviews in American History* 39 (2011): 735-740.

⁷⁸ Paul Gottfried, "Up From Liberalism? From Anti-Communism to Democratic Globalism and GOP Drift," (paper presented at the annual meeting of The HL Mencken Club, Baltimore, Maryland, November 5, 2011); Peter Brimelow, "The WFB Myth" (paper presented at the annual meeting of The HL Mencken Club, Baltimore, Maryland, November 5, 2011). Gottfried is among a handful of conservatives openly criticizing the Buckley legacy.

⁷⁹ Gottfried writes about the historical imagination. Gottfried, *Conservative Millenarians*; Paul Gottfried, *The Search for Historical Meaning*; Paul Gottfried, *Conservatism in America: Making Sense of the American Right* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009).

⁸⁰ Paul Gottfried, *Leo Strauss and the Conservative Movement in America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012). One of his arguments against the Straussians is that they attempt to universalize politics by stripping away the distinctions between nations.

embrace neo-conservatism or Burkean conservatism led him to embrace the Old Right figure of H.L. Mencken in opposition to both camps.⁸¹

Gottfried's textual community is decidedly Menckonian as its members actively seek to rearrange the conservative landscape back to its gritty pre-postwar moorings. Gottfried has taken on the role of the new Mencken as he founded the H.L. Mencken Club, which meets annually in Baltimore. Before Gottfried became an outspoken paleo-conservative, he was a respected member of both The Philadelphia Society and the Intercollegiate Studies Institute. While one might expect Gottfried to claim a member of the Right as his favorite contemporary, he claims that his conservatism is much closer to Christopher Lasch than any other modern conservative.⁸² In fact, the trajectory of Gottfried's career was forever changed when he was welcomed into the Telos group as Telos members were thinking aloud about how to relate critical theory to a conservative kind of populism.⁸³

Gottfried is the synthetic moment for this project too because he returned American conservatism to its pre-Second World War roots. While many conservatives reject the mantra of reaction, Gottfried demonstrates that conservatism is not a popular cause suited for democratic politics.⁸⁴ For Gottfried, the conservatism that is presented to the public via the Republican Party and Fox News is not conservatism at all. A true conservative rarely has a large audience, and

⁸¹ Gottfried is the founder and president of the H.L. Mencken Society (HLMC). The HLMC meets annually in Baltimore, and serves as split from organizations like ISI and The Philadelphia Society.

⁸² Conversation with Paul Gottfried. Baltimore, MD., November 2011.

⁸³ Gottfried, *Encounters*, 77-95.

⁸⁴ Paul Gottfried, "Recognizing Enemies," *Lew Rockwell*, November 15, 2007, <http://www.lewrockwell.com/gottfried/gottfried104.html>, accessed February 1, 2013; Paul Gottfried, "The Right Lesson," *The American Conservative*, November 17, 2008, <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/article/2008/nov/17/00016/>, accessed February 1, 2013; Paul Gottfried, "The GOP is Useless," *Lew Rockwell*, December 10, 2010, <http://www.lewrockwell.com/gottfried/gottfried121.html>, accessed February 1, 2013.

should expect to be shunned. Most importantly, a true conservative is historically minded, as she or he seeks to dethrone the ventures of the managerial state.

Conclusion and Chapter Outlines

I began by asking: what was the glue that held conservatism together? By describing compact intellectual histories of four postwar conservatives—Russell Kirk, John Lukacs, Christopher Lasch, and Paul Gottfried—this dissertation argues that imagination, and the ability to live a parallel existence to reality, has served as the glue for that movement. The otherness of American conservatism is implicitly wrapped up in the language of imagination, and not in commitments to either capitalism or anti-communism. I plan to demonstrate that, while these four scholars surely responded negatively to the postwar liberal consensus, their grievances later focused on the flattening effect of state bureaucracy. Once Reagan was elected, conservative infighting grew at an alarming rate as factions lined up to see who would carry conservatism into the next century.

I would like to suggest two main reasons why this aspect of American conservatism has not garnered research before now. The background of the Cold War and William Buckley's desire to impose a perception of togetherness gave the image of conservatism as having a monolithic identity. This makes understanding the projects of four historians studied here even more important than discerning the original intellectual underpinnings of postwar conservatism. These historians' distaste for the modern world and its fruits of bureaucracy, democracy, planned society, social engineering were so strong that they literally took on the role of portraying the past in the present by mimicking personages of the long dead. As we saw, for Russell Kirk, this entailed becoming the first American Burke. Lukacs and Lasch chose to emulate two nineteenth

century thinkers, Alexis de Tocqueville and Orestes Brownson. Gottfried bucked the Kirkean tradition with his choice of H.L. Mencken and the poison pen of early journalists of an era worth reviving. Gottfried solidified conservatism as intellectually and politically reactionary by returning to its Old Right roots of pre-war conservatism. All four historians employed the imagination—particularly the historical imagination—to demonstrate how the present and future could be different.

The historiography on American conservatism is still relatively lean considered next to the literature available about the Left. While there is new literature that considers conservative intellectuals, it is often limited to biography or to a previously well-known group of conservative intellectuals such as the New Humanists or The Southern Agrarians. In my research, I hope to disband these pre-packaged groupings and also demonstrate how conservatism veered into the intellectual life of the left. Within these groups, I reveal that there was often little parity with the exception of a linkage to other conservatives through the framework of imagination.

Many renowned historians and political scientists have chosen to associate certain conservative intellectuals together with a particular politics and policy. But this has often been done in vain as relationships between policy and scholarship are difficult to establish and often shift. Of the four postwar conservatives studied here, not one of them has seen his scholarship directly result in policy thus far. The place I see my research occupying is one that re-contextualizes American conservatism at the end of modernism and in the broader scope of postmodernism. In other words, while postmodernism was almost at once exclusively seen to be a product of the Left, I show that American conservatives were very much influenced by the imaginative writings of British writers who were conservative postmoderns that rejected the Enlightenment long before the likes of Foucault made it popular to do so. In this regard, there is

definitely both a transnational element to the creation of American conservatism and an ideational one that connects conservatism to a revived recognition of humanism following the conclusion of the Second World War. The subjective experience of the imagination has helped conservatives to willfully continue to reconstruct the past for the present. Imagination and the construction of counter-narratives have breathed life into conservatism, despite many of its electoral failures.

The title of this dissertation is *Imagination Movers: The Creation of Conservative Counter-Narratives in Reaction to Consensus Liberalism*. I chose the term consensus liberalism as opposed to just liberalism. In other words, postwar conservatives rejected the various formations of a widely accepted worldview, whether it began with Karl Marx, Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, or some other thinker in the modern liberal canon. The basic premise of this research is to show that it was imagination, and not either anti-communism or free-market capitalism, that bound conservatives loosely together. In this regard, my research is also rejection of the fusionism thesis as propagated by liberals and conservatives alike. I will explain more about while I reject the fusionism thesis throughout this dissertation too. My research shows the importance of historicism, historical consciousness, and a general recognition of history that was important to the founding of American conservatism. More often than not, capitalism and public policy matters were secondary to the actual theorizing.

The first chapter is this introduction, which has given a rough map for the proceeding findings. The second chapter is concerned with methodology. In this chapter, I demonstrate how Brian Stock's concept of a textual community helps to flesh out the imaginative qualities of postwar conservatism. I also detail the strengths of an interdisciplinary/intellectual history for understanding the gyrations of postwar conservatism. It is also my contention that there are

seminal differences between studying conservatism from an intellectual angle as opposed to a cultural one. The primary aim, in other words, of the methodology should not be to discredit conservatism, but to investigate its intricacies in more depth.

The third chapter is a keystone section of this dissertation in which I consider the birth of imagination into postwar conservatism. Without Kirk and *The Conservative Mind*, I argue, American conservatism probably would not exist. Kirk gave conservatism its imaginative power through a mimetic function that taught conservatives how to fuse together thought and lived action. Kirk created a Burkean landscape that was given a strong Catholic flavor following his death. The chapter on Kirk is followed by a chapter on John Lukacs. Lukacs was one of the first critics of Kirk who was also an active émigré member of the New Right. As we saw above, Lukacs believed that America did not have a genuine feudal conservative tradition like Europe. Therefore, Lukacs introduced reactionary terminology into conservatism as he also acted out Tocqueville. A true American conservatism, Lukacs declared, was a pilgrim or outsider always looking down on the follies of democracy.

The following chapter represents a transition within conservatism. The person and work of Christopher Lasch demonstrate that conservatism overflowed its border as it drew in former leftists through a renewal historical thinking. Lasch and his textual community were integral in reintroducing intellectual history into the field of history proper. The Laschian textual community rejected postmodernity and cultural history. While Lasch was not an outspoken historicist, he was great at understanding that conservatives' primary enemy was the state and its elites, and not liberalism at large. Lasch embraced the populist persona too, as he reacted against the universalizing or standardizing impulse of the state. This is important because he passed this belief onto his friend Paul Gottfried. Gottfried is ultimately a Laschian in that he carried on

Lasch's populist project forward in his own research. Gottfried was seminal in reintroducing the concept of historicism into conservatism. For Gottfried, the idea of progress has spread so far into both the Republican and Democratic Parties that it is necessary to dethrone the state at all costs. Therefore, Gottfried's textual community is decidedly anti-statist.

To conclude this research, I have written an epilogue that explains where the future of conservatism may go. Historians must continue to historicize the conservative movement by looking deeper into texts and making connections that may not have been foreseen before. For example, untold stories like the birth of paleo-conservatism and its relationship to critical theory reveal undiscovered territory. Furthermore, I also reiterate that American conservatism may need to be understood within the context of what I call the imaginative turn that was created in the fictions of British imaginative writers such as G.K. Chesterton, C.S. Lewis, and JRR Tolkien. Conservatism may even be considered as a later reactionary episode against the Enlightenment and liberal modernity. It is my hope that scholars will continue to make bigger distinctions as they understand conservatism as interdisciplinary, intellectual, transatlantic, or otherwise. The introduction of complexity into history is never a poor avenue for historians to take. In the following chapters, using the concept of a textual community, I hope to reveal the complex and meandering geography of postwar conservatism all the way to the present.

Chapter 2: Methodology and Conservatism's Textual Communities

Chapter Abstract

In this chapter, I lay out the importance of utilizing the concept of textual communities as a fulfilling and promising way to understand the growth of postwar conservatism. Included is a biography of Brian Stock and a synopsis of his major work *The Implications of Literacy*. I also show how Stock fleshed out the idea of textual communities in later historiography. In this chapter is a state of the historiography on American conservatism during the last half-century or so. I will analyze the current state of field as it has changed rapidly in the last decade.

Introduction

William Inge's award-winning play *Picnic* that depicts life in small-town America is similar to the way in which historians think about American conservatism: there are many streets, but they all lead to the general store. The familiar story goes that American conservatism grew en masse after the Second World War in reaction to New Deal liberalism, collectivism, and the fear that many of America's intellectuals and government officials had already capitulated to the promise of Soviet communism.⁸⁵ The first wave of postwar conservatives, also referred to as the New Right, failed to get Arizona senator Barry Goldwater elected as President in 1964 and gradually lost power to the second-wave of conservatives that included the neo-conservatives and the Protestant evangelicals. Seeing the possibility of America as the engine of global democracy, the neo-conservatives and their evangelical counterparts were successful in implementing their policies and views into the Reagan administration and solidified their presence in the Republican Party through the first Bush administration. These disaffected former leftists then ousted the radical, racist, and nostalgic element of the New Right once they entered

⁸⁵ George Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America since 1945* (Wilmington: ISI Books, c1976, 2006).

Reagan's administration. Nevertheless, despite the rivalry among conservative factions, conservatives of all stripes banded together to elect Reagan in hopes of returning America to its pre-New Deal form. The person credited for conservative victory and influence was *National Review* founder and editor William Buckley, who was considered the intellectual who Americanized conservatism and made it an acceptable power in American politics.⁸⁶

In hindsight, this narrative is both unlikely and unprecedented given the knowledge that intellectuals, who rarely agree with each other, would join politicians to elect a former actor to the office of president.⁸⁷ Therefore, it should not be unsurprising that many of conservatism's key figures, such as William Buckley are undergoing revision. "(H)e (Buckley) helped associate the Republican Party with his preferred synthesis of social conservatism, libertarianism, and a foreign policy of Wilsonian outreach," writes Michael Kimmage.⁸⁸ In other words, William Buckley was primarily a conservative organizer and purveyor of ideas.

Once considered conservatism's prime intellectual voice, William Buckley, is now thought of as its popularizer, even a patsy, according to some critics.⁸⁹ From his powerful post in

⁸⁶ An example of this kind of straight-line historiography regarding American conservatism is Thomas Frank, *What's the Matter with Kansas?: How Conservatives Won the Heart of America* (New York: Henry Holt and Co.: 2004). For a similar take on the path of American conservatism from an academic perspective see David Farber, *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010). The most recent academic roundtable on American conservatism is featured in the December 2011 issue of *The Journal of American History*. For the lead essay see, Kim Phillips-Fein, "Conservatism: A State of the Field," *The Journal of American History* 98 (2011): 723-743.

⁸⁷ Political theorist Patrick Deneen is one of a host of conservative thinkers to find serious fault lines in the thesis that the election of Reagan was a great conservative moment. See, Patrick Deneen, "Is There a Conservative Tradition in America?" *Front Porch Republic*, September 28, 2010, <http://www.frontporchrepublic.com/2010/09/is-there-a-conservative-tradition-in-america/>, accessed August 11, 2012.

⁸⁸ Michael Kimmage, "A Consequential Man," review of *Buckley: William F. Buckley Jr. and the Rise of American Conservatism*, by Carl Bogus, *The New Republic*, January 9, 2012, <http://www.tnr.com/print/book/review/consequential-man>, accessed June 1, 2012.

⁸⁹ For a moderate take on Buckley see, Carl T. Bogus, *Buckley: William F. Buckley Jr. and the Rise of American Conservatism* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2011). An example of both a sympathetic and glorified biography of Buckley see, Lee Edwards, *William F. Buckley Jr.: The Maker of a Movement* (Wilmington: ISI Books,

Manhattan, he balanced the margins of the traditionalist wing of conservatism with the urbane neo-conservatives. Critics such as former friend and *National Review* editor, Peter Brimelow, and Paul Gottfried consider Buckley's welcoming of the neo-conservatives his most fateful mistake because it was a betrayal of conservatism's rebellious roots. The neo-conservatives appealed to Buckley the socialite because many of them were his peers in Manhattan.⁹⁰ Because he craved political influence for conservatism, he made sure the neo-conservatives did not have to conform to the fusionist image of conservatism promoted by Frank Meyer or his opponent Russell Kirk.⁹¹

Buckley was optimistic that the neo-conservatives were more prepared for political warfare than the original postwar New Right.⁹² The New Right (first generation postwar conservative traditionalists and fusionists)—also referred to as the cultural conservatives who included Russell Kirk, Richard Weaver, Samuel Francis, and others—were quietly ushered out of the mainstream of conservatism by the neo-conservatives because they were considered backward thinking and illiberal.⁹³ A host of urban intellectuals that included Irving Kristol,

2010). In interviews with a host of conservatives who used to work with him, most notably Peter Brimelow, the consensus is that Buckley was more of a politician and self-gratifying socialite than an intellectual.

⁹⁰ See, Enid Nemy, "Pat Buckley, Writer's Wife and Socialite, Dies at 80," *The New York Times*, April 16, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/16/obituaries/16buckley.html>, accessed June 12, 2012.

Conversation with Bill Regnery. Baltimore, MD., November 2011. Regnery is a former board member of ISI and a relation to deceased conservative publisher Henry Regnery. He is particularly critical of William Buckley for his connections to the liberal Manhattan social scene.

⁹¹ Peter Brimelow, "The WFB Myth" (paper presented at the annual meeting of The HL Mencken Club, Baltimore, Maryland, November 5, 2011).

The term fusionist in this respect means the collaboration of libertarianism and traditionalism. The neo-conservatives were neither traditionalists nor economic libertarians.

⁹² Brimelow, "The WFB Myth" (paper presented at the annual meeting of The HL Mencken Club, Baltimore, Maryland, November 5, 2011). Andrew Hartman, "Is the Neoconservative "New Class" New?" *U.S. Intellectual History*, June 12, 2012, <http://us-intellectual-history.blogspot.com/2012/06/is-neoconservative-new-class-new.html#more>, accessed June 13, 2012. Hartman gives credence to the intellectual prowess of the neoconservatives as former leftists. The neo-cons were particularly successful in the New Left's literary and academic circles before turning right, which made them very useful to Buckley as a magazine editor, Hartman said.

⁹³ Paul Gottfried, *Leo Strauss and The Conservative Movement in America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012). Gottfried writes this from the perspective of a critic against what he considers the

Norman Podhoretz, Allan Bloom, Leo Strauss, Gertrude Himmelfarb, Michael Novak, and Midge Decter quickly took the reins from the New Right.⁹⁴

Eventually William Buckley lost his status as the neo-conservative darling too. The Reagan era proved fruitful for the neo-cons because the president opened up cabinet positions to them. The neo-conservatives were more skilled and influential journalists than Buckley's *NR* colleagues.⁹⁵ The neo-cons further solidified their position in conservatism by building powerful Washington think tanks around their version of conservatism and remaining a bold presence in both Bush administrations.⁹⁶ Buckley rejected the neo-cons near the end of his life by making disparaging comments about the second Bush administration, but it was too late. Nevertheless, Buckley was a key player in American conservatism as he lived through the major waves of the movement and made sure conservatives had a permanent place in American politics. Where Buckley failed was to smooth over the complexity that pervaded conservatism. In the end,

destruction of the original attitude of American conservatism, which he believes, is traditional, unapologetic, and anti-democratic. Also, see, Joseph Scotchie ed., *The Paleoconservatives: New Voices of the Old Right* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1999). Here is a short piece regarding a controversy between Kirk and neo-conservative journalist Midge Decter: Joseph Sobran, "Remembering Russell Kirk," *Sobran's*, September 8, 2005, <http://www.sobran.com/columns/2005/050908.shtml>, accessed June 13, 2012.

⁹⁴ For an example of the rise of neo-conservatism after the defeat of Goldwater see, Mark Gerson, *The Neoconservative Vision: From the Cold War to The Culture Wars* (Lanham: Madison Books, 1996). This book is an example of the comfort neo-conservatives felt within conservatism during the Cold War and throughout the ascendancy of the Republican Party. A memoir record of this is, Irving Kristol, *The Neoconservative Persuasion: Selected Essays, 1942-2009* (New York: Basic Books, 2011).

⁹⁵ For a resource that demonstrates the neo-conservatives journalism skills see, David Hoeveler, *Watch On The Right: Conservative Intellectuals in the Reagan Era* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991). The neo-cons included a stellar cadre of journalists including Charles Krauthammer, George Will, Midge Decter, Norman Podhoretz, John Podhoretz, and Irving Kristol. The neo-cons were especially good at disseminating their ideas through the major U.S. newspapers such *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, and *The Washington Post*.

⁹⁶ For a brief summary of this quarrel see, Paul V. Murphy, *The Rebuke of History: The Southern Agrarians and American Conservative Thought* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 245-46. The earliest butting of the heads between the New Right (paleos, traditionalists, etc.) was somewhat of quite battle between the neo-conservative supported William Bennett and the University of Dallas scholar Mel Bradford. Bradford was originally favored for the post of chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Ronald Reagan chose Bennett because the neo-conservatives accused Bradford of racism and a general backwardness.

Buckley's conservatism was so big that it became everything and therefore nothing simultaneously.

The above anecdote was included to show the complex and meandering nature of postwar conservatism. The story of conservatism and its intellectuals still needs serious attention after decades of research. American conservatism has gone through many origin stories only to the find the next generation of historians scratching their heads at this movement.⁹⁷ Some figures like Buckley stand out for the wrong reasons and need revision. Now that all but a handful of the first wave of postwar conservatives are still living and it is the job of historians to re-contextualize their legacies into different frameworks. The history of American conservatism needs complexity added to it because the movement was so immense that it encompassed people from a variety of backgrounds. I hope to demonstrate the complex and peculiar nature of conservatism in the four chapters on Russell Kirk, Paul Gottfried, Christopher Lasch, and John Lukacs.

Literature Review

Conservatism is not like other more mature subfields of history, such as the history of the American south. In the history of the American south, for example, there are competing poles of historiography. One version says that the south is definitely like X, while the other says 'no Y is more accurate'. Then another historian comes into the debate and says 'well both X and Y is true and here is something else to think about'. The study of conservatism does not have solid schools, per se. What it does have is interconnecting themes. There are historians of

⁹⁷ The 2012 meeting of the Organization of American Historians (OAH) consisted of a panel of current historians and George Nash to discuss the new currents of research on American conservatism. See, Andrew Hartman, "George Nash: Intellectual Autobiography," *U.S. Intellectual History*, May 5, 2012, <http://us-intellectual-history.blogspot.com/2012/05/george-nash-intellectual-autobiography.html>, accessed August 1, 2012.

conservatism who only write about Reagan, or race or religion and so on. Nevertheless, in the next few pages I will demonstrate the shifts and the long stasis in the history of conservatism.

The history of conservative's intellectuals is the least developed of all the subfields of American conservatism. The earliest books documenting American conservatism, which date to the late 1940s and 1950s fall into the category of primary-source material. Even conservatism's earliest critics, people such as Samuel Huntington, Richard Hofstadter, and Lionel Trilling fall into the primary source category, because they were too close to conservatism to make an objective and critical appraisal of the movement. In a sense, they were reactionary participants in its earliest phases. For the most part, secondary source consideration of American conservatism did not begin until the 1970s, although its consideration began sporadically. This literature grew throughout the 1970s and early 1980s because of key Republican political victories across the United States and a great migration to conservatism from secular Jewish intellectuals in New York, and Protestant evangelicals in the Sunbelt.⁹⁸ These shifts were reflected in the literature of that period.

Critics of conservatism's quest for ideological purity have often harped most sharply on the relationship between conservatism and its business proprietors. This trope has a long history dating back to the middle of the twentieth century from conservatism's outset. James Weinstein and Gabriel Kolko questioned the relationship between business and conservative ideology as

⁹⁸ For recent historiography that considers the greater intellectual shifts in the 1970s see, Edward Berkowitz, *Something Happened: A Political and Cultural Overview of the Seventies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: New Press: Distributed by Perseus Distribution, 2010); Judith Stein, *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011). For an appraisal of conservatism in the 1970s see, Bruce Shulman and Julian Zelizer ed., *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

early as the 1960s.⁹⁹ We find author Thomas Frank tackling the relationship between the right wing and capitalism in his 2012 book *Pity the Billionaire*. Academic accounts continue this route and expand the scope to look at how business relates to religion, capitalism, populism, and the Republican Party. Bethany Moreton's *To Serve God and Wal-Mart* is representative of these kinds of accounts. Moreton demonstrates how conservative evangelicals restored faith in capitalism and markets by showing how devotion to God worked hand-in-hand with prosperity. In other words, this was a new kind of prosperity gospel founded on biblical principles and a middle-class work ethic. Moreton's study has benefitted from past research like Lizabeth Cohen's *A Consumer's Republic* and Thomas W. Evans' *The Education of Ronald Reagan*. Cohen reveals how consumption became synonymous with citizenship, as a kind of new civil religion in Cold-War era America. Evans, on the other hand, deals specifically with Reagan's intellectual development during his tenure as host of *GE Theater* and his relationship with General Electric executive Lemuel Boulware. In all of these accounts, each writer demonstrates how conservatives built hope and ideology on the idea of accumulated wealth and the necessity of markets to promote happiness.¹⁰⁰

Yet, the two most influential books to have come out of the recent revival of scholarship on conservatism and business/free-market ideology is Kim Phillips-Fein's *Invisible Hands* and Jennifer Burns' crossover work on Ayn Rand, *Goddess of the Market*. Phillips-Fein's book is

⁹⁹ Gabriel Kolko, *The Triumph of Conservatism: a Re-interpretation of American History, 1900-1916* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963) and James Weinstein, *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State, 1900-1918* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968).

¹⁰⁰ For examples of the relationship between religion, capitalism, and the Republican Party see, Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: the Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009) and Shane Williams, *Trucking Country: the Road to America's Wal-Mart Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). Specific books that deal with consumerism and conservatism in postwar America see, Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: the Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003) and Thomas W. Evans, *The Education of Ronald Reagan: The General Electric Years and the Untold Story of His Conversion to Conservatism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

important because she did not just trace the relationship between big business and politics to electoral success. Her revisionary history took the usual suspects like Ronald Reagan, The Mont Pelerin Society, and the influx of the Austrian economists in the Cold War period and demonstrated how they related to actual businessmen who wanted to permanently change the New Deal order. This previously unstudied group of businessmen fought the New Deal and eventually turned their ideas of free enterprise into political action and a usable ideology, she posits. These businessmen, according to Phillips-Fein, funded a host of think tanks, publications, and campaigns. They were able to put their belief in free markets into ideas through a host of hallmark thinkers like F.A. Hayek and the Austrian economists. In other words, the consumer's republic was not a grassroots movement, instead it was one built by business executives and made to appear as a grassroots revolution.¹⁰¹

Burns' book is both biography and intellectual history. In *Goddess of the Market*, she shows that Ayn Rand does deserve to be taken seriously, whether or not she is considered a serious philosopher. Rand, of course, was not an analytic philosopher and her philosophy was fueled by her fictional portrayal of the world most memorably through characters John Galt and Howard Roark. A major crux of Burns' thesis is that people did really take Rand seriously enough to become proponents of the free market and hyper-individualism. Her most well-known follower was former Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan. However, she had a combative relationship with both conservatives and the libertarians of her day. She hated William Buckley's attempt to Christianize capitalism; she was an atheist. Yet, Rand is still the most influential libertarian thinker of the twentieth century, and her books remain in print. Burns ability to include Rand within the context of American conservatism is both new and worthwhile because

¹⁰¹ Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009).

Rand's memory has been all but erased out of the context of postwar conservatism.¹⁰² Burns' greatest contribution to conservative literature may be to show why conservative historians must take literary ideas seriously, as they look at how ideas translate into political action and worldview.

Neither Phillips-Fein nor Burns make great historiographic claims, though. Critics have most always decried the relationship between business and politics; and Ayn Rand, while not considered within the context of conservatism before, is still an outcast in academic circles. The claim that business interests have always played a large part in research on American conservatism is new or shocking. Both of these books built on previous research and expounded on it. Other subfields of American conservatism such as race, gender, and politics have had a great impact too.

From the perspective of political conservatism, the subject that has carried the most interest is former President Ronald Reagan. The historiography is the most extensive of all subfields of American conservatism. It seems that there are not distinct phases of research on Reagan like there is in American conservatism in general. Throughout Reagan's career, we find critics and supporters writing simultaneously. What has changed though is that the paleo-conservative and traditionalist wing of conservatism have begun to question Reagan's conservatism. This is a rather new wave and most important to this research, because of the change in attitude towards Reagan and the Republican Party as a result of the Reagan presidency. The overall historiography is large enough to fill several volumes, so I will merely touch upon the highlights.

¹⁰² Jennifer Burns, *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

There is of course the Reagan sympathizers who validate all of his actions. Conservative fundraiser and political strategist Wayne Valis edited *The Future under President Reagan* in 1981 to bolster Reagan as the sitting president. Simultaneously critics such as Joan Holbrook wrote *Retreat from Safety: Reagan's Attack on America's Health* in 1984. Both of these books were written from the perspective of strategists with something to gain with either victory or defeat of the Reagan presidency. There is also the journalistic angle in which they try to lay a foundation for later historians and give a *real* portrayal of the commander-in-chief. Former Reagan staff member and opinion columnist Peggy Noonan, penned glowing portrayals of Reagan that linked him to a bygone era of hard-working men with character. Journalist Lou Cannon's *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* is a less sympathetic view of the commander-in-chief. Cannon's view counters the morning in America mantra of Reagan's supporters. Neither of these genres moves along existing historiography with great force, but they are often informative of the mood of the day in which they were published.¹⁰³

There is also a host of serious monographs covering the Reagan presidency from a variety of angles. One of the more memorable or infamous accounts of Reagan is Edmund Morris' *Dutch*. Morris' book was original supposed to be an exhaustive biography of Reagan but found controversy as Morris slid into new journalistic devices, which included the author into the narrative. Jay Winik's *On the Brink*, like many academic histories, cover a particular aspect of Reagan as opposed to an all-encompassing biography. *On the Brink* deals primarily with foreign

¹⁰³ Wayne Valis ed., *The Future under President Reagan* (Westport: Arlington House Publishers, 1981); Peggy Noonan, *What I Saw at the Revolution: A Political Life in the Reagan Era* (New York: Random House, 1990); Peggy Noonan, *When Character was King: A Story of Ronald Reagan* (New York: Viking, 2001); Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991).

relations and matters of Cold-War policy in the Reagan administration.¹⁰⁴ Matthew Dallek's *The Right Moment* focuses on Reagan's California gubernatorial victory in 1966. Dallek's monograph is significant because he demonstrates that America's political fabric changed long before Reagan's first presidential win, and that Reagan is as monumental of a political figure as was Franklin Roosevelt or Lyndon Johnson.¹⁰⁵

Those sympathetic to the Reagan legacy have continued to be published alongside the academic record. However, that does not mean that these books are necessarily bad or poorly researched, although some fall into that category. Stephen Hayward's *The Age of Reagan* is an exploration of the death of liberalism in the United States through the prism of Reagan. It is a history of those discontented with the great liberal experiments of the sixties through the decades of the seventies.¹⁰⁶ Conservative historian Lee Edwards, an in-house historian for the conservative think tank, The Heritage Foundation, has written the most paeans to Reagan.¹⁰⁷ Research on Reagan has also spun off a series of books revising previous decades of the twentieth century political history. David Farber and John Ehrman have both edited period pieces that show how political discourse changed, even if the changes originally appeared slight or non-

¹⁰⁴ Edmund Morris, *Dutch: A Memoir of Ronald Reagan* (New York: Random House, 1999); Jay Winik, *On the Brink: The Dramatic, Behind-the-Scenes Saga of the Reagan Era and The Men and Women Who Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

¹⁰⁵ Matthew Dallek, *The Right Moment: Ronald Reagan's First Victory and the Decisive Turning Point in American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, c2000, 2004).

¹⁰⁶ Stephen Hayward, *The Age of Reagan: The Fall of the Old Liberal Order, 1964-1980* (Roseville: Forum/Prima, 2001). Also see, *Greatness: Reagan, Churchill, and The Making of Extraordinary Leaders* (New York: Crown Forum, 2005).

¹⁰⁷ Lee Edwards, *The Essential Ronald Reagan: A Profile in Courage, Justice, and Wisdom* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005) and *Ronald Reagan, A Political Biography* (Houston: Nordland Pub. International, 1980). Other sympathetic portrayals included Craig Shirley, *Reagan's Revolution: The Untold Story of The Campaign That Started It All* (Nashville: Nelson Current, 2005).

existent.¹⁰⁸ The mixture of sympathetic research and revisionary monographs has led both conservative and liberals to re-think the age of Reagan.

Gil Troy has been seminal in driving this new thinking with the publication of *Morning in America: how Ronald Reagan invented the 1980s*. In *Morning* Troy shows Reagan more as a mood-setter and imaginative leader than the paradigm shift (and policy leader) that most of his followers see in him. Troy sees the 1980s as less revolutionary and more conciliatory. This thesis has carried over into other research and thinking about conservatism among conservatives. This has led other historians to look further into the creation of Reagan's mind.¹⁰⁹ Conservative thinkers have begun to openly question the Reagan legacy. Charles Dunn's edited volume *The Future of Conservatism: conflict and consensus in the post-Reagan era* is a major example of the kind of conservative work questioning the once infallible legacy with American conservatism.¹¹⁰ The conservative authors of Dunn's volume disagree about the nature and legacy of the Reagan legacy.

Today, one still finds books defending Reagan and criticizing him.¹¹¹ The late academic historian John P. Diggins defended Reagan as the seminal leader of a great policy shift in America and someone who has struggled to find a voice among his detractors. Sean Wilentz also paints a picture of Reagan as a great conciliator and a hallmark figure for a new age.

¹⁰⁸ A revisionary look at the conservatism and sixties see, David Farber and Jeff Roched ed., *The Conservative Sixties* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003) and John Ehrman, *The Eighties: America in The Age of Reagan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

¹⁰⁹ Thomas W. Evans, *The Education of Ronald Reagan* and Edward Yager, *Ronald Reagan's Journey: Democrat to Republican* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

¹¹⁰ Charles W. Dunn, ed., *The Future of Conservatism: Conflict and Consensus in the Post-Reagan Era* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2007). Richard Gamble outlines his case for Reagan as un-conservative here. "How Right Was Reagan? *The American Conservative*, May 4, 2009, <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/how-right-was-reagan/>, accessed August 12, 2012.

¹¹¹ Sean Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan: A History, 1974-2008* (New York: Harper, 2008) and John Patrick Diggins, *Ronald Reagan: Fate, Freedom, and The Making of History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2007).

Furthermore, Wilentz says, historically Reagan was the popularizer of modern political realism, and the model for the Clinton presidency. Some might say that Reagan birthed a new epoch in American liberalism or the neo-liberal model—the relationship between business and government and the promotion of scientific thinking as a way to measure goals in education.¹¹² Still conservatives such as neo-agrarian Allan Carlson, Jean Elshtain, and natural law theorist Hadley Arkes find that conservatives need to find sources of cultural renewal beyond political and electoral gains. In other words, the Reagan model is severely limited beyond politics.¹¹³ The literature on Reagan has followed many of the same themes found in other conservative literature. However, there are differences because Reagan has a much broader appeal than other conservative issues.

Race is another popular subfield of conservatism. Often the subfields, especially race, are connected to economy and politics too. Representative works in this subfield have looked at race's relationship to conservative politics, religion, economics, and suburbanism. Lisa McGirr's work on southern California suburban politics *Suburban Warriors* is the standard. McGirr studied the relationship between grassroots politics (suburban housewives in Orange County California) and the transformation of the American political landscape throughout the Cold War. Dan Carter's *The Politics of Rage* traces what he considers an important colonel of race at the center of conservative politics from George Wallace to the Republican congressional counterrevolution of 1994.¹¹⁴ The genres that include race and gender can be pinned up to the

¹¹² Diane Ravitch, *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education* (New York: Basic Books, 2010). Ravitch's book is a kind late career autobiography against the neo-liberal model in education. From the standpoint of a journalist William Kleinknecht's book is tale about the destruction of middle-class America because of Reagan's policies. See, *The Man Who Sold the World: Ronald Reagan and The Betrayal of Main Street America* (New York: Nation Books, 2009)

¹¹³ Charles Dunn, ed., *American Culture in Peril* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2012).

¹¹⁴ A couple of representative texts on conservatism and grassroots suburbanism is, Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) and Kevin Kruse,

prominence of cultural and social history during the late seventies into the nineties. Currently and pertaining to this, there is even a small debate among historians about how to teach conservatism.¹¹⁵ This debate, I believe, can be chalked up to the changing trajectory of research on conservatism and a general shift from cultural/social history to a re-birth of intellectual history.

This apparent shift from cultural to intellectual histories of conservatism has been a slow process and one could miss it without prior knowledge of its historiography. In 1994 historian Alan Brinkley headlined a forum in *The American Historical Review* calling for a renewed interest in conservatism outside of the typical pathology thesis. Pathologizing conservatives was a favorite tool for liberals who thought conservatives were outside of the consensus of the *genuine* and historical American experience.¹¹⁶ Brinkley said that most historians of conservatism believed that liberalism should be the predominant way of thinking because “Understanding America in the twentieth century requires, ultimately, more than an appreciation of the central role of liberalism (in all its various forms) in our modern history, and more, too, than an understanding of the important role of the Left in challenging liberal claims,” wrote

White Flight: Atlanta and The Making of Modern Conservatism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). Two books that represent the influence of race on conservatism see, Dan Carter, *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1995) and *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich: Race in The Conservative Counterrevolution, 1963-1994* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1996).

¹¹⁵ Paul Lyons, *American Conservatism: Thinking It, Teaching It* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2009). Also, see the debate in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* between Russell Jacoby and Mark Bauerlein in July of 2012. The debate was originally stirred with this article, Mark Lilla, “Taking the Right Seriously,” *The Chronicle Review*, September 11, 2009, <http://chronicle.com/article/Taking-the-Right-Seriously/48333/>, accessed August 25, 2012.

¹¹⁶ See, Daniel Bell ed., *The Radical Right* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1964) and Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963). Both Hofstadter and Bell saw conservatives as outside of the consensus and pathologically motivated towards destroying the liberal order.

Brinkley.¹¹⁷ In other words, the question of consensus was an ideological weapon used to demonstrate that conservatives suffered from the pathology of nostalgia. The question arises as to whether Brinkley's article could have had provided the foundation for a great shift in thinking about conservatism. Some historians, like Julian Zelizer, claim that historians did return to more traditional ways of understanding conservatism as a political and intellectual movement after Brinkley's 1994 article.¹¹⁸

Zelizer says that historians must understand that three waves of scholarship have dominated research on conservatism from the Cold War until present. The first stage of conservative research was defined by giving conservatives a voice. He links this stage to conservative intellectual historian George Nash. Zelizer's first stage is referring to conservatives writing about other conservatives and not so much serious analytic scholarship. However, he neglects to point out that negative scholarship written by the consensus school also defined the first wave as well. The second wave he defines as "the backlash thesis" which sought to demonstrate the strange world of the post-New Deal order. The second wave is defined by the prominence of cultural and social history as the main methodological tool. We might also refer to the second wave of research as the postmodern turn towards the study of conservatism. About the second wave, Zelizer writes, "Regardless of the motivation behind conservatism, there is agreement among these scholars about the basic story." "Namely, there was a backlash against New Deal and Great Society liberalism that enabled conservative activists, who had been slowly coalescing since the early Cold War battles, to produce an important realignment in American politics." According to Zelizer, historians are now seeing the culmination of the third wave of

¹¹⁷ Alan Brinkley, "The Problem of American Conservatism," *The American Historical Review*, 99 (April 1994), 429.

¹¹⁸ Julian E. Zelizer, "Rethinking the History of American Conservatism," *Reviews in American History*, 38 (2010): 367–392.

conservative historiography. The third wave is both intellectual and political in nature, and generally outside of the backlash thesis, although there is still an element of that kind of research. About this waves he says “the third wave will have to start developing a historical narrative about the divisions, opposition, struggles, and compromises that conservatives grappled with throughout the postwar period, even when they obtained the highest positions of power.”¹¹⁹

A better term or at least an alternate one instead of third wave might be the new complexity thesis. The complexity thesis can be traced to at least two particular schools. Columbia University has produced several historians who are a part of this new complexity. The Columbia school boasts third-wave historians that include Kim Phillips-Fein and Paul Murphy. George Washington University history professor Leo Ribuffo, who wrote alongside Brinkley in the 1994 AHR conservatism issue, is renowned for directing the third wave of conservative historians too. Andrew Hartman is one of Ribuffo’s most prominent students and a founder of The Society for U.S. Intellectual History. Prominent history departments across the country including Berkley, Harvard, and Yale have also produced historians writing within the third wave too. However, before waving the celebration banners, conservative intellectuals and liberals are still debating this supposed “third wave” of research.

The Phillips-Fein Thesis vs. The McClay stasis

It was mentioned at the beginning of this section that there were not yet any poles in American conservatism like that of other historical subfields, southern history for instance. Now, the sporadic nature of conservatism research may indeed be gradually changing, as Julian Zelizer demonstrates. In 2011, *The Journal of American History* (JAH) published a kind of follow-up

¹¹⁹ Zelizer, 387.

forum to the 1994 forum on conservatism in *The American Historical Review* (AHR). Leading this roundtable on the state of American conservatism was Kim Phillips-Fein. Phillips-Fein article covers the state of the field from the postwar period to the present. She touches on most of the known secondary literature and that which she is familiar with, mainly conservatism and its business underpinnings. Her basic thesis is that the new complexity is good but not good enough. Historians need to delve in further to ideology and the invisible hands (particularly business people in her case) behind the political campaigns, think tanks, and so on.¹²⁰

The first response article came from longtime conservative intellectual historian and former Merle Curti award-winner, Wilfred McClay. McClay's article titled "Less Boiler Plate, More Symmetry" applauds Fein's scholarship with reservations.¹²¹ McClay, who we must remember has done the bulk of his research through Zelizer's second wave of conservative research, writes, "What complaints I have about Phillips-Fein's analysis revolve around this problem of symmetry and more generally the ways some elements of her analysis tend to work at odds with this admirable larger vision."¹²² McClay's claim is that the new complexity thesis, as it rests primarily on the shoulders of liberal historians, is still partisan jousting. He wants conservatism, as a serious subject, to garner the same respect as has liberalism. In other words, scholarship on conservatism should be less partisan and more scholarly. "I hope that, beyond the crossroads, we will see more of this kind of scholarship, uncovering all the mediations by which the interaction of liberalism and conservatism produced the world we inhabit. More complexity,

¹²⁰ Kim Phillips-Fein, "Conservatism: A State of the Field," *The Journal of American History* 98 (2011): 723-743.

¹²¹ Wilfred McClay, "Less Boilerplate, More Symmetry," *The Journal of American History* 98 (2011): 744.

¹²² McClay, 745.

less partisanship. More symmetry, and less—much less—boilerplate,” he concludes his short response.¹²³

Much has changed regarding scholarship on conservatism. However, there is still a field that lacks the greatest amount of research and is the most important because it deals with conservatism’s most complex and integral elements—its intellectuals. The books are few and the historiography of conservatism’s scholars, who were not primarily political figures, is short. Despite all of this, I will outline the contours of this developing field. This historiography has the greatest impact on my research and is the specific area in which I hope to impact.

Research on Conservatism’s Intellectuals

George Nash’s 1976 study of conservative intellectuals still looms large within the field of the history of American conservatism. Nash is still the only historian to attempt to synthesize this mass of intellectuals into a single volume. The Harvard-trained historian used broad strokes to study conservatism’s intellectuals; his purpose was to demonstrate how prominent their legacy loomed in a country with a supposedly grand tradition of liberalism.¹²⁴ However, the young Nash could not predict the explosion of conservative thought after he published *The Conservative Intellectual Movement* in 1976. Admittedly, his study turned out to be shortsighted towards such groups as the Protestant evangelicals and the many organizational manifestations of think-tank conservatism that would come later. What Nash is criticized for most often however, was his attempt to show conformity in conservatism, which was translated by generations of historians thereafter to mean lack of complexity.¹²⁵ More than three decades later, Nash, reappraising his own scholarship wrote, “Some of these figures, as you will see, were unabashed contrarians,

¹²³ McClay, 747.

¹²⁴ Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement*.

¹²⁵ Conversation with George Nash. Philadelphia, PA., April 2012.

even toward one another—a useful reminder that conservatism is not the same as conformity.”¹²⁶
Nash’s work is still the place to begin to look at the category of conservative intellectuals.

Nash’s study of conservative intellectuals is not without scrutiny. His study is sometimes ignored because he was considered a sympathizer; he dedicated *Reappraising the Right* to Russell Kirk’s wife, Annette Kirk.¹²⁷ Contemporary historians, such as Jennifer Burns, criticize Nash for being both “partisan” and “romantic” in his record of post-Second World War conservatism. In other words, Nash’s ideology trumped historical methodology, in Burns’ opinion.¹²⁸ Other contemporaries of Burns, including historian Andrew Hartman, do not fault Nash for his methodology because, from his historical perspective, postwar conservatism would have necessarily seemed monolithic.¹²⁹

Nash’s tome set the tone for the push to minimize the study of conservative intellectuals into workable groups. Other historians chose to re-narrativize the story of conservative intellectuals as response to Nash. Jonathan Schoenwald’s *A Time for Choosing: The Rise of Modern American Conservatism* looks at the transformation of conservatism immediately after Barry Goldwater’s loss in 1964. He looks to important political campaigns including Reagan’s 1966 gubernatorial race and William Buckley’s failed mayoral run in New York. Jerome Himmelstein’s *To the Right: The Transformation of American Conservatism* connects the neo-

¹²⁶ George Nash, *Reappraising the Right: The Past and Future of American Conservatism* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2009), xvii.

¹²⁷ For recent trends of histories of conservatism that go beyond the postwar era to find a conservative framework, see Patrick Allitt, *The Conservatives: Ideas and Personalities Throughout American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010) and Gregory Schneider, *The Conservative Century: From Reaction to Revolution* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009).

¹²⁸ Jennifer Burns, “In Retrospect: George Nash’s The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945,” *Reviews in American History* 32 (2004): 456.

¹²⁹ Andrew Hartman, “Do You Still Read George Nash?,” *U.S. Intellectual History*, March 18, 2011, <http://us-intellectual-history.blogspot.com/2011/03/do-you-still-read-george-nash.html>, accessed June 12, 2012. The main reason Nash could make the case for conservatism as a monolithic entity was because most conservatives congregated around William Buckley and his publication *National Review*. The avenues of participation in conservatism were few.

conservatives of the 1980s all the way back to what he terms the Old Right of the immediate postwar era. This transformation included making a political ideology out of religion and capitalism. In *The World Turned Right Side Up*, Godfrey Hodgson paints a broad picture of conservatism as movement built on a plethora of conflicting ideologies. These three books portray conservatism, not as a forceful intellectual movement as Nash did, but as conservatism as a new wave ideology built on race, marginalization, and business interests proliferated through the ideology of free enterprise and religion.¹³⁰ These books are indicative of the kind of books on conservative intellectuals that miss the mark by connecting them to the same ideology and ultimately minions in service for the Republican Party.

Beyond the ideology drama studies, there are two main avenues historians study conservative intellectuals after Nash. There are group studies (these include researching prominent conservative groups like the southern agrarians), or biographies (examples are biography of William Buckley, Jr., Whittaker Chambers, and Ayn Rand).¹³¹ The group studies show both cohesion and complexity in the same time and space. Paul Murphy's *The Rebuke of History* and David Hoever's *The New Humanism* gave a voice to particular groups of those included into the rubric of conservatism without reducing them to just conservatives. Groups such as the New Humanists often appear to die out, only to find a voice in a new generation of conservatives. The groupings on the other hand seem too neat and fail to expand outside of the traditional apogees of "agrarian" "southern" "traditionalist" and so on. Alternatively, biographies

¹³⁰ Jerome L. Himmelstein, *To The Right: The Transformation of American Conservatism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Godfrey Hodgson, *The World Turned Right Side Up: A History of the Conservative Ascendancy in America* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996); and Jonathan M. Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing: The Rise of Modern American Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

¹³¹ Examples of group studies include Paul V. Murphy, *The Rebuke of History* and J. David Hoever, *The New Humanism: A Critique of Modern America, 1900-1940* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977). For examples of biography see, Jennifer Burns, *Goddess of the Market*; Michael Kimmage, *The Conservative Turn: Lionel Trilling, Whittaker Chambers, and The Lessons of Anti-Communism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Bogus, *Buckley*.

limit the scope of conservatism further and intentionally escape the complexity of any milieu by studying one main figure such as Buckley or Kirk, as opposed to the groupings or Nash's big historical schemata. On the other hand, Michael Kimmage's *The Conservative Turn, which is a dual political/intellectual history of Whittaker Chambers and Lionel Trilling*, seek to overcome the weaknesses of a general biography and the group studies by including each thinker in a different framework.

Now, there is a substratum of both of these approaches as well. A new wave of what I might call "Americanization" studies of conservatism. Drew Maciag and Corey Robin are demonstrating that American conservatives—predominantly the traditionalist wing of conservatism—Americanized European thinkers like Edmund Burke by taking them out of context or radicalizing them.¹³² These studies are in the history of ideas vein, popularized by Arthur Lovejoy before the middle of the twentieth century.¹³³ While they are successful and useful in demonstrating how an idea changes over time, they never seem to go beyond considering the *idea in contradiction*. A greater difficulty brought into the light by these Americanization studies is the problem of context. Context and ideas never seem to meet outside of the realm of ideology in most studies of American conservatism.¹³⁴ Hayden White is useful here when he said that historians should study intellectuals in hopes of understanding their

¹³² Corey Robin, *The Reactionary Mind: From Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Matthew Mancini, *Alexis de Tocqueville and American Intellectuals: From His Times to Ours* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), and Drew Maciag, *The Americanization of Edmund Burke* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

¹³³ Arthur Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being; A Study of the History of an Idea* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960, c1936). Lovejoy's account is criticized for taking an idea out of context and attempting to understand it outside of its historical circumstances. See, Tim Lacy, "What Is U.S. Intellectual History? Toward A More Definite Identity" *U.S. Intellectual History*, March 9, 2007, <http://us-intellectual-history.blogspot.com/2007/03/what-is-us-intellectual-history-toward.html>, accessed August 26, 2012.

¹³⁴ The December 2011 roundtable on American conservatism is the best resource to delve into this discussion. Specifically see Wilfred McClay's response to Kim Phillips-Fein, Wilfred McClay, "Less Boilerplate, More Symmetry," *The Journal of American History* 98 (2011).

history as opposed to settling an ideological score. In this quote, White writes about his own research concerning American polymath Henry Adams. “In saying that a given text represents a type of meaning production, we are not reducing the text to the status of an effect of some casual force conceived to be more basic than that of meaning production in general,” White writes in his explanation that intellectual history should be more than weighing objectivity against subjectivity.¹³⁵ “By unpacking the rich symbolic content of Adams’s work, we de-sublimate it and return it to its status as an immanent product of the culture in which it arose,” White says, and explains of how to write a good intellectual history.” Few of the aforementioned approaches rise beyond the level of looking for the secret key to American conservatism and ideology.

While there are more recent texts that are changing the seemingly never-ending chain of histories that see conservatism as only an ideology, debate about the new complexity within the field of the history of conservatism is lively. The recent roundtable in *The Journal of American History* between Kim Phillips-Fein and Wilfred McClay is summarized earlier in the chapter. The gist of the conversation was that both historians agreed that much more work needs to be done on American conservatism, especially towards its intellectuals, before historians can claim success. It is in that vein that my research seeks to open doors that have not been considered previously.

Methods Utilized for this Study

The key analytical tools utilized in this study are used to demonstrate the relationship between imagination, text, action (specifically reenactment), and social territory. Of course, ideology is a silent partner throughout the study too, but my discussion of it is limited as it is not

¹³⁵ Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 213. White’s essay, “The Context in the Text” is appropriately both a guide and a kind of manifesto for how to write intellectual history.

the major thrust of this project.¹³⁶ Studying intellectual life in this manner—via intertwining relationship between imagination, text, action, and social territory—allows one to see the complex, and often-unintentional transformation of ideas into ideology. Postwar conservatism was full of what philologist Brian Stock called “textual communities.” These communities filtered imagination through seminal texts, in turn reenacting ideas of the past, which enabled them to map social territory, thus defining boundaries between one kind of conservatism against another.

Reviewing Stock’s Literature on Textual Communities

Brian Stock wrote *The Implications of Literacy* in 1983. It was his second monograph and his most important. He was trained as an intellectual historian at Cambridge. Stock specializes in literature and society in late antiquity. He is also a scholar of Augustine, the history of reading, and church history during the middle ages. Stock has four major publications including *Implications*, *Myth and Science in the Twelfth Century* (1972), *Listening for the Text* (1990), and *After Augustine* (2001). All of Stock’s publications, after *Implications*, essentially deal with the idea that texts play an active role in experience through the production of human action. In essence, Stock believes that people take ideas from books and make everyday decisions based on them. Texts are seminal intermediate moorings in Stock’s summation of culture. Stock’s research is broad enough that it can be applied to a variety of settings.

¹³⁶ See Kim Phillips-Fein, “Conservatism: A State of the Field,” *The Journal of American History* 98 (2011): 723-743; and Alan Brinkley, “The Problem of American Conservatism,” *American Historical Review*, 99 (April 1994), 409–29; Susan Yohn, “Will the Real Conservative Please Stand Up? Or, the Pitfalls Involved in Examining Ideological Sympathies: A Comment on Alan Brinkley’s ‘Problem of American Conservatism,’” *ibid.*, 430–37; Leo P. Ribuffo, “Why Is There So Much Conservatism in the United States and Why Do So Few Historians Know Anything about It?,” *ibid.*, 438–449.

For the purposes of this study, it is necessary to include a review of Stock's 1983 publication *The Implications of Literacy*. This particular publication of Stock's is significant because it is where he first fleshes out his idea of textual communities. He did so in the context of eleventh and twelfth century Europe. The basis for his research was to demonstrate the changing authority structures as culture transitioned from oral to written, illiterate to literate. Depending on how *Implications* is read, one could also make the case that authority structures did not necessarily change so much as they did to adapt to texts and the new literacy.

The Implications of Literacy is a tome about the relationship between literacy and oral culture in the Middle Ages. Stock demonstrated that literacy equaled neither the death of oral discourse nor the dawn of a new age of individual enlightenment. Authority structures merely adapted from the old oral structures to texts. Possibly the best way to say this is that oral culture became subservient to texts because new authority figures vocalized texts to the illiterate. Communities formed around these new literate interpreters and lived in a way that was pleasing to the interpreter, because the interpreter had supposedly divine knowledge of the texts. Stock uses several case studies to show how privileged literate interpreters interpreted texts to a textual community.

Textual communities are “groups of people whose social activities are centered around texts, or more precisely, around a literate interpreter of them.”¹³⁷ Textual communities require the presence of a privileged (and a literate/semi-literate) interpreter who will build a worldview around interpretation of certain texts. The role of privileged interpreter is both educative and pastoral. The presence of textual communities ensures that the privileged interpreter's ministry is

¹³⁷ Brian C. Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 522.

public and open to view. These textual communities eventually became sectarian and doctrinaire based on the interpreters explanation of the texts. Particularly, Stock focused his research on textual communities in the context of scattered heresies between the millennium and 1050 and the Patarene movement in the diocese of Milan between 1057 and 1075.¹³⁸

The thrust of the notion of privileged interpreter is that these people take a text and retranslate it for an audience. The re-translation process is often political and with serious motivations for the present. Take for instance Stock's second case study where he looks at Monforte in 1028. The case studies of textual communities are all based on religious heresy controversies. Therefore, privileged interpreters and textual communities fleshed out there specific doctrines in these controversies. In Monforte, a few nobles were involved in heresies that concerned duty, ritual, and theological purity.¹³⁹ This heretical event was an opportunity for a man called Gerard to set forth a worldview for his followers by creating a practical theology. Another man named Aribert challenged Gerard's public confessions of faith. Aribert was eventually convinced that Gerard and his sect were heretics because Gerard's doctrines were not in line with orthodox Catholic theology.¹⁴⁰

Aribert led an ambush against Gerard and his followers and his followers were given the choice between death and orthodoxy. The author explains that Gerard was an erudite man who used texts as "the justification for eliminating any intermediary between God and man."¹⁴¹ The interpreter demonstrated that salvation came through illumination and reason, says Stock. Heretics and heresy were considered a threat to the status quo. For this reason, textual

¹³⁸ Stock, *The Implications of Literacy*, 88.

¹³⁹ Stock, 139-145.

¹⁴⁰ Stock, 143.

¹⁴¹ Stock, 145.

communities were often considered subversive to authority structures. However, these textual communities also played a seminal role in reforming established religion, and in Stock's case, the reformation of monasticism specifically. Heretics were not the only ones to live out texts; the faithful were just as devout as their opposition. While heresy was often treated harshly, these new "heretical" tropes were important to reviving faith in each age.

Stock organized *Implications* into five sections. In the first section, he traces the two traditions of oral and written culture. What emerged out of these two traditions was not very different from previous authority structures where elites ruled. As literacy spread, elites would lose power in stages. Stock shows that quantitative restructuring happened between rationalist literature and a heretical literature that is often imaginative and personal in nature. The most fruitful section of *Implications* deals with the place of texts, interpreters, and symbols in intellectual history. Texts essentially took on their own kind of agency as literacy spread. Especially as literacy spread and gave birth to criticism, texts could be seen as living because of their prominent place as culture transmitting agents. For example, Christians speak of the idea of the living word (Bible) and strive to be imitators of Christ through absorption of the text. Stock's idea of texts as agents of culture has important implications regarding postmodern theory, which sees power as institutional and hegemonic.

Stock disagrees with the theory that all ideas are institutional and subject to greater authority structures. Textual communities created worldviews often outside of organized authority. While privileged interpreters were often the first stage of a new power vacuum, this kind of grand formation was unusual. Even textual communities, once large enough, were subject to heretical players and dissent. We might relate this example to how certain American cult groups have lived apart from the rest of society or how organized groups such as

the Pennsylvania Amish have chosen lives of passive dissent as opposed to living by the demands of culture. Ideas, as Stock sees them, are greater than institutions.

Textual communities did not perish after the privileged interpreted died either. “From the formation of communities to implement ideas and to draw up lines of debate, it was a short step to focusing on inherited attitudes towards ritual and symbol and to the evolution of a critique of the nature of observable reality,” writes Stock.¹⁴² Textual communities may begin in a porous fashion but eventually entrance means that specific rituals and symbols must be observed. This is especially true after the death of the privileged interpreter where textual communities must redefine themselves as *most like* the privileged interpreter. Stock writes, “ritual was chiefly expressed as a form of interaction among the members; that is, the rules or dicta were written, but the consequences were acted out orally.”¹⁴³ Textual communities, if large enough, become “systematic.” Ideology naturally increases with each successive generation of the textual community.

The greater implication, according to Stock, is that texts served as the new intermediary between “orally transmitted ideas and social change.”¹⁴⁴ This opened the possibility for time travel through the creation of alternate realities. History could be altered for through the lens of traditionalism or progressivism depending on the community. Texts became of greater importance as intent became the target of rendering a path through the fast-pace of modernity.

As the importance of texts increased so did the necessity and importance of interpretation. Interpretation fell between the opposing sides of objective and subjective. There was an official kind of interpretation that was often institutional, such as through official laity of

¹⁴² Stock, 523.

¹⁴³ Stock, 529.

¹⁴⁴ Stock, 527.

the Catholic Church. Unofficial interpretations, such as that of textual community, produced heretical interpretations of history. It became more difficult to put heresy down as literacy spread, though. Furthermore, as Stock demonstrates so well, the modern world and its opposing forces of subjective and objective made it ever more difficult to determine what warranted the label of heresy. The two tropes of heresy and the authoritative/official narrative worked hand-in-hand as its own kind of culture-making device. We might example the Protestant Reformation in this vein, as official doctrine collided with heresy to create a new religiosity based on the reading of texts, specifically the Bible.¹⁴⁵

A collection of Stock's essays titled *Listening for the Text* was published in 1990. These essays were a rejoinder and expansion of his ideas published years earlier in *The Implications of Literacy*. Stock says that literacy increases orality, which is something he hinted at in *Implications*. Texts are essentially everywhere in everyday life; this, he says, is what hermeneutics cannot explain. As an intellectual historian, Stock also used this publication to distance himself from postmodernism. In the first essay, he explains his concept of textual communities further. Discourse is not impersonally hegemonic because the human factor cannot be diminished from epistemology. Micro-societies (textual communities) play a greater role in human understanding than does the official discourse of institutions.

Again in the third chapter, Stock comments on postmodernists again. His accusation is that they—he also uses the term post-structuralism here—seek to frame all history under new myths and a basic metanarrative that revolves around power. This is a direct mortar against French theorist Michel Foucault and his many followers. Stock says that each historian must

¹⁴⁵ Charles Taylor is a philosopher known for his historical renderings of modernity. In his most recent monograph, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007) he retells what he considers to be the new narrative of secularism.

create a new picture with each age; power structures reflect the concerns of the historian in other words.¹⁴⁶ In chapter seven he deals directly with textual communities. Textual communities create traditions. Tradition is a created historical narrative between what happened in the past and what did not take place, Stock writes. The members of a textual community use texts to create important historical dimensions to its membership. According to Stock, there is always the dimension of the enlightened few against the masses that keep the textual communities active and resistant to authority.

After the turn of the century, Stock published *After Augustine*. He sheds more light on his theory of the relationship between texts, ideas, and action. Specifically he is concerned with the life of the reader. For Stock, the reader is a kind of philosopher who is supposed to participate in the past by living it out in the present. In the first chapter, Stock makes an integral historical delineation. His claim is that moderns participate in reading as an analytic tool only. In the Middle Ages, mimesis or imitating some else was an actuality. Rationality, on the other hand, has kept modern readers from participating with texts and from knowing the value of the life of a philosopher. *Ethics through literature: ascetic and aesthetic reading in Western culture* is a follow up to *After Augustine*. In essence it is the logical conclusion of Stock's theory of reading, which is that reading produces, or should produce, a lived ethic in the reader. In this vein Stock's latest publication, *Augustine's Inner Dialogue*, is monograph but it also serves as a manifesto about how to return to an ethics through reading and mimicking ideas through action. Stock is calling his readers to a life of philosophy towards an inner spiritual dialogue.¹⁴⁷ All of these texts

¹⁴⁶ Stock, *Listening for the Text*, 94.

¹⁴⁷ Brian Stock, *After Augustine: The Meditative Reader and The Text* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001) and *Augustine's Inner Dialogue: The Philosophical Soliloquy in Late Antiquity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

included in Stock's post-*Implications* period flesh out his conceptualization of textual communities and act of reading in an active fashion.

Overcoming Methodological Inaccuracies through Textual Communities

American conservatism was a movement built on texts.¹⁴⁸ Its intellectuals constantly reiterated important texts throughout their careers and fought wars over acceptable canon.¹⁴⁹ Canon was important to conservatives because they were arguing for an intellectual legacy against liberalism. They could not begin their projects with Jo'hn Locke, as Louis Hartz had done in 1955, because they believed America's past was a liberal one. In order to make conservatism permanent, they linked conservatism to supposed "conservative" texts. Thus, texts were much more important in the postwar world where many sought out cultural authority and a usable past.¹⁵⁰ The unprecedented amount of new information—before it was called "the information age"—gave people like Russell Kirk a greater amount of leverage.

¹⁴⁸ I cannot emphasize enough the importance of texts to conservatism. *Human Events*, ISI.org, *The Claremont Review of Books*, and the Young America's Foundation all produced regular lists of books conservatives must read. ISI and The Liberty Fund house book presses that print books specifically for consumption by conservatives. The Conservative Book Club has maintained a regular clientele for years too. For two examples of books written by conservatives for the purposes of guiding conservatives to the right texts see, Lee Edwards, *Reading the Right Books: A Guide for the Intelligent Conservative* (Washington D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 2009) and Benjamin Wiker, *10 Books Every Conservative Must Read: Plus Four Not to Miss and One Impostor* (Washington D.C.: Regnery, 2010).

¹⁴⁹ For a couple of examples of conservatives writing about acceptable canon see, Russell Kirk ed., *The Portable Conservative Reader* (New York: Viking Press, 1982) and Edwin Feulner ed., *The March of Freedom: Modern Classics in Conservative Thought* (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Books, 2003). One should note the great differences in canon between Feulner, the president of The Heritage Foundation, and Kirk the traditionalist historian.

¹⁵⁰ Historically my claim that Kirk was the first postwar conservative to link texts to history, and his ability to understand how overwhelming information was in a hyper-literate America is supported in a later intellectual event known as the culture wars. For examples of literature with the guiding principle of what to read see, Allan Bloom, *Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987) and William Bennett, *The Educated Child: A Parent's Guide From Preschool Through Eighth Grade* (New York: Free Press, 2000). There are also many other examples of this guiding literature and authors the readily provided this examples also including Mortimer Alder, Francis Schaeffer (both Schaeffer and Adler were Kirk's contemporaries) and recently Susan Wise Bauer.

Textual communities then became more of a feature and integral part of American conservatism because of the essentiality of texts. The creation and growth of conservative textual communities shows the relationship, as previously mentioned, between imagination, text, action, and social territory. It should be noted that not all textual communities operated in the same way or garnered similar results. I will not example a conservative textual community because of redundancy in regards to the following four chapters, which will focus exclusively on Russell Kirk, Paul Gottfried, Christopher Lasch, and John Lukacs and their followers.

Textual communities may begin as loose associations but greater form follows. There is a three-fold process to creating firm textual communities. First, the privileged interpreter vocalizes the texts. This happens, Stock writes, through lectures, personal contact, letters, and any form of communication that is extra-textual. Second, there is an educative process. This happens from reading of assigned texts, memorization, and includes a public ministry where boundaries are made for the purposes of exclusivity. The third step involves “historicizing the community” or giving the group a past.¹⁵¹ Each of the four historians in this research were revisionists—many liberal critics would consider them heretics—because they reconstituted the present with a new past. The third step also includes teaching followers how to be conservative by leading them to further corrective texts (continually revising the canon) and a lifestyle of reaction against the enemy.¹⁵² If an enemy does not exist, opposition does however. In other words, a textual

¹⁵¹ Stock, *Listening for the Text*, 25-26.

¹⁵² For a good recent book on how postwar conservatives demonize an enemy to historicize their communities see, Andrew Hartman, *Education and the Cold War: The Battle for the American School* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011). Hartman is correct when he contends that generations of American conservatives used John Dewey as a punching bag. The author may or may not have intended to demonstrate how this move demonstrates integral building blocks and doorways for textual communities in that they serve as markers for induction into these communities.

community is more often than not created with opposition in mind, which serves as a perpetuating force.¹⁵³

The Limits of Textual Communities

Admittedly, the study of textual communities is a kind of subset of intellectual history. Intellectual history, as Peter Gordon defines it is “intellectual history is the study of intellectuals, ideas, and intellectual patterns over time.”¹⁵⁴ In regards to this research, it means studying an era’s prominent intellectuals in hopes of a better understanding of the culture and era they lived through. The purpose is not to show the studied intellectuals as lacking as much as it is to demonstrate why they made particular choices. As a philosopher of history, Hayden White, has reiterated throughout his career, historians participate and create their own fictions. This process he defines as a kind of re-sublimation of history. What White means by this, as Herman Paul explains, is that the historical profession is stuck in its nineteenth century mooring towards empirical explanations.¹⁵⁵ That is essentially where Christopher Lasch, Russell Kirk, John Lukacs, and Paul Gottfried are seminal to understanding mid to late twentieth century intellectual history. All four historians re-sublimated history according to a particular choice of historical imagination. Each historian’s idea of imagination was different, of course, but each of them coalesced around the idea that anchoring the present in an alternative past was fruitful, rewarding even. Each historian was attempting to instill a kind of historical consciousness into the public’s idea of a civic virtue. Historical consciousness is defined as a way of thinking about the present

¹⁵³ James McPherson, “Revisionist Historians,” *Perspectives*, September 2003, <http://historians.org/Perspectives/issues/2003/0309/0309pre1.cfm>, accessed September 2, 2013. McPherson’s article is relevant because he discusses whether all history is revisionist, and whether or not historians necessarily write from a political standpoint.

¹⁵⁴ Peter Gordon, “What is Intellectual History? A Frankly Partisan Introduction to a Frequently Misunderstood Field” <http://history.fas.harvard.edu/people/faculty/documents/pgordon-whatistellhist.pdf>, self-published, accessed August 28, 2012.

¹⁵⁵ Herman Paul, *Hayden White: The Historical Imagination* (Malden: Polity Press, 2011), 119.

with the past as an active agent in determining choice.¹⁵⁶ This dissertation is an intellectual history that deals as much with sublime non-empirical subject matters as it does empirical issues such as politics or economics.¹⁵⁷

A problem not overcome by textual communities, as explained above, was that Gottfried, Lasch, Kirk, and Lukacs were dealing in imagination, fictions, and the sublime. One of the remaining questions about both conservatism and America is who owns America's history? Do origins matter or can we change our history and institutions based on altering history through imagination? Historians are still debating the same questions that Louis Hartz, Lionel Trilling, and Russell Kirk were arguing about at mid-century.¹⁵⁸ The method of textual communities will not settle political questions, although it is helpful as a tool to understand how conservatism grew quickly in such a short period. If anything, the methods of textual communities and intellectual history raise more questions than they answer, which is not necessarily a negative, given that research on mid-century intellectuals is still in its infancy. Textual communities may reveal why conservatives chose conservatism, but they do not settle the issue of whether America is liberal, conservative, or something entirely different.

Conclusion

¹⁵⁶ A good example of historical consciousness is Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, c1981, 2007). Both Kirk and Lukacs used the term "historical consciousness."

¹⁵⁷ Daniel Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011). Rodgers attempted a large-scale analysis of what essentially amounted to an intellectual history of historical consciousness, although he does not call it that.

¹⁵⁸ Most recently, this debate has shifted to an argument about whether America was founded as a Christian nation or not. Historians David Barton and John Fea have both debated this question see, John Fea, *Was America Founded As a Christian Nation?: A Historical Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011) and David Barton, *Original Intent: The Courts, The Constitution & Religion* (Aledo: WallBuilder Press, 1996). Barton's most recent book, *The Jefferson Lies* was halted by its original publisher because of other historians' problems with what they consider Barton's historical inaccuracies.

I began this chapter by demonstrating why thinking about conservatism as a monolithic political machination is misleading. Conservative intellectuals rarely agreed, even about anti-communism. Previous approaches to the study of conservative intellectuals from both the left and right tend to downplay complexity in favor of synthesis. The strength of the concept of textual communities is the ability to demonstrate how and why imagination played such a large and misunderstood role in conservatism. It shows overlap, contradiction, and the interplay of ideology within imagination and, in doing so, it is not afraid to expose or even embrace complexities. However, it is exactly these contradictions that limit textual communities' ability to link these ambiguities to a strict empirical analysis. Complexity and the creation of fictions is as much a product of textual communities as are finality and certainty.

Yet the method of textual communities should not be abandoned because it reveals more complexity and begs further re-interpretation. Textual communities are a method that provides insight to better understand the role of intellectuals in Cold-War America, mid-century America, where information grew rapidly and people sought some form of cultural authority.¹⁵⁹ This is the background for which the four historians created what we term textual communities and in which they saw themselves as virtuous dissenters from a people without a strong sense of the role of tradition in the formation of community. "For such groups normally see themselves as small units within the whole: they are dissenters and reformers, whose social dramas are played out against the backdrop of a larger world," Stock writes.¹⁶⁰ Textual communities operate and act on the belief that they are wanderers and pilgrims against the zombified masses, whether that is true or not. This may explain the reactionary tendencies and attitude of many postwar conservatives,

¹⁵⁹ For two appraisals concerning the nature of cultural authority in America see, Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* and Roger Lundin, *From Nature to Experience: The American Search for Cultural Authority* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005).

¹⁶⁰ Stock, *Listening for the Text*, 153.

too. Conservative textual communities, which were often traditional, even out-dated, changed the trajectory of an America dominated by respected liberal scholars from Horace Greeley to John Dewey and Lionel Trilling. These textual communities revamped nostalgia and made imagination an active idea to combat liberalism.¹⁶¹ These new conservatives held texts closely and lived them out. The narrative of the text was active and life changing.¹⁶² The experience of the texts was different for each textual community. It is the use of historical imagination embodied through texts that allowed the four historians studied here, and their textual communities, to create or try to create at least an altered reality.¹⁶³ The following quote from Gabrielle Spiegel demonstrates the above statement in a precise manner: The “past [became] a repository of...dreams and desires, both because it [could] offer up a consoling image of what once was and is no longer, and because it [contained] the elements by which to reopen the contest, to offer an alternative vision to a now unpalatable present.”¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ The revamping of nostalgia generally takes two avenues: historical consciousness/re-creation of the past through scholarship and community. By revamping nostalgia through community, it allows conservatives to locate their conservative in a particular tone whether it is religion, nationality, or occupation. For a view of these perspectives see, John Lukacs, *Destinations Past: Traveling Through History with John Lukacs* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1994) and George W. Carey and Bruce Frohnen ed., *Community and Tradition: Conservative Perspectives on the American Experience* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998).

¹⁶² Stock, *After Augustine*, 35-36.

¹⁶³ In the June 2012 issues of the *The American Historical Review* there is a roundtable concerning the idea of “turns” among academic historians. Serving as a commentator on the three lead essays, Nathan Perl-Rosenthal suggests that the turns are generational. “Comment: Generational Turns,” 804-813. One could easily see textual communities as revealing much about generations of conservatives.

¹⁶⁴ Gabriele Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 211-12.

Chapter 3: Russell Kirk creates American Conservatism

Chapter Abstract

I begin this chapter with a short biography of postwar American conservative Russell Kirk. The biographical section is followed with a section on secondary research on Kirk. I show that recent Kirk scholars have made progress, but that there is more than enough room to consider Kirk's scholarship outside of both hagiography and critical biography. Most importantly, it is time to re-contextualize Kirk as an intellectual among other intellectuals, and a product of a line of scholastic-thinking Americans that has existed since well before he came onto the scene in 1953. To conclude the first section of this chapter, I summarize and explain the significance of Kirk's historiography during his 40-plus year career.

In the following four sections, I consider Kirk's conservatism in relationship to imagination, texts, action, and social territory. In the first section, I show the importance of imagination to Kirkean conservatism; as a result, imagination became an often unnoticed, but the penultimate trope among the different conservative schools and individuals that made up postwar conservatism. In the second section, I look at how Kirk used texts to create and canonize American conservatism. Texts served as a partnered interlocutor for Kirkeanism. The final two sections address how Kirk defined his textual community as a privileged interpreter through the combination of action and the creation of a conservative social territory. In the conclusion, I show how Kirk made the role of imagination, particularly historical imagination, of greater importance to following generations of conservatives.

“(Russell) Kirk assembled a tradition, and he did it deliberately.”

Matthew Davis, a former research assistant to Russell Kirk.¹⁶⁵

The Cracking Consensus

Conservatism is now an accepted political tradition in the United States but that was not always the case. As the Second World War concluded in 1945, there were Republicans and

¹⁶⁵ Interview with Matthew Davis. Interview by Seth Bartee. September 2012.

Democrats in America. There were isolationists in the fashion of Republican senator Robert Taft and variations of liberals that extended from working-class Democrats to Communist fellow travelers. But conservatism and conservatives were terms that had not yet made it into American vernacular.¹⁶⁶

As with the movement of many ideas, rumblings concerning an American conservatism began trickling down after the Second World War and soon America's top intellectuals were debating its existence and place in American intellectual life. Respected scholars Louis Hartz and Lionel Trilling both attempted to quell what they considered a youthful fervor for conservatism by demonstrating that America held a predisposition towards liberalism. Hartz's well-known and oft repeated book, *The Liberal Tradition in America*, set the standard not only for liberal and left critiques against conservatism, but also found a voice among conservative critics against the New Right.¹⁶⁷ Hartz argued that America was radical in its origins and without stock conservative feudal institutions like the ones found in Europe, such as landed gentry. Trilling was less sanguine than Hartz concerning the prominence of liberalism. However, instead of abandoning liberalism, he thought it needed reimagining. "It is one of the tendencies of liberalism to simplify, and this tendency is natural in view of the effort which liberalism makes to organize the elements of life in a rational way," he wrote.¹⁶⁸ Trilling was worried that liberalism had accepted the spirit of "delegation" and "organizational impulse" without concern

¹⁶⁶ A good recent article on the changing faces of American conservatism is Hyrum Lewis, "Historians and the Myth of American Conservatism," *The Journal of The Historical Society* 12 (2012): 27-45.

¹⁶⁷ Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1955); Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* (New York: Viking Press, 1950). For criticisms of early postwar conservatism from a conservative's perspective see, Clinton Rossiter, *Conservatism in America* (New York: Knopf, 1955); Samuel Huntington, "Conservatism as an Ideology," *American Political Science Review* 51 (June 1957) 454-473; Morton Auerbach, *The Conservative Illusion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959).

¹⁶⁸ Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination*, xiv.

for ideas.¹⁶⁹ Still Trilling and Hartz never abandoned liberalism for reasons of tradition and hope. Hartz (more so than Trilling) was part of a larger school of academic historians referred to as the consensus school. The consensus school believed that the American experience was similar in that the core was a kind of cosmopolitan liberalism.¹⁷⁰

The consensus historians boasted some of American history's greatest public intellectuals of the mid to late twentieth century. Columbia historian Richard Hofstadter was the winner of two Pulitzer prizes in the years of 1956 and 1964. In both prize winning books—*The Age of Reform* and *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*—Hofstadter attacked the hinterlands of American intellectual life. He found democratic life contentious, contradictory, obtusely radical, and anti-bourgeois.¹⁷¹ However, as an academic liberal and a perfunctory anti-conservative, he chose not to abandon ship for conservatism either. Like Trilling, Hofstadter held out hope that liberalism would remain tied to a tradition that could be found among America's brightest founders.¹⁷² Hofstadter's negative opinion towards radicalism, and any ideology critical of bourgeois liberalism, was the consensus among a roster of hallmark liberal historians that included Daniel Boorstin, Louis Hartz, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., political scientist Robert Dahl, and sociologists Daniel Bell and Seymour Martin Lipset. These thinkers celebrated the new American century and often downplayed conflict such as the Civil Rights movement, populist

¹⁶⁹ Trilling, xiv.

¹⁷⁰ Eileen Cheng, *Historiography: An Introductory Guide* (New York: Continuum, 2012), 118.

¹⁷¹ David S. Brown, *Richard Hofstadter: An Intellectual Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). Brown shows Hofstadter at war with the New Left and radicalism.

¹⁷² Richard Hofstadter, *America at 1750; A Social Portrait* (New York: Knopf, 1971). This was Hofstadter's last book. In it, he evidenced the lives of ordinary people and the contradictory nature of democratic life. For an example of Hofstadter's bourgeois tendencies against the radicalism of the New Left see, Richard Hofstadter, *Great Issues in American History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969) and Richard Hofstadter ed., *American Higher Education: A Documentary History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968, c1961).

uprisings, and otherwise general reactions to the liberal consensus that dominated American politics from the Great Depression until the election of Ronald Reagan as president.¹⁷³

To various degrees, these debates about consensus and conflict were largely arguments among liberals about the nature of American liberalism. The debates were intense and serious enough to open up some room for critics, however.¹⁷⁴ The American philosopher of democracy John Dewey died in 1952, and with him perished an era when American liberalism dominated the precious triumvirate of politics, literature, and philosophy—a strange mixture that made up a uniquely American civil religion.¹⁷⁵ The liberal imagination was about to be usurped by an opposing force with a new voice. The quote below from August Heckscher in 1953 is an example of the new fervor for conservatism that swept America at mid-century.

“The outstanding fact about conservatism in America is that as a force it was hideously distorted in the bitter fires of the past twenty years. A whole generation has been brought up to suppose that conservatism is essentially negative and sterile, and that it is represented by the kind of groups, which fought to the death against the New Deal and the Fair Deal. Men, who called themselves conservatives, wildly attacked the New Deal and the Fair Deal after it. However, in truth these were mainly the advocates of a purer and more orthodox brand of liberalism. They objected to the government’s program in the name of *laissez faire*. They attacked centralization,

¹⁷³ The consensus historians were not without challengers. For examples of challenges to this school from the left see, C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of The New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1951); William A. Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (New York: Dell Pub.Co., 1962); Christopher Lasch, *The American Liberals and The Russian Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962).

¹⁷⁴ Michael Kazin, *American Dreamers: How The Left Changed a Nation* (New York: Knopf, 2011). Kazin highlights the peak and trough of the American left and how the movement struggled to maintain its composure following the conclusion of the progressive era.

¹⁷⁵ Robert Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” *Daedalus* 96 (1967): 1-21. Bellah first coined the term “civil religion” in this article. Bellah explained later that civil religion does not mean national self-worship but “religious self-understanding.” See, Bellah’s explanation at Robert Bellah.com, http://www.robertbellah.com/articles_5.htm, accessed August 29, 2012.

government by decree, excessive bureaucracy and the rest —not as a Burke or a Disraeli would have attacked them, because they chilled an inner spirit of growth and development, but almost precisely in the terms of the nineteenth-century Manchester economists. The result was that crowds of young men left our colleges with the idea that conservatism offered no useful insights to any of the modern dilemmas.”¹⁷⁶

Kirk and the General Reaction against Liberalism

The above quotation is from a thinker not considered a canon conservative, but who was thinking outside of the domain of liberalism at the same time an obscure Michigander by the name of Russell Kirk forever changed the prospects for American conservatives. Russell Kirk published a book titled *The Conservative Mind* in 1953. *The Conservative Mind* was an unexpected book for midcentury America, despite the cracking of the liberal consensus, because both world wars seemed a good riddance to the conservative European mind that was so willing sacrifice life for land and national pride.¹⁷⁷ Yet here was an American making a case for a genuine American conservatism that began in Europe with Irish polymath and politician Edmund Burke—a counter-revolutionary opponent of the French Revolution.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Bradley Birzer, “1953: Where are the American Conservatives? By August Heckscher,” *The Imaginative Conservative* (blog), November 23, 2011, <http://www.imaginativeconservative.org/2011/11/1953-where-are-american-conservatives.html#more>, accessed June 1, 2012.

¹⁷⁷ For an example of literature that celebrated a good riddance to conservative European ideas see, John Dewey, *German Philosophy and Politics* (New York: H. Holt, 1915) and George Santayana, *Egotism in German Philosophy* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1916). Dewey, who was directly influenced by Hegelian ideas, blames much of German philosophy for a blunt egotism that leads to the preference for blind duty over moral actions. Dewey's attitude was common among American intellectuals. Another example of American disdain for European ideas is Henry Luce, “The American Century,” in David Hollinger and Charles Capper ed., *The American Intellectual Tradition*, Vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 260-264. Luce's belief was that Americans should spread democratic ideals across the world.

¹⁷⁸ Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind; From Burke to Eliot* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, c1953, 1995). The original title was *From Burke to Santayana*. Kirk updated TCM from *Burke to Eliot* because Eliot was a friend and wrote a few seminal political books near the conclusion of his long career.

Kirk was a truly unique product of American industrialism and British imaginative writing. He was born in Plymouth, Michigan in 1918 and spent his summers in the small town of Mecosta, Michigan. According to Kirk scholar and friend Wesley McDonald, Kirk's two greatest influences as a child and youth were his mother and grandfather who filled his mind with the works of Samuel Johnson, Edmund Burke, Thomas Macaulay, Victor Hugo, Charles Dickens, and Mark Twain.¹⁷⁹ Having grown up in Michigan at the heart of the second American industrial revolution, the prominence of the automobile in the life of Michiganders further pushed him towards something like conservatism in the 1930s.¹⁸⁰ He became deeply cynical about Henry Ford's industrial legacy because he saw the way it segmented Detroit and destroyed communities similarly throughout Michigan. Kirk curbed the Fordist vision in his own life with a bookish attitude. He found solace in the novels of Walter Scott and many others.¹⁸¹ He completed his undergraduate education at Michigan State University, his Master's degree at Duke, and his doctorate from the University of Saint Andrews. His graduate years at the University of Saint Andrews furthered and forever colored Kirk's view of America and the possibility of conservatism. "Kirk wrote of drinking with Scottish lords and adventuring with poet-translator Roy Campbell, and he spent more time wandering through the haunted castles of old Scotland than commenting directly on the United States and its affairs," writes Gerald Russello.¹⁸² He also carried closely his friendship with poet T.S. Eliot, whom he met in 1953 in Scotland.¹⁸³ Kirk finished *The Conservative Mind* in Scotland essentially surrounded by European cultural

¹⁷⁹ W. Wesley McDonald, *Russell Kirk and the Age of Ideology* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2012, c2004), 16.

¹⁸⁰ McDonald, *Russell Kirk and the Age of Ideology*, 17-19. Kirk called automobiles "mechanical jacobins."

¹⁸¹ John J. Miller, "Russell Kirk Shaped Conservative Thought from a Northern Michigan Farm," *Traverse, Northern Michigan's Magazine*, August 16, 2010, <http://www.mynorth.com/My-North/August-2010/Russell-Kirk-Shaped-Conservative-Thought-from-a-Northern-Michigan-Farm/>, accessed September 1, 2012.

¹⁸² Gerald Russello, *The Postmodern Imagination of Russell Kirk* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 33.

¹⁸³ Russell Kirk, *The Sword of Imagination: Memoirs of a Half-Century of Literary Conflict* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), 212.

conservatism that lived on in ruins and a breed of men who ushered in a new era of imaginative thinking.

Alongside the liberal consensus, another trope of historical thinking developed in England that had a greater impact on American conservatives (even if this trajectory was only realized in totality decades after) and fleshed its way out into American society through postwar conservatives and their progeny. By 1953 JRR Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and T.S. Eliot were still alive and writing. The triumvirate gave birth to a new kind of imaginative spirit embodied in Christianity, leisure, literature, and fantasy with the characteristic of medieval theology. Kirk was especially drawn to Eliot because he believed that the past lived in him. “(I)t had been Eliot’s purpose to defend ‘lost’ causes, because he knew that no cause worth upholding is lost altogether,” Kirk wrote of his friend and mentor decades later.¹⁸⁴ Tolkien and Lewis wrote their famous fantasy books in the midst of the Second World War and general societal upheaval that they believed was detrimental to Western civilization, which had been built on tradition and mythmaking according to them. Unlike most conservatives, the imaginative writers did not blame National Socialism, Soviet Communism, and other “evils” on Europe’s long-standing conservative institutions.¹⁸⁵ They blamed democracy, enlightenment, and rationalism—views they borrowed from an earlier British imaginative writer by the name of Gilbert Keith Chesterton.

G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936) was an influential writer and journalist of the early twentieth century. He was not formally educated but others were drawn to his writing because he

¹⁸⁴ Kirk, *The Sword of Imagination*, 214.

¹⁸⁵ Historians often still miss the connections between the American right’s and the New Left’s criticism of the enlightenment. See Ross Douthat, “The Quest for Community in the Age of Obama: Nisbet’s Prescience,” *First Principles*, January 30, 2012, <http://www.firstprinciplesjournal.com/articles.aspx?article=1810>, accessed January 1, 2014.

was a unique Christian apologist.¹⁸⁶ What made his defense of Christianity so unique was that he defended it by making modernity appear irrational. In his most famous apologetic, *Orthodoxy*, Chesterton wrote: “But perhaps God is strong enough to exult in monotony. It is possible that God says every morning, ‘Do it Again’ to the sun; and every evening, ‘Do it again’ to the moon. It may not be automatic necessity that makes all daises alike; it may be that God makes every daisy separately, but has never got tired of making them.”¹⁸⁷ We see in Chesterton that his logic was otherworldly and somewhat medieval. His Christian epistemology was a reaction against scientism, industrialism, formal education, and the mechanical culture of the modern world. The fact that moderns believed everything in the world could be measured, calculated, and exacted was a form of insanity, Chesterton believed.

Tolkien and Lewis took the next step and wrote fantasy with a strong Chestertonian quality. Tolkien’s protagonist Frodo Baggins was on the edge of danger constantly, and his journey included life-threatening adventure and a sense that the soul is always at stake. Chesterton wrote, “But to a Christian existence is a story, which may end up in any way. In a thrilling novel (that purely Christian product), the hero is not eaten by cannibals; but it is essential to the existence of the thrill that he *might* be eaten by cannibals. The hero must (so to speak) be an eatable hero. So, Christian morals have always said to the man, not that he would lose his soul, but that he must take care that he didn’t.”¹⁸⁸ Much like Tolkien’s, Lewis’ characters in *The Chronicles of Narnia* found themselves in situations that tested the soul in the midst of a

¹⁸⁶ For a recent treatment of Chesterton see, Ian Ker, *G. K. Chesterton: A Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹⁸⁷ G.K. Chesterton, "Orthodoxy," in *From the Library of C. S. Lewis: Selections from Writers Who Influenced His Spiritual Journey*, ed. James Stuart Bell, et al. al. (Colorado Springs: Shaw Books, 2004), 289-90. This selection of Chesterton’s was a favorite of C.S. Lewis the author of *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

¹⁸⁸ G.K. Chesterton, "Orthodoxy," in *From the Library of C. S. Lewis*, 273.

life-threatening adventure. This trope of thought greatly influenced Kirk and his take on an American conservatism.

Throughout *The Conservative Mind*, Kirk continually made the connection between the British imagination and America. Kirk found this evident specifically in what he called the moral imagination, a concept I will return to later. He also borrowed another important term from Chesterton, the “democracy of the dead,” which he concluded was an undiscovered trope among certain American thinkers. “The individual is foolish; but the species is wise; and so the thinking conservative appeals to what Chesterton called “the democracy of the dead.””¹⁸⁹ If Chesterton, Lewis, and Tolkien left politics to the realm of imagination, T.S. Eliot brought both of them together in a politics of imagination. Eliot published *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* as his political statement of the promise of a Christian society in a secularized world. Kirk believed Eliot’s essay was important because it challenged the likes of Lionel Trilling on the ground of efficacy of imagination.¹⁹⁰ “(T)he most influential poet and critic of his age, the unsparing spectator of the Waste Land of modern culture, took up the defense of the beliefs and customs that nourish civilization, bitterly aware that we are “destroying our ancient edifices to make ready the ground upon which the barbarian nomads of the future will encamp in their mechanized caravans.””¹⁹¹ In other words, an avenue for pushing back against secular society was to coopt “idyllic imagination” with a thoroughgoing imaginative lifestyle antithetical to modern life.¹⁹² Kirk was a great writer like his counterpart Richard Hofstadter but in a manner of a bygone era. For Kirk, it was impossible and unthinkable that imagination and an imaginative

¹⁸⁹ Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*, 500.

¹⁹⁰ Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*, 480 and T.S. Eliot, *Christianity and Culture* (San Diego: Harvest, 1976).

¹⁹¹ Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*, 493.

¹⁹² Russell Kirk, *Eliot and His Age: T. S. Eliot's Moral Imagination in The Twentieth Century* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2008, c1971), 109-110. Kirk describes the idyllic imagination as one where there is no master or no authority; each person is her own god.

lifestyle could flourish in a semi-industrial occupation—meaning any job suited for the modern world, including the position of tenured professor.¹⁹³ Kirk sought to be a gentleman-scholar, and in the process of doing so wrote *The Conservative Mind*, which belongs as much in the category of the great American novel as it does in field of history.

Beyond being an author and historian, Kirk also became his subject matter. In other words, it was not enough to insist on an American conservatism. One had to become a Burkean to be a conservative. Kirk was the American Burke not only because he wrote about him, but because he lived a life as a gentlemen scholar and brought out Burkean qualities in his life and expected it from others. In fact, one of the hallmark's to Kirk's work is that he insisted that on the permanent relationship between research and living. As of today, not one historian of American conservatism has discovered this aspect about Kirk or the conservatives who followed suit. As I argue, it is this act of re-incarnation heavily mingled with imagination that kept conservatism alive well after the conclusion of the Cold War.

Previous Approaches to Studying Russell Kirk

Approaches to studying Kirk have been conventional and often apologetic. Two main approaches to studying the life of Russell Kirk have been developed since 1999 when the first biography was published about him. The first one is hagiography, written from the perspective of other conservatives who were close to Kirk and defend his legacy. These people were usually a part of Kirk's original textual community as supporters and fellow conservatives. The second approach to Kirk is what I call the critical phase of scholarship concerning Kirk. This scholarship is beyond hagiography yet it is still sympathetic with Kirk and his conservative project. Yet, the

¹⁹³ See, Russell Kirk, *Academic Freedom: An Essay in Definition* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1977, c1955).

study of Kirk has not reached those scholars outside of Kirkean circles because of a lack of a critical distance and for the simple reasons of oversight and neglect of Kirk as an influential historical actor in conservatism.

The list of books considering such as influential figure in Cold-War America is small.¹⁹⁴ James Person's biography of Kirk, *Russell Kirk: A Critical Biography of a Conservative Mind* is a hagiography. The full brunt of Person's lack of critical distance can be found in a review essay in *The Intercollegiate Review*.¹⁹⁵ Person essentially retells the story of Kirk and his place in postwar conservatism. His history of Kirk is done in a most favorable light. Possibly Person can be forgiven because he wanted to give Kirk a voice to those outside of conservatism (of course this would have been difficult because the book was published by ISI Books). However, the sympathetic biography never really leaves the boundaries set forth by the textual community. A critical tone is often considered to be seditious and in the conservative movement this was especially so because of the newness of the movement. In the latter part of this chapter I will explore a little of what happens to those who take a critical stance towards Kirk and Kirkean traditionalism. Those who are not sympathetic to the Kirkean legacy will be turned off from the sympathetic portrayal.

Political scientist Wesley MacDonald and New York attorney Gerald Russello, despite being conservatives who are active in conservative organizations, have written works that move

¹⁹⁴ There are a mere two monographs that consider Kirk in the form of critical biography see, McDonald, *Russell Kirk and the Age of Ideology*; Gerald Russello, *The Postmodern Imagination of Russell Kirk* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007). James Person's *Russell Kirk: A Critical Biography of a Conservative Mind* (Lanham: Madison Books, 1999) despite its title, it is considered hagiography because of the author's proximity to the Kirk family. Otherwise, the bulk of literature on Kirk can be found in the pages of ISI publications including *The Intercollegiate Review* and *Modern Age*. Elsewhere the former print publication, *The University Bookman*, is now edited by Kirk scholar Gerald Russello and funded through The Russell Kirk Center for Cultural Renewal.

¹⁹⁵ Morgan Knoll, "A Man in Full, a review of Russell Kirk: A Critical Biography," *The Intercollegiate Review* 36 (2001): 76-78.

beyond the level of hagiography. McDonald goes into the philosophical underpinnings of Kirk's conservatism, in *Russell Kirk and the Age of Ideology*. McDonald particularly looks at Kirk's reliance on historical experience as a litmus test for conservatism; he also delves briefly into Kirk's theory of moral imagination. McDonald also unearths what he calls an ethical dualism in Kirk's conservatism. There are classical and Christian elements in Kirk's thought, which created a general theological tension between religious doctrine and traditionalism that was often non-religious. Because Kirk was the most important intellectual figure in postwar conservatism, we find these tensions working their way out in strange conflicts as conservatism grew in later phases.¹⁹⁶ Out of these tensions, McDonald finds a tangential and ironic approach to ideology in Kirkeansim.

Gerald Russello sticks specifically to understanding the role of imagination in Kirk's conservatism in *The Postmodern Imagination of Russell Kirk*. Russello sees Kirk as a conservative postmodernist who reconstructed modernity through the promise of medieval and Anglo-Catholic imagination. Russello believes that postmodernism is not just a leftist bulwark—a belief and trope that became prominent among conservatives throughout the culture wars against relativism. Rather, he believes Kirk created otherness by reconstructing the dead through a postmodern moral imagination. He does not connect Kirk to Foucault and the poststructuralists except that they all had serious quandaries with Enlightenment liberalism and power manifested in the machinery of bureaucracy. Russello gets into the practical details of Kirk's philosophical

¹⁹⁶ Many of the later debates that define or deconstruct traditionalist conservatism come from the fact that Kirk inserted a religious element without necessarily making dogma a strict element in conservatism. As evangelicals and devout Roman Catholics attempted to insert dogma into policy, a growing segment of the non-religious right pulled away to reconstruct a kind of non-religious conservative imagination based on things like humanism and art. See Hilton Kramer, *The Triumph of Modernism, 1985-2005* (New York: Ivan R. Dee, 2006).

underpinnings and tries to convince conservatives that postmodernism is not strictly a leftist enterprise.

Most of the publications on Kirk are contained in journal articles that are housed and published by the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI). ISI is a conservative organization that began as a fusionist/traditional organization in the fifties and is now a primarily neo-conservative political activist organization interested in creating student newspapers across campuses.¹⁹⁷ The people who publish most of these articles are sympathizers, though that is not always the case. There is yet to be a serious consideration of Kirk outside of his textual community though. As stated previously, liberal historians have generally shunned Kirk because of his unabashed conservatism. However, many Kirkeans want to keep Kirk's legacy pure and out of the hands of liberal historians too.

Kirk's Historiography

Kirk's first major publication and without a doubt his best was *The Conservative Mind*. *The Conservative Mind* is commonly thought of as a history book, but it is more of an imaginative history and a manifesto for postwar conservatism. As time passes, I believe it will not be a stretch to consider *The Conservative Mind* (TCM) to dwell in the realm of historical fiction. It is not that Kirk did not include facts into his opus, but the way he groups those facts to make his narrative work strips TCM of its status as a strictly academic history text.

In the introduction, Kirk tells the reader what to expect. "In the following chapters, the conservative is described as statesman, as critic, as metaphysician, as man of letters," wrote Kirk. "Men of imagination, rather than party leaders, determine the ultimate course of things, as

¹⁹⁷ See Seth Bartee, "Intercollegiate Studies Institute," *U.S. Intellectual History*, October 9, 2012, <http://us-intellectual-history.blogspot.com/2012/10/intercollegiate-studies-institute.html>, accessed October 19, 2012.

Napoleon knew; and I have chosen my conservatives accordingly.”¹⁹⁸ There is no more telling statement in TCM. Kirk began his narrative with Edmund Burke and paints a picture of him through seven sections of the second chapter. Burke is pictured as both conqueror and defeated, aristocrat and defender of equality. In the final section of the Burke chapter, Kirk brings to the fore what he considers Burke’s most important principle, that of societal and philosophical order. By order, Kirk meant order in the soul, in society, and in the commonwealth. Moreover, according to Kirk, Burke’s eighteenth-century ballast against radicalism “provided the defenses of conservatism, on a great scale, that still stand and are not liable to fall in our time.”¹⁹⁹

In the following eleven chapters of TCM, Kirk follows this meandering Burkean trope to America through John Adams, Walter Scott, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, southern aristocrat John Calhoun to James Russell Lowell, English novelist George Gissing and to twentieth-century writers George Santayana and T.S. Eliot. Interestingly Kirk’s choice of two modern conservatives included a Harvard professor and Spanish academic (Santayana) and an American expatriate to England (Eliot). However, Burke and Eliot stand out as the preeminent conservatives, because they were the perfect combination of men of imagination and political reactionaries, Kirk thought.

Kirk was also a master at pulling thinkers like Paul Elmer More, Irving Babbitt, and W.H. Mallock from the ash heap of history and giving them a new life, even if it was not the legacy they deserved or wanted. The selection of thinkers was as much a methodological tool as anything else. Great ideas were often embodied in a cast of characters long forgotten—purposely neglected in Kirk’s opinion. Kirk was extremely concerned that America’s love of all things new

¹⁹⁸ Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*, 10-11.

¹⁹⁹ Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*, 69.

and modern was a blind spot and malfeasance against everything conservatives cherished. He took it upon himself in TCM to correct this by leading people back to thinkers and books they had probably never heard of. Consequently, for this reason, the Kirkean influence spread quickly but later struggled under the weight that this narrative was historically untenable.²⁰⁰

In 1951, Kirk published his master's thesis titled *Randolph of Roanoke: A Study in Conservative Thought*. Kirk's interest in John Randolph stemmed from the fact that Randolph began his career as a radical and ended his career as a conservative. Randolph also held key affinities with Burke, Kirk thought. He was aristocratic, conservative/reactionary, uncomfortable with empire, and found comfort in high-church Protestantism. Randolph was equally appealing to him because he considered him a man of letters who possessed an extraordinary library.²⁰¹ Kirk thought about Randolph as a prototypical Burkean. He returned to reflect upon Randolph's career again in 1964 with the publication of *John Randolph of Roanoke; a study in American politics*. This was an exploration of the primary documents that Kirk felt defined Roanoke as a conservative thinker.²⁰² One of Kirk's former research assistants, Matthew Davis, holds that Roanoke was one of those figures that Kirk held in reverence his entire career along with Burke and Eliot.²⁰³

Following the publication of *The Conservative Mind*, Kirk began to implement a more direct path towards becoming an American conservative. In *A Program for Conservatives*, Kirk simplifies his narrative from *The Conservative Mind*. Through twelve chapters, Kirk addressed such issues as social justice, tradition, community, power, and so on. A well-known essay out of

²⁰⁰ Conversation with Paul Gottfried. Elizabethtown, Pa., March 2012.

²⁰¹ Russell Kirk, *Randolph of Roanoke; A Study in Conservative Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951).

²⁰² Russell Kirk, *John Randolph of Roanoke; A Study in American Politics, with selected speeches and letters* (Chicago: Regnery, 1964).

²⁰³ Interview with Matthew Davis. Interview by Seth Bartee. September 2012.

this collection is titled “The Gorgon’s Head.” In it, he explained the problem of converting conservatism into a political program. Consequently, he stated that reviewers of TCM were anxious because “One could not understand what I was after, I would embrace neither capitalism nor communism.”²⁰⁴ The next year in 1955 Kirk published *Academic Freedom; an essay in definition*. *Academic Freedom* was written to explain Kirk’s departure from academia in 1953. In this little book, Kirk explained that the occupation of professor should be more akin to the role of pastor and agitator than the model of modern scientific researcher. His main criticism of the modern professoriate was that they were more like scientists and “calculators” than like the men of imagination he cherished.²⁰⁵

In this regard, Kirk usually preferred the role of essayist and cultural critic to that of academic historian. This is obvious by looking over his lifetime of scholarship. He returned to this role as essayist with the publication of three books in which he delved into the genres of confession and biography. During this phase, Kirk began to distance himself from the terminology of conservatism.²⁰⁶ From 1956 until 1963, Kirk published *Beyond the Dreams of Avarice*, *Old House of Fear*, and *Confessions of a Bohemian Tory*. *Beyond the Dreams of Avarice* are essays that dealt with a plethora of subjects. There are two sections, the first serves as observations on American life, and the second section deals with the decadence of postwar Europe. Kirk was a repetitive writer, so familiar themes pop up in each book.²⁰⁷ *Old House of Fear* was Kirk’s first foray into fiction. Surprisingly, *Old House* was his most popular book during his lifetime. In *Old House*, Kirk tells the story of Hugh Logan who travels to Scotland to

²⁰⁴ Russell Kirk, *A Program for Conservatives* (Chicago: H. Regnery Co., 1954), 11.

²⁰⁵ Kirk, *Academic Freedom*.

²⁰⁶ While Kirk began to distance himself from the terminology of conservatism, he did publish *The Intelligent Woman’s Guide to Conservatism* (New York: Devin-Adair Co., 1957). Insiders consider Kirk a person torn between the need to publish to make money and a thinker desperately attempting to react against the reaction.

²⁰⁷ Most Kirkean scholars agree that Kirk was indeed repetitive throughout his career, thus making his lifetime of research easily discernible.

purchase a castle for his boss. While there, he encounters political revolutionaries and Soviet spies. This was a tale of adventure co-mingled with political intrigue. We see Kirk attempting to bridge the gap between man of imagination and political provocateur in *Old House*.

The 1963 publication of *Confessions of a Bohemian Tory* is a favorite work of Kirkeans.²⁰⁸ As the title reads, Kirk used this book to explain his ideology and differentiate his conservatism from the wider postwar movement. Of course, it is a mistake to think that Kirk did not share affinities with the movement. He was an anti-communist not a believer in making America an empire just to defeat the Soviet Union. Planned economies were reckless to local economies but hyper-capitalism was equally detrimental to communities. “Toryism is loyalty to persons,” wrote Kirk of his conservatism. “...In the phrase of Burke, we learn to love the little platoon we belong to in society.”²⁰⁹ If *Confessions* is not considered a turning point for Kirk, it is at least considered Kirk at his best—as essayist, conservator of the land, and writing about what he considered the impractical but permanent things in life. The ideas in *Confessions* were seminal to Kirk and his followers, but they would never find a place within the Republican Party’s platform.

Kirk finished out the sixties and early seventies writing essays and working on his literary biography of T.S. Eliot. *The Intemperate Professor and other Cultural Splenetics* is like other volumes of essays Kirk previously published, except that his focus here was college culture and how he believed it failed to prepare students to engage religion, morality, beauty, community,

²⁰⁸ Of the four thinkers included in this study, both Kirk and Lukacs evoked Augustine in books with the word *Confessions* in the title. Gottfried wrote an autobiography that that could be considered to some affinities with the two aforementioned books; Lasch wrote *Revolt of the Elites* as a kind of confession on his deathbed.

²⁰⁹ Russell Kirk, *Confessions of a Bohemian Tory: Episodes and Reflections of a Vagrant Career* (New York: Fleet Publishing Corp, 1963), 30.

and the place of economy in American life.²¹⁰ In 1967, Kirk tackled Edmund Burke again. This time he did so in biographical form. He deals with the historical Burke as a way to give credence to his conservative Burke. A fair criticism is that Kirk downplays the obvious contradictions in Burke's worldview; in Kirk's view, Burke was the penultimate conservative statesman and philosopher.²¹¹

Both *Enemies of Permanent Things* and *Eliot and His Age* signaled the conclusion of the first half of Kirk's career, which was more literary and cultural and less political. In Kirk's first phase, we see Kirk as a loner individualist—an aspiring poet. His concern for politics and American longevity were not primary in this phase.²¹² There is an outstanding reason for this I believe. Conservatism and the Republican Party were not always synonymous.²¹³ The relationship changed in the seventies after a host of cultural and political circumstances gave way to a new kind of fusion.²¹⁴ In the second phase of his career, Kirk defended conservatism as a serious political strategy, but not primarily against liberals. These new attacks were directed against the new neo-conservative wing of the Republican Party.

Enemies of Permanent Things (1969) are a collection of essays in three parts. Similar to *Confessions*, it is a favorite of Kirkeans because it contains Kirk's views on fiction, literature, and ideology. In an essay titled "The Slums of Literature," Kirk wrote: "A Soviet Humanism?"

²¹⁰ Historians can include Kirk with other midcentury writers who tackled these issues too. These other thinkers included historian Richard Hofstadter, cultural critic Lionel Trilling, and anti-communist cultural critic Whitaker Chambers.

²¹¹ Russell Kirk, *The Intemperate Professor and Other Cultural Splenetics* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1965) and Russell Kirk, *Edmund Burke: A Genius Reconsidered* (Wilmington: ISI Books, c1967, 2009).

²¹² The exception to this was the publication of *The Political Principles of Robert A. Taft* (New York: Fleet Press Corp., 1967). This book also foreshadows Kirk's foray into politics years later.

²¹³ George Marsden, *Religion and American Culture* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing, 2001). See chapters 4-6.

²¹⁴ See James Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). In chapter 19, Patterson writes about the transformation of American liberalism from the protection of labor to the politics of consciousness. *Roe v. Wade* is seen as a high-water mark for the new coalition between Republicans, conservatives, and Protestant evangelicals.

Who will be the Soviet Erasmus? Humanism, true humanism, drew its vigor from the conviction that man was something more than merely flesh, that there existed law for man and law for thing, and that the disciplinary arts of *humanitas* taught a man his rights, his duties, and his station as a truly human person.”²¹⁵ This is an example of the kind of statements found in *Enemies*, which appealed greatly to cultural conservatives. Books such as *Enemies* limited Kirk’s reach too. The political wing of the conservative movement was looking for material that could be applied immediately for political usage, and not foundational approbations against the very materialism that capitalists were using against their liberal opponents.

Kirk followed *Enemies* with his second most complex piece of scholarship after TCM. *The Age of Eliot* (TAE) is a sympathetic biography of his friend and hero T.S. Eliot. TAE was written to demonstrate that the late Eliot was a continuance of maturation of Eliot of *The Waste Land*. The premise of TAE is that specific intellectuals have carried the tradition of moral imagination throughout Western civilization. Kirk traces the idea of moral imagination through the ancient poets, moralists like Ben Jonson and William Faulkner and to Eliot himself. The moral imagination, Kirk explains, is “apprehending of right order in the soul and right order in the commonwealth.”²¹⁶ Kirk’s history is revisionist because he makes Eliot a kind of interlocutor and spiritual advisor for conservatives. The accuracy of the historical record was not Kirk’s primary concern.

Kirk knew Eliot in the latter part of the poet’s career. By that time, Eliot had been somewhat disowned by a great amount of his original followers because of his conversion to

²¹⁵ Russell Kirk, *Enemies of the Permanent Things: Observations of Abnormality in Literature and Politics* (New Rochelle: Arlington House, 1969), 94.

²¹⁶ Kirk, *Eliot and His Age*, 5.

Christian orthodoxy and a shift to reactionary political views.²¹⁷ Kirk wanted to rescue Eliot in the latter part of his career and demonstrate that he was more relevant than ever. Methodologically, Kirk used what Herbert Butterfield called the Whig interpretation of history to study Eliot; I also might term this the method of ascension because it represents the New Testament narrative of Christ's return from death and eventual victorious ascension into heaven.²¹⁸ For Kirk, Eliot represented the culmination of the greatest aspects of Western civilization in a decadent world. "He had striven to renew modern man's understanding of the norms of order and justice and freedom, in the person and in the commonwealth," wrote Kirk. "He had not offered the opiate of ideology: he had pleaded for a return to enduring principle..."²¹⁹ Kirk obviously saw himself reflected in the life of Eliot as he worked out his theory of moral imagination through the lives of Burke, Randolph, Eliot, and into his own life as a conservative reactionary.

Three years after the publication of *Eliot and His Age*, Russell Kirk's career shifted into its final phase. When Kirk published *The Roots of American Order* in 1974, conservatism was beginning its second phase, although this was not realized until much later.²²⁰ This shift was furthered by the fact that both political parties used a national crisis of identity to consolidate their respective poles of power. Vietnam and Richard Nixon's Watergate Scandal were just two examples of what was seen as a failure of the American spirit. With all of these issues at hand, Kirk transitioned into the role of conservative public intellectual. *The Roots of American Order*

²¹⁷ Arthur S. Trace, "The Relevance of T.S. Eliot," *The University Bookman*, 1972, <http://www.kirkcenter.org/index.php/bookman/article/the-relevance-of-t.-s.-eliot/>, accessed August 31, 2012.

²¹⁸ Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (London: G. Bell, c1931, 1968).

²¹⁹ Kirk, *Eliot and His Age*, 353.

²²⁰ See Niels Bjerre-Poulsen, *Right Face: Organizing the American Conservative Movement 1945-65* (Museum Tusulanum Press, 2002). Bjerre-Poulsen's thesis is that two conservatisms developed after the Second World War. One vied for intellectual respectability (Kirk) and the second vied for power (Buckley and later neo-conservatives). I argue that these two forces were not necessarily opposed and indeed fed off the Kirkean historical imagination he popularized in *The Conservative Mind* and later books.

was an expansion of *The Conservative Mind* in many ways. Instead of limiting American conservatism to Burke, Kirk went all the way back to the Biblical prophets to demonstrate how and why America's intermediate moorings were born in centuries of affirmed wisdom. In order to produce this kind of history Kirk had to brush over more inconsistencies and barbarisms, but he desired to make his ideas more accessible to a wider audience.²²¹ *Roots* was written as a primer for students and it produced readable vignettes on the entire history of Western civilization from the perspective of conservatism.

Throughout the rest of the decade of the seventies Kirk published and re-published books with a patriotic tone. *The American Cause*, originally published in 1957, was re-released a year after *Roots*.²²² Kirk said that he wrote *The American Cause* (TAC) as a refresher course for Americans who had forgotten what America stood for. TAC was indicative of Kirk's shift from the imaginative to the reactionary patriot. The tone of TAC was instructive and defiant. "The United States is a Christian nation," Kirk wrote. "This is a simple statement of fact, not an argument to advance the American cause."²²³ This and other statements are indicative of Kirk's reactionary period, in which he was upfront and vocal about his positioning of America as an inherently conservative country. Kirk's trajectory was larger than the local community or habits of the mind.

Kirk had written about reactionaries as early as *The Conservative Mind* and had almost always championed the dissenting mind.²²⁴ What changed was Kirk's concern with expediency. TAC included ten chapters where Kirk demonstrated to conservatives the urgency of free

²²¹ Russell Kirk, *The Roots of American Order* (LaSalle: Open Court, 1974).

²²² Russell Kirk, *The American Cause* (Westport: Greenwood Press, c1957, 1975).

²²³ Kirk, *The American Cause*, 23.

²²⁴ TCM was full of references to "third way" kinds of thinkers. In other words, Kirk intentionally found thinkers that fell between popular poles of thinking.

enterprise, various types of liberty, the difference between Communism and conservatism etc. Before the conclusion of the seventies, Kirk published *Decadence in Higher Learning* and another book of fiction. In *Decadence* Kirk showed why education was so important to building and maintaining a conservative America.²²⁵ Education was a familiar theme for Kirk and a favorite of his, especially as conservatives began to fight the first phase of the culture wars (mid 1970s and afterwards).

By the 1980s, Kirk found himself on the margins of conservatism despite great Republican political gains. Kirk was replaced with more prominent neo-conservative intellectuals and conservative political figures like Jerry Falwell.²²⁶ Kirk's publishing record reflects this shift. Kirk edited *The Portable Conservative Reader* in 1982. This little book may seem innocent, as it is only a reader. However, Kirk used it to show both what was definitely conservative and who was a conservative. The reader included Kirk's hallmark conservatives such as Burke, Orestes Brownson, John Adams, John Newman, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and many of the same characters found in *The Conservative Mind*. Nevertheless, Kirk also updated the canon to include modern conservatives such as C.S. Lewis, Malcolm Muggeridge, and Michael Oakeshott. He did include a piece by Irving Kristol, and listed Leo Strauss as a valuable reference in a suggested readings section. Yet, the bulk of the materials included in this reader leans heavily towards variants of traditionalist conservatism including English conservatism, southern agrarianism, aristocratic conservatism, and Roman Catholic conservatism. The

²²⁵ Russell Kirk, *Decadence and Renewal in the Higher Learning: An Episodic History of American University and College Since 1953* (South Bend: Gateway Editions, 1978) and *The Princess of All Lands* (Sauk City: Arkham House Publishers, 1979).

²²⁶ Carl Bogus, *Buckley: William F. Buckley Jr. and The Rise of American Conservatism* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2011) and Paul Gottfried and Thomas Fleming, *The Conservative Movement* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988).

Protestant evangelicals were left out of Kirk's canon including influential apologists like Carl Henry, Gordon Clark, and Francis Schaeffer.

Kirk's work visibly slowed down during the final decade of his life, although he managed to publish many short pamphlet-like books. In 1989 he released *Prospects for Conservatives* as an updated version of his 1954 publication *A Program for Conservatives*. Kirk's concern here was that conservatism, as he derived it, had lost its moorings in the Republican Party and through the new host of liberals in conservative clothing.²²⁷ *The Conservative Constitution* is a volley against the neo-conservatives and liberals who considered America's founding as inherently bathed in the liberal-enlightenment tradition.²²⁸ The greater claim here is that Kirk considered the neo-conservatives as undercover liberals who coopted conservatism and made it another engine for the promulgation of a managerial state.²²⁹

His two final publications were collections of essays. *The Politics of Prudence* covered a plethora of subjects from disavowal of neo-conservatism to reiteration of his exemplary canon conservatives. It did not garner as much attention as *The Conservative Mind*, but it was a final exposition on the canon of Kirkean conservatism. Before he died, Kirk penned an autobiography titled *The Sword of Imagination*. Here he tried to set the record straight and explain the history of American conservatism from the viewpoint of both participator and sympathizer. His first chapter was titled "The Dead Alone Give Us Energy."²³⁰ This summed his career in

²²⁷ Russell Kirk, *Prospects for Conservatives* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, Inc., 1989).

²²⁸ Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Constitution* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1990). Also, see *America's British Culture* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1993).

²²⁹ Kirk published a few smaller books/pamphlets through the Heritage Foundation in which he continually sounded the warning bell against the neo-cons. See, *The Constitution's Conservative Character* (1987), *The Fraud of Multiculturalism* (1992), *The Degradation of the Democratic Dogma* (1992), *Civilization without Religion* (1992), *Renewing a Shaken Culture* (1993), *The Meaning of "Justice"* (1993) *The Injustice of Inequality* (1994).

²³⁰ Kirk, *The Sword of Imagination*.

conservatism as Kirk promoted the dead to give energy to the living. *The Sword of Imagination* was essentially a rejoinder and extension of his earlier *Confessions* as it was published posthumously, a year after his death in 1994.

Kirk was repetitive throughout his publishing career, as his opus remained *The Conservative Mind*. Both *Randolph of Roanoke* and *Eliot and His Age* were definitive publications, too, that help us to understand specifically how Kirk defined conservatism through epochal biography. Throughout his career, Kirk was a premier essayist. His publishing record supports this claim, as Kirk published no less than nine volumes of essays and many more articles. His other major work was *The Roots of American Order*, an extension and expansion of his 1953 thesis that America was indeed an inherently conservative nation. In everything that Kirk wrote during his career, he tried to demonstrate that real life existed in what humans considered dead. He believed reincarnation of the dead was possible through the habituating of the moral imagination in the present.²³¹

Resurrecting the Dead: Conservatism and the Promise of Imagination

Throughout Russell Kirk's career, he made defeating the progressive mindset a priority. He was not alone in this fight against progressivism, but his plan to defeat it was novel because he wanted to return to old books, long forgotten authors, and ideas that seemed antiquated in the postwar world.²³² In other words, Kirk wanted to defeat progressivism by resurrecting the dead and reconstituting their ideas under the banner of the possibility of a conservative mindset. "Two types of humanity were the wonder of medieval Europe: the great saint and the great knight,"

²³¹ He borrowed many of these ideas from Irving Babbitt, G.K. Chesterton, Eliot, and C.S. Lewis.

²³² It is widely accepted by both Gerald Russello and Wesley McDonald that Kirk borrowed many of his ideas from the New Humanist School, namely Irving Babbitt.

Kirk wrote. “In later ages, their descendants would be the scholar and the gentleman.”²³³ At the outset, Kirk’s project was a mixture of epistemology and history.²³⁴ His ten conservative principles reveal how he fused history and epistemology into a single fabric. The ten principles are as follows:

1. The conservative believes that there exists an enduring moral order.
2. The conservative adheres to custom, convention, and continuity.
3. Conservatives believe in what may be called the principle of prescription.
4. Conservatives are guided by their principle of prudence.
5. Conservatives pay attention to the principle of variety.
6. Conservatives are chastened by their principle of imperfectability.
7. Conservatives are persuaded that freedom and property are closely linked.
8. Conservatives uphold voluntary community, as they oppose involuntary collectivism.
9. The conservative perceives the need for prudent restraints upon power and upon human passions.
10. The thinking conservative understands that permanence and change must be recognized and reconciled in a vigorous society.²³⁵

²³³ Russell Kirk, “The Light of the Middle Ages” in *The Essential Russell Kirk*, 91.

²³⁴ Russello, see chapter 2. In addition, the new challenges of the postwar era to conservatism are exemplified in Elizabeth Fratterigo’s *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

²³⁵ “The Ten Conservative Principles,” last modified 2007, <http://www.kirkcenter.org/index.php/detail/ten-conservative-principles/>.

Given Kirk's biography, it is not strange that he chose Edmund Burke as the penultimate conservative and the embodiment of his ten conservative principles. He grew up with parents who saturated his young mind with romantic writers like Walter Scott; he wrote his master's thesis on Virginia aristocrat John Randolph at an up-and-coming southern university and eventually earned his doctorate from the University of Saint Andrews, one of Europe's oldest institutions for higher learning. There was an inherent conservative trajectory to Kirk's mind, one both instilled by his parents, and created and elaborated by the adult Kirk. It is possible that Kirk actually benefitted from his modest upbringing as the son of a railroad engineer; Kirk more so than Buckley understood that mere reliance on the supremacy of the free market would not be enough to sustain conservatism outside of those who were already wealthy.²³⁶ The quiet and often aloof Michigander was no mere antiquarian who happened into a career of hagiographer historian. What Kirk's biographers, critics, and supporters have often failed to grasp is that the sage of Mecosta, a titled bestowed from supporters, intentionally set forth a trope that made the past relevant again by recreating it in the present via imagination.

The first reviewers of the *The Conservative Mind* (TCM) often picked upon the imaginative aspect of Kirk's work. Likewise, TCM received good reviews from major outlets like the *New York Times* and *Time Magazine* for not being overtly political.²³⁷ One reviewer wrote, "In view of current threats to liberty and to the amenities of civilization, we may say a hearty Amen to 'the deliberate revival of the concept of traditional wisdom.' But we must insist

²³⁶ Bogus, *Buckley*, see chapters 1 and 2.

²³⁷ "1953 Time Magazine review of Dr. Kirk's 'The Conservative Mind'" December 4, 2010, <http://www.imaginativeconservative.org/2010/12/1953-time-magazine-review-of-dr-kirks.html>, accessed December 6, 2013.

that it be wisdom.”²³⁸ Another reviewer wrote, “Prof. Kirk’s present study will help the liberal, or the conservative, to a better understanding of what conservatism at a high level is like.”²³⁹ Yet others continued to compliment Kirk for his ideas of conservative imagination. “Mr. Kirk is to be commended for his sound scholarship and his delightful, vigorous prose style. To be sure, the reader is not always sure when Mr. Disraeli is talking or when Mr. Kirk is talking, but the reader is convinced that Mr. Kirk is thoroughly conversant with his subjects and has done a vast amount of reading in preparation for the book,” Elizabeth Jackson wrote.²⁴⁰

The reviewers almost immediately caught onto the imaginative elements in Kirk’s work because imagination was not often the prevailing aspect among American conservatives.²⁴¹ Imagination was a word long associated solely to the realm of children’s stories. Yet Kirk recommended it as a guiding principle for conservative adults. We might reference the famous 1947 Christmas movie, *Miracle on 34th Street*, in which imagination is a catalyst to reviving the heart of a child who does not believe in Santa Clause. Imagination was Kirk’s version of the holy spirit, historians might even think of this as a conservative holy spirit that brought back magic and the unknown into the world again. Echoing Chesterton, Kirk wrote: “The more imagination a man possesses, the more he must wonder about the mysterious essence that is himself,” Kirk wrote. “the more he must be aware of his uniqueness; the more he must torment himself by

²³⁸ Richard Hope, “Reaction to Kirk’s 1953 Magnum Opus, The Conservative Mind, Round III” *The Imaginative Conservative*, November 15, 2011, <http://www.imaginativeconservative.org/2011/11/reaction-to-kirks-1953-magnum-opus.html>, accessed September 8, 2012.

²³⁹ Guy Cardwell, “Round Two: Reactions to Kirk’s 1953 seminal work, THE CONSERVATIVE MIND” *The Imaginative Conservative*, November 14, 2011, <http://www.imaginativeconservative.org/2011/11/round-two-reactions-to-kirks-1953.html>, accessed September 8, 2012.

²⁴⁰ Hope, “Reaction to Kirk’s 1953 Magnum Opus, The Conservative Mind, Round III” *The Imaginative Conservative*, November 15, 2011, <http://www.imaginativeconservative.org/2011/11/reaction-to-kirks-1953-magnum-opus.html>, accessed June 19, 2012.

²⁴¹ William Buckley and people like Whittaker Chambers served as the face of conservatism through much of the Cold War. Neither thinker gave the impression that imagination was the centripetal force of American conservatism.

suspecting that his face reflected in a mirror, or his conscious behavior with other people, cannot be *really* himself.”²⁴² In this same discussion, Kirk made a more important claim about imagination as the greater guide for living than philosophy: “Formal philosophy...is merely the ordering and examination of knowledge; philosophy is not the *source* of knowledge.” To conclude this same paragraph he tells the reader why moral imagination is better than philosophy. “Resort to the moral imagination as a path to wisdom liberates the thinker from the narrow limits of personal experience and individual rational faculties.”²⁴³

In other words, the preference of “rational faculties” over the wisdom of the ages whether myth or legend, destroyed modern humans recognition of the modern self as something strangely unique, Kirk believed.²⁴⁴ Of course, Kirk believed that imagination was powerful. But more importantly, he believed imagination was the key regenerative element lost in modernity, specifically during the age of European enlightenment and their heirs the American pragmatists. “Kirk was a great exponent of mentality,” said conservative scholar and editor of *The American Conservative*, Daniel McCarthy. “He gave conservatives a way to imagine the world.”²⁴⁵

The original significance of the Kirkean imagination was lost and misunderstood for several reasons. First, the conservative movement grew so rapidly after the publication of TCM in 1953 that many conservatives did not take the time to really flesh out Kirk’s thesis. The explosion of publications by conservatives after TCM was seminal because the time needed to

²⁴² Kirk, *Eliot and His Age*, 37.

²⁴³ Kirk, *Eliot and His Age*, 38.

²⁴⁴ There is an undercurrent and recurring debate among conservatives about the place of philosophy in conservatism. Leo Strauss was a philosopher but there are questions about whether he came to disregard philosophy as a guide to living later in life. Kirk’s disdain for philosophy has also led to charges of anti-intellectualism by critics, too. However, we find Kirk have similar affinities to John Lukacs as he theorized about what he termed the “historical consciousness.”

²⁴⁵ Conversation with Paul Gottfried. Elizabethtown, Pa., March 2012.

understand and absorb TCM was short.²⁴⁶ Second, because the conservative movement split into its second phase a decade later, Kirk himself abandoned much of the imaginative trope to defend a conservative political program against his neo-conservatives foes.²⁴⁷ To the outsider, conservatism follows a progressive stage from Old Right, New Right, and on to neo-conservatism, and this is why many historians miss the significance of imagination within this larger movement.²⁴⁸

Imagination is not immediately discernible because it has a multiplicity of faces that are political as well as poetic and aesthetic.²⁴⁹ We can speak of the Kirkean imagination, the neo-conservative imagination, historical, and political imagination and so on. Each generation of postwar conservatives has based their conservatism on historical imagination embodied in imaginative texts.²⁵⁰ Imagination was ultimately an interactive force for Kirk, something that leaped from the pages of books into reality. “Having drawn the sword of imagination, he (Kirk)

²⁴⁶ A feverish amount of seminal “conservative” books preceded and followed the publication of TCM including *Ideas Have Consequences* (1948), *God and Man at Yale* (1951), *Witness* (1952), *The New Science of Politics* (1952), *The Quest for Community* (1953), *Natural Right and History* (1953), *McCarthy and His Enemies* (1954), *Conservatism Revisited* (1962), and *The American Dissent* (1966). Ayn Rand was publishing her novels and manifestos during this era too, and theologian Carl Henry was spearheading the beginnings of the evangelical worldview movement erstwhile.

²⁴⁷ See, Paul Gottfried and Thomas Fleming, *Conservatism in America* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988). This is one of the first histories from within the conservative movement to demonstrate a definitive split between neo-conservatives and traditionalists.

²⁴⁸ See Patrick Allitt, *The Conservatives: Ideas and Personalities Throughout American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). One of Allitt’s contentions is that conservatism changes throughout history and through various personalities that represent it, whereas as many critics, and even supporters of conservatism, believe conservatism is a monolithic idea all the way from point A to Z.

²⁴⁹ Imagination was utilized in different ways by various conservatives, as is my contention throughout this dissertation. While Kirk began the imaginative trope, others built on it and made it their own.

²⁵⁰ In the immediate postwar period, Russell Kirk’s *The Conservative Mind* was the key imaginative text. Each success generation of conservative had to base their conservatism on some element of imagination, Christopher Demuth and William Kristol ed., *The Neoconservative Imagination: Essays in Honor of Irving Kristol* (Washington, D.C.: AEI Press, 1995), and currently the neo-agrarians such as fetishize the imaginative element of their conservative in novelist Wendell Berry. Evangelical conservatives such as Alan Jacobs and current Roman Catholic conservatives set their foundations on such religious writers as Flannery O’Connor, T.S. Eliot, and C.S. Lewis. A larger list of these works is included in the introduction.

ventured, in the words of Pico della Mirandola, to “join battle as to the sound of a trumpet of war,” assailing the vegetative and sensual errors of his time,” Kirk wrote of himself.²⁵¹

Imagination was a tool for the orderly reconstruction of society, one platoon at a time, as Edmund Burke described it. Kirk’s greater project was to teach conservatives how to build Burke’s little platoons and make texts work for them by making them alive again in the present.²⁵² This belief and practice was no more alive than in Kirk’s own life. He rejected the qualifications of his own class distinction as Kirk was not born into wealth, and could not afford to live like conservative peer William Buckley who owned expensive homes in Manhattan and Connecticut, sailed for a hobby, and congregated with his influential alums from Yale. While Kirk was not a blue blood, that did not stop him from creating a worldview and lifestyle that gave him ability to live like his wealthy peers and essentially overcome their follies through the power of intellect. Kirk used his resources and created a bohemian lifestyle to emulate and even become the American Burke in what he called the stump country of Michigan.²⁵³

The village of Mecosta, Michigan had another appeal besides the comforts of a low-cost lifestyle. Kirk could claim that he lived near his ancestral home much like his conservative heroes who boasted of living gracefully in the land full of their dead kin. He was involved politically in the village of Mecosta as an advocate for rural schools and held a minor office in Morton Township. He was a kind of local legend there because he built a home that resembled a

²⁵¹ Kirk, *The Sword of Imagination*, 119.

²⁵² Brad Stone, “Mediating Structures,” *First Principles*, April 12, 2012, <http://www.firstprinciplesjournal.com/articles.aspx?article=348&loc=qs>, accessed December 1, 2012. Stone explains that Burke defined the “little platoons” of society as the groups each individual is the most connected to such as church and family. There are also understood segments and intersections in these platoons that are further defined by race, class, and gender.

²⁵³ Conversation with Peter Lawler. Blacksburg, Va., November 2009.

gothic castle and kept hosts of strange guests around his property year round.²⁵⁴ Kirk's community was also an imaginative one, and in that, imaginative community he could be whomever he chose to be as long as he aligned his created persona closely with texts.

Imagination was both counterrevolutionary and a socially binding element for Kirk and his conservative followers such as Mark Henrie, Gerald Russello, and Winston Elliot. Kirk never believed that capitalism alone provided the binding agent between conservatives. "Kirk's rejection of libertarian beliefs never flagged," write Kirk biographer John Pafford. Pafford goes on to cite Kirk's famous 1981 lecture for further consolation "Libertarians: Chirping Sectaries" where he dismissed the idea of fusionism—the possibility of linking together traditionalism with capitalism.²⁵⁵ Kirk did not believe that capitalism and belief in the free market could hold all conservatives together because "true freedom is found only in service to God," Pafford writes of Kirk.²⁵⁶ However, Kirk's religious preferences did not mirror the public evangelicalism of Liberty University founder Jerry Falwell. Kirk's Catholicism was imaginative and mystical in most respects. His was a faith in the power of the religious imagination to transform society beyond its rationalistic boundaries.

Kirk's imaginative faith was not a faith of personal salvation or even a Puritan faith of living like Christ.²⁵⁷ Kirk's faith was exclusive for those who understood the need for community, hierarchy, and everything that Kirk the privileged interpreter extracted from key texts. "Kirk forged a patrimony," said traditionalist conservative scholar Bruce Frohnen.

²⁵⁴ Kirk, *The Sword of Imagination*, 15-24; 337-372.

²⁵⁵ John Pafford, *Russell Kirk* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 57-58.

²⁵⁶ Pafford, *Russell Kirk*, 58. Kirk's religiosity is a contentious issue, because he never collaborated with the evangelical Republicans during the Cold War nor was he particularly an outspoken critic of such hot-button political issues such as abortion.

²⁵⁷ For a modern treatment of the faith and theology of the Puritans see Joel Beeke and Mark Jones, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012).

“Fundamentally what Kirk was about was rebuilding culture.”²⁵⁸ Frohnen says that Kirk was an “intellectual Catholic” who wanted to rebuild intermediary institutions under the guise of a lost Catholic hierarchy; his message was not salvation or repentance. You will not find any documented story of Kirk attempting to convert anyone to Christianity either. Certainly, Kirk’s religion of imagination was almost utopian with its focus on permanence, tradition, and the possibility of finding relevance in the ashes of the dead.

While Kirk railed against leftists for their utopian sentimentalism, his faith in the healing power of imagination bordered on its own kind of conservative utopianism. His students reveal this aspect of Kirk’s thinking too. “...(W)e must find ways in this inhospitable environment to encourage not only new books...but new works of literature, political and moral philosophy, art, drama, and poetry that in the future that will become the inspiration and sources for such studies,” writes Kirkean Vigen Guroian.²⁵⁹ From Guroian’s comment, we can see the reconstructive element of imagination fleshed out as an alternative and better way of living among the unenlightened. Yet, no conservative scholar, especially a Kirkean, would admit that this is anything more than a way to keep “the legacy of our (Western) civilization... safe.”²⁶⁰ Critics of conservatism miss the utopian element in conservatism because many conservatives often use utopianism as a political weapon against the left. “(T)he conservative person is simply one who finds the permanent things more pleasing than Chaos and old night,” Kirk wrote in the second edition of *Prospects for Conservatives*. Kirk’s preference for permanence and tradition outweighed his desire to wait for the treasures of the afterlife. Kirk continually bolstered this

²⁵⁸ Conversation with Bruce Frohnen. April 2012.

²⁵⁹ Vigen Guroian, “*The Conservative Mind Forty Years Later*,” *The Intercollegiate Review* 30 (1994): 26.

²⁶⁰ Russell Kirk, “Apology for a New Review,” *Modern Age* 1 (1957): 2.

utopian element by rehashing texts that gave credence to the need for permanence and tradition in society. His goal was immediate in its implications.

Imagination and Texts

Kirk could never have had the success he had without the availability and importance of texts to his project. Kirk instilled conservatism primarily through reading.²⁶¹ The age of print and the age of information—both products of the modern age—benefitted Kirk’s cause for the conservative mind. Books and various texts were widely available through libraries and bookstores, and that availability made it possible to empirically connect ideas across time and revise history around the form of the texts.²⁶² Kirk’s followers and former students often remark that Kirk saw his library as a weapon against liberalism, which is another way of saying anyone that believed was not a true conservative. *The Conservative Mind* is full of references to old books and the Kirkean canon is replete with references to those same books first referenced in TCM. TCM was important for not only giving American conservatism an intellectual past, but also for how Kirk took scattered texts and gave them a new meaning with an embellished and innovative historical arc.²⁶³ “Kirk was good at re-imagining people inside of his conception of history,” said Frohnen.²⁶⁴ This aspect of Kirk’s career has been all but ignored because it means regarding the conservative movement as something both lesser and greater than genealogy.²⁶⁵ Theoretically, it also says something important about the study of the history of ideas as

²⁶¹ Russell Kirk, “The Decline of Christian Literature” in *Confessions of a Bohemian Tory*.

²⁶² See Robert Darnton, *The Case for Books: Past, Present, and Future* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2009).

²⁶³ Recently historian Michael Kimmage has claimed that anti-communism was a kind of binding agent for mainstream American conservatism and an avenue for de-radicalizing conservatism. However, Kimmage never considers the many varieties of anti-communism among other conservatives such as Kirk and John Lukacs.

²⁶⁴ Conversation with Bruce Frohnen. April 2012.

²⁶⁵ Corey Robin, *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism From Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin* (New York: Oxford University Press, c2011). Despite missing the mark on a few aspects of conservative thought, Robin does understand the creative and counterrevolutionary nature of conservatism. Also, see the winter 1996 issue of the journal *Modern Age*. This issue is dedicated to looking at different types of conservatism

historians often attempt to give ideas a genealogy.²⁶⁶ In other words, attacking American conservatism as outside of the liberal tradition is a fruitless effort because imagination is a reconstruction of history and the past.²⁶⁷ For the study of intellectual history, it means returning to studying the mental faculties of intellectuals and how and why they chose to make certain turns or decisions.²⁶⁸

Kirk was not merely a historian; he was an artist and creator with the extraordinary ability to render texts into the fabric of history. Kirk intentionally picked figures to write about that he thought did not need to “cleaned up.” Still, historians cannot avoid including Kirk in the dual categories of historian-hagiographer who was more than generous with his subjects. Genealogy or re-creating the historical narrative was a great aspect of Kirk’s project of course, but he was always more than a peddler of nostalgia to his followers.²⁶⁹ Kirk was the prototypical privileged interpreter in that he retranslated texts for his audience, put them in a new context and one that conservatives could understand and identify with.²⁷⁰ As a privileged interpreter, he created new historical trajectories from the reimagined dead to new history trajectories by

²⁶⁶ See *Journal of the History of Ideas* symposium titled “Assessing and Extending The Logic of the History of Ideas” in the October 2012 issue.

²⁶⁷ John Lukacs describes this notion best when he writes about the “remembered past” as if it is a choice.

²⁶⁸ I borrow this explanation of how to study intellectuals from Hayden White’s *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987). For a shorter recent treatment see, Nils Gilman, “What is the Subject of Intellectual History?” *U.S. Intellectual History*, February 15, 2013, <http://s-usih.org/2013/02/what-is-the-subject-of-intellectual-history.html>, accessed February 15, 2013.

²⁶⁹ Robert Champ, “Russell Kirk’s Fiction of Enchantment,” *The Intercollegiate Review* 30 (1994): 39-42. See fall 1994 edition of *The Intercollegiate Review* for a round tribute to Kirk.

²⁷⁰ Brian C. Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983). There is an element of the prophetic in Kirk’s case as he weaved text into a narrative that spoke simultaneously about past and present.

grouping particular texts together, whether they fit with America's *actual* historical trajectory or not.²⁷¹

Kirk made texts alive for generations of followers by linking himself to the dead and building a continuum in which he was the missing link between Edmund Burke and a previously unrealized conservative past. The text works hand-in-hand linking both past and present simultaneously. Kirk used imagination to create a new reality and to demonstrate to conservatives that reality could be altered. In other words the liberal life was not inevitable, because as Bruce Frohnen writes, Kirk believed good books could teach people "the dictates of natural law."²⁷² Textuality (using texts to alter reality and altering the meaning of texts to fit the present) was a seminal aspect and method to Kirk's re-imagined world. Kirk fleshed out textuality through the practice of research as well as his lifestyle (one met the other and vice versa). In fact, Kirk's vision of the text as lived experience often played such an intertwining role with conservative social mores that it might often seem difficult to differentiate between the two, especially to those unfamiliar with Kirk's work and biography.

Kirk did not write and research like modern academics. He wrote in a flowery language and considered his mind proudly a "gothic" one.²⁷³ His life and occupation reflected those of an English gentleman, rather than those of a postwar career man so vilified by thinkers like David Riesman and Herbert Marcuse.²⁷⁴ Kirk in this fashion created a conservative genealogy for

²⁷¹ The three other thinkers included in this study including John Lukacs, Paul Gottfried, and Christopher Lasch disagreed with Kirk that America ever had a conservative past. All three firmly believed America's historical past was liberal or at the very least not conservative in Kirk's English sense.

²⁷² Bruce Frohnen, *Virtue and the Promise of Conservatism: The Legacy of Burke and Tocqueville* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 174.

²⁷³ Kirk, *Confessions of a Bohemian Tory*. Throughout *Confessions* Kirk references his gothic mind. This is not the modern day equivalent of the term gothic, but an earlier one rooted in writers like Walter Scott and Scotland prior to the twentieth century.

²⁷⁴ See, David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd* and Herbert Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man*.

American who despised modernity and the fruits of modern liberalism, even if that history was not necessarily revolutionary or American. “Kirk did more than any other writer at midcentury to devise a conservative family tree,” writes historian of American conservatism Patrick Allitt. “...To the objection that the American system, at least, was based in revolution, Kirk responded with the old Federalist retort that the American Revolution was “a conservative reaction, in the English political tradition, against royal innovation.””²⁷⁵

Kirk’s idea was to make the past more than an argument. “As Kirk’s tenth canon says, “The thinking conservative understands that permanence and change must be recognized and reconciled in a vigorous society.” That means that we have to be willing and able to think creatively about conservative principles, and apply them to new facts and circumstances,” writes traditionalist author and commentator Rod Dreher.²⁷⁶ The past is renewable because it is textual—reading is an active principle in Kirk’s conservatism—and since it can be read and written, it can also be lived thus present is re-imagined and renewable. All of this was directly connected to Kirk’s philosophy of history, and specifically Kirk’s expansion of Edmund Burke’s theory of moral imagination, which is important because it was also the key to understanding how Kirk positioned his philosophy of history along with his practical philosophy for living. Ted McAlister explains how conservatives and Kirk view of history and human action.

“One can make sense of Kirk and other conservatives only if one understands that the fundamental constituents of reality possess a permanent nature, which is true not only of the transcendent normative order but also of humans. A great many things change about humans, and these changes over time constitute history. The task is to distinguish the temporary form of the permanent.”²⁷⁷

²⁷⁵ Allitt, *The Conservatives*.

²⁷⁶ Rod Dreher, “What Is A Conservative?” *The American Conservative*, posted September 22, 2012, <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/dreher/what-is-a-conservative/>, accessed November 22, 2012.

²⁷⁷ Ted McAlister, *Revolt Against Modernity: Leo Strauss, Eric Voegelin, and The Search for a Postliberal order* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 269.

Benjamin Lockerd explains that Kirk aimed to move beyond purely historical thinking—Kirk considered historicism to be a relativist claim and rigid historical thinking as a product of liberal thinkers like Marx—into a philosophical and literary debate the extended back to Plato and that dealt with place of mimesis, imagination, and artistic expression inside of the state. Kirk considered himself a kind of outsider artist whose job it was to introduce art and poetics back into history and politics (much like a 19th century historian such as Burckhardt, whom he did not consider a conservative). As a historian and writer of fiction he further believed in the power of the past fused with imagination, and returning to the wisdom of great thinkers, like Burke, was the path to good living. The tragic sense, the poetic equivalent of original sin, Lockerd says, was the element that allows people to move beyond the idyllic logic of rationality, which Kirk considered bland, boring, and twin characteristics of the modern age. “(R)eliance on the wisdom of the ages—for only those who do not believe in evil can suppose they will be able to think of rational solutions to all problems,” Lockerd writes of Kirk’s problem with modern men.²⁷⁸

Kirk wanted to make life worth living again by making modernity appear mundane and antithetical to the good life. Life was supposed to be fun, unpredictable, un-bureaucratic (unplanned); Kirk wanted people to be able to waste time—a privilege only known to aristocrats and bohemian gentlemen such as Kirk—and not feel as if they had to be contributing to some greater national goal (this is at least one competing trope throughout his career).²⁷⁹ Kirk published an essay aptly titled “Is Life Worth Living?” He led the article off with a famous quotation from Thoreau about men leading lives of quiet desperation. Kirk explained his purpose

²⁷⁸ Benjamin Lockerd, introduction to *Eliot and His Age: T.S. Eliot’s Moral Imagination in the Twentieth Century* (Wilmington: ISI Books, c1971, 2008), xxi.

²⁷⁹ For this fleshed out from a conservative perspective see, James Schall, *On Unseriousness Of Human Affairs: Teaching Writing Playing Believing* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2001) and for an earlier account of leisure that conservatives quote often is Josef Pieper, *Leisure: The Basis of Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1952).

for living as “living as much as his (Kirk writing in the third person) ancestors lived, on their land, in circumstances that would enable him to utter the truth and make his voice heard: a life uncluttered and unpolluted, not devoted to getting and spending.” Describing the need for leisure, he wrote, “On the shelves of Kirk’s library rest a good many books he never had found time to read through...” “How many thousands of hours had he wasted in dreamy reverie, after the fashion of the Little Fir Tree?”²⁸⁰

Kirk’s canon of conservatism began with Burke because Kirk believed he best espoused the life of moral imagination. George Panichas explains why Kirk found Burke the model figure for the moral imagination: “Burke sought to present a system of truths obtained from the wisdom of the ages, in short, principles which save civilized society and prescriptive institutions from what Burke terms the ‘antagonist world’ of “madness, discord, vice, confusion, and unavailing sorrow,”” Panichas adds. “Kirk sees Burke as a hero of combatting “armed doctrines” and defending the spirit of religion and the spirit of the gentlemen.”²⁸¹ According to Kirk, Burke stood against the “abstractions” of the Jacobins and the calculators and had a firm grasp of ancestral wisdom, “practical” experience, and “knowledge of the human heart.”²⁸² Overall, Kirk believed Burke gave conservatives a path out of the modern malaise, which he believed inevitably, led to the flattening of all humanity to the unrelenting prospects of equality and progress.²⁸³

²⁸⁰ Kirk, *The Sword of Imagination*, 473, 475.

²⁸¹ George Panichas, "short introduction," in *The Essential Russell Kirk*, ed. George Panichas (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2007), 138.

²⁸² Kirk, "short introduction," in *The Essential Russell Kirk*, ed. George Panichas (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2007), 143.

²⁸³ This is a shared belief between the four intellectuals in this study. It also worth noting that Kirk and the traditionalists shared affinities with the Frankfurt School. See, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, c 1944, 2002). However, finding conservatives who will admit this shared skepticism towards enlightenment and popular culture is difficult.

In *The Conservative Reader*, Kirk further explained why he believed Burke gave humans a way out of the modern malaise of greed, rationalism, and the prevalence of abstract universals that gave humans a monolithic existence. Kirk thought there were a couple of specific reasons Burke best understood the benefits of moral imagination. Burke knew that “the spirit of a gentleman and the spirit of religion” were the true marks of keeping Western civilization alive through moral imagination, Kirk wrote. In this same volume, Kirk quotes Harvard professor and friend Irving Babbitt’s explanation of Burke’s moral imagination: “His (Burke’s) individualism, however, is not, like that of Rousseau, naturalistic, but humanistic and religious,” Babbitt wrote.²⁸⁴ Elsewhere, Kirk describes moral imagination as artistic expression. This is primarily, I believe, where Kirk is best and most precise in explaining what moral imagination means in regards to culture. “‘Scientific’ truth, or what is popularly taken to be scientific truth, alters from year to year—with accelerating speed in our day,” he wrote. “But poetic and moral truth changes little with the elapse of the centuries. To the unalterable in human existence, humane letters are a great guide.”²⁸⁵ Burke was primarily a politician and Kirk essentially fused together Burke and T.S. Eliot the Christian poet and cultural critic into his own worldview concerning American conservatism.

Ultimately, the moral imagination is a strange mixture of high Protestant custom coming from more catholic denominations such as the Anglican communion, Catholic natural law, bourgeois/aristocratic sentimentalism, and philosophical history as translated through the literature and letters of high-ranking gentlemen like Burke and Eliot. This strange mixture appealed to many groups within the postwar conservative movement for a variety of reasons. William Buckley could grasp the imaginative style because he had been raised as a European a

²⁸⁴ Russell Kirk ed., *The Portable Conservative Reader* (New York: Viking Press, 1982), 454.

²⁸⁵ Kirk, *The Essential Russell Kirk*, 218.

gentleman in a Catholic boarding school—American English was Buckley’s second language, French his first. The appeal of hierarchy was great for Buckley because of his social status as a New England gentleman. Catholic purists and later Protestant evangelicals sided with Kirk because he wrote about the importance of religiosity, virtue, universality, and manners. The free enterprisers found that while Kirk was hesitant to embrace the so-called virtues of capitalism, he still preferred the free market to widespread government planning. Traditionalists, religious or not, found worth in Kirk’s philosophy because he wrote about the importance of community, custom, history, and hierarchy. Most importantly, Kirk gave conservatives a method for combatting liberalism and modernity beyond the free market and selfish individualism.²⁸⁶ He showed conservatives how to create their own narratives and imagination without sacrificing their identities to the dominant personalities found in the Randians or in the various faces of liberalism.

Kirk’s emphasis on moral imagination in *The Conservative Mind* and throughout his career gave conservatives a greater reason for hope than either the free market or the promise of political triumph, although the imagination could contain kernels of both of these simultaneously. James Kalb writes of the importance of Kirkeanism to conservatives. “One attempt to refound American conservatism on a deeper and more comprehensive basis was that of Russell Kirk, who discovered, with the aid of imagination and piety, a ‘conservative mind’ that had previously gone largely unnoticed among us,” writes Kalb.²⁸⁷ It is not a coincidence that

²⁸⁶ Gregory Schneider, *The Conservative Century: From Reaction to Revolution* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009). See chapters 1 and 2 for Schneider’s take on pre-WWII conservatives.

²⁸⁷ James Kalb, *The Tyranny of Liberalism: Understanding and Overcoming Administered Freedom, Inquisitorial Tolerance, and Equality by Command* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2008), 185.

conservatives (of different stripes) focused on the promise of imagination from 1953 onward.²⁸⁸

One of the key institutions that Kirk helped create, the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI), built its reputation on the Kirkean notion of moral imagination. ISI sponsors writers like professors Anthony Esolen and James Wilson who have built careers emphasizing and promoting their research on imagination and American conservatism.²⁸⁹ ISI, Kirk's largest and most influential textual community, served as an intellectual retreat for the most influential American conservatives including Kirk, Lukacs, Buckley, and leaders of influential conservative think-tanks.²⁹⁰ The imagination therefore played a great, and as I argue, definite role among postwar conservatives and later conservatives through the present day.

As explained in the previous methods chapter, Brian Stock makes it possible to follow what I would call an intellectual lineage. Russell Kirk was in Stockian language, a *privileged interpreter* par excellence because he had followers who defined conservatism in his Kirkean terms. Boundaries existed because Kirk said so, and his followers carried out a 'Kirkean' legacy following his death as they vie for who is the most Kirkean in the conservative movement today. The concept for understanding an intellectual lineage is that of textual communities of which Stock defined. Textual communities are just as the term reveals without great explanation; it is a

²⁸⁸ See, Victor Hanson ed. et al, *Bonfire of the Humanities: Rescuing The Classics in an Impoverished Age* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2001); Bradley Birzer, *J.R.R. Tolkien's Sanctifying Myth: Understanding Middle-Earth* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2003); Vigen Guroian, *Rallying the Really Human Things: The Moral imagination in Politics, Literature, and Everyday Life* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2005); Peter Kreeft, *The Philosophy of Tolkien: The Worldview Behind the Lord of the Rings* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005); Douglas Wilson, *What I Learned in Narnia* (Moscow: Canon Press, 2010); David Hart, *The Devil and Pierre Gernet: Stories* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2012). I will also include novelist and essayist Marilynne Robinson too. See, *When I Was a Child I Read Books: Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012).

²⁸⁹ See, Anthony Esolen, *Ironies of Faith: The Laughter at The Heart of Christian Literature* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2007) and *Ten Ways to Destroy The Imagination of Your Child* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2010) and James M. Wilson, *Four Verse Letters* (Franciscan University at Steubenville Press, 2010). Wilson also published an important series of articles for ISI's online journal *First Principles* titled "The Politicized Aesthetic."

²⁹⁰ See Seth Bartee, "Intercollegiate Studies Institute," *U.S. Intellectual History*, October 9, 2012, <http://us-intellectual-history.blogspot.com/2012/10/intercollegiate-studies-institute.html>, accessed October 19, 2012.

way to trace how Kirk and his followers used books to create and recreate conservatism. Therefore, Kirk's textual community read Kirk's *The Conservative Mind* and Edmund Burke's *Reflections* on an equal plane. These books were a part of the Kirkean canon that could teach others how to be conservative. The canon expanded or contracted as they textual community reacted to or against a kind of conservatism considered un-conservative. My goal mainly is to flesh out the ways in which the idea of imagination manifested itself among Kirk's followers both old and new in the next section. In that section I was also highlight some of those who have intentionally taken on the Kirkean mantle following his death, and new boundaries they have created for Kirkeanism.

Mapping Social Territory: The Kirkean Textual Community

Russell Kirk's textual community were his followers at the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI), those students who independently traveled to study with him at his home in Mecosta, Michigan, and then admirers who may have found Kirk intriguing but had not made the pilgrimage to Mecosta. Both sets of followers have taken on the Kirkean mantle since Kirk's death in 1994 and modified it in some manner. The Kirkean textual community did not deviate or modify the privileged interpreter's teaching until after he died. By the middle of the 1990s, various members of Kirk's textual community were able to solidify themselves in administrative positions at ISI first and to disseminate their ideas from the most powerful conservative academic organization in the United States through the next decade. ISI and The Kirk Center remained the sole venues to find Kirkean textual communities until the internet and its second phase, 2.0, began paving the way for Kirkean, since. Internet 2.0 gave new Kirkean groups the

opportunity to develop a voice without having to operate on funding or an official board of advisors.²⁹¹

There are recognizable groupings and divisions in the Kirkean textual community, but before I list them, I will have to give some background about the era in which Kirkean textual communities grew. Kirk died in 1994 as neo-conservative intellectuals had firmly placed themselves in positions of political prominence at think tanks like the American Enterprise Institute and the Heritage Foundation not to mention the Republican Party. Kirk recognized that near the conclusion of his long career that he was no longer the foremost thinker of the conservative movement.²⁹² During the 1990s and the first decade of the new century, ISI was still a recognized academic organization who boasted the greatest minds of the conservative movement. In fact, ISI was the only academic organization *strictly* dedicated to fusionist conservative thought (libertarian-traditionalist-Roman Catholic-Straussian, etc).²⁹³ Being so, ISI served as the gatekeeper for conservatives who wanted to debate with other conservatives, and the fact that they housed three academic journals only bolstered their reputation as the foremost place for conservative intellectuals to gather.²⁹⁴ Moreover, ISI boasted a long intellectual heritage that began long before either Heritage or AEI came onto the conservative scene.

²⁹¹ Internet 2.0 and the possibility of collaborating through interactive portals and blogs opened up new opportunities for conservative intellectuals. A host of conservative blogs including *Front Porch Republic*, *The Imaginative Conservative*, *VDARE.com*, *Taki's Magazine*, and others began popping up during the middle of the first decade of the new millennium. What make conservative blogs so popular is that they did not have to answer to a board of advisors or need serious overhead to begin a blog.

²⁹² See Donald Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy: How the Republican Right Rose to Power in Modern America* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2011). Chapters 7-10 address the shifts in the conservative movement during the Cold War.

²⁹³ See George Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America* for a summary of the fusionist era of conservatism.

²⁹⁴ The journals include *The Intercollegiate Review*, *Modern Age*, and *The Political Science Reviewer*.

People like Mark Henrie and Jeffrey Nelson had a great amount of influence at ISI because they studied with Kirk (Nelson is Kirk's son-in-law, too). Henrie and Nelson rode the wave of Reaganism that powered ISI through its most fruitful years as longtime president T. Kenneth Cribb led that organization as a former advisor to Ronald Reagan. As someone with political prowess, Cribb never deviated ISI from its mission of promoting ideas and sending out conservatism's best intellectuals to college campuses.²⁹⁵ Under Cribb, though, the neo-conservatives gained a greater foothold at ISI, and the organization began to age under the final years of his presidency.²⁹⁶ By 2010 nearly all of the ISI's greatness was lost because the entire first generation of postwar conservatives was dead, Internet 2.0 had grown into an avenue for expression of new ideas, and fusionism buckled as conservatives and conservatism further split from one another.²⁹⁷ The remaining first and second-generation traditionalists, as few as they were, were angry with ISI because they were now firmly committed to Republican political ideology and neo-conservative policy, which they consider just another form of progressivism.²⁹⁸ ISI now supported interventionist foreign policy, desired greater influence in Washington, and let its journals falter under a new president with a background in Wall Street just as traditionalists

²⁹⁵ ISI continued to grow under Cribb until he was ousted in the fall of 2010. Christopher Long was hired as his replacement. The reasons for Cribb's firing are still unclear.

²⁹⁶ By neo-conservative, I mean occupationally leaders of prominent think tanks, Republican Party insiders, fundraisers, and lobbyists. Intellectually these people tend to be Jewish ex-communists and their academic students who gravitated into conservatism during the latter half of the Cold War. Critics may call these people liberal and or big government conservatives.

²⁹⁷ I measure ISI's greatness according to their totalizing effect on conservatism and its intellectuals. ISI used to serve as the gatekeepers for anyone who wanted to participate in the intellectual life of conservatism. Now, this is no longer the case. In fact, the majority of conservative thinkers and historians who write about conservatism do not have to associate with ISI or publish in their journals. Publishing in one of their journals may actually the intellectual credibility of these thinkers, too.

²⁹⁸ Members will quietly confess that Heritage Foundation president Edwin Feulner's presence in ISI and other conservative organizations has denigrated them to subsidiaries of Heritage. The recent formation of both the Academy of Philosophy and Letters and The H.L. Mencken Club were founded by second-generation traditionalists Paul Gottfried and Claes Ryn. Both of these thinkers were previously involved with ISI.

criticized the Bush era corporate bailouts.²⁹⁹ ISI steadily shifted from an intellectual to a political organization after its founding generations died.³⁰⁰

Three primary groups of Kirkeans exist now. First, ISI is still home to Kirkeans Mark Henrie and Jeffrey Nelson. Both men also have influence in The Philadelphia Society and at The Kirk Center (particularly Nelson). The second group is located at The Kirk Center (TKC) as it is still a separate entity from ISI. Gerald Russello, a Manhattan attorney, is the key intellectual at TKC and has written a scholarly book on Kirk, edits the online journal *The University Bookman*, and is also active in The Philadelphia Society. The third group is most prominent at the blog *The Imaginative Conservative* (TIC), which is the most recent manifestation of a Kirkean textual community. The Kirkeans located at TIC may or may not be on good terms with ISI; in fact, many of the participants are reacting against ISI's turn towards politicization and corporatism. TIC is important because it does not have a board of advisors like either TKC or ISI. It is a manifestation of internet 2.0. Still, each of these textual communities has similarities but is diverse in thinking about Kirk. The Kirk Center via Russello and TIC have both gained a greater following because of the waning of traditionalism at ISI and other venues such as The Philadelphia Society and *National Review*.³⁰¹ These shifts and divisions will become apparent in the following material that concerns ISI and the Kirkean textual community.

²⁹⁹ By 2012, all three of these journals were only publishing intermittently. Also, see the *Front Porch Republic's* page that describes why they found the Bush era and the Republican Party as displeasing as the Left, <http://www.frontporchrepublic.com/about/>.

³⁰⁰ There are key figures such as George Panichas and Victor Milione who had a great hand in ISI's intellectual prowess who died since 2008. For a summary of Milione's activities at ISI see, Lee Edwards, "Milione, E. Victor," *First Principles*, Dec. 11, 2012, <http://www.firstprinciplesjournal.com/articles.aspx?article=283&loc=r>, accessed January 20, 2013.

³⁰¹ An outsider might attribute this decline to the death of William Buckley; however, Buckley himself was a supporter of neo-conservatism until just before his death. During a 2011 lecture to The H.L. Mencken Society Peter Brimelow chided Buckley for his long involvement with neo-conservatives and his lax stance about keeping

ISI is the obvious starting place for Kirk's textual community for two main reasons. Kirk was greatly involved with ISI during his career and, at one time, Kirk was its most celebrated thinker. Members of ISI, at least the remaining traditionalists, believe in the power of created tradition rooted in an alternative conservative past. Here, imagination is the quality that is supposed to hold together created or alternative history. The tropes of imagination and created tradition are prominent in the corpus of Kirk's work, and they were active at ISI even while Kirk was living. "The course of history is not predestined or automatic, it is determined by people by men and women of flesh and blood," wrote conservative publisher and publisher of *The Conservative Mind* Henry Regnery. "If we don't like the present state of affairs, it is within our power to change it."³⁰² Yet imagination, as the following quote will establish, was not automatically available to anyone who disliked liberalism, or that associated with conservatism. "Some years ago I remarked in the course of a speech that conservative imagination is required in our time," Kirk wrote. "From the audience, a conservative man of business retorted, 'We don't need any imagination' we're practical.' That is what I mean."³⁰³

Henrie and Nelson have tightened the Kirkean group identity at ISI as a result (or even a reaction against) those same people Kirk disdained during his lifetime.³⁰⁴ In Kirkean fashion, they believe that most who call themselves conservative neither understand the power of imagination nor tradition with all of its promise. Here is a brief list of a few ways the Kirkean textual community as ISI tightened group identity.

conservatism conservative. See Peter Brimelow, "The WFB Myth" (paper presented at the annual meeting of The HL Mencken Club, Baltimore, Maryland, November 5, 2011).

³⁰² Henry Regnery, *Perfect Sowing: Reflections of a Bookman* ed. Jeffrey Nelson (Wilmington: ISI Books, 1999), 350.

³⁰³ Russell Kirk, *Prospects for Conservatives* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 1989), 256.

³⁰⁴ This knowledge based on several private conversations with conservative scholars who participate(d) on the ISI lecture circuit.

1. They no longer promote fusionist conservatism probably because it can no longer exist under the terms it did in the fifties, sixties, and seventies.³⁰⁵ They might argue that the fusionist thesis was a unique time in history when the Cold War held these strange alliances together.
2. Kirkeanism at ISI is ardently Catholic and Straussian. Because neo-conservatives and evangelicals have loosely formed an alliance, Catholicism and philosophy seem to be where ISI Kirkeans have chosen to reconstruct conservatism's boundaries.³⁰⁶
3. Kirkeanism distilled through ISI is bourgeois and not bohemian or reactionary, as Kirk preferred it. These rules remain unwritten but known to those associated and accepted into ISI's inner circles.³⁰⁷ The price for breaking these rules is exclusion from the textual community and its subsidiaries.³⁰⁸

There is a bourgeois posturing to Kirkeanism at ISI especially as they (most likely Henrie and Nelson) recruit new young leaders and students. When ISI recruits, Henrie and Nelson prefer students from certain venues such as Ivy League schools, or acceptable "conservative" schools such as St. Johns (Annapolis) or Hillsdale College. If none of the above, they seek followers who

³⁰⁵ See Mark Henrie's lecture "America's Englishness," for insight into how ISI Kirkeans teach American history, <http://www.isi.org/bios/bio.aspx?id=94df135d-97ba-45db-ad8c-2204a47d2746&source=Books&select=true>, accessed January 17, 2013.

³⁰⁶ See, Seth Bartee, "All the Shepherds are Sheep, too: The Great Commission against Conservatism," *U.S. Intellectual History*, January 8, 2013, <http://www.us-intellectual-history.com/2013/01/all-shepherds-are-sheep-too-great.html?m=1>, accessed January 8, 2013.

³⁰⁷ You will find evidence of some of these unwritten rules on ISI's website (ISI.org) and blogs such as Darryl Hart's *Old Life* blog or by attending an ISI event such as its dinner for Western Civilization.

³⁰⁸ There are many ways one can be excluded from ISI but the two most prominent ways is being taken off of the ISI lecture circuit and excluded from participation in its journals. It may also include exclusion from certain functions like the Dinner for Western Civilization and the Lehrman summer institutes.

will conform to the standards set forth by the ISI textual community. Kirk, who was known to have taken in many wayfaring strangers into his home in Mecosta, would have been opposed to the bourgeois posturing based on his notion of a tacit conservatism available to educated and uneducated alike.³⁰⁹ By bourgeois posturing, I mean the preference of elite social status and all the features that come with that over selecting its members based on intellectual merit and interest.³¹⁰ A former member of ISI reported that a large southern school was denied participation in the ISI lecture circuit because it was not considered elite enough by ISI staff.

Because the neo-conservative and liberal Straussians have balked at traditionalism and the notion and existence of a British conservative strain alive in the United States, Henrie and Nelson have countered them by continuing Kirk's counter-historical project, as they understand it, as is a key point in any textual community.³¹¹ Henrie sees himself as the standard-bearer of English and European conservatism as described by Kirk in the *Roots of American Order* and in *Right and Duties: Reflections on Our Conservative Constitution*. "Ever the conservative, Kirk attempted to demonstrate the *unoriginality* of the American Revolution," Henrie wrote. "To him, "ours was a revolution not made but prevented," a conservative revolt against the novelty of George III's centralizing rule and Parliament's departure from past practice into direct taxation of the colonies."³¹² Henrie goes on to approximate that Kirk was more interested in continuity than in rupture in his theory of history, which is a concept Kirk was more attentive to during the second phase of his career following the publication of *Roots*. "Kirk's work is an attempt at the

³⁰⁹ See, Kirk, *The Sword of Imagination*.

³¹⁰ Historians may recall that Russell Kirk was not a northeastern blue blood like Buckley. Yet his legacy has taken on this seemingly new bourgeois status, particularly after his death.

³¹¹ For a summary of the controversy between Russell Kirk and Midge Decter see, Samuel Francis, "Queen of the Damned," *Chronicles Magazine*, August 1, 2004, <http://www.chroniclesmagazine.org/2004/08/01/queen-of-the-damned/>, accessed January 20, 2013.

³¹² Mark Henrie, "Russell Kirk's Unfounded America," *The Intercollegiate Review* 30 (1994): 51.

recovery of tradition from the diremptions of the eighteenth century,” Henrie wrote. “The success of the attempt remains uncertain.”³¹³

Henrie’s vision of Kirkeanism is as a counter revolutionary force against the neo-conservatives who believe America’s tradition is indeed liberal, enlightened, and a secular Lockean project.³¹⁴ For Kirk and Henrie continuity and tradition overpower America’s liberal and revolutionary tendency because there are those who seek a “high-minded” interlude from the world as it is.³¹⁵ Standing athwart history, according to Henrie, is a specifically conservative position because of the necessity of countering liberalism with something more powerful than market ideology or politics, which he believes go hand-in-hand with the modern project. Henrie and the traditionalists quietly opposed the second Bush administration, the preemptive strike on Iraqi soil, and John McCain’s presidential bid based on their belief that both men embraced the “universal and homogenous state” just as their liberal opponents did. Henrie believes the modern Republican Party has only continued the progressive liberal project of destroying America’s intermediate moorings by further usurping it with bureaucracy.³¹⁶ During Henrie’s address to The Philadelphia Society in 2011, he gave a kind of backdoor critique of the neo-conservative abandonment of traditionalism as they unite conservatism and progress closer together. He said:

³¹³ Mark Henrie, “Russell Kirk’s Unfounded America,” *The Intercollegiate Review* 30 (1994): 56.

³¹⁴ It is worth noting that Straussians and neo-cons can are often similar depending on the school. See Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Roads to Modernity: The British, French, and American Enlightenment* (New York: Knopf, 2004) and Peter Lawler, *Postmodernism Rightly Understood: The Return to Realism in American Thought* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999).

³¹⁵ Mark Henrie’s lecture, “Rethinking American Conservatism...Yet Again,” <http://www.isi.org/lectures/lectures.aspx?SBY=lecture&SFor=ddeaed12-9412-4a47-bb40-3a66f0353665>, accessed June 11, 2013.

³¹⁶ See Daniel Larison, “Understanding Traditionalist Conservatism,” *The American Conservative*, Aug. 1, 2005, <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/larison/understanding-traditionalist-conservatism/>, accessed January 19, 2013.

“There should have been a profound civilizational rejection of the kind of inevitablist historical thinking which is so deeply entwined with the modern age—especially among conservatives. We conservatives should have blinked in the light of a new day and confidently proclaimed that the future will be what we make of it, because impersonal historical forces do not have the last word. We should have set our minds to the task of articulating a new—or perhaps very old—vision of the human goods we want to see realized in the now wide-open historical world. Instead, as we know, conservatives and others were drawn to the intoxicating arguments of Francis Fukuyama. What Fukuyama learned from the collapse of communism was not that human beings are free and so the future remains open. What he learned, instead, was that Hegel was right where Marx had been wrong. History remained an impersonal realm of irresistible forces, but the end toward which those forces were driving humanity was not Soviet communism but rather American democratic capitalism. We ourselves, we Americans, were the first to reach History’s inevitable and predestined endpoint. Many controversial policy decisions followed from the intellectual inebriation of “End of History” thinking. An intellectual opportunity was lost.”³¹⁷

It is interesting to note that while Henrie prides himself as a conservative who hates revolution that his pontificating also carries with it the very historical tones of change that he rails against above. Corey Robin noticed this in his book titled *The Reactionary Mind* in which he explains the revolutionary undertones evident in the work of Edmund Burke and the American conservatives who sought to emulate him.³¹⁸ Henrie’s statement that the “future will be what we make of it,” is revolutionary, even if it is classified as a counter-revolutionary

³¹⁷ Mark Henrie, “Progressivism and the Younger Generation,” *The Imaginative Conservative*, March 7, 2012, <http://www.imaginativeconservative.org/2012/03/progressivism-and-younger-generation.html>, accessed January 18, 2013.

³¹⁸ See, Corey Robin, *The Reactionary Mind: From Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

charge. The traditionalist camp can cover this revolutionary impulse in language like imagination. The neo-conservatives were quite perceptive at understanding the traditionalists' double-mindedness towards ideology and revolution.³¹⁹ David Horowitz's book, *The Art of Political War*, challenged conservatives to master their presence in the media, on the campaign trail, and in the language of debate. He wanted conservatives to be victorious like their adversaries the Democratic Party; as former leftist, conservatives relied upon his neo-conservative vision for defeating liberals, *politically*.³²⁰ Yet, traditionalist conservatives have created a counter-narrative that says that the wrong kind of victory was thrust upon them. "So the problem was not with the movement, it was with the politicians," writes conservative publisher, former editor of *The American Spectator*, and board member of ISI, Alfred Regnery. "...It is they, the true believers, who will continue pushing the ideas and philosophy that is conservatism's foundation forward, and who will keep it alive."³²¹ Within the traditionalist camp, there is a denial that political victory and popularity were ever original considerations of conservatism's founding generation, as Regnery's quote reveals.

The Philadelphia Society has also provided battleground for the uneasy fusion of the traditionalist-neoconservative synthesis.³²² Paul Murphy cites previous eruptions between neo-cons and traditionalists at Philadelphia Society meetings. The most famous incident was when

³¹⁹ Several historians have pointed to the neo-conservatives' history as revolutionaries including overseeing several revolutionary type publications before and during the Cold War. See, Jacob Heilbrunn, "The Neoconservative Journey," in *Varieties of Conservatism*, Peter Berkowitz ed. (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2004), 105-128.

³²⁰ See, David Horowitz, *The Art of Political War: And Other Radical Pursuits* (Dallas: Spence Publishing, 2000).

³²¹ See, Alfred Regnery, *Upstream: The Ascendance of American Conservatism* (New York: Threshold, 2008), xvi.

³²² The Philadelphia Society began as a traditionalist organization in 1964. Former presidents of this organization including traditionalists Russell Kirk, Mel Bradford, Stephen Tonsor, and Claes Ryn. It should be noted that traditionalists, or those who oppose changing society through bureaucracy, no longer garner positions of leadership in the organization.

Stephen Tonsor referred to neo-conservative as “whores” in a speech during one of the annual meetings.³²³ Tonsor’s statement, however, was one just incident in a long line of skirmishes between these groups. Traditionalists lost ground to the neo-conservatives because of lack of financial resources and because neo-conservatives gained the ear of national media by inheriting prized seats in top newspapers and other media.³²⁴ The neo-conservatives carried with them the financial support from places such as New York and Washington therefore co-opting the very same organizations traditionalists counted on for support.³²⁵ The traditionalists at ISI and The Philadelphia Society, in hopes of gaining political clout, lost control of both organizations to the neo-conservatives. The sectarian infighting with neo-conservatives, and the yearning to make the Reagan years last perpetually, brought ISI’s greatness—and an important wing of Kirk’s textual community—to a gradual end.³²⁶

It is worth briefly mentioning the presence of another society called the Academy of Philosophy and Letters (APL), which is a split from ISI for reasons mentioned above.³²⁷ Claes Ryn, a traditionalist, originally co-founded APL with Paul Gottfried before the two of them split over competing political priorities. Ryn, a Swedish-born moral philosopher at Catholic University, believes in the primacy of culture as the foundation of traditionalism, except that,

³²³ Paul V. Murphy, *The Rebuke of History: The Southern Agrarians and American Conservative Thought* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), see chapter eight. The neo-conservatives gradually either pushed out the traditionalists/paleo-conservatives from The Philadelphia Society or made sure that their presence is slight. The most recognized neo-conservatives no longer participate in this organization.

³²⁴ In *Conservatism in America: Making Sense of the American Right* Paul Gottfried argues that the Old Right withered because traditionalists began playing the “values” game against liberals only to find it usurped and later used against them by the neo-conservatives.

³²⁵ Very few traditionalist organizations exist with the exception being the ISI breakoffs The Academy of Philosophy and Letters and its breakoff the H.L. Mencken Club. The Rockford Institute has existed longer than both but its roster is small.

³²⁶ This was not true for every traditionalist either. Some traditionalists or paleos did not like Reagan (Lukacs and Samuel Francis) while other traditionalists, such as Patrick Buchanan, like Reagan.

³²⁷ I have been informed that the anger towards ISI is not so much directed at people like Edwin Feulner and Alfred Regnery who are neo-conservatives and not intellectuals in their own right.

unlike Kirk, he believes that a conservative resurgence in both politics and culture is possible.³²⁸ APL, which began as a reaction to the fall of ISI's original traditionalist moorings, split because co-founder Paul Gottfried would not limit membership to any one conservative group including those involved in neo-paganism and other non-religious groups.³²⁹ Ryn, as the name of the organization suggests, is not interested in making APL a place for making new political alliances. Ryn—opposing what he considers the politicalization of conservatism—wrote: “Because the conservative discussions of public policy and adjoining issues have not been inspired or informed by the kind of advanced intellectual and artistic culture that once seemed in the making, those discussions have been more prone to ideological reductionism and lack of imagination than need have been the case.”³³⁰

While Ryn believes that a conservative politics and culture is implausible, this fusion has taken on a new political and theological meaning at ISI. ISI has also become the home to a recent fermentation of Catholicism and Straussianism. What this means is that ISI's Kirkeans believe that religion is only one side of the coin to unlocking a rightly ordered conservatism. The other side, Straussian—we might also think of this as a Straussification of Kirkeanism—, calls for a serious rendering of extra-canonical or philosophical texts along with religious ceremony or meaning.³³¹ In other words, a secret almost gnostic kind of intellect is as important to ISI

³²⁸ See, Gerald Russello, “Conservatives, Politics & Culture: A Response to Claes Ryn,” *The Imaginative Conservative*, <http://www.imaginativeconservative.org/2011/10/conservatives-politics-culture-response.html>, Oct. 15, 2011, accessed January 20, 2013.

³²⁹ The HLMC hosts all kind of conservatives including those who are irreligious and opposed to mainstream representation.

³³⁰ Claes Ryn, “How Conservatives Failed ‘The Culture’,” *The Imaginative Conservative*, Oct. 10, 2011, accessed January 17, 2013. TIC reprinted this article from a 1996 issue of *Modern Age*.

³³¹ Here are two books and authors that bring together theology with Straussianism. See James Schall, *A Student's Guide to Liberal Learning* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2000) and Peter Lawler, *Homeless and at Home in America: Evidence for the Dignity of the Human Soul in Our Time and Place* (South Bend: St. Augustine Press, 2007).

conservatism as is the soul, and this is Straussian element.³³² In the 2007 issue of *The Political Science Reviewer* (an ISI journal) dedicated to Strauss and Straussianism, Peter Lawler wrote: “They (particular sect of Straussians) clearly are saying what they think is true about the thought of Strauss and Straussians, but to some extent in the service of defending their own view of the true and proper relationships among philosophy, theology, morality, and politics. I’m not saying that they’re writing esoterically; they probably aren’t. But they’re each alive to the esoteric or hidden dimension of Strauss’s thought.”³³³ This issue of *The Political Science Reviewer* is a collection of conservative Catholic Straussians who are interested in bringing together esoteric philosophy (the so-called secret teachings of Strauss about truth) together with a kind of Biblical theology built on knowing the true path that leads through both Athens and Jerusalem. The trick, as Lawler explains, is to figure out who is telling the truth about truth—or if life lived virtuously is really rewarding or not—and what this truth means about the metaphysics of life. Catholic Straussians such as Lawler, James Schall, and Marc Geurra have continued to play a greater role at ISI during the last decade.

While it seems that ISI has shrunk its audience to Catholics who are also Straussians, The Kirk Center has embraced ISI’s new Catholicism with gusto.³³⁴ Those associated with the Kirk family claim that Kirk’s legacy has become more Catholic as Annette Kirk—who was instrumental in Kirk’s conversion to Roman Catholicism—eagerly embraces the revisionist

³³² See, Rod Dreher, “Hart: Evangelicals are Inherently Progressive,” *The American Conservative*, Nov. 8, 2011, <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/dreher/hart-evangelicals-are-inherently-progressive/>, accessed January 20, 2013.

It should be noted that there is a field of thinking about Straussian that claims that Strauss was not a gnostic theorist. However, this is rejected by paleo-conservatives such as Paul Gottfried. See, Paul Gottfried, *Leo Strauss and the Conservative Movement in America: A Critical Appraisal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

³³³ Peter Lawler, “Introduction: Strauss, Straussians, and Faith-Based Students of Strauss,” *The Political Science Reviewer* 36 (2007): 1-2.

³³⁴ Interview with Matthew Davis. Interview by Seth Bartee. September 2012. Davis, fresh off of a recent trip to Mecosta, shared that the Catholic-ness of the Kirkean legacy lives large at TKC now.

portrait of Kirk the devout Catholic. However, this remains a debatable fact of Kirk's life and career that may never become clear. Although it is obvious from visiting the Kirk's home in Mecosta, that Annette is a devout Roman Catholic. The intellectual influence of TKC comes from Gerald Russello who has devoted a large segment of his life to researching Kirk and the imaginative element of his worldview. Russello is the founder of the postmodern Kirkean school.³³⁵ In Russello's Kirkeanism, the imagination was never meant to be something modern. But according to him, it is postmodern in that it is an outright rejection of modernism and all of its fruits including revolution, industrialism, and scientific rationalism.³³⁶ Russello's greater claim is that postmodernism is a *conservative* idea and not a liberal as left postmoderns believe.³³⁷ "Kirk's conservatism is 'postmodern' in the sense that it was never modern, and therefore is not burdened as liberalism is with the weaknesses of the Enlightenment worldview. Kirk's emphasis on imagination, his concern for the imagery a society creates of what it admires or condemns, his treatment of tradition and history as not objective but one in which we participate and can change, and his devotion to what Burke called the "little platoons" of society

³³⁵ See, Gerald Russello, "Russell Kirk: Traditionalist Conservatism in a Postmodern Age," in *The Dilemmas of American Conservatism*, ed. Kenneth Deutsch and Ethan Fishman (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 2010), 125-150. Russello's postmodern conservatism is primarily and ecumenically imaginative. His project, as he explains it through Kirk's is: "reconstructing tradition in a postliberal society." (134) Conservative postmodernism, I might also add evangelical postmodernism too, is based on the idea "image making." This idea is as I have suggested throughout: the imagination provides both the foundation and ecumenical idea for reconstructing society according to conservative (or evangelical) principles. From the evangelical postmodern side see, Andy Crouch, "Playing God: An Honest Conversation About Power," 2013 Carver-Barnes Lecture at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary Center for Faith and Culture, Wake Forest, NC, February 8, 2013. The key words in postmodern conservatism are "imagination" and "reconstruction."

³³⁶ See Mark Henrie, "Understanding Traditionalist Conservatism," in *Varieties of Conservatism*, Peter Berkowitz ed. (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2004), 5-6. Henrie says that three evils emerged throughout *The Conservative Mind* including the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution, and bureaucracy.

³³⁷ When I use the term left postmodernism if I am also referring to adherents to French theorist/historian Michel Foucault and social/cultural theorists. See, Lynn Hunt ed., *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

all have parallels in postmodern thought.³³⁸ Moreover, Kirk himself saw this,” Russello said in an interview.³³⁹

Russello has updated Kirk, because, as he said in an interview with *National Review*, Kirk did not even fully realize the potential of postmodernism in his own scholarship. Russello brings in the postmodern element as a path he believes Kirk was traveling towards, although Kirk never defined his scholarship as “postmodern” per se. Russello has gained an intriguing audience through a publication he edits titled *The University Bookman* (TUB). TUB has gained prominence because Russello hosts those whom he and Annette Kirk consider worthy Kirkeans. He has also found ways to expand the conservative canon and keep Kirkean traditionalism strong in literary and conservative academic circles.³⁴⁰

Russello’s group tends to have many Catholic conservatives. But Catholic Straussianism is not the most profound trope here. Imagination is a dominant trope in all Kirkean textual communities. However, Winston Elliot who founded the blog *The Imaginative Conservative* in 2010 has made it the dominant theme for his Kirkean textual community. As president of Free Enterprise Institute, Elliott has become one of the most influential Kirkeans in a short period because he hosts an outlet for most of the Kirkeans listed above, and makes sure TIC’s material is posted on a series of social media sites including facebook and twitter.

³³⁸ See, Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). The Frankfurt School was critical of mass culture and enlightenment as Kirk and the traditionalists were also critical of mass culture and enlightenment for some of the same reasons.

³³⁹ John J. Miller. Interview with Gerald Russello. *National Review*. “Captain Kirk.” <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/221431/captain-kirk/interview>, June 28, 2007, accessed January 19, 2013.

³⁴⁰ See Gerald Russello, “Ten Conservative Books Revisited,” *The University Bookman*, Dec. 9, 2012, <http://www.kirkcenter.org/index.php/bookman/article/ten-conservative-books-revisited/>, accessed January 21, 2013 and JP O’Malley. Interview with James Lasdun. *The University Bookman*. “Having it Both Ways.” <http://www.kirkcenter.org/index.php/bookman/article/having-it-both-ways/>, December 2, 2012, accessed January 21, 2013.

As the title suggests, *The Imaginative Conservative* is solidly first-phase (aesthetic/poetic) Kirkean. Elliott writes of Kirk's appeal to him: "The writings of Russell Kirk have shaped my intellectual life, my spiritual life, and my career. I read Dr. Kirk's *Randolph of Roanoke* as a college student. After I became president of the Institute, I once again returned to the writings of Dr. Kirk to seek the wisdom of Western Civilization. I expanded our programs to include culture, literature and the arts in addition to an appreciation of private property and limited government. Eventually I began to seek an understanding of the Christian faith and converted while reading *The Roots of American Order* (in particular Dr. Kirk's retelling of St. Augustine's conversion)." ³⁴¹ TIC serves as both a blog and online journal. Kirkeans such as Bruce Frohnen, Benjamin Lockerd, and Brad Birzer publish at TIC regularly. ³⁴²

The blogosphere has greatly extended the boundaries of Kirkeanism while bringing to an end ISI's institutional greatness. ISI would disagree by countering that they are merely restructuring for twenty-first century conservatism. Still, it is clear that ISI has lost its intellectual greatness that it owned from the 1950s until the first decade of the new millennium. But as the boundaries have expanded, the identity of Kirkeanism has contracted in response. The privileged interpreter, as Stock has so ably demonstrated, has no control over his textual community after death. Those closest to the privileged interpreter will claim that they know the *real* path of the interpreter. Yet, whether they intend to or not, the following generations of textual communities will naturally change the direction of the original privileged interpreter as they too take on the role of privileged interpreter in return. Pat Buchanan demonstrates how the loss of a privileged

³⁴¹ Winston Elliott III, "Winston Elliott in the Russell Kirk Center Newsletter," *The Imaginative Conservative*, <http://www.imaginativeconservative.org/p/winston-elliott-iii-interview-in.html>, accessed January 21, 2012.

³⁴² It should be noted that some Kirkeans also consider themselves something else. Bradley Birzer considers himself a libertarian first.

interpreter(s) changes trajectories, legacies, movements, etc.: “That the old house is divided, fractured, fallen, is undeniable,” he wrote. “The great unifier Ronald Reagan, is gone. The Cold War that brought conservatives together is over.”³⁴³ Kirk’s changing persona can also be seen in the language each of these groups uses to define their conservatism from that of the masses and the heretics whoever they may happen to be: neo-conservatives, paleo-conservatives, racist right wingers, and so on.

Terminology has always seemed to be a minor issue among conservatives. Kirk took terminology seriously but never took the time to expound upon it further than in passing or the occasional essay. Yet, whenever there is a shift in conservatism, the terminology is the first to change.³⁴⁴ While Kirk wrote a book titled *The Conservative Mind*, we must remember that the book was supposed to be titled *The Conservative Route*. Throughout TCM, we must also recall that the majority of thinkers included never used the nomenclature conservative. Kirk was even less consistent with terminology than were his notables in TCM. He did indeed use the nomenclature conservative, I believe, mostly because it was expected from people like William Buckley who featured his writing in *National Review*—conservatives’ only national outlet for decades. I have already covered this material earlier in this chapter and in other places. Kirk is the cause of the terminological issue in conservatism because, as conservatism grew and changed, so did his nomenclatures.

³⁴³ Patrick Buchanan, “Foreword,” in Justin Raimondo, *Reclaiming the American Right* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2008), VII.

³⁴⁴ See Bradley Birzer’s recent article “Neither Greek Nor Jew, Neither Male Nor Female, Neither Left Nor Right,” *The Imaginative Conservative*, December 2, 2012, <http://www.theimaginativeconservative.org/2012/12/neither-greek-nor-jew-male-female-left-right.html>, accessed December 2, 2012. In this article Birzer describes the different burgeoning schools of conservative terminology including “Tory anarchism,” “(r)epublican,” and “humane libertarianism.”

This is most evident in Kirk's textual community because they have a small voice but they thrive on their smallness with titles that make the boundaries tighter. At ISI, they remain "conservatives," but they also call themselves reactionaries, traditionalists, Tories, postmodern conservatives, Burkeans, and the gamut.³⁴⁵ Most of Kirk's textual community still uses the term conservative, especially for immediate instrumental purposes. Yet, the other terms have ideological, technical, social, and political meanings that are different from conservative.³⁴⁶ Because the term conservative is no longer exclusive, terms such as Tory anarchist, as Daniel McCarthy refers to himself, separate him from the likes of Fox News Republicans and *National Review* conservatives. A postmodern conservative, for example, sounds better and more profound than just a conservative as the term Kirkean sounds more scholarly and superior to saying *conservative*.³⁴⁷

Conclusion

Russell Kirk is the most important figure in American conservatism because he published the most important book in American conservatism, *The Conservative Mind*, and because the themes included in that tome and throughout his career such as imagination still hold sway over conservative intellectuals. Additionally, the publication of TCM led to the formation of ISI, gave traditionalism a regular place at *National Review*, and he is easily the most written about

³⁴⁵ Conversation with James Matthew Wilson. Blacksburg, Va., April 2010.

³⁴⁶ Reactionary can mean many things including someone who hates the Republican Party and neo-conservatism. It can also be a strictly intellectual term as John Lukacs uses it. Also see, "Tory Anarchism in America: An Interview with Daniel McCarthy," The League of Ordinary Gentlemen, <http://ordinary-gentlemen.com/blog/2011/01/tory-anarchism-in-america-an-interview-with-daniel-mccarthy/>, January 3, 2011, accessed January 17, 2013.

³⁴⁷ For a recent and very general summary of splits within the conservatism see, David Brooks, "The Conservative Future," *The New York Times*, November 20, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/20/opinion/brooks-the-conservative-future.html?partner=rssnyt&emc=rss>, accessed November 20, 2012. None of the aforementioned nomenclatures have political representation even as a third party. Many of them, however, may have voted for Ron Paul during the 2012 general election.

conservative by other conservatives, whether they love or hate Kirk. Before TCM one could not even formulate a conservatism. No one had ever attempted it. Everyone who followed Kirk either joined him or reacted against him in some way. Kirk's ability to fuse history and imagination continues as a prominent theme among other conservative intellectuals alive and deceased. His career was not homogenous though.

From 1953 until his death in 1994, Kirk shifted from a conservative aesthete who occasionally dipped into politics to an activist by the middle of the 1970s when conservatism grew exponentially beyond the fusionist borders William Buckley set at *National Review*. The Russell Kirk of 1953 was embittered by the middle of the 1980s as the promise of Ronald Reagan and political conservatism actually hurt the traditionalist cause to end what he called the bureaucratic age. One will notice that Kirk's historiography during this period turned from biography and aesthetics to political essays and pamphleteering. By his death in 1994, Kirk was no longer the conservative darling either. Names like Irving Kristol, Norman Podhoretz, Allan Bloom, and George Will replaced Kirk as the new sages of the movement.

Kirk's textual community continued to grow after his death. His textual community was a conscious one that he developed over decades through venues such as ISI, The Philadelphia Society, and at his home in Mecosta, MI. His textual community's most prosperous years were from the 1950s through most of the first decade of the new millennium. Yet, after George W. Bush finished his consecutive terms in January of 2008, ISI and The Philadelphia Society lost control of the movement they sought to grow.³⁴⁸ The fact Rush Limbaugh, Bill O'Reilly, Sean

³⁴⁸ A host of new traditionalist and paleo-conservative publications began during the second Bush presidency including *The American Conservative* and the academic journal *Anamnesis*. Blogs such as *Front Porch Republic*, *Alternative Right*, *The Imaginative Conservative*, *Taki's Magazine*, and *The University Bookman* (online) are representative of a certain brand of new paleo type of conservative publication.

Hannity, and conservative think tanks were now the spokesmen for conservatism helped tear this movement apart.³⁴⁹ What really bothered the Kirkeans is that, while they worked hard on scholarship and debate, these so-called populist conservatives pleaded their cases to a broader base over both television and radio, and succeeded in pushing their agenda through the Republican Party.³⁵⁰ Still, the Kirkean textual community struggled under its own weight to maintain a friendly consensus that existed during most of the Cold War between its intellectuals. Even Reagan's eleventh commandment, which stated that Republicans should not speak ill of other Republicans, could not pacify conservative intellectuals as they fought over conservatism and its principles at The Philadelphia Society and in other venues.³⁵¹

ISI remained the main place to find Kirkeans until the age of Reagan concluded with the firing of its longtime president Kenneth Cribb in the fall of 2010 as baby boomer neo-conservatives officially took the reins from the Kirkeans.³⁵² While ISI remains a place for a few Kirkeans, Mark Henrie has generated a strange brew of Roman Catholic Straussians to weed out new Kirkeans from those only interested in being loyal Republicans. Both The Kirk Center and *The Imaginative Conservative* have taken ISI's once prominent spot in the small community of traditionalists. Both of these venues focus on Kirkean imagination and seek to downplay the modern Republican Party and its affiliates. With the division came terminological changes built on reaction towards the Republican Party and each other in many instances. The term

³⁴⁹ Rush Limbaugh gave the 2009 Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) keynote speech to the chagrin of traditionalists and Kirkeans alike.

³⁵⁰ Rush Limbaugh was an early supporter of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) of which traditionalists hated. Republicans largely supporter NAFTA because of Limbaugh's support on radio. Limbaugh later recanted his support of NAFTA after major American job losses.

³⁵¹ Another famous incident in conservatism was the breakup of The Rockford Institute. This incident happened reportedly from a controversy that involved accusations of racism of RI from its eastern office in New York. For one account of the incident see Maria McFadden Maffucci, "The Rockford Raid," *First Things*, April 2009, <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2009/03/012-the-rockford-raid-32>, accessed January 21, 2013.

³⁵² Cribb's firing never made it into conservative publications despite its profound effect on ISI's direction.

conservative, the majority of Kirkeans feel, has been stolen or usurped by people who care nothing for Kirk or imagination. The terminology is key to understanding the new nuances that separate Kirkeans from each other and conservatism proper.

Terminology is inextricably linked to both the imagination and the historical consciousness that comes along with it. “Historical imagination” is the place where language and terminology meet the expectation of each textual community’s portrait of the coalescing of history and imagination. In other words, idea and vision find expression in language, which often happens through texts and in bonds of friendship and community that represent the idea in flesh. A conservative, like the Russell Kirk of 1953, could link his alternative history to Edmund Burke and create an imaginative language around that conception of history. A community formed around his ideas and boundaries was set as conservatism grew.

Kirk’s textual community does not necessarily have to return to Burke because it has Kirk, the American Burke. Therefore, Gerald Russello can link his project to Kirk and remain connected to Burke by being grandfathered into conservatism by Kirk’s linkage to him. Elliott at *The Imaginative Conservative* channels the Kirk of 1953 before conservatism was spoiled by populist conservatives. One will find Kirkean references to George Gissing, Burke, and T.S. Eliot, all who held special places in the original Kirkean conservative canon.³⁵³ Elliott returns to conservatism, as it was in 1953, as he understands it— young, undefiled, aristocratic, and apolitical. Russello’s Kirkeanism is primarily literary, scholarly, and postmodern.

³⁵³ See *The Imaginative Conservative*, “About the Imaginative Conservative.” http://www.imaginativeconservative.org/p/blog-page_12.html, accessed January 22, 2013.

Conservatives in the Kirkean tradition understand the importance of the synthesis of history with imagination because history becomes an active force in the present.³⁵⁴ Yet imagination has its limits because it is supposed to be anti-ideological, as Kirk supposed it. Any attempt to see imagination fulfilled in politics is irony at best. As an aside, this is precisely where Kirk would have benefitted from a well thought out historicism that maintained that communities should define its law and judicial presence instead of Washington. There is still somewhat of a double-mindedness on the part of the Kirkeans on the issue of politics, as Russello writes: “Russell Kirk, whose own work was a conscious attempt to recreate a living conservative tradition, remained hopeful that resurgences were possible.”³⁵⁵ While imagination and intellectual currency remain priorities, a politics that reflect these goals are not out of the question. The Kirkeans have not been honest about their political aspirations, and, with few exceptions, have yet to produce a systematic political treatise where the Kirkean imagination is central to good governance.

From the perspective of history, Kirk and his followers chose a path that was so farfetched from American history that it was impossible that imagination could overcome the overwhelming reality that America does not have a “conservative” past. If there was a Burkean element to American life, it was destroyed by the Civil War.³⁵⁶ This has not stopped Kirkeans such as Mark Henrie from trying to lay out a political map based on Kirk’s thinking about the American past. Henrie says that three particular evils stood out in Kirk’s *Conservative Mind*—

³⁵⁴ To demonstrate that Kirk was not merely a passive antiquarian see his essay, “Regaining Historical Consciousness,” in *Redeeming the Time* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2006), 100-114.

³⁵⁵ Gerald Russello, “Conservatives, Politics & Culture: A Response to Claes Ryn,” *The Imaginative Conservative*, October 15, 2011, <http://www.imaginativeconservative.org/2011/10/conservatives-politics-culture-response.html>, accessed January 22, 2013.

³⁵⁶ See Wilfred McClay, *The Masterless: Self and Society in Modern America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994). McClay points out the anti-conservative tensions in American life, especially after the Civil War.

The French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution and the Bureaucratic Age. Of these three, Henrie writes, the bureaucratic age seeks to homogenize the character of society by eliminating a discourse needed to scrutinize the core of liberalism.³⁵⁷ Henrie, like Russello, wants to move beyond imagination and into a politics of tradition. However, setting that project up based on America as land of Catholic aristocrats will not find a voice outside of a small group of people, which is a major reason why ISI is still an organization not known to most people.

Conservatism has never penetrated American life as Kirk would have preferred it. As John Lukacs pointed out, American conservatives would have been more successful if they had chosen reaction or a reactionary position instead of trying to find a genuine American conservatism that does not exist. John Lukacs was a native of Budapest, Hungary, and felt he knew well how conservatism looks in practice. He believed so strongly that American did not have a conservative tradition that he created a reactionary language that he said was a better fit for Americans who also considered themselves to be conservatives. Instead of attempting to create a Burkean societal order, it was best for Lukacs to use more instrumental means to find a way out of the American tendency towards hyper-democratization that destroys the remains of the bourgeois moral order, Lukacs thought. Lukacs does not believe that just re-establishing an American aristocracy will fix the problem of disorder in the commonwealth. A major trope in Lukacs' later career is a belief that Americans have abandoned all belief in the concept of sin. Sin, he believes, needs to be re-established as a method for reading and writing history (this goes for all academic disciplines also) in order regain the Western consciousness, which is ideally humanistic and Christian.

³⁵⁷ See Mark Henrie, "Understanding Traditionalist Conservatism," in *Varieties of Conservatism*, Peter Berkowitz ed. (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2004), 3-7.

Chapter 4: A Bourgeois Reactionary: The Conservatism of John Lukacs

Chapter Abstract

John Lukacs is one of the most intriguing intellectual figures in the postwar conservative movement for several reasons. 1. He was one of the many key European émigrés to gravitate to the conservative movement following the Second World War. He brought intellectual pedigree to a new movement that needed verification beyond its own borders. Lukacs understood how conservatism worked in practice and theory because of his familiarity with European conservatism as a native of Budapest. 2. Although Lukacs believes that America does not have a conservative tradition like Europe, he created a language and terminology for American conservatives that he felt better reflected their misguided intentions. 3. Lukacs is a historian by training. However, throughout his career he has been the unofficial phenomenologist of the conservative mind. In order to be *conservative*, one must also think, feel, and live as if one inhabited the period of history in which aristocratic beliefs flourished. 4. He fleshed out his phenomenology in what he calls “historical consciousness.” 5. Lukacs personified and updated Alexis de Tocqueville to demonstrate the place of the bourgeois outsider in American life just as Russell Kirk embodied Burke to his followers. There is the act of recreation, in Lukacs’ conservatism, that happens through the process of reading and writing fiction that culminates in something he terms the bourgeois interior. Lukacs created an outsider role for conservatives that was neither Kirk’s traditionalist Burkean gentleman of letters nor Christopher Lasch’s populist agitator. Lukacs’ hero is the bourgeois novelist and the urbane bourgeois politician. The characters that Lukacs connects himself to most are Alexis de Tocqueville, Winston Churchill, George Kennan, and novelists Gyula Krudy, and Agnes Repplier. Because Lukacs presents such a complex philosophy of conservatism and rejects most, if not all, popular conservative terminology, he too is rejected by the majority of conservative intellectuals, and lives as a kind of afterthought in a movement where he no longer participates. Whereas there is a consistency throughout Russell Kirk’s career, Lukacs is less consistent and even paradoxical in his prolonged career.

A Brief Biography of John Lukacs

John Lukacs is one of the most unusual characters that inhabited postwar conservatism. This is a grand claim for a movement that was already full of colorful characters that included a womanizing professor whom Yale paid to leave its faculty (Wilmore Kendall), an ex-communist with a dark past who hid secret government documents in his garden (Whitaker Chambers), a

hermit-like academic who left academia to pursue life as a country squire (Russell Kirk), and a philosopher who created a cultic offshoot of conservatism by claiming that the great philosophers of Western Civilization shared an esoteric meaning only discernible to a certain few learned thinkers (Leo Strauss). Lukacs stood out from these various individuals. He is a Jewish Roman Catholic who escaped from both the Nazis and Communists in his native country of Hungary and became openly critical of American anti-communists after his arrival in the United States. While Lukacs often sided with American conservatives including Russell Kirk, he is known to be critical of his friends' positions, and an equally difficult person to get along with otherwise. Because Lukacs is not a team player—his criticisms often run contrary to conservative common sense, especially regarding the Republican Party—he is dismissed as a lesser version of Kirk or a thinker who has not thought out his system. The majority of his professional career was spent at an all-female Catholic College in the suburbs of Philadelphia.

Lukacs replaced another well-known conservative European émigré professor—Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn—at Chestnut Hill College in 1947. Lukacs blames this for the reason he never received greater accolades and positions of prominence in his career.³⁵⁸ His career has not taken unexpected turns, as he retired from Chestnut Hill in 1994, which may explain the reason for attention-grabbing claims in many of his books.³⁵⁹ During his long career, he has published more than 30 books dating from the 1950s until 2012. The subject matter of his books range from Cold War history, historical methodology, theology, public philosophy, and near fiction. Like Kirk, Lukacs was a regular lecturer on the ISI circuit until his health would no longer allow him to travel far from his home in the suburbs of Philadelphia.

³⁵⁸ Conversation with Paul Murphy. New York, NY., November 2010.

³⁵⁹ Lee Congdon, "The Reactionary Loyalties of John Lukacs," *First Principles*, October 14, 2008, <http://www.firstprinciplesjournal.com/print.aspx?article=767>, accessed December 26, 2012.

Among the four intellectuals included in this study, other than Christopher Lasch, Lukacs is the most respected among liberal academics who are familiar with his scholarship.³⁶⁰ He is respected for his rigorous questioning of conservative terminology, his exploration of the bourgeois mind (phenomenology), his examination of the relationship between ideology and American conservatism, and his defiance as an anti anti-communist during the height of the Cold War. While prestige has often eluded him, he maintains a somewhat underground or avant-garde reputation among those who appreciate his research, but is often hated by some in the conservative movement for various positions held, if they engage him at all.³⁶¹ Lukacs is known to have created many enemies because of his personal temperament as an admitted intellectual reactionary.³⁶²

The inclusion of Lukacs among the four other conservative/reactionary intellectuals is purposive and represents a shift in American conservatism and American intellectual life. From the standpoint of American conservatism, he represents an early and sly dissent from the Kirkean view of American conservatism as something innate but unharnessed because of the prevalence of liberalism among American intellectuals.³⁶³ Lukacs was not a Burkean, and did not believe that Kirk's Burkean seed was more than a fantastical understanding of conservatism in America.³⁶⁴ A seminal aspect of this dissertation is to bring to light how different conservatives

³⁶⁰ Conversation with Casey Nelson Blake. New York, NY., November 2010.

³⁶¹ Here are two critiques of Lukacs from different angles. See David Gordon, "Blunders, Lies, and Other Historicist Habits," *The Mises Review*, 2005, http://mises.org/misesreview_detail.aspx?control=279, accessed December 5, 2012; and Tom Piatak, "John Lukacs, Neocon?," *The American Conservative* (blog), May 23, 2008, <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/john-lukacs-neocon/>, accessed February 1, 2013.

³⁶² Many of the conservative thinkers I had conversations with and interviewed told me this without me first asking. This was also confirmed with several Intercollegiate Studies Institutes employees too.

³⁶³ John Lukacs was not the only dissenter from the Kirkean view from within conservatism either. See, Frank Meyer, *What is Conservatism?* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964) and Peter Viereck, *Conservatism Revisited; The Revolt Against Revolt, 1815-1949* (New York: C. Scribner, 1949).

³⁶⁴ There is a strange kind of dissent that took place in conservatism following the publication of *The Conservative Mind*. If someone like Lukacs would have been an outspoken reactionary too early and openly in his

and anti-liberals founded their conservatisms through different historical figures and created specific lineages from them. Some of these figures included Edmund Burke, Alexis de Tocqueville, Jonathan Edwards, H.L. Mencken, and so on. Not just historical personages, but each conservatives' conservatism ended in a different place like populism, capitalism, traditionalism, religious orthodox or political activism. Following this trope of dissent from the consensus of liberalism, Lukacs represents a greater tradition or possibility of dissent among American intellectuals one that does not have a thorough historiography yet.³⁶⁵ Lukacs continued to be a dissenting intellectual throughout his career, so much so that we find him reacting against other conservatives, and American intellectual life, using historical figures such as Alexis de Tocqueville in a variety of ways to represent the moment in history he wanted to react against. In this manner, he is less consistent than Kirk. We also find Lukacs struggling within himself to decide what reaction means exactly.

There are definitive characteristics that define Lukacs' scholarship from his conservative peers. 1. As mentioned, French diplomat and writer Alexis de Tocqueville is an immense source of inspiration for Lukacs. Tocqueville represents conservatives as bourgeois outsiders, and Lukacs is an outsider to American life as a Hungarian émigré. Lukacs portrays himself as a

career, he may have lost funding and even his occupation. At least early on, dissent must be found in the historical lineages created. The early kind of fusion held sway because a movement was being created, and too much open reactionary would have destroyed it. The first decades of both *National Review*, *Modern Age*, and *Intercollegiate Review* show various kinds of conservatives in dialogue, often, uneasily so.

³⁶⁵ There are thinkers who have begun to think about dissent as fracture and reaction from a normative type of American experience. See, Corey Robin, *The Reactionary Mind: From Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) and Daniel Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011). There is also a growing historiography of dissent from American conservatives. It tends to be less second than it does primary. See, Bill Kauffman, *Look Homeward America: In Search of Reactionary Radicals and Front-Porch Anarchist* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2006) and Andrew Bacevich, *Washington Rules: America's Path to Permanent War* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010).

modern Tocqueville and a bourgeois observer standing above the follies of American life.³⁶⁶ He also modernized the Tocquevillian perspective and persona to that of agitator and reactionary. 2. Lukacs is the defender of the supposed outcast bourgeois against the chaos of democratic life, as he sees it. Bourgeois, according to him, is not merely a class distinction; it is also a predilection towards life—specifically private life—and a way of thinking about the world. 3. Lukacs is a phenomenologist of the conservative/bourgeois/aristocratic mind. The terms of bourgeois, conservative, and aristocrat are interchangeable for Lukacs, although certainly these terms have different meanings in reality. 4. He created a language for the bourgeois conservative, who is also a reactionary. A reactionary takes little for granted against prevailing “accumulated opinion” and supposed common sense.³⁶⁷ Lukacs uses language to define his conservatism apart from Kirkeanism, movement conservatism, and anti-communism. In this fashion, he riddles his text with terms like *reactionary*, *bourgeois*, and *sin*, which he essentially revises in his historical re-interpretation of those terms. The ability to define discourse is the right of the privileged interpreter. 5. All of the aforementioned culminates in what Lukacs calls historical consciousness. Historical consciousness is a philosophy, methodology, and theology wrapped into one term. According to Lukacs, historical thinking has taken the place of philosophy as the primary way of dissecting and understanding life in the post-modern age. Historical consciousness, according to Lukacs, is a re-cognition of the Augustinian theory of human depravity and a revival of thinking about sin as a serious category relating to history, philosophy, and methodology. This is only one level. Historical consciousness is also a technique for understanding the blurred boundaries of history and fiction and the entry of mind into matter, as he calls it. The Lukacsian version of imagination—particularly historical imagination—is

³⁶⁶ See, Michael Federici, “The Politics of Fear and Hatred,” review of *Democracy and Populism: Fear and Hatred* by John Lukacs, *Modern Age*, Winter 2006, 82-85. Federici portrays Lukacs as a modern Tocqueville.

³⁶⁷ “Accumulated opinion” is an inversion of Burke’s and Kirk’s “accumulated wisdom.”

historical consciousness, and like Kirk's moral imagination, it also binds without a strict adherence to dogma, despite his belief in original sin. This may seem like an odd claim; however, Lukacs does not seem to be an enforcer of his theological beliefs outside of assumptions and claims made in confessional autobiography.

Lukacs returns to three specific tropes or themes throughout his career: 1. Original Sin, Augustinianism, and a general theological thrust towards Catholic Christianity. 2. Phenomenology or the preeminence of mental facilities over both reason and science. 3. Pragmatism. John Lukacs' pragmatism is cosmopolitan, urbane, and comfortable. John Lukacs is not a prophetic type or writing jeremiads like Kirk, Lasch, and Gottfried. These three concepts can indeed be complimentary, but often are contradictory instead. Lukacs is frequently trapped between a desire to be faithful and to live like a bourgeois politician like Churchill while celebrating the private life of the novelist. Later in life, we find him championing Wendell Berry, not for his objectification of small-town life, but for his appreciation of the strange essence of humanity.³⁶⁸ As Lukacs makes these shifts in his text, we also find these dualities of alienation, determination, faith, celebrity, and the desire for sobriety alive in the intellectual life of American conservatism and possibly in the larger life of American intellectualism life.³⁶⁹

Lukacs' Historiography: Early Career

John Lukacs began his career writing contemporary empirical history with a philosophical twist. Essentially, this is the only work that Lukacs wrote that mirrors what is considered a monograph or a scientifically researched book aimed primarily at other academics.

³⁶⁸ John Lukacs, *The Future of History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), section three.

³⁶⁹ There is a developing literature that speaks to dualism of life among American intellectuals. See, David S. Brown, *Richard Hofstadter: an intellectual biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006) and Howard Brick, *Age of Contradiction: American Thought and Culture in the 1960s* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000).

There is also a glimpse into the future of his career as he tapped into both phenomenology and theology. *The Great Powers and Eastern Europe* is his first published work and, admittedly, a contemporary book rooted in his interest in the Second World War, Eastern Europe, and the Cold War. The availability of primary documents gave him further impetus to complete this project.³⁷⁰ *The Great Powers* is not one of his more important books, as he began working on a broader history of the Cold War shortly thereafter but it is still one of the few works where Lukacs focuses on his Eastern European upbringing and how he sees its epoch related to the Second World War, which he claims was misinterpreted by Western historians. He filled in this gap by painstakingly describing international relations between Eastern Europe, Russia, Germany and the U.S together with history and personal reflection. Eastern Europe and its role in international relations is not a subject he would really elaborate upon later in his career.

In 1962, he published a *History of the Cold War*, only to revise it again in 1966 and re-publish it as *A New History of the Cold War*. Lukacs claimed that the updated book was not a “revision” but an entirely new book. Yet the five additional chapters did not significantly shift the broader narrative of the original text.³⁷¹ *A New History of the Cold War* is “concerned primarily with Russian-American relations in Europe and, to some extent, in the Far East; it is not a survey of the contemporary historical development of the world,” Lukacs wrote.³⁷² *New History* is lathered in Lukacsian jargon as he dealt with the nature of knowledge and the problem of reconstructing history according to science and objectivity in a seemingly empirical subject.³⁷³

³⁷⁰ John Lukacs, *The Great Powers and Eastern Europe* (New York: American Book Co., 1953). Also, see, John Lukacs, “Writing,” in *Remembered Past: John Lukacs On History Historians & Historical Knowledge*, ed. Mark Malvasi et. al, (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2005), 658-659. Lukacs explained in the introduction that the plethora of primary sources available gave him impetus to complete this work.

³⁷¹ John Lukacs, *A New History of the Cold War* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1966), ix.

³⁷² Lukacs, *A New History of the Cold War*, x.

³⁷³ Lukacs is more postmodern in the academic sense as he deals continually with the problem of epistemology as it relates to mastery and authority. However, Lukacs may be less postmodern in his epistemology

The first part of the book deals with summits, Stalin, and the nature of policy between the Soviet Union, Europe, and the United States. Later, Lukacs turns the discussion of the Cold War into a philosophic one in the second half of this book: “But civilized mankind is now capable of destroying itself, not merely because of the existence of horrible weapons but because of the spiritual inadequacies of their constructors and managers,” he opined.³⁷⁴ In view at the conclusion is Lukacs’ Christian Augustinianism as it relates to thinking about the Cold War as a spiritual conflict. This Augustinianism is not of the evangelical kind, ever seeking to expand its message, but of the bourgeois kind—private and sentimental. The implication is that both the West and East were equally guilty in the dominant world clash at the conclusion of the twentieth century because of their appeal to the masses. We also find Lukacs’ anti anti-communism coming to the fore, especially as he grew closer to foreign policy expert George Kennan.

The phenomenologist side of Lukacs appears early in his career. In *Decline and Rise of Europe; a study in recent history, with particular emphasis on the development of a European consciousness*, he began exploring the subjects of European and bourgeois as more than Marxist class distinctions. Lukacs tried to demonstrate that both terms of bourgeois and Marxism were worldviews, as well as cultural imperatives to be lived out. I would not classify Lukacs’ study of European bourgeois mind as necessarily conservative but urbane.³⁷⁵ The modern age, Lukacs believes, meant the primacy of European-ness and the Western, primarily British, bourgeois

and more pragmatic, if the term pragmatism is not reduced to its vulgar meaning of scientism. Lukacs is more interested in how humans form meaning and understand their surroundings by creating a universe out of human-centered knowledge. As the perceptive person will notice, this is at odds with his Augustinianism.

³⁷⁴ Lukacs, *A New History of the Cold War*, 411.

³⁷⁵ Historians tend to think of most New Rightists as traditionalists and agrarian types. However, they often forget about the urban wing of conservatism that included the likes of William Buckley and art critic Hilton Kramer. In Lukacs, we find a definite preference for the bourgeois urban life, which is in opposition to Kirk’s preference for rural, local aristocratic living. In one way, Kirk lived athwart cities with his choice being the village of Mecosta over other American metropolitan locations such as New York. Lukacs showed that cities, such as Philadelphia, were just as important to conservatism as were rural regions.

ideal across the world.³⁷⁶ Many of the films that appeared after the Second World War demonstrated the destruction and decline of the British Empire and its way of thinking. Both *Lawrence of Arabia* and *The Bridge over the River Kwai* showed something about English mind and manners that fascinate Lukacs.³⁷⁷ *Decline and Rise* is an early revelation as to how Lukacs would develop his research and thinking about the importance of historical thinking in the post-modern-borderless age in his following books.

Decline and Rise was merely the opener for Lukacs' larger project, which is a phenomenology of thinking, specifically historical, conservative, bourgeois, and Christian thinking.³⁷⁸ *Historical Consciousness: The Remembered Past* is a complex work that defies definition because of its seemingly novel and unorganized grouping of history, philosophy, theology, phenomenology, and methodology. The best way to approach *Historical Consciousness* is to take several themes that Lukacs returns to throughout it. 1. The end of the modern age meant the death of a particular Anglo-European way of thinking about the world; this could be understood as a kind proto version of conservatives thinking about globalization before that term was invented. Fewer borders exist in the postmodern (postmodern meaning a world defined beyond Anglo-European hegemony, according to Lukacs) world, unlike the modern world where nation-states created not only geographical but intellectual borders as

³⁷⁶ See, John Lukacs, *Decline and Rise of Europe: A Study in Recent History, with Particular Emphasis on the Development of a European Consciousness* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1976, c1965). Lukacs and his generation of conservatives did not seem to be interested in ideas about the process of Western European colonization. Lukacs was more interested in the ideas behind English world dominance from a cultural and intellectual perspective. However, this perspective would change somewhat near the latter part of his career as he became critical of American as an empire. I believe he became critical because the United States, in his opinion, is not bourgeois enough for his tastes.

³⁷⁷ Lukacs reiterates throughout his historiography that historians should move beyond the empirical and into the phenomenological, although he never uses that term. Throughout his career, he shows his fascination with all things English especially its manners and ways of thinking.

³⁷⁸ Lukacs' books, unlike Kirk, were not primarily directed at a conservative audience. He hoped to advance his theses beyond conservatives, although if you search for book reviews of his work you will find that his work rarely crossed borders into the broader academic world.

well.³⁷⁹ 2. The age of philosophy is dead. Historical thinking has taken over philosophy because scientism and objectivity destroyed the classical definition of philosophy as speculation, because of the overemphasis on precision and the reduction mind to matter. He connects philosophy's decline to the age of pragmatism, despite the fact that he utilizes the participatory theory of knowledge, which was a seminal idea in American pragmatism during its classical period (for example in Dewey, James, and Peirce).³⁸⁰ Lukacs erected, as Kirk did throughout his career, a dualism and incompatibility between science and imagination. 3. History is neither objective nor scientific. History is the remembered past or the imagined past. Lukacs version of Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* is "I am, therefore I think, therefore I am" which resembles the pragmatic participatory theory of knowing.³⁸¹ In a sense, Lukacs builds upon Kirk's historically reimagined conservative past by giving it greater philosophical complexity, and only accidentally links the conservative project to Hayden White's history of imagination.³⁸² 4. Heisenberg's uncertainty principle is a recognition of the fallibility of science, the scientific method, and humans ultimately. Because humans are imperfect and unpredictable, this makes science imperfect, as Lukacs implies of the greater implications of Heisenberg's principles to epistemology. Lukacs bolsters his Augustinianism with a kind of counter scientific validation concerning the impossibility of a perfected humanity.

John Lukacs as Phenomenologist

³⁷⁹ See, John Lukacs, *Historical Consciousness; or, The Remembered Past* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968). This is not Russell Kirk's conservatism of despair, which is always trying to find an outlet for the idealization of the possibility. Lukacs is more interest in the death of the modern age, and how and why people turn to history and historical thinking despite political affiliation.

³⁸⁰ See, Deron Boyles, "Dewey's Epistemology: An Argument for Warranted Assertions, Knowing, and Meaningful Classroom Practice," *Educational Theory* 56 (2006): 57-68.
Classroom Practice

³⁸¹ Lukacs, *Historical Consciousness*, passim.

³⁸² See, Hayden White, *The Fiction of Narrative: Essays on History, Literature, and Theory, 1957-2007* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

Historical Consciousness is popular with few conservatives because of Lukacs' boldness and explicit confidence that his declarations are self-evident to everyone.³⁸³ As *Historical Consciousness* relates to the field of history, Lukacs wrote: "Meanwhile the professionalized study of history, too, is deeply affected by the intellectual crisis of our interregnum." "It must now consider not only the inherent dangers of specialization, the condition that its own specialists tend to know more and more about less and less."³⁸⁴ For conservatives who are writing history in what Lukacs calls the "Democratic Age," he demonstrates why he favors Tocqueville to other conservative favorites like Burke.³⁸⁵ "Whereas Ranke laid down many of the canons of modern historical research Tocqueville attempted to penetrate beneath the surface of political history to the opinions and sentiments of peoples."³⁸⁶ Lukacs is interested in the problem of undertaking history writing and thinking in democratic societies. The mass availability of print documents and historical artifacts, he believes, is tainted with a great amount of pre-conceived opinion that stultifies the truth of the historical record. In other words, the forcefulness of opinion buries the possibility of truth under layers of politically correct fluff. Lukacs erects walls where he finds a specific way of truth seeking good. Any kind of scientific materialism of the postmodern stripe is bad, yet literary modernism is fine. Lukacs especially is dissatisfied with social history because social historians use their knowledge to re-interpret the past according to a worldview that is in opposition to Anglo-bourgeois modern thinking.

³⁸³ See Gordon, "Blunders, Lies, and Other Historicist Habits," *The Mises Review*, 2005, http://mises.org/misesreview_detail.aspx?control=279.

³⁸⁴ Lukacs, *Historical Consciousness*, 48-49.

³⁸⁵ Although Lukacs uses a wide terminology to describe what he calls the Democratic Age and or the Post Modern Age, I believe he means the world following the Enlightenment. However, I believe his greater meaning of the term Democratic Age is a post-Enlightenment world defined outside of the realm of Anglo-British aristocratic thought. I believe it also means post-aristocratic post-bourgeois thinking. This, too, brings up a glaring contradiction in Lukacsian thinking as he is quite at home in his postmodern epicurean garden of social imaginaries. If there were a periodization for the Democratic Age, I would say he dates it as beginning at the conclusion of the Second World War.

³⁸⁶ Lukacs, *Historical Consciousness*, 52.

Lukacs does not believe that only the most important intellectuals deserve a place in history books, as he was seminal in re-introducing Tocqueville, essayist Agnes Repplier, and Hungarian novelist Gyula Krudy to America.³⁸⁷ Nevertheless, he is concerned that social historians base their research on an inaccurate vision of public opinion as something tangible.³⁸⁸ The problem is that “the historian of the democratic ages must possess what are somewhat extraordinary intellectual and moral capacities and insights in order to detect the real tendencies in the opinions and sentiments of peoples: for, despite the abundance of documentation, these are frequently obscured and hidden,” he wrote.³⁸⁹ The historian, according to Lukacs, must have superior intellectual prowess to know what is real and what is imagined. Such powers put Lukacs firmly in the camp of Hegel who also believed his capabilities surpassed the contemporaries of his day too. An exemplary historian must have keen literary skills, however, Lukacs does not explain how his exemplars achieve these goals.³⁹⁰ Historians, he suggests and warns, will become ever frustrated novelists as the appearance of more fiction is the actualization of the problem of doing history in a world with an insurmountable amount of sources and conflicting opinion. In other words, knowledge became warped when fact was reified.

Historians today will quickly realize that Lukacs uses the terms democratic, masses, and social as historians now often use the terms postmodernism or late modernism.³⁹¹ The modern

³⁸⁷ Matthew Mancini, *Alexis de Tocqueville and American Intellectuals: From His Times to Ours* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

³⁸⁸ Historians might also term Lukacs' problem with democratic history to be reification of non-entities such as opinion and fact.

³⁸⁹ Lukacs, *Historical Consciousness*, 93.

³⁹⁰ Lukacs generally only exemplifies dead heroes such as Jacob Burkhardt, Agnes Repplier, Winston Churchill, Alexis de Tocqueville, Johan Huizinga, and so on. His few living heroes are Wendell Berry and George Kennan (recently deceased). Both Berry and Kennan were reactionaries in their own way, and equally are difficult to pigeonhole politically.

³⁹¹ For an interesting take on the seemingly endless meanings and meaning making of the terms modern, postmodern, and late modern see, James Marsh and John Caputo, *Modernity and its Discontents* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992). From a conservative standpoint concerning the terminology of postmodernism

era not only was Anglo-European and bourgeois but also carried with it a rigid scientific orthodoxy and historical determinism that wavered after the Second World War, he believes.³⁹²

This guides Lukacs to the conclusion that historical thinking has taken precedence over philosophy because of the failure of a. determinism b. materialism c. the re-recognition of humanism as a foundation for human flourishing following the Second World War. There is a paradox here as well because Lukacs at times conflates the terms modernism and Marxism without making fine distinctions. In other words, Lukacs handpicks which parts of modernity he prefer and which parts he chooses to reject. His preference is that modernity should have greater amounts of humanism and imagination and that science should not render imagination and fiction meaningless. For Lukacs, although he never addresses this explicitly, modernism is a dual edged sword. On the one hand, traditional historical and literary practices were born in the modern age; yet, scientific materialism and Darwinism were products of the mysterious nineteenth century as well. In this manner, Lukacs could freely embrace a Dickens, disdain Marx, and hand down judgment on postmodernists.

The penultimate chapters in HC are chapters six and seven where he states his case for a “historical cosmology.” Chapter six is a complex section where Lukacs deals with epistemology—a favorite subject of his. His narrative goes something like this: The French philosopher Rene Descartes discovered something great with his *cogito ergo sum*. However, Descartes failed to latch onto something greater because he did not connect internal thought with external, mind with body—Descartes of course intentionally did not link them together. The

see, Peter Lawler, *Postmodernism Rightly Understood: The Return to Realism in American Thought* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999).

³⁹² There is a strange exchange happening here too. While Lukacs says he hates these elements of the modern age, he loves the bourgeois or conservative modernist’s reaction to science. In other words, the modern era provided an intellectual free play among bourgeois intellectuals that has now been opened up to the middle class, which is bad.

West, he continues, has gone through the seismic shifts of theology (Middle Ages), scientism (Modern Age), and a return to humanism, which Lukacs bases on the fact that something like conservatism existed in the most modern and progressive country (America) in the world following the Second World War. His narrative is convoluted and filled with personal clichés such as the Lukacsian cogito, and it can be difficult to follow his style of reasoning. By the conclusion of the sixth chapter, he brings together his epistle like narrative by claiming that all knowledge is personal and subjective similar to White’s thoughts on historical epistemology. It is important to remember that Lukacs wrote this, surprisingly, two decades before the postmodern culture wars.³⁹³ Despite Lukacs’ apparent subjective epistemology, he concludes the sixth chapter with a call to the Christian historian to believe in the Second Coming, and then finalizes it with both a historical and epistemological claim: “(T)here may be, after all, no such thing as ‘pre historic’ and ‘post historic’ man, but only historic man, whose story may have begun sooner than we have been accustomed to think, and which may end, too, sooner than we have been accustomed to think.”³⁹⁴ In other words, humans are always a product of their history and never able to overcome it, which, for Lukacs, is also a recognition of the perfect mind of God, and the imperfectly flawed mind of all humans. This claim is both historical and theological, and historians will notice that this is historicism.³⁹⁵ While Lukacs the phenomenologist reconciled these dualities in his mind, it is not clear in the text and conservatives currently—although I

³⁹³ It is also surprising because Russell Kirk endorsed the second edition of HC and without reservation. Yet, Kirk and the neo-conservatives (who were strange bedfellows) stood ardently against subjectivism in history as something to be avoided at all costs. See, Gerald Russello, “Time and Timeless: The Historical Imagination of Russell Kirk,” *Modern Age* (1999): 218. For many decades most of the New Right avoided any talk of postmodernism as they considered it anathema to both faith and Western Civilization.

³⁹⁴ Lukacs, *Historical Consciousness*, 272.

³⁹⁵ No postwar conservative willingly embraced the term historicism or called himself a historicist because of how Leo Strauss attacked the term in *Natural Right and History*. Even the southern agrarians had to stake out positions around it. See, John Langdale, *Superfluous Southerners: Cultural Conservatism and The South, 1920-1990* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2012). Langdale shows how southern agrarians had to walk a thin balance between the universalism of Kirk and localism with historicism.

believe, the shift is coming—have not yet figured out how to bring together religious convictions and customary practices/local culture.³⁹⁶

In the final chapter titled “History and Physics,” Lukacs attempts to bring together HC by demonstrating that history, not science, is the most powerful idea of the Post-Modern age. His objective is to explain what the *historical* “post scientific” world means for the next age. Here, Lukacs—an amateur historian of science—says that Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle is important, for several reasons. 1. There is no such thing as scientific certitude. 2. Objectivity is illusory. 3. Old definitions are illusory because of the ever-changing nature of science and scientific certainty. 4. Mathematics is not absolute either, as Gödel’s theorem of 1931 proved to him. 5. The evidence of fact is a human invention. Fact is an American cultural icon. 6. Mechanical causality is defunct because of the massive complexity of all events. Lukacs uses the example of the process of an atomic bomb explosion to describe what he means by complexity and uncertainty. 7. Potentiality and tendency are as much a part of scientific method as reliability. Here Lukacs brings in another scientific example by using quantum physics to explain how potential and tendency do not necessarily guarantee certainty. He also managed to talk about complexity without ever entering the great conversation about relativism—a subject anathema to conservatives of this period.³⁹⁷ 8. Relationships are tantamount to science and not one single defining factor. Science like history includes all relationships, and not one factor can make history but only a series of linked counter-forces. 9. All logic is a human creation, and

³⁹⁶ For a recent conservative attempt at reconciling the local with the universal (creation) see, Gregory Wolfe, *Beauty Will Save The World: Recovering The Human in an Ideological Age* (Wilmington: ISI Books Intercollegiate Studies, 2011).

³⁹⁷ There are only two conservatives in the second wave of American conservatism that embraced forms of historicism openly. See, Paul Gottfried, *The Search for Historical Meaning* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1986) and Claes Ryn, *Will, Imagination and Reason* (Washington, D.C: Regnery, 1986).

knowledge is always personal. 10. The Cartesian split no longer exists. There are no more dualisms between mind and matter, humanity, and history.

As Lukacs tied up HC in the final chapter, he also did so by returning to the topic that he began with, which was defining what the end of the modern age meant to human thought processes. Like the later conservative postmodern communitarians (MacIntyre, Berry, and Milbank) who found that subjectivity rightly understood was friendlier to community and communitarianism than either nihilism and relativism, Lukacs was more than willing to welcome an extraordinary amount of subjectivity into the conservative equation in order to destabilize scientism and use this move to re-establish humanism's high place over scientism in the Western world again.³⁹⁸ Furthermore, Lukacs utilizes history as a way to reconstruct the past and re-imagine the present as a path that leads away from the nihilism and staleness of late modernity. We might also think of his project as putting old wine (good wine in Lukacs' case) into new wineskins (re-packaged or renewed ideas). "On the other hand, this now so suddenly closer Day of Doom can be adjourned, indeed it can be indefinitely postponed—by the sheer quality of our determination to live," he wrote. "And this quality—ultimately, and really, a quality of consciousness—has now become involved, irretrievably, with our historical way of thinking, with this new child which, out of the ancient marriage of realism and idealism, may yet become Europe's greatest gift to mankind."³⁹⁹

As Lukacs carried on research into the next decade of the 1970s, his following four books continued with similar themes about the passing of the modern age, the new post-modern age,

³⁹⁸ For a recent example of Christian historians re-establishing faith and humanism over science and objectivity in the practice of history see, John Fea, Jay Green, and Eric Miller ed., *Confessing History: Explorations in Christian Faith and the Historian's Vocation* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), especially part two and chapters four through nine.

³⁹⁹ Lukacs, *Historical Consciousness*, 315.

the Second World War as the official death knell in the aristocratic age, and historical thinking. *The Passing of the Modern Age* was published in 1972. It served as a kind of paean to Johan Huizinga's *The Waning of the Middle Ages* because it was meant to be a display of intellectual, empirical, and a kind of artistic thinking about history.⁴⁰⁰ Here Lukacs explained what the passing of the modern age meant for social standards and institutions. "We live in a time when there is developing an increasing intrusion of mental processes into the structure of events," he wrote. "...Our civilization is in ruins because our beliefs about civilization are in ruins."⁴⁰¹ It may seem that Lukacs is waxing nostalgic for some lost kind of civilization, but he is really seeking to build something brand new with his project. In a way he is seeking to re-invent a new way of thinking about the world that is almost is simultaneously literary, theological, and civilizational.⁴⁰²

There are three sections to *The Passing of the Modern Age*. The first section deals with the end of the modern age; the next section with the passing of the modern age; and the final section is about the beginning of what he terms the new Dark Ages. The final section includes a piece that Lukacs is famous for, and before focusing on that section, it is necessary to say a little about the chapters included in the second section. As I noted in previous chapters, a hatred for bureaucracy joins the four thinkers in this study and all of them have a different answer as to how to terminate it or move beyond it. Lukacs believes that democracy and bureaucracy make humans feel "weak and powerless." Even states, such as the United States, have to yield to

⁴⁰⁰ See, Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages, A Study of The Forms of Life, Thought and Art in France and the Netherlands in the XIVth and XVth Centuries* (London: E. Arnold & Co., 1924).

⁴⁰¹ John Lukacs, *The Passing of the Modern Age* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 5.

⁴⁰² As I will explain later, Lukacs's *A Thread of Years*, is an attempt, according to Lukacs, at a new synthesis of history and fiction.

minority public opinion; states, too, eventually become powerless against the rising tide of bureaucracy created to restrain the powerful.

The second section might be called a devotional on powerlessness and bureaucracy. Lukacs writes about the failed “fraternity” of races; democracy and the universal conformity of all nations; purposelessness; the myth of prosperity; destruction of nature; senselessness of the arts; decay of science; and the popularization of religion. He concludes this section on powerlessness with a quip against the idiocy of the pursuit of happiness included in the Declaration of Independence. Humans are powerless in the democratic age and they wish to be dominated in some kind of secret fetish.⁴⁰³

The final section, and specifically the eighteenth chapter, is one of Lukacs’ more famous pieces titled “The Bourgeoisie Interior.” In the preceding chapter, Lukacs said that a good portion of the Middle Ages and the modern age could be found in the present. His answer to the vulgarity of democratic life that is ever more public and simplistic is a retreat or re-creation of what he calls the “bourgeoisie interior.” The term bourgeois is misunderstood in the West as it does not mean or equal middle class life, Lukacs wrote.⁴⁰⁴ Since the term is Anglo-European, Americans use it incorrectly to mean “middle class”, “unimaginative”, “pedestrian”, and “philistine.” Additionally, Marx misused the term and equated it with capitalism; Lukacs says the term therefore, has been left in flux. This is so because “A sociology of the principal thinkers, writers, artists, poets, inventors of the last three hundred years would show that their

⁴⁰³ Lukacs, *The Passing of the Modern Age*, 176.

⁴⁰⁴ John Lukacs never denies Richard Yates portrait of suburbia in *Revolutionary Road*. However, he would deny that the characters depicted in *Revolutionary Road* were representative of his definition of the bourgeois.

vast majority came for a bourgeois background—no matter how many of them may have attacked the bourgeois.”⁴⁰⁵

The centuries of 1450 to 1950 were neither aristocratic nor democratic but primarily bourgeois, Lukacs explains.⁴⁰⁶ Europe’s greatest achievements were from bourgeois people: “The greatest achievements of European civilization during the last half-thousand years were predominantly patrician in their inspiration, urbane in their manners, urban in their spirit,” he wrote.⁴⁰⁷ This is Lukacs’ portrayal of the bourgeois mind as he relates these qualities to people like Tocqueville, Churchill, Kennan, and Reppier. “Such patrician standards of culture and of responsibility were the sources of some of the finest achievements in the civilization of the Bourgeois Age,” he wrote. “This is why we should no longer abide by the narrow and distorted Marxist usage of the word “bourgeois”: we should recall, instead, its more spacious sense, including its precapitalist suggestion of a free urban citizenry.”⁴⁰⁸ Historians, Lukacs writes, should extend the meaning and definition of bourgeois, and claims that conservatism can be recreated, re-imagined, or reconstructed in the present, as the bourgeois interior is something to be re-imagined and made active in the present, even in liberal America.

Lukacs writes: “During the last one hundred years this word has penetrated the vocabularies and the conscious minds of the English-speaking peoples of the world: and it is high time to grant it not only citizenship but to nominate it to a respectable office in the building of the English

⁴⁰⁵ Lukacs, *The Passing of the Modern Age*, 194-195.

⁴⁰⁶ This chapter can also be found elsewhere, see, John Lukacs, “The Bourgeois Interior,” in *Remembered Past: John Lukacs On History Historians & Historical Knowledge*, ed. Mark Malvasi et. al, (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2005), 615-626.

⁴⁰⁷ Lukacs, “The Bourgeois Interior,” in *Remembered Past*, 619.

⁴⁰⁸ Lukacs, “The Bourgeois Interior,” in *Remembered Past*, 626.

language which, besides being a means of communication, is a historical building, a living structure of a people's past that has much to say to the present."⁴⁰⁹

He concludes by stating that the bourgeois interior is not merely nostalgia or "heirloom." Like Kirk's Burkean imagination, we find the Lukacsian bourgeois imagination built on the possibility of reviving the modern urbane life of a gentleman or gentlewoman. However, Lukacs seems to struggle to reason beyond his own thought processes as historical consciousness and the modern age mean a multiplicity of ideas including the loss of Western civilization, civilization in general, the death of the bourgeois, and so on. More so, what is in view is Lukacs' struggle to choose between what to conserve and how to conserve it.

The Last European War followed in 1976. Lukacs makes grand historical claims such as the fact that the Second World War did not begin until the United States entered the war in 1941. While Hitler and Germany had the chance to extend Western Civilization for another long while, they actually destroyed it in return for their own world "primacy." This is Lukacs' way of unlinking Nazism from Western Civilization. The National Socialists were not modern bourgeois figures as many assume, but instead were products of the new world to come (democratic and post-bourgeois). "From Podolian villages to the avenues of great cities such as Budapest or Trieste or Prague, Germans, whether tourist visitors or their white-stockinged youth, walked or marched with an arrogance and self-confidence that had never been theirs before," Lukacs wrote of witnessing their presence across Central and Eastern Europe. "They seemed, moreover, as if they were the incarnations of a new world: strong and contemptuous of the old bourgeois

⁴⁰⁹ Lukacs, *The Passing of the Modern Age*, 206.

civilization of Europe, or what remained of it.”⁴¹⁰ His book is filled with the typical Lukacsian clichés and hackneyed expressions such as finding contempt for liberals because they believed Hitler was worse than Stalin, and that the leadership of De Gaulle and Churchill were more seminal in defeating the Nazis than was Roosevelt’s coordinating efforts as the leader of allied forces. From a philosophical standpoint, he asserts in the conclusion that mind triumphed over matter because all institutions are founded on ideas, not on economic schemes. His greatest historical claim from *The Last European War* concerned Hitler’s Final Solution. The Final Solution, Lukacs believes, was such an excessive horror that anti-Semitism became an impossible belief to hold publicly or politically. Hitler, ultimately, Lukacs posits, lost his war against the Jewish people because leaders and philanthropists from around the world sought to rid the idea of anti-Semitism from all societies following the conclusion of the Second World War and all the way into the present.

Lukacs the Pragmatist: Urbane Bourgeois Cosmopolitanism against Conservatism

It is somewhat of a miracle that John Lukacs ended up in the conservative movement following his arrival in the United States. He arrived in the United States before the sixties, and the key liberal thinkers like Daniel Boorstin, Richard Hofstadter, and Arthur Schlesinger were bourgeois liberals whose lifestyles and manners would have appealed to Lukacs. Lukacs may have joined the conservative movement because he somehow felt it better represented the patriotic affection his mother felt for the United States.⁴¹¹ There were reasons he should not have gravitated towards conservatism: a. He never held any affinity for agrarian traditionalism, at least

⁴¹⁰ John Lukacs, *The Last European War, September 1939/December 1941* (Garden City: Anchor Press, 1976), 24.

⁴¹¹ Lukacs talks about Second World War era America as a benevolent power in an interview here, John Lukacs, “In Depth with John Lukacs,” CSPAN video, 2:53, February 6, 2000, <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/155155-1>, accessed February 1, 2013.

openly until he wrote glowingly of Wendell Berry much later in his career. At no time during his career do we find him associating with the southern agrarian wing of conservatism—even this is somewhat surprising given the academic elites that filled that circle. b. He was not an anti-communist and he opposed Senator Joseph McCarthy’s plan to root out communists from government apparatus. Furthermore, Lukacs’ bourgeois heroes were more liberal and even pragmatic than conservative per se. Yet, it is strange that Lukacs railed against abstract art and political correctness given his proclivity for bourgeois urban life. Winston Churchill, Alexis de Tocqueville, George Kennan, and Agnes Repplier were bourgeois urban figures who found solace from the city in either their country homes or literature, or letter writing. It may be that Lukacs, like other respected bourgeois people he imitates, found respectability in representation that was accessible and representative of status and not alienation.⁴¹² While Lukacs insisted on portraying these people as *reluctant* public figures neither Churchill nor Kennan fit that typology well. The fact that both Tocqueville and Repplier produced written material for public consumption makes the idea of reluctance nearly untenable.

Still, these dualisms are alive in Lukacs’ work. There seems to be a pull between city and church; nation-state against community; sin versus cosmopolitanism and so on.⁴¹³ It is possible that this is the conservative’s modern problem as the reality of life in America following the Second World War was filled with new devices and forms of education that made communication public instead of private. Communication and dissemination of ideas, in other

⁴¹² For a conservative art critic’s take on art and the bourgeois see, Hilton Kramer, “Postmodern: Art and Culture in the 1980s,” *The New Criterion*, September 1982, <http://www.newcriterion.com/articles.cfm/Postmodern--art-and-culture-in-the-1980s-6494>, accessed May 5, 2013.

⁴¹³ It seems evident that there is a dialectic at work in Lukacs’ research. I talk at length about this later in the final chapter. Paul Gottfried wrote about a tacit form of Hegelianism that existed in the New Right. See, Paul Gottfried, *The Search for Historical Meaning: Hegel and The Postwar American Right* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1986).

words, became vulgar, public, and consumptive.⁴¹⁴ Lukacs, as I demonstrated above, believes the plethora of new communication was a product of the Post-Modern and Democratic Ages. What we find in Lukacs is the desire to remain relevant while remaining athwart liberalism, popular culture, democracy, and everything that middle-class American life stood for following the Second World War.⁴¹⁵ These dualisms and paradoxes are quite apparent throughout the rest of Lukacs' career, especially as he is unwilling to commit to either the right wing (including Gottfried and eventually Kirk) or neo-conservatism. It is worth noting here that Lukacs is somewhat ambiguous about his political affiliation prior to the election of Ronald Reagan. Most historians would expect him to vote for the Republican Party ticket especially during America's chaotic decade of the sixties. What we see is someone who became disenchanted and angry at the popularity of the Republican Party during the Age of Reagan. Lukacs gives no indication that he returned to the Republican Party after the election of Reagan either.

In 1978, Lukacs published *1945, Year Zero: The Shaping of the Modern Age*. Lukacs' *1945: Year Zero* is best explained by a reviewer who wrote: "Lukacs' chatty series of essays is always literate, often provocative, and sometimes wrong."⁴¹⁶ *1945* is a series of essays that covers much of the same ground as in previous books, including his conviction that Churchill was too naïve and old world to understand the nature of a new world order based on American power, as well as his take on America and the unchanging character of its intellectuals. It took Lukacs a mere year and a half to write this little book as he began working out his theory of historical consciousness into a more concrete project.

⁴¹⁴ See, Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003).

⁴¹⁵ For a look at the dual nature of conservatism see, Samuel Francis, *Beautiful Losers: Essays on The Failure of American Conservatism* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993).

⁴¹⁶ Melvin Small, "1945: Year Zero by John Lukacs," review of *1945: Year Zero*, by John Lukacs, *The American Historical Review* (85), April 1980, 387.

Philadelphia, Patricians & Philistines, 1900-1950 (1981) represents a shift in Lukacs' career as it signifies his theory of historical consciousness appropriated into a methodology relating to real historical actors.⁴¹⁷ PPP is a sort of caricature of Philadelphia through the lives of seven Philadelphians including a magazine mogul, a political boss, a novelist, and a lawyer among others. This book is an aristocratic/bourgeois cultural history of the city of brotherly love. Lukacs' elite figures are imperfect and he demonstrates that their leadership was more often than not weak. PPP is a history of mentalities of sorts and a forerunner of his grander experimental history *A Thread of Years*.

PPP is important for another reason. Lukacs reiterates again why he believes America is not an inherently conservative or aristocratic country. "Its social order, with its unwritten laws, had little in common with the traditions or with the composition of aristocracies in Europe or England," writes Lukacs. "It had something in common with the old patrician societies of early modern Europe, nearer to the middle of the continent, with a social and civic order incarnated by the great merchant families in cities such as Basel, Geneva, Amsterdam, Hamburg, or with the *grands bourgeois* (often Protestant) families in France." He summarizes his view of American bourgeois life when he writes that its elites were not of "feudal" stock or "noble" ancestry.⁴¹⁸ While his seven patrician Philadelphians were all deceased by 1950, all of them left an indelible "bourgeois" mark on that city. He is referring to his concept of the bourgeois interior here.

⁴¹⁷ I believe the method of historical consciousness is Lukacs' attempt to recreate the thought patterns of the past into the present without the past looking antiquarian. He was quite aware that nostalgia was destined for the dustbin; after all, he was a member of the American Historical Association for most of this academic career at Chestnut Hill College. As a professional historian, he knew the currents in the practice of history went against the mainstream. Historical consciousness is one of those theories that very much emanated out of academic circles, whether he would admit this fact or not.

⁴¹⁸ See, John Lukacs, *Philadelphia, Patricians & Philistines, 1900-1950* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1981), 6-7.

Before Lukacs returned to his experimental histories of historical consciousness, he expounded more on his reactionary philosophy and mantra with *Outgrowing Democracy: A History of the United States in the Twentieth Century* (1984). However, I am not going to describe *Outgrowing Democracy* in detail because he updated his thesis in this book in later versions. His official revision of *Outgrowing Democracy*, is titled *A New Republic: A History of the United States in the Twentieth Century* (2004). His insights in this book are not much different from previous intuitions included in other books, specifically, *The Passing of the Modern Age. A New Republic*, including *Outgrowing Democracy* represents Lukacs split from William Buckley and the larger conservative movement. In both *Outgrowing Democracy* and *A New Republic*, Lukacs unofficially broke up with neo-conservatives and the Republican Party, and halfheartedly joined the paleo-conservatives, but only in the loosest terms possible.⁴¹⁹

There were reasons not to break away from movement conservatism because it often meant loss of funding and banishment from a host of organizations.⁴²⁰ Lukacs became very critical of the Republican Party once Ronald Reagan was elected president, as was mentioned above. Because Reagan was an actor and the opposite of Lukacs' bourgeois hero, he felt personally betrayed that his adopted country and fellow conservatives would choose a former actor to lead the free world. Both *New Republic* and *Outgrowing Democracy* are Lukacsian tirades against democracy, progressivism, populism, globalism, consumerism, immorality, the

⁴¹⁹ Paul Gottfried is the inventor of the term paleo-conservative. Many incorrectly conflate the terms paleo-conservative and traditionalist. A paleo-conservative is a right-winger who aims at de-stabilizing the bureaucratic apparatus of the state. Traditionalist is less authoritative and seeks to change culture first. See Paul Gottfried's most recent publication, *War and Democracy* (London: Artkos Media, 2012) for an example of how paleos seek to dethrone the bureaucratic state. A typical example of the difference of paleos and traditionalists can be seen in Gottfried's traditionalist rival Claes Ryn's essay: "The Humanism of Irving Babbitt Revisited," in *Modern Age: The First Twenty-Five Years* ed. George Panichas (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1988), 191-203.

⁴²⁰ The literature of disaffected conservative intellectuals is small because most of them have remained loosely attached to the movement. However, venues such as *Taki's Magazine*, *The American Conservative*, *The University Bookman*, and *The Alternative Right* represented specific kinds of reactionary thinking among conservative splinter groups.

middle class, and so on. To demonstrate my point that Lukacs considers himself the new Tocqueville who stands above American culture, you can look at the following quote where he wrote about his role as a historian living inside of American democracy. “Unlike *Democracy in America*, this book is a history,” he wrote. “Like Tocqueville, its author is a foreigner; unlike Tocqueville, he has lived in the United States for thirty-seven years. *Democracy in America* was an interpretation of American institutions and of the democratic character. This book...is an interpretation of the historical development of the second century of the nation.”⁴²¹ It is also worth noting that Lukacs still participated frequently in the Intercollegiate Studies Institute. However, this is before that organization became an organization dominated by think tank dons and Republican Party partisans.

Lukacs as Tocqueville: Fear and Loathing in Conservatism

Most intellectuals are familiar with Tocqueville as the aristocratic observer of American life. However, one will never hear of the fury of Tocqueville or Tocquevillian anger. Yet, Lukacs began utilizing Tocquevillian anger to comment on conservatism and the Republican Party. This is a transformative act for Lukacs because he is making himself the new Tocqueville—a Tocqueville filled with righteous anger against all currents of democracy, which he believes are alive and well in both American political parties.

Lukacs’ tone is harsher against the United States as a growing dictatorial and bureaucratic force in the world. These feelings increased in Lukacs during supposed conservative presidential administrations. Lukacs no longer feels that the United States is a reluctant and

⁴²¹ John Lukacs, *A New Republic: A History of the United States in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 3-4.

benevolent power as it was during the Second World War.⁴²² He continued to rail against Ronald Reagan because of his tendencies towards populism. Populism, according to Lukacs, defined as the decline of political discourse to the lowest common denominator of American citizen.⁴²³ “When American presidents now don the garb of Commander in Chief, when American warplanes are named ‘Predators,’ ‘Raptors,’ ‘Black Hawks,’ ‘Warhogs,’ when the imaginations of millions of young Americans are inspired by monsters, dragons, dinosaurs, *Star Wars*, these are but superficial symptoms of a national ideology resting on a dangerously shallow kind of spirituality: the belief that naturally, as ordained by God, Americans are the Chosen people of the Universe,” he wrote.⁴²⁴ Those who either know Lukacs or knew him admit that Lukacs felt belittled by a country where he believed his scholarship would produce greater success, and filled with rage against conservatism as a popular ideology alongside of liberalism. To add insult to injury, his scholarship never produced a great amount of study in conservative circles either. Still his criticisms of this period reflect a more seminal shift among American intellectuals (left and right) who became critical of both political parties, American power, and the shift of liberalism from labor and wage to the politics of identity. This is where we begin to see people like Christopher Lasch entering the conservative scene, if it can be called that at all.⁴²⁵

Lukacs’ publications that are more recent have continued to focus on familiar career themes: 1. Correspondence with George Kennan. 2. The Second World War. 3. Historical Consciousness 4. Sympathetic biographies and 5. Historical methodology/theory. Lukacs, like Kirk, is very repetitive in his research and possibly more so because he has lived longer and

⁴²² Lukacs talks about Second World War era America as a benevolent power in an interview here, John Lukacs, “In Depth with John Lukacs,” CSPAN video, 2:53, February 6, 2000.

⁴²³ This serves as a major point of difference between Kirk, Lukacs, Lasch, and Gottfried. Lasch believed in the power of the community family to rise beyond the elitism of social science. Lukacs remained bourgeois and aristocratic; Kirk and Gottfried fell between poles.

⁴²⁴ Lukacs, *A New Republic*, 436.

⁴²⁵ Unlike Lukacs, Lasch had no qualms about joining forces with right-wingers such as Paul Gottfried.

published more now than Kirk did. I believe it is interesting to consider that Lukacs' career may be somewhat indicative of what Kirk's would have been like if he had lived beyond 1994.

Lukacs' career is also different because the tensions are greater, and the adversary has become more difficult to locate given the nature and near impenetrability of bureaucracy in all facets of American life.

In *Budapest 1900: A Historical Portrait of A City and Its Culture*, Lukacs focuses on different aspects of Budapest including its writers, artists, intellectuals, and anti-Semites—this book is similar to his work on Philadelphia's bourgeois class.⁴²⁶ Lukacs is often at his best writing strictly about intellectuals and people in their own cultural settings. *Budapest*, published in 1988, was followed by Lukacs' first autobiography titled *Confessions of an Original Sinner* released in 1990. *Confessions*—a loose variation of Augustine's famous religious tract—is important because Lukacs takes the time to explain his reactionary terminology and other items left unexplained in his previous scholarship. Lukacs writes: "I am convinced that the most important matter in this world, and perhaps especially in our times, is what people think and believe; and that the material conditions of their lives (and the very material structure of their world) are but consequences of that."⁴²⁷

Confessions should be read for further insight into Lukacs' earlier work and as a kind of lexicon for this thought, even if much of that thought contradicts previous scholarship.⁴²⁸ He explains the meaning of reactionary conservatism: "This book is by a historian, not a theologian," writes Lukacs. "It is also because I am historian that I know how, while all human

⁴²⁶ John Lukacs, *Budapest 1900: A Historical Portrait of a City and Its Culture* (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1988).

⁴²⁷ John Lukacs, *Confessions of an Original Sinner* (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1990), xii.

⁴²⁸ There are three tropes in which Lukacs has trouble reconciling throughout his career: original sin, pragmatism, and phenomenology. In other words, Lukacs' political and lifestyle desires, more often than not, come into conflict with his religiosity and theological aims.

conditions change, human nature does not really change. This may be called a reactionary view.”

“A reactionary knows, and believes, in the existence of sin and in the immutable essence of human nature. He does not always oppose change, and he does not altogether deny progress. What he denies is the immutable idea of immutable progress: the idea that we are capable not only of improving our material conditions but our very nature, including our mental and spiritual nature,” Lukacs continues. Still, reactionary conservatism goes further by taking both political and academic norms towards the Platonic ideal; the vision of the real is only available to a few courageous thinkers willing to challenge culturally entrenched icons. The term reactionary, given its Platonic aims, is best defined here: “Near the end of an age there occurs a heavy accumulation of accepted ideas and institutionalized ways of thinking, against which thinking men and women must *react*... It is high time to reassess the sense of certain words—that, for example, *progressive* is not necessarily good, and *reactionary* not necessarily bad.”⁴²⁹

John Lukacs also represents a broader shift in how non-theologians speak to theological issues. Neither Russell Kirk or Lukacs were trained theologians, but like their liberal counterparts (Reinhold Niebuhr and Sidney Hook), they provided commentary on cultural issues (like the Cold War, Communism, Art, Philosophy) that theologians simply did not speak to for the most part.⁴³⁰ Even the most renowned cultural Christian authorities, or at least the most recognized,—C.S. Lewis, T.S. Eliot, and G.K. Chesterton—were not trained theologians either. This is a trend that as far as I know has not yet garnered much ink, but theologians have been stuck, primarily, in a place, where either they do not, or have chosen not to fence outside of their

⁴²⁹ Lukacs, *Confessions of an Original Sinner*, xiv.

⁴³⁰ We may consider exceptions to be thinkers like Francis Schaeffer. However, Schaeffer was not trained to be an academic theologian like a tenured academic theologian. For an excellent commentary on the nature of thinking in public about theological issues see, Barry Hankins, *Francis Schaeffer and The Shaping of Evangelical America* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2008) and Ronald Stone, *Politics and Faith: Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich at Union Seminary in New York* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2012).

theological circles. However, this is not always true as conservative evangelicals like Richard Land and Albert Mohler, and liberal theologians such as Rowan Williams and John Hick certainly speak to culture beyond their academic circles. Still, it seems that theologians carry with them the inability to bring together greater material outside of their disciplines to speak about grand issues like sin, as Lukacs did. In other words, in order to be a critic of culture, one needs to be interdisciplinary. Both liberal and conservative theologians often fail to penetrate the larger conversations, not only because of their commitments, but mainly because they do not understand how their theology may fit with those outside of their disciplines, and their small circles of cheerleaders. Non-theologians cannot afford to be insular, but many theologians are confined to very interrelated places like seminaries. The debates that take up most of their time are generally aimed at other seminarians.⁴³¹

Another important reason to read *Confessions* is to understand how Lukacs set boundaries for his textual community. As will be detailed below, the Lukacsian textual community is small and made up mostly of conservative outsiders who have been shunned by larger conservative textual communities, and witness their own experiences and feelings of alienation embodied in Lukacs. This is why the more refined term reactionary is needed as opposed to the identifier of conservative: “Near the end of a great epoch many of its great ideas become senseless... Their superficial reformulations will not amount to anything that is inspiring

⁴³¹ There are many examples of interdenominational debates that never make into the public realm. One instance is the recent fight among Southern Baptist theologians over Calvinism. See, Bobby Ross Jr. “Calvinism debate shakes up Southern Baptist Convention,” *Get Religion Blog (Patheos)* June 11, 2013, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/getreligion/2013/06/calvinism-debate-shakes-up-southern-baptist-convention/>, accessed December 30, 2013; and Joe Carter, “The FAQs: Southern Baptists, Calvinism, and God’s Plan of Salvation,” *The Gospel Coalition*, June 6, 2012, <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2012/06/06/the-faqs-southern-baptists-calvinism-and-gods-plan-of-salvation/>, accessed December 30, 2013. These debates rarely include laypeople, but are insular in their nature, as they will define body politic from the top down.

or even useful,” he wrote. “...Such a rethinking necessarily begins with a conscious reaction.”⁴³² He then lists a short list of ideas he reacts against such as sex education, abstract art, gross national product, national security, and opinion research. He also uses the first chapter to demonstrate his dislike for the neo-conservatives who he considers progressives in right-wing clothing. His disdain for them is not unlike Kirk, Lasch, or Gottfried in that he sees them as democratic/liberal capitalist elitists out for national and global political dominance.⁴³³ In other words, the neo-conservatives did not plan to disassemble the American bureaucratic apparatus as a means of shrinking America back to localities and away from its aspirations as an empire.

Following the publication of *Confessions* in 1990, Lukacs published three more books in the following four years. All three books were shorter revisions of previously published works. *Duel: 10 May-31 July 1940: The Eighty-day Struggle Between Churchill and Hitler* (1991), *The End of the Twentieth Century and The End of the Modern Age* (1993), and *Destinations Past: Traveling Through History with John Lukacs* (1994) are repetitive works in Lukacs’ repertoire.⁴³⁴ *Duel* is a day-by-day account of Hitler and Churchill poised against one another before the United States entered the Second World War. *The End of the Twentieth Century* is a re-hashing of his previous work on the conclusion of the modern age, and *Destinations Past* is a kind of historical travelogue of selected Lukacsian material.

He continued to work and published correspondence with George Kennan, as well as a popular book titled the *The Hitler of History*. *The Hitler of History* (1997) was a semi-controversial book because Lukacs surveyed the bulk of research on Hitler, and in Lukacsian

⁴³² Lukacs, *Confessions of an Original Sinner*, 4.

⁴³³ Lukacs, *Confessions of an Original Sinner*, 26.

⁴³⁴ John Lukacs, *The Duel: 10 May-31 July 1940: The Eighty-day Struggle Between Churchill and Hitler* (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1991, c1990); *The End of the Twentieth Century and The End of The Modern Age* (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1993); *Destinations Past: Traveling Through History with John Lukacs* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1994).

fashion, makes final claims about them. Lukacs' *Hitler* is not strictly a biography: "It is not a biography...but a history of his history, and a history of his biographies," he wrote. "...And the purpose of history is often not so much the definite accounting the events of a period as it is the historical description and understanding of the problems: description rather than definition; understanding, rather than completeness—because while a perfect completion of our knowledge of the past is not possible, a reasonably and proper understanding of it is within our powers."⁴³⁵ As should be obvious from the previous quotes, this book is more of a statement about historiography, historians, and method than for what it adds to knowledge and the academic historiography about the studies of Hitler and fascism. This book is also indicative of Lukacs' preferred method of research, which is cultural criticism, phenomenology, and philosophy on his terms.

Lukacs, adding to the historical debates made so prominent during the culture wars, writes that all history is "revisionist."⁴³⁶ Specific to Lukacs, his claims here are aimed at the universalism of both liberal historians and neo-conservatives intellectuals who might use universal claims to score political victories.⁴³⁷ He also uses this revisionist history to make general claims about the historiographical debate over Hitler such as: Hitler was a product of the coming democratic age and that although Hitler's prophesied millennial kingdom ended much

⁴³⁵ John Lukacs, *The Hitler of History* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1997), xii.

⁴³⁶ Lukacs, *The Hitler of History*, 1.

⁴³⁷ The story of neo-conservatism within and understood by conservatives is much different than it is understood by historians who are not also conservatives. Neo-conservatism is not just an intellectual predilection towards liberalism; it is mostly, at least in this writer's opinion, the political project to popularize the Republican Party. In order to do so, I believe, almost accidentally, the Republican Party bolstered by intellectuals of the neo-conservative persuasion, become more progressive. For a couple of different takes on this shift in conservatism's intellectual see, Bradley Thompson and Yaron Brook, *Neococonservatism: An Obituary for an Idea* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2010) and Justin Vaisse, *Neococonservatism: The Biography of a Movement* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010).

sooner than he predicted, his legacy is far reaching through the memory of historians.⁴³⁸ The implication is that the memory of Hitler in the minds of historians has destroyed the possibility of civilization because historians wrongly associate the idea of civilization with fascism and authoritarianism.⁴³⁹ Lukacs manages to historicize Hitler but not to exonerate him; interestingly, he utilizes the failure of Hitler to universalize the notion of bourgeois integrity he found in Churchill.

Lukacs' correspondence with Kennan from 1944 until 1946 was also published in 1997. It is a small book titled *George F. Kennan and the Origins of Containment, 1944-1946*. This book is an attempt to rescue Kennan's legacy from those who believed the Cold War was won solely because of the actions of Ronald Reagan and his neo-conservative supporters. Lukacs restates Kennan's view of containment—which was a bourgeois assessment of foreign policy because it was rooted in history, in Lukacs' opinion—since he looks at Kennan as an American version of Winston Churchill who understood that national interests, and not ideology, drove the Cold War, thus explaining his disdain for anti-communism.⁴⁴⁰ Although Lukacs spends a great deal of his career pontificating on the power of ideas over matter, he chooses to portray Kennan as a realist much like Kirk's Burke as someone supposedly beyond the grasp of ideology. Kennan—the last American aristocrat, according to Lukacs—was not given to the same proclivities as ordinary people.

Phenomenology as Conservatism

⁴³⁸ These claims are also reminiscent of claims in his previous books.

⁴³⁹ Lukacs, *The Hitler of History*, 268.

⁴⁴⁰ John Lukacs, *George F. Kennan and The Origins of Containment, 1944-1946: The Kennan-Lukacs Correspondence* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 19-20.

As Lukacs' career entered the twentieth century, he gravitated more towards phenomenology. In particular, he uses phenomenology for what he believes is the architecture for a new humanism. This is important for Lukacs because he believes so-called conservatives, like liberals, have lost the ability to speak to communities because of their belief in the overarching power of technology and science. We find him putting together projects nearing the conclusion of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century that reflect his desire to establish the bourgeois mind. However, his project has never made serious waves in conservatism during the twenty-first century. It is interesting that he has gravitated towards both the right wing (Gottfried) and agrarianism without joining or really recognizing either camp.⁴⁴¹ Lukacs wants to re-establish conservatism through mental faculties. Ultimately, his project has culminated in a firm belief that the conservative mind must be bourgeois and reactionary. Yet, he has never systematized his project outside of theoretical and philosophical concerns.

Lukacs finished out the twentieth century by publishing two more books, one important to his canon, and another a rehashing of his thoughts on the Second World War. In 1998, Lukacs published *A Thread of Years*, which is the culmination of his method and theory of historical consciousness.⁴⁴² It did not garner the attention that Lukacs would have liked, however. *Thread of Years* is an experimental history because it represents Lukacs' attempt at fleshing out his theory of historical consciousness into something concrete. This book is methodologically significant and valuable for insight into Lukacs' project, which is literally an effort to recreate the height of Anglo-English civilization by recreating that way of thinking back into the present.

⁴⁴¹ Here again is why I speculate as to whether Kirk would have gravitated towards Lukacsian positions if he had lived longer. Russell Kirk, although he intellectually agreed with Alasdair MacIntyre, never wrote of him or recognized him. See, Gerald Russello, *The Postmodern Imagination of Russell Kirk* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007). Lukacs has begun writing about Wendell Berry but he never engaged past conservative agrarians like Mel Bradford and Richard Weaver. Neither does he acknowledge the new agrarians such as Patrick Deneen and Mark Mitchell.

⁴⁴² John Lukacs, *A Thread of Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

He does this without joining Kirk whose Anglo-conservative project was traditional (agrarian and Christian); Lukacs' Anglicism is more bourgeois-urbane and in opposition to the Kirkean project. We might call Lukacs' book a cultural history of civilization because: "This book does not deal with the Roosevelts, Churchill, Stalin, and so on. They do not figure in it," Lukacs wrote. What Lukacs is more interested in is an obsession: "I was inspired by the recognition of the inevitable overlapping of history and literature." The real kicker is that he wants to attempt a kind of historical reincarnation, "mental, rather than the external...how and what they were wanting and thinking and perhaps believing."⁴⁴³ It is here in the mental reincarnation where we find Lukacs' pathway to the historical imagination. He sought the impossibility of every-historian's dream, which is to actually bring the past into existence in the present.

Lukacs' approach is different from the Annales school historians and the culturalists too.⁴⁴⁴ Although there is surely some overlap in both approaches minus the use of social science and the overarching ideological commitment to overturn intellectual history and its cousin phenomenology (acceptance of the mind as greater and not less than historical experience), Lukacs is still committed to a "civilization" or a high-cultural approach to history and phenomenology.⁴⁴⁵ The explanation for this approach, I believe, is simple: he believed that social history (materialism and scientism) dominated the major houses of academic history and sought to preserve something lost in these shifts away from intellectual history.⁴⁴⁶ While it is not fair to lump Lukacs into that broad category of culture warrior, it is also incorrect to think that Lukacs

⁴⁴³ Lukacs, *A Thread of Years*, 4.

⁴⁴⁴ See, Andre Burguiere, *The Annales School: An Intellectual History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

⁴⁴⁵ Lukacs is not situating his approach to phenomenology among phenomenological thinkers like Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Edmund Husserl. If anything, he is situating his kind of *conservatism* from other conservatives writing in the postwar era.

⁴⁴⁶ For an appraisal of the shifting of history away from its intellectual and modern moorings see, Anna Green and Kathleen Troup ed., *The Houses of History* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).

found the “turns”—linguistic, cultural, postmodern—as anything but smaller and fatal attempts to accomplish the larger project he had in mind. The turns were imperfect ways to understand the greater ideal, which is humanism in Lukacs’ thinking. Also in view is a greater conservative critique of academia and a civilizational approach to scholarly life that he feels was lost in the democratic age. That critique is that liberals amidst their theorizing about Marxism, science, and progress forgot how to ask big questions that mattered most to humans. For Lukacs this meant understanding and seeking to know how humans thought about their history and place within it.

A Thread of Years includes 69 chapters/vignettes, which according to Lukacs are not really fictional because they *could* have happened based on the historical record. *Thread* is not a revisionist history, but a phenomenological one. “I am writing about everyday people whose plausibility exists only because of the historical reality of their places and times,” he wrote. “...History has not yet had its Dante or its Shakespeare. That will come one day, and this book is not that. For, if it is not a novel, it is not history either.”⁴⁴⁷ Despite the fact that Lukacs tells the reader that he is neither a Shakespearean historian, nor a novelist, and nor has he invented a new kind of genre, we can see that Lukacs secretly hopes that he is the Shakespearean historian to be discovered after his passing.

Lukacs followed *Thread* with the publication of *Five Days in London, May 1940* (1999). Lukacs recounts the British decision to continue fighting the Second World War instead of negotiating with Hitler. Essentially, Lukacs takes the reader into the British war rooms where tough decisions were made. His hero, of course, is Churchill because: “At best, civilization may survive, at least in some small part due to Churchill in 1940,” he wrote. “At worst, he helped give us—especially those of us who are no longer young but who were young then—fifty

⁴⁴⁷ Lukacs, *A Thread of Years*, 7.

years.⁴⁴⁸ His first book in the new century was part of the ISI Student's Guide series where chosen conservative authors wrote about an academic discipline in a short volume. Lukacs wrote the guide to history where he covered what history should include for anyone interested in the subject. His historical heroes worth mimicking, he mentions, are people like Churchill, Henry Adams, Tocqueville, and Huizinga, as he posits them as the key historians of the modern age. The best historians are the ones who write "historical literature" and understood how to bring readers into the age or period written about.⁴⁴⁹

In 2002, he published another version of his end of the modern age series, and a hagiography of Churchill titled *Churchill Visionary, Statesman, Historian*.⁴⁵⁰ Both books shared the common theme of observing the end of the modern age as something wholly decadent. In his short study of Churchill, he includes a short appraisal of recent biographies about Churchill, which are far too short to be considered worthy appraisals. His historiography, in other words, reflects the style of a journalist as opposed to an academically trained historian. The rest of Lukacs' historiography or canon throughout this decade includes more repetition. Four of his books re-hashed his thoughts on some piece of the Second World War and Cold War history.⁴⁵¹ His most seminal contributions during the new millennium was an extended biography of Philadelphia writer Agnes Repplier and a couple of autobiographical works that also serve as extended essays on philosophy and history.

⁴⁴⁸ John Lukacs, *Five Days in London, May 1940* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 219.

⁴⁴⁹ John Lukacs, *A Student's Guide to the Study of History* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2000).

⁴⁵⁰ John Lukacs, *Churchill: Visionary, Statesman, Historian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002) and *At the End of an Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

⁴⁵¹ See, John Lukacs, *Democracy and Populism: Fear & Hatred* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); *June 1941: Hitler and Stalin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); *George Kennan: A Study of Character* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007) and *Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat: The Dire Warning* (New York: Basic Books, 2008).

One of those Cold-War contributions was a short sympathetic biography of George Kennan where he elucidates further about why he (Lukacs) was an anti anti-communist, and why containment was a more solid theoretical approach to Cold War foreign policy than stockpiling nuclear arms.⁴⁵² We find at the conclusion of *George Kennan* that Lukacs believes him to be a Churchillian kind of figure offering sobriety and moderation in a time of chaos. Moderation and sobriety, according to Lukacs, are specifically bourgeois values. In *Last Rites*, Lukacs extended his autobiography *Confessions*. This little volume presents a cornucopia of familiar Lukacsianisms such as that liberalism is dead, and that Churchill and Hitler presented not only two opposing viewpoints of rights, but also two opposing views of modernity (democratic and bourgeois). The most significant aspect of this scholarship here is his further explanation of history's relationship to epistemology.

Lukacs claims that all human knowledge is personal and participatory, a familiar theme throughout his corpus of work. This is significant for reasons Lukacs does not flesh out in the text.⁴⁵³ Here, he is essentially agreeing with classical pragmatist epistemology, which says that knowledge is always personal, participatory, and earthly.⁴⁵⁴ Obviously, John Dewey would have rejected both Lukacs' insistence of the category of sin and a divine epistemology. However, if knowing equaled human flourishing and the preeminence of the human actor in concert with its environment as a theory of knowing, then Lukacs and Dewey are in similar agreement.

⁴⁵² See, John Lukacs, *George Kennan: A Study of Character* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007). This short biography is not bad; however, it is overtly sympathetic to Kennan.

⁴⁵³ In a short written communication with Lukacs concerning his epistemology, he never reflected upon it outside of his published books. Other conservative thinkers who have challenged Lukacs to explain his epistemology have also heard similar silence from him on that issue.

⁴⁵⁴ Among Dewey scholars, his most famous appraisal of active knowing is seen in his essay, "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology," which was published in 1896. A more popular and somewhat less technical book by Dewey on epistemology is, *How We Think* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1997). This book was written for teachers.

Classical pragmatists such as John Dewey rejected the correspondence theory of knowing, whereas Lukacs states repeatedly that he does not believe good knowledge is possible without a concept of both human depravity and the recognition of the God of the Christian Bible.⁴⁵⁵ What Lukacs is trying to achieve is twofold: first, he wants to debunk science as a theory of historical knowledge; and he seeks to utilize participatory knowledge to build an architecture for a new humanism, as he calls it.⁴⁵⁶ At least a couple of items are worth nothing before moving on to explain the remainder of *Last Rites*. He refuses to join his philosophy to another's work because of his apparent arrogance. His larger project has noticeable similarities with the work of Hayden White, Christopher Lasch, Alasdair MacIntyre, John Dewey's humanist phase, and John Milbank.⁴⁵⁷ In a very general fashion, Lukacs agrees that accepted secular notions of knowing are too limiting, and that these limitations as opposed to freeing humans from authority, actually become all powerful in the created institutions of secular authority known as bureaucracy. Community, history (historicism included), tradition, and religion become ways in which to know again.⁴⁵⁸ What Lukacs was on to with his newfound theory of history was a concept known as historicism. It is possible that Lukacs would have found jumping into this century-long debate too time consuming or unworthy of his trouble.

Lukacs continues to elucidate his theory of epistemology by claiming that humans and science have limitations.⁴⁵⁹ However, humans must now realize that we are not individuals alone in the universe but are connected to one another by our very humanness. It is interesting to note

⁴⁵⁵ Lukacs' theory of epistemology is a gaping hole in his philosophy of history. Because he chose to flesh his theory of knowledge out so late in life, he of course did not do the groundwork of identifying his work with others, like Dewey.

⁴⁵⁶ John Lukacs, *Last Rites* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), see chapter one.

⁴⁵⁷ Lukacs is at the very least familiar with White and would have known of both Lasch and MacIntyre as all four were publishing in the decades of the 80s and 90s.

⁴⁵⁸ See, Eric Miller, "Confessing History: Prospect," *Fides et Historia* 43 (2011): 62-70.

⁴⁵⁹ Science is limited by it requires a human agent.

that this is one of the first times Lukacs references novelist and agrarian humanist Wendell Berry. Citing Berry, he says there is now a division between those who wish to be machines or humans, and a distinction between idealism and materialism.⁴⁶⁰ The modern machines are those people who objectify science, certainty, and reason more than human folkways. Humans are at the core of history and not ideas, says Lukacs, thus countering R.C. Collingwood's history of ideas approach. The known is non-existent without the knower, in other words.⁴⁶¹ This kind of subjectivism stands radically opposed to his belief in the universalism of original sin and an all-knowing God. In other words, Lukacs' epistemology seems split between pragmatism and Christianity .

Lukacs then aims for the credibility of both Leo Strauss and Karl Popper because he believes they did not understand the difference between historicism and historicity. The distinction, of which Lukacs seems to have come too late in his career, is one between the problem of relativism, universalism, and custom. Very basically, a historically based customary practice does not equal moral relativism, as Strauss and Popper believed it did.⁴⁶² In fact, a bourgeois customary practice does not lead to relativism but to a moderate view of the world and communities in them.

Countering both Strauss and Popper, Lukacs asserts that the human mind is not universal but limited by a need to be local and customary.⁴⁶³ However, Lukacs does not differentiate his

⁴⁶⁰ Lukacs, *Last Rites*, 14. Similar to his stances in other debates, Lukacs does not stake out a position except to counter other conservatives.

⁴⁶¹ Lukacs seems to be contradicting his earlier Augustinian claims.

⁴⁶² See, Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953) and Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950). Upon hindsight and further examination, it appears that both Strauss and Popper used the term "historicism" out of context to make broader political claims.

⁴⁶³ The confrontation between historicists and universalists (Straussians and traditionalists) often took place during the culture wars and served to bring out doctrinaire and intellectual differences in the conservative

theory of historical consciousness from historicism other than to claim that history is bigger than science and that the gap between knower and known has shrunk exponentially. Lukacs is fond of saying that mind and matter are inseparable given the uncertainty of science which he links to Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle. Still, he never extends his arguments beyond generalizations and into the realm of analytics. This all leads to Lukacs' thesis that says: "Our consciousness, our central situation in space, cannot be separated from our consciousness of time."⁴⁶⁴ Even the arrival of Darwin was a historical moment born in humans thinking about what it meant to be human, Lukacs tells us. Evolution is a historical claim and about the universe, not a scientific one. For Lukacs, this equals the return of the geocentric universe, which in turn entails the renewal of humanism or the "architecture for a new humanism."

The two most notable books that Lukacs has published recently are *The Future of History* and *History and the Human Condition*.⁴⁶⁵ Both books are restatements of ideas found in previous works such as *Last Rites* and *Confessions of an Original Sinner*. Two familiar themes resonate throughout *The Future of History*. First, post-humanism, which he defines as a universal belief in the unlimited progress of science and democracy, is now the most formidable opponent of humanism. One will notice that conservatism as a political preoccupation is in the background too. Second, human fascination with history has seeped into the very blood of Western Civilization. This is the birth of what Lukacs calls historical man. Historical man, consciously or

movement. See, Paul Gottfried, *Leo Strauss and the Conservative Movement in America: A Critical Appraisal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012) and Daniel McCarthy, "Leo Strauss and the Right's Civil War," *The American Conservative*, January 19, 2014, <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/mccarthy/leo-strauss-and-the-rights-civil-war/>, accessed January 20, 2014.

⁴⁶⁴ Lukacs, *Last Rites*, 38. While there is certainly a pragmatic element here, it is not entirely pragmatic. It is entirely possible that Lukacs is less interested in seriously re-establishing subjectivity as a permanent and vital feature of conservatism than he is bolstering historical conservatism back to a place of prominence. John Dewey was also much more logical and systematic in his approach to epistemology than was Lukacs who has never made a claim to being a "pragmatist." Lukacs is not the first conservative to make this claim. See, Paul Gottfried, *The Search for Historical Meaning*.

⁴⁶⁵ Lukacs, *The Future of History*; and *History and the Human Condition* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2012).

not, finds that the past is always illuminating the present. Historians, Lukacs says, must recognize the very humanistic elements of historical man, and the historicity of the process of thinking and writing.⁴⁶⁶ *History and the Human Condition* is a rewrite of the bulk of his theory for the Intercollegiate Studies Institute's press ISI Books (2013). Lukacs' historiography is heavily theoretical with a variety of recurring observations concerning the Second World War, containment, history, fiction, and so on.⁴⁶⁷

The Three-Pronged Reactions of John Lukacs

In this section, I will cover three areas of John Lukacs' bourgeois conservatism that stand out the most. In the first section, I will cover his fascination with phenomenology and the tensions that emanate from his theory of conservative thinking. From the section on phenomenology, I will talk about Lukacs' pragmatic cosmopolitanism, which works paradoxically next to his theology of sin and human depravity. Lukacs' pragmatic bourgeois moderation and social palatability is in conflict with his Catholic/Christian orthodoxy. I consider Lukacs' wandering into pragmatism and his eventual championing of subjectivism and participatory theory of knowledge in relation to conservative thinking. This chapter concludes with profound conservative paradoxes that reveal dualisms between subjectivism, universalism, and the role of faith. These remain pulls within conservatism, as its identity and history are still debated among those active within the movement. I will also demonstrate the ways in which Lukacs utilized Tocqueville as an interlocutor for his positions concerning theology, pragmatism, and conservative thinking.

⁴⁶⁶ See, Seth Bartee, "John Lukacs and the New Age of Historical Thinking," *The Way of Improvement Leads Home*, June 18, 2011, <http://www.philipvickersfithian.com/2011/06/john-lukacs-and-new-age-of-historical.html>, accessed March 25, 2013.

⁴⁶⁷ There are two books of Lukacs' that I did not mention: *American Austen: The Forgotten Writings of Agnes Repplier* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2009) and *The Legacy of the Second World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010). Repplier is another bourgeois figure that Lukacs found fascination with beginning with his portrait of her in *Philadelphia, Patricians, and Philistines*.

John Lukacs' Phenomenology and the Conservative Mind

John Lukacs understood what Russell Kirk did not. The conservative mind needed fleshing out phenomenologically, and its inner workings explained.⁴⁶⁸ It was insufficient to make a historical claim for conservative America because it never had a feudal class and its traditions began as reactions against European authority.⁴⁶⁹ Because Lukacs believed that America was not inherently a conservative nation, essentially agreeing with liberal historian Louis Hartz, he never took on the burden of Kirk's historical restructuring project.⁴⁷⁰ That does not mean that he did not attempt to restructure the present according to ideas he found usable in the past. He did. He directed his reactions against American democracy whose extremes were moderated by an ever-expanding bureaucratic structure that he believed infiltrated every aspect of American life.⁴⁷¹ The bureaucratic structuring of American life was so powerful that he thought conservatives' last bastion was the interior or the mind. Lukacs did indeed have a historical personage that he believed could counter balance life in the United States for those who wanted an escape from

⁴⁶⁸ I consider John Lukacs' most seminal works on phenomenology to be *Historical Consciousness* (1968), *Decline and Rise of Europe* (1965); *Philadelphia, Patricians & Philistines* (1981); *A Thread of Years* (1998); *Last Rites* (2009); *The Future of History* (2011). Of the listed works, the most important are *Historical Consciousness* because it is strictly a work on the instrumentation of Lukacs' theory of historical consciousness and *A Thread of Years* because it is where Lukacs fleshed out historical consciousness into a work dealing with human actors in historical settings.

⁴⁶⁹ Lukacs, *Philadelphia, Patricians & Philistines, 1900-1950*, 6-7. For a modern reaction against the claims of Lukacs and Hartz see, Jordan Bloom, "Why Hayek is a Conservative," *The American Conservative*, May 8, 2013, http://www.theamericanconservative.com/why-hayek-is-a-conservative/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=why-hayek-is-a-conservative, accessed May 8, 2013.

⁴⁷⁰ See, Russell Kirk, *The American Cause* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2002). Gleaves Whitney, a senior fellow at The Russell Kirk Center, edited this volume. The Kirkean project of finding a serious historical grounding for American conservatism is still the acceptable path.

⁴⁷¹ See, James Livingston, *The World Turned Inside Out: American Thought and Culture at the End of the 20th century* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010).

chaos. Alexis de Tocqueville represented the moderate approach to life, something Lukacs and the liberal consensus school felt was missing for the American experience.⁴⁷²

Lukacs' impression of Tocqueville and the Tocquevillian mind was bourgeois and served as a representative example for conservative thinking because he was an artist and moralist, according to Lukacs. "He (Tocqueville) conceives his historian's duties as primarily moral ones; but, then, he is also an artist at the same time," Lukacs wrote. "... (H)e sought to find the great latent tendencies of the human heart rather than to be an academic accountant of the obvious," he added.⁴⁷³ Lukacs never accuses Kirk of anti-intellectualism or extremism, but it is clear that Lukacs believes in the ability of the bourgeois moderate against the new American conservative. He found the bourgeois order in view in figures like Winston Churchill and Tocqueville because they stood athwart the tide of democratic reform without succumbing to democratic ways of thinking. Wilfred McClay explains why Tocqueville held appeal for Lukacs' moderate conservative mind: "Tocqueville was the child of an aristocratic French family, many of whose members had suffered death or devastation at the hands of the French Revolution. As a consequence, he was haunted all his life by the specter of revolutionary anarchy, and of the tyranny such a sweeping social revolution would inevitably bring in its wake."⁴⁷⁴

Lukacs' project stood out from the other postwar conservatives because, at least early in his career, he was not interested in an agrarian project based on radical localism or Burkean traditionalism centered on customizing Anglo-British practices in American communities, although he certainly utilized Burkean language at some points in his writing. He was not a

⁴⁷² Consensus historians like Richard Hofstadter and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. were obviously cosmopolitans and appreciated the ability of bourgeois liberalism to render a moderate view of America acceptable.

⁴⁷³ Alexis de Tocqueville, *"The European Revolution" & Correspondence with Gobineau*, trans. John Lukacs, 11- 12.

⁴⁷⁴ Wilfred McClay, "The Tocquevillian Moment . . . and Ours," *Wilson Quarterly*, Summer 2012, <http://www.wilsonquarterly.com/article.cfm?AID=2197>, accessed March 26, 2013.

libertarian either and never demonstrated an affinity for Frank Meyer's fusion of economic libertarianism and traditionalism.⁴⁷⁵ Lukacs was interested in Tocqueville for reasons that he felt Burke, Meyer, and the Southern Agrarians did not detail or understand. "Tocqueville was interested not only in the outward forms of democracy but in its innermost effects, the ways in which a society's political arrangements, far from being matters that merely skate on the surface of life, have influences that reach deep into the very souls of its members," McClay writes.⁴⁷⁶ What democracy destroyed among other aspects of private life, Lukacs believed, was the inner life.

Lukacs linked the inner life explicitly to bourgeois thinking about the world. Therefore, Lukacs championed people like Agnes Repplier because she represented a strand of conservative *thinking* in America beyond activism and pontification. He called this kind of conservative thinking regarding a conservative mentality the "bourgeois interior," as I mentioned in the section on Lukacs' historiography. The bourgeois interior is a kind of bourgeois worldview. It began with innermost thoughts in letters and then became public through publication and intentional intellectual and literary kinds of reaction against ignorance.⁴⁷⁷ The bourgeois worldview or interior is never egalitarian or populist intentionally. Lukacs relates the inner quality of the bourgeois thinker to Tocqueville. "He (Tocqueville) was above them," Lukacs says of Tocqueville's party politics. "He transcends these categories...He did not believe the voice of

⁴⁷⁵ For a good primer on fusionism in conservatism see, George Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America, since 1945*.

⁴⁷⁶ McClay, "The Tocquevillean Moment . . . and Ours," *Wilson Quarterly*, Summer 2012, <http://www.wilsonquarterly.com/article.cfm?AID=2197>, accessed March 26, 2013.

⁴⁷⁷ These two books are the most representative of Lukacs' conservatism of the interior. See, *American Austen* and the introduction he wrote for a new edition of Gyula Krudy's *Sunflower* (Budapest: Corvina, 1997).

the people was divine.”⁴⁷⁸ Ironically, all of the figures that Lukacs championed were public figures, despite his disdain for the public and populism.

Lukacs’ modern Tocquevillians were not without their own tensions between public and private life. There were striking tensions in Winston Churchill’s life between ambition and his bourgeois exterior.⁴⁷⁹ Churchill, as has been documented repeatedly, wanted a public life and to be heard by those beyond his bourgeois class. For Lukacs the biggest difference between Churchill and Reagan, whom he disdained, is that Churchill was a grand figure at an outstanding moment in history when the world’s fate was in balance. Although it sounds strange, it appears that Lukacs finds the Second World War a more noble conflict where bourgeois leaders saved the world one last time instead of the Cold War where post-bourgeois leaders created an imagined ultra-evil enemy to consolidate power.⁴⁸⁰ Lukacs continually zigzags between those figures he exemplifies: the novelist (Replier and Krudy), the bourgeois policy maker (Kennan), and the politician in his choices of reaction (Churchill), and Tocqueville above them all. Reviewing Lukacs’ edited volume of Replier’s writings, *Washington Post* book editor Michael Dirda picks up intuitively on Lukacs’ selection of Replier as a worthy conservative mind: “(B)eing deeply read in history and literature, Replier could always illustrate her points with an apt quotation or telling anecdote. And so she supplied *The Atlantic* and other periodicals with bookish reflections on the American character, the development of the novel, the drinking of tea, the virtues of city life, the drawings of Thackeray, the nature of enthusiasm, the comic spirit and,

⁴⁷⁸ Alexis de Tocqueville, “*The European Revolution*” & *Correspondence with Gobineau*, trans. John Lukacs, 13.

⁴⁷⁹ Here are two books that demonstrate the tensions in Winston Churchill’s life as a politician and bourgeois intellectual: Roy Jenkins, *Churchill: A Biography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001) and Michael Sheldon, *Young Titan: The Making of Winston Churchill* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013).

⁴⁸⁰ See, *1945, Year Zero: The Shaping of the Modern Age* and *George Kennan: A Study of Character*.

not least, the history of Philadelphia,” wrote Dirda.⁴⁸¹ What animates conservatism for Lukacs is that conservative thinking must first be owned before making conservatism a historical and political reality.

Lukacs hated that conservatives used anti-communism to make conservative a *movement*. This bothered him because he believed conservatism was supposed to be principled and never implemented in revolutionary terms. He wrote a controversial article in *National Interest* more than a decade after the conclusion of the Cold War titled “The Poverty of Anticommunism.” In this article, he chided the founders of the conservative movement including William Buckley Jr. and conservative foreign policy theorist James Burnham for creating a counter-ideology to communism. The problem, it seems, for Lukacs was that conservatism was never meant to be a counter-ideology or even a publicized choice in the marketplace of ideas. It is not clear as to whether his criticisms begin from a genuinely scholarly perspective or from some kind of personal qualm with Buckley. Countering Buckley and movement conservatism, he claimed that Americans had far more to worry about from homegrown communist sympathizers than with international communism.⁴⁸² Lukacs explains that his anti anti-communism is similar to a Tocquevillian reaction against the extremes of left and right. “There are variations of anti-communism,” Lukacs wrote. “There are those anti-communists who convince themselves that all enemies of freedom are to be found on the Right and not on the Left: their colors are, plainly, pink. And there is another kind of anti-communist who has no sympathy for communism but who is appalled by the errors and dishonesties of anti-communist ideology and of its

⁴⁸¹ Michael Dirda, “A Woman of Masterful Persuasion,” review of *American Austen: The Forgotten Writing of Agnes Repplier*, edited by John Lukacs, *Washington Post*, July 16, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/story/2009/07/16/ST2009071601578.html>, accessed March 19, 2013.

⁴⁸² See, John Lukacs, “The Poverty of Anticommunism,” in *Remembered Past: John Lukacs On History Historians & Historical Knowledge*, ed. Mark Malvasi et. al, (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2005), 567.

propagation.”⁴⁸³ He then goes on to explain that there are variations of anti-communism and that Churchill was an exemplary anti-communist but that Hitler was not. The point is that Hitler’s inner life was driven by an obsession to be loved and dominate simultaneously, a particular characteristic he associates with democratic regimes and a new age of democratic demagogues. Churchill was superior to Hitler because he was first a bourgeois historian and artist, and these translated to making him an exemplary statesman.

John Lukacs and Pragmatic Cosmopolitanism

All of this is quite strange. If Lukacs were really seeking a private life, he would want to be more like Repplier than Churchill and Kennan. His desire would be directed towards a hyper-kind of localism much like Kirk. However, this is not what we find with Lukacs. While Lukacs favors private life and moderation, this is in conflict with his supposed concern and focus on sin and the return of Jesus Christ for The Second Coming. Bourgeois conservatism not only does not fit together with any sort of evangelical Christianity; it is opposed to it.⁴⁸⁴ First, Jesus promoted and lived for a ministry that was to be explicitly public and not private.⁴⁸⁵ Second, an inherent responsibility of a theology of sin is to confess sin openly. John Lukacs never promotes or adheres to evangelizing the Christian faith or confessing sin beyond intellectual predispositions. In his description of Simone Weil, we find that Lukacs’ theology of sin is more mystical and possibly an objectification of the mind of the bourgeois as something prophetic. “Like Bernanos,

⁴⁸³ See, John Lukacs, “The Poverty of Anticommunism,” in *Remembered Past: John Lukacs On History Historians & Historical Knowledge*, ed. Mark Malvasi et. al, (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2005), 568.

⁴⁸⁴ I argue that conservatism in practice and theory is opposed to the famous Biblical doctrine known as The Great Commission, which is found at the conclusion of the Gospel books of Matthew and Mark. Conservatism is naturally opposed for disposing of custom to seek a wider audience on the basis of faith and sacrifice. See, Seth Bartee, “All the Shepherds are Sheep, too: The Great Commission against Conservatism,” *U.S. Intellectual History blog*, January 8, 2013, <http://s-usih.org/category/seth-bartee>, accessed March 7, 2013.

⁴⁸⁵ This is an evangelical interpretation of the ministry of Jesus. For an overview of American evangelicalism see, Mark Noll, *American Evangelical Christianity: An Introduction* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2001).

she was a patriot,” he wrote. “She (Weil) tried to volunteer when Hitler started the war, in 1939...She then chose to work in the fields, first in the garden of a Catholic writer and philosopher and then on a truck farm. She also had to take a hand in guiding the destinies of her endangered family in Marseille: for Simone Weil—like most humble saints and unlike most intellectuals—was a practical person,” Lukacs wrote.⁴⁸⁶ The bourgeois appeal of Weil and her remarkable life for Lukacs is that she resisted “the accepted ideas of our times.”⁴⁸⁷ Just as he claims about himself, Churchill, and Kennan, he wrote of Weil that her resistance “was more than political or ideological. It was philosophical, personal, and participant.” There is no place in all of Lukacs’ works where he explains his theology better.

For Lukacs, religion is about resistance and interiority. Resistance or reaction is refined, but not pious or necessarily public. Piety is not a factor in Lukacs’ corpus of works. In fact, when he does invoke sin, it is an intellectual assertion concerning human limitations. His theology of sin boils down to a literary kind of bourgeois confessionality. “(E)very kind of writing is, to some extent, and at some depth, autobiographical,” he began a chapter titled “Confessions of an Original Sinner.”⁴⁸⁸ His confessional model follows: “I was a reactionary, a Westerner and bourgeois.”⁴⁸⁹ His theology of sin is more of a realization and lament of something lost than it is a call to Christian orthodoxy: “Sometime during the 1950s I began to recognize that the restoration of the bourgeois, the old-liberal, the conservative practices and standards and virtues would not happen.”⁴⁹⁰

John Lukacs and Pragmatism

⁴⁸⁶ John Lukacs, “Simone Weil,” in *Remembered Past: John Lukacs On History Historians & Historical Knowledge*, ed. Mark Malvasi et. al, (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2005), 378.

⁴⁸⁷ Lukacs, “Simone Weil,” in *Remembered Past*, 378.

⁴⁸⁸ Lukacs, *Confessions of an Original Sinner*, 301.

⁴⁸⁹ Lukacs, *Confessions of an Original Sinner*, 303.

⁴⁹⁰ Lukacs, *Confessions of an Original Sinner*, 304.

We find John Lukacs mourning the fact that he belongs to a world where he is no longer appreciated, and perhaps he never was in reality. Just as movement conservatives (also known as the New Right) were beginning to gain momentum in the 1950s, Lukacs said he was depressed by the death of the old-liberal. While the early conservatives were not optimistic about their place in the world, most of them were not publicly lamenting the death of the bourgeois order because it existed in the liberalism of that day and was prominent in academia.⁴⁹¹ However, there is most definitely a strong bourgeois element in the conservative movement that resembles a pragmatic cosmopolitanism. This kind of conservative pragmatic cosmopolitanism goes by the names of careerist, bourgeois, gentleman, novelist, conservative, professor, etc. In other words, the conservative project of establishing order is not an inherently Christian project; and I believe the case can be made that there is a utopian strain within the conservative movement from its beginnings.

Faith is problematic for the bourgeois element of conservatism because it requires a heavenly hierarchy constructed for the afterlife and not primarily for earthly living.⁴⁹² In other words, order is a serious quandary for conservatives because they have not figured out how to bring together faith with their earthly political goals. These tensions are evident in John Lukacs' textual community, too. The Lukacsian textual community is different from Kirk's in size and stature. His textual community is much smaller in number probably because of his reactionary nature and several theoretical inconsistencies. In the following section, I will look at how the Lukacsian textual community differs from the Kirkeans, and why this matters. Since Lukacs

⁴⁹¹ Tim Lacy's forthcoming monograph, *Dreams of a Democratic Culture*, is specifically about Mortimer Adler and The Great Books movement. However, he also touches up the bourgeois element that was alive in many academic institutions through the seventies and eighties. Liberal cosmopolitanism would later be joined to conservatism during the culture wars.

⁴⁹² It is interesting that William Buckley, Russell Kirk, and John Lukacs all wrote confessional types of autobiographies.

chose to reject Kirk's thesis that America was a conservative nation, then why is it that this should make his legacy and following minimal? What does the contestation of Kirk's Burkeanism and the overall unwillingness to react against it say about the New Right? These are questions and prompts that I will talk about further in the following section. Before I look at Lukacs' followers or those closely associated with him, I will define the parameters of his textual community first.

The Lukacsian Textual Community

I have chosen the concept of textual communities to flesh out conservatism, because it first shows that there were competing axiomatic approaches among key postwar conservative thinkers and that these differences did and do matter now. This is the most seminal aspect of textual communities because there are important variances between beginning ones conservatism with Burke as opposed to Tocqueville or Friedrich Nietzsche, etc. Second, I demonstrate how these axiomatic approaches defined various branches of conservatism. Finally, textual communities are followers who both amend and change the nature of the privileged interpreter after that person dies. Often textual communities birth their own second and third generation privileged interpreters as well. Textual communities also form important boundaries defining a Kirkean from a Straussian, for example. One can be expelled from one textual community and possibly join another because of various intellectual or pedagogical infractions. In order to form tighter boundaries, a textual community may alter the legacy of the original interpreter to fit present cultural and political circumstances. There is also a tenuous relationship between deceased author and textual community, as the textual community will always change the legacy of the original interpreter. This is paradoxical because the original interpreter gained his following as a result of altering the legacy of a thinker like Tocqueville. The process of building

and forging a textual community is somewhat of circular process, and it reveals more about the nature of dissent in American intellectual life at the end of the modern era. In one way, the forging of these communities in conservatism demonstrate the faltering of the liberal age and the coming post-liberal era.

Lukacs' textual community is a mishmash of fellow traveling reactionaries, outcasts, and rejects. It is worth noting that those who chose to react against the reaction—reacting against the conservatism of the conservative movement—did not find the typical success of Kirk or the later neo-conservatives such as Irving Kristol, George Will, or Norman Podhoretz.⁴⁹³ If Lukacs is correct that conservatism should be an intellectual predisposition towards the interior or literary life, then the fact that his textual community is small and nefarious speaks to the course of the conservative movement. In other words, many of the early conservatives like Kirk and Meyer wanted political prominence more than cultural prowess.⁴⁹⁴

The two most prominent members, if that term can be used, of Lukacs' textual community are historians Mark Malvasi and Lee Congdon. Neither historian has a big presence in conservatism because their positions are reactionary, and not easily represented in the latest Republican Party platform.⁴⁹⁵ Patrick Allitt, a rather well known historian of conservatism and religious history, and a recently naturalized American citizen, has also written about and become an admirer of Lukacs. Allitt is not a phenomenologist, but he has joined Lukacs in his criticisms

⁴⁹³ See, David Hoeveler, *Watch on the Right: Conservative Intellectuals in the Reagan Era* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

⁴⁹⁴ This is also a source of debate. See, Joseph Scotchie, *Revolt from the Heartland: The Struggle for an Authentic Conservatism* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2002).

⁴⁹⁵ I continue to use the Lukacsian definition, which he says, means reacting against accumulated opinion and accepted knowledge.

of the left and progressivism. Paul Gottfried is an admirer, but not a Lukacsian.⁴⁹⁶ Jeff Nelson, a son-in-law of the late Russell Kirk, co-edited the Lukacs reader with Malvasi, but has not explicated further upon Lukacs since publishing that volume. These are the people who make up the Lukacsian textual community and take up the mantle of Lukacsian reactionary—some more than others.

Mark Malvasi, who was a student of Christopher Lasch and Eugene Genovese at the University of Rochester, explains why he believes Lukacs never gained wide acclaim in the conservative movement. “He’s an oddball (among American conservatives),” Malvasi explains. “His criticism of anti-communism caused many (in conservatism) to dismiss him.”⁴⁹⁷ Malvasi goes on to state another aspect of Lukacs’ research that is not obvious from just reading his many books and articles, but one that further separated him from other movement conservatives. Malvasi claims that Lukacs believes that genuine conservatism perished with the totalitarian regimes of Europe following the Second World War.⁴⁹⁸ Those who are a part of the Lukacsian textual community tend to agree, although the degree in which they do is varied. This belief is a hallmark of the Lukacsian textual community which remains unsure about and athwart the modern Republican Party and neo-conservatism.

Malvasi has not nearly produced the amount of work Lukacs has produced. In fact, he has published only one monograph and edited a collection of Lukacs’ writings. Malvasi has also spent the bulk of his career in a small liberal arts college and currently does the bulk of his publishing at *The Imaginative Conservative*, which is a kind of Kirkean hangout. Malvasi is a

⁴⁹⁶ See, Paul Gottfried, *Encounters: My Life with Nixon, Marcuse, and other Friends and Teachers* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2009). See chapter six.

⁴⁹⁷ Conversation with Mark Malvasi. Interview by Seth Bartee. June 2012.

⁴⁹⁸ I believe Malvasi refers to both a feudal conservatism, and a conservatism founded on royalty or at the very least a set of mores based on social hierarchy.

hybrid reactionary who blends his training at Rochester with Lasch and Genovese and updates it with some of Lukacs' verve.⁴⁹⁹ He blends Lasch's family-oriented populism with Lukacs' reactionary positions regarding what he considers excesses of American exceptionalism. On Lukacs and American history, Malvasi writes: "Arising less from Christianity, even in its evangelical Protestant idiom, this faith in, this addiction to, Progress, Lukacs maintains, is among the principal consequences of the Enlightenment. At the heart of the American experiment was a vast delusion about the nature of man and history. It had originated in the Enlightenment conception of Americans as New Men and New Women who, invincibly committed to Progress, transcended the limits that nature, history, and Providence imposed upon all human beings."⁵⁰⁰ As Malvasi rails against progress, in other places he uses this platform to show how modern liberalism has failed to live up to the promises that his teacher Christopher Lasch and his followers originally had hope in during sixties: "Modern liberals have nonetheless articulated no coherent philosophy of reform, have occasioned no bold redistribution of wealth and power, have themselves ignored, tolerated, or encouraged racism and xenophobia, and have promoted mass consumption to temper or obscure persistent social and racial injustice."⁵⁰¹ It is interesting that a student of Lasch's would gravitate towards a reactionary conservative position, as Lasch did in the latter half of his career.

Similar to Malvasi, Lee Congdon has a minor position in the hinterlands of the conservative movement. Congdon participates in both conservative Catholic circles (such as *Crisis Magazine*)

⁴⁹⁹ Malvasi's lone monograph considers how the Southern agrarians sought to preserve southern traditions. See, *The Unregenerate South: The Agrarian Thought of John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, and Donald Davidson* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1997).

⁵⁰⁰ Mark Malvasi "The Awful Responsibility of Time," *The University Bookman*, December 21, 2011, <http://www.kirkcenter.org/index.php/bookman/article/the-awful-responsibility-of-time/>, accessed March 27, 2013.

⁵⁰¹ Mark Malvasi, "All's Well That Ends Well?: Reflections on Liberalism and Race," *The Imaginative Conservative*, January 21, 2013, <http://www.theimaginativeconservative.org/all-well-that-ends-well-reflections-on/#.UVMxxWDD8qQ>, accessed March 27, 2013.

or in Paul Gottfried's splinter organization the H.L. Mencken Club. Congdon's reaction is somewhat different from both Malvasi and Lukacs. Congdon is not afraid to take right wing positions and fuse them with Roman Catholicism. He publishes in places like *The World and I*, *Chronicles*, and *The American Conservative*.⁵⁰² He published an article on Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, the conservative monarchist Lukacs replaced at Chestnut Hill College. In this article, he elucidates the Lukacsian position concerning what he considers the stench of the democratic age. "In its modern form, that object of near worship owed its birth to the French Revolution, but once loosed upon the world it soon transformed itself into socialism—international and national. Contrary to received opinion, that is, Kuehnelt-Leddihn regarded communism, fascism, and Nazism as rivals rather than enemies, brothers under the skin; like their progenitor, democracy, they were all ideologies of the Left. That is why the Hitler-Stalin Pact should have occasioned no surprise," Congdon wrote.⁵⁰³ Lukacs does differentiate between liberalism and progressivism, however. Congdon believes that liberalism has birthed a host of mini-ideologies built on the notion of political correctness. It's not that Lukacs is not concerned with political correctness and identity politics, but as he is nearing the end of his career, methodology (epistemology) has been of greater importance to him than politics. I also think that Lukacs, like other conservatives who are unwilling to take right-wing positions, is afraid of being labeled a racist or anything that could tarnish his reputation irreparably.⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰² Until recently when *The American Conservative* has found vogue, all of these publications were considered to be on the "far right." Congdon is also a member of Paul Gottfried's anti-movement group the H.L. Mencken Club too.

⁵⁰³ Lee Congdon, "Kuehnelt-Leddihn and American Conservatism," *Crisis Magazine*, March 26, 2012, <http://www.crisismagazine.com/2012/kuehnelt-leddihn-and-american-conservatism>, accessed March 27, 2013.

⁵⁰⁴ Here I am specifically referencing the split of The Academy of Philosophy and Letters (APL). One side was fearful of including any kind of race-based conservatism into the mix and split group claimed that APL should welcome all based on the idea of conservative pluralism.

Congdon, like Lukacs, believes that aristocracy, for all of its faults, is a better choice than the host of bureaucrats and functionaries who compromise the democratic age. “Aristocracies often [de Tocqueville conceded] commit very tyrannical and inhuman actions, but they rarely entertain groveling thoughts; and they show a kind of haughty contempt of little pleasures, even whilst they indulge in them,” Congdon wrote. “The effect is greatly to raise the general pitch of society. In aristocratic ages, vast ideas are commonly entertained of the dignity, the power, and the greatness of man.”⁵⁰⁵ In Congdon’s previous essay on Kuehnelt-Leddihn, he berated the neo-conservatives for using ideology to combat ideology,—not unlike what Lukacs had to say about the anti-communists—and for portraying America as a country built on creed instead of custom. Congdon freely brings together Lukacs’ realism (as Lukacs relates it to Kennan’s view of ideology over history) with Kirk’s customary Burkeanism (America as inherently conservative). Both Malvasi and Congdon also bring out the Lukacsian tensions between faith and a desire for a bourgeois order as they portray the desire for political order to work hand-in-hand with faith.

Mainstream academics can be found in the Lukacsian textual community as well. Patrick Allitt is an intellectual historian at Emory University in Atlanta. Allitt’s Lukacsian positions are different from both Malvasi and Congdon. Allitt has explored the Catholic element of the ‘new conservatism’ of the postwar era, including research on Lukacs.⁵⁰⁶ His stances are less harsh than Lukacs, but he still finds room to criticize the left from a historical standpoint: “Spare a thought, conservatives, for America’s leftist intellectuals. The Right has had its ups and downs over the last 30 years, but the Left has had nothing but downs. What could be more painful than to see so

⁵⁰⁵ Lee Congdon, “The Persistence of Aristocracy,” review of *The Social History of the Hungarian Intelligentsia, 1825-1914*, by Janos Mazsu, *H-Net Reviews*, December 1997, <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=1571>, accessed March 27, 2013.

⁵⁰⁶ Patrick Allitt, *Catholic Intellectuals and Conservative Politics in America, 1950-1985* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

many of your hopes hammered flat by history, so many good intentions turned to ashes?" wrote Allitt.⁵⁰⁷ Against the grain of popular conservatism and its culture warrior historians like William Bennett, Allitt writes: "Trade unions, the Roman Catholic Church, and common decency all enjoy his support, while on racial matters he's nearly as politically correct as Howard Zinn, author of the otherwise utterly different *People's History of the United States*. Zinn is a compassionate lefty. We will have to wait for volume two to confirm, as appears to be the case, that Bennett is staking out for himself the corresponding historical ground of compassionate conservatism."⁵⁰⁸

The Lukacsian textual community participates in a host of organizations including Paul Gottfried's H.L. Mencken Club, ISI, and it writes for publications such as *The Imaginative Conservative*, *The Weekly Standard*, and *The American Conservative*. Only Malvasi has a small leadership role at the TIC as a co-editor. Popularity continues to elude the Lukacsian textual community, yet they remain intrigued by one of the few conservatives who revels in reactionary intellectualizing.

Allitt explains how those who admire Lukacs understand his legacy. "Lukacs liked to say, contra to scientific orthodoxy, that the sun really does rise in the morning and set in the evening, that it is truer for a person to say that the sun moves round the earth than the converse, that is, to accept a subjective or existential standpoint and avoid the "objective" standpoint by which the earth can be said to move around the sun," writes Allitt.⁵⁰⁹ "... These examples raised the question of the meaning of truth, which Lukacs was willing to meet, again by treating science

⁵⁰⁷ Patrick Allitt, "Untenured Radical," *The American Conservative*, December 1, 2009, <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/untentured-radical/>, accessed March 27, 2013.

⁵⁰⁸ Patrick Allitt, "America the Beautiful," review of *America: The Last Best Hope Vol. I: From the Age of Discovery to a World at War* by William Bennett, *The Weekly Standard*, June 26, 2006, <http://www.weeklystandard.com/author/patrick-allitt>, accessed March 27, 2013.

⁵⁰⁹ See, Patrick Allitt, "John Lukacs and the Idea of History," *The Intercollegiate Review* 29 (1993): 13.

as a limited subset of history,” Allitt adds. In other words, Lukacs’ greatest contribution to conservatism is as a phenomenologist. He is a phenomenologist because he is primarily concerned about thinking as opposed to thinking systems (epistemology). While he does make epistemological claims, he wants to know more about how culture and class defines the mind and mentalities as is evident in his book, *A Thread of Years*. Congdon shares Allitt’s assertion about the prevalence of Lukacs’ phenomenology when he wrote about Lukacs’ literary aspect of George Kennan’s life: “Not the least significant of their (Kennan and Lukacs) shared recognitions was the fundamental importance of memory. “History,” Lukacs has often insisted, “is the memory of mankind.” “...History, that is, is not restricted to the recorded past; it encompasses the remembered past,” Congdon wrote.⁵¹⁰ Lukacs’ textual community, however, has not openly taken to Tocqueville as the forbearer of their historical imagination, although I am quite sure they all hold affinity for the French diplomat. The personages that Lukacs’ textual community embraces vary from the Southern Agrarians to Burke.

Conclusion: A Conservatism of Paradoxes

Lukacs represents an important but neglected voice in the émigré bloc of American conservatism. He has not garnered the same kind of attention as other postwar émigrés such as Eric Voegelin, Michael Polanyi, Ludwig Von Mises, and F.A. Hayek. In fact, all of the aforementioned except for Lukacs have societies named after them—of course, they are all deceased too. Yet there are reasons to consider Lukacs’ legacy next to the likes of Voegelin and Polanyi, because of his explorations into the phenomenology of conservatism. His delving into conservative thinking, however, has led to tensions within his philosophy. These tensions in

⁵¹⁰ Lee Congdon, “Lukacs and Kennan: Reflections on a Friendship,” *The University Bookman*, December 22, 2011, <http://www.kirkcenter.org/index.php/bookman/article/lukacs-and-kennan-friendship/>, accessed March 27, 2013.

Lukacs' philosophy also represent greater paradoxes within the conservative movement. These are struggles to live out a life of faith and remain committed to a theology of sin and human depravity while committing to a conservatism built on bourgeois values, which are cosmopolitan and not sacrificial or evangelical. Despite conservatives railing against cosmopolitanism, modernity, and pragmatism, they were and are unable to escape the desire for public influence, affluence, and finding the world of intellect more fascinating than faith geared towards an afterlife. The notion of the afterlife usually only appeared as a conservative thinker neared the end of his/her career and sought to link their thinking to something beyond the political realm.⁵¹¹ Foundationally is the problem of faith and order. Conservatives have yet to find a way to bring together faith with order. As I have attempted to demonstrate throughout, instead, we find conservatives filing into different schools to work out the problem of faith and order. The necessity of order is also a major reason we find postwar conservatives acting out and updating past heroes like Tocqueville in the present. The voice from the past took on divine proportions among the postwar conservatives, although this is not stated openly by Lukacs.

While Lukacs often acted out Tocqueville and believed himself to be the new Tocqueville, the historical personages he mimicked changed during his long career. What is in view is Lukacs' ironic depiction of Tocqueville through other public/intellectual figures he believed embodied Tocquevillian/bourgeois characteristics the best, including Churchill, Kennan, and Replier. Conversely, Lukacs' reaction against movement conservatism through the bourgeois interior also weakened his reputation as a thinker weak on logic, and with a feeble analytic structure. His personal reactionary stance also hurt his ability to change the conservative

⁵¹¹ See John Lukacs, *Last Rites*; Russell Kirk, *The Sword of Imagination: Memoirs of a Half-Century of Literary Conflict* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 1995) and William Buckley, Jr., *Nearer, My God: An Autobiography of Faith* (New York: Doubleday, 1997).

movement and neo-conservatism. Because Lukacs remained primarily a historian who wrote like a phenomenologist and desired to be novelist, he never fleshed out his conservatism beyond theoretical assumptions.

Despite the criticisms of Lukacs, it is hard to diminish his role as a conservative linguist, phenomenologist, and critic of movement conservatism. Without implementing a progressive view of conservative thinking and postwar conservatism, Lukacs did indeed represent an early critic of the New Right from within that circle, and an early dissenting voice within conservatism too. For that reason alone, he deserves further study and inclusion into the canon of important postwar conservative thinkers. From the aspect of generations, we find both Lukacs, Kirk, and other first generation postwar conservatives struggling to think beyond aesthetics, and translate their aesthetic critiques of liberalism into political action. Russell Kirk failed to do serious work towards something political until the latter part of his career when his influence was greatly diminished. John Lukacs did understand that bureaucracy was far more than a political issue. He knew that its effects were not just on the economy, but that it stultified all of human flourishing. Government functionaries who wanted to make all that was private, public destroyed even the precious human mind and its interior.

Christopher Lasch agreed with Lukacs concerning the destruction of the private life by government functionaries and a new elite that wanted to control the middle class. Like Lukacs, Lasch desired to be a writer and preserve something humane from the world. Lasch understood what Kirk and Lukacs did not. He knew that, in order to implement traditional and communal thinking, bureaucracy first had to be destroyed, and that the necessity of a politics of beauty or aesthetics would have to wait for the restructuring of society based on a deconstructed governing system without liberal elites. Interestingly, Lasch gave traditionalist conservatism its most

intricate critique of bureaucracy. In the next chapter, I consider Lasch's wandering into conservative thinking even to the point of putting together a Kirkean kind of lineage for his opus *The True and Only Heaven*. Lasch had an advantage that neither Kirk nor Lukacs possessed. As a former leftist, he understood how bureaucracy worked theoretically from the inside, which made his criticisms powerful, specific, and applicable to an American society governed from the top down.

Chapter 5: Left Meets Right: Christopher Lasch at Limits of Intellect

Chapter Abstract

Christopher Lasch has never been considered a prominent figure in a history of conservative intellectuals. George Nash did not include him in his monumental study, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America, since 1945* or its more recent editions. Nevertheless, Lasch gained notoriety among conservatives shortly after the publication of Nash's work because of his resounding criticisms of liberalism, progress, and consumer culture. By 1994, Lasch was to the right of the majority of the Republican Party given his concern that neither major political party properly attended to the place of family and community or sought to limit the bulldozing power of progress.

There are several reasons for including Lasch in a study of conservative intellectuals. Like Kirk and Lukacs, he wrote imaginative counter-narratives in reaction to consensus liberalism as it manifested itself in the late twentieth century. He rejected the post-liberal and post-bourgeoisie world where order was merely created with a degree or conferred by climbing the corporate ladder. Lasch's imaginative counter-narratives were written to counteract the new elitism as they were rooted in the intellect whose characteristics were civic, existential, humanistic, and populist. His counter-narrativizing of history was aimed at decentralizing the role of progress and a new elite founded on what he believed was a faulty understanding of work and order. While Lasch fancied himself a critic of capitalism and Marxist, he was bourgeois and conservative in his understanding of social hierarchy. Whereas Kirk and Lukacs chose to act out thinkers such as Edmund Burke and Alexis de Tocqueville, Lasch chose to act out a plethora of selected moralist public intellectuals that included that likes of Jonathan Edwards, Reinhold Niebuhr, William James, and Orestes Brownson. Lasch therefore idealized and romanticized the place of the public intellectual to serve as the de facto conscience for the public.

Despite Lasch's apparent conversion from liberalism to conservatism, he sowed a great deal of ambiguity concerning the nature how to overcome progress, secularism, and human depravity. Instead, he made the intellect and a humanism rooted in community, its own kind of religion. Lasch's textual community often reflects these ambiguities as they continue to flesh out his unfinished legacy.

Christopher Lasch and the Shifting Political Binaries of the late Twentieth Century

Christopher Lasch's biographer, Eric Miller, was adamant that the former Leftist turned reactionary was not a conservative by popular standards.⁵¹² Miller backed up his hesitation for

⁵¹² Conversation with Eric Miller. March 2012.

considering Lasch a conservative for the following reasons: he never openly supported the Republican Party, and by no means joined forces with postwar conservatives like Russell Kirk, even after his break from the New Left; he remained fiercely critical of free-market capitalism, American military power, and the idea of American exceptionalism until his death.

Lasch would have had other entryways into conservatism besides the Republican Party. Scholarly conservative organizations such as the Intercollegiate Studies Institute would have welcomed him, and William Buckley was always on the lookout for new blood in his *National Review* circle.⁵¹³ Still, Lasch chose not to join these types of organizations, despite the fact that he supported most of their causes including conventional morality, societal order, and skepticism towards progress.⁵¹⁴ Although he disliked the broad label of conservative (he called himself a right-wing populist), and chose not to participate in the Republican Party, that does not mean historians should not consider him a *conservative* who deserves a place next to the likes of Kirk and Lukacs. While Lasch certainly had commonalities with Kirk and Lukacs that included an appreciation of tradition, scholarly acumen, and community, he also represented a greater shifting intellectual and political binary that witnessed former Leftists drifting rightward in the late seventies and eighties. Lasch also drifted into conservatism during a period of transition when the newly ostracized paleo-conservatives were looking for a way to take back conservatism from what they considered William Buckley's faux conservative consensus at *National Review*.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹³ Some of Lasch's students, including his daughter Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn and Christopher Shannon, have worked with the Intercollegiate Studies Institute. It seems that many Laschians have been willing to consider intellectual conservatism, as long as it remains separate from the Republican Party.

⁵¹⁴ Feminist Susan Faludi was a critic of Lasch's turn towards traditionalism. See, Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (New York: Crown, 1991).

⁵¹⁵ For two books that consider the shifting political binaries of the late twentieth century see, Daniel Horowitz, *Consuming Pleasures: Intellectuals and Popular Culture in The Postwar World* (Philadelphia: University of

Christopher Lasch, although he prided himself on being a kind of public intellectual ex-liberal outlaw who shunned all forms of political association and popular ideology, was not the sole proprietor of a new intellectual trend founded on dissent. However, he was one of the first public intellectuals to break from the Left, and openly question the bedrock foundations of the group he once played a key part in, all without joining conservatism (like the ex-Marxists neo-conservatives in the seventies).⁵¹⁶ Lasch spearheaded a new breed of dissenting public intellectuals who rejected easy political labels and most popular forms of ideology. The names of Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, John Milbank, Nicholas Wolterstorff, James Davidson Hunter, Wendell Berry, Marilynne Robinson, Jane Jacobs, and Robert Bellah, all fit the bill of public intellectuals who resisted being called Conservative or Liberal in favor of something like intellectual independence.⁵¹⁷ Lasch was representative of those who came to believe that the modern theories of Left and Right were impotent in relation to creating an American society where human flourishing for all was possible.⁵¹⁸ These dissenters agreed on two broad beliefs about America and its experience during the Cold War. They agreed that America's ongoing crusade to win the Cold War merged ideologies of conservative and liberal into mere variances

Pennsylvania Press, 2012) and James Livingston, *The World Turned Inside Out: American thought and culture at the end of the 20th century* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010). For a look at the shifting intellectual trends in conservatism see, Jeffrey Hart, *The Making of the American Conservative Mind: National Review and Its Times* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2005).

⁵¹⁶ For a recent intellectual history of neo-conservative intellectuals see, Nathan Abrams, *Norman Podhoretz and Commentary Magazine: The Rise and Fall of The Neocons* (New York: Continuum, 2010).

⁵¹⁷ See, Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981); Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Reason within the Bounds of Religion* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1976); Robert Bellah, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); John Milbank, *Theology and Social theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Cambridge: B. Blackwell, 1991, c1990); Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of The Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989); James Davidson Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York: Basic Books, 1991); Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture & Agriculture* (San Francisco : Sierra Club Books, 1996); Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Modern Library, c1961, 2011); Marilynne Robinson, *The Death of Adam: Essays on Modern Thought* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998).

⁵¹⁸ For an article that considers the increasing politicization of intellectual conservatism, see Tim Mak, "Heritage Foundation Gets Tough: Think tank puts punch behind its conservative ideas," *Washington Examiner*, September 13, 2013, <http://washingtonexaminer.com/article/2535471>, accessed September 13, 2013.

of progress, and they assumed that the conflation of progress and secularism into a body of thought that dominated nearly every American institution through the creation of a new elite class promoting its ends.⁵¹⁹

Lasch alleged that the progressive vision of history eradicated the possibility of community because of its entrenched hatred of localized knowledge, and anything considered outside of the progressive consensus. There was no longer room for a middle path because the Western idea of progress drove the engine of culture. According to Lasch, average Americans considered outside of the elite consensus should fight progress through populist measures such as home schooling and through greater participation in civic life. In this regard, it was Lasch's criticisms of progress and the powerful institutions that maintained a secular outlook that provided him the main thoroughfare into conservatism.⁵²⁰

Besides his criticisms of progress, several aspects of Lasch's body of thought solidified his place on the Right. First, he provided more thorough criticisms of progress, liberalism, and bureaucracy than anyone in the conservative camp had done previously. If Kirk's *The Conservative Mind* is instructive, it reveals that conservative's argumentation often remained cultural into the early 1980s. Lasch had a major advantage over his conservative counterparts because he spent the first half of his life and career on the Left.⁵²¹ Second, in Lasch's second to last work (*The True and Only Heaven*), he created a profound genealogical counter-narrative of

⁵¹⁹ This was the subject matter for Lasch's two final books *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics* and *The Revolt of the Elites*. Jane Jacobs dealt with this belief in her famous book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, too.

⁵²⁰ For an appreciation and tribute to Lasch following his death in 1994 from a conservative writer see, James Seaton, "The Gift of Christopher Lasch," *First Things*, August/September 1994, <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2007/01/the-gift-of-christopher-lasch-30>, accessed October 2, 2013.

⁵²¹ According to historian Brad Birzer, Kirk was not as cultural at the conclusion of his career as he was at the beginning. In fact, before he died in 1994 he was preparing a book that would engage the arguments of John Rawl's thoughts on liberalism. See, Bradley Birzer, "Keynote Speech," (paper presented at the regional meeting of The Philadelphia Society, Atlanta, Georgia, October 4, 2013).

populism similar to Kirk's *The Conservative Mind*. The major difference was that Lasch's counter-narrative was a populist one rooted in the American tradition of dissenting populist public intellectuals. Third, Lasch was a methodological conservative. He was an intellectual historian who believed that the study of ideas and scholarly voices from the past to be of primary importance to locating wisdom.⁵²²

If a conservative can be considered more than someone who joins the Republican Party and, or, aspires to be a capitalist mogul of some sort then Lasch was conservative because he advocated many conservative positions without going these routes.⁵²³ Therefore, the focus or emphasis in this chapter is on both a methodological and tacit kind of conservatism that idealizes and often romanticizes the place of the intellect, the human, and the text in society. As a professor and graduate advisor, Lasch created a pedagogy of the intellect that was aimed to train his students how to remain critical of bureaucratic institutions and the elites who are invested in keeping these structures profitable. Lasch purposely revived the image of public intellectual and set aside the realm of the intellect as a necessary virtue for keeping progress and all of its antecedents at bay.⁵²⁴

There are five specific reasons for including Lasch in a history of conservative intellectuals of which I will flesh out here. 1. Lasch is a transitional figure in conservatism because of his thorough criticisms of progress that resonated with a group of maturing former

⁵²² See, Roger Kimball, "The Disaffected Populist: Christopher Lasch on Progress," *The New Criterion*, March 1991, <http://www.newcriterion.com/articles.cfm/The-disaffected-populist--Christopher-Lasch-on-progress-5433>, accessed October 8, 2013.

⁵²³ For a recent description on the crooked path and definition of conservatism in the postwar era see, Jennifer Burns, "Liberalism and the Conservative Imagination," in *Liberalism for a New Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 58-72. See also my argument about defining conservatism in this way in the introductory chapter.

⁵²⁴ Other aspiring public intellectuals have intentionally followed Lasch's example. See, Richard A. Posner, *Public Intellectuals: A Study of Decline* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003) and George Scialabba, *What are Intellectuals Good For?: Essays & Reviews* (Boston: Pressed Wafer, 2009).

Reaganites who found the corporatization of America bad, and the promise of a trickle-down economics to be misleading, even impossible. 2. Lasch was a tacit conservative. He supported order and normativity without being a spokesperson for the Republican Party. 3. He was methodologically and intellectually conservative in that he chose to continue writing intellectual history when social and cultural history clearly dominated the profession. He also utilized his methodology to create a pedagogy of the intellect (primarily for his students) as a way to re-envision and recreate the idea of the public intellectual. This method was also a way to protect the realm of intellect from institutionalization, radical forms of postmodernity, and immorality without (in Lasch's eyes) firmly planting his roots with one political party or the other. 4. While Lasch did not directly participate in the culture wars, he was most definitely a part of them. His position was to make the place of the public intellectual transcendent as the moralist or conscience for society. 5. For Lasch the place of the text is important because it represented the proper place for moral discourse. He was an intellectual historian who wrote texts, engaged critics with them, and believed in a kind normative manner of argumentation that protected texts (or should) from the impulse of postmodern relativism.⁵²⁵ He also taught his students that arguments were to be made in texts (monographs or journal articles) and then used to engage both the public and critics.

In this regard, the Laschian historical imagination is different from the Kirkean and Lukacsian imagination. Lasch's imagination is not primarily literary and aesthetic like the cultural conservatives, although that element is present in his textual community (especially Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn). Lasch's historical imagination was public, academically reactionary,

⁵²⁵ Lasch made these beliefs apparent in *Plain Style: A Guide to Written English* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002). Lasch used this instructive text throughout his career but it was not published professionally until after his death.

intellectual, and humanistic in that he objectified moral minds. Whereas both Kirk and Lukacs shifted in their belief as whether to be public thinkers or private scholars, Lasch's historical imagination is intentionally public—in fact, Lasch taught his students that inwardness was antithetical to the purposes of a responsible public intellectual.⁵²⁶ His imagination is likewise geared towards recreating the idea public intellectual that the radicals of sixties hated because of its bourgeoisie upper-class connotations.⁵²⁷ The Laschian textual community idealizes and seeks to recreate/reinvent America's most revered public intellectuals like John Dewey, William James, and others in order to reintroduce a cosmopolitan intellectual morality back into a world they consider chaotic and ever bent on controlling the language and freedom of communities.⁵²⁸

Biography and Career

I will not dwell at length on Eric Miller's intellectual biography of Lasch, except to fill in how *Hope in a Scattering Time: A Life of Christopher Lasch* situates Lasch in American intellectual life.⁵²⁹ Christopher Lasch was born to progressive parents in the Midwest, and just this fact has led David Brown—an intellectual historian who has written extensively about liberal Cold-War era historians—to claim a Midwestern mantle of 'dissent' type of thinking for Lasch. Brown includes Lasch in a group of midcentury Midwestern historians (including William Appleman Williams) who disliked the idea of progress in favor of provincialism.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁶ Lasch made this delineation between what he considered populists and the hyper-romantic communitarians. See, Christopher Lasch, "Communitarianism or Populism?" in *Rights and the Common Good: The Communitarian Perspective* ed. Amitai Etzioni (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), chapter 4.

⁵²⁷ He made a similar case to this in *The New Radicalism in America, 1889-1963: The Intellectual as a Social Type*.

⁵²⁸ See, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn ed., *Reconstructing History: The Emergence of a New Historical Society* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

⁵²⁹ Eric Miller, *Hope in a Scattering Time: A Life of Christopher Lasch* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2010).

⁵³⁰ David Brown, *Beyond the Frontier: The Midwestern Voice in American Historical Writing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009). Brown says Lasch's populism is one of the 'heart.' According to Brown, the

Brown's Lasch is a blue-collar liberal who stood athwart any kind of universalism including interventionism in domestic affairs and foreign policy. Miller is less concerned with the Midwestern mantle of thinking that Brown associates with Lasch, than he is with a gradual story of de-conversion from liberalism.

For Miller, Lasch's biography is complicated and often defies categorization. Lasch's intellectual journey towards something similar to conservatism began during his undergraduate career, according to Miller, when he discovered humanism and Christian theology in coursework at Harvard. While Lasch was absorbed with a newfound fervor for humanism, it did not penetrate his scholarship immediately. The social progressivism of his upbringing remained profound throughout his graduate career at Columbia, although he never preferred liberal Morningside Heights to his home in the Midwest. In effect, Miller highlights a kind of phase-ology of Lasch's thinking or worldview. During the early part of his career, Lasch gravitated to the New Left, it seems, as a kind of rejection of his parents' bourgeoisie liberalism. The irony is that Lasch's flirtation with radicalism was short lived. His involvement in the Students for a Democratic Society was awkward and primarily intellectual too, as he advanced the unpopular idea that SDS should utilize a "populist strategy of political action."⁵³¹ While Lasch joined the New Left to counter a cosmopolitan liberalism that he believed limited the opportunity and ability of those located outside of the consensus, Miller points to an irony here: "Most striking, perhaps, was Lasch's continued confidence that intellectuals ... could truly affect events."⁵³² His stay in the New Left was short-lived, as he became disenchanted with their project of radical democratization for a variety of reasons including its disapproval of the

Midwestern historians provincialism was against the imperial power of the presidency, consumer capitalism, and the growth of the welfare state.

⁵³¹ Miller, *Hope in a Scattering Time*, 123.

⁵³² Miller, 124.

traditional family. From Miller's interpretation, Lasch left the New Left above all because he was not radically oriented.⁵³³

The second phase of Lasch's intellectual career that Miller finds most interesting is Lasch's reorientation from a more orthodox kind of Marxism to the Marxist-infused Freudianism and then eventually to British Marxism with a defined orientation towards communitarianism (of populist kind) and family. Lasch was drawn to British Marxist thinkers, such as Lawrence Stone, because he wrote about family and economy. "For Lasch, in sum, the older political economy in which the family had been the "center of production" was superior because it enabled children and parents to work together and so mature together," Miller writes.⁵³⁴ Critics have debated as to whether Lasch ever completely abandoned Marxism, and it is likely that he did not given his lifelong belief that capitalism was a destructive force to community and family. British Marxism inadvertently led Lasch in the direction of an older kind of political economy and conservatism. As Lasch advanced theses concerning a family-centered labor force, he gravitated towards traditionalism, but with critical differences from Kirk's Burkeanism or John Lukacs' cosmopolitan Tocquevillianism.

Lasch's traditionalism was American in that its traits were concurrently civically humanistic (rooted in the need for a common culture), culturally Protestant (a realization of human depravity and limits), and intellectual (the desire to bring together faith and imagination in a rational framework). All of the above amounted to a strange kind of humanism that Lasch called populism. Whereas Kirk fused together English customary practices with Catholic

⁵³³ Departures from the New Left were not unusual as it became more radical throughout the seventies and eighties. See, Mark Rudd, *Underground: My Life with SDS and The Weathermen* (New York: William Morrow, 2009) and David Gilbert, *Love and Struggle: My Life in SDS, The Weather Underground, and Beyond* (Oakland: PM Press, 2012).

⁵³⁴ Miller, 206.

imagination, Lasch remained within the American tradition to make his case for a populist counter-narrative to the radicalized liberal consensus. Lasch's greatest contribution to conservatism, Wilfred McClay says, was as a foremost critic of the idea of progress and progressives. "(H)e renders a harsh judgment on the college-educated professional and managerial elites in America, whom he accuses of having abandoned the common life and subverted democracy," McClay wrote.⁵³⁵ Lasch believed progress (the driving force behind capitalism) had broken all the bonds of kinship of communities including the ability of liberals to look introspectively into the new heart of liberalism because of the bureaucratic apparatus that sheltered it from criticism.⁵³⁶

The Cautious New Leftist: Lasch's Early Career

Ambiguity permeated Lasch's earliest works, as it seems that he was trapped between a desire to be radical, and the realization that his preferred liberalism was more traditional than the majority of his generation. This ambiguity followed him throughout his career, despite his fierce criticisms of progress and liberalism that defined the latter part of his career. He was critical of the Left but unwilling to abandon liberalism, and was equally cautious concerning the fortunes of the New Right thus never finding reason to join them. What we do find is Lasch trying to find his voice throughout his career and doing so shrewdly.⁵³⁷ While Lasch earned recognition for many of his monographs, there is a feeling or sense that he is hedging his bets until he figured out his

⁵³⁵ See, Wilfred McClay, "The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy, by Christopher Lasch," *Commentary*, May 1995, <http://www.commentarymagazine.com/article/the-revolt-of-the-elites-and-the-betrayal-of-democracy-by-christopher-lasch/>, accessed July 9, 2013.

⁵³⁶ McClay, "The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy, by Christopher Lasch." Lasch remained staunchly populist throughout his career, although this was not fully evident until the 1980s and thereafter.

⁵³⁷ Although Lasch was a reactionary kind of public intellectual, he never burned his bridges with academia.

worldview.⁵³⁸ This uncertainty marked his career, and the hesitation to leave liberalism entirely behind is a key reason why Lasch's legacy remains vulnerable to interpretation, especially in his very own textual community.⁵³⁹

Lasch's first book, *American Liberals and the Russian Revolution* (ALRR), a product of his dissertation research at Columbia, was "a critique of liberalism's early capitulation to imperialism" and an examination of the response of American liberals to the Russian Revolution.⁵⁴⁰ In ALRR, Lasch showed that American liberals, not conservatives, made unwise decisions concerning foreign policy in relation to the Soviet Union. His main reproach was that American liberals looked at the Soviet Union as a new paradise, and then turned *reluctantly* against that view following the revelations of Communist evils following the Second World War. He believed that liberal commitment to Communism was primarily ideological and not rooted in practical reasoning, which he prized. What is most striking about ALRR is the way Lasch viewed the nature of American liberalism and its relationship to radicalism. "All Americans are liberals, by virtue of the fact that they have no feudal past against which to rebel; but Americans at the same time are conservative in their liberalism, as Europeans keep reminding us, and as we ourselves have now begun to realize," he wrote.⁵⁴¹

⁵³⁸ Lasch's uncertainty about liberalism and his place in it will come to fore in the section concerning his historiography.

⁵³⁹ A host of authors seek to place Lasch in one tradition or another. See, for example, Patrick Deneen, *Democratic Faith* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). Deneen sees Lasch as having a "chastened faith" built on hope and limits. In *The Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of American Consumer Culture, 1939-1979* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), Daniel Horowitz places Lasch in a group of Cold-War era intellectuals who wanted to limit consumerism and the free market.

⁵⁴⁰ Norman Birnbaum, "Gratitude and Forbearance: On Christopher Lasch," *The Nation*, October 3, 2011, <http://www.thenation.com/article/163358/gratitude-and-forbearance-christopher-lasch?page=full#axzz2YSMbKZXZ>, accessed July 8, 2013.

⁵⁴¹ Christopher Lasch, *The American Liberals and the Russian Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), vii.

Lasch began his search for what he considered the lost essence of liberalism in ALRR too. He wrote that “the radicals changed their minds about the revolution, though not always about liberalism; thus it has not been uncommon for disillusioned radicals to veer to the extreme Right. There is consistency in the career of a Whittaker Chambers; it begins and ends in a rejection of liberalism.”⁵⁴² Lasch believed a dualism existed in liberalism that allowed liberals to make faulty claims about the world and human nature, which was an early sign of the hope he would put in limits and the societal value of human depravity. Yet, he believed these dualisms were not profound enough to turn liberals towards traditionalism or help them recognize that perpetual human progress was impossible. Lasch could have been speaking for himself here as well.

His following book was titled *The New Radicalism in America, 1889-1963: The Intellectual as a Social Type* (TNRA). With TNRA, Christopher Lasch became a star of the New Left, according to Miller.⁵⁴³ TNRA reveals how progressive-era radicals transformed the entirety of American culture, including but not limited to politics. Through a variety of short biographies of Jane Addams, Randolph Bourne, Mabel Dodge Luhan, and others, Lasch demonstrated how progressives altered the trajectory of American history through social reforms. TNRA stood out because it mirrored Richard Hofstadter’s *The Progressive Historians* where Hofstadter claimed that an earlier generation of progressive historians suffered mental maladies that tarred their vision of liberalism in American history.⁵⁴⁴ TNRA was not typical of the New Left literature that often celebrated all forms of radicalism, but reminiscent of the very consensus literature he was

⁵⁴² Lasch, *The American Liberals and the Russian Revolution*, xiii.

⁵⁴³ Miller, 89.

⁵⁴⁴ Richard Hofstadter, *The Progressive Historians--Turner, Beard, Parrington* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979, c1968).

supposed to be opposed too.⁵⁴⁵ TNRA was also uncommon among other New Leftist literature because Lasch had to excuse his methodology, as he took time to explain why his methods invited “misunderstanding” from fellow radicals. “The subjects of this book were chosen in deliberate violation of the notion that a social historian ought to write about people ““typical of their times.””⁵⁴⁶ Then in the final chapter of TNRA, Lasch differentiated between radicalism and liberalism. The difference between the two, he wrote, was based on perceived intellect and approach—not a typical answer for a social historian looking to dispose of intellectual taxonomies.⁵⁴⁷ “In a world divided between Communism and liberalism...American radicalism tended to become increasingly shrill, increasingly desperate, and increasingly bizarre, as it searched for some tenable third position independent of both.”⁵⁴⁸

Lasch at Midcareer

Lasch was not only beginning to think aloud about a deeper crisis in liberalism, but as to what the role of an academic entailed. In this regard, he began to differentiate between what he considered a true liberal and a monstrous radical who preferred the “underground” and the “experimental” to reality.⁵⁴⁹ Radicals, particularly radical academics, in Lasch’s opinion, were not serving the needs of the public or filling their roles as moralists. Lasch was still not the famed opponent of progress at mid-career; it was obvious that he was searching for a usable public philosophy in the liberal tradition in which he still participated. Lasch’s search for a human-centered liberalism rooted in the bourgeoisie intellect was apparent in the books he

⁵⁴⁵ See, Alexander Bloom, ed., *Takin' it to the Streets: A Sixties Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁵⁴⁶ Christopher Lasch, *The New Radicalism in America, 1889-1963: The Intellectual as a Social Type* (New York: Knopf, 1965), xvii.

⁵⁴⁷ Lasch, *The New Radicalism in America*, 286.

⁵⁴⁸ Lasch, *The New Radicalism in America*, 288.

⁵⁴⁹ Lasch, *The New Radicalism in America*, 347.

published in this phase of his career. The majority of publications in this part of his career were collections of essays, and this period was highlighted by the release of *The Agony of the American Left* (TAAL) in 1969.

Before the publication of TAAL, Lasch edited *The Social Thought of Jane Addams* in 1965. This little volume is significant because Lasch attempted to find his own social understanding of liberalism's awkward relationship to society through the writings and career of Addams. While Lasch certainly founds aspect of Addams' life worth complementing claiming that, "She (Addams) was...the very model of Christian charity."⁵⁵⁰ That did not stop Lasch from criticizing her for what he considered a personally enforced alienation from American society—a criticism that Lasch often lobbed at his liberal colleagues. Addams, according to Lasch, had a tenuous relationship with America because her parents could not explain to her why tradition and custom mattered. This, Lasch said, was why Addams fought so hard to discover the distance between first and second-generation immigrants to the United States.

Lasch had other reasons for choosing to write about Addams as well. His affection for Freud was on showcase here, too. The study of psychology and Freud allowed Lasch to remain in touch with intellectual history (and the New Left) without appearing to be an outdated bourgeois historian only interested in the study of heroic people and intellectuals. Nevertheless, Lasch's Freudianism was not the radicalized kind (like Marcuse's Freudianism) that revealed deep-seated repression and the gross excretions of the mind.⁵⁵¹ He was primarily interested in the inner workings and metaphysics of the scholarly mind. This fascination was on display in the

⁵⁵⁰ Christopher Lasch, *The Social Thought of Jane Addams* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), xiii.

⁵⁵¹ See, Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization; A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955). Furthermore, Eric Miller explains that Lasch gravitated towards Freud because the Frankfurt School used him to explain the intersection between Marxism, personality, and culture. See, Miller 112.

volume on Addams. His aim in this edited volume was to “rescue the less familiar, but to my mind more important, side of Jane Addams’ life. It shows her as theorist and intellectual...”⁵⁵²

“She (Addams) loved the concrete, but she was always earnestly seeking the general.”⁵⁵³

Lasch published *The Agony of the American Left* in 1969. TAAL is a rejoinder to TNRA in a way, as most of Lasch’s books seem to fit together as a working out of a grander philosophical scheme aimed at showing the inconsistency of liberal intellectuals who chose alienation over reality. As one reviewer explained, Lasch’s main concern in TAAL was that a new generation of liberals were left without a responsible body of thought to borrow from: “His central thesis, spread out over the several articles which comprise this volume, is that a succession of disastrous failures and compromises over the past fifty years has so debilitated and corrupted American radicalism that there now exists no body of leftist thought to guide the new generation of radicals that has grown up in the sixties.”⁵⁵⁴ While TAAL received mixed reviews for some sly Laschian claims that accused American radicals of hating all forms of convention—a nearly unforgivable faux pas on the New Left—Lasch continued to remain ambiguous about his relationship to liberalism. Lasch was still trying to find that middle path between radicalism and liberalism, and this was on display as he chided radicals but applauded both populism and black nationalism.

Throughout five essays, Lasch worked through the decline of populism and the isolation of radical intellectuals from the middle class. Populism was the subject of the first essay, and was a reflection on Lasch’s career-long concern with uniformity among American intellectuals.

⁵⁵² Lasch, *The Social Thought of Jane Addams*, xv.

⁵⁵³ Lasch, *The Social Thought of Jane Addams*, xxv-xxvi.

⁵⁵⁴ David Bruck, “The Agony of the American Left,” *The Harvard Crimson*, March 25, 1969, <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1969/3/25/the-agony-of-the-american-left/>, accessed June 15, 2013.

Uniformity and conformity, Lasch wrote, are born into institutions in order to erase complexity in favor of standardization. Even the Civil Rights movement, Lasch opined ironically, was coopted by American institutions that dealt with the Civil Rights' activists as a corporation deals with a client.⁵⁵⁵ The greater implication is that: "The drying up of traditional sources of dissent helps to explain why democratic values show so little vitality in contemporary society."⁵⁵⁶ Lasch's worldview and liberalism was changing simultaneously. While on the one hand he was on the road to a traditionalist middle-class approach to conservatism that was rooted in community, he would also come to champion specific public intellectuals who believed were effective civic figures who were not radical.

The Making of a Populist Public Intellectual: Lasch's Late Career

After Lasch published TAAL, it would be nearly a decade before he published another book earned him acclaim. From 1969 onward, Lasch entered the final phase of his career, which lasted from 1977 until his death in 1994. The final phase of his career was marked by three central claims or impulses alive in this historiography. First, texts continued to be the formal avenue for Lasch to engage the public and other intellectuals. He was no activist. He taught his graduate students to use texts as the appropriate way to engage critics as well. Second, and most importantly, the latter phase of his career was defined by his creation of a populist conception of history. Lasch created a conservative counter-narrative to the liberal consensus based on those thinkers who dared to think beyond the majority. Finally, there was the Laschian task of intellectual action. As previously mentioned, Lasch was no activist that threw paint on women in fur coats or chained himself to wrecking equipment destined to destroy forests. For Lasch,

⁵⁵⁵ Christopher Lasch, *The Agony of the American Left* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), 27-28.

⁵⁵⁶ Lasch, *The Agony of the American*, 29.

acceptable intellectual action emanated from moral public intellectuals who transcended internecine fighting. The final phase of his career was defined by an explicit rejection of radicalism.

Haven as a Defense of Order

In between the publication of *TAAL* and *Haven in a Heartless World*, Lasch released a small collection of essays titled *The World of Nations; reflections on American history, politics, and culture* was published in 1973. *The World of Nations* was merely a longer collection of essays that covered many of Lasch's ongoing arguments made in previous places. After a hiatus of which Eric Miller covers in his biography, the tenured University of Rochester professor entered uncharted waters with the publication of *Haven in a Heartless World: the family besieged* in 1977. *Haven* catapulted Lasch's career from that of an academic historian to a recognized public intellectual and moralist, according to Miller. The publication of *Haven* also opened up direct pathways to conservatives and conservatism because Lasch resolutely defended the family and order against radical liberalism and social scientists. Its publication also demonstrated indubitably to many of Lasch's liberal allies that he had abandoned liberalism forever.

What made *Haven* divisive was that Lasch forwarded many controversial, if not downright seditious theses that the Left had supposedly abandoned during the 1960s. 1. He claimed that humans were biologically and functionally different. This assertion especially angered his former feminist allies because of its supposed traditionalist overtones. 2. Democracy depended upon order that emanated from traditional authorities structures and not primarily on fluctuating bureaucratic hierarchies. 3. Secularism created a social geography of disorder instead

of a new birth of freedom. 4. Right order depended upon traditional authority (he considered this good), and not on experimentation and fluidity.

Eric Miller argues that *Haven* is also the place where Lasch began to create his own style of argumentation. He began to favor non-liberal thinkers like Carl Zimmerman and Philip Rieff who never made it into the Laschian canon before then.⁵⁵⁷ These new appearances, while often merely only appearing at glance or in a footnote, were indicative of his major genealogical counter-narrative to come a decade later. Lasch fleshed out his condemnations of bureaucracy, its promulgators, and progresses tenuous relationship to family and community chapter-by-chapter.

In eight chapters and an introduction, Lasch made his case that the “contemporary family is the product of human agency, not of abstract social forces.”⁵⁵⁸ Families no longer thrive in America because, “In reality, the modern world intrudes at every point and obliterates its privacy.”⁵⁵⁹ Differing from both cultural conservatives and Anabaptist evangelicals, Lasch did not call for families to retreat into private enclaves or abandon their civic duties.⁵⁶⁰ Instead, he wanted family-oriented and traditionalist Americans to become more active in public life and change the world by rejecting bad policy.⁵⁶¹

Lasch tackled the sociologization of the family in the second chapter. His conclusion was that social scientists reduced the study of the family into mere analysis, and that ultimately the

⁵⁵⁷ Previously the only non-liberal thinker Lasch had openly applauded was George Kennan

⁵⁵⁸ Christopher Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), xiv.

⁵⁵⁹ Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World*, xvii.

⁵⁶⁰ For a Calvinist view of this trend that sought to pull away from society see, Rousas Rushdoony, *The Messianic Character of American Education; Studies in The History of The Philosophy of Education* (Nutley: Craig Press, 1963).

⁵⁶¹ Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World*, xviii.

ideology of progress was behind these studies of the modern family.⁵⁶² In chapter three, Lasch shows that challenges to “sociological orthodoxy” were ignored by social scientists because they were insulated from defiance through liberal consensus of bureaucratic structures. Lasch was mainly criticizing came the Frankfurt School’s censures of traditional authority. “The study of culture and personality had taught them (Frankfurt School) that authoritarian families produced authoritarian personalities...,” he wrote. The Frankfurt School’s linkage between authoritarianism and the nuclear families, he believed, gave social scientists further reason to “democratize the family” and move them away from traditional authority structures.⁵⁶³

Throughout the next four chapters, Lasch continued to demonstrate why democratizing families made society sick. This sickness emanated from the process of social engineering that produced a culture of people addicted to therapy, and social relationships built on faulty understandings of family life. In the final chapter of *Haven*, Lasch insisted that a society built on permissiveness is destined for greater social control because permissiveness inevitably resulted in further indoctrination. More laxity begged greater regulation, in Lasch’s estimation. In return greater regulation made “social cohesion” impossible because of the inescapability of the control needed to protect indiscriminate behavior. Describing what could be thought as a diatribe against government encroachment into private life and political correctness, Lasch supposed that traditional forms of unity are continually replaced by new ones, and the new ones are “more constricting than the old” ones.⁵⁶⁴

A False Sense of Self and the Decline of Public Man: The Culture of Narcissism

⁵⁶² Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World*, 43.

⁵⁶³ Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World*, 96.

⁵⁶⁴ Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World*, 189.

In 1979, as the belief in American exceptionalism continued to ebb, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (CON), released to abundant praise.⁵⁶⁵ Despite CON's popularity, it also became Lasch's most misinterpreted work. Most interpreted it as an attack upon selfishness and hyper-individualism in American society.⁵⁶⁶ In reality, Lasch was attacking a capitalist consumer ethos that he believed trapped Americans helplessly inside of a narcissistic framework. Caught inside of this narcissistic moral economy, Americans erroneously defined themselves outside of traditional bonds, which included blue-collar kinds of occupations (artisans), family, and religiosity.⁵⁶⁷ Narcissism was a disease and not a choice.

Names, historical personages, and ideas continued to appear in CON that had not surfaced in Lasch's previous books. Many of these names and ideas also appeared in postwar conservative literature like *The Conservative Mind*.⁵⁶⁸ The names and ideas of Orestes Brownson, George Santayana, Calvinism, Puritanism, Jacques Ellul, T.S. Eliot, and E.L. Godkin made their debut in Laschian literature through CON.⁵⁶⁹ Although Lasch never referenced Kirk, or any of the contemporary conservatives that were writing during that period (in CON), whether

⁵⁶⁵ There is a growing historiography of new books on America during the 1970s. See, Bruce Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York: Free Press, 2001); Lewis Penny, *Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks: The Vietnam Antiwar Movement as Myth and Memory* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2013); and ed. David Farber and Beth Bailey ed., *America in the Seventies* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004). On the reception of *The Culture of Narcissism* see, Miller 221-223.

⁵⁶⁶ Miller, 223-230.

⁵⁶⁷ He corrected the misgivings in CON later in Christopher Lasch, *The Minimal Self: Psychic Survival in Troubled Times* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984).

⁵⁶⁸ Santayana, Brownson, and Eliot all played large roles in Kirk's conservatism, and E.L. Godkin played a minor role in TCM, too.

⁵⁶⁹ Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York: Norton, 1979).

he wanted to admit it or not, he was also looking to history and tradition just as the first generation of postwar conservatives did three decades earlier.⁵⁷⁰

Lasch began CON with a section titled “The Waning of the Sense of Historical Time.” His contemporaries, he alleged, looked upon the past as something to be both disposed of and improved upon, but never worth conserving. “Having no hope of improving their lives in any of the ways that matter, people have convinced themselves that what matters is psychic self improvement...,” wrote Lasch.⁵⁷¹ This is the most important hypothesis that he touched upon throughout CON. Yet, another trope that Lasch included along with the waning sense of history was the decline of the public man. Lasch idealized the role of the civic-minded public intellectual just as Kirk romanticized the aristocratic scholar. For Lasch the public intellectual lived by a higher (though not divine) morality, so he therefore linked the decline of the public intellectual/public man to the erosion of private life in return for the objectification of the private into public realm.⁵⁷² Civic-mindedness, according to Lasch, began with the privilege of personal privacy, and not the objectification of the grotesque disseminations of the mind.⁵⁷³

Lasch dedicated a large part of CON to describing the problem of being a public intellectual in what he considered a radical world. But what Lasch is really admitting here is that the old bourgeoisie order has passed and so has an era when public intellectuals oversaw public

⁵⁷⁰ Lasch, as I pointed out earlier concerning Greg Schneider’s volume on twentieth-century American conservative intellectuals, shared affinities with people like Kirk, Peter Viereck, Paul Elmer More, and Godkin as well.

⁵⁷¹ Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, 4.

⁵⁷² This is ultimately Lasch’s criticism of radical or Left Postmodernism.

⁵⁷³ It is interesting to note that Lasch typifies between good private life and bad private life. His ideal type is bourgeois—like Lukacs. Bourgeois private life is preferable to an objectified version of the private life as it is found through the gross dissemination of modern psychology, and the elitist type that seeks to work out all personal problems in public. It seems that an acceptable version of private life is an older notion that suppresses the ego instead of needing to objectify it through therapy and new regulations that help suppress the ego socially. This is ultimately a criticism of the Frankfurt School’s adventures into psychology and psychoanalysis.

opinion. He laid the blame for the decline of the public intellectual and his or her morality at the feet of social science, because the socialization of science for the purposes of manipulation reversed the role of public intellectual to provocateurs of the dark private life, as the last bastion of individual autonomy was at stake.⁵⁷⁴ This cycle began, Lasch thought, with a paternalistic instinct that fueled elites to seek consensus, and destroy whatever they considered anti-democratic or not willing to worship at the feet of progress. Lasch believed that the force of liberal consensus drove all dissent underground and further to the margins of society. The decline of the moralist public intellectual was inevitable because “Politics degenerates into a struggle not for social change but for self-realization.”⁵⁷⁵

Lasch peppered the remainder CON with insights into the personality and variations of narcissism. A narcissistic culture cannot see beyond the clinical nature and hyper-inwardness of the self. “The ideology of personal growth, superficially optimistic, radiates a profound despair and resignation,” he wrote. “It is the faith of those without faith.”⁵⁷⁶ The changing nature of the idea of progress is the primary subject matter in chapter three. There he linked progress to therapeutic culture because faith is no longer an anchor for modern conceptions of selfhood. The final chapter of CON is important because it is Lasch’s take and concern with the nature of bureaucratic elites. New elites are more cunning than the old rich, which these elites despise because of an engendered hatred of tradition that includes most forms of conventional morality. The corporate rich or the managerial elite—unlike the old rich—are always on the move and

⁵⁷⁴ Peter Lawler makes a similar case and thus claims the mantle of Catholic realism as a way to renew the human person from post-human oblivion. See, Peter Lawler, *Postmodernism Rightly Understood: The Return to Realism in American Thought* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999).

⁵⁷⁵ Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, 28.

⁵⁷⁶ Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, 51.

removed from the life of the community, if they participate in it at all.⁵⁷⁷ The new managerial elite, to make matters worse, are not *necessary* components of the good society, according to Lasch. “(T)he new professions themselves invented many of the needs they claimed to satisfy,” Lasch declared.⁵⁷⁸

Lasch believed new elitism was a product of a great axiomatic shift in liberalism. Liberalism moved from a worldview of “rational self-interest” to “a therapeutic conception which acknowledged irrational drives and seeks to divert them into socially constructive channels,” Lasch said.⁵⁷⁹ The “therapeutic ethic,” is actually a front for bureaucrats to monopolize permissiveness for their gain, Lasch believed. Elites have a stake in societal “discontent” because it makes consumption a commodity and strict governing unavoidable.⁵⁸⁰ “The struggle against bureaucracy therefore requires a struggle against capitalism itself.”⁵⁸¹ This kind of controlled market-based narcissism was forced upon people from the top down, and it is impossible to overcome without gaining control over technology and production, Lasch claimed.⁵⁸² Yet, Lasch, despite these terminal prophecies, held out hope that some forms of localism and community may provide a viable way to incapacitate the overarching grasp of bureaucracy, technocracy, and capitalism.

Explaining Narcissism

⁵⁷⁷ Much of the new urban literature was directed at the new elites how created subdivisions but not communities.

⁵⁷⁸ Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, 228.

⁵⁷⁹ Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, 224.

⁵⁸⁰ Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, 234.

⁵⁸¹ Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, 235. It seems that Lasch did not so much hate the idea of capitalism, but what we now refer to as neo-liberalism.

⁵⁸² This book’s primary concern is to understand how technology should be managed responsibly, see Larry Hickman, *John Dewey's Pragmatic Technology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

Lasch's following book was written as a corrective to the widely held misconceptions about CON. *The Minimal Self: Psychic Survival in Troubled Times* (TMS) was written to: "make clear what *The Culture of Narcissism* seems to have left obscure or ambiguous." In the preface, Lasch explained that selfishness and egoism were behaviors people used to cope with a culture built on consumption. "The minimal or narcissistic self is, above all, a self uncertain of its own outlines, longing either to remake the world in its own image or to merge into its environment in blissful union," he wrote.⁵⁸³ Popular culture is driven by consumption and that was the only form of identity that most people could latch onto. He therefore spent the bulk of TMS explaining how narcissism really worked in culture.

There were a few key themes or ideas that Lasch corralled around in TMS. First, Lasch said it is almost impossible to find genuine sources for selfhood that are not rooted in consumerism. Second, postmodernism was not an improvement upon modernism, because it made no serious effort to confront the future in a practical way. Postmodern art and art in general, lost its power to chasten materialism or speak to history.⁵⁸⁴ He also demonstrated how elites used psychology and psychoanalysis to sustain their projects to create society in their image.

The most important aspect Lasch fleshed out in TMS was the connection between the therapeutic worldview and the nineteenth century pragmatic thinkers. Lasch was often wavered in his opinion of the American pragmatists; however, in TMS he was harsh in his consideration of pragmatism. He believed the therapeutic instinct was evident among early pragmatism. His chagrin towards pragmatism lies in the fact that they believed that authority was often

⁵⁸³ Lasch, *The Minimal Self*, 19.

⁵⁸⁴ Lasch, *The Minimal Self*, 162.

generational and non-stationary.⁵⁸⁵ While the pragmatists were traditionalists in several instances, Lasch believed they set the stage for a liberalism that lacked the sources for traditional historical authority. In this respect, the final chapter is an extended critique of the Frankfurt School where Lasch explored how the therapeutic impulse that began with the pragmatists was carried on through the Frankfurt School as they radicalized Freud for their larger democratic project.

“(T)hose who did turn to Freud, in the years following World War II, did so for good reasons... *Civilization and Its Discontents*... provided both (Norman) Brown and Herbert Marcuse with a starting point for their investigations of culture—seemed to speak more directly than any other intellectual tradition to the question that haunted the postwar world: Why is it precisely the highest civilization that has developed and unleashed unprecedented powers of destruction?”⁵⁸⁶

Lasch believed the pragmatic project to make democracy an end goal, ultimately led to a therapeutic social agenda. According to Lasch, the Frankfurt School theorists then built upon this pragmatic project by re-interpreting and contextualizing Freud through the scope of culturalism because it was apparent to them that Western Civilization and traditional forms of Christianity failed to stop totalitarianism.⁵⁸⁷ The implication of the radicalization of Freud, according to Lasch, is that the Frankfurt School stripped the famous psychologist of his traditionalism “to reconcile it with progressive social philosophies...”⁵⁸⁸ American liberals who embraced the Frankfurt School’s culturalism eventually went down the path of indulgence as they fetishized unlocking supposed repressed erotic impulses as a key to freeing the West from its authoritarian past. The implication is that the Frankfurt School improperly used human irrationalism to instill a therapeutic sense of democracy in American society. Their worst sin, according to Lasch, was

⁵⁸⁵ Lasch, *The Minimal Self*, 205.

⁵⁸⁶ Lasch, *The Minimal Self*, 227.

⁵⁸⁷ One of the most recognized books from the Frankfurt School that linked tradition to authoritarianism was Theodor Adorno’s *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper, 1950).

⁵⁸⁸ Lasch, *The Minimal Self*, 228.

throwing out foundationalism in order to accomplish the goals of engineering society according to irrational human desires. Three specific problems followed from the therapeutic worldview that modern liberals were yet to address with success, and they included purposefulness, nature, and selfhood.⁵⁸⁹ Therapeutic liberalism has not given humans a sense of selfhood and purpose, but instead a feeling of weariness and purposelessness has continued to plague them because liberalism cannot give the happiness it promises.⁵⁹⁰

The Critic of Progress as Public Man of Interdictions

The final years of Lasch's career were defined by his continued fierce criticisms of liberalism and neo-conservatism. It is likely that Lasch picked up his criticisms of neo-conservatism from his friendship with right-wing reactionary Paul Gottfried.⁵⁹¹ Strangely, as Lasch beat up on liberals, liberalism, progress, and secularism, he remained ambiguous about key philosophical ideas such as metaphysics and teleology not to mention that although he skirted theological issues, they were more akin to political theology and civic humanism than anything else was. What we find is a Lasch who has become so critical that he lands in a very general sort of humanism that seems interchangeable with terms like populism and community. He met the limits of his humanistic and intellectual project as he refused orthodoxy and religiosity in favor of non-compliance and an outlaw intellectual persona fleshed out in texts.

⁵⁸⁹ Lasch's textual community, and others, addressed these three areas in *Figures in the Carpet: Finding The Human Person in The American Past* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2007). The observer will notice there is not round agreement except to consider humans complex and ordered.

⁵⁹⁰ The HBO television show, *The Sopranos*, is the best and most recent example of the exploitation of the therapeutic worldview by elites who understand how to manipulate it to overcome things like sin, crime, and purposelessness. The family that the show chronicles temporarily overcomes its ills through the avenues of therapy, but the effect is short lived, and never life changing.

⁵⁹¹ Paul Gottfried's most substantial theoretical criticisms of the New Right and neo-conservatism were published in 1986, five years before Lasch published his criticisms against both major political parties. In the introduction of *The True and Only Heaven* (1991), Lasch credited Gottfried and other rightists with his misgivings of neo-conservatism and the Republican Party.

However, Lasch was specific in his outlaw and reactionary nature as, in his final book, published posthumously; he chose to remain a man of the “interdictions.” The term interdictions had more than one meaning for Lasch. However, it most often relates his desire to remain in the middle and unblemished by the partisanship of American culture.

The True and Only Heaven: The Populist Counter-Narrative

Lasch’s most essential works were his final two books: *The True and Only Heaven* and *Revolt of the Elites*. Both of these books were the most important because Lasch constructed a new genealogical counter-narrative against what he considered an elitist-drive therapeutic liberal consensus.⁵⁹² However, even now, debates continue among liberal and conservative historians as to what exactly Lasch’s legacy means and which books remain his most important.⁵⁹³ From a historical vantage point, *The True and Only Heaven: progress and its critics* (TTOH) is not as significant as Russell Kirk’s *The Conservative Mind* that forged a movement from its theses. Yet there are reasons to consider *The True and Only Heaven* as an important book as a work that found a place in both conservatism and liberalism for the reasons that it gave rise to a new narrative for those liberals who did not buy into the therapeutic vision, and for conservatives who

⁵⁹² Most liberals tend to like Lasch either up to the publication of *Haven in a Heartless World* or *The Culture of Narcissism*. Consequently, Lasch’s books were reviewed favorably by conservatives from *Haven* onwards. In this review essay, the author summarizes the criticisms of Lasch’s books from *Haven* to *The True and Only Heaven* see, Steven Watts, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry Critic: Christopher Lasch’s Struggle with Progressive America,” *American Studies* 33 (1992): 113-120. Watts wrote somewhat sympathetically as he wondered about the fusion of conservatism and liberalism. For a critical review of Lasch’s ideas see, Thomas Bender’s review of *The True and Only Heaven*. Thomas Bender, review of *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics*, by Christopher Lasch, *The American Historical Review*, April 1992: 605.

⁵⁹³ For the most recent debate concerning Lasch the liberal and populist see, Michael Kramer, “Reflections on Christopher Lasch’s Reflections,” *U.S. Intellectual History blog*, November 7, 2013, <http://s-usih.org/2013/11/reflections-on-christopher-laschs-reflections.html>, accessed December 28, 2013 and Christopher Shannon, “Stuck in the Middle with Lasch,” *U.S. Intellectual History blog*, November 15, 2013, <http://s-usih.org/2013/11/stuck-in-the-middle-with-lasch.html>, accessed December 28, 2013.

rejected Kirk's bourgeoisie Burkean conservatism.⁵⁹⁴ There are specific reasons why TTOH is seminal to Lasch's overall career. 1. TTOH is a genealogical post-liberal counter narrative written from the populist tradition. 2. TTOH contains the vision of a populist imagination rooted specifically in American history.⁵⁹⁵ 3. In TTOH bureaucratic elites are the greatest threat to freedom, and not liberalism writ large. He saw a party (of elites) that was greater than both political parties. 4. As a former liberal and New Leftist, TTOH resonated among liberals (and conservatives) because of his academic credentials, something that Kirk could not boast.

In eleven chapters, Lasch created a populist lineage of reactionaries who fought progress. Similar to *The Conservative Mind*, the historical associations in TTOH are often weak. For instance, it is difficult to understand how a Christian theologian like Jonathan Edwards could be paired with the likes of Ralph Waldo Emerson and pragmatist philosopher William James. However, Lasch saw them as a part of a greater line of anti-progressivism in American intellectual life.

Lasch began TTOH by asking how Americans could continue to believe in progress given the malaise of modern society.⁵⁹⁶ Opposition to progress and progressivism had its own history, which could be seen in "nineteenth-century populism" and "proprietary democracy."⁵⁹⁷ While Lasch quoted approvingly of the Civic Republican historians such as Gordon Wood and J.G.A. Pocock, his project was different from the Atlantic School historians because of the

⁵⁹⁴ Right-wingers such as Bill Kauffman joined themselves more to Lasch's populist American narrative than Kirk's aristocratic Anglo-Americanism. See, Bill Kauffman, *Ain't My America: The Long, Noble History of Antiwar Conservatism and Middle American Anti-imperialism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008) and *With Good Intentions?: Reflections on The Myth of Progress in America* (Westport: Praeger, 1998).

⁵⁹⁵ The late seventies, eighties, and nineties were heightened times of debate among American historians about legacies lost and created. See, Joyce Appleby, et. al., *Telling the Truth about History* (New York: Norton, 1994) and Peter Berkowitz, *Virtue and the Making of Modern Liberalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

⁵⁹⁶ Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics* (New York: Norton, 1991), 13.

⁵⁹⁷ Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven*, 15.

explicit political and theological forcefulness of TTOH. In other words, Lasch was doing more than revisionist history—he was reimagining the past in hopes of recreating the future. “In the nineteenth century, a time when the progress of human ingenuity seemed to promise a decisive victory over fate, Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson, latter-day Calvinists without a Calvinist theology, reminded their readers that human beings did not control their own fate,” he wrote.⁵⁹⁸ Lasch used historical actors as interlocutors, and his student David Stiegerwald said that his mentor changed interlocutors throughout his career as his ideas came into fuller view. He utilized the likes of Edwards, James, and Orestes Brownson to give voice to his new ideas that revolved around his conception of populism.⁵⁹⁹ Unlike Kirk, Lasch did not associate with one specific historical personage throughout his career.

TTOH was not a tribute to conservative thinking or a total lambasting of liberalism. Throughout TTOH Lasch took shots at both the left and right. He chided conservatives for depending too much on the free market, and liberals for trying to spread the Western idea of progress throughout the world. Lasch followed this with a short biography of his transition to “right-wing populism.” According to Lasch, he began to question the idea of progress when he was writing *Haven* in the mid-seventies.⁶⁰⁰ He questioned whether liberals were championing the underclass or becoming authoritarian in the way they treated middle-class Americans.⁶⁰¹ During the seventies, he discovered the works of British Marxist historians such as Raymond Williams

⁵⁹⁸ Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven*, 15.

⁵⁹⁹ Historians like JGA Pocock and Gordon Wood were much more analytic in their approach, sticking to the medium of the monograph to posit their ideas. Most of their corpus of work is difficult and faintly approachable for non-academics.

⁶⁰⁰ Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven*, 25.

⁶⁰¹ For a recent take on the literary left and its compulsion towards the kind of social radicalism that Lasch hated see, Alan Wald, *Exiles from a Future Time: The Forging of the Mid-Twentieth-Century Literary Left* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

and E.P. Thompson, and a seminal shift in his thinking about economy and family took place.⁶⁰² He then began to study family life and its relationship to economics. His research on the family unit eventually became a study of traditionalism in principle.⁶⁰³

Lasch was surprisingly cautious about his exit from liberalism. Even his tone and language describing his departure was morose.⁶⁰⁴ Yet, his renewed recognition of family and simple life sounds almost prophetic. “Liberalism now meant sexual freedom, women’s rights, gay rights; denunciation of the family as the seat of all oppression; denunciation of “patriarchy”; denunciation of “working-class authoritarianism.””⁶⁰⁵ His investigation into family matters revealed to him the authoritarian type of paternalism evident in the left’s policies. The quarrel for the left, he suggests, was with Middle America and families.

Lasch also attacked secularism and its relationship to progress. Progress was never about setting up a utopian society, instead secularism conceals progress’ real mission, which is “impermanence.” “Impermanence” promises “certain continuity” in a plan that is never ending. “A social order founded on science, with its unnerving but exhilarating expansion of our intellectual horizons, seems to have achieved a kind of immortality undreamed of by earlier civilizations,” he wrote.⁶⁰⁶ Consequently, as a result of this improbability, progressives have a faulty understanding of the difference between hope and optimism. Liberal optimists believe that

⁶⁰² Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven*, 29.

⁶⁰³ Lasch foreshadowed a kind of third wave movement in American conservatism that was critical of the capitalism, the Republican Party, and corporate culture. This new generation of conservative thinkers grew up at the tail end of the Cold War and became critical of the fusionism promoted by people like *National Review* editor William Buckley and Heritage Foundation president Edwin Feulner. See, Rod Dreher, “Story Lines, Not Party Lines,” *The American Conservative*, June 10, 2013, <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/story-lines-not-party-lines/>, accessed July 13, 2013.

⁶⁰⁴ See, Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven*, section one. I would describe Lasch’s tone in the first section of TTOH as morose and less than gleeful.

⁶⁰⁵ Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven*, 34.

⁶⁰⁶ Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven*, 48.

all things will turn out well no matter what, and because the left has a false hope based on “improvidence,” it keeps them from changing the nature of their project when it does not work.⁶⁰⁷

In the fourth chapter, Lasch defined his populist conception of community. He dedicated a section of this chapter to Edmund Burke and the Burkean idea prejudice, which Russell Kirk defended in 1953. Lasch believed Enlightenment birthed a universal language where skepticism of the communal kind was looked down upon because of its refusal to participate in the wider cosmopolitan world.⁶⁰⁸ The simple, the communal, the outlier, the hinterlands, all needed reforming in order to participate in the world community and Lasch followed these thoughts with a section on Burke. Burke therefore was useful for Lasch’s populist project because Burke argued against the “naked reason” of Enlightenment for its ineptitude in a communal emergency.⁶⁰⁹ The communal instinct is superior to abstract reason because it understands the root and intricacies of its own problems, Burke thought, and Lasch praised. Governmental elites fail to see this because they despise skepticism because it is not institutional (or official). Seeking to make Burke his own, Lasch countered Burkean conservatives by claiming that Burke was not a traditionalist but a “sociologist of oblivion.”⁶¹⁰

The most important chapter TTOH is chapter five. In this chapter titled “The Populist Campaign against Improvement,” Lasch wrote about an alternative to the prospects of conservatism and liberalism. He covered these populist alternatives reactions against progress. Coming into view is the imaginative side of Lasch, as he revised various historical figures to fit

⁶⁰⁷ Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven*, 81.

⁶⁰⁸ Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven*, 125. It is worth noting that large segments of the Laschian textual community are cosmopolitan, as they believe in the power of language communicated through official academic texts.

⁶⁰⁹ Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven*, 131.

⁶¹⁰ Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven*, 131.

into his populist synthesis of history. He paints Thomas Paine as neither a liberal nor republican (conservative), but as a “populist.” His next historical proto-populist character is William Cobbett who campaigned against the government’s paper system. He then chose Catholic polymath Orestes Brownson as a populist character. Brownson was also popular among Catholic conservatives, such as Kirk, because he supported religious liberty, territorial democracy, and human limitations.⁶¹¹ Lasch found Brownson useful to his populist genealogy because he understood “the inseparability of matter and spirit, politics and religion.”⁶¹²

In view in the fifth chapter is Lasch’s quasi-religious-politic-civic-intellectual public philosophy, which boils down to his transcendent understanding of the intellectual that he merged with a specific understanding of the human. Later in *The Revolt of the Elites*, Lasch settled for the interdictions (or the inexplicable middle path), which was evident in his simultaneous praising of the universal nature of Brownson’s thought and the skeptical nature of populism. This comes further into view again as he applauded Brownson’s “Christian radicalism” while appreciating James’ pragmatic faith in religious experience. The complex view of populism that Lasch created also led him to counter-narrativize the prevailing definition and historicity of the term populism.⁶¹³ The essence of populism is not the media’s perception of that

⁶¹¹ Both Catholic conservatives and academic historians rehabilitated Brownson’s legacy in midcentury America. It seems the interest stemmed from Brownson’s lifestyle as a Catholic, radical, Unitarian, and socialist. See, Arthur Schlesinger, *Orestes A. Brownson; A Pilgrim’s Progress* (Boston: Little, Brown and company, 1939); Theodore Maynard, *Orestes Brownson, Yankee, Radical, Catholic* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1943); and Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind: from Burke to Eliot* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 2001, c1953). Recently it appears that interest from liberals in Brownson has diminished. However, he continues to be of interest to primarily Catholic conservatives see, *Orestes Brownson: Sign of Contradiction* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 1999) and Patrick Carey, *Orestes A. Brownson: American Religious Weathervane* (Grand Rapid: W.B. Eerdmans, 2004).

⁶¹² Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven*, 194.

⁶¹³ For the changing views of populism see, Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); James Beeby ed., *Populism in the South Revisited: New Interpretations and New Departures* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012); Michael Kazin, *A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan* (New York: Knopf, 2006) and *The Populist Persuasion: An American history* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

term: “Having learned...that Populism has to be carefully distinguished from the free-silver movement and from a merely rhetorical championship of the redneck, so often confused with populism in American politics, we must nevertheless recognize that nineteenth-century populism found other outlets besides the People’s Party.”⁶¹⁴ A populist is not “anyone who cultivates a folksy style” either. What Lasch meant by populism he coins here: “Nineteenth-century populism meant something quite specific: producerism; a defense of endangered crafts (including the craft of farming); opposition to the new class of public creditors and to the whole machinery of modern finance; opposition to wage labor. Populists inherited from earlier political traditions, liberal as well as republican, the principle that property ownership and the personal independence it confers are absolutely essential preconditions of citizenship.”⁶¹⁵

Revolting Against Everything

What Lasch left out in TTOH he amended in his final work *The Revolt of the Elites and The Betrayal of Democracy*.⁶¹⁶ Lasch completed *Revolt* as he was dying of cancer and his daughter, Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, aided him through the writing process.⁶¹⁷ *Revolt*, according to Eric Miller, is Lasch’s most outspoken work and a “final reckoning with the secularist worldview of his parents and the professional class in which he had been reared, and with which he had pursued serious, consequential debate for more than four decades.”⁶¹⁸ Miller is correct that religion played a greater role in *Revolt* than it did in previous books, still, Lasch remained

⁶¹⁴ Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven*, 223.

⁶¹⁵ Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven*, 223.

⁶¹⁶ Christopher Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995).

⁶¹⁷ Miller, 377-78.

⁶¹⁸ Miller, 380.

ambiguous about his religiosity and religion's role in his worldview, beyond its function as a populist mechanism against progress.⁶¹⁹

The Revolt of the Elites is written in three sections. The introductory essay is titled "The Democratic Malaise." In it, are familiar Laschian themes such as distinctions between jet-setting new elites and people-oriented old rich. He made further epistemological distinctions between what he considered proper public ways of knowing. He quoted and cited journalist and theorist of public opinion Walter Lippmann at length.⁶²⁰ Lippmann is famous for his belief that the public is not capable of judging large amounts of knowledge without it taking overtly partisan tones.⁶²¹ Lasch claimed that secularists in the media and government downplay and destroy knowledge that bolsters communities, such as religion and long-held experience. Therefore, the problem with mass media is that it destroys the ways the public can know.

Lasch illustrated why the elites, not the masses, have been revolting in "The Intensification of Social Divisions." The new elites hate Western Civilization, and use this hatred to put free people (particularly the American middle class) under subjugation.⁶²² Consequently, they use market-driven loyalties in service to secularism to destroy populist uprisings including civil rights, environmentalism, etc. Comparable to David Noble's old-world/new-world thesis, according to Lasch, these elites threw overboard the past and its values to create a freer world

⁶¹⁹ Jeremy Beer dealt with some of the ambiguity concerning Lasch's religiosity here, Jeremy Beer, "On Christopher Lasch," *Modern Age* 47 (2005): 330-343.

⁶²⁰ Lippmann is a Laschian family favorite. Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn still assigns Lippmann's books for some of her seminars. Conversation with Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn. Blacksburg, Va., December 2010.

⁶²¹ See, Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Macmillan, c1922, 1929) and *The Phantom Public* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1925). What is interesting about Lasch's use of Lippmann is that Lippmann was clearly elitist in his view of the public's ability to digest information.

⁶²² Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites*, 26.

that is in reality a faux representation of what is genuine.⁶²³ “Upper-middle-class liberals” fail to grasp true community and class distinctions, and in their quest to “sanitize” the world, they became more “intolerant” by constructing greater social barriers in their faux reality, than the old rich whom they set about destroying.⁶²⁴

The new class of elites succeeded in erasing most class distinctions. There are now only two classes—one with power and one without. Painting a dismal picture, Lasch said that the middle class would disappear as the global economy grew and the domestic economy collapses in response. The worst outcome of this was that middle class mores and customs would evaporate, too. “The upper middle class, the heart of the new professional and managerial elites, is defined, apart from its rapidly rising income, not so much by its ideology as by a way of life that distinguishes it, more and more unmistakably, from the rest of the population,” Lasch wrote.⁶²⁵ In other words, “necessity” outweighs “conviction” despite their apparent radicalism and showy revolutionary politicking. They bypass “folkways” and “old fashioned” ways of doing things in return for getting richer.⁶²⁶

Lasch took time to make further distinctions in *Revolt* between the seemingly complimentary positions of populism and communitarianism. “My strongest objection to the communitarian point of view is that it has too little to say about controversial issues like affirmative action, abortion, and family policy,” he wrote.⁶²⁷ Communitarianism, in Lasch’s opinion, asks for “good intentions” when it should require “guidelines.”⁶²⁸ The larger problem

⁶²³ See, David Noble, *Debating the End of History: The Marketplace, Utopia, and The Fragmentation of Intellectual Life* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), especially chapter one.

⁶²⁴ Lasch, *Revolt of the Elites*, 28.

⁶²⁵ Lasch, *Revolt of the Elites*, 33.

⁶²⁶ Lasch, *Revolt of the Elites*, 36.

⁶²⁷ Lasch, *Revolt of the Elites*, 107.

⁶²⁸ Lasch, *Revolt of the Elites*, 108.

with communitarianism is that common understanding is never possible.⁶²⁹ Lasch's distinctions have importance for conservatism because Lasch's conservatism was not cultural in that he supported remaining outside of society in little platoons.⁶³⁰ He tempered his humanistic tendencies with a populism that was, at least here, decidedly political with the purpose being to dethrone the government's central place in society.⁶³¹

In the final chapter, Lasch wrote many things he had never stated previously. He spoke openly about what it meant to live a life in the interdictions, but despite this openness, Lasch, the man of interdictions left his legacy open to interpretation. Before further exploring Lasch's ambiguity, he gave two insights to his late-life transformation that are key. He wrote that he no longer found psychology and psychoanalysis useful because psychoanalysis "has been moving toward therapies aimed more at behavior modification than insight."⁶³² He concluded chapter eleven with an ever more striking suggestion: "Maybe religion is the answer after all."⁶³³ He then spent the remainder of this chapter reconsidering a thinker who played a great role in his life at one time.

The section on sociologist Philip Rieff is an important because Lasch used it to sketch a kind parallel biography of himself next to one of his favorite thinkers. This chapter almost a new Laschian manifesto for living a life of intellectual transcendence. He admired Rieff because he remained a person of the *interdictions*. Rieff, like Lasch, had an interesting career, and one that moved in the opposite direction of Lasch's from public intellectual to something of a recluse

⁶²⁹ Miller dedicated the seventh chapter of his biography to Lasch's search for a common culture, which he would eventually abandon.

⁶³⁰ For a cultural conservative take on living athwart culture see, Mark Mitchell ed. et. al., *The Humane Vision of Wendell Berry* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2011).

⁶³¹ Among cultural conservatives there is a kind of unspoken belief that humanistic and political realms are separate, but this was not so with Lasch. See his criticisms of communitarians.

⁶³² Lasch, *Revolt of the Elites*, 211.

⁶³³ Lasch, *Revolt of the Elites*, 212.

after his retirement from the University of Pennsylvania.⁶³⁴ By career's end, Rieff began advocating that engaging the public from the standpoint of an academic was impossible.⁶³⁵

Lasch, ever the public intellectual, chided Rieff for the “cryptic” and paradoxical nature of his apparent enforced seclusion.⁶³⁶

Another reason Lasch wrote at length about Rieff's career is that he mistakenly made “a religion out of culture.”⁶³⁷ This is an odd claim given that Lasch never advocated religion as anything but a cultural practice and, or, reaction against elitism. Lasch then gives a bizarre interpretation of the relationship between religion and culture, which culminated in him concluding that religion is neither social nor cultural. Furthermore, Lasch said that Christianity is not cultural, and should be considered separate from culture.⁶³⁸ In what is one of the most confusing claims in this chapter, Lasch finalizes it by alleging that equating human moral laws and faith is erroneous.⁶³⁹ Truth and life therefore are to be found in the “interdictions.”

Lasch concluded *Revolt* with an essay titled, “The Soul of Man under Secularism.” This essay served as Lasch's final confession to those who had followed his winding career. He retells the story of modernity through thinkers such as Max Weber, Oscar Wilde, Carl Jung, Sigmund Freud, and others. This amounted more to a sociology of the roots of secular thinking.

Secularism, Lasch argues, is even more detrimental because as it seeks to wipe away the past, a

⁶³⁴ Jeremy Beer, “Pieties of Silence,” *The American Conservative*, October 23, 2006, <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/pieties-of-silence/>, accessed July 16, 2013.

⁶³⁵ Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites*, 225.

⁶³⁶ Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites* 226.

⁶³⁷ Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites*, 227.

⁶³⁸ Creating a Christian culture is a key belief among the traditionalist Catholic humanists. Many of them hearken back to T.S. Eliot's *Christianity and Culture: The Idea of a Christian Society and Notes Towards The Definition of Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1960, c1949).

⁶³⁹ Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites*, 229.

natural nostalgic or conservative impulses arises in reaction.⁶⁴⁰ “Disillusioned but undaunted: such is the self-image of modernity, so proud of its intellectual emancipation that it makes no effort to conceal the spiritual price that has to be paid.”⁶⁴¹ Modernity, Lasch suggests, gave humans a yearning for simpler times and a desire to escape a life where everything is so regulated, impersonal, and mundane. Yet again, we find Lasch’s criticisms similar to many conservative and religious thinkers writing during this period, but Lasch still chose to remain unaffiliated or willing to brand himself this or that. For Eric Miller Lasch’s non-committal stance remained a weakness, which, in Miller’s take, failed to give Lasch’s philosophy that binding element it needed.

Lasch was comfortable or he found it more intellectually honest to remain within the interdictions. Lasch objectified the intellect so much that it held a kind of religious fascination for him. However, Lasch of the interdictions is also the ambiguous public intellectual that struggled to define the tension between his universalism and his populism. As we will see in the next section that concerns Lasch’s textual community, a variety of schools have arisen because of the ambiguity and tensions that arises from Lasch’s lack of clarity concerning faith. Lasch’s religion was one of heterodoxy, as it was more about challenging “complacency” and “pride” while still leaving room for “ambiguity” and “doubt.”⁶⁴²

In the next section, I will consider how the Laschian textual community updated, changed, or ignored aspects of Lasch’s populist persona. Whereas Lasch saw himself as simultaneously a man of the interdictions and populist-outlaw public intellectual rejecting the

⁶⁴⁰ Once again this is another place of contradiction for Lasch.

⁶⁴¹ Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites*, 240.

⁶⁴² Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites*, 242.

axioms of his liberal colleagues, he taught his students (his own textual community) a pedagogy of the intellect that fleshed its way out in the very cosmopolitan manner he despised.

The Laschian Textual Community in the Interdictions

Many of the same tensions that were alive in Lasch's career also exist in his textual community. The Laschian textual community struggles to find a common culture while remaining detached from institutions that erase important communal distinctions. The tug-of-war between universal morality and community culminate in the approach of exactly how to find the appropriate action to take on a seemingly unmovable bureaucratization and corporatization that permeates American institutions.⁶⁴³ The Laschian textual community, like their privileged interpreter, romanticizes the idea of the public intellectual and the time when public people held a prominent place in both scholarly and public discourse. For Lasch's textual community their imagination is the idealization of the power of intellectuals to change the world while remaining relevant in many different sectors—something that Lasch desired. The majority of Lasch's textual community are neither populists nor outlaw intellectuals like Lasch. For the Laschian textual community the text is alive and cherished, and they are not interested in taking their criticisms of governing institutions further than textual analysis. Not only does the Laschian textual community deal with the inherited tensions from the privileged interpreter, but they often disagree about how to address these. The questions remains as how best to thrive in an overly regulated society, and whom should instill values and what kinds of values are worth saving.

A Humanism of the Intellect

⁶⁴³ For a Laschian take on the continuing debates concerning the place of social order, governing institutions, and freedom see, Michael Flamm and David Steigerwald ed., *Debating the 1960s: Liberal, Conservative, and Radical Perspectives* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008).

Christopher Lasch trained his students to be public-thinking intellectuals, and not specialized academics. One of the Lasch's last students, David Steigerwald, confirmed this aspect of Lasch's teaching in a panel at meeting of the Society for U.S. Intellectual History in 2010. Steigerwald spoke of his training as a Laschian historian who entered into fields and subject matter where historians were not supposed to enter, such as philosophy and civic matters.⁶⁴⁴ A key reason as to why sects have arisen among the Laschians is because, in a way, there were two Lasches: there was the one presented in the text as the reactionary public intellectual, and there was the tenured graduate advisor that trained his students to be serious academic public intellectuals. This is not surprising because it fits in with Lasch's training at Columbia, as he was a part of grand tradition of seminal twentieth-century American intellectuals who were trained and taught at Columbia—people like Jacques Barzun, John Dewey, Mortimer Adler, Charles Beard, Richard Hofstadter, C. Wright Mills, Lionel Trilling, James Harvey Robinson, and others. And in this tradition, Lasch taught his students to think broadly and tackle subjects beyond the narrow empirical strivings of the history profession.⁶⁴⁵

This methodological distinction is important because Lasch believed public intellectuals had been replaced by social scientists, and the narrow-minded academics that looked at the public as in constant need of reform.⁶⁴⁶ I believe the case can be made that Lasch trained his students in the humanist tradition drawn from his populist intellectual conception of it.⁶⁴⁷ His daughter, intellectual historian Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, still teaches Lippmann in her courses on

⁶⁴⁴ See, David Steigerwald, "U.S. Intellectual History For What?," (presentation in plenary, annual meeting of The Society for U.S. Intellectual History, New York, NY, October 22, 2010).

⁶⁴⁵ See, Rochelle Gurstein, "U.S. Intellectual History For What?," (presentation in plenary, annual meeting of The Society for U.S. Intellectual History, New York, NY, October 22, 2010).

⁶⁴⁶ See, *The Revolt of the Elites*, chapter 10.

⁶⁴⁷ Currently, no historian has touched directly upon this aspect of Lasch's career. All four historians under observation in this research understand the role of the intellectual to have varying standards. Both Kirk and Lukacs' scholars were more withdrawn and aristocratic, while Lasch and Gottfried see intellectuals as outlaw types who should actively engage the public and critics.

American intellectual history to demonstrate the nature of how to engage the public with issues that are often complex.⁶⁴⁸

It should be noticed that Lasch indirectly encouraged tensions within his textual community. First, Lasch did not have a foundational figure he hearkened back to throughout his career. He came to Catholic intellectual Orestes Brownson late in life, and held affinities for both Jonathan Edwards and Walter Lippmann, but not to the level where he expounded greatly upon their legacies as Kirk did with Burke and Lukacs did with Tocqueville. Second, Lasch may have embraced an outlaw persona in his texts, but that was not true of his career and life. He remained a tenured academic in good standing at the University of Rochester until his death. He did not leave academia like Kirk or find himself forced into retirement. Third, he did not participate in the localized and communal organizations he supported in his texts. The groups he participated in were respected and established academic organizations—*Telos*, while esteemed today, remained on the periphery of academic discourse for its forwardness during Lasch’s era.

The Laschian Textual Community in Three Parts

Andrew Hartman, an intellectual historian, and one of the founders of the Society for U.S. Intellectual History, says that Lasch’s legacy will be contested for many years. While Hartman was originally skeptical of thinking about a Laschian school of thought, he now believes that Lasch and his students are instrumental in reviving a “moral framework” back into thinking about history.⁶⁴⁹ Hartman’s claim about the moralism of the Laschian textual community is accurate, but it is also here that the problem begins. The Laschian textual community is not unified in their reaction against progress, lax moral standards, and a society

⁶⁴⁸ Conversation with Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn. Blacksburg, Va., December 2010.

⁶⁴⁹ Conversation with Andrew Hartman. April 2012.

driven by consumption. What we find in the Laschian textual community is the aforementioned tension between cosmopolitanism often emanating from career choice, the necessary action for seeing progress and bureaucracy decentralized, and whether or not the text is powerful enough to do so in the Western World where thousands of print and electronic documents/media are released annually. In following section, I will demonstrate how the tensions play out in the Laschian textual community between action, imagination, and interpreting legacy of the privileged interpreter.

The Cosmopolitan Laschians

The cosmopolitan Laschians, strangely enough, all were students of Lasch's during his populist phase. I will discuss three of the most prominent members of this school: David Steigerwald (intellectual historian), Casey Nelson Blake (intellectual historian), and Rochelle Gurstein (writer and columnist for *The New Republic*). What defines the cosmopolitan Laschians from the rest of the Laschian textual community is a politically liberal persuasion, genuine belief that the academy is the best place to spread ideas, a moderate secularist tone, and an underlying belief that resistance is best done in strategic cultural institutions like universities and recognized publications. They also choose to demonstrate their activist tendencies by forming breakoff academic organizations—like the Society for U.S. Intellectual History—to temper larger organizations such as The American Historical Association.

David Steigerwald remembers Lasch as a “humanist” and a skeptic “towards technology and progress.”⁶⁵⁰ This is the side of Laschian humanism and imagination that Steigerwald focuses on in his work as he is critical of capitalism, consumerism, progress, and its main

⁶⁵⁰ Conversation with David Steigerwald. April 2012.

representative—American exceptionalism. In Steigerwald’s first book— *Wilsonian Idealism in America*—he reflected all of the hatred of progressivism found in Lasch’s later work.⁶⁵¹ In fact, *Wilsonian Idealism in America* could be studied as an addition to TTOH because of the harsh treatment of globalism, corporate capitalism, and American foreign policy.⁶⁵² What defines Steigerwald’s brand of Laschianism is that he finds no reason to abandon liberalism or to seek encouragement from a populist heritage of anti-consensus.

Steigerwald is a secular Left Laschian, meaning that he does not see theological or spiritualism as providing a favorable way to overcome a culture built on materialism, and faulty notions of community. For Steigerwald the problem is how to insert meaning back into the daily lives of the middle class without relying on traditional religion to do so.⁶⁵³ In his essay, “David Riesman on the Frontiers of Consumption,” Steigerwald agrees with Riesman that work must be made more difficult so that humans can appreciate leisure, which is a most perplexing suggestion given his criticisms of faulty notions of community built on materialism.⁶⁵⁴ In *Culture’s Vanities* (CV), Steigerwald sees paradoxes evident in a consumptive American culture with a false sense of diversity (i.e. multiculturalism).⁶⁵⁵ The ambiguities that defined Lasch’s career are evident in the cosmopolitan Laschians who often use capitalism and traditionalism as whipping posts without delving into the possibility of Lasch’s populism or orthodoxy to overcome a consumptive culture.

⁶⁵¹ David Steigerwald, *Wilsonian Idealism in America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

⁶⁵² Both TTOH and *Wilsonian* were published within a year of each other.

⁶⁵³ Lasch skirted the issue of orthodoxy as anything other than communal reaction against progress. However, his contemporaries like Alasdair MacIntyre and John Milbank wrote extensively about the promise of orthodoxy and religiosity as more than reaction. See, John Milbank, *The Word Made Strange: Theology, Language, Culture* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1997) and Alasdair MacIntyre, *God, Philosophy, Universities: A Selective History of The Catholic Philosophical Tradition* (London: Continuum, 2009).

⁶⁵⁴ David Steigerwald, “David Riesman on the Frontiers of Consumption,” in *A Destiny of Choice?: New Directions in American Consumer History* ed., David Steigerwald et. al., (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013), 83-98.

⁶⁵⁵ David Steigerwald, *Culture’s Vanities: The Paradox of Cultural Diversity in a Globalized World* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).

For instance, Steigerwald's argument in CV is that multiculturalism is just another way to spread America's flattening and standardizing influence throughout the world. His conclusion is that the complexity of the cosmopolitan world, as it is, should guide humans to genuinely appreciate community. "Understanding that the best alternative to mass society is neither the consumer bonanza nor racial and ethnic rigidity, the cosmopolitan is willing to live in a world in which different realms and distinct institutions run according to their own logics," he says.⁶⁵⁶ Steigerwald obviously believes that liberalism offers a tacit dimension of hope where Lasch believed that little about its contemporary worldview was worth salvaging.

The cosmopolitan Laschians find a great deal worth salvaging from the bourgeoisie liberal era when integral public intellectuals like John Dewey and Reinhold Niebuhr were active. In spite of Lasch's mantra of right-wing populist, none of his textual community has carried that label any further, especially among the cosmopolitans. Both Casey Nelson Blake and Rochelle Gurstein reside in New York City, and serve in the fields of intellectual history and journalism respectively. Blake, a longtime professor at Columbia, has dedicated his research to studying civic life as it relates to intellect, culture, and art.⁶⁵⁷ Gurstein, a columnist for *The New Republic*, espouses a moderately-toned Laschianism as she espouses many of the same themes Lasch confronted in the late seventies.

Gurstein's *Repeal of Reticence: A History of America's Cultural and Legal Struggles Over Free Speech, Obscenity, Sexual Liberation, and Modern Art* further fleshes out Lasch's theory of privacy from CON where he delved into the problem of projecting the private self onto

⁶⁵⁶ Steigerwald, *Culture's Vanities*, 246.

⁶⁵⁷ See, Casey Nelson Blake ed., *The Arts of Democracy: Art, Public Culture, and The State* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2007).

society.⁶⁵⁸ In the fashion of her mentor, Gurstein takes aim at radicals and new elites as she exposes how these people repeal reticence in support of popular culture built on a false sense of the self.⁶⁵⁹ What she means by the repeal of reticence is that lewdness is now a form of emancipation and enlightenment.⁶⁶⁰ The exchange of private life for public indecency, she explains, is the product lost notion of *real* intimacy and love. There was once a collective good in society that began in the private realm, but it remains no more, she writes.⁶⁶¹ In a most uncanny way, and in a manner only a student of Lasch's could, Gurstein gives credence to puritanism much the same way Lasch credited the once dead idea of populism in order to offset the lost bastion of private life. Gurstein wrote:

“For almost a hundred years now, the charge of Puritanism has guaranteed the accuser the prestige of being on the side of progress, free speech, and sexual emancipation. To utter this epithet has been to announce and celebrate one's own receptivity to difficult ideas and advanced art; it has been the preeminent sign of one's capacity for regarding all aspects of the human condition without flinching or passing judgment. To label one's opponent a Puritan has been, above all, to theatrically display one's own sophistication. Puritanism has become the unanswerable indictment, the ultimate smear, occupying much the same territory in contemporary cultural disputes as the final, damning charge "Critic !" in the ever-escalating exchange of insults between Vladimir and Estragon in *Waiting for Godot*.”⁶⁶²

Gurstein goes on show how, what she calls puritan bating, gradually repealed the ability of private life to stabilize society and families without objectifying absurdity into social reality. The failure to keep a reticent sensibility in culture has greater consequences, according to Gurstein,

⁶⁵⁸ See, Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, chapter one.

⁶⁵⁹ See, Rochelle Gurstein, *The Repeal of Reticence: A History of America's Cultural and Legal Struggles over Free Speech, Obscenity, Sexual Liberation, and Modern Art* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996).

⁶⁶⁰ See, Roger Kimball, "The Repeal of Reticence," review of *The Repeal of Reticence*, by Rochelle Gurstein, *The New Criterion*, January 1997, <http://www.newcriterion.com/articles.cfm/repealofreticence-kimball-3402>, accessed December 28, 2013.

⁶⁶¹ Gurstein, especially, demonstrates that there is indeed a strong bourgeoisie strain in Laschianism as it rejects outward display of affection and free expression.

⁶⁶² Rochelle Gurstein, "'Puritanism' as Epithet: Common Standards and the Fate of Reticence," *Salmagundi* 101/102 (1994): 95.

because: “This defining characteristic of the reticent sensibility...hinged on a shared sense of which things were large and sturdy enough to withstand the glare of publicity, and which things were so personal, fragile, or vulnerable that they required the cover of privacy if they were to retain their significance and emotional vibrancy,” Gurstein claimed.⁶⁶³ What these criticisms amount to is a serious disapproval of academic postmodernism most associated with cultural relativism. Blake carries these criticisms of postmodern radicalism forward in his research that considers the public space of intellectuals in relation to relaying virtue to the public.

Casey Blake’s first book (a product of his dissertation work with Lasch), *Beloved Community: The Cultural Criticism of Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks, Waldo Frank, and Lewis Mumford* is the kind of project that obviously fascinated Lasch. Blake studied four New York intellectuals and situated them between Victorianism and Modernism (in the transcendent interdictions). What united the “Young Americans”, in Blake’s telling of the story, was a rejection of the false promises of industrialization, scientific rationalism, and the reaction against them, subjectivism. The Young Americans were seeking the ever hard to define middle ground, according to Blake. “(T)heir joining of civic and self-renewal remains a powerful indictment of modern bureaucratic institutions and an important restatement of the republican tradition’s understanding of citizenship,” Blake wrote. “...A politics of democratic self-realization seeks to repair the damage done to our civic culture by promoting a common discourse about our ills and our aspirations.”⁶⁶⁴ Blake’s hope is that “identity,” “language,” and practice all develop alongside each other for the hope of a common language. This reflects more of a Deweyan

⁶⁶³ Gurstein, “Puritanism” as Epithet: Common Standards and the Fate of Reticence,” 109.

⁶⁶⁴ Casey Blake, *Beloved Community: The Cultural Criticism of Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks, Waldo Frank & Lewis Mumford* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 302.

perspective on democracy than a populist hope for small communal responses to the intruding state.⁶⁶⁵

The cosmopolitan Laschians reveal specific ambiguities about Lasch's career. First, they are critical of bureaucracy and big government, but they do not take action beyond textual criticisms, although one could argue the publishing in *The New Republic* is a form of activism. Second, and similar to Lasch, they never choose orthodoxy or a path that would lead them to break firmly with the Left and secularism.⁶⁶⁶ The greater implication or tension among the cosmopolitan Laschians is that they reject the local in favor of the universal. They desire a common culture (like Lasch) where universals naturally flavor communities.⁶⁶⁷ However, the cosmopolitan Laschians never give a solid plan for how this universalism and common culture will work within communities, especially ones that resist the universalist impulse. Neither did the privileged interpreter figure out how to work out this problem in his own worldview. For the next sect of Laschians of which I call the Left Laschians, the tension is not so much on the tension between community and common culture as it is instilling which Christopher Lasch and version of liberalism is worth re-instilling in society.

Left Laschianism

For the Left Laschians, Christopher Lasch remained a New Leftist who became disenchanted by the lost dream of the sixties. Of course, this requires one to read Lasch's later career as an aberration instead of a betrayal of the Left. Left Laschians also leave out a key

⁶⁶⁵ A Kirkean critic of the new communitarians says that the movement towards community is merely another disguised way to rescue a morally bankrupt liberalism from its inevitable decline. See, Bruce Frohnen, *The New Communitarians and The Crisis of Modern Liberalism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996).

⁶⁶⁶ In this case, I refer to orthodoxy as a religious (or way to re-envision the world

⁶⁶⁷ This is reminiscent of John Dewey's late-career work *A Common Faith* where Dewey refers to community as a garden without enclosures. See, John Dewey, *Common Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934).

quality of Lasch's legacy, and that is his populism, particularly its conservative drift. They translate Lasch's populism and civic engagement to mean social and economic justice instead of an outright rejection of liberalism. For the Left Laschians, such as Kevin Mattson who is the focus here, Lasch remained a civic liberal who departed from the Left because he had no other place to retreat.

The promise of action as a regular feature of democratic culture is the hope for the Left Laschians. Kevin Mattson has focused his efforts on the study of intellectuals actively pursuing a democratic culture.⁶⁶⁸ In *Intellectuals in Action: The Origins of The New Left and Radical Liberalism, 1945-1970*, Mattson attempts to renew the roots of New Left and then find a way to make it work with his radicalized Laschianism where democracy and social justice are key goals.⁶⁶⁹ Mattson chides the New Left radicals for not finding enough middle ground and room to change the existing order of American society.⁶⁷⁰ Echoing cosmopolitan Laschian Casey Blake, Mattson believes that core precepts like "participatory democracy," "social justice," "public deliberation," and "engaged intellectual(s)" are keys to renewing democracy. Like the cosmopolitan Laschians, Mattson's issues with the Left are not great enough for him to consider shifting to either populism or a communal kind of conservatism. For the Left Laschians, like Mattson, there has to be political action and a committed effort to the promise of democracy. Again, the parameters for this project are never fully explained and are somewhat ethereal.

⁶⁶⁸ I have mentioned throughout this chapter that Lasch's relationship to pragmatism was wrapped in a host of ambiguities. Blake is champion of Dewey's democratic vision, see, "Private Life and Public Commitment: From Walter Rauschenbusch to Richard Rorty," in *A Pragmatist's Progress?: Richard Rorty and American Intellectual History* ed., John Pettegrew (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

⁶⁶⁹ Kevin Mattson, *Intellectuals in Action: The Origins of The New Left and Radical Liberalism, 1945-1970* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002).

⁶⁷⁰ Mattson's argument is reminiscent of Lasch's *The New Radicalism in America, 1889-1963: The Intellectual as a Social Type* and *The Agony of The American Left*. In both books, Lasch calls for a revival of the middle ground in liberalism.

There is still a conservative element among both Left and Cosmopolitan Laschians as they cherish a society rooted in bourgeois democratic forms of activism. While Mattson—breaking precedent with most of the Laschian textual community—has been given over to paining anti-intellectual broad strokes of conservatism. Even still, Mattson is cautious about the guiding passions of those who believe in a radical kind of democracy.⁶⁷¹ “Thus, passion is not enough—nor is the principle of democratic self determination,” he wrote. “(True) Liberals believe that a polity needs more than passion and democratic action...”⁶⁷² Blake directly ties Left and Cosmopolitan Laschians to conservative yearnings when he writes of public intellectual Paul Goodman. Blake calls Goodman one of the “great cultural conservatives of the twentieth century.”⁶⁷³ After detailing a few reasons that Goodman may not be considered a conservative—given his lifestyle and contemporary cultural associations, Blake writes: ... (T)he chapters on jobs, patriotism, and faith that form the moral center of *Growing Up Absurd* are a traditionalist’s lament of loss and waste that T.S. Eliot and even the Southern Agrarians might have endorsed.⁶⁷⁴ Blake goes on to say Goodman believed in ‘manly’ work, love of home, and patriotism.⁶⁷⁵ These kinds of the beliefs and loyalties define the next group of Laschians that find relief in place and traditional authority.

The Communitarian Laschians

⁶⁷¹ See, Kevin Mattson, *Rebels All!: A Short History of The Conservative Mind in Postwar America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008). For a critique of *Rebels All* see, Andrew Hartman, “Mattson’s Many Books,” *U.S. Intellectual History blog*, June 5, 2012, <http://s-usih.org/2012/06/kevin-mattsons-many-books.html>, accessed July 23, 2013.

⁶⁷² See, Kevin Mattson, “Liberalism and Democracy: A Troubled Marriage,” in *Liberalism for a New Century* ed., Neil Jumonville and Kevin Mattson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 118.

⁶⁷³ Casey Blake, “Introduction” to *Growing up Absurd* by Paul Goodman (New York: New York Review Books, 2012), ix.

⁶⁷⁴ Blake, “Introduction” to *Growing up Absurd* (New York: New York Review Books, 2012), x.

⁶⁷⁵ Blake, x.

The third group or variant Laschians are the Communitarian Laschians. The communitarian Laschians often tend to be oriented towards Catholicism, although this is not a guarantee. The Communitarian Laschians embrace the right-wing populist Lasch, and pepper it with faith, and, or neo-agrarianism. They believe they are being more accurate with the historical Lasch who gravitated away from the Left, unlike the Cosmopolitan and Left Laschians who are more interested in reviving the Lasch prior to the publication of TTOH—one they consider more moderate. Communitarian Laschians also update Lasch’s worldview by adding thinkers like Wendell Berry and Alasdair MacIntyre to Lasch’s incomplete conservative or religious conversion. The communitarian Laschians are interested in further humanizing the worldview of Laschian by demonstrating his commonality with the likes of Berry and MacIntyre as they drifted from Left to something more *humane*.

There is no doubt that Lasch held affinities with thinkers like Wendell Berry and Alasdair MacIntyre because of the way in which he championed community, religion, and local authority over the secularized state. His questioning of the credibility of Enlightenment thinking and the trajectory of the progressive-narrative of history, might also demonstrate the reasonableness of including him in the camp of post secular thinkers too.⁶⁷⁶ The communitarian Laschians share qualities with other sects of Laschians as they are equally critical of modern culture, progress, and consumerism. Christopher Shannon, David Chappell, and William Leach are representative communitarian Laschians. Each of these historians fall into the broad category of humanists minus the affinities for either secularism or political liberalism.

⁶⁷⁶ Berry’s questioning of Enlightenment and Progress is seen in his literature and creation of the fictitious town of Port William. See, Wendell Berry, *A Place In Time: twenty stories of the Port William membership* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint Press, 2012) and Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition: Being Gifford Lectures Delivered in The University of Edinburgh in 1988* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990).

Leach has earned a reputation as a historian who considers the problem of rootlessness in American life. His books *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and The Rise of a New American Culture*, *Country of Exiles: The Destruction of Place in American Life*, and *Butterfly People: An American Encounter with The Beauty of The World* all deal with finding beauty at home and in the world. His latest book is a study of how nineteenth-century naturalists understood and regarded the mystery of existence.

David Chappell has used place and regionalism as an avenue for historical criticism of progress and academic hubris. Chappell began his career studying race from a regional perspective. *Inside Agitators: White Southerners in The Civil Rights Movement* is a corrective to the way race experts in America studied racism in relation to the American South. According to Chappell, as the title suggests, not all Southerners were racist and segregationists.⁶⁷⁷ Motivations for supporting desegregation among white Southerners were often more complex than historians portrayed them to be. In Chappell's most important book, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and The Death of Jim Crow*, he claims that the story of the Civil Rights movement was not the triumph of liberalism. He argues that because liberals put such a high price on rationality that they tended to mistrust religion and faith, which were the key components to the success of civil rights. The quest for a secular faith, as he calls it, lacked a moral and imaginative dimension, which churches gave to that movement through leaders such as Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. "The history of Protestantism and secular alternatives to in the modern West has been full of surprises," Chappell wrote. "One surprise that has not been appreciated is that, in the American civil rights movement, the irrational traditions of prophetic, revivalistic religion served that the liberal goals of freedom and equality." Surprisingly, Chappell follows that powerful revisionist

⁶⁷⁷ David Chappell, *Inside Agitators: White Southerners in The Civil Rights Movement* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

assessment with this: “The flip side of that surprise is that those traditions did not help the allegedly backward, conservative, southern opponents of liberty and equality.”⁶⁷⁸ Chappell is not defending white southerners from criticism, but following Lasch’s belief in the responsible public intellectual, Chappell wrote *A Stone of Hope* as someone who fills in the “important element that is missing from the picture shared by the reading public.”⁶⁷⁹

Christopher Shannon is a Catholic communitarian Laschian. Shannon’s Laschianism is also academic in that he appreciates and believes in the ability of ideas, texts, and cultural/religious institutions to provide societal order.⁶⁸⁰ He shares Chappell’s belief in correcting the historical narrative, especially as theorist of history. Shannon is at the forefront of debates concerning the continued secularization of historical methodology, and making place and faith a central way to critique the expansion of government and progress into everyday life.⁶⁸¹ Uniquely, Shannon’s books are highly technical intellectual histories that are not accessible outside of scholarly reading communities. His first two monographs deal with critical and nuanced weaknesses in liberalism. In *Conspicuous Criticism: Tradition, The Individual, and Culture in Modern American Social Thought* (CC) Shannon argues that liberals must look beyond culture to cure the “acids of modernity.”⁶⁸² CC is an argument for the necessity of religion and tradition to overcome the malaise of modernity. For Shannon, humanism alone is

⁶⁷⁸ Chappell, *Inside Agitators*, 179.

⁶⁷⁹ David Chappell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and The Death of Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 193.

⁶⁸⁰ See, Christopher Shannon, “After Monographs: A Critique of Christian Scholarship as Professional Practice,” in *Confessing History: Explorations in Christian Faith and The Historian’s Vocation* ed. John Fea, et. al. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), chapter eight.

⁶⁸¹ The Society for U.S. Intellectual History moderated a debate between Christopher Shannon and Robert Self on history and secular narratives in 2012. See, Christopher Shannon, “All or Nothing In the Family,” *U.S. Intellectual History blog*, December 22, 2012, <http://s-usih.org/2012/12/all-or-nothing-in-family.html>, accessed July 24, 2013; “All or Nothing in the Family, Part II,” January 9, 2013 and “Shannon Responds to Self,” January 25, 2013.

⁶⁸² Conversation with Christopher Shannon. Columbia, S.C., June 2012. In other words, faith needs a prominent place at the table of academic criticism.

not an answer to the malaise of modernism because it lacks the element of orthodoxy. Of course, Lasch never made this distinction, but this is Shannon's and the communitarian's way of adding that needed ecumenical element to Lasch's populism.

In his second book, *A World Made Safe for Differences: Cold War Intellectuals and The Politics of Identity*, Shannon updates *The True and Only Heaven* in a way by attempting to show that liberalism was always therapeutic in nature. "The argument I present in this book is less an explicit defense of this tradition than an analysis of the self-referential nihilism of its dominant secular alternative," he wrote.⁶⁸³ At the conclusion of *A World Made Safe for Differences*, is the essence of Shannon's communitarian Laschianism: "The fostering of local institutions, rooted in distinct, particular traditions, promises the most meaningful alternative to both the religious intolerance of the past and the secular intolerance of the present."⁶⁸⁴ Because Lasch was not open about his religiosity, it is incorrect to suggest that he would have embraced Shannon's religious communitarianism. However, the many correctives and additions to Laschianism by his textual community reveal the nature of the privileged interpreter's ambiguity. The mystery of Christopher Lasch and the Laschians, despite these correctives, remain. To better understand the thrust and the continued ambiguity of the Laschian legacy, and their search for that uncertain and transcendental element in the human intellect, it is necessary to finalize the section on his textual community with a look at Lasch's public intellectual daughter—Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn.

Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn's Quest for the Essence of Transcendent Humanity

Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn is most like her father intellectually. She lives in the interdictions as she refuses to take stands with a particular political party, and is critical of the idea of progress

⁶⁸³ Christopher Shannon, *A World Made Safe for Differences: Cold War Intellectuals and The Politics of Identity* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), xxii.

⁶⁸⁴ Shannon, *A World Made Safe for Differences*, 136.

without being polemical. However, there are differences between Lasch-Quinn and her father. She is much more of a humanist in that she is interested in the place of the self in society. Never has she claimed to be a populist or a right-winger and is more cosmopolitan than Lasch was. Lasch-Quinn has made a religion of the intellect and the inwardness of the human experience.⁶⁸⁵ She has done this while trying to remain faithful to her father's instruction not to fetishize the mind that is private and grossly objectified.

Lasch-Quinn's early work focused on the failure of social and governmental reforms to address the problems of race and community.⁶⁸⁶ Her first book, *Black Neighbors: Race and The Limits of Reform in The American Settlement House Movement, 1890-1945*, dealt with the American Settlement House movement. She looked at the problems of overregulation, and the way in which communities stepped in where the government and social reformists could not. In *Race Experts*, she demonstrated how political correctness and multiculturalism hurt the cause of justice and equality. She used this seemingly empirical study say something important about human flourishing when she claimed that the therapeutic self gets set up as the goal in place of something real and valuable.⁶⁸⁷

While in one way or another all of the Laschian textual community deals with selfhood and disciplining the self to live within communal restraints, Lasch-Quinn addresses it directly in nearly all of her books. Like her father, she is interested in how the self might flourish beyond the culture of narcissism. "When it has any use of belief, our age presses religion into the service

⁶⁸⁵ This aspect of Lasch-Quinn's career was most evident in the lecture she gave to the ASPECT program at Virginia Tech in 2010 where she talked about friendship and her recent musings as a contributor at the U.S. Intellectual History blog. See, Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, "Intellectual Flourishing," *U.S. Intellectual History Blog*, May 5, 2013, <http://s-usih.org/2013/05/intellectual-flourishing.html>, accessed October 18, 2013.

⁶⁸⁶ Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, *Black Neighbors: Race and The Limits of Reform in the American Settlement House Movement, 1890-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

⁶⁸⁷ Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, *Race Experts: How Racial Etiquette, Sensitivity Training, and New Age Therapy Hijacked The Civil Rights Revolution* (New York: Norton, 2001).

of power,” she writes. “The rest of the time, it banishes faith from any position of authority. Once the lifeblood of intimate, social, and civic life, the sacred makes its appearance now as a mere distraction...from the main event. Ignoring previous counsel and reflection from Aristotle to Freud, we embrace a gospel of personal happiness, defined as the unbridled pursuit of impulse. Yet, we remain profoundly unhappy.”⁶⁸⁸

The question remains as to whether Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn answers the foundational problem that her father and the rest of the Laschian textual community never answer.⁶⁸⁹ If liberalism has not debunked tradition and the practice of religion, and if conservatism is not the entirety of the answer, then isn’t lived faith the key. Lasch-Quinn gets the Laschians no closer to finality than her father did. As her career has progressed, she has stopped primarily writing about race instead focusing on the self, friendship, and something nearing the sacredness of humanity.⁶⁹⁰ Like Shannon, she is critical of American consumerism and its negative effects on family and society. She says that technology in the life of children is bad because it removes them from “nature.”⁶⁹¹ While she applauds the work of Wendell Berry, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Charles Taylor (as the communitarian Laschians do), she does not applaud the orthodox, religious, and sacred beyond find hope in literature, letters, friendship (etc) in the tradition of Western humanism. “We have forgotten that the sources of human goods—faith, hope, awe, joy, wholeness, love, unity, humility, dignity, sacredness—are discovered one a time, everyday, close

⁶⁸⁸ Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, “Introduction,” in *The Triumph of The Therapeutic: Uses of Faith After Freud* by Philip Rieff (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2006), vii.

⁶⁸⁹ I do exempt Communitarian Laschian Christopher Shannon from this comment. His Laschianism is anchored in both transcendent language (God) and cultural authority (the Catholic Church and local autonomy).

⁶⁹⁰ Lasch-Quinn has published much less recently as these new tropes became evident. The most representative piece she has written in this new interest is, “A Stranger’s Dream: The Virtual Self and the Socialization Crisis,” in *Figures in The Carpet: Finding The Human Person in The American Past* ed., Wilfred McClay (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2007), chapter eight.

⁶⁹¹ Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, “A Stranger’s Dream: The Virtual Self and the Socialization Crisis,” in *Figures in the Carpet: Finding The Human Person in The American Past* ed., Wilfred McClay (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2007), 253.

to home.”⁶⁹² In a forum responding to Christopher Shannon’s promise of religious communitarianism, Lasch-Quinn backed away from the possibility of orthodoxy in relation to scholarship and public intellectualism. She pushed back against the notion of communal religious authority when she wrote: “I am not sure I see how Shannon’s position gets us beyond the nonjudgmental pluralism of tolerating multiple perspectives. He argues convincingly that the professional claims of unbiased observation are actually rooted in a certain idiom. But once he reveals that the emperor has no clothes, how would the addition of a history that is rooted in another idiom do more than provide another alternative?”⁶⁹³ In place of making a statement of authority on history and the practice of faith, Lasch concludes by writing that what we need is a “cultivating of judgment” in order to bring the soul out of darkness.⁶⁹⁴

Conclusion: Universal Morality, Common Culture, and the Limits of the Intellect

If we contextualize Lasch and his textual community, we see that they were very much a part of an extended culture war that emanated from a profound need to simultaneously find a common language and yet recognize wide cultural needs and differences.⁶⁹⁵ The problem is that Lasch and his textual community were intentionally ambiguous and hard to pin down on many foundational issues including religion and culture among others. They came from Lasch for two main reasons: 1. He wanted to live in the interdictions and never be pinned down, and 2. He objectified the intellect and the public intellectual as a kind of transcendent being not akin to regular human impulses, such as ideology.

⁶⁹² Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, “A Stranger’s Dream: The Virtual Self and the Socialization Crisis,” 262.

⁶⁹³ Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, “Comment on Christopher Shannon,” *Historically Speaking* 12 (2011): 19.

⁶⁹⁴ Lasch-Quinn, “Comment on Christopher Shannon,” 19.

⁶⁹⁵ Theorist of history, John Toews, gave a lecture where he explained this shifts in liberal thinking about the process of thinking historically. He also covers various epistemological foundations of the cultural and postmodern turns. See, John Toews, “Thinking Historically about Thinking Historically: Identity Politics to Ethical Action,” *YouTube*, April 9, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1AkJM6mbF3U>, accessed October 19, 2013.

This interdictional nature was evident from the beginning of his career as Lasch often vacillated on his relationship to liberalism. He was a New Leftist without ever really believing in their most foundational premises of radical democratic reconstruction of American society. He was always something of a bourgeoisie liberal, and continued to realign his thinking about the world even up until his death. He believed himself to be a kind of outlaw ex-liberal public intellectual, and thrived on that persona without taking the necessary steps to finalize it as Paul Gottfried, following his lead, did. Lasch reacted against the consensus only to find that taking the necessary steps from texts to action was much too great a sacrifice if he wanted to maintain his audience.⁶⁹⁶

In Lasch's desire to remain relevant to both academics and the middle class, he never answered the tensions between his need for a common culture and radical localism. Furthermore, he never ground the self or person in anything other than the interdictionality of intellectualism. Therefore, his textual community has spent their career looking for that foundational answer to the question of purpose, community, and human nature thus never really agreeing on anything but that the human person needs to flourish, somehow. What is also evident in the Laschian textual community are the limits of the text. While texts are valuable, they are often only accessible to a small amount of people. Real action must take place between text and activism. Lasch and the Laschians are bourgeoisie intellectuals and not activists. The exchange between text and activism is the possibility of alienation, which is something that Lasch's friend Paul Gottfried found out as he took on the mantle of reaction against both conservatives and liberals.

Returning to the Right

⁶⁹⁶ See, Kazin, *A Godly Hero*.

Whereas Kirk, Lukacs, and Lasch limited their reaction to maintain an audience, Paul Gottfried's fierce retorts alienated both friend and foe alike. If Lasch's desire was to keep the good graces of academia and affect the public in a meaningful way, Gottfried has a limited audience of only supporters. Gottfried took the Laschian legacy further to the Right by latching onto his late-life right-wing populism, instead of focusing on the humanistic elements of his worldview.

A renewed friendship between Paul Gottfried and Christopher Lasch developed later in Lasch's career because of their mutual interest, and participation in the Telos group. Gottfried, who had at one time followed, unwittingly, the Republican Party line as set forth by people like William Buckley, began to question its theses about the time he met Lasch again.⁶⁹⁷ Gottfried is admittedly profoundly influenced by Lasch and his populist critiques of the state.⁶⁹⁸ Consequently, it is Gottfried, not Lasch's textual community, who has carried out Lasch's populist legacy the best.

Gottfried, who was also very familiar with the Frankfurt School as student of Herbert Marcuse, is also fighting the therapeutic nature of American life as it manifests itself in both major political parties and their ideologies. Gottfried has taken the Laschian legacy further by emphasizing the anti-elitism of his populist project. Where Lasch idealized Brownson and Edwards, Gottfried takes on the role of H.L. Mencken as the kind of public intellectual needed to deconstruct the therapeutic state. Gottfried has actively former splinter organizations that reflected his Menckean persona. He has chosen to combine texts and activism in his reactionary politics much like the pre-Second World War conservatives and reactionaries, like

⁶⁹⁷ Conversation with Paul Gottfried. Baltimore, Md., November 2011.

⁶⁹⁸ See, Paul Gottfried, *Encounters: My Life with Nixon, Marcuse, and other Friends and Teachers* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2009), especially chapters five and nine.

Mencken, who used their poison pen to stand athwart the state and its representatives. In this regard, Gottfried returns conservatism back to the Right.

Chapter Six: No Country for the Old Right: Paul Gottfried's Historical Imagination

Chapter Abstract:

Paul Gottfried was representative of what I call the third wave of conservatism, which is defined by a rejection of the politics and popularization of conservatism beginning in the Reagan administration. To explain this untold story of the conservative rejection of Reaganism, I elaborate once more upon the fusionism thesis, which served the agenda of both triumphalist conservatives and critical liberals. I also use the introduction to elucidate about how Gottfried and Christopher Lasch met through the Telos group, and how that consortium helped form what is known as paleo-conservatism. The meeting of minds between Lasch and Gottfried provided a transition from the postwar conservative epoch, to a time when American conservatives would begin rejecting the Burkean or European phase of American conservatism as espoused by Kirk and Lukacs.

Following the introduction, I then delve into Gottfried's canon of work, which spans the years 1979 until 2012, and how Gottfried reiterated or reinserted the idea of historicism back into conservatism after its long hiatus from the conservative movement following the Second World War. I will then demonstrate how Gottfried updated the idea of historicism for the purposes of what he calls right wing or historicist pluralism. Finally, I illustrate why Gottfried renewed the character of H.L. Mencken and created a new Menckonianism that fleshes out through his textual community. Within his textual community, I trace out three strands of new Menckenians built on skepticism, the declension narrative of conservatism, and the rebirth of conservatism through the formation of new publications and institutions.

Fusionism Redux: Conservatism in the Age of Reagan

The history of conservatism is a strange one, as anyone who takes the time to study it will learn. The previous three chapters showed how an imitator of British imaginative thinkers, a Hungarian émigré who sought to create a new way of thinking based on the fusion of history and literature, and an academic populist public intellectual each defined, redefined, and redrew the boundaries of American conservatism with imaginative frameworks and reconfigurations of

selected historical figures who fit their conception of what a conservative should look like. A set of questions related to the nature and history of conservatism immediately arises from this research so far. Were conservatives ever united beyond the so-called imaginative frameworks I have elaborated upon here? Moreover, was there ever a *conservative* consensus or fusion of ideas, as many historians have suggested?

These questions will serve as guiding themes throughout the final chapter where I will explore the puzzle of conservative consensus or fusionism through the career of Paul Gottfried. Gottfried's journey to a historicist conception of conservatism was spearheaded by an eventual rejection of conservatism as it came to be associated with Ronald Reagan and a powerful Republican Party.⁶⁹⁹ Gottfried represented a growing generation of conservatives who would sooner or later reject Reaganism for its adverse effects on the domestic life of middle class Americans. Gottfried was also a sign of hope or rebirth for the remaining first generation New Right who realized too late that they did indeed need a theory of historicism to found their conservatism after all.⁷⁰⁰

Gottfried's effort to return conservatism to the Right (or its prewar status) is no triumphal re-entry of some nostalgic summer of conservatism past. His passionate dislike for neo-conservatism and the Republican Party gained him more enemies than friends. As I will demonstrate, Gottfried's historicist conservatism is a rear-guard effort aimed at disrupting all

⁶⁹⁹ Although his history of that period is dated, David Hoeweler's book on the Reagan era conservatism is still worth reading see, David Hoeweler, *Watch on the Right: Conservative Intellectuals in the Reagan Era* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991). For a recent history of the Reagan era from the perspective of a journalist see, Charles Untermeyer, *When Things Went Right: The Dawn of The Reagan-Bush Administration* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2013).

⁷⁰⁰ See, Joseph Scotchie ed., *The Paleoconservatives: New Voices of The Old Right* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1999). Gottfried's correspondence with the likes of Russell Kirk also reveal that many of the elder generation New Right looked to him for guidance, especially after the dustup with the neo-conservatives during the NEH dustup.

popular manifestations of conservatism, including the Republican Party, and what Gottfried considers stale replications of intellectual conservatism, such as Fox News channel today. He began to take these stances just when it seemed that conservatives were unified behind the Republican Party and its seemingly untouchable celebrity president. However, the Reagan years proved to ignite a new level of strife among conservative intellectuals because conservatives could not come to an agreement about core principles in relation to politics.

This new wave of conservative sectarianism is the reason for exploring fusionism again at the onset of this chapter. Conservatism began to take on new faces, new theoretical underpinnings, and new partners during the 1980s as the first generation of postwar conservatives (the New Right) aged. The remainder of the New Right joined the paleo-conservatives in a concerted effort to take conservatism back from Reagan and the neo-conservatives.⁷⁰¹ Third wave conservatives rejected globalism, the managerial state, corporatism, neo-liberalism (referred to as crony capitalism in conservatism), and American exceptionalism.⁷⁰² This wave of conservatives consists of what is referred to now as paleo-conservatives, and has some overlap with the three previous textual communities discussed in this dissertation. The major difference between paleo-conservatives, traditionalists or neo-conservatives is that paleo-conservatives have the benefit of understanding the theoretical oversights of the New Right. In this manner, the paleo-cons are historicists, which means that

⁷⁰¹ Currently, there is not a book that specifically addresses the history of the paleo-conservatives or the third wave of conservatism, as I call it. The simple reason for this fact is that the third wave, and paleo-conservatism, is still working its way out. Russell Kirk's choice to support Patrick Buchanan for the Republican nomination in 1992 proved to be another watershed moment for the paleo-conservatives.

⁷⁰² The first wave of postwar conservatism began in 1953 with Kirk, while the second wave grew following the defeat of Barry Goldwater and then throughout the seventies. The second wave of conservatism is predominantly neo-conservative. The third wave of conservatism began during the first Reagan administration and is still working its way out now.

For a couple of conservative views on the end of American exceptionalism see, Andrew Bacevich, *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008) and Richard Gamble, *In Search of the City on a Hill: The Making and Unmaking of an American Myth* (New York: Continuum, 2012).

they scale down their conservatism with a smaller framework that does not utilize universal language to make its case. Nevertheless, I am limiting this discussion of paleo-conservatism for now because it is the subject of the remainder of this chapter.⁷⁰³ The fusionist thesis took on renewed strength during the Reagan era (despite this apparent shift in thinking) and was bolstered by conservative historians who wanted to promote the picture of togetherness, while liberal historians used Reagan's presidency to further their long-running argument that conservatism was monolithic.

The subsequent section considers how the fusionism thesis filtered out through liberalism and conservatism. Following that, I consider the part played by the Telos group in the formation of paleo-conservatism. Afterwards, I contextualize Gottfried's entrance into conservatism, and the legacy of what is now referred to as the Conservative Civil War. After situating Gottfried at the center of the conservative civil war, I then look at Gottfried's historiography. Once that section is concluded, I move on to talk about the place of historicism in Gottfried's thought and how this has defined his conservatism and reaction against his nemeses, the neo-conservatives, and the Republican Party establishment.

Fusionism: The Liberal Line and the Conservative Triumph

The fusionism thesis is a two-sided coin. Liberal critics have used it to paint conservatism as a monolithic entity, while conservatives later utilized it to demonstrate triumph over liberalism. The fusionism thesis has fallen into disrepair for the following reasons. Conservatives have continued to splinter since 1953 and show little possibility of ever uniting under one

⁷⁰³ See, the introductory chapter of this dissertation for an elaborated discussion of the fusionism thesis.

banner.⁷⁰⁴ As I stated previously, a new generation of liberal academic historians has given conservatism its due instead of finding anything redeemable about it. The new liberal historians who study conservatism have grown considerably and, in essence, given a new voice to a movement that barely collected good ink among its opponents before 2005.⁷⁰⁵ I will briefly flesh out the consensus or fusionist view through the Reagan era.

There is a bit a terminological nuance that needs to be cleared up here first. Fusionism is a term associated with conservatism because it emanated from the postwar conservatives, some of whom sought an alliance between traditionalists and libertarians. However, conservative historian George Nash modified the fusionism term later as he used to describe the mass of new conservative ideas growing rapidly through the seventies.⁷⁰⁶ After Nash, the term eventually worked against conservatives because it showed a lack of nuance about a complex movement. Liberal academics utilized this term to think about conservatism as a grand scheme. The liberal view of conservatism began with the consensus historians during the middle of the twentieth century and who believed liberalism was indefinitely ingrained in the American fabric.⁷⁰⁷ The fusionist view of conservatism on the Right did not begin with Kirk, as he remained skeptical about the success of conservatism in America throughout his life.⁷⁰⁸ The fusionist view began

⁷⁰⁴ Infigting has been a regular aspect of conservatism from 1953 onward. See Patrick Allitt, *The Conservatives: Ideas and Personalities Throughout American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), and John Derbyshire, *From the Dissident Right* (Lulu.com, May 2013).

⁷⁰⁵ The rebirth of the study of conservatism among liberal historians can be linked to at least two major professors who have advised many of the students writing current scholarship on conservatives: Leo Ribuffo at George Washington University and Casey Nelson Blake at Columbia University. Conversation with Andrew Hartman. New York, NY., November 2010.

⁷⁰⁶ See, George Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America, since 1945* (Wilmington: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 1998).

⁷⁰⁷ Originally, the term consensus was associated with liberal historians like Richard Hofstadter and Daniel Boorstin, among other consensus thinkers, while fusionism is associated with conservatism. However, it seems that these terms are interchangeable terminology now, and I will use them as such.

⁷⁰⁸ Opinions differ on Kirk's personality and as to whether he was a triumphal figure or more of an existentialist. I have found that those who spent time with him often share the existentialist view of Kirk. The

within New Right thinkers such as William Buckley and Frank Meyer who desired cooperation between traditionalists (like Kirk and Richard Weaver) and libertarians.⁷⁰⁹ Fusionism later served as a useful political tool to discredit conservative politicians for later generations of liberal historians as they continued to demonstrate a linkage between conservatives and sinister elements in society.⁷¹⁰ The consensus view of conservatism stuck, too, because the New Right needed and often welcomed the appearance of oneness, in order to survive beyond texts and imagination. In other words, imagination was no good unless it had a certain amount of measurable political influence.

Conservative historians are equally guilty of using fusionism or the consensus view to make claims about the perceived special place of conservatism in American intellectual life. Whereas the creator of fusionism, Frank Meyer, and others in the New Right used that term to describe what they thought was the friendly, yet cautious, relationship between libertarianism, free marketers, and traditionalists, later, conservative historians approached fusionism as anti-intellectually as their liberal consensus counterparts did.⁷¹¹ Conservative historian George Nash unintentionally popularized fusionist historical thinking among conservatives—as I explained in

existentialist view stands in opposition to the popular view of Kirk who is often portrayed as a jovial happy-go-lucky personality by ISI. My conversations with both Paul Gottfried and Wesley McDonald confirmed this picture of Kirk. However, Kirk's wife, Annette Kirk, and historian, George Nash, present what I call the triumphalist view of Kirk. See, George Nash, "The Life and Legacy of Russell Kirk" (paper presented at The Heritage Foundation, Washington D.C., June 22, 2007).

⁷⁰⁹ For a picture of the so-called fusionist or pragmatic wing of the New Right see, Kevin Smart, *How Great the Triumph: James Burnham, Anticommunism and The Conservative Movement* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1992). The agreed upon author of the fusionism thesis is considered to be ex-communist Frank Meyer. See, Frank Meyer, *In Defense of Freedom and Related Essays* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1996).

⁷¹⁰ Here are two examples of this kind of literature, See, Shadia Drury, *Leo Strauss and The American Right* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997) and Dan Carter, *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, The Origins of The New Conservatism, and The Transformation of American Politics* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2000).

⁷¹¹ See, Edwin Fuenler ed., *The March of Freedom: Modern Classics in Conservative Thought* (Dallas: Spence Pub. Co., 1998); Lee Edwards, *The Conservative Revolution: The Movement That Remade America* (New York: Free Press, 1999).

the introduction—because coherence appeared to be reality in the early seventies.⁷¹² Even then, the broad strokes used to explain conservatism painted over the divisions between rival factions.⁷¹³ After Nash, other conservative historians used his picture of togetherness to bolster conservatism's prominence on the political scene, especially after the election of Ronald Reagan seemed to confirm the fusionist view and the consensus opinion. However, it has only been since the second term of the George W. Bush administration that consensus writing has completely crumbled on the left and right. Motives for the cracking of consensus writing include the fact that conservative infighting was no longer merely on display in conservative organizations, but was open to public view through blogs and new publications.⁷¹⁴ In other words, it became blasphemy not to recognize variance even among liberal historians.⁷¹⁵

At the origin of the fusionism thesis is the argument for hegemony. No intellectual movement, including American conservatism, has pure unity, as James Scott has shown in his study of Malaysian peasantry. Hegemony is always challenged at different levels, and conservatism was no different from any other movement in this manner.⁷¹⁶ Russell Kirk's *The Conservative Mind*—still the most important book published in the postwar conservative canon—faced criticism in every generation of conservatives that followed, whether traditionalist,

⁷¹² Conversation with George Nash. Philadelphia Pa., April 2012.

⁷¹³ I join Andrew Hartman who believes that Nash cannot be faulted for his monolithic portrait as conservatism was still in its infancy, in many ways. See, Andrew Hartman, "Do You Still Read George Nash?," *U.S. Intellectual History*, March 18, 2011, <http://us-intellectual-history.blogspot.com/2011/03/do-you-still-read-george-nash.html>, accessed October 1, 2013.

⁷¹⁴ A host splinter conservative blogs and publications have arisen in reaction to the Bush consensus. A few representative blogs are *The Front Porch Republic* (Berryites and neo-agrarians), *The University Bookman* (Kirkeans), *The Imaginative Conservative* (Kirkean and paleo) and *Taki's Magazine* (paleo-conservative). *The American Conservative* is now the primary place of publication for reactionary conservatism against what they consider to be the false conservatism of *National Review* and *The Weekly Standard*.

⁷¹⁵ While I believe that Jennifer Burns is wrong in her conclusion to state the conservatism's appeal was primarily political—I claim it was imaginative—she is perceptive in picking up that more variation is needed in order to study conservatism better. See, Jennifer Burns, "In Retrospect: George Nash's The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945," *Reviews in American History* 32 (2004): 447-462.

⁷¹⁶ See, James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

neo-conservative, or from another sect of the Right. As I have attempted to demonstrate, fusion is a myth perpetuated by the first wave of cosmopolitan (and often politically liberal) historians who considered conservatism a cabal of rivals to the liberal tradition, and by the nostalgic conservative historians who only see victory where complexity, strife, and disagreement exist.

There were, however, brief moments of union among conservatives, such as the round rejection of the increasing societal power of the Supreme Court and the impending nature of mass media that blossomed in the culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s.⁷¹⁷ It is equally incorrect to locate conservative *moments* in victorious circumstances only (such as the victory of Ronald Reagan and the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment)—a trait shared by the fusionist view, as disagreement often produced more agreement than victory did.⁷¹⁸ In other words, conservatives have often thrived in the midst of apparent defeat.⁷¹⁹ Conservatives used the defeat of Barry Goldwater to gain renewed strength. Strife, persecution, and turmoil often led to the recreation of identity, and this will come into fuller view later.

The Timeline of Fusionism

⁷¹⁷ Notice that I chose to say that conservatives roundly rejected the overarching power of the Supreme Court, and not *Roe v. Wade*, for example. Most conservatives will protest administered social control, and still disagree about the effects of the availability of services such as abortion. There was a fervent debate in the seventies in the libertarian because of these happenings between counter-cultural libertarians (Randians) and traditionalist libertarians like Murray Rothbard. Rothbard was a student of Ludwig Von Mises and held the lonely role of being a traditionalist libertarian who valued family and natural law theory. For an appraisal of some of these debates see, Justin Raimondo, *An Enemy of the State: The Life of Murray N. Rothbard* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2000).

⁷¹⁸ For a fusionist view of a triumphal conservatism see, Jules Tygiel, *Ronald Reagan and The Triumph of American Conservatism* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2006). For a recent history that looks at how conservatives addressed the legal field following *Roe v. Wade* see, Michael Avery et al., *The Federalist Society: How Conservatives Took the Law Back from Liberals* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2013).

⁷¹⁹ The literature that often represents victory within defeat, at least of recent, has come from conservative media personalities. Bernard Goldberg's bestselling book, *Bias: a CBS insider exposes how the media distort the news* (Lanham, MD : Distributed to the trade by National Book Network, 2002), helped to eventually tilt broad favor away from mainstream media, as did Rush Limbaugh's earlier bestselling treatment of the media: *The Way Things Ought to Be* (New York: Pocket Books, 1992). Both of these works led to the eventual decline of network news and to the success of Fox News Channel.

Another problem that faces the fusionism thesis is the fluctuating historical timeline of American conservatism. There is the *long* history or *longue durée* of American conservatism that can be studied as having a tacit existence through the centuries. Those sympathetic to the movement, or those who may have found a cryptic (often fascistic) element in conservative thought patterns, often write these types of narratives.⁷²⁰ Then, there is the *modern* history of conservatism birthed in the collapse of the Bourgeois Age, following the conclusion of the Second World War. The modern approach to conservatism is the most popular style today because, on the one hand, it understands conservatism as an often abrupt, awkward, and sometimes unwelcome player in American intellectual life, whereas conservatives, on the other hand, spin the abrupt shift to show the welcome place of resistance to liberalism in the postwar era.⁷²¹ The backdrop of the Cold War gives further credence to the modern approach because of the vivacious and polarized international debates that took place over which ideology or superpower would guide the soul of the world, which many conservatives such as James Burnham and William Buckley were quite vocal about.⁷²² From a historiographical standpoint, the modern approach makes sense given the steady stream of books and publications published by the New Right, including the founding of *National Review* and the birth of stock conservative

⁷²⁰ An example of the long *durée* historiography from the conservative angle is Gary Gregg's, *Vital Remnants: America's Founding and The Western Tradition* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 1999). From the liberal side, the long *durée* of conservatism is evidenced in David Rosner's *Conservatism and Crisis: The Anti-Modernist Perspective in Twentieth-Century German Philosophy* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012).

⁷²¹ For an example of the abrupt view, see, Jerome Himmelstein, *To The Right: The Transformation of American Conservatism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). William Buckley's *God and Man at Yale; The Superstitions of Academic Freedom* amounts to a sort of abrupt siren call to other conservatives. GAMAY, as it is referred to at *National Review*, appeared two years before Kirk's *The Conservative Mind*.

⁷²² There has been a recent upsurge in a new diplomatic history that seeks to match intellect with foreign relations during the Cold War. See, Andrew Preston, *Sword of The Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012); William Inboden, *Religion and American Foreign Policy, 1945-1960: The Soul of Containment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008) and Angela Lahr, *Millennial Dreams and Apocalyptic Nightmares: The Cold War Origins of Political Evangelicalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

organizations like the Mont Pelerin Society and The Philadelphia Society that followed.⁷²³

Nevertheless, the modern approach, which is the chosen timeline for the consensus school, is problematic due to the fact that historians who utilize this timeline often fail to understand the complex relationship between continuity and discontinuity in American conservatism.

The modern chronological approach is also limited by its own desire to see continuity where discontinuity is an equal player. Within Brian Stock's concept of textual communities, one can see how continuity and discontinuity are often co-belligerents in the historical record.⁷²⁴ The concept of textual communities, framed within imagination and the counter-narrative, reveals how continuity and discontinuity work together to produce, create, rearrange, and interrupt reality.⁷²⁵ The positive element of the modern approach is that it forces conservatism into a manageable and, done the right way, a historicized account of how the players operated in a particular periodization of history.⁷²⁶ As I have tried to demonstrate, there is good reason to consider a third wave of conservatism now, one that is defined by a refinement of the first wave's ideas and the recognition for a theoretical re-alignment.

The Formation of Paleo-Conservatism and The Telos Group

⁷²³ For an insider view of the New Right and American conservatism through the second Bush administration see, Jeffrey Hart, *The Making of the American Conservative Mind: National Review and its times* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2005). A recent critical history on The Mont Pelerin Society is Philip Mirowski, Dieter Plehwe's ed., *The Road from Mont Pèlerin: The Making of The Neoliberal Thought Collective* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

⁷²⁴ The concept of the privileged interpret is a recognition of continuity within discontinuity. See, Brian Stock, *Listening for The Text: on The Uses of The Past* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996).

⁷²⁵ See, Brian Stock, *Ethics Through Literature: Ascetic and Aesthetic Reading in Western Culture* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2007).

⁷²⁶ For two exemplary modern approaches to the conservative movement see, Paul Murphy, *The Rebuke of History: The Southern Agrarians and American Conservative Thought* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001) and Michael Kimmage, *The Conservative Turn: Lionel Trilling, Whittaker Chambers, and The Lessons of Anti-Communism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

Conservatism's more recent history began in the late 1970s and 1980s. The third wave of conservatism began during this period as the second wave of the neo-conservative and the Reaganite coalition formed new alliances and shifted the conjecture of conservatism from New Right to political conservatism.⁷²⁷ Here are a few seminal reasons why paleo-conservatives found justifications to form a counter-revolutionary ideology: 1. Politically active evangelical Protestant leaders began to hold sway in the Republican Party by gradually forming coalitions with the new neo-conservatives over moral issues such as abortion, and therefore fostered acceptance of a hermeneutics of universalism in place of historicism.⁷²⁸ 2. Already by 1980, the New Right was quickly aging or dead. Frank Meyer, Whitaker Chambers, and Willmoore Kendall never knew Ronald Reagan beyond his role as a governor of California. This group constituted the only bulwark against neo-conservative ideology. 3. The corporatization of American business ballooned and the Republican Party absorbed many of these corporate figures and supporters in their continued crusade against Communism.⁷²⁹ Business people funded conservative organizations to further the Republican Party's political prowess, but not the propagation of historicist ideas that downplayed conservatism and universalism. 4. What we think of as traditionalist, agrarian, populist, and reactionary elements in conservatism for the most part went underground and formed new alliances that held very little political prowess

⁷²⁷ The two segments or groups that have garnered the most ink in the study of recent conservatism are neo-conservatives and Protestant Evangelicals. For two monographs that are representative of this trend, see, Daniel K. Williams, *God's Own Party: The Making of The Christian Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010) and Adam Fuller, *Taking The Fight to The Enemy: Neoconservatism and The Age of Ideology* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012).

⁷²⁸ The Straussians and neo-conservatives usually hearken back to Leo Strauss in their preference for universals over particulars. See, Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953).

⁷²⁹ For a critical appraisal on the relationship between conservatism and business culture see, Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen's Crusade Against The New Deal* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010).

because the neo-conservatives drove them further towards dissent by utilizing the language of universalism and human rights as a political weapon against their historicism.⁷³⁰

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated the presence of an overlap between Left and Right in the populist counter-narratives of Christopher Lasch. Lasch was representative of a tacit conservatism apparent in liberals who became critical of lax moral standards, standardization (including education, society, and human anthropology), and a global democratic project aimed at making the world a monoculture. Lasch also represented an entire movement or anti-movement of ex-secularists who became suspicious of elites, the paternalism of the state, corporatism, and the standardizing impulses that eradicated communal mores in return for a more educated and cosmopolitan middle class.⁷³¹ What Lasch started in *The True and Only Heaven*, Paul Gottfried took to a new level as he renewed the legacy and character of H.L. Mencken in carrying out the next phase of revolting against elites. In the following section, I set up the scenario in which a small platoon of remaining New Rightists joined the new paleo-conservatives in order to take the conservative movement back.⁷³² The path to what I am calling the third wave of conservatism (or anti-fusionism) began in an academic journal dedicated to studying the promise of critical theory in America. Because of that *Telos*, an important friendship between Christopher Lasch and Paul Gottfried ensued—a friendship that gradually changed the trajectory of American conservatism from fusion and conservative overreach to that of reaction,

⁷³⁰ Paleo-conservative has grown exponentially since the 1980s. See, Samuel Francis, *Beautiful Losers: Essays on The Failure of American Conservatism* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993) and Bill Kauffman, *Bye Bye, Miss American Empire: Neighborhood Patriots, Backcountry Rebels, and Their Underdog Crusades to Redraw America's Political Map* (White River Junction: Chelsea Green Pub. Co., 2010).

⁷³¹ I mentioned some of these others thinkers including Charles Taylor, Alasdair MacIntyre, John Milbank, and Marilynne Robinson.

⁷³² Paleo-conservative can serve as an umbrella term for a host of sectarian conservatisms including neo-agrarianism, traditionalism, anarchism, and populism.

isolation, and the consolation of communities built on re-establishing conservatism back on the historical Right.⁷³³

A Crooked Line: The Telos Group and the Paleo-Right

At the journal *Telos*, there was also a revolt of sorts taking place in the latter half of the 1970s. *Telos* began as a graduate student journal that shared affinities with both the New Left and Frankfurt School Marxism.⁷³⁴ However, the founders of this journal, which included long-time editor Paul Piccone, felt the path of Marxism, as it was represented in the West, had become misdirected. Western Marxists began to reflect the image of their supposed antagonists as they fused together socialism, capitalism, corporatism, and elitism in an effort to regulate the free market and its champions. The Telos group saw that the new rationalism for socialism—to utilize capitalism and bureaucracy for means of increasing the state’s reach—was a deviant misrepresentation of the New Left’s project for radical democratization of society. The Telos group especially found what academics now refer to as neo-liberalism (the cooperation of big business and governmental institutions) alive in higher education and promoted by supposed radicals: “Whereas in earlier periods higher education was merely an institution meant to prepare new generations of the ruling class for their future privileged social role, today its latent function is simply to train new workers so that they will meet the new requirements of advanced industrial society.”⁷³⁵

⁷³³ Paul Gottfried tells the story of this friendship in *Encounters: My Life with Nixon, Marcuse, and Other Friends and Teachers* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2009), especially chapter five. I have also had conversations with both Gottfried and Telos founder, Prof. Timothy W. Luke, concerning the importance of Telos to paleo-conservatism.

⁷³⁴ See, Timothy W. Luke and Ben Agger ed., *A Journal of No Illusions: Telos, Paul Piccone, and The Americanization of Critical Theory* (New York: Telos Press Pub., 2011).

⁷³⁵ The Telos Staff, “GRADUATE STUDENT JOURNALS: PREDICAMENTS, PROSPECTS AND PITFALLS,” *Telos* 132, 3 (1969): 132.

The *Telos* journal editors also understood that the cozy relationship between Marxism and capitalism was a product of Cold-War thinking.⁷³⁶ In other words, the struggle between competing worldviews and conceptions of political economy gave way to a new Westernized global conception of progress: “In both systems the dominant classes have insoluble problems: the capitalists have difficulties trading with Eastern Europe without disrupting existing socio-political structures; and the Soviet political bureaucracy has problems incorporating Western technology. On the whole, the period of frontal contradictions and of the Manichean perspective of good versus evil (the Cold War) made choices simpler and problems less complex.”⁷³⁷ The editors at *Telos* continued to carry these new criticisms and recognitions forward as they hosted a symposium on Christopher Lasch’s *The Culture of Narcissism*, which served as another turning point for that journal and the paleo-right.

In the introduction to the *Telos* issue dedicated to Lasch’s *The Culture of Narcissism* (CON), Paul Piccone wondered openly about what had happened to the promise of Critical Theory in America. “The collapse of the Left in the 1970s, both politically as well as theoretically, has created a vacuum in urgent need of filling,” Piccone wrote.⁷³⁸ The issue, dedicated to the impact of CON, was important for a couple of reasons. It gave way to the *Telos* founders including thinkers on the Right in their circle—at least under the direction of Piccone—and gradually turning away from the Marxism of the famed Frankfurt School. Even with changes *Telos* remained at the forefront of the European and American intellectual scene in the seventies and eighties by publishing figures as diverse as Russell Jacoby, Emmanuel Levinas, Raymond

⁷³⁶ Gottfried later refined this notion in his monograph *The Strange Career of Marxism*.

⁷³⁷ Antonio Carlo, “The Crisis of Bureaucratic Collectivism,” *Telos* 43 (1980): 29.

⁷³⁸ Paul Piccone, “Introduction,” *Telos* 44 (1980): 1.

Aron, Jurgen Habermas, Dominick La Capra, Adolph Reed, and others. Even with this in mind, their shift away from a Western European Marxist worldview did not go unnoticed.

The new machinations were not exactly welcome. One contributor called *Telos* the right wing of the Left and the Left's right wing.⁷³⁹ While the editors began including ex-New Leftists such as Lasch and a few of his students (Casey Blake and Russell Jacoby) regularly, the inclusion of conservative thinkers was not immediate. In fact, it was years before Paul Gottfried's name first appeared in *Telos*; Gottfried explains the reason why he joined the *Telos* group in the first place: "My new comrades were graying New Leftists who had moved by stages away from their original leftist Frankfurt School positions," Gottfried recalls. He claims the *Telos* founders were interested in including him in their group because he was familiar with the work of German jurist Carl Schmitt as "they were supplementing their changing belief systems or investigative methodologies."⁷⁴⁰ Although Gottfried was a recognized paleo-conservative before he joined the *Telos* group, some of his most profound criticisms of neo-conservative and what he calls the managerial state came from his participation in *Telos* and a new friendship with Lasch and Piccone.

Paul Gottfried is most well known as the father of paleo-conservatism. Therefore, his participation in an academic circle such as *Telos* brings to light important revelations concerning the birth of paleo-conservatism. Gottfried knew Lasch before *Telos*, as Lasch was integral in making sure Gottfried was not selected for a job as a professor at the University of Rochester

⁷³⁹ Paul Breines, "The Left's Right: Remarks on the Relative Autonomy of the Base," *Telos* 46 (1981): 88-91.

⁷⁴⁰ Gottfried, *Encounters*, 53.

during a long-lasting war between Lasch and department of history chair Eugene Genovese.⁷⁴¹ Lasch admitted to Gottfried his role in knocking him out of contention for a job on that illustrious staff. However, Gottfried forgave him and the two forged a bond. At this time in Gottfried's career, he was still very much involved in conservative organizations, and enamored at the things that Lasch and Piccone were detailing. They were telling others that the distance between the Democratic and Republican Parties was nearly non-existent, and this was fascinating to Gottfried. "Piccone and Lasch both observed that the differences now separating Left and Right had become utterly trivial in comparison to what they had been before," writes Gottfried.⁷⁴² By the late eighties and early nineties, *Telos* was leading a small revolution, as intellectuals who congregated in that circle were reacting against popular and publicly soluble versions of both conservatism and liberalism. This was apparent as *Telos* met at Elizabethtown College in an important 1990 conference that Lasch, Gottfried, and neo-Kirkean Claes Ryn attended.

The 1990 Telos Conference, which thematically focused on the possibility of populism as a real force against the new class of global elites and progress, featured seminal debates between Lasch and Ryn. Ryn presented a paper titled "The Problematic Heritage of Populism" which was a critical take on Lasch's revival of populism. Ryn's main argument against Lasch and populism was that an elite would arise no matter what kind of government was in place. "Given the traditional conservatives' concern with the established order and natural hierarchies, it is not surprising that Ryn was not particularly sympathetic to any resurgence of what he understood as 'populism' —something he proceeded to associate with the worst "plebiscitarian" features of the

⁷⁴¹ Gottfried, *Encounters*, see chapter 8.

⁷⁴² Gottfried, *Encounters*, 94. Gottfried goes on to claim that Piccone became something of a neo-conservative given his support of Rudolph Giuliani and the first war in Iraq.

French Revolution: Rousseauism and Jacobinism,” the conference reporter wrote of Ryn’s presentation.⁷⁴³ The following day, Lasch presented his paper “Populism and the Revolt against Liberalism.” From Gottfried’s remembrance of the exchange between Ryn and Lasch, a firestorm erupted between the two because Lasch appealed to “real people” and Ryn accused him of romanticizing populism and the people. Ryn, unlike Kirk at late career, no longer held out the possibility that a traditionally conceived politics was possible.⁷⁴⁴ Ryn, reflecting the views of the neo-Kirkean textual community, believed that conservatives were better suited to change culture than run for political office. Gottfried admittedly found Lasch’s project appealing because of his penetrating criticisms of progress (and for reasons that Gottfried seems more akin to middle-class mores than do the bourgeois Kirkeans), despite the fact that he was cautious concerning the prospects of populism.⁷⁴⁵

The Conservative Civil War and the NEH Controversy

The 1990 Telos Conference came in the midst of a decade-long civil war among conservatives. By 1990, the conservative civil war had spilled over into the Left as neo-conservative public intellectuals like Midge Decter attacked the paleo-conservatives for their apparent anti-Semitism and attacked Lasch for his historicism, which Decter linked to Nazism.⁷⁴⁶ Decter, wife of neo-conservative cultural critical Norman Podhoretz, embraced the Straussian

⁷⁴³ The Telos Staff, “Populism vs. the New Class: The Second Elizabethtown Telos Conference (April 5-7, 1991),” *Telos*, 88 (1991): 12.

⁷⁴⁴ Conversation with Bradley Birzer. Atlanta, Ga., October 4, 2013. Birzer, who is working on a biography that considers Kirk anew, says that Kirk was more concerned with politics at late career than at the beginning and middle phase of his life. According to Birzer, Kirk wanted to take on the neo-conservatives at their own game before his death in 1994.

⁷⁴⁵ Gottfried, *Encounters*, 180-181. Gottfried is also admittedly not a *cultural* conservative.

⁷⁴⁶ Gottfried, *Encounters*, 182. Decter attacked Lasch for his apparent anti-universalism (or historicism).

belief that historicism was the link to the rapid expansion of Nazism in Germany.⁷⁴⁷ In fact, she became infamous for lobbing anti-Semitism at anyone not of the neo-conservative ilk.⁷⁴⁸ When Russell Kirk dared to criticize neo-conservative's foreign policy and their unwavering support for Israel in a 1988 speech at the Heritage Foundation, Decter fired back in the *Washington Times*: "A bloody outrage, a piece of anti-Semitism by Kirk that impugns the loyalty of neo-conservatives," she wrote.⁷⁴⁹ While the conflict between Decter and the paleo-right intensified and pored over into venues such as The Philadelphia Society, one incident in particular marked a new phase and a formidable break within the conservative movement. That incident also defined paleo-conservatism and its founder Paul Gottfried.⁷⁵⁰

In 1981, just when conservatives were exerting their first national influence with one of their own in the White House, something seemingly innocuous changed the course of conservatism in America. M.E. (Mel to his friends) Bradford—a rotund literature professor at the University of Dallas—was nominated to the chairmanship of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Bradford seemed a likely pick for the position because he was an acquaintance of

⁷⁴⁷ These books considered the ongoing Straussian debates over universalism and historicism. See, Sharon Portnoff, *Reason and Revelation Before Historicism: Strauss and Fackenheim* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011) and David Meyers, *Resisting History: Historicism and Its Discontents in German-Jewish Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

⁷⁴⁸ It is worth noting that Decter's criticisms still resound. However, recently, conservatives have begun to openly question Decter's accusations, as the founding generations of the neo-conservatives are aged and mostly inactive in conservative organizations. See, See, Bradley Birzer, "Keynote Speech," (paper presented at the regional meeting of The Philadelphia Society, Atlanta, Georgia, October 4, 2013).

⁷⁴⁹ Paleo-conservative Sam Francis retells the story of Decter's crusade against the New Right. See, Sam Francis, "Queen of the Damned," *Chronicles Magazine*, August 1, 2004, <http://www.chroniclesmagazine.org/2004/08/01/queen-of-the-damned/>, accessed August 11, 2013.

⁷⁵⁰ The terminology here is often interchangeable. Old Right can refer to pre-Second World War conservatives such as H.L. Mencken and Paul Elmer More. Now Old Right can also mean thinkers such as Russell Kirk and Frank Meyer who were a part of the immediate first-generation of postwar conservatism called the New Right. The term New Right eventually dissipated, and was replaced by more general terms like conservative, traditionalist, cultural conservative, paleo-conservative, and right-winger. I utilize the term new New Right also as a way to describe the paleo-conservatives who are similar to both the New Right and Old Right in many ways.

Ronald Reagan and had campaigned for him.⁷⁵¹ Bradford earned his conservative credentials as an active second-generation member of the New Right in the Southern Agrarian tradition, and he had studied with the famed Vanderbilt School Agrarians. Like Kirk, Bradford believed America was a conservative nation with conservative principles handed down through other great Western Civilizations like Rome. Bradford also thought that the South prior to the Civil War was the closest societal example Americans had of a European-style conservatism—a view not uncommon among the New Right prior to 1980.⁷⁵² As a sympathizer of the antebellum South, Bradford was no fan of Abraham Lincoln, and what was once considered a less than harmful claim—criticizing Lincoln from the Right—became a serious accusation that could destroy careers and friendships.⁷⁵³

“You just can’t attack Lincoln and get away with it—you just can’t,” Bradford told an audience in 1989.⁷⁵⁴ Bradford regularly exchanged volleys with West Coast Straussian Harry Jaffa, who was a Lincoln-loving Straussian and a student of the conservative philosopher Leo Strauss.⁷⁵⁵ Jaffa was trained as a philosopher but extended his research into the field of the America founding. He took liberties with the historical record by making the historical record fit around his philosophical insights.⁷⁵⁶ Jaffa believes that America is the inheritor of Western Civilization and that Lincoln holds a special place in it because “Abraham Lincoln had in some

⁷⁵¹ See, David Gordon, “Southern Cross,” *The American Conservative*, April 1, 2010, <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/southern-cross/>, accessed October 2, 2013.

⁷⁵² See, Gordon, “Southern Cross,” *The American Conservative*, April 1, 2010, <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/southern-cross/>.

⁷⁵³ See, Daniel McCarthy, “The Right’s Civil War,” *The American Conservative*, July 23, 2013, <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/the-rights-civil-war/>, accessed October 3, 2013.

⁷⁵⁴ Gordon, “Southern Cross,” <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/southern-cross/>.

⁷⁵⁵ Harry Jaffa is referred to as a “West Coast” Straussian because he teaches at Claremont College in California, and for reasons that the West Coast Straussians view America as great democratic model and situate America as an exceptional enlightened nation set a part at the end of history.

⁷⁵⁶ See, Edward Erler, “Harry Jaffa,” *First Principles*, September 24, 2010, <http://www.firstprinciplesjournal.com/articles.aspx?article=1043&loc=r>, accessed October 26, 2013, accessed October 26, 2013.

sense re-founded the American regime by rejecting the radically modern Lockean principles of the founders and grounding the new political regime in Aristotelian natural right.⁷⁵⁷ Therefore, any criticism of Lincoln was taken as a criticism of universal moral standards, and of the founding principles of America, including its documents, such as the Constitution.

Bradford's intellectual attributes, including his appearance that reminded people of bygone age—he wore a white Stetson, was 350 pounds, tall, and a former boxer—lost him the NEH chair as Reagan believed he could not afford to lose neo-conservatives' support from the likes of the Podhoretzs (including Decter) and Kristols (including Gertrude Himmelfarb) because of their influence in places like New York and Washington. Following the NEH controversy, according to many, not only was Bradford never the same after the incident—a few speculate it may have led to Bradford's early death—but the conservative movement was also forever altered.⁷⁵⁸

It was under these auspices that Paul Gottfried found himself coming of age in the conservative movement. All of the aforementioned controversies including the Lincoln debates and the NEH controversy had an indelible impact on Gottfried's career and the formation of paleo-conservatism as opposed to both traditionalism and neo-conservatism. The days when conservatives could be radically opposed to progress and democracy were over, and Gottfried began fighting a rear-guard effort to conserve a time when conservatives could speak openly about the past.⁷⁵⁹ It is possible to witness the theme of preserving what he calls a conservative

⁷⁵⁷ Erler, "Harry Jaffa," *First Principles*, September 24, 2010, <http://www.firstprinciplesjournal.com/articles.aspx?article=1043&loc=r>, accessed October 26, 2013.

⁷⁵⁸ Conversations with a host of conservatives who were around during these wars all mentioned the grand toll it took on Bradford.

⁷⁵⁹ Later in this chapter, I evidence several episodes where Gottfried's textual community faced harsh criticisms for opinions considered harmless at one time. A couple of episodes that Gottfried's textual community uses to show how this social transformation is the recent controversy with Heritage Foundation researcher Jason

“pluralism” throughout the corpus of his work.⁷⁶⁰ Instead of collapsing into depression over his plight as a historicist and unpopular reactionary, it was almost as he up made for this conflict. Where others backtracked in the face of controversy, Gottfried took on the role of the new Mencken as he fought what he considered the inseparable cabals of the Republican Party establishment and the neo-conservatives. In other words, because Gottfried felt he had been shunned by the neo-conservatives—and kept from attaining prominence in the conservative movement—the only alliances he found worth conserving were those of fellow reactionaries who had no change of earning acceptance, either.

Gottfried’s Canon of Work

Paul Gottfried believes that his first book is not a defining work.⁷⁶¹ *Conservative Millenarians (CM): The Romantic Experience in Bavaria* does not make the cut of any conservative must-read list, as it is a narrow piece of academic literature.⁷⁶² CM tackles the subject of how early nineteenth-century Bavarians, who identified with the Romantic Movement, became outspoken opponents of liberal democratic revolutions. These romantic-minded

Richwine. Richwine, a PhD from Harvard, researched IQ and race and was fired from the Heritage Foundation after the Washington Post revealed this in the spring of 2013. See, Dylan Matthews, “Heritage Study Co-author Opposed Letting in Immigrants with Low IQs,” *The Washington Post*, May 8, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2013/05/08/heritage-study-co-author-opposed-letting-in-immigrants-with-low-iqs/>, accessed November 23, 2013. One of the most famous cases is Mississippi senator Trent Lott’s remark at South Carolina senator Strom Thurmond’s 100th birthday. Lott commented that the country would be a better place if Thurmond had been elected president. These controversies are emblematic, not because liberals criticize, but for reasons that conservatives will not back their own.

⁷⁶⁰ The literature of those considering the influence of Gottfried on the conservative movement is not extensive. For three differing views on Gottfried see, Claes Ryn, “Paul Gottfried,” *First Principles*, February 24, 2012, <http://www.firstprinciplesjournal.com/articles.aspx?article=405&loc=r>, accessed October 26, 2013; Thomas Bertoneau, “The Gist of Paul Gottfried: Right Principle and the Failure of the American Right,” *First Principles*, February 9, 2009, <http://www.firstprinciplesjournal.com/articles.aspx?article=1214>, accessed October 26, 2013; and Seth Bartee, “What You Need to Know about Paul Gottfried,” *Front Porch Republic*, September 13, 2013, <http://www.frontporchrepublic.com/2013/09/what-you-need-to-know-about-paul-gottfried/>, accessed October 26, 2013.

⁷⁶¹ Conversation with Paul Gottfried. Elizabethtown, Pa., March 2012.

⁷⁶² Paul Gottfried, *Conservative Millenarians: The Romantic Experience in Bavaria* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979).

Bavarians supported monarchical institutions and a church-state alliance to oppose the growing tide of liberalism. Given's CM's subject matter and conclusions, it is ironic that Gottfried claims to have ever been a committed conservative Republican as the seeds of his later ideas and reactions are readily visible here.⁷⁶³

CM is a revisionist work in the field of German history. German Romantics, Gottfried wrote, had been given a bad name because of the legacy of Adolph Hitler, and therefore warranted another look by historians. Therefore, Gottfried cautioned fellow historians about playing the role of "hanging judge" with the lives of historical actors—such as dead German thinkers—who can no longer defend themselves.⁷⁶⁴ He also wrote CM to problematize the historical record by studying conservative types of thinkers who were also utopians. This was taboo in 1979 as American conservatives publicly downplayed or outrightly ignored this aspect of their heritage.⁷⁶⁵

Beyond these criticisms, there are noteworthy thoughts in CM that give insight into Gottfried's conservatism. He chided the Bavarian Romantics for falling too far into subjectivism—a key to his brand of historicism which is not synonymous with a radical kind of subjectivism.⁷⁶⁶ He was also interested in early reactions to modernization that included religious and philosophical responses to Enlightenment liberalism. It was evident that Gottfried was already thinking about how early conservatives reacted against liberalism from a customary perspective. It is also interesting to note that CM was released the same year as Lasch's *Culture*

⁷⁶³ Conversation with Paul Gottfried. Baltimore, Md., November 2011.

⁷⁶⁴ Gottfried, *Conservative Millenarians*, 1.

⁷⁶⁵ Russell Kirk was famous for claiming that conservatism was not an ideology. See, *The Conservative Mind*, especially chapter one and eight.

⁷⁶⁶ Conversation with Paul Gottfried. Elizabethtown, Pa., March 2012. Gottfried is adamant that his version of historicism is not opposed to divine revelation. In an email exchange of 9/6/2013, Gottfried claimed that he holds a great reverence for Biblical scripture.

of Narcissism, and during an election cycle that saw Reagan catapult conservatism into a mainstay in American political and intellectual life.

It would be seven years before Gottfried published another monograph. By the time *The Search for Historical Meaning: Hegel and The Postwar American Right*, was published in 1986, Gottfried was openly questioning the conservatism of his colleagues, neo-conservatives or otherwise.⁷⁶⁷ *The Search for Historical Meaning* (TSHM) is Gottfried's most important book for the following reasons: 1. It is the most precise criticism of the New Right and the neo-conservatives ever written by a conservative active in the movement. 2. Gottfried demonstrates why historical thinking (or historicism) is important to maintaining conservatism. 3. It is also a period piece in that it synthesizes key arguments that the traditionalists and paleos were using against the neo-cons at the time. 4. It is also a revisionist work that considers the historical traditions that informed the New Right. Lastly, TSHM is definitive for Gottfried's career as a conservative historicist.

TSHM was released during a time when conservatives did not want to interact with Gottfried's criticisms. With major electoral success, who could or should argue with how conservatism reached that point, some asked. One aspect was certain: the Reagan era had definitively shifted conservatism from an intellectual predisposition to a full-throttle political movement.⁷⁶⁸ This swing in conservative thinking produced mixed results for conservatives

⁷⁶⁷ He uses this review essay Samuel Francis' biography of James Burnham to criticize neo-conservative foreign policy. See, Paul Gottfried, "The Historical Realism of James Burnham," *Intercollegiate Review* 20 (1984): 43-48.

⁷⁶⁸ Most conservatives and Republican Party members of this period were familiar with what is referred to as (Ronald) Reagan's 11th commandment which stated, "thou shalt not speak ill of any fellow Republican." This also resulted from what is considered a dulling of conservative intellectualism. See, Quin Hillyer, "A New Eleventh Commandment," *The American Spectator*, February 2013, <http://spectator.org/archives/2013/02/06/a-new-eleventh-commandment>, accessed October 26, 2013.

hopeful in the first *conservative* president, as the founding generation of conservatives who were on the outside looking in, again.

Gottfried wrote TSHM as a kind of reprimand or reminder about conservatism's roots in what he calls historical thinking.⁷⁶⁹ He demonstrated that American conservatism did indeed have traceable roots in German philosophy, particularly, the Hegelian dialectical way of thinking. This was in direct opposition to the neo-conservative view that conservative thinking was rooted in the Enlightenment.⁷⁷⁰ He found a tacit Hegelianism in the works of James Burnham, Will Herberg, Eric Voegelin, and others who congregated in the New Right.⁷⁷¹ In the revised preface to TSHM, Gottfried explains that he had to write TSHM because "...the influence of Leo Strauss and his disciples, was pushing younger (presumably conservative) Americans away from a true understanding of the formative role of historical tradition."⁷⁷² Gottfried admits that his valuing and reinserting ideas like historicism led to "increasing isolation" because conservatives had been taught to "shun" historicism.⁷⁷³ Still, Gottfried says that this unspoken and residual Hegelianism was important because it put greater value on history and "continuity" rather than on abstract universals, such as human rights.

Gottfried found historicist ideas in unlikely places. Russell Kirk, he said, was a historicist despite Kirk's rejection of German ideas.⁷⁷⁴ Still, Gottfried believes Kirk was a kind of proto-historicist in the Burkean tradition, and in that regard, various conservative intellectuals

⁷⁶⁹ Paul Gottfried, *The Search for Historical Meaning: Hegel and the Postwar American Right* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1986).

⁷⁷⁰ See, Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Roads to Modernity: The British, French, and American Enlightenments* (New York: Knopf, 2004). Himmelfarb essentially tries to bring together Enlightenment Liberalism together with American conservatism.

⁷⁷¹ Gottfried, *The Search for Historical Meaning*, xv.

⁷⁷² Gottfried, *The Search for Historical Meaning*, viii.

⁷⁷³ Gottfried, *The Search for Historical Meaning*, viii.

⁷⁷⁴ Gottfried, *The Search for Historical Meaning*, 109, 116, 125.

operating under the guise of maintaining Western Civilization applied various kinds of historicism (existential and political) to their projects.⁷⁷⁵ In other words, Western Civilization was merely a byword for a historicist logic whose goal was to vouchsafe a particular kind of *historical* heritage in America. Ironically then, this impulse to locate America and the Founding in the continuous line of Western Civilization also gave rise to anti-historical conservatism. Anti-historical conservatism began as a way to connect conservatism to abstract universal principles located outside of custom and prescription—both terms found in Kirk’s work. Strauss applied these abstractions to Western Civilization and to America’s relationship to it.

In the first chapter, Gottfried looks specifically at the Hegelian legacy in American conservatism. The Right Hegelian tradition is different from the Burkean tradition in nuanced ways. The Burkean tradition justifies rights and duties in particular and known political experiences. However, the Hegelian Right of the nineteenth-century accepted authoritarianism in place of democracy as a kind of local way of understanding authority. The New Right, Gottfried says, had additional reasons to embrace the “older” Hegel as he was a sympathizer of Christianity and not an overt supporter of the abstractions of the French Revolution.⁷⁷⁶ Despite these Hegelian characteristics, conservatives had good reason not to become “Hegelians” in the middle of the twentieth century, as well. Émigré postwar conservatives like Thomas Molnar chided modern left Hegelians for attempting to play God in history. And then other Left émigrés like Herbert Marcuse and Alexander Kojeve confirmed Molnar’s objection by radicalizing the Prussian thinker for their great political projects.⁷⁷⁷

⁷⁷⁵ Gottfried, *The Search for Historical Meaning*, see chapter seven.

⁷⁷⁶ Gottfried, *The Search for Historical Meaning*, 6-9.

⁷⁷⁷ Gottfried, *The Search for Historical Meaning*, 12-15.

Gottfried followed the first chapter with an interesting historiography of how the New Right's rejection of Hegel and historicism actually hurt their cause and allowed the Straussians to overtake conservatism and make it abstractly ideological.⁷⁷⁸ By the time Gottfried reaches the final chapter, conservatives have all but rejected the appeal to history in favor of futurism and presentism. What made the New Right conservative, in Gottfried's opinion, is "that a sense of history was long basic to the conservative movement."⁷⁷⁹ What changed conservatism from an intellectual way of thinking to politics were the neo-conservatives who made politics "a vocation."⁷⁸⁰ The following statement is the most important in TSHM and the definitive avenue for Gottfried's project to return conservatism to the Right: "The battle against Hegelianism, once waged by some conservatives, has led into the more grandiose struggle against 'historicism,' and this call to arms has served to weaken the historical-mindedness of much of the American intellectual right."⁷⁸¹

Laying the Foundation for Reaction

A couple of years later, Paul Gottfried co-authored *The Conservative Movement* with Thomas Fleming. The fact that he chose to write a book with Fleming was a statement in itself because Fleming was editor of the controversial right-wing publication *Chronicles*.⁷⁸² *The Conservative Movement* (TCM) was written with multiple agendas in mind: a. as a historical corrective to the accepted fusionist interpretation; b. as a jeremiad against neo-conservatism; and c. as an insider's account of what *really* went wrong with conservatism.

⁷⁷⁸ Gottfried, *The Search for Historical Meaning*, 19. Gottfried continued to flesh out this contention. He is not so much concerned with ideology, as he was with the fact that Strauss politicized conservatism and eroded its meaning. Variety was replaced by a universal abstraction for rights, in Gottfried's thinking.

⁷⁷⁹ Gottfried, *The Search for Historical Meaning*, 105.

⁷⁸⁰ Gottfried, *The Search for Historical Meaning*, 105.

⁷⁸¹ Gottfried, *The Search for Historical Meaning*, 106.

⁷⁸² See Thomas Bertonneau, "Thomas Fleming," *First Principles*, December 6, 2012, <http://www.firstprinciplesjournal.com/articles.aspx?article=120&theme=home&loc=b>, accessed October 26, 2013.

The first edition of TCM was published in 1988 at the end of the Reagan presidency. To the outsider, the publication of a revisionist account of American conservatism at its supposed apex appears strange. No other conservatives were writing counter-narratives to Nash's accepted fusionist account at this point, either.⁷⁸³ In the preface to the second edition, Gottfried explains what he had corrected and updated from the first edition, specifically that he initially, believed the postwar New Right had been derailed by the neo-conservatives who accepted big government as the only way to implement conservative ideas in Washington.⁷⁸⁴ In actuality, Gottfried now connected to "an impassioned anticommunism, which could be and was pared with changing domestic agendas" from the beginning.⁷⁸⁵ William Buckley, he writes, was never a conservative but rather an opportunist who could play many different roles given the setting.⁷⁸⁶ Both of the aforementioned assertions seem to contain nuggets of truth with large amounts of vitriol. "The second reason for revising the book stems from my growing awareness that postwar conservatism marked an end as well as the beginning of a movement," Gottfried wrote.⁷⁸⁷ From this point, Gottfried takes conservative historian George Nash to task for using fusion to explain conservatism instead of disjunction and complexity.⁷⁸⁸ He finalizes the new preface by saying that the paleo-conservatives, of which he is one, look to challenge the established order that they see as being one gigantic mass of leftist ideology located in Washington D.C.

⁷⁸³ There is a well-known symposium on the state of conservatism that was published in the spring 1986 issue of the *Intercollegiate Review*. This issue is rarely spoken of at ISI because the then editor, Gregory Wolfe, intentionally stacked that forum with the paleo-right thinkers including Russell Kirk, Clyde Wilson, Paul Gottfried, and Mel Bradford. Wolfe was then fired from his position shortly after that because of his apparent disapproval of neo-conservatism, according to Gottfried.

⁷⁸⁴ Paul Gottfried and Thomas Fleming, *The Conservative Movement*, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988), vii.

⁷⁸⁵ Gottfried, *The Conservative Movement*, vii.

⁷⁸⁶ Conversation with Paul Gottfried. Baltimore, Md., November 2011.

⁷⁸⁷ Gottfried, *The Conservative Movement*, viii.

⁷⁸⁸ Gottfried, *The Conservative Movement*, ix.

TCM has seven parts, and in those seven sections, Gottfried presents his view of the history of American conservatism. In the first chapter, Gottfried demonstrates how the conservative “worldview” was formed during the 1950s. The fifties, however, were not *the* birth of conservatism, as conservatism was something that existed in tacit form long before the New Right. In the second chapter, Gottfried perceives a shift in conservatism just before and after the defeat of Barry Goldwater in 1964. The next phase was the neo-conservatives’ entry into the “Ivory Tower.” A reason for including this chapter, according to Gottfried, was to demonstrate how badly conservatives like Buckley and the Straussians desired acceptance from liberals. The fourth chapter is titled “The Revolt of the Intellectuals,” and in it Gottfried ponders at length about why the neo-cons looked down upon the first-generation New Right. In the remainder of TCM, he demonstrates how and why the neo-conservatives and Protestant Evangelicals formed an impenetrable alliance that dominates both the Republican Party and intellectual conservatism.

From its inception in the 1950s, Gottfried states that conservatism was double-minded, something which created an impetus for outsiders to manipulate it. He blames this double-mindedness on Russell Kirk’s desire to Europeanize American conservatism.⁷⁸⁹ Essentially, Gottfried retells the story of fusionism with new twists and turns from the perspective of a conservative who does not believe that there is an actual conservative heritage in America.⁷⁹⁰ Conservatism’s split identity—American and European—gave way to a brief moment of fusion between traditionalism and Frank Meyer’s economic libertarianism (the New Right). This is where Gottfried’s telling of the conservative story differs from the majority views. He says that

⁷⁸⁹ Gottfried, *The Conservative Movement*, 9. In the first edition, Gottfried calls this Anglicization of the American mind. Several members of his textual community also carry forward the “Americanization” of conservatism thesis in their research.

⁷⁹⁰ Gottfried often oscillates on conservatism’s history in America. However, this has not stopped him from pursuing a vision of a conservative America.

the New Right felt the weight of the economic goals of Meyer's libertarianism because this side of fusionism rarely appealed to history and imagination.

Goldwater's campaign was a victory for the coming neo-conservatives because it created a new fervor for activism. However, it was a setback for the New Right because Goldwater was the embodiment of the fusionist contradictions of traditionalism and economic libertarianism.⁷⁹¹ The fanfare that followed the Goldwater campaign—a kind of Lost Cause mentality—forged a new kind of fusionism between economic libertarianism and a fervent anti-communism promoted by the likes of Morris Cohen and Irving Kristol.⁷⁹² What seemed to be a nice and compatible cohabitation of ideas ended up pushing the New Right out of institutions (such as the Heritage Foundation and the Hoover Institution) because the traditionalists were often isolationist and critical of capitalism.

With the neo-conservatives and evangelicals now controlling key conservative think tanks and sources of funding by the 1980s, neo-cons created an empire out of the Republican Party and American foreign policy.⁷⁹³ This is a resonating theme Gottfried returns to, and one that most conservatives will not touch because they are funded by organizations dominated by neo-conservatives. In the final chapter of the second edition, Gottfried continues to reveal the connections between neo-conservatives and conservative funding sources that only a conservative insider would know and understand. What is remarkable is that, in the conclusion, Gottfried remained optimistic about the return of the paleo-Right. “In the end, however, there is

⁷⁹¹ Gottfried, *The Conservative Movement*, 31-33.

⁷⁹² Gottfried, *The Conservative Movement*, 69-71.

⁷⁹³ There is a theoretical assumption here. The reason for this alliance was an agreed upon universal morality. The Straussians believed in philosophical universalism, and the Evangelicals believe in theological universals. Both camps naturally gravitated towards one another from these assumptions.

one virtue shared by all authentic men of the Right, the combination of short-term pessimism with long-term optimism,” he stated.⁷⁹⁴

The High Critic of Liberalism and Conservatism

The next phase of Gottfried’s career is a filtering out of his interaction with the Telos group and Lasch. His following four books were theoretical and genealogical reconsiderations of the liberal tradition in its various forms.⁷⁹⁵ After TCM, Gottfried published *Carl Schmitt: politics and theory*.⁷⁹⁶ His interest in Schmitt came from the Telos group’s curiosity in Schmitt as a worthwhile critic of liberalism. In *Carl Schmitt* (CM), Gottfried considers Schmitt as a defender of the nation-state, and a worthy critic of the Western political tradition. Once again, Gottfried plays the role of revisionist by claiming that Schmitt was not simply a Nazi sympathizer and theoretician, but one of the most erudite detractors of liberal democracy in the twentieth century. “Schmitt points to a somber future in his works of the 1960s. It is a world marked by the activities of political intellectuals, each pushing a salvific value and a revolutionary agenda while sovereign states continue to decay,” Gottfried wrote.⁷⁹⁷ Gottfried’s CM is a narrow piece of scholarship and is not directly connected to the American conservative movement but rather to engage scholars of Schmitt.

His following three books form what is known as the Marxism Trilogy. Each of the three following monographs tackles some aspect of the travels of Marxism, Marxist ideology, and

⁷⁹⁴ Gottfried, *The Conservative Movement*, 166.

⁷⁹⁵ Even as Gottfried writes about liberalism, he is also speaking about modern conservatism, too. It is important to remember that Gottfried does not consider the United States to have a genuine conservative tradition like Europe. He believes that the only way to instill conservatism is through imagination and decentralizing the state, which is a fusion of both Laschian and Kirkean themes.

⁷⁹⁶ Paul Gottfried, *Carl Schmitt: Politics and Theory* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990).

⁷⁹⁷ Paul Gottfried, “Confronting the Challenge of the Exception: George Schwab as an Interpreter of Carl Schmitt,” *Political Science Reviewer* 20 (1991): 284.

liberalism in America and Europe. The Marxism trilogy contains Gottfried's most original claim and seminal contribution to the field of intellectual history, which is that therapeutic liberalism (or radicalism) was not imported to America from Europe. He argues that contemporary leftist radicalism was created in America by the Frankfurt School émigré thinkers who were themselves influenced by their new surroundings in the United States. Prodigies of Frankfurt School thinkers, like Herbert Marcuse, then exported this new therapeutic radicalism back to Europe.

After Liberalism: Mass Democracy in The Managerial State is Gottfried's second most important work and the first book in the Marxism Trilogy. *After Liberalism* (AF) stands out in Gottfried's historiography because it is ultimately an extension of the Laschian project of looking deeper into the roots of contemporary liberalism.⁷⁹⁸ The basis or running thesis throughout *After Liberalism* is that mass democratic political debate depends less on substantive claims than it does on distinctions between rival social democratic camps (Republican and Democratic). "Throughout this century but most noticeably in the last fifty years, this book argues, democratic practice has entailed less and less vigorous self-government, while becoming progressively dissociated from any specific or cultural heritage," Gottfried writes.⁷⁹⁹ Liberalism, accordingly, has lost its meaning and "essence" during the last half of the twentieth century, as it has disassociated itself from history.

The loss of the liberal essence is the subject of the first chapter of AF. The first section considers what Gottfried says is a semantic problem in liberalism. "First, liberalism has not been allowed to keep any fixed and specific meaning," Gottfried adds. "...Self-described liberals in the Western world during the last seventy-five years have been nationalists, internationalists,

⁷⁹⁸ Paul Gottfried, *After Liberalism: Mass Democracy in The Managerial State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

⁷⁹⁹ Gottfried, *After Liberalism*, ix.

socialists, libertarians, localists, bureaucratic centralizers, upholders of Christian morality, and advocates of alternative lifestyles.”⁸⁰⁰ Gottfried follows his semantic criticisms with a history of the shifting language of liberalism. In America, the difference in the language of liberalism is only one of degrees now. On one side are the hawkish “neoconservative(s)” and on the other is “the left wing of the Democratic Party.”⁸⁰¹ Both of these wings of liberalism are globalists with similar agendas. Gottfried concludes this foundational first chapter by saying that: “The liberal essence, it can be said, continues to elude.”⁸⁰² In chapters two through four, Gottfried continues to explain what he considers to be the changing goals of the American left. The second chapter concerns the differences between liberalism and democracy. Early critics of democratic theory underestimated thinkers such as John Stuart Mill because they did not understand that “the intertwining of mass democracy and public administration as the shape of things to come.”⁸⁰³

The impulse towards centralization is a key component of democracy. This is the issue in chapter three. In order for democracy to be implemented, Gottfried says, it needed an administrative mechanism. The next step or phase in maintaining liberal democracy and the administrative state was the formulation of a grand theory of pluralism to keep these mechanisms in place (chapter four). From this juncture, Gottfried perceives the expansion of democracy and democratic language to be a global phenomenon utilized by the New Class for its larger political goals. “The managerial state has also given strong encouragement to multicultural activities and curricula that are intended to showcase the genius of designated victims,” he writes.⁸⁰⁴ New-

⁸⁰⁰ Gottfried, *After Liberalism*, 3.

⁸⁰¹ Gottfried, *After Liberalism*, 29.

⁸⁰² Gottfried, *After Liberalism*, 29.

⁸⁰³ Gottfried, *After Liberalism*, 48.

⁸⁰⁴ Gottfried, *After Liberalism*, 108.

Class pluralism is not pluralism at all, but a form of social control aimed at making people “right-thinking liberal democrats.”⁸⁰⁵

The fifth chapter serves as a kind of tribute to Christopher Lasch, which is aptly titled “Mass Democracy and the Populist Alternative.” Gottfried looks at the possibility of populism as a force against the managerial state. While it is clear that Gottfried sympathizes with populists, his optimism for populism’s success is minimal: “The identitarian politics and appeals to a cultural heritage that populists favor can only work among those who share a traditional communal identity.”⁸⁰⁶ Those seeking to implement a national or internal populist movement will fail because populism is only designed to be “regionally based.”⁸⁰⁷ Gottfried’s project for living out the past is much different from Lasch’s because he understands that the interconnectivity of the global world is much more ingrained than Lasch thought it was. Therefore, Gottfried’s imagination is much more analytic because of what he considers conservatives’ continued failure to understand the nature of liberalism and its almost a priori presence in the fabric of America.⁸⁰⁸ Gottfried considers himself a nineteenth century conservative liberal because he believes that liberalism and democracy, ultimately, belong to different “epochs.” Liberalism belongs to the nineteenth century and democracy to the international twentieth century.⁸⁰⁹

Three years later in 2002, Gottfried published the second volume of the Marxism Trilogy titled *Multiculturalism and The Politics of Guilt: Toward a Secular Theocracy*. *Multiculturalism and The Politics of Guilt* (MPG) is a continuation of Gottfried’s intellectual genealogy of the

⁸⁰⁵ Gottfried, *After Liberalism*, 109.

⁸⁰⁶ Gottfried, *After Liberalism*, 118.

⁸⁰⁷ Gottfried, *After Liberalism*, 118.

⁸⁰⁸ It is worth noting Wes McDonald’s response to Gottfried’s joining of *Telos*. See, *Encounters*, 53.

⁸⁰⁹ Gottfried, *After Liberalism*, 140.

therapeutic state, and the travel of democracy in America during the twentieth century. He begins his story as such: Liberals during the Cold War rejected the Christian conceptions of the welfare state, and therefore secularized Christian doctrine by putting it in the service of the therapeutic vision of democracy. He locates these instincts in texts such as Theodore Adorno's *The Authoritarian Personality* and Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* where any kind of moral dissent from the liberal consensus is in need of reeducation (or secular salvation).⁸¹⁰ What thinkers like Adorno and Myrdal did was to create a new dogma minus the scriptural language of Biblical Christianity. In short, new governmental elites replaced the authority of the church and God. Therefore, Gottfried's main purpose in MPG is to show in depth the transition from the administrative conception of the state to the viral therapeutic one.⁸¹¹

Throughout five chapters and a conclusion, Gottfried shows how the therapeutic state is promoted through a variety of hosts including language and faux populist types of organizations such as the European Union. The therapeutic state is a product of the Left's ability to shift its ideology (via language) to fit different circumstances, and the Right's failure to understand the fluctuating nature of liberalism. Gottfried says that the therapeutic worldview was invented following the collapse of what most liberals considered the failure of classic liberalism to stop totalitarianism during two world wars. A new socialism with an instilled core of indulgence overcame both nineteenth-century versions of liberalism and Communism.⁸¹² These therapeutic tendencies eventually seeped into all modern ideologies because they touched upon the human need for release from history and orthodoxy. Like Lasch, Gottfried believes that the state would fill the vacuum left by the liberation from history and tradition. However, the cultural flux

⁸¹⁰ Paul Gottfried, *Multiculturalism and The Politics of Guilt: Toward a Secular Theocracy* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 2.

⁸¹¹ Gottfried, *Multiculturalism and The Politics of Guilt*, 9.

⁸¹² Gottfried, *Multiculturalism and The Politics of Guilt*, 22-27; 66.

created by the erasure of history would leave people feeling empty and eventually seeking that history back again.

The therapeutic ideology spread further than Lasch expected because even populist organizations cannot ward off the state's religion of indulgence. Organizations like the European Union are able to implement the therapeutic dogma in multiple nations if they do not abide by certain rules (under the guise of democracy and free association).⁸¹³ "Not surprisingly, establishment populists can appeal to 'the people' against 'the rich' and 'special interests' without having to abandon public administrators, media allies, or, in the United States, the legal profession," Gottfried writes.⁸¹⁴ Gottfried does not fall back on the 'all liberals are fascists' argument as Jonah Goldberg does.⁸¹⁵ His arguments about the nature of therapeutic liberalism are more nuanced.

The modern secularized therapeutic state has its own genesis story that it is trying to recreate in North America and Europe. Secularism and the secular state are not "value-free" but are working to fashion a "new public consciousness" that is aimed at freeing people from tradition.⁸¹⁶ This is reminiscent of Lasch's conviction that secularism's greatest deception was that its project was never finished and always needed refining. The end game for Gottfried's therapeutic state is a harrowing scenario in which the mechanism of the state must run its course before it fails. "Unlike medieval Christianity, the enforced commonality in the current managerial setting is not shared ritual and sacramental mysteries or ecclesiastical authorities, but a tightening system of managerial control," writes Gottfried despairingly. The consequences of

⁸¹³ He claims the European Union began as regional organization with populist aims.

⁸¹⁴ Gottfried, *Multiculturalism and The Politics of Guilt*, 126.

⁸¹⁵ See, Jonah Goldberg, *Liberal Fascism: The Secret History of The American Left, from Mussolini to The Politics of Meaning* (New York: Doubleday, 2007).

⁸¹⁶ Gottfried, *Multiculturalism and The Politics of Guilt*, 131.

the mechanistic aspect of the therapeutic state could not be more dire and apocalyptic because it forces humans to “behave unnaturally, despising their ancestry...”⁸¹⁷

Gottfried finalizes his larger thesis in the third and final book of the Marxism trilogy. As I stated earlier, his main thesis from this trio of books is that American liberals have radicalized Europe (and the world), and not vice versa. In addition to this, like liberal historian Louis Hartz, Gottfried agrees that America is no conservative nation but one with deep roots in various forms of liberalism.⁸¹⁸ Gottfried has, in a sense, updated Hartz’s argument in *The Strange Death of Marxism: The European Left in The New Millennium. The Strange of Death of Marxism* (TSDM) is a slim volume that shifts the argument from primarily an American context to a European one (although he stills says a great deal in it about American liberalism). He disentangles several aspects of his thesis in TSDM: 1. The European Left is Post-Marxist with its ties being in America, and not in the historical Marx or Lenin. 2. The European Left is not historically Marxist, as it has more in common with the managerial state found in contemporary American liberalism. 3. Europe has been the lesser of the two continents since the conclusion of the Second World War, and consequently has less hegemonic power in relation to ideas. 4. America’s influence is not just material but primarily cultural, which has a two-way effect of drawing nations to America or vehemently against it.

Gottfried begins TSDM the way all of the books in the Marxism trilogy begin: with a genealogy. The introduction concerns how the Frankfurt School thinkers, located in America, separated the economic and historical apparatus from Marxist-Leninism, and then how postliberal European postmodernists such as Michel Foucault picked up on this Americanized

⁸¹⁷ Gottfried, *Multiculturalism and The Politics of Guilt*, 141.

⁸¹⁸ See, Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America; An Interpretation of American Political Thought since The Revolution* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1955).

form of Marxism and spread it throughout Europe to much avail. “The Post-Marxist Americanization of the European Left has been a response to the continuing need for a historically relevant Marxism,” Gottfried wrote.⁸¹⁹ In response to a historically-relevant Marxism, a new project developed, with its goal to democratize the world. However, this project is doomed to fail because “the rise to power of the Post-Marxist Left has blocked democratic protest and the possibility of political self-correction that is not perceived as politically correct.”⁸²⁰ Gottfried’s conclusions in the first chapter lead him to the second chapter where he sees a shift between what used to be considered the Old Right to what is now referred to as New Deal Democrats and liberal pacifists.⁸²¹

For Gottfried, the failed promise of historical Marxism to liberate the working class was detrimental to the health of the orthodox doctrine of Marxism. The unsuccessful promise steered European Marxists to commit their allegiance to a deformed and even misanthropic view of Marxism created in America by the Frankfurt School. Because European Marxists had to reorient their compass westward, their Marxism evolved (or devolved) into anti-Americanism born in American universities, Gottfried writes.⁸²² This new focus headed them towards championing the possibility of revolution in the third world, partially because Soviet Communism lost its luster. Once it became clear that capitalism defeated Communism (in the Soviet Union), the new vision among European leftists became to make capitalism subservient to a reformed global kind of Marxism.⁸²³ A third-world consciousness developed as these new democratic capitalists (ex-Marxists) sought to transform the world according to a revamped Marxist vision. Here, he finds

⁸¹⁹ Paul Gottfried, *The Strange Death of Marxism: The European Left in The New Millennium* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2005), 21.

⁸²⁰ Gottfried, *The Strange Death of Marxism*, 26.

⁸²¹ He associates these qualities in left thinkers such as William Appleman Williams and anti-statist conservatives like Albert Jay Nock.

⁸²² Gottfried, *The Strange Death of Marxism*, 42-43.

⁸²³ See above, Introduction, 10-16.

the neo-conservatives and American liberals owning two sides of the same coin, although it seems strange and farfetched to claim that neo-conservatives are intentionally attempting to herald in a kind of reformed global Marxism.

Gottfried historicizes or explains the history behind what he calls the neo-Marxism of the Frankfurt School in an important third chapter. American culture profoundly changed the course of Marxism. According to Gottfried, Theodore Adorno enjoyed America—Adorno spent twelve years in the United States—enough that Max Horkheimer grew concerned.⁸²⁴ Eventually, once sympathetic American followers of the Frankfurt School, like Christopher Lasch, began to question whether Marxism (and the Frankfurt School) was defending the middle class. As the Frankfurt School made Marxism more about social psychology and culture than the worker, it birthed something other than a striving for a worker’s paradise. “*The True and Only Heaven* may be cited to confirm that the Frankfurt School’s Neomarxism had grown into a Post-Marxist cluster of attitudes and programs that traveled easily in American society,” Gottfried wrote. “The Americanized version of Critical Theory provided resources that served well in a therapeutic war against bigotry.”⁸²⁵ Gottfried goes on to say that, in the Frankfurt School’s fight against bigotry and traditional Western symbolism, that they effectively put state and federal agencies to work for their goals of greater democratization of the world.

The therapeutic conception of the state grew out of “liberal bourgeois society.”⁸²⁶ “The consolidation of a managerial state, appealing to the ideal of service to the people and to “scientific” governance, sealed the doom of the society it took over,” wrote Gottfried. Both major political parties embrace the therapeutic managerial society for a plethora of reasons,

⁸²⁴ Gottfried, *The Strange Death of Marxism* 74.

⁸²⁵ Gottfried, *The Strange Death of Marxism*, 77.

⁸²⁶ Gottfried, *The Strange Death of Marxism*, 142.

including the lack of an elite willing to fight it, and the fact that the values of elites are based primarily on “electoral strategy.”⁸²⁷ Gottfried returns to his friend Lasch to finalize his thoughts: class identity and not race nor gender are the centuries’ greatest obstacles. This is so because the New Class of American elites are guilty of undermining European culture (and Western Civilization) in return to for progress and secularism.⁸²⁸ Gottfried concludes SDM with a detrimental claim to those conservatives who rely on the argument that America is a nation of intuitively conservative people: The “incentive to social engineering has gone from the Old to the New World and then back again and in the process altered Europe even more dramatically than us.”⁸²⁹

Making Sense of the Right, Again

Gottfried returned to write his third history of American conservatism in *Conservatism in America: Making Sense of The American Right*.⁸³⁰ *Conservatism in America* (CIA) is a work of meant to disrupt the fusionist and triumphalist narrative of conservatism. It is also a part of the canon of work that grew during the second Bush administration and that spoke to what the paleo-conservatives considered the final fall of the that movement from grace.⁸³¹ Gottfried lasches out at establishment conservatism and takes on a host of conservative thinkers from Russell Kirk to

⁸²⁷ Gottfried, *The Strange Death of Marxism*, 145.

⁸²⁸ Gottfried, *The Strange Death of Marxism*, 147.

⁸²⁹ Gottfried, *The Strange Death of Marxism*, 148.

⁸³⁰ He essentially wrote two editions of TCM, so I am counting that volume as two—one co-authored with Thomas Fleming and one without.

⁸³¹ See John Derbyshire, *We are Doomed: Reclaiming Conservative Pessimism* (New York: Crown Forum, 2009); Andrew Bacevich, *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008); Rod Dreher, *Crunchy Cons: How Birkenstocked Burkeans, Gun-Loving Organic Gardeners, Evangelical Free-Range Farmers, Hip Homeschooling Mamas, Right-Wing Nature Lovers, and Their Diverse Tribe of Countercultural Conservatives Plan to Save America (or at least the Republican Party)* (New York: Crown Forum, 2006); Justin Raimondo, *Reclaiming The American Right: The Lost Legacy of The Conservative Movement* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2008); Bruce Frohnen ed. *Rethinking Rights: Historical, Political, and Philosophical Perspectives* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2009); Bill Kauffman, *Ain't My America: The Long, Noble History of Antiwar Conservatism and Middle American Anti-Imperialism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008); Patrick Buchanan, *Suicide of a Superpower: Will America Survive to 2025?* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2011).

Charles Krauthammer.⁸³² In CIA, Gottfried states outright what he did not say in *The Conservative Movement* published more than two decades earlier.

In essence, conservatism, Gottfried says, has always been a product of the imagination and the faculties of the mind. Conservatism has failed because thinkers like Kirk did not understand the value of historicism to a cogent theory of conservatism. While imagination is important to conservatism, he then turns it around on Kirk for strictly sticking to imaginative writing instead making arguments that were more analytic.⁸³³ Furthermore, Kirk's conservatism was not broad enough because Kirk dismissed important proto-conservative reactionary types of anti-statists such as John Flynn, HL Mencken, and Isabel Patterson.⁸³⁴ Facing Kirk again, he wrote that: "Equally foreign to American politics was the defense of feudal privilege against bureaucratizing monarchies...."

The most important point that Gottfried makes in CIA, one that he had made in previous books too, is that American conservatives rejected "European...conservatism."⁸³⁵ He used the example of Barry Goldwater's 1964 presidential campaign and legacy, which continued to move leftward following his defeat.⁸³⁶ More importantly, Gottfried writes, the Goldwater legacy was never about conserving a particular tradition, but instead about taking hold of the apparatus of the state for the sake of politicizing conservatism and capitalism. Just as Gottfried had demonstrated that the language of liberalism had been in flux throughout the twentieth century,

⁸³² Paul Gottfried, *Conservatism in America: Making Sense of The American Right* (New York: Palgrave, 2007).

⁸³³ Gottfried, *Conservatism in America*, 2-8.

⁸³⁴ Gottfried, *Conservatism in America*, 7-8.

⁸³⁵ Gottfried, *Conservatism in America*, 35.

⁸³⁶ Gottfried, *Conservatism in America*, 147.

he claims that conservatism has become equally elusive.⁸³⁷ CIA may be read in two different but complementary lights. First, it is a kind of rejoinder or addition to the Marxism trilogy from the perspective of the conservative movement. Second, without saying so directly, Gottfried makes important assertions about conservatism including that history (or the historical record) must precede imagination. This is Gottfried's effort to reinsert the concept of historicism back into conservatism by claiming that Germany had more influence on nineteenth and early twentieth century American thinkers than did England.⁸³⁸ In this regard, he does not believe that the idea of historicism should be negated from conservatism because it was associated with Nazism. For him, historicism is both a theoretical notion and a tacit dimension of society that will always exist. In other words, humans are drawn naturally towards a particular past and an eternal longing that are often subverted for the wrong ideological purposes. Nothing is wrong with ideology, he thinks, as long as ideology is rooted in the particular, which may also have eternal impact.

Encounters: My Life with Nixon, Marcuse, and Other Friends and Teachers was Gottfried's first attempt at autobiography. *Encounters* serves as an insightful look into Gottfried's career in the conservative movement. Published in 2009, Gottfried highlights encounters with Richard Nixon, the influence of Central European émigrés on his thinking, and

⁸³⁷ Gottfried, *Conservatism in America*, 149. Gottfried referenced a 2005 conference at Princeton on conservatism. He wrote of an exchange between journalist Rick Perlstein and several conservative panelists. The gist of the story is that those conservative panelists could not provide journalist Rick Perlstein with cogent or a unified answer about what exactly conservatism amounted to.

⁸³⁸ Germanist and scholar of German culture Stephen Fritz says that Germany was the primary culture in the world until the beginning of the First World War. Fritz backs his claims up by citing German influence in literature, science, and overall education. Before institutions like Johns Hopkins began issuing doctorates in the late nineteenth century, most American students earned their credentials in Europe and Germany. Fritz's latest work is Stephen Fritz, *Ostkrieg: Hitler's War of Extermination in The East* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011).

his time with the Telos group. Mostly, *Encounters* is filled with tidbits concerning his intellectual turns and choices without being apologetic.

Encounters was also a needed book for Gottfried because his life and career remained somewhat of a mystery given that he never shared the stardom of the likes of Strauss, Buckley, and Kirk. In *Encounters*, Gottfried revealed that his versatility as a thinker came partially from his years spent with renowned Frankfurt School scholar Herbert Marcuse at Yale. The most important chapter of *Encounters* is the final one in which he tells the reader which thinkers inspired him and why. He celebrated what can be considered his personal reactionary hall of fame. He talked briefly about influential figures such as Southernist Eugene Genovese, Christopher Lasch, Burkean scholar Peter Stanlis, conservative sociologist Robert Nisbet, and Mel Bradford. In one way or another, Gottfried builds upon the projects of each of these men in his work, and in this way his work is almost a tribute to these people. He appreciates the work of each of them because their conservatism was *historically* grounded. He also linked them together by claiming that they were all more importantly “prophets against Progress.”⁸³⁹

Gottfried considers himself a modern day prophet against progress who understands the mechanics of a real conservatism. As he became further removed, or shunned entirely, from the organizations that once housed him (The Philadelphia Society and the Intercollegiate Studies Institute), he began freely writing books like his 2012 release, *Leo Strauss and the Conservative Movement in America: A Critical Appraisal*.⁸⁴⁰ Gottfried considers Strauss and the Straussians to be faux conservatives, therefore this was his main reason for writing such as book that only distanced him more from establishment conservative organizations like ISI and The Heritage

⁸³⁹ *Encounters*, 204.

⁸⁴⁰ Paul Gottfried, *Leo Strauss and The Conservative Movement in America: A Critical Appraisal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Foundation. *Leo Strauss and The Conservative Movement in America* (LSCMA) is meant to disconnect Strauss and his textual community from conservatism in a sense. Before getting into the technical aspects of LSCMA, more needs to be said about the travel and place of Strauss, Straussians, and Straussianism in American conservatism in order to understand Gottfried's aggressive reaction against them.

Leo Strauss was a recognized figure in conservative circles before terms like neo-conservatism gained popularity. However, Strauss gained a new popularity in the run-up to the Second Iraq War.⁸⁴¹ The reason, it seems, is that journalists began finding Straussians throughout both Bush administrations, political science departments, and in important newspaper posts.⁸⁴² Because of the renewed focus on his supposed conspirators, Straussianism took on a new fervor among young would-be conservatives who were excited to find a conservatism not explicitly but implicitly stated in Strauss's philosophical texts.⁸⁴³ As Gottfried explains, Strauss provided the intellectual clout that many young conservatives were looking for, especially those who considered the New Right antiquarian. By the conclusion of the second Bush administration,

⁸⁴¹ See, George Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945*, especially chapter eight. To understand the degree of the rapid rise of Strauss' influence in America see, Brian Bolduc, "Leo Strauss, Back and Better Than Ever," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 6, 2010, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052748704271804575405532811938748>, accessed October 27, 2013.

⁸⁴² See, James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet* (New York: Viking, 2004) and Anne Horton, *Leo Strauss and The Politics of American Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004). For a general consideration of the criticisms of Strauss and Straussians from a Straussian see, Peter Minowitz, *Straussophobia: Defending Leo Strauss and Straussians Against Shadia Drury and Other Accusers* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009).

⁸⁴³ There has yet to be an extensive history written about Strauss and his textual community. However, there are books that do look at the rise and decline of segments of the Straussian legacy. See, Aggie Hirst, *Leo Strauss, The Straussians & The Iraq War* (New York: Routledge, 2013) and Tony Burns and James Connelly ed., *The Legacy of Leo Strauss* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2010).

Strauss's legacy was so widespread that his textual community had split into sects over the supposed real legacy of Leo Strauss.⁸⁴⁴

LSCMA is important both as a primary and secondary source in regards to the conservative movement and its trajectory. Because Gottfried holds that rare place as someone who participated in conservatism with the founding generation, and then monitored the rise of Strauss and Straussianism for more than forty years, LSCMA gives an insider view at another seminal school within that movement. Gottfried's main historiographical assertion in LSCMA is that Strauss was a neo-conservative ideologue, and that is why his students continue to carry that mantle forward through the in Republican Party. The trajectory and plausibility of a Strauss caught up into ideological strategizing contradicts the accepted opinion that Strauss was averse to such menial tasks. And, it has become popular among Straussians to claim that Strauss was different from his ideological students and followers. Within these notions about the intellectual purity of Strauss, there are those who claim that his textual community has dogmatized the legacy of the privileged interpreter.⁸⁴⁵ Throughout LSCMA, Gottfried reiterates that Strauss was always an ideologue and this ideological strain in his thinking has allowed his legacy to hang on longer because of that fact.

Gottfried explains that Strauss became associated with the conservative movement because of William Buckley. According to Gottfried, Buckley reached out to Strauss in search of academic credibility.⁸⁴⁶ This is an important suggestion, particularly if we remember that Kirk

⁸⁴⁴ See, Leo Strauss, *Leo Strauss: The Early Writings, 1921-1932* trans. Michael Zank (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).

⁸⁴⁵ The literature covering the relationship to Strauss and his students are voluminous. For a couple of representative works where Strauss's students seek to revive the real Strauss, see, Laurence Lampert, *The Enduring Importance of Leo Strauss* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013) and Steven Smith ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Leo Strauss* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁸⁴⁶ Gottfried, *Leo Strauss and The Conservative Movement in America*, especially chapter five.

left the academy, and most other New Rightists never held prominent positions in the academy either. The Straussians also brought respect from the New York intelligentsia whose respect Buckley desired greatly because he and his wife Patricia Buckley were Manhattan socialites.⁸⁴⁷ The Straussians earned extra cultural credence, Gottfried explains, because they were predominantly politically bourgeois liberal supporters of John F. Kennedy too. Their support of Kennedy, Gottfried says, was indicative of the language of natural rights they would use to found their conception of conservatism. The Straussian conception of the universal language of natural rights appealed to unsuspecting Catholic conservatives like Kirk and Buckley because it seemed compatible with natural law theory.

Gottfried contextualizes Strauss and how the twentieth century influenced his approach to a conservatism rooted in natural rights. Gottfried's main theoretical criticism of Strauss and Straussianism is that their conservatism "does not require historical imagination or any serious acceptance of the possibility that others, separated by time and circumstance, were not like themselves, namely religious skeptics who would have celebrated their good fortune in being able to live in a materialistic democracy."⁸⁴⁸ For Gottfried, the fact that Strauss was a German Jew left an indelible mark on his worldview.⁸⁴⁹

In the same way Gottfried contextualized the Frankfurt School thinkers in America, he demonstrates that Strauss was no transcendent philosopher hovering above time or outside of history. First, Gottfried says Strauss's Jewish heritage cannot be diminished in relation to his

⁸⁴⁷ See, Bob Colacello, "Mr. and Mrs. Right," *Vanity Fair*, January 2009, <http://www.vanityfair.com/magazine/2009/01/buckleys200901>, accessed October 27, 2013. For a history of the Manhattan intellectual scene during the heyday of conservatism see, Alexander Bloom, *Prodigal Sons: The New York Intellectuals & Their World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

⁸⁴⁸ Gottfried, *Leo Strauss and The Conservative Movement in America*, 10.

⁸⁴⁹ There is a recent trend towards historicizing intellectuals. The most recent example that has made quite a stir is Jonathan Sperber's *Karl Marx: A Nineteenth-Century Life* (New York: Liverlight, 2013).

writings. He sees Strauss as a Jewish thinker caught between modernity and a pre-modern desire for faith. Strauss believed Franz Rosenzweig when he wrote that modern Jews were torn between faith and reason.⁸⁵⁰ As a European Jewish émigré, Strauss's worldview and philosophy were greatly influenced by the persecution of the Jews throughout the world during the twentieth century. Therefore, Gottfried explains, Strauss found hope in American liberal democracy as a kind of second chance for Jews to modernize without persecution.⁸⁵¹ The first wave of modernity was marked by a failure of Jewish people to recognize that faith must be hidden from plain view.⁸⁵²

Gottfried takes the time to explain the rise of Strauss's fame after his arrival in the United States. Before Strauss immigrated to the U.S., he was not a recognized thinker in Europe. His influence only grew once he associated with American conservatives, and Gottfried chalks up Strauss's prized place in conservatism to his espousal of universal natural rights which worked well with the revival of natural law theory among Catholic conservatives.⁸⁵³ Strauss's philosophy, similar to that of the Frankfurt School, gradually became Americanized as his mature career was spent as a "liberal democratic moralist" in the United States.⁸⁵⁴ Gottfried claims that the Americanization of Leo Strauss has caused his students to search for developments in his Strauss's philosophy before he left Europe in order to find a Strauss untainted by the culture wars of the United States.

⁸⁵⁰ Gottfried, *Leo Strauss and the Conservative Movement in America* 15-16.

⁸⁵¹ Gottfried, *Leo Strauss and the Conservative Movement in America* 24-27.

⁸⁵² Strauss stressed the secretive or what he called the esoteric nature of thinking in public. In implicit tones, he encouraged other Jewish thinkers to hide their faith through writing philosophy. See, Leo Strauss, *Persecution and The Art of Writing* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1952).

⁸⁵³ Midcentury America proved to be fertile ground for conservative Catholic intellectuals searching for a usable political philosophy, see, Patrick Allitt, *Catholic Intellectuals and Conservative Politics in America, 1950-1985* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993) and Drew Maciag, *Edmund Burke in America: The Contested Career of The Father of Modern Conservatism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

⁸⁵⁴ Gottfried, *Leo Strauss and The Conservative Movement in America*, 36.

What emanated from Strauss's Americanized philosophy of natural rights was not a traditionalist conservatism rooted in ancient philosophy, as many suppose it is. Instead, what Strauss's students have done is to make a cultic regime out of American democracy by using philosophy to these ends.⁸⁵⁵ The Straussians want to spread American-style democracy throughout the world because, according to Gottfried, they are in a perpetual state of reliving "1938" when democracies failed to stand up to Nazism.⁸⁵⁶ LSCMA was seminal to Gottfried's thought and to the overall conservative canon because Gottfried is the first historian to historicize Strauss and his influence on conservatism. To this end, Gottfried remains the only conservative to utilize historical criticisms of Strauss instead of the preferred philosophical style of argumentation.

Gottfried's latest publication is a collection of essays titled *War and Democracy*.⁸⁵⁷ This little 2012 book is a compilation of essays and criticisms that Gottfried wrote from 1975-2012. *War and Democracy* is not a seminal part of Gottfried's publication record, other than for the fact that it was published by the radical right-wing book publisher Arktos Media. Gottfried's publication record is not limited to books, as he also published in academic journals and a host of general reader publications during his career.

After Neo-Conservatism: Historicism, Pluralism, and the Anti-Statist Menckonianism of the Gottfriedian Textual Community

The overarching concern of Paul Gottfried's scholarship is the place of history and historical thinking in American conservatism. In this regard, the key to understanding Paul Gottfried's historical imagination is to understand the stress he puts upon the mechanism of

⁸⁵⁵ Gottfried, *Leo Strauss and the Conservative Movement in America*, 159.

⁸⁵⁶ Gottfried, *Leo Strauss and the Conservative Movement in America*, 158-59.

⁸⁵⁷ Paul Gottfried, *War and Democracy* (United Kingdom: Arktos Media, 2012).

history to define human action against the state. One of the interesting aspects about Gottfried's historicism is that he never elaborates on it in a prolonged manner. Like the English Constitution, Gottfried's historicism comes together in bits and pieces throughout his career. Neither has Gottfried dedicated a single book to his theory of historicism, although he touches upon it most explicitly in *The Search for Historical Meaning*. In almost all of his monographs, Gottfried writes about the necessity of being historically minded in order to be an authentic conservative. If we can pin Gottfried down on what he means by historicism, it is necessary to patch this together from several works, which consider the nature of a conservatism centered on a historically conceived epistemology. There are three definitive aspects to Gottfried's theory of historicism. 1. Gottfried roots his historicism in the nineteenth-century bourgeois liberal tradition. The nation or the locality should define customary ways of living and knowing. 2. Gottfriedian historicism recognizes divine revelation and the universal nature of God. Therefore, his historicism is neither values laden or relativistic. Gottfried's conception of historicism is national, communal, and local, and therefore, the values can neither be universalized or necessarily relativized. In other words, the boundaries are so restricted that it would be almost impossible to penetrate local customary ways of knowing from an outsider perspective. 3. The most controversial aspect of Gottfried's historicism is its pluralism. The pluralistic element serves as a stern response against what he considers the progressive tendency to standardize all societies into a monoculture. This pluralistic element of historicism is aimed specifically at his conservative counterparts—mainly the neo-conservatives—whom he considers liberal fellow travelers.

Upon further inspection, it seems that Paul Gottfried's theory of historicism is more akin to historical consciousness than a set of clear axioms. "... (T)he American intellectual Right has

largely lost the sense of a living past,” Gottfried states.⁸⁵⁸ This statement is significant because Gottfried is interested not merely in the theoretical underpinnings of historicism, but in the mechanics of living *conservatively*. Living historically is important, in Gottfried’s opinion, because it serves as a kind of natural or ingrained life compass. His argument for a meeting of theory and practice is reminiscent of Kirk’s striving to make conservatism more than just a capitalist vision of the world.⁸⁵⁹ Ultimately, Gottfriedian historicism is an attack on what he considers to be the hyper-politicization of the conservative mind and the denigration of historicity of intellect. “Too many conservatives prefer to capitalize on transitory political issues or to declaim against the historicization of values and knowledge,” he wrote.⁸⁶⁰ In other words, conservatives have forgotten how to live with history and within its necessary boundaries.

Before getting into how the historicity of Gottfried’s historical consciousness is fleshed out in his theory of historicist pluralism, it is necessary to examine how twentieth-century journalist and critic H.L. Mencken is interrelated to both of these. There are specific reasons why Gottfried chose Mencken as opposed to either Burke or Tocqueville. Both Mencken and Gottfried were Germanists, raised in the American Northeast, and anti-statists.⁸⁶¹ He chose Mencken for two other reasons related to the creation of the conservative canon or lineage in the postwar era.⁸⁶² The postwar New Right did not have a figure like Mencken, as Buckley and Kirk created a bourgeois persona for the New Right. Furthermore, the postwar right conveniently

⁸⁵⁸ Gottfried, *The Search for Historical Meaning*, 115.

⁸⁵⁹ Postwar conservatives read and helped popularize Josef Peiper’s *Leisure: The Basis of Culture* (New York: New American Library, 1963). Kirk was especially interested in demonstrating that leisure in the service of imagination served as a compass for one’s life.

⁸⁶⁰ Gottfried, *The Search for Historical Meaning*, 115.

⁸⁶¹ See, Brian Domitrovic, “H.L. Mencken,” *First Principles*, December 29, 2010, <http://www.firstprinciplesjournal.com/articles.aspx?article=969&theme=cotho&loc=b>, accessed November 14, 2013.

⁸⁶² See, Carl Bogus, *Buckley: William F. Buckley Jr. and The Rise of American Conservatism* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2011), especially chapter one.

ignored most of the prewar right for past figures with absolutely no connection to American conservatism, such as Burke and Tocqueville. As historian Michael Kimmage has pointed out recently, the more radical proto-conservative figures, like Mencken, were purged from conservatism as the New Right created a moderate tone for postwar conservatism.⁸⁶³ Gottfried's pick of Mencken represents the reappearance of the American prewar Right and its gritty non-consensus-building personality. Gottfried chose Mencken in opposition to Buckley's bourgeois political morality and to Lukacs's cosmopolitan literary-minded conservatism because he considers both types of conservatisms powerless in the face of the state.⁸⁶⁴

Mencken also embodies the ironic nature of postwar conservatism. In Gottfried's opinion, Mencken signifies a return to an era when principles mattered and popularity did not. Mencken never had great political authority or a large base of support. Brian Domitrovic explains why the character of Mencken held this appeal: "Mencken loathed democracy, which he thought stifled the most interesting spirits in the population. Yet he cultivated indifference toward the rich and high society, was highly skeptical of religion, and was slow to give honor to recognized intellectuals," Domitrovic says.⁸⁶⁵ Alongside these similarities, are also some important differences between Gottfried and Mencken. It is common knowledge that Mencken was anything but a pluralist, or a representative of the hinterlands of society.⁸⁶⁶ Yet, Gottfried

⁸⁶³ See, Michael Kimmage, *The Conservative Turn: Lionel Trilling, Whittaker Chambers, and The Lessons of Anti-Communism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

⁸⁶⁴ Conversation with Paul Gottfried. Elizabethtown, Pa., March 2012. This is a repeated criticism of strictly cultural conservatives such as Kirk and Lukacs.

⁸⁶⁵ Domitrovic, "H.L. Mencken," *First Principles*, December 29, 2010, <http://www.firstprinciplesjournal.com/articles.aspx?article=969&theme=cotho&loc=b>, accessed December 29, 2013.

⁸⁶⁶ In 2005, Marion Rodgers published the definitive biography of H.L. Mencken titled *Mencken: The American Iconoclast* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). Rodgers paints a portrait of Mencken as a fierce critic and a complex thinker worth further investigation.

updates the Menckonian persona for his textual community by fashioning him into a patron saint of conservative rebellion.

There are major differences between Gottfried and Mencken that make intellectual partnership tenuous. Gottfried is no enemy of religion like Mencken was, and the ‘Sage of Baltimore’ was certainly not a pluralist, right wing or otherwise. Despite these intellectual differences, Gottfried renews Menckenianism to reflect his historicist pluralism as a kind of siren call for revolt. “The founders conceived of the organization as representative of the spirit of the “Sage of Baltimore,” Henry Louis Mencken (1880-1956), the brilliant iconoclast, satirist and columnist who founded *The American Mercury* – a figure who questioned the egalitarian creed, siren calls for democratic crusades, and welfare statism with which American democracy was already identified during his lifetime,” Gottfried explained of his choice of Mencken as the representative figure for his textual community.⁸⁶⁷ While scholars agree that Mencken was surely an iconoclast and a complex figure, Gottfried uses his legacy to usher in a pluralistic historicism aimed at overturning a society in which global elites define societal order.

Pluralistic Historicism

Gottfried’s pluralistic conservatism serves as a memorial to those prophets against progress that he wrote about in his autobiography, *Encounters*. He blends various elements of his pluralistic historicism from those prophets of progress (like Christopher Lasch, Eugene Genovese, Robert Nisbet, and Mel Bradford) that he idealizes. Similar to each of them, he presents a conservative counter narrative based on a rejection of the status quo of the conservatism movement as it stands today. Gottfried’s reaction is Menckonian in the sense that

⁸⁶⁷ See, The H.L. Mencken Club “About” Page, <http://hlmenckenclub.org/about/>, accessed November 17, 2013.

he also adds a journalistic element to his academic repertoire. Therefore, his pluralistic conception of historicism is a monument to what he considers the lost age of historical consciousness when conservatives thought historically (or contextually) and freely about the past.

It is impossible to understand his theory of pluralistic historicism without knowing something about the language of conservatism he uses. Gottfried has called himself many things including a right-winger and a reactionary. One term he uses to describe his views now is right-wing pluralism. What he means by right-wing pluralism a desire to create a forum for all viewpoints considered outside of the conservative mainstream. “We seek to change perceptions and attitudes by bringing together today’s heretics to discuss the dangerous topics few now dare to address. Like Mencken, our enemies are ignorance, wishful thinking and obscurantism,” as it is stated on the description page of Gottfried’s Mencken Society.⁸⁶⁸ Gottfried’s pluralistic historicism has fleshed out ultimately as a disdain for the New Class that Lasch wrote extensively about before his death. The New Class elites try to forgo history in favor of creating a global order that is easily manipulated and controlled by the state and its partners. Gottfried wants to create a historicism that has the ability to dislocate the epistemic grounds for which global elites create impenetrable networks.

One of the ideas produced by these global elites that Gottfried hates the most is the “end of history” thesis. He is opposed to Francis Fukuyama’s “end-of-history” thesis because he sees it as the apex of ahistorical conservatism.⁸⁶⁹ If history is indeed at an end, then there is no need for historical consciousness or for the particularities that make humans across the world

⁸⁶⁸ The H.L. Mencken Club “About” Page, <http://hlmenckenclub.org/about/>.

⁸⁶⁹ Francis Fukuyama, *Have We Reached The End of History?* (Santa Monica: Rand Corp., 1989).

different, whether those differences are considered heterodox or not.⁸⁷⁰ Gottfried believes that Fukuyama's "end-of-history" thesis is the worst representation of the impulses of the global elite class because it demonstrates their desire to standardize and eradicate the necessary flavors of history, including community and customary practices, in favor of further societal control.⁸⁷¹ "Both (George) Gilder and Fukuyama point to entrepreneurial activities and the operation of markets to show their economic system is alive and well," he wrote. The payoff is that, "...such developments cannot coexist with elaborate state planning."⁸⁷² The "end of history" serves the neo-conservatives (and their global designs) who can still appeal to conservatives because it is an opportune way to gain control of the state while still preaching the virtues of capitalism.⁸⁷³

The end of history is also an end to identity and Western Civilization.⁸⁷⁴ It is a horrific conclusion to Western Civilization that was originally ordered by humans in specific localities during particular times.⁸⁷⁵ Therefore, for Gottfried, the end of history is really a termination Western Civilization, and of people who were willing to think consciously about their place in history. "At a time when the past was coming to be viewed as a source of bigotry and irrationality, these figures raised up models of order by looking backwards," Gottfried wrote of

⁸⁷⁰ It is worth noting that, after having read Gottfried's letters and spent time interviewing him for this research, there is a libertine aspect to his thought that often goes unnoticed. For him, history may or may not lead a people towards something like Western Civilization. In other words, historicism may benefit a Christian or a Muslim; and then again, it may benefit whatever group has the longest standing traditional compass to provide a certain segment of people.

⁸⁷¹ See, Gottfried, *Multiculturalism and The Politics of Guilt*, especially chapter one.

⁸⁷² Gottfried, *Multiculturalism and The Politics of Guilt*, 18.

⁸⁷³ Conversation with Paul Gottfried. Elizabethtown, Pa., March 2012. He also finds these beliefs represented among Catholic neo-conservatives such as Michael Novak. See, Michael Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982).

⁸⁷⁴ Gottfried is not specifically a humanist; however, his criticisms of Fukuyama and the end of history thesis fall into that category, too.

⁸⁷⁵ I need to note here that Gottfried is not specifically a neo-agrarian who celebrates all forms of localism over the state. However, we might consider that he sided along postwar agrarians like Bradford, and later Genovese, who believed that the antebellum South held more promise than the industrial North. Still, as a keen observer will see, Gottfried obviously has affinities with agrarians like novelist and activist Wendell Berry without necessarily joining that category. Gottfried would note the difference between the historicity of Genovese's *Roll, Jordan, Roll; The World The Slaves Made* and Berry's fictive Port William series.

the plausibility of finding historically minded conservatives again.⁸⁷⁶ His greatest cause for concern is that humans will be manipulated to the point that they will not recognize their own past. Gottfried states, "... (T)hey believed that without firm, inherited structures of authority, individuals would become the playthings of those who could manipulate their vanity and exploit their social and emotion fragility."⁸⁷⁷ Gottfried, as the protector of the middle class and their its beliefs, uses the threat of losing or forgetting history to justify the Menckonianism of his textual community.

The Gottfriedian Textual Community and Menckonianism as Anti-Statism

While Gottfried plays the role of the protector of middle-class morality, and of a reactionary Mencken supporting the hinterlands of conservatism from a bygone age, the Menckonianism of his textual community only fleshes out the reactionary side of his Menckonianism to varying degrees. Gottfried's textual community consists of those thinkers who were pushed out of establishment conservatism (quietly or not) for issues as basic as their age, radical worldview, and, or, open disdain for the nature of the Republican Party and its policies.⁸⁷⁸ In many cases, all of the above is true for members of his textual community who are often resentful that conservative in high places have banished them for one offense or another. Therefore, the Gottfriedian textual community consists of academics, journalists/critics, aristocratic radicals, disenchanted conservatives, and others who all gather around Gottfried's ideas. The authority structure within the Gottfriedian textual community is ideational as opposed to being personality driven as it was in both the Kirkean and Lukacsian textual communities.

⁸⁷⁶ Gottfried, *Encounters*, 203.

⁸⁷⁷ Gottfried, *Encounters*, 203.

⁸⁷⁸ When Gottfried and his textual community refer to establishment conservatism, they are really talking about a triumvirate. This triumvirate includes political conservatism (GOP), media conservatism (Fox News), and conservative think tanks (The Heritage Foundation). All of the above draw the ire of Gottfried and his textual community because their beliefs about conservatism are virtually the same.

While Gottfried remains the main privileged interpreter, he has also chosen not to be the sole authority figure in his textual community. He has chosen to be more of an umpire than a dictator.

Whereas other textual communities, such as the Kirkean and Laschian textual communities, will intentionally change or shift the borders set by the privileged interpreter, Gottfried's textual community does not deliberately alter the borders of Gottfried's historicism. Instead, they continue to add to it with beliefs that often contradict Gottfried's scholarship. These updates to his pluralistic historicism often include adding racism, hyper-elitism, paganism, and other eccentricities. In the following section, I will discuss how various segments within his textual community utilize Gottfried's historicism, and why he continues to welcome those whose worldview often contradict his own. Additionally, I will highlight three prominent clusters within Gottfried's textual community and how they either expand upon his notion of historicism, or venture far away from it.

The Pied Piper of Reaction: Mencken as Counter-Revolutionary

When Gottfried began the H.L. Mencken Club in 2008, he welcomed such recognized paleo-right figures as Patrick Buchanan, a former candidate for president on the Republican Party ticket in 1989. Buchanan's cultural conservatism is respected because he was supported by the likes of Russell Kirk during his 1989 run against George H.W. Bush.⁸⁷⁹ Buchanan's stamp on an organization like the newly formed HLMC was considered a blessing from a kind of longstanding grand inquisitor of conservatism. The first two HLMC conferences (2008 and 2009) featured other stellar conservative figures such as Catholic political theorist Patrick Deneen, conservative culture critic Charles Murray, and evangelical intellectual Gene Veith.

⁸⁷⁹ Conversation with Annette Kirk. Mecosta, MI., June 2013. Annette Kirk ran Buchanan's Michigan campaign headquarters from her home in Mecosta.

Both Veith and Deneen represented the Protestant and Catholic Right and provided needed voices in such a group that lacked a religious element.⁸⁸⁰ However, Buchanan, Deneen, Murray, and Veith never returned to other HLMC meetings following the 2009 meeting. The speculation, as Daniel McCarthy puts it, is that Gottfried continued to welcome anyone hated by the left to his cabal, despite the sometimes contradictory nature of their axioms. For devout religious thinkers (and others), allowing open racists to present material at the HLMC was a deal breaker. McCarthy, who edits *The American Conservative* magazine, had just this concern. “Paul has made a lot of enemies by accepting anyone into the H.L. Mencken Club,” McCarthy said. “That’s Paul. He has a tendency to believe that anyone who is attacked by the left has something going for them.”⁸⁸¹ Even among reactionaries, and Daniel McCarthy is no establishment conservative, Gottfried is considered to be wild and unwieldy with his associations.

While this wildness may be associated with Gottfried’s persona as the pied piper of reaction, divisions remain within his textual community as to exactly how to approach the idea of Menckonianism and historicism. There are the academic Gottfriedians or Menckenians that are more like Gottfried intellectually because they insert historical conservatism into their personal research. This segment includes political theorist Barry Shain and historian Kenneth McIntyre. This group remains angry with the conservative establishment, but it stays within the bounds of academic discourse to show its disfavor. The second group includes former journalists and polemicists, people such as Peter Brimelow, John Derbyshire, and Robert Weissberg. Brimelow, Derbyshire, and Weissberg are representative members of this collection as they insert their politically incorrect disseminations into public form via articles, lectures, and blogging. Their

⁸⁸⁰ See, 2008 and 2009 conference schedule at <http://hlmenckenclub.org/>. Because religious conservatives played a seminal role in the founding and expansion of American conservatism, to leave them out would be to ignore a large group of important contributors.

⁸⁸¹ Conversation with Daniel McCarthy. May 2012.

polemics are primarily aimed at other conservatives in order to disrupt the status quo of the establishment. This group's tone is acerbic as it remains outside of academic discourse to engage opponents. The third group, which is related to the second group in most ways, is the aristocratic radicals group. These reactionary aristocrats include the likes of Richard Spencer and Taki Theodoracopulos. Both of these men have the funds to create more reactionary types of organizations to carry out Gottfried's pluralist Menckonianism. They see the state as the vehicle that now defines elitism and therefore shun the old rich and the bourgeoisie. One of their purposes is to recreate a conservatism that appreciates the old rich and understands the value of inherited status and wealth.

Anti-statism binds Gottfried's textual community together whether it comes in the form of explicit or implicit forms of dialogue. Gottfried, especially in his late career, has become ardently anti-statist to show his great disdain for neo-conservatism and the Republican Party. It should come as no surprise that Gottfried's textual community is without the compassionate conservatism that defined the second Bush administration and evangelical conservatism.⁸⁸² Their anti-statist stances allow them to reinvent history to show how an America with a true conservatism should look. It is not untypical for speeches at annual HLMC gatherings to pose questions as to how life would work in reality before the managerial state; one might expect the HLMC to join forces with the Tea Party movement, but this fusion has not happened probably because the Tea Party tends to be comprised to the middle class and Christian evangelicals.⁸⁸³ In this regard, an a posteriori element allows the members of the HLMC to speak of history as a lost

⁸⁸² These two texts represent what is called compassionate conservatism see, Marvin Olasky, *Renewing American Compassion* (New York: Free Press, 1996) and George W. Bush, *A Charge to Keep* (New York: Morrow, 1999).

⁸⁸³ See, Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and The Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) and Ronald P. Formisano, *The Tea Party: A Brief History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012).

opportunity, and the need to recognize the change and hope for a kind of rightist anarchy this time to destroy the reach of the state.⁸⁸⁴ In each group's thinking about the present and past, the state, stands in the way of some goal or reality that needs to be reawakened.

Academic Menckeniens

I begin with what I am terming the academic Menckeniens because they carry forward Gottfried's theory of historicism most overtly. In fact, Gottfried calls historian Kenneth McIntyre his protégé.⁸⁸⁵ McIntyre is probably the closest to Gottfried's historical conservative mind because he inserts an English tradition of skepticism into American conservatism. McIntyre's chosen reaction against establishment conservatism is biographical in that he objectifies skeptical English conservative figures that understood the complex nature of history, and disliked the idea of continuing progress. Therefore, the thrust of McIntyre's Menckenianism is skepticism. His work focuses on the life and scholarship of both Herbert Butterfield, and political philosopher Michael Oakeshott.⁸⁸⁶ In *The Limits of Political Theory: Oakeshott's Philosophy of Civil Association*, McIntyre demonstrates that Oakeshott cannot be considered conventionally conservative, liberal, postmodern, or otherwise. History defined Oakeshott's political philosophy, McIntyre posits, and his methodology was historical because he did not force his philosophy onto history. Lately, he has focused his efforts on Herbert Butterfield. Butterfield is a useful Menckenian figure because he believed the past should never glorify the present.⁸⁸⁷ Gottfried, favorably reviewing his protégé's book on Butterfield, lines up these figures in the

⁸⁸⁴ Conversation with Paul Gottfried. Elizabethtown Pa., March 2012.

⁸⁸⁵ Conversation with Paul Gottfried. Elizabethtown Pa., March 2012.

⁸⁸⁶ Kenneth B. McIntyre, *The Limits of Political Theory: Oakeshott's Philosophy of Civil Association* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2004) and *Herbert Butterfield: History, Providence, and Skeptical Politics* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2011).

⁸⁸⁷ Butterfield's most famous work or tract on the methodology of history is *The Whig Interpretation of History* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1931). This small book is an anti-progressive view on writing history.

nineteenth-century British skeptical tradition as well. “McIntyre also identifies Butterfield with the ‘skeptical liberalism’ that he finds in his subject’s longtime friend and colleague at Cambridge, Michael Oakeshott. Both thinkers were in favor of decentralized, limited government, although neither showed much interest in defending a free market economy. What concerned them deeply was the temptation toward what Oakeshott describes critically as an ‘enterprise association,’ that is, the deliberate use of modern political administration to mobilize populations to wage collectivist crusades,” Gottfried wrote approvingly.⁸⁸⁸

Barry Shain is a conservative political theorist who claims that he has faced the academic and intellectual wrath of the Straussians, as his scholarship was ignored by the publications they control. This may indeed be a likely scenario as his scholarship is also in the Gottfriedian historicist tradition, and diametrically opposed to natural rights theory, which is a core Straussian principle. His books—*Myth of American Individualism: The Protestant Origins of Political Thought* and *The Nature of Rights at The American Founding and Beyond*—address the roles of history and historicity in the American founding.⁸⁸⁹ Both books are intended to derail the idea that natural rights were the foundational source of the founding. The main theoretical thrust to Shain’s work is that history, while it can be freeing, should ultimately awake us to the realization that humans are happily (or unhappily so, in the Straussian case) limited in their ability to pull universal truths from history. One will notice the similarity with McIntyre’s work here. Just like Gottfried, Shain argues that American conservatism must find its roots in America. “We need to develop a fully American variant of conservatism; to advance our understanding of the

⁸⁸⁸ See, Paul Gottfried, “History and the Path of Liberty,” in *Liberty Law Blog*, 2011, <http://www.libertylawsite.org/book-review/history-and-the-path-of-liberty/>, accessed November 19, 2013.

⁸⁸⁹ Barry Shain, *The Myth of American Individualism: The Protestant Origins of American Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) and *The Nature of Rights at The American Founding and Beyond* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007).

conservative nature of the political traditions we have inherited; and to do so with a dignity that will permit us to stand before God, the American public, and our conservative forebears,” he writes.⁸⁹⁰

Shain’s work also has a personal flair to it because he believes that Straussians have discriminated against the real conservatives (traditionalists and the paleo wing).⁸⁹¹ His skepticism towards the prospects of intellectual conservatism was on display when he called the majority of his popular conservative contemporaries “whores.”⁸⁹² What Shain means is that, unlike the Left, the funding sources on the Right are so limited that many conservative thinkers sell their souls and craft for the promise of neo-conservative funding.⁸⁹³ For Shain, the real conservatives are of the paleo kind (Gottfried, Kirkean Bruce Frohnen, Bradford), and they have been “martyred”—ignored or pushed out of influential positions—because are were historical-thinking conservatives. This is a direct attack on Straussian political theorists because they are, in Shain’s phraseology, “lazy” and “evil” in the way they think about conservatism, and they ignore the work of paleo-conservatives.⁸⁹⁴ These Straussian academics also label their enemies “Nazis”—a reference to the ousting of Bradford from consideration of the NEH chair—and maintain that “myths about America” must be maintained, according to Shain.⁸⁹⁵ His anger is taken to the next level with the following groups of Gottfried’s Menckenians who do not hold back in how they challenge Straussians and liberals.

⁸⁹⁰ Barry Shain, “The Americanization of Conservatism,” *Modern Age*, 42 (2000): 126-127.

⁸⁹¹ As of today, there are not any books that deal strictly with the Straussian and paleo infighting.

⁸⁹² Conversation with Barry Shain. March 2012.

⁸⁹³ Gottfried covered the issue of funding in *Conservatism in America*.

⁸⁹⁴ It has been well known for decades that the work of traditionalist and paleo-conservatives, if it was reviewed, made it into one of the ISI academic journals, until recently. In fact, since ISI underwent a leadership change after 2010, it sold off its journal on political theory, and radically transformed its main journal into a news-like format. ISI is now considered a Catholic Straussian organization.

⁸⁹⁵ Conversation with Barry Shain. March 2012.

Journalistic Menckonianism: From Skepticism to Declension

A key member of the Gottfried textual community and leader of the journalistic group is former *National Review* editor Peter Brimelow.⁸⁹⁶ Brimelow is important to Gottfried's counter-revolution because he knew William Buckley well and traveled in the NR circle for years. From the perspective of the Gottfriedian textual community, Brimelow demonstrates the power of the poison pen to shock those with the representation of the *real* Buckley outside of the sympathetic portraits painted by sympathizers. In addition to his un-bourgeois picture of the bourgeois Buckley, Brimelow has created *VDARE.com*, which is a spinoff reactionary publication aimed at exposing the falsehoods of *National Review* and status quo conservatism.⁸⁹⁷ Brimelow also leads the effort of other lesser-known Menckonian reactionaries, including Robert Weissberg, who was recently forced out as a contributor to *National Review* for participating in another organization associated with the HLMC. Weissberg's dismissal followed the firing of another NR contributor and HLMC member, John Derbyshire who wrote an article (considered racist) for another publication, which is also associated with Gottfried's HLMC.⁸⁹⁸

These firings were looked at by the HLMC as capitulation to a culture that prizes an impotent faith in progress and political correctness. The majority of the HLMC believed that the removal of both Weissberg and Derbyshire from NR were also related to their belief that

⁸⁹⁶ Brimelow's two most representative publications include the subjects of immigration and the problem of teachers' unions in public education. See, Peter Brimelow, *Alien Nation: Common Sense about America's Immigration Disaster* (New York: Random House, 1995) and *The Worm in The Apple: How The Teacher Unions are Destroying American Education* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003).

⁸⁹⁷ See, *VDARE.com*. Brimelow boasts many of the same writers that frequent the HLMC including John Derbyshire and Pat Buchanan. Ironically, he has also recently begun to include a couple of writers who are often criticized at HLMC meetings like popular commentators Michelle Malkin and Ann Coulter.

⁸⁹⁸ For articles addressing both of these firings see, Dylan Byers, "National Review Fires John Derbyshire," *Politico*, April 7, 2012, <http://www.politico.com/blogs/media/2012/04/national-review-fires-john-derbyshire-119887.html>, accessed November 20, 2013 and Dylan Byers, "Robert Weissberg: NRO dismissal 'bizarre'," *Politico*, April 12, 2012, <http://www.politico.com/blogs/media/2012/04/weissberg-national-review-dismissal-bizarre-120323.html>, accessed November 20, 2013.

intellectual conservatism had relaxed its standards as it was now taking its cues from venues like Fox News.⁸⁹⁹ This journalistic Menckonianism also represents a further irony present in Gottfried's Menckonianism. Most of these thinkers, including Brimelow, Weissberg, and Derbyshire, surely consider themselves bourgeois. Yet, their participation in the HLMC is ironically anti-bourgeois in that it exposes the private in exchange for public recognition.⁹⁰⁰

Brimelow essentially agrees with Shain that conservatism's recent history is built on a house of cards. He considers his former superior (Buckley) an "enemy" who, while he helped build conservatism, because of his weak character, also destroyed it.⁹⁰¹ According to Brimelow, Buckley was no great intellectual, as he was always envious of his brother James Buckley who became a U.S. senator.⁹⁰² "Buckley may have been the maker of the conservative movement, but he was also the breaker," Brimelow said in 2011. He shared a host of very personal material about Buckley as the destroyer of the conservative movement, including his apparent depression, turncoat behavior against supposed friends, pandering to people like Rush Limbaugh, and a general sycophantic personality that caused him to regrettably invite the neo-conservatives into his *National Review* circle.

⁸⁹⁹ Robert Weissberg was present at the 2012 meeting of The Philadelphia Society days following these firings. I spoke with Weissberg, who was in attendance, and others familiar with these happenings.

⁹⁰⁰ To make Weissberg's travails even more interesting, he was criticized by the very people he spoke in front of at the American Renaissance conference after he called himself a sixties liberal in comment to the *Politico*. See, Hunter Wallace, "Robert Weissberg Grovels To Politico," *Occidental Dissent*, April 12, 2012, <http://www.occidentaldissent.com/2012/04/12/robert-weissberg-grovels-to-politico/>, accessed November 21, 2013.

⁹⁰¹ Peter Brimelow, "The WFB Myth" (paper presented at the annual meeting of The HL Mencken Club, Baltimore, Maryland, November 5, 2011).

⁹⁰² Brimelow, "The WFB Myth" (paper presented at the annual meeting of The HL Mencken Club, Baltimore, Maryland, November 5, 2011).

Derbyshire's 2009 book, *We are Doomed: Reclaiming Conservative Pessimism*, discusses the pessimism about conservatism that McIntyre and Shain are concerned with.⁹⁰³ This little book has become a favorite of the paleo-right for its candor. One of the aspects of paleo-thinking that has come from the firings of Derbyshire and Weissberg from *National Review*, and the rise of the paleo-right, is what I call the declension thesis of American conservatism. These thinkers are asking whether conservatism was always destined to fail. "Was the post World War II conservative movement destined to go bad?" Derbyshire asks in a 2012 lecture at the annual meeting of the HLMC. He adds: "...The post World War II conservative movement began by selling the pass on federal power. The movement did this because without a mighty defense system established backed by an all-powerful federal government, the Cold War could not be won."⁹⁰⁴ He said that the likes of Buckley ditched "the core principle" of pessimism and limitations in return for political influence.⁹⁰⁵ The abandonment of the core principle and new the declension thesis from greatness to neo-conservative decadence that Derbyshire speaks about is put into action as the aristocratic Menckenians form organizations and publications that reflect this apparent declension in order to attempt to start over or reboot American conservatism.

Aristocratic Menckenianism: From Declension to Rebirth

Taki Theodoracopulos and Richard Spencer are the aristocratic Menckenians. Their wealth allows them to continue to recreate counter-narratives through the formation of sister

⁹⁰³ John Derbyshire, *We are Doomed: Reclaiming Conservative Pessimism* (New York: Crown Forum, 2009).

⁹⁰⁴ John Derbyshire, "Was the Conservative Movement Destined to Go Bad?" (paper presented at the annual meeting of The HL Mencken Club, Baltimore, Maryland, November 10, 2012). Derbyshire goes on to state that he believed that conservatives really went wrong during the 1990s after the fall of the Soviet Union, and a change in the editorship of *National Review* in 1997 (Rich Lowry). These are key moments in the declension thesis.

⁹⁰⁵ This is also a theme in Gottfried's second edition of *The Conservative Movement*.

organizations to the HLMC.⁹⁰⁶ Both men thrive off the declension thesis as it gives them impetus to live out the counter-revolutionary aspects of the Menckonian persona. Theodoracopulos founded *The American Conservative* magazine, and the online magazine *Taki's Magazine*. Both venues serve as powerful outlets for reaction and recreation of what they consider the flawed conservative postwar model. TAC is the most important paleo-conservative publishing currently. TAC is not nearly as radical as his other publication—*Taki's Magazine*—which has become in a sense the publication home for the HLMC.

It is unclear how Theodoracopulos has gotten his wealth. But it is clear that he enjoys journalism as a former correspondent for the *American Spectator*. Taki, as he is known in conservative circles, addressed his founding of the *The American Conservative* in 2012, and deals with the question of how the aristocratic Menckenians are attempting to rebirth a conservatism that they believe has been hijacked. “How quickly time flies, and how much more quickly they forget? It was ten years ago that I flew to Washington to see Pat Buchanan with a proposal in mind. Scott McConnell was with me, and the deal we presented to Pat was a new magazine whose sole purpose would be to recapture traditional conservatism from the hijackers of the movement, namely the neo-cons, back then, as now, riding high and Iago-like whispering in W’s ears about an end to evil,” wrote Theodoracopulos.⁹⁰⁷ Theodoracopulos, despite his wealth, has struggled with his own loose tongue as a journalist. Even in 1986, in a rarely watched CSPAN clip, Theodoracopulos argues with another journalist (from his own newspaper) about Theodoracopulos’s attacks on former New York governor Mario Cuomo.

⁹⁰⁶ For a recent critical piece on Spencer see, Lauren M. Fox, “The Hatemonger Next Door,” *Salon*, September 29, 2013, http://www.salon.com/2013/09/29/the_hatemonger_next_door/, accessed November 3, 2013.

⁹⁰⁷ Taki Theodoracopulos, “Right From the Beginning,” *The American Conservative*, November 16, 2012, <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/right-from-the-beginning/>, accessed November 20, 2013.

Apparently, Cuomo and Theodoracopulos hurled ethnic slurs at each other, and Theodoracopulos was chided for using the same tactics as the governor.⁹⁰⁸

It is these types of incidents that Theodoracopulos and Spencer are arguing about. In other words, is there no place where the nationalist, the racist, the bigot, or whatever can spout his or her thoughts freely? This is where Richard Spencer comes in as he is trying to further that space that Theodoracopulos has worked on for more than a decade. The big difference with the Aristocratic Menckianis is that instead of trying to find common ground like establishment conservatives, or arguing academically, both Theodoracopulos and Spencer have ultimately given up on the common ground argument. Spencer, who is much younger than Theodoracopulos, has taken his family's wealth and invested it in organizations and publications that reflect his anger at political correctness and multiculturalism.⁹⁰⁹ Spencer, a graduate of the Universities of Chicago and Virginia, takes Gottfried's pluralism towards a general kind of paganism that disregards modern bourgeois Christian principles, as he promotes race-based policies and a culture far removed from feel-good multiculturalism. He also uses his inherited wealth to fund and work with racist organizations including The National Policy Institute, Washington Summit Publishers, and *Alternative Right*, which is an online magazine.⁹¹⁰

Spencer is the least consistent of Gottfried's textual community members. In one breath, he may support bringing in religious people into his camp, and in the next he believes in a Nietzschean kind of human bound only to history and power. During the 2011 HLMC, behind

⁹⁰⁸ The clip can be seen on CSPAN's Week in Review, May 30, 1986, <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/WeekinReview72>, accessed November 20, 2013.

⁹⁰⁹ For a recent interview with Spencer see, "Interview: Richard Spencer," *The Libertarian*, June 28, 2013, <http://the-libertarian.co.uk/interview-richard-spencer/>, accessed November 3, 2013.

⁹¹⁰ Spencer is also involved with a host of race-based publications including *Alternative Right* as founder, Radix Journal (print only), Washington Summit Publishers, Vanguard Radio, and he was formerly involved with *The American Conservative* and *Taki's Magazine*.

closed doors, several of the academic members of the HLMC were worried that his talk on “The Other “Old Right”: The WASP Elite” was anti-intellectual due to its apparent anachronisms, and might have discouraged other academics from returning. Spencer’s apparent flip-flopping was on display as he published a short article about giving over the reins of *Alternative Right* to a friend. “I often got chided for my putative attempt to align traditional Catholics, atheistic Darwinists, Nietzscheans, National Anarchists, White Nationalists et al. But this critique never touched me, and not because I imagined AltRight as an effort in team-building (à la “The enemy of my enemy is my friend” or “We’ll resolve internal disputes after the Revolution.”), wrote Spencer.⁹¹¹ What Spencer omits are his various posts and thoughts on the possibility of paganism, thus ostensibly alienating any possibility of a religious unity within his group. “But politics isn’t ultimately about ‘believing’ in anything; politics is, to be frank, the (often brutal) use of state power to achieve the aims of the governing class. What’s most interesting about the world is not politics, really, but the human flourishing that occurs outside it, or rather in the shadow of state sovereignty: from the mother and father to the warrior to the monk to the businessman to the aristocrat to the artist,” he wrote.

As we read and browse through Spencer’s thoughts about White Nationalism and the future of paganism, we still find the mechanism of counter-narrativity at work. Journalist Lauren Fox picked upon Spencer’s oddball counter-narrativity when she interviewed him about his race-based politics.

“Under the auspices of his blandly named National Policy Institute, Spencer is working to create an intellectual class of white separatists. The organization’s editorial unit publishes

⁹¹¹ Richard Spencer, “The Future of AlternativeRight.com,” May 3, 2012, *Alternative Right*, <http://alternativeright.com/altright-archive/fundraising/the-future-of-alternativerightcom>, accessed November 20, 2013.

‘scientifically-based’ books like “Race Differences in Intelligence” and “The Perils of Diversity.” The group rejects the calls for violence, which appear in Internet chat rooms and public campaigns of hate. Spencer prefers a more professorial approach of publishing books and organizing conferences. “Our goal is to form an intellectual community around European nationalism,” he wrote in an email.”⁹¹²

For Spencer and Theodoracopulos, the problem is living in a world where even the aristocrat must abide by the rule of institutional and functionary elites. While Spencer and Theodoracopulos can hide from the public’s view—they choose not to, obviously—they find that, despite their wealth and status, they must still go by the same rules as the middle class. Their hope is that they can rebirth a conservatism where elites are in charge intellectually and institutionally of the conversation again. They simultaneously desire to recreate a history before the postwar era in the hopes of finding that fulcrum of imagination that will once again reignite a return of the intellectual Right to its place of prominence.

Conclusion: Skepticism, Declension, and Rebirth: Imagination and Returning to the Right

The late Eugene Genovese once wrote to Paul Gottfried and said: “butter does not melt in your f*cking mouth.”⁹¹³ What Genovese was referring to was that, even earlier in Gottfried’s career, he had earned the reputation of a kind of hard-nosed critic. Genovese also recognized that there was clearly a division between Gottfried’s often-venomous paleo-conservatism and his contemporaries who stuck to the meekness of cultural argumentation. Still, Gottfried is the synthetic moment for this dissertation for several reasons. First, he correctly understood that there was no such thing as a genuinely historic conservatism in America. He agreed with Mel

⁹¹² Lauren M. Fox, “The Hatemonger Next Door,” *Salon*, September 29, 2013, http://www.salon.com/2013/09/29/the_hatemonger_next_door/, accessed November 3, 2013.

⁹¹³ Eugene Genovese, mailed letter to Gottfried, January 2, 1986.

Bradford that the antebellum South was probably the closest to European conservatism that America ever met. Second, as a result of the previous point, any conception of conservatism in America must be built on imagination. While he remained critical of a conservatism just founded on imagination, he also understood its power and relationship to historicism. Third, Gottfried knew that any conservatism in America must be founded on historicism as a reaction against the state because the state scaled down the size of the human economy. In other words, history, and being historically minded, allowed people to live within a familiar and manageable cultural framework. Additionally, he agreed with his friend Christopher Lasch who utilized historicism to reimagine the place of populism in a modern context. Lasch's populist genealogy spurred Gottfried to do the same. Finally, Gottfried recognized that intellectual honesty and political power were never conservative realities. The proto conservatives like Mencken, Irving Babbitt, and Paul Elmer More did not have political influence. This is why Gottfried chose the Menckonian persona to anchor his conservatism instead of Burke or Tocqueville. Gottfried knew that a historic American conservatism was reactionary, and he never shied away from it.

The postwar New Right avoided the nature of reaction precisely because of the way it ended up fleshing out in Gottfried's textual community. Gottfried intentionally opened up the boundaries of his work to followers for reinterpretation, and some groups have used it better than others, obviously. The academic Menckenians rightly chose to bring the tradition of skepticism back into the Right, which seems to be an acceptable venture in Gottfried's opinion. The journalistic Menckenians added the declension narrative to conservatism. They asked, "Was conservatism ever primed for victory?" The aristocratic Menckenians took the declension thesis and used it to forge new coalitions for a rebirth of the reactionary Menckonian Right. Racism, nationalism, and anti-intellectualism have often plagued this wing of Gottfried's textual

community and revealed an apparent inability to bring imagination and reality into a coherent whole.

What remains is the imaginative quality that Kirk forged in 1953. The ability to reimagine the world or reconstruct reality is still alive today. Kirk was not naive in understanding that America did not have a conservative tradition. But he knew through imaginative faculties paired with the appropriate texts that it could exist. Each successive generation of conservatives both chipped away at and added to the imaginative qualities of the Kirkean imagination, just as Gottfried's Menckeniens did with the privileged interpreter's pluralist historicism. Now that political conservatism has fallen flat and lost its battle for political relevance, it has one aspect going for it, and it is imagination. Imagination is the new frontier for conservatives, although it seems clear that this may not come to fruition for some time. Imagination is also the new frontier for a rebirth of politics—one built on literature, poetry, film, philosophy, history, art, and the unimpeded intellect. In this way, imagination remains open to people of all political stripes. In the epilogue to this dissertation, I will briefly talk about the place of this entire study in the field of intellectual history and in relation to thinking about politics. I will speak about the imagination as the new American frontier thesis, and will explain why, what I call *the imaginative turn* deserves a place next to the cultural and linguistic turns in the study of American intellectual history. In arguing against others who write about American conservatism, I will shortly state why American conservatism's appeal was not in its political promise, but rather in its imaginative appeal, and how that may filter out in the future.

Chapter 7: Epilogue: The Imaginative Turn in America

Answering the Fusionist Dilemma

I have answered the central question to this dissertation, which concerned the nature of the fusionist argument. Fusionists claim that anti-communism and capitalism kept this notion of conservatism alive after it should have perished following the success of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. The response I gave as to what held conservatism together was that of imagination, and the ability of conservative intellectuals to live a kind of parallel reality based on rendering the past as alterable. Postwar conservative intellectuals spoke about culture and the present as mutable based upon a reimagined or reconstructed past. The four thinkers discussed in this dissertation (Kirk, Lukacs, Lasch, and Gottfried) all wrote counter-narratives to the liberal consensus tradition whether it fleshed out in a Burkean, populist, or Tocquevillian literary form. Throughout these chapters, I have claimed that Kirk gave conservatism a method of addressing an evolving kind of liberalism whether its face was postmodern or a more specific variety like feminism. Successive generations of conservatives continue to build upon these original counter-narratives today. In all cases, the postwar conservatives gave followers an avenue in which to reimagine and live out another life besides the present one.

Overview of Previous Study

Some of the key findings of the present study are as follows. In the introduction, the focal point was to explain why another history of American conservatism was necessary. I argued that not only was the recent upswing in research on conservatism good for its revelations on previously unforeseen narratives, but that it had indeed opened up more gateways to

understanding this complex movement. In this manner, I proposed to slim my own intellectual history of postwar American conservatism down to four thinkers who arguably represented what I called imaginative conservatism. Each of these four thinkers had three things in common. They recreated a conservative genealogy in texts; mimicked a particular historical figure; and they all had a textual community of followers who then mimicked them in return. My research proposed to proceed in concentric circles to get a deeper understanding of the conservative movement by unlocking nuance among its key players. It therefore became a study of how and why these four historians chose individual thinkers as worthy conservatives, and how they then retranslated historical personages for the present condition. Each of these conservative intellectuals offered a revisionist picture of history by adding new qualities to certain past figures. For example, Burke was Americanized by Kirk; while Tocqueville, Mencken, and Brownson were modernized by the other three scholars to fit better into contemporary categories.⁹¹⁴ As the legacies of these bygone intellectuals were amended to fit into a new context, they then became inextricably linked to their privileged interpreters. These amendments also became boundary markers for joining a specific textual community, or say, becoming a Kirkean rather than a Gottfriedian. As Matthew Gabriele demonstrated in his own use of the concept of textual communities that living out the heresy was as important as remaining true to the actual legacy of the privileged interpreter was while he was alive.⁹¹⁵ Therefore, in order to join a certain textual community, one had to remain somewhat true to one's rendering of, for example, Burke, Mencken, or Tocqueville, whether it

⁹¹⁴ Recently, other authors have begun to notice these revisions as well. See, Drew Maciag, *Edmund Burke in America: The Contested Career of the Father of Modern Conservatism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013); Matthew Mancini, *Alexis de Tocqueville and American Intellectuals: From His Times to Ours* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), and Yuval Levin, *The Great Debate: Edmund Burke, Thomas Paine, and the Birth of Right and Left* (New York: Basic Books, 2014).

⁹¹⁵ See, Matthew Gabriele, *An Empire of Memory: The Legend of Charlemagne, The Franks, and Jerusalem Before The First Crusade* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), especially part three where Gabriele writes about imagined empire and the process from idea to action.

was an accurate representation or not. Yet, once the privileged interpreter died, his or her legacy (and the historicity of the likes of Tocqueville) was up for grabs due to competing divisions within the textual community.

Given the complexity and richness of this study work, I had to add a methods chapter to the study, which explained the reason for utilizing the method and concept of textual communities. I explained that Brian Stock's definition of textual communities reframed the conversation about conservatism from primarily a political one to an intellectual discourse that included stories of heresy, formation of orthodoxy, and reactionary linguistics that often went unnoticed by outsiders.⁹¹⁶ I demonstrated how certain segments of a textual community, for instance, had changed the legacy of Russell Kirk, and further how this transformed the public's memory concerning the privileged interpreter. In other words, memory has political capital too. Following the methods chapter, I then offered a keystone chapter on the career and intellectual conservative legacy of Russell Kirk.

The reason the chapter on Kirk is the keystone section of this study is that Russell Kirk invented conservatism with imaginative overtones. Kirk wrote regularly about what he called "the moral imagination," and he created a conservative canon of writers to match it. Only an imaginative writer could have placed the likes of Edmund Burke, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Calhoun, George Santayana, and T.S. Eliot in the same intellectual genealogy and claim it as *conservative*. As we know, Russell Kirk conceived of a customary conservatism based on Edmund Burke's imaginative renderings of English aristocracy that was filtered through T.S.

⁹¹⁶ The primary texts of Stock's utilized for this project were Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in The Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983) and *Listening for The Text: On The uses of The Past* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

Eliot's Christian modernism. Therefore, I claimed that Russell Kirk's enduring legacy might be more about his writings of intellectualized fictions than what we may consider to be the work of a scientifically minded academic historian.⁹¹⁷

John Lukacs was the subject of the fourth chapter. Lukacs, however, followed Kirk as a later first-generation conservative who also represented the important American postwar émigré wing. Lukacs rejected Kirk's customary conservatism by introducing his own worldview and his own conservative characters. Lukacs argued that conservatism in America could only exist through outsider notions of bourgeois life, which he termed the *bourgeois interior*. For him, a real conservatism could only exist through thinking conservatively; he called this historical consciousness. Lukacs was also seminal in reintroducing French diplomat and writer Alexis de Tocqueville into America during the postwar years. Lukacs believed that conservatism in America did faintly exist in aristocratic observers like Tocqueville, and in the old blue-blood bourgeoisie urban dwellers such as early-twentieth-century writer Agnes Repplier. Lukacs's imaginative conservatism included escapes into literature, a general reactionary posturing against all popular opinion, and a personal reliving of the past in the present. The Democratic Age, Lukacs believed, was thrust upon the Western world after the conclusion of the Second World War. Therefore, the remaining European bourgeoisie was left as the last set of enlightened observers of a vulgar populism that ordered the New World. If Kirk's conservatism was organic and preexistent in communities, Lukacs's hovered over the masses as he spiritualized the bourgeois experience. In other words, Lukacs's gave his bourgeois characters and their bourgeois

⁹¹⁷ In this regard, philosopher of history Hayden White plays a tacit role throughout this research too. White believes the most important way to study intellectuals is textually. In other words, the best way to study any thinker is by looking at his or her textual footprint located in books. See, Hayden White, *The Content of The Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), esp. chapter 8.

life almost god-like powers. The insights of the bourgeois remained pure, untrammelled, and did not need explanation as a democratic type of epistemic rendering only vulgarized and manipulated bourgeois morality.

The fifth chapter considering Christopher Lasch represented a transition in this dissertation. Lasch's conservatism was closer to Lukacs because of the need to publicly react against what he considered an anti-bourgeois liberalism aimed at striving for progress at all costs. Whereas Lukacs reflected a reaction within the conservative movement, the example of Lasch demonstrated that conservatism had indeed crept beyond its borders. Lasch was one of the first of a growing number of ex-secularists and former leftists like Alasdair MacIntyre, who came to hold great disdain for Enlightenment liberalism. Yet, Lasch stood out because he was willing to create a counter-narrative as a way to disrupt the status quo of liberalism.

There were many reasons for including Lasch in this research, and I demonstrated why he deserved a place next to the likes of Kirk and Gottfried. Mostly, Lasch's textual footprint shows a decidedly conservative turn after 1975. There were of course other reasons for including Lasch given the fact that many well-known conservatives now applaud and praise his work. As I revealed in the chapter on Lasch, he eventually rejected the radicalism of the New Left by the middle of the 1970s. While this fact is not particularly revelatory, what made Lasch stand out is that he did not just leap from liberalism to conservatism. Rather, Lasch held equal disdain for the second wave of conservatism—the neo-conservatives—because he believed their conservatism was only different from liberalism by degrees. Instead of seeing a kind of conservative conversion experience in Lasch's life, I questioned whether Lasch could ever be considered a New Leftist since he criticized that movement and liberalism throughout his career.

In reality, Lasch was more akin to an older kind of bourgeois public intellectual mentality than a radical one. With this in mind, he recreated American populism aimed at saving middle-class mores, and he simultaneously idealized an era when public intellectuals had the final word on all matters. Therefore, Lasch mimicked an assortment of thinkers that reflected his bourgeois populism, such as Orestes Brownson, Jonathan Edwards, and Reinhold Niebuhr, in his genealogical counter-narratives *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics* and *The Revolt of the Elites: And The Betrayal of Democracy*. Unlike either Kirk or Lukacs, Lasch refused the path of traditional religion and orthodoxy. Because Lasch remained ambiguous concerning religious matters and on issues such as epistemology, for the most part, members of his textual community embraced cosmopolitanism as they often chose to ignore his populism completely. While Lasch's textual community largely refused his populism, Paul Gottfried, used it to form paleo-conservatism.

Paul Gottfried is the subject of the seventh and final substantive chapter of this study. Gottfried befriended Lasch just as Lasch was making his conservative turn, and that connection made an indelible mark on both Gottfried and paleo-conservatism. A large part of this chapter is revisionist because it considers Lasch as one of the fathers of paleo-conservatism instead of Kirk or other recognizable conservatives rightists such as Samuel Francis. Gottfried established his conservatism on the basis of Lasch's right-wing populism while adding a vital historicist element to it. At the core of Gottfried's conservatism is the concept of historicism aimed at dethroning the place of what he termed the managerial state. Gottfried's theory of historicism is three-pronged. It is, first, a theoretical claim to demonstrate that history and tradition are freeing and imaginative, and not debilitating and limiting. Second, it is explicitly anti-statist and pluralistic. Third, it serves as a renewal of the legacy of Mencken as it is meant to dismantle what he

considers the post-liberal statist order that dominates America culture. Therefore, Gottfried serves as a host for the periphery of the right wing as his textual community congregates primarily around Gottfried's notions of right-wing pluralism and anti-statism.

Whereas the textual communities of the previous three authors would probably claim that they are beyond ideology, neither Gottfried nor his followers shy away from ideology and politics. Kirk's textual community is decidedly cultural. Lukacs's is bourgeois and literary. Lasch's textual community is more intellectual, cosmopolitan, and academic. And Gottfried's is mostly anti-statist. As a result, with Gottfried, conservatism returned to the Right by going back to a platform of anti-statism that defined the worldviews of Mencken, Albert Jay Nock, and Paul Elmer More, all antecedents of postwar conservatism in the United States. I also tried to show in the Gottfried chapter, that conservative intellectuals could not escape the draw of politics, and public life, no matter how cultural or imaginative they attempted to make their worldview.⁹¹⁸

Implications for Intellectual History and Research Concerning American Conservatism

To claim that ideology and political expectations were not a part of the aforementioned imaginative projects would be untrue. A rival politics to the liberal consensus was most definitely desired by all, although some wanted political recognition more than others did. Yet, politics was not the ecumenical agent that held conservatives as disparate as the poetic Kirk, the academic reactionary Gottfried, and the populist Lasch together. While the imaginative binding agent and the ideas of counter-narrativization created an intellectual space for conservatives, they also caused them to disagree about exactly how to approach political life.

⁹¹⁸ Each of the four thinkers studied here eventually corralled a kind of anti-statism. One's anti-statism could be more cultural or less than another's could.

Therefore, the imaginative component of conservatism and conservative history often made these thinkers reject most popular or fashionable representations of conservatism. For example, all four historians disliked Ronald Reagan: Kirk disliked Reagan's apparent lack of cultural conservatism; Lukacs hated his supposed celebrity-driven populism; Lasch detested Reagan's capitulation to the free market; and Gottfried found him unfavorable because he surrounded himself with neo-conservatives. More than likely, political recognition was always unlikely for these conservative intellectuals because the modern idea of imagination was also born out of fictional worlds created by the likes of C.S. Lewis and JRR Tolkien. The postwar conservatives were representative of a greater shift that I have claimed was part of an imaginative turn in America following the Second World War. I have called it the imaginative turn because it consisted of thinkers (some unassociated with conservatism) who chose to reject many aspects of the modern world while accepting that something was also lost from the past. This so-called loss was often some aspect of life that had succumbed to progress and to the uniformity of American culture. This imaginative turn has gone unnoticed by historians, by and large, because they failed to understand the genesis of the conservative movement and that its legacy may be regarded more as a resurrection of an imaginative kind of culturalism aimed at dethroning the presence of bureaucracies in American life than in building a permanent political platform.

The Imaginative Turn: Looking at Conservatism, Again

There are two larger implications to this research. The first is for the field of intellectual history, and the other for the subfield of research on American conservatism. My contention regarding the field of intellectual history is that an imaginative turn developed in the last fifty to sixty years alongside other academic turns such as the linguistic, cultural, or postmodern turns.

Often, the imaginative turn combined elements of all the aforementioned turns, thus making it more difficult to recognize. As I described in the chapter dealing with Kirk, he brought in the imaginative apologetics of T.S. Eliot, G.K. Chesterton, C.S. Lewis, and JRR Tolkien into postwar conservatism from its inception in 1953. From the imaginative worlds that these British writers penned came American conservatism via Kirk. However, this imaginative turn went unnoticed because it often happened outside of mainstream academic circles.⁹¹⁹ Because those involved with the imaginative turn were often anti-statists and against governmental reforms, their approach would have been even more unpopular among liberal academics.

When it relates to specifically studying American conservatism, I have argued that placing imagination at the center of the study allows historians to rethink previous narratives and methods used to explain postwar conservatism. This is especially true, as many previous studies have been concerned with making the conservative movement only about political triumph. Conservative intellectuals were often the people outside the beltline. While anti-communism and free-market capitalism obviously played seminal roles in shaping conservatism, we found in this study that these issues were often contentious topics among conservative thinkers too. Conservative intellectuals were writing about many matters and arguing about numerous things. But it is incorrect to think that they were only interested in writing public policy. With this in mind, I have also argued that historians must reorient their view of conservatism from geopolitical places such as Washington D.C. and New York to more formative conservative meccas such as Mecosta, Michigan, the suburbs of Philadelphia, and many American living rooms where imagination was born. It may also be wise to consider the greater aesthetic

⁹¹⁹ The most instructive text describing how mainstream historians addressed questions of counter-narratives and postmodernism see, Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "objectivity question" and The American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

components of conservative thinking and how imaginative methods may be utilized as ways to talk about the relationship between humans and technology in a supposedly post-human world.⁹²⁰

The Hermeneutics of Imagination

Imagination was not merely located in texts and separate from everyday life. The hermeneutics of conservative imagination was also a mimetic function that brought past and present together. While other historians such as Gerald Russello have picked upon the imaginative element in conservatism, many have only understood it through the life of Kirk, and not in the wider movement, especially with regards to methodology.⁹²¹ No previous study, I believe, has recognized the way that imagination entered into conservatism's hermeneutics through lived action taken from texts. In this regard further questions regarding widespread literacy and new technologies—such as the era of mass publication of books and so on—allowed conservatives to reinsert the past in the present with relative ease.

While language and texts were key to the imaginative aspect of conservatism, historians must also realize that the ability to live out the text was just as important. Once again, each conservative intellectual studied here mimicked a particular personage and linked that thinker directly to their life and research. Therefore, Russell Kirk was the American Burke and intentionally took on Burkean qualities in everyday life. John Lukacs thought of himself as a reincarnation of Tocqueville. And Paul Gottfried became the new H.L. Mencken. Imagination, in essence, was impotent without a figure to be mimicked and that could help to demonstrate the

⁹²⁰ For a discussion of post-humanism see the Summer 2009 issue of the journal *Daedalus*. The title of volume 138 was *On Being Human*.

⁹²¹ Gerald Russello, *The Postmodern Imagination of Russell Kirk* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007).

path of resistance on a daily basis. This gave these intellectuals' various projects their power and ability to be reconstructed with each successive generation of followers. In other words, the conservative imagination was not just about the printed text. The mimetic function also allowed followers of a particular textual community to live out a quasi-religious faith with regards to the seminal author while remaining faithful to religious orthodoxy and within the confines of the textual community. A member of any given textual community could live out an almost saint-like existence learned from official religious texts, and also take guidance from a contemporary model, such as Kirk, who served as a kind of modern religious figure. In other words, a great advantage to the conservative imagination and its relationship to the mimetic function, is that it connected the long past of sacred religious history, and paired it with a contemporary model (such as Lasch) who understood the travails of living in a modern world that struggled for a concept of the sacred. For many conservatives, the privileged interpreters were saint-like models, who had survived testing in return for intellectual prowess.

In the conclusion to this epilogue, I am going to briefly consider the ways imagination and research on conservatism may be expanded based on the use of imagination as a conceptual way of thinking about that movement. I agree with Kim Phillips-Fein that American conservatism needs to be historicized further in order to reveal more complexity. With this in mind, I also heed Wilfred McClay's rebuttal to Phillips-Fein that complexity should be revealed for scholarship's sake and not merely finding other ways to demonize conservatism for political reasons. Furthermore, as I did with the revelation between the founding of paleo-conservatism, Telos, and American Critical Theory, other connections and intellectual commitments may be found in the future. Conservatives and conservatism were not born out of thin air, but were historical people influenced by both real and unseen cultural forces. It makes sense to look

deeper at how philosophical trends, such as postmodernity and critical theory, affected conservative thinkers. In what ways may there be crossover between conservative thinking about modernity, and liberal criticisms of the Enlightenment, for example. Finally, and possibly most importantly, I shall say a bit more about what imagination may mean for the future of the soul of conservatism.

Conclusion: New Directions in the Study of the Right and the Soul of Conservatism after Reagan

The importance of imagination to American conservatism cannot be overstated. Without the imaginative counter narrative, conservatism in the United States would merely be a set of free-market principles. Still, knowing of imagination's significance to conservatism in the postwar era is just the tip of the iceberg. For greater understanding of the place of imagination in post-Second World War America, it is up to historians, anthropologists, novelists, sociologists, philosophers, linguists, and so on, to look closer at the axioms of imagination. In the current state of the scholarship, few scholars have demonstrated the various avenues of influence that imagination had in the United States during the Cold War.⁹²² Contextually, more work needs to be done to show how the likes of Russell Kirk and Christopher Lasch interacted with other postwar era intellectuals such as David Reisman, Philip Reiff, and Herbert Marcuse, for instance. More demonstration of the genesis and presence of imagination are needed from outside perspectives to show how it manifested itself in other areas, and why it became so prevalent in the postwar period.

⁹²² Lionel Trilling tried to make imagination a predominant feature of liberalism but to no avail. Intellectual historian, Eric Miller, has also situated Christopher Lasch's career in what he calls the rebirth of Humanism following the Second World War in America. See, Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* (New York: New York Review Books, c1950, 2008) and Eric Miller, *Hope in a Scattering time: A Life of Christopher Lasch* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2010).

The idea of imagination did not exist as an island that conservatives happened upon either. It was a historical construct as well as philosophical concept that was shaped and molded for conservative purposes. Because Kirk borrowed the idea of imagination from European conservatives thinking about conservatism in decline on the European continent, more analysis between European-style conservatism immediately before and after the Second World War, and American conservatism, should be studied in order to understand how Kirk envisioned imagination working in the United States. After all, Kirk did his doctoral work in Scotland at the University of Saint Andrews, and the effect of European conservatism colors his early career. The invention of imaginative conservatism was also a product of the triangulation of Kirk's upbringing in Michigan, the second industrial revolution in the United States, and the appeal of the aristocratic values found in the writings of T.S. Eliot and the long-dead Edmund Burke that Kirk consumed. Additional questions follow from these findings such as to why someone from a middle-class upbringing found aristocratic life appealing. Surely, Kirk realized that actual European aristocrats would have shunned him for his humble origins. Despite these facts, the Michigander drew in highborn types such as William Buckley into his realm of influence, and eventually usurped Buckley's legacy as the most influential conservative intellectual in the United States. These are just a few questions, observations, and ironies that deserve more investigation.

In the United States, conservatism and liberalism are conveniently separated into spheres. There may be more connections between postwar conservatism and the radical Leftist politics of the 1960s than historians previously believed. Both camps rejected some aspect of the Enlightenment, and the bourgeois liberal progressivism that defined the United States until the middle of the twentieth century. There also may be insights into modern conservatism embedded

in the works of Leon Trotsky, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Karl Marx, Edmund Husserl, Michel Foucault, and other thinkers not generally associated with the conservative canon. The point is that larger connections can and should be drawn between conservatism and larger intellectual currents. An interdisciplinary approach and microscope would help in performing these valuable tasks.

The main remaining question or matter in this dissertation is to whom will have the soul of conservatism in the future. A problem with addressing this kind of query is that it often makes prophecy a method for inquiry. While there is nothing wrong with the study of prophecy in relation to the past, predicting the future of a political party and a political movement is generally not a worthwhile affair. There are just too many variables to consider as generations change, events happen, and general uncertainty is a given. Who would have guessed in 1989 that the Republican Party that celebrated the huge electoral victories of Ronald Reagan in the early 1980s would struggle for survival two decades later?⁹²³ What is more surprising is that the Republican Party would use the same strategies for victory it did in 1984 as it would again in 2012.

In this writer's opinion, the only real aspect of conservatism that will change is the general obsolescence of the baby boomer generation from its leadership. The baby boomers have without a doubt had a profound impact on the course of American history; and they have dominated the political conversation since the 1980s, with successive generations often struggling for a place at the table. Even the Tea Party revolt and the birth of Fox News Channel seem to channel middle-class baby-boomer reactions against more elite baby boomers.⁹²⁴ With

⁹²³ See, Larry Sabato ed., *Barack Obama and The New America: The 2012 Election and The Changing Face of Politics* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013), especially chapter seven.

⁹²⁴ See, Nicole Hemmer, "The Conservative War on Liberal Media Has a Long History," *The Atlantic*, January 17, 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/01/the-conservative-war-on-liberal-media-has-a-long-history/283149/>, accessed January 18, 2014.

this in mind, it seems that younger generations, including generations X and the millennials, have chosen other pursuits instead of primarily politics, although there is certainly no shortage of young people involved in politics. The irony is that the generations following the baby boomers are often caught between finding a peaceful existence between state and community, and tradition and progress. One may often observe that younger generations are simultaneously libertarian in their views concerning fiscal matters, and statist when it comes to securing rights. In other words, these generations desire things like social justice, peace, equality, and financial success all at once.

As far as which piece of this complex generational puzzle conservatives will delve into the deepest is unclear. Yet, if the Republican Party exists the same way it does now in a decade or more, it is likely that a third party will rise in reaction for its failure to ignite the imaginative tones found in Kirk, Lukacs, Lasch, and Gottfried. Forays aimed at forming a more conservatively or historically informed coalition have failed multiple times in the past, and we may recall how the unsuccessful presidential campaigns of Patrick Buchanan, John Huntsman, and Ron Paul evidenced this trend.

If it is possible to speculate as to which thinkers in this study will be the most influential to the soul of conservatism in the future, I will pick both Christopher Lasch and Paul Gottfried as having the most intellectual impact on conservatism of the near future. Both historians thought that American society must be scaled down to more traditional pursuits because the state was eventually bound to fail based on its seemingly unbounded growth. In addition, both Lasch and Gottfried understood that a purely culturally based conservatism was not forceful enough to have this kind of long-lasting impact either. Both historians were more politically perceptive than either Kirk or Lukacs, and understood that imagination must be grounded in a historical

recognition (or historicism) of real localities. In other words, imagination alone could not overcome the apparatus of the state without recognizing that values cannot overcome the tradition set forth in each region or locality.⁹²⁵ Now that we are aware that the long-term impact of the post 9/11 world means exchanging privacy for security, a conservatism of limitations and accountability is more desirous than ever. Possibly, the recognition of limiting the technological and bureaucratic apparatus of the American empire will become the greatest impact of the four historians studied here.

Limiting the state and recognizing the peculiarities of local history and tradition is risky business, however. Both Lasch and Gottfried believed that despite the often-ugly industry of recognizing the value of customary historical practices, that this avenue was the only path to curb America's further bureaucratization of society.⁹²⁶ Lasch, Gottfried, and other conservatives were willing to exchange the largesse of government for a kind of segregated society based on its various historical commitments. As to whether they realized the full impact of this exchange is still somewhat unclear. At the very least, conservatism will have to become more flavorful, local, and historical as both Lasch and Gottfried suggested because recently its emphasis on universal values and matters such as foreign policy have only weakened its base.⁹²⁷ If the vision of the four historians is fulfilled, it seems likely that American conservatism will have many faces and personalities dotting a rolling geography. In one place, conservatism may indeed look like the fictional *Downton Abbey*, and in another, it could mirror a middle-class workers' paradise. Either way, if conservatism is to carry forward an imaginative personality rooted in customary

⁹²⁵ See, the chapter in this dissertation concerning Paul Gottfried that delved into the nuanced differences between historicism and cultural conservatism.

⁹²⁶ For a picture of what I mean when I say the often ugly industry of recognizing local tradition see, Tony Horowitz, *Confederates in The Attic: Dispatches from The Unfinished Civil War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999).

⁹²⁷ For a right-wing reaction against conservatism as espoused by neo-conservatives see, Andrew Bacevich, *Breach of Trust: How Americans Failed Their Soldiers and Their Country* (New York: Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt and Company, 2013)

practices, it is likely that it will become much less popular in the short term. Yet conservatism may one day slowly erect a foundation that will chip away at the edifice of the state. Until that day comes, conservatives can only imagine a world where noble lords once again dictate the welfare of a community, and where the automobile may disappear out of fashion in hopes of rebuilding communities.

APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL

MEMORANDUM DATE: May 10, 2012

TO: Seth Bartee, Francois Debrix

FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires May 31, 2014)

PROTOCOL TITLE: Imagination Movers: Conservative Reactions to Liberalism in Postwar America

IRB NUMBER: 12-489

Effective May 10, 2012, the Virginia Tech IRB Administrator, Carmen T. Green, approved the new protocol for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at <http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm> (please review before the commencement of your research).

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Approved as: Exempt, under 45 CFR 46.101(b) category(ies) 2

Protocol Approval Date: 5/10/2012

Protocol Expiration Date: NA

Continuing Review Due Date*: NA

*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered

under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:

Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals / work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.

Date*	OSP Number	Sponsor	Grant Comparison Conducted?

*Date this proposal number was compared, assessed as not requiring comparison, or comparison information was revised.

If this IRB protocol is to cover any other grant proposals, please contact the IRB office (irbadmin@vt.edu) immediately.