

➤ **CHAPTER FOUR** ◀

CONSERVATIVES AND THE MASS MEDIA

Crucial to the conservative goal of swaying voters and policymakers is the manipulation of the mass media. Right-wing perspectives today dominate much of both the print and the electronic media (see appendix B). Michael Parenti, one of America's leading progressive thinkers, observes:

Media bias usually does not occur in random fashion; rather, it moves in the same overall direction again and again, favoring management over labor, corporations over corporate critics, affluent whites over inner-city poor, officialdom over protestors, the two-party monopoly over leftist third parties, privatization and free-market "reforms" over public-sector development, U.S. dominance of the Third World over revolutionary or populist social change, investor globalization over nation-state democracy, national security policy over critics of that policy, and conservative commentators and columnists . . . over progressive or populist ones.¹

Media critic Michael Massing makes many of the same points: The media are timid, fearful of appearing liberal, especially prone to give government the benefit of the doubt, and sensitive not to paint business in a bad light. "Of all the internal problems confronting the press," he concludes, "the reluctance to venture into politically sensitive matters, to report disturbing truths that might unsettle and provoke, remains by far the most troubling."²

Who Owns the News?

Ideological direction comes from the very top. In 2002, according to *Forbes* magazine, more than one-third of the fifty wealthiest citizens in the United States gained the preponderance of their fortunes in

media-related industries.³ Massively wealthy, the owners of the major networks and newspapers are staunchly conservative (as are their corporate sponsors)—it is not likely that many billionaires this side of Ted Turner and George Soros vote the Democratic ticket.⁴ Not surprisingly, during the 2000 presidential election, 48 percent of the daily newspapers in the country endorsed Bush, while only 23 percent supported Gore.⁵

There is no better example of right-wing bias at the top of the corporate ladder than media mogul Rupert Murdoch (b. 1931), who owns one of the handful of conglomerates that control virtually the entire industry in the United States. (The other major media conglomerates are Time Warner, Disney, Viacom, Seagram, Sony, General Electric, and AT&T.) A diehard conservative who sits on the board of directors of the libertarian Cato Institute, the Australian-born publisher (he became a U.S. citizen in 1985) exerts massive influence on political discourse through his media empire, which in addition provides employment for hundreds of conservative commentators. Murdoch's conglomerate (News Corporation) owns the Fox television network; Fox News Channel, a twenty-four-hour cable network launched in 1996 that is fiercely partisan (and virtually lily white); Twentieth Century movie studio; several publishing houses, including HarperCollins; 130 daily newspapers, including *The Times* of London and the *New York Post*; and a multitude of other media outlets in the United States and abroad.⁶ Murdoch has recently expanded onto the Internet and satellite television, as well as the sports industry (News Corp. paid \$311 million for the Los Angeles Dodgers in 1998 and sold the struggling team six years later for \$430 million).⁷

General Electric (Ronald Reagan's former employer) is one of the Pentagon's leading contractors. Its many holdings include three news networks, including NBC. What are the odds that NBC will ever run an exposé of the military-industrial complex or that its news department will provide balanced coverage of an antiwar protest? As has been observed, News Corp., General Electric, and "the handful of global conglomerates that dominate America's media system have about as much interest in challenging the status quo in America as elephants have in challenging the status quo in the jungle."⁸

Right-Wing Dominance

Predictably, media employees mirror the views of their employers and advertisers. Who dominates the political talk show format on radio? For most Americans, the name Rush Limbaugh (b. 1951) remains virtually synonymous with talk radio, and with good reason. Aired on more than six hundred radio stations, his views are impossible to ignore: "You can drive almost anywhere in the United States on any weekday and get a three-hour,

undiluted, un-rebutted and often persuasive advertisement for President Bush and the Republican Party."⁹ (In 2001, Premiere Radio Networks awarded Limbaugh an eight-year, \$285 million contract.)¹⁰ Limbaugh has lots of company; New Right luminary Paul Weyrich has estimated that some fifteen hundred conservative talk show hosts hold forth on radio.¹¹ They dominate "attack" radio, and nothing is sacred to them—except big business. Prominent right-wing radio commentators with large followings include G. Gordon Liddy, Michael Reagan, and Ollie North.

Conservatives dominate the airwaves throughout the country. In Portland, Oregon, to cite what is admittedly an extreme case, listeners of the city's two local commercial political talk and news stations, KUGN and KPNW, are subjected to eighty hours per week (over four thousand hours per year) of Limbaugh and other conservative commentators, "with not so much as a second programmed for a Democratic or liberal perspective."¹²

Who are the syndicated columnists one sees over and over in the major newspapers? By the mid-1990s, George Will (b. 1941), ex-Washington editor for the *National Review*, and Cal Thomas, an evangelical Christian, ranked one and two in terms of visibility.¹³ They both continue at or near the top of the rankings today. Thomas Sowell, Charles Krauthammer, William Rusher, and other archconservative writers also have little trouble finding sympathetic editors and owners to pick up their syndicated columns. Editorial pages of major newspapers seem to feature two William Safires for every one Paul Krugman.

And who are the most visible political commentators on television, the most powerful opinion molder of all? Little is progressive about recent Catholic convert Robert Novak, ex-disc jockey Sean Hannity, born-again Christian Fred Barnes, or the bombastic John McLaughlin, ex-Jesuit priest and another former Washington editor of the *National Review*. Bill O'Reilly (b. 1949) claims to be "fair and balanced"—"the most ingeniously cynical slogan in the history of media marketing," according to *New York Times* executive editor Bill Keller¹⁴—but there's a reason why 72 percent of viewers tuning in to *The O'Reilly Factor*, the most popular show on Fox News, described themselves as conservatives in a 2004 Pew Research Center study.¹⁵ According to one noted critic, "the most prominent talking heads are all white males. The public is not even hearing policy recommendations from a significant segment of the body politic."¹⁶

High-Paid Darlings

These media darlings are not exactly working for minimum wages. Media scholar Robert McChesney reports that a 2002 survey of the forty largest-circulation newspapers in the U.S. indicates that, on

average, journalists made almost twice as much as a typical worker.¹⁷ Salaries among journalists in the electronic media are as high as those of their colleagues in the print media, if not higher. The marquee names, of course, earn much more. With salaries rivaling those of star athletes—themselves products of the communication revolution—members of the elite media living in affluent neighborhoods in and around New York City and Washington, D.C., can hardly be expected to be sympathetic to antiestablishment views.¹⁸ “Journalists at the dominant media,” McChesney avers, “are unlikely to have any idea what it means to go without health insurance, to be unable to locate affordable housing, to have their children in underfunded and dilapidated schools, to have relatives in prison or on the front lines of the military, to face the threat of severe poverty.”¹⁹

Given their background, Eric Alterman finds that while his fellow journalists working for prestigious media outlets may be liberal on social issues, their “views on economic matters are generally consistent with their privileged position on the socioeconomic ladder, and hence, well to the right of most Americans.”²⁰ Moreover, he adds, celebrity journalists can supplement their lofty salaries with generous stipends for corporate appearances:

Journalists are not being paid tens of thousands to give a single speech by public school children, welfare mothers, individual investors, health-care consumers, or even (in most instances) unions. They are taking it from banks, insurance companies, investment houses, and all manner of unindicted CEOs. If they want to continue to be invited, they had better not write anything that might offend these people.²¹

What Liberal Bias?

Conservatives are fond of citing the liberal credentials of university professors, as ex-radical David Horowitz has done recently in supposedly proving the liberal bias of Ivy League academics,²² but it would be interesting to poll media pundits in terms of *their* political orientation. Don’t hold your breath; it is about as likely to happen as that Vice President Cheney will reveal the beneficiaries of his charitable contributions or the names of the business executives who helped him formulate the Republican energy policy at the secret October 2002 meetings.²³ (Except for fellow Republican Tom DeLay, whose transgressions are well documented, it is difficult to find a public figure whose personal ethics are as questionable as those of the vice president.)²⁴ Most members of the television media may well be registered Democrats. However, their politics are moderate or slightly right of center. In his memoirs, Bill Clinton recalls a discussion he

had in this regard with Senator Alan Simpson, a conservative Republican from Wyoming, who observed about the elite media: “Most of them voted for you, but they think more like your right-wing critics do, and that’s more important.”²⁵

Certainly this is true of the most influential members of the television media, the Beltway political commentators. These talking heads, on both network and cable channels, are assuredly more conservative than the population at large, particularly on economic issues. If elections were left to them, the GOP candidate would win by a landslide. Listening to their commentary one would never guess that Bill Clinton was twice elected president of the United States and that Al Gore was the people’s choice during the 2000 presidential election, despite being outspent by over \$60 million by a Republican opponent who raised a whopping \$193 million.²⁶

Recall what the mainstream media did to Gore in 2000. Taking their cue from right-wing pundits, whose strategy was to call into question Gore’s honesty and even his mental stability—a strategy later used against Howard Dean—the major media participated in character assassination, enthusiastically portraying Gore as stiff, self-aggrandizing, and kooky, when in fact his mind was more flexible than that of his opponent and his ideas close to the American mainstream.²⁷

Despite all of this, one of the most vociferous and outrageous of conservative charges is that the media establishment is controlled by liberals, an allegation first made forcefully by the late Reed Irvine and most recently by media insider Bernard Goldberg.²⁸ Bear in mind that the Right constitutes an ideological movement, and members of such groups—“true believers,” as the American political philosopher Eric Hoffer referred to them—tend to interpret the world in absolute terms. As secular as well as religious right-wingers see it, the struggle is one between Good and Evil. Neutrality is impossible: “You’re either with us or against us.” This means that the majority of media reporters who strive to remain impartial—for example, Tom Brokaw and Dan Rather, both now retired—are reckoned by right-wing ideologues to be among the enemy, a rather idiosyncratic method of tracking.²⁹

Moreover, as the journalist-historian Eric Alterman demonstrates, the alleged media bastions of liberalism that conservatives love to hate—*The New Yorker*, *Harper’s*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *New Republic*, *Washington Post*, and even the much-maligned *New York Times*—are packed with articles by conservatives, including Andrew Sullivan, P. J. O’Rourke, William Safire, George Will, Robert Novak, and Charles Krauthammer.³⁰ Books by well-known right-wing authors, such as Ann Coulter and Bernard Goldberg, receive regular reviews in the so-called liberal press. This ideological toleration is rare, to say the least, in major right-wing publications.

Nevertheless, the criticism of liberal media bias is made so often and with such vehemence that it is difficult not to see the charge as orchestrated by right-wing zealots, a point emphasized by David Brock in his 2004 best seller, *The Republican Noise Machine: Right-Wing Media and How It Corrupts Democracy*. (So concerned was Brock with right-wing influence on the media that he founded and became CEO of the progressive Media Matters for America, a media watchdog group.) Once again, it may not be a conspiracy, but it seems highly suspect. Conservatives seem to be popping up everywhere. During the past two or three years, for some obscure reason, right-wing hacks such as Dennis Miller and Rush Limbaugh, who know little more than the average fan, have surfaced on sports programs as "commentators." What's this about?

On the other hand, the entire left wing of the U.S. political spectrum is virtually missing in the media. Twenty years ago a frustrated critic lamented, "There are few progressives and no socialist commentators in the mass media. In contrast, reactionaries, militarists, and ultra rightists have a multimillion dollar yearly propaganda budget donated by business firms."³¹

This political bias is even more apparent today. On television, for example, where are the liberal counterparts of the ultraconservative Bill O'Reilly, who hosts a *daily* program? Where is a left-wing network to balance off Fox News, now headed by GOP hardball strategist Roger Ailes and "operate[d] as an adjunct of the Republican Party"?³² The best that liberals can come up with is a modest for-profit talk radio network, Air America, featuring satirist Al Franken, which initiated operations in March 2004. According to a study by Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), a bipartisan media watch group, covering the first nineteen weeks of 2001, 89 percent of the guests with a political affiliation on Fox's signature political news show, *Special Report with Brit Hume*, were Republicans.³³

During the Afghanistan war, Fox correspondents wore U.S. flag pins, and anchor Brit Hume dismissed civilian deaths in the war-torn country as unworthy of coverage.³⁴ Embedded journalists went even further in uncritically justifying the unprovoked attack on Iraq in March 2003. While some 90 percent of western Europe opposed the war against Saddam Hussein, who allegedly harbored weapons of mass destruction, polls indicate that about three-quarters of the American population backed their government's decision to invade, even in the absence of credible evidence to support the administration's case. This wide discrepancy in public opinion had more than a little to do with the U.S. media's jingoistic slant. According to Robert McChesney, an expert on media studies, news coverage of the Iraq war ranks "among the very darkest moments in U.S. journalism history."³⁵ With few exceptions, the mainstream media enthusiastically supported the war.³⁶

Conveyor Belt for the Administration

Interviewed early in 2005, Amy Goodman, host of Pacifica Radio's *Democracy Now!*, remarked, "Bush not finding weapons of mass destruction exposed more than the Bush administration—it exposed the media that acted as a conveyor belt for the lies of the administration. It's not just Fox that was alleging it, it was CNN, it was MSNBC, it was NBC, ABC, it was the *New York Times*, it was the *Washington Post*, day after day, front page, above the fold, lead stories in the newspapers and television about weapons of mass destruction."³⁷ Rather than focusing on the transparent pretexts for the six-week war, American journalists had a field day reporting the official versions of the largely fictitious saga of Private Jessica Lynch and the heroic May 1 jet landing by George Bush, in full gear, on the USS *Abraham Lincoln*, a costly publicity stunt.³⁸ In September 2003, President Bush was forced to admit that no discernible evidence linked Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda, yet his admission received no coverage in the *Wall Street Journal* or Rupert Murdoch's *New York Post*.³⁹ The media were slow, too, to provide coverage a year later of American atrocities committed against insurgents during the pacification campaign.⁴⁰ Moreover, but for the extraordinary sleuthing of one veteran journalist, Seymour Hersh, the press might well have completely missed one of the biggest stories of 2004: American torture at Abu Ghraib prison.⁴¹

Not surprisingly, the most biased coverage of the war appeared on Fox News.⁴² When newsman Peter Arnett, working for cable rival MSNBC, gave an unflattering assessment of the U.S. military during an interview on state-run Iraqi television, Fox News labeled the New Zealand-born journalist a traitor, par for the course for "the flag-wrapped, star-spangled tenor of its coverage."⁴³ That American television coverage of the war was so one-sided reflects, too, the extensive use of former U.S. admirals and generals as military analysts, many of them employees of defense firms and advisers for groups promoting the invasion—a clear conflict of interest.⁴⁴

If CNBC could find a weekly slot for the ultraconservative editorial board of the *Wall Street Journal*, why can it not do the same for journalists representing the other side of the political spectrum? If a right-wing crusader like Pat Buchanan can spend years on CNN's *Crossfire* and *The Capital Gang*, as well as NBC's *The McLaughlin Group*, why can't a progressive thinker like Michael Parenti or Noam Chomsky get airtime? When panelists do ideological battle on these kinds of shows, as media critic Mark Hertsgaard wryly notes, the leftist position usually goes to former Clinton administration officials, hardly wild-eyed radicals.⁴⁵ Quite aside from intellectuals from the militant left such as Parenti and Chomsky, first-rate critics of the politics of greed are not in short supply: Kevin Phillips, William Greider, and Robert Reich, to name only a few. These liberal-minded pundits express themselves powerfully and eloquently.

Unfortunately, most Americans read little, preferring to watch television, where antiestablishment points of view get short shrift. If academia is so full of "reds," as right-wingers charge, why are they invisible in the media? Why do so few liberal professors get the opportunity to write syndicated columns, host radio talk shows, or appear on television as guest commentators? Instead, defenders of the status quo abound.

Treating the White House with Kid Gloves

Right-wing media bias is most evident in coverage of the White House. Compare, for example, media coverage of Presidents Clinton and Reagan: The Democrat was widely maligned; the Teflon president—blame never stuck to him—received kid gloves treatment.⁴⁶ The media jumped on the bandwagon, almost to a person, when conservatives launched their vituperative campaign to impeach the Democratic president for lying about his sexual transgressions. Right-wing columnists lost all sense of balance, as they went after anyone associated with the White House. William Safire of the *New York Times* went so far as to accuse the First Lady of being a "congenital liar."⁴⁷ The suicide of Clinton aide Vince Foster may well have been precipitated by personal attacks from the media, the *Wall Street Journal* in particular.⁴⁸ But when the aging Reagan lied about trading arms for hostages in clear violation of the law—thus committing not only a sin but a crime as well—the national press chose to ignore the elephant in the room. The weeklong coverage of his death in June 2004 by all the major networks, and their gushing admiration for his dubious legacy, only confirmed the media's love affair with him.

Maintaining less cordial relations with journalists than the Great Communicator, the Bushes, both father and son, have nonetheless received far more favorable media treatment than they deserve. When Bush the elder invaded Panama in 1989 and arrested the elected head of state, General Manuel Noriega, on drug charges—arrogance bordering on the extreme—the U.S. media were completely uncritical. One might have thought the invasion was a routine military exercise. Nor did the media find it strange that the United States threatened in 2004 to bring drug trafficking charges against deposed Haiti president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who had fallen out of favor with the Bush administration.⁴⁹ But what else can one expect from what public intellectual Bill Moyers describes as "a media oligarchy whose corporate journalists are neutered and whose right-wing publicists have no shame"?⁵⁰ Is it any wonder that young people are increasingly turning to *Saturday Night Live* and to *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart (on Comedy Central) for their news?⁵¹

A particularly egregious example of media bias and irresponsible journalism occurred in the summer of 2003. Noted Clinton basher Robert

Novak, acting on information he received from two senior White House officials, exposed the classified identity of a CIA operative to the public on July 14. The incident was all the more curious since the agent, Valerie Plame, was the wife of a former U.S. ambassador, Joseph Wilson, who had run afoul of the Bush administration.⁵² Sent to Niger to investigate whether Saddam had attempted to buy material that could be used to manufacture nuclear weapons, Wilson found no such evidence. Despite his own emissary's report, President Bush, attempting to build up support for the coming war in Iraq, went ahead and made the link before the American public in his State of the Union address in January 2002. After Gulf War II, Wilson denied the White House claim and criticized the invasion, drawing the administration's ire. Why was the ex-ambassador's wife exposed as a CIA operative? Were the Bush crowd punishing the recalcitrant emissary? Was Karl Rove, the president's chief political strategist, implicated in some way? Now here was a story that begged to be told. But the media, apparently still in a patriotic mood, were strangely hesitant. They practically had to be cajoled into following up with some good old-fashioned investigative reporting.

Had the Clinton White House been suspected of such a breach of national defense, media pundits would surely have howled for special prosecutors and impeachment. But these public servants were almost as reticent to investigate as was Attorney General Gonzales. (When the government was finally forced to launch an investigation, it was innocent journalists who refused to identify their sources who were threatened with prosecution rather than Novak, who at the time of writing continued to lead a charmed life.)⁵³ By and large, the media have bent over backward to accommodate the president; "George W.," *Newsweek* columnist Anna Quindlen charges, "has developed a Teflon coating slicker and thicker than that of Ronald Reagan."⁵⁴

Sesame Street Moves to the Right

Republican policies have rarely received the careful media scrutiny that Democratic policies do. Why should they? After all, these policies generally reflect the views of the media establishment. As progressive gadfly Jim Hightower points out, media conglomerates "all *love*" George Bush II and his deregulation agenda "because it's their agenda, too."⁵⁵

Indeed, even the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) exhibits a conservative bias, if one judges by the programming (e.g., fifteen hundred hours of William Buckley's *Firing Line*), which is not difficult to fathom given its heavy reliance on corporate funding.⁵⁶ A 1989 study on PBS's *MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour*, for example, found its guest list dominated by representatives of two right-wing Beltway think tanks, the Center for

Strategic and International Studies and the American Enterprise Institute. The report concluded, “*MacNeil/Lehrer’s* virtual exclusion of public interest leaders is a sad commentary on public TV.”⁵⁷ One has only to check out the lineup of corporate sponsors—they prefer to be known as “underwriters”—to realize that the piper calls the tune.

Given their powerful influence on PBS, how ironic that conservatives have waged a vast and unrelenting campaign, spearheaded by AIM and the Committee on Public Integrity (COMINT), a David Horowitz media watchdog, to defund the network, part of a broader strategy to deny public monies to those institutions that in the slightest way refuse to go along with their right-wing agendas.⁵⁸ In parallel fashion, noncommercial Christian radio stations are doing everything they can to crowd National Public Radio (NPR) affiliates off the airwaves.⁵⁹ Apparently, these chambers of free speech will be satisfied with nothing less than complete suppression of liberal views on the airwaves. And they are halfway there: A FAIR study conducted in June 2003 of the guest lists of four NPR news shows—*All Things Considered*, *Morning Edition*, *Weekend Edition Saturday*, and *Weekend Edition Sunday*—“shows the radio service relies on the same elite and influential sources that dominate mainstream commercial news, and falls short of reflecting the diversity of the American public.”⁶⁰ The study counted 2,334 quoted sources. In terms of party affiliation, GOP guests took the top seven spots among the most frequently cited sources; altogether, Republican guests outnumbered Democrats 61 to 38 percent.

Conservatism for the College Set

Just as corporate America owns the major news media, vast amounts of Republican money have gone into supporting conservative newspapers on college campuses. For example, the aforementioned Institute for Educational Affairs, the corporate philanthropy institute founded by William Simon and Irving Kristol, provided funding for over seventy campus newspapers by the mid-1980s through its Collegiate Network.⁶¹ The network’s first member, in 1980, was the ultraconservative *Dartmouth Review*, which received \$15,000 from IEA during its first ten years (and over \$295,000 from the Olin Foundation in the same period).⁶²

Around 1998, conservatives began taking the ideological war to another realm favored by the young—the Internet. As one media critic reports:

With increasing speed, conservative think tanks, policy institutes, religious groups, and grassroots organizations are turning the Internet into a vast conservative neighborhood where everyone knows each other. In

fact, most of the groups crudely lumped together as “the right”—from neo-nazi, white supremacist, and militia organizations to Christian right, conservative, and libertarian groups—are extremely active on the Internet and are regularly updating and building their sites.⁶³

The key Web sites are Townhall.com (www.townhall.com) and the Heartland Institute (www.heartland.org), the major conservative policy portals.⁶⁴ Founded in 1993 as a project of the Heritage Foundation and the *National Review*, the former claims to be the nation’s leading right-wing online service, uniting over fifty-five publications and organizations, including Americans for Tax Reform, the Federalist Society, and the Traditional Values Coalition. Founded in 1984 by Joseph Bast, the Heartland Institute has become the Right’s paramount information clearinghouse. The progressive Left operates many Web sites but nothing remotely approaching Townhall.com and the Heartland Institute in scope and complexity.

We should remember, too, the role of conservative think tanks (the subject of the previous chapter) in manufacturing what Americans read, what legislators hear, and how and what students learn.

The conservative attack on the media as an instrument of liberal ideology is part of a broader right-wing strategy to use fear as a means of advancing its own agenda, as we shall soon see. The tactic of fearmongering figures prominently among media outlets themselves. Fox TV’s stock-in-trade, for example, is crime, indignation, and fear of immigrants, and CNN is not far behind.⁶⁵ The Muslim threat to Americans has been another cable TV staple, an exaggerated fear exploited years after September 11 by Rupert Murdoch and other media moguls (at a time, in reality, when a U.S. resident was more likely to be hit by lightning than to be struck down by Islamic fanatics).

The reader who has come this far has learned about the birth of the right-wing juggernaut, its funding, some of its major institutions, and how it gets its point of view before the American people. Now it is time to focus on that point of view and the contents of conservative ideology in greater detail.

➤ **CHAPTER SIX** ◀

**CONSERVATISM AND THE
POLITICS OF FEAR**

The dawn of the twenty-first century found conservatives firmly in control of the major instruments of power, at both the state and the federal levels. Given the current fragmentation of the Democratic Party and the failure of liberals to offer a credible alternative—Joe Lieberman, Evan Bayh, and other party leaders are practically indistinguishable from their counterparts on the other side of the aisle—all indications are that right-wing dominance will only intensify in the immediate future.¹ How has this state of affairs come to pass? How has such a markedly antidemocratic agenda that benefits business elites at the expense of everyone else achieved such resounding success? It is not as if the right-wing agenda has been imposed by a dictatorship. In fact, election after election has been won by conservative Republicans; the elites could not have prevailed without the active collaboration of the masses. How this can be so, according to journalist Thomas Frank, is “the preeminent question of our times.”² “In any other democracy, the majority would have coalesced by now in a populist rebellion,” marvels another critic.³

A Typical Operation

Part of the answer is that the Republican Party has both articulated a set of coherent, integrated, and well-thought-out strategies and disseminated its views widely and effectively. As we saw previously, its dense network of think tanks and policy institutes has played an indispensable role, as has dominance of the national media. Right-wing policies were generally conceived, refined, and ultimately drafted in think tanks by well-paid merchants masquerading as scholars. Godfrey Hodgson cogently explains the process by which these pro-establishment ideas are marketed:

A typical . . . operation would begin with an article by a reputable social scientist in a journal such as *The Public Interest*. . . . These “new” ideas

would then be discovered, commended, circulated in a host of other publications, all ultimately supported by the same ring of half a dozen foundations committed to conservative ideology. Conferences would be organized. Speakers would be carefully and selectively invited. The right (and right) journalists would be invited to attend. The favored ideas would duly circulate through media more and more closely approaching the objective mainstream until they had received the widest possible exposure and, it was hoped, acceptance. Thus the trail from the avowedly partisan conservative fringe to the op-ed columns of major newspapers could be blazed by patient, dedicated conservative scouts. If necessary, an incipient counterattack could be beaten off, sometimes with surprising *ad hominem* acerbity. Throughout, it would have been made unambiguously clear that the glittering prizes of career advancement, research posts, research assistance, publication, and promotion awaited those, and only those, who hewed close to the ideological line. Such skillful use of the carrot and the stick has succeeded in creating, in the Washington think tanks, in some newspapers and magazines, and in some university departments, a sort of conservative *nomenclature*; and this careful process has enabled the conservatives, to a remarkable degree, to drown out discordant voices.⁴

University of California linguistics professor George Lakoff points out—as do scholars Jean Stefancic and Richard Delgado—that right-wing think tanks are funded through massive unrestricted grants and are virtually guaranteed long-term funding. As a result, their fellows can develop long-term, high-level strategies that cover a wide range of issues.⁵ Liberal think tanks, vastly underfunded compared with their adversaries, cannot provide their scholars this luxury.

Celebrity Sells

Using Madison Avenue techniques, conservative strategists have marketed their product, a right-wing agenda, with consummate skill. With close links to the corporate world, Republicans know what a consumer-oriented society wants—entertainment. And employing market research and public relations firms, they have proven adept at delivering the product. Television, as communications theorist Neil Postman convincingly argues in an insightful study, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, has radically transformed political discourse, as it has virtually every other aspect of modern life.⁶ Because corporate conglomerates monopolize the electronic media, they are in a position to control this discourse.

Second only to profits, television is about entertainment. When it presents information, it does so “in a form that renders it simplistic, nonsubstantive,

nonhistorical and noncontextual.”⁷ Even the news is distorted, and not just on television. The news media in general, according to media critic Norman Solomon, “with their addiction to ratings have evolved into infotainment.”⁸ The process by which conglomerates have encouraged this trend, and thus destroyed the credibility of broadcast journalism, is traced by Bonnie Anderson, an ex-CNN vice president, in her revealing exposé, *News Flash*.

Serious news analysis, like investigative reporting, has been replaced, critics like Anderson lament, with a steady diet of celebrity stories. The coverage of Ronald Reagan’s death provides a dramatic example (the week of his death, *Newsweek* ran a twenty-three-page feature on the popular ex-president, followed the next week by an eighteen-page lead article and several related features). The lives of “the rich and famous,” safe stories that rarely offend the power elite, are less expensive to cover than hard news.⁹ More important, however, as the renowned historian Haynes Johnson notes, celebrity sells.¹⁰ And the cult of celebrity is not confined to mass culture. In 1997, the regents of the University of Wisconsin–Superior awarded an honorary doctorate to Arnold Schwarzenegger!¹¹ Exposed to mindless programming and endless commercials, is it any wonder that the public has suffered a gradual erosion of its capacity for critical thinking? Unable to distinguish fact from fiction, the citizenry is ill equipped to handle the political responsibilities that a true democracy requires.

Moreover, because image is everything, the field of entertainment has also opened up new vistas to celebrities wishing to enter the political arena. Americans are so fascinated by celebrities that entire industries inform the public about the lives of famous personages. Autobiographies not just of the stars themselves—Bill Clinton’s memoir was one of the greatest publishing successes of 2004¹²—but of the relatively inconsequential individuals who interview them, serve as their bodyguards, or even sleep with them are overnight best sellers. The GOP, drawing on its business acumen, has been quick to seize the opportunity to tap into the popularity of media stars. The corporate world has provided the model. The use of celebrities, such as Bob Hope and Ronald Reagan, to market merchandise on television was commonplace from the fifties to the seventies. (Celebrities still hawk products on television, often without acknowledging that they are being handsomely subsidized by corporate sponsors.)¹³

It was only a small step to use these popular personalities, despite the mistrust of Hollywood types by born-again Christians, to market political agendas. Then, in the eighties, the celebrities themselves were marketed as politicians. Postman notes that during this decade came a deluge of politicians who “put themselves forward, intentionally, as sources of entertainment.”¹⁴ Politicians, like everyone else on television, were required to elicit warm feelings and avoid controversy. Consequently voters are

asked to vote not in their own interests but on a candidate's likeability. "We are not permitted to know who is best at being President or Governor or Senator," Postman writes, "but whose image is best in touching and soothing the deep reaches of our discontent."¹⁵ The apotheosis of Ronald Reagan leaps to mind.

An excellent recent example is the election of Arnold Schwarzenegger to the California governorship in October 2003, after the successful recall of Democrat Gray Davis over a budgetary catastrophe largely brought on by former GOP governor Pete Wilson's deregulation of the utilities industry. "How is it possible," asked an incredulous but bemused journalist, Lewis Lapham, "to elect Arnold Schwarzenegger governor of California except in the belief that he will bring to Sacramento the secret stone of power that Conan the Barbarian rescued from the sorceress in the castle of Shain?"¹⁶ How extraordinary that a candidate with few credentials for the job, a bodybuilder and Hollywood actor who made his name by starring in a series of violent action films, should defeat an incumbent who served as an officer and won a Bronze Star in Vietnam, graduated from an elite university (Stanford), and had many years of experience in the political arena—one, moreover, who had recently been elected fair and square by the voters of the state to be their chief executive.

Clearly, what won the Austrian-born box office star the election was his celebrity status—and that of his wife, Maria Shriver, a member of the famed Kennedy clan and a popular news reporter on national television. During the period leading up to the election, Schwarzenegger films aired endlessly on television; and the Terminator himself, though he refused to participate in debates and answer questions from legitimate journalists, was only too glad to appear as a guest on shows hosted by Oprah Winfrey, Howard Stern, Jay Leno, and Larry King.¹⁷ He was featured simultaneously on the covers of *Time* and *Newsweek*.

Beyond name recognition, "Arnie," as a fawning media quickly dubbed the actor, also enjoyed one other awesome advantage, the trump card GOP candidates seem to always have—lots of money. His campaign raised \$27 million, about a third of it coming from thirty-seven donors who provided six-figure checks, even though the "populist candidate" initially promised not to take donations from special interests.¹⁸ Moreover, even his backers admitted that the single most important factor in getting the recall drive off the ground in the first place was the \$1.7 million of his own money that conservative politician and millionaire businessman Darrell Issa shelled out to initiate and sustain the effort during its first weeks.¹⁹ Mike Davis, an astute social commentator, observed that the new "populist" revolution that resulted in the triumph of Schwarzenegger—and the stealth return of Pete Wilson, his chief political adviser—won its most enthusiastic support not among the down-and-out but among the state's

wealthiest residents, such as Mike Davis's own friends and neighbors in San Diego's most affluent suburbs.²⁰

Hardball for Our Enemies

Although the Schwarzenegger camp was relatively free of mudslinging during the hard-fought battle (even though the actor himself was accused by his political opponents of chronic sexual harassment, an accusation he acknowledged), this is not always the case in GOP campaigns. The tactical ruthlessness that the young Republicans of the Nixon and Reagan years displayed in running negative political campaigns still plays well to audiences accustomed to being entertained. Consequently, the take-no-prisoners maneuvers associated with Lee Atwater and Karl Rove are continually employed today not only in political campaigns but in the media as well, especially on right-wing "shout" radio and cable television. "Democracy," E. J. Dionne Jr. observed in 1991 in his popular *Why Americans Hate Politics*, "takes on all the dignity of mud-wrestling."²¹ If the situation was bad then, serious political discourse has become a rare commodity in the electronic media, where most people get their news. Not that the masses seem to mind—Fox News does much better than C-SPAN.

Big Lies

As both comedian-political analyst Al Franken and investigative journalist Joe Conason have amply documented in their 2003 best sellers, *Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them* and *Big Lies*, conservative ideologues, often employing Orwellian newspeak, have consistently relied on deceit and manipulation to deliver their message to a gullible public. From the president on down, bait-and-switch techniques have been elevated to an art. "Bush's lies now fill volumes," charges columnist Molly Ivins. "He lied us into two hideously unfair tax cuts; he lied us into an unnecessary war with disastrous consequences; he lied us into the Patriot Act, eviscerating our freedoms."²² So constant is his fibbing, another critic of George W. Bush charges, "that a history of his lies offers a close approximation of the history of his presidential tenure."²³ The most damning personal criticism of all, however, comes from highly regarded political analyst Kevin Phillips in his recent book, *American Dynasty: Aristocracy, Fortune, and the Politics of Deceit in the House of Bush*, a searing indictment not just of the current president but of four generations of his family.

Taking their cue from the intemperate politicians, right-wing pundits have followed suit. Perhaps the most extreme has been Ann Coulter,

author of three outrageous best-selling hits.²⁴ The mercurial pundit also has her own blog (AnnCoulter.com), one of the most popular on the conservative side. An appeal that extends even beyond her hard-core right-wing base leaves serious media scholars perplexed. Many would share the view of Susan Raskey, a senior lecturer at UC Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism: "I would argue that Ann Coulter is provocative for the sake of being provocative. She's not attempting to make any sort of journalistic argument. I don't know what you'd call her—'pundit' seems too distinguished."²⁵ Unleashing the Limbaughs, the Hannitys, and the Coulters with their omissions, half-truths, and outright lies may have coarsened political discourse, but this steamroller approach has paid the GOP huge dividends.

Just Plain Folks

Another effective tactic of the populist New Right is to convince voters that the Democrats are effete intellectuals who have lost touch with their constituencies while the Republicans are the party of the people. The latter, particularly, would seem to be a hard sell considering the traditional association of the GOP with the rich since the time of FDR. Nevertheless, right-wing luminaries have proven remarkably successful in convincing the middle class that its interests are identical to those of the GOP. Indeed, conservative ideologues such as Coulter and Limbaugh are relentless in pushing the idea that they themselves are just "plain folks," not ivory tower intellectuals like their ideological opponents.

Apparently this antielitist message gets an enthusiastic welcome since even George W. Bush cannot resist the temptation, at every opportunity, to remind his audiences that he's just "like y'all," which is true—if you attended Phillips Andover, Yale, and Harvard; if your grandfather was a senator from Connecticut; and if your father was president of the United States.²⁶ The ruse, though, seems to work every time. "It amazes me," Morris Berman writes, "that Americans are quick to call intellectuals—who have no power at all—'elitist,' yet remain oblivious to the real oligarchic elites, which are corporate."²⁷ While it is hard to believe that ordinary people actually buy into this transparent egalitarian claptrap—after all, Limbaugh lives in a \$30 million mansion—election results indicate otherwise.

It is clear, then, that conservatives have been much more successful than liberals in taking their message to the public. Nevertheless, the simple volume of information disseminated via the media fails to fully account for their success at the polls. The question remains: Why have voters consistently supported candidates and policies that are apparently inimical to their own self-interest?

What, Me Vote?

Part of the answer to this complex question is that many Americans have simply opted out of the system. Only about half of the electorate bothers to cast a vote in even the most important national elections (55 percent voted in the 2000 presidential election). "Politically," journalists Mark Hertsgaard remarks, "we live in a democracy that barely deserves the name. Our government lectures others on how to run elections yet most of our own citizens don't vote. Abdication of this basic civic responsibility may be rooted partly in the complacency that affluence can breed, but surely another cause is the alienation many Americans feel from a political system they correctly perceive as captive to the rich and the powerful."²⁸

Political lethargy is most pronounced among the youth, who are distracted by a multitude of other priorities, the media for one. Sitting before a television set four hours a day, a national average, leaves little time for anything else, nor does it do much to hone critical thinking skills.²⁹ Youth are also understandably distracted by the demands of school, late adolescence, family, and dating.

Political apathy also runs rampant among the impoverished, who are preoccupied with immediate concerns, including putting food on the table. The working poor, moreover, are conditioned to act passively on their jobs. Social researcher Barbara Ehrenreich explains:

If low-wage workers do not always behave in an economically rational way, that is, as free agents within a capitalist democracy, it is because they dwell in a place that is neither free nor in any way democratic. When you enter the low-wage workplace—and many of the medium-wage workplaces as well—you check in your civil liberties at the door, leave America and all it supposedly stands for behind, and learn to zip your lips for the duration of the shift. The consequences of this routine surrender go beyond the issues of wages and poverty. We can hardly pride ourselves on being the world's preeminent democracy, after all, if large numbers of citizens spend half their waking hours in what amounts, in plain terms, to a dictatorship.³⁰

Although difficult to quantify, another cause of the pronounced apathy of Americans in general, not just the youth and the impoverished, is the high incidence of drug use. "Although marijuana remains illegal," claims journalist Ruth Rosen, "mind-altering drugs are as common as a double latte or Big Mac."³¹ How can we expect people to meet their civic responsibilities when we live in a medicated society? This point is made forcefully by the historian Morris Berman, who adds that a vital democracy requires citizenry that actually wants to get out of bed every morning.³²

Given the lethargy of large segments of the population, huge numbers of Americans have paid scant attention to the workings of government. Unquestioningly obedient to authority, many citizens have lost sight of their own true interests. For example, ample evidence suggests, according to Princeton political scientist Larry Bartels, that most middle- and lower-income Americans who support the Bush tax policies "have failed to connect the tax cuts to rising inequality, their future tax burden or the availability of government services"; not realizing that they themselves will be the victims, they are in fact motivated by what Bartels calls "un-enlightened self-interest."³³

In the past few years, then, large segments of the American population simply haven't been paying attention. Writer Robert D. Kaplan foresees a time when the problem will grow worse. "Increasingly," he muses, "... one can be an expatriate without living abroad. One can have Oriental rugs, foreign cuisines, eclectic tastes, exposure to foreign languages, friends overseas with whom one's life increasingly intertwines, and special schools for the kids—all at home. Resident expatriatism, or something resembling it, could become the new secular religion of the upper-middle and upper classes, fostered by communications technology."³⁴ At the moment, however, it is not clear why the affluent would forsake a political system that has served them so well for so long.

Indeed, the people who *do* count in political calculations and actually exercise their vote today come predominantly from the well-to-do. A significant number of these voters—perhaps a third of the middle class—back the Republican Party for perfectly rational reasons: They benefit directly and immediately from conservative policies. These boosters include owners, managers, and major shareholders in large corporations and the lawyers of the top legal firms who represent these powerful organizations. Writing in 1959, Columbia University professor C. Wright Mills commented that "every one of the very rich families [in America] has been and is closely connected—always legally and frequently managerially as well—with one of the multi-million dollar corporations."³⁵ This nexus is even more evident today. Sometimes labeled the superrich, their incomes are in the top 1 percent, which means they made at least \$293,000 in 2001.³⁶

Identification with the Aggressor

Beyond these elites, however, self-interest also dictates that corporate employees, from executives to janitors, will support probusiness policies. It is not difficult, for example, to convince an aircraft worker in Seattle or St. Louis that what's good for Boeing is good for America. Thus, the privileged set extends well beyond the superrich, or even the upper class, and

incorporates the upper-middle class. (Already by the late 1980s, Ehrenreich estimated, more than 60 percent of this class—made up predominantly of managers and professionals—"earns its living in the direct service of corporate power.")³⁷ Their numbers are most evident in the suburbs of the nation's major metropolitan areas, especially in the newer, upscale outer suburbs, where every third vehicle is an SUV and gourmet restaurants are packed even at midweek. Political economist Robert Reich refers to these privileged elites, who dominate the upper ranks of the political as well as the corporate hierarchies, as "the fortunate fifth" since he estimates that collectively they represent the upper quintile of the nation's wage earners.³⁸ (*Harper's Magazine* editor Lewis Lapham prefers the term "the equestrian classes.")³⁹

However, most voters are not directly tied to corporations, at least not yet. Indeed, their interests mostly tend to run counter to those of the elites. Mostly members of the middle class, they expect to enjoy hard-earned entitlements such as Medicare and Social Security. Yet during the past thirty or thirty-five years, huge numbers of these same voters have regularly sustained the Republican Party with its regressive tax policies and escalating assault on the welfare state. This was not always the case. From the thirties through the sixties, the middle class tended to vote solidly in favor of Democratic candidates in national elections. Defections to the GOP began under Nixon; they became an avalanche under Reagan ("Reagan Democrats"); and, after flirting with Clinton, they seem to have returned to the Republican fold under George W. Bush. How has the GOP been able to win this battle for the hearts and minds of Americans so completely?

"Moral Values"

According to George Lakoff, the GOP has constructed a kind of popular appeal. Specifically, he posits that Republicans, in contrast to their Democratic rivals, have displayed a much greater appreciation of human psychology. They have understood and employed a key concept discovered by Freud in the late nineteenth century: People are moved less by rational arguments than by emotional appeals. The emphasis on moral messages, religious and otherwise, has paid rich dividends to GOP strategists such as Paul Weyrich and Ralph Reed. Dominated by the secular humanistic tradition emanating from the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, liberal Democrats have been slow to grasp this truth. "As long as liberals ignore moral, mythic and emotional dimensions," Lakoff, himself a staunch liberal, cautions, "they will have no hope."⁴⁰

Undoubtedly, the conservative emphasis on moral values has resonated with significant segments of the American public, especially those who

take their religion seriously. However, even hard-core traditionalists must feel, from time to time, a lingering suspicion that the champions of the Republican Party and particularly its chief beneficiaries, “the rich and the famous,” hardly enjoy a monopoly on family values. Republican success at the polls exhibits, rather, a different dimension: the appeal to baser instincts.

Fear

To understand the conservative ascendancy, both politically and intellectually, one has to appreciate the widespread *fear* that haunts American society, as filmmaker Michael Moore illustrates in his popular 2002 documentary *Bowling for Columbine*. This at the very moment, ironically, when our nation has emerged as the only superpower on the globe, when we appear to be so self-confident, even arrogant in our dealings with other nations.

The roots of this insecurity—which some observers date from the Kennedy assassination in 1963—are complex. As mentioned previously, the rise of formerly disenfranchised populations—notably women and racial minorities—on the one hand, and the emergence of secular humanism, on the other, are important factors. The loss of the Vietnam War, too, created a crisis of conscience. It is almost impossible for young people today to appreciate how divisive the conflict in Southeast Asia was and how much soul-searching America went through in the aftermath. Massive immigration into the country, mostly from underdeveloped areas, has altered the American cultural landscape dramatically, calling into question the whole notion of what it means to be an American.⁴¹ Immigration, however, was but one cause of xenophobia.

International terrorism became more than simply a nuisance after September 11, 2001, when American complacency shattered irrevocably. Though shock waves reached every corner of life, politics experienced the greatest impact. The Bush administration was quick to seize on the pervasive fears generated by the jihadists for its own ends, easily winning popular support for the enactment of a host of programs, notably the USA PATRIOT Act, which gave the chief executive virtually unprecedented powers.⁴² Moreover, in the presidential elections following that singular act of terrorism, his handlers deftly portrayed George W. Bush, a Vietnam War draft dodger, as a resolute wartime leader—while his opponent, John Kerry, a decorated war veteran, was accused of being wavering and indecisive—thus paving the way for Bush’s 2004 reelection.

This fraudulently whipped-up fear has powerful social and political consequences. Social scientists have long known that in times of crisis, citizens rally around a strong leader and are impatient with critics. The

perception of threat solidifies followers, boosts patriotism, and strengthens support for military action. Conservatives trade on all these fears.⁴³ Leo Strauss taught that intellectuals should spread an ideology of good versus evil, to mobilize the ordinary people against the enemies of freedom. The neoconservatives learned his lesson all too well.

This is not, of course, to deny that terrorism is real or that fear and vigilance are not rational responses to foreign threats. The world is a dangerous place. But neoconservatives have gone far beyond what is warranted to safeguard our security. They have eroded civil liberties more than is necessary or desirable and may have made the nation less, not more, secure by alienating our allies and inflaming the Arab world.

Job Insecurity

Second to terror as a profound cause of insecurity has been the series of economic dislocations wrought by globalization—defined by Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz as “the closer integration of the countries of the world as a result of lowering of transportation and communication costs.”⁴⁴ The historian William C. Berman, professor emeritus at the University of Toronto, points out that America’s rightward turn was hardly unique; much of western Europe—notably England under Margaret Thatcher and Italy under its wealthiest citizen, Silvio Berlusconi—followed the same path.⁴⁵ The common denominator, he argues, is the changing global economy, particularly the expansion of international markets and labor pools. These extraordinary changes, observes Kevin Phillips, have been as momentous as those that accompanied the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth century.⁴⁶

Globalization, as many scholars have noted, naturally privileges the GOP.⁴⁷ After all, as Morris Berman explains, greater investments in complexity are always “accompanied by a greater share of the pie for the elite.”⁴⁸ Among the many destabilizing consequences has been the virtual destruction of trade unions under the impact of massive immigration from abroad and the ability of multinational corporations to find cheap labor in underdeveloped regions of the globe.

Job security among U.S. wage earners is rapidly fading. More and more workers are being forced into part-time employment, a trend that has increased threefold since 1968.⁴⁹ Two-thirds of Kmart’s workforce and almost all of Starbucks’ employees are part-timers.⁵⁰ (This same trend is evident in institutions of higher learning.) Corporations are also increasing profits by outsourcing jobs and by hiring workers on long-term temporary contracts. The use of “temp” labor in the United States, according to award-winning investigative journalist Naomi Klein, increased 400 percent from 1982 to 2000.⁵¹ By the mid-1990s, Manpower Temporary

Services, an international temporary employment agency, had replaced General Motors as America's largest private employer.⁵² Needless to say, these kinds of low-wage jobs, called "McJobs" by critics, bring few fringe benefits or none at all. While Clinton's welfare reforms managed to get some people off the welfare rolls and into the workforce, many of them still remained impoverished—despite the rosy predictions made by conservatives—given the meager wages provided by businesses such as McDonald's and Wal-Mart.⁵³

The fear of modernization that some scholars see as the essence of the fascist revolution of the twenties and thirties seems to be very much in evidence today. In some quarters, the fear accompanying the breakdown in traditional society has become almost pathological. How else can one explain the huge upsurge in interest in the Apocalypse among evangelical Christians, reflected in the extraordinary success of the "Left Behind" novels coauthored by New Right activists Reverend Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins (over sixty-two million copies sold)?⁵⁴

Alienated? Pick a Scapegoat

The Republican Party has been masterful in tapping into this discontent. It has done so by creating a series of scapegoats and playing on popular fears, time-tested tactics since the days of Senator Joseph McCarthy.⁵⁵ Captured by the New Right in the seventies, the GOP, though thoroughly modern itself, according to journalist William Greider, was now prepared to pose "as the bulwark against unsettling modernity."⁵⁶ Greider, one of America's most astute political commentators, observes in this regard:

In this period of history, it is perhaps not an accident that so many of the effective political managers are southerners. The South understands alienation better than the rest of the nation. Feelings that were once peculiar to a single section of America—the defeated region within the nation—have now taken over the national mood. The winning strategies of modern Republicans owe more to George Wallace than to Barry Goldwater.⁵⁷

Indeed, the politics of fear so characteristic of the South at one time are pervasive throughout the country today and largely define the modern conservative movement. At the outset, in the seventies and eighties, Communists were the scapegoat of choice for the New Right, red-baiting the best tactic in the Republican repertoire for mobilizing mass support. (The only place where red-baiting still works today as effectively as it did thirty years ago is Dade County, Florida.) Ronald Reagan got a lot of mileage out of his crusade against "the evil empire" (a term coined by Reagan speechwriter

Tony Dolan). As Joe Conason, author of *Big Lies*, illustrates, with the end of the Cold War in 1989–1990, the GOP discovered that liberals were even worse than Communists.⁵⁸ The permissiveness rampant in society in the aftermath of the eighties, the "Me Decade," was conveniently blamed not on Reagan or even consumer capitalism, where it belonged, but on liberal intellectuals, the group that the New Right had contemptuously labeled the New Class in the seventies.⁵⁹ The antiliberal crusade, under the leadership of Newt Gingrich, preached a continuing struggle between good and evil. One of Gingrich's young admirers at the time later recalled the tremendous appeal of the Georgia firebrand's message: "The apocalyptic 'us versus them' paradigm was gratifying, for it held out the promise of assuaging my insecurities and giving me a sense of finally belonging."⁶⁰

Weird Oriental Terrorists with Curved Swords and Shoe Bombs

More recently, especially after September 11, the fear of Islamic terrorists has served the Republican agenda, especially the bellicose pro-Israel neoconservatives, nearly as well as the fear of political radicals. Iraqis fighting against an illegal occupation of their own country are routinely labeled "insurgents" or "terrorists."⁶¹ These labels have been used to discredit virtually anyone the Bush administration opposes. Recall how, angered by opposition to GOP educational policies, Bush's first education secretary, Rod Paige, went so far as to charge that the largest teachers' union in the United States, the National Education Association, was a terrorist society! Terrorist warnings by the Department of Homeland Security have been commonplace in the past three years, keeping the American people on the edge of panic. "The Bush administration is deliberately fostering fear," warns philanthropist George Soros, a staunch critic of George W. Bush and his policies, "because it helps to keep the nation lined up behind the president."⁶² Even administration sympathizers see the danger. "Every other word out of this administration's mouth is 'terror' or 'terrorism,'" laments syndicated columnist Thomas L. Friedman, a three-time Pulitzer Prize winner who lent his support to the recent Iraq war. "We have stopped exporting hope, the most important commodity America has."⁶³ (Ironically, the United States government has not hesitated to use terrorism itself or sponsor state terrorism in other lands when this policy suited its purposes, as Noam Chomsky has amply documented.)⁶⁴

The Party of the White Man

Ultimately the paranoia that has benefited the GOP the longest and the most successfully has been racism: "Race," according to Greider, "is

only one of the bridges [used by conservatives to link their divergent constituencies] though surely the most powerful.”⁶⁵ As sociologists Michael Omi and Howard Winant have shown, most students of the rise of the New Right have understated “the crucial importance of *race* as a defining issue.”⁶⁶ Perhaps the writer who has done the most to make the linkage between racism and recent Republican victories is *Washington Post* journalist Thomas Byrne Edsall, particularly in his landmark 1992 best seller, *Chains Reaction*, written with his wife, Mary Edsall.⁶⁷

With the adoption of the southern strategy by Richard Nixon in 1968, the Edsalls and other students of the New Right illustrate, the Republicans decided to play the race card. It was a calculated gamble that has paid huge dividends for the party, as GOP strategist Kevin Phillips foresaw at the time (the same Kevin Phillips who today makes a living by writing excellent studies critical of his old party).⁶⁸ In fact, this momentous decision is as important in the history of the Republicans as was the abandonment of southern blacks during Reconstruction in the interests of northern industrialists, thus initiating the transformation of the party of Lincoln into the party of big business that it remains today.⁶⁹ The appeal to racial prejudice, coded and overt, explains to a large extent why voters have often been willing to support conservative causes that seem to fly in the face of their own self-interest (and, Ehrenreich makes abundantly clear, this is true not only of the much-maligned working class—“Charley Six-Pack”—but also of the middle classes). Such inconsistency is especially the case in the South, the citadel of GOP strength. As Alabama native Diane McWhorter puts it:

What the racist Southern gentlemen of old and the modern-day Republicans have both cannily appreciated is that poor people do not like to consider themselves poor. Low-income whites would rather identify with rich folks than with their own class, especially if their partners in poverty happen to be black. That helps to explain why, in clinging to its nostalgia for the underdog (“special interests” to the uberdogs), the pre-Clinton Democratic Party lost much of its base—the Reagan Democrats—to the rival party. The now Solid Republican South is a tribute to the cleverness of the haves at getting the have-nots to work against their own interests. The main attraction the Republicans hold for the “regular people” who make up the bulk of their Southern constituency is that they are the party of the white man.⁷⁰

In other words, poor southern whites today pursue the same objective that led them to fight to preserve the Peculiar Institution during the Civil War, even though they received minimal benefits from the status quo ante bellum—white supremacy.⁷¹

Yet this race-based GOP strategy has proven nearly as successful in Boston and Chicago as in Selma and Little Rock, resulting in what the historian Godfrey Hodgson has labeled the “Southernization” of national politics.⁷² In the North and other parts of the country, reacting in part to the mass exodus of southern blacks into their cities, whites had been migrating to the suburbs since the fifties, isolating themselves from the urban poor (71 percent of the white population would reside in suburbs by the end of the century).⁷³ Left behind in the inner city were impoverished whites and people of color, particularly blacks.

More recently, as author Mike Davis points out, minorities, too, have become suburbanites, but the basic problems remain as the white population moves from old suburbs, increasingly brown in complexion, farther out from the city centers, into so-called edge cities, suburbs that provide jobs as well as exclusive residential tracts, new and old suburbs now competing for diminishing resources.⁷⁴ Typical is the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area, where old white suburbs, fashionable residential areas in the fifties, in places such as the San Fernando Valley, have become densely populated by people of color, and white residents have relocated to rapidly growing, affluent communities on the periphery such as Simi Valley, Palmdale, and Palm Desert.

Sociologist Andrew Barlow elaborates on the relationship between race and suburban communities: “Explicit racial discrimination by developers, realtors, banks, government agencies, and individual home buyers revealed the widespread awareness of the importance of race in the suburbs: These new communities were seen from the beginning as privileged places whose residents were going to do whatever they could to improve the quality of their personal lives at the expense of urban America—that is, people of color.”⁷⁵ Living in lily-white settings, these new suburbanites were especially vulnerable to conservative arguments that essentially justified the continuing assertion of white privileges. These white suburbs today represent the citadel of Republican strength in many parts of the country.

Black gains in the aftermath of the landmark 1954 Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education* precipitated a revolution in the American political landscape. In the South, anxieties born of the civil rights movement, “which sought not to survive racial oppression, but to overthrow it,” reached a fever pitch after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.⁷⁶ These fears, also fanned by the race riots of the mid-1960s, found expression in the surprisingly strong showing by George Wallace in his 1964 and 1968 bids for the presidency. Nor was his electoral support confined to the South; the Alabama governor managed to make inroads into some traditional Democratic strongholds in the Northwest and Midwest. Wallace made race the central issue of his campaign—apparently the source of his appeal to large segments of the

electorate. After losing his bid for the Alabama governorship in 1958 to a fanatic antiblack bigot, Wallace had sworn that "no other son-of-a-bitch will ever out-nigger me again."⁷⁷

Wallace's influence on Republicans proved incalculable, though it is probably a legacy that few movement conservatives would willingly acknowledge, at least in public. Seeing the racial hysteria engendered by the prospect of a black resurgence—the one thing whites dread most, says political scientist Andrew Hacker, is that blacks will treat *them* as contemptibly as they have treated blacks historically⁷⁸—Paul Weyrich and other GOP strategists, many of them Barry Goldwater supporters in 1964, sensed that the time was ripe to woo southern Democrats. It was no mean task, given traditional ties to a vehicle that had served the South for so long and so well. But in the end, the tacit endorsement of the doctrine of racial supremacy by GOP conservatives proved irresistible. (Tellingly, during the mid-1970s, Weyrich, Richard Viguerie, and Howard Phillips abandoned the Republican Party, temporarily, in an unsuccessful attempt to gain control of Wallace's Klan-ridden American Independent Party.)⁷⁹ By the mid-1970s, the ex-Dixiecrats had abandoned the Democrats and were being welcomed into the GOP. Appropriately, this shift came to completion under Nixon, who saw blacks as genetically inferior, according to loyal lieutenant John Ehrlichman.⁸⁰

If Nixon displayed little concern for the welfare of black communities, Ronald Reagan exhibited even less—the former, after all, did pass *some* civil rights legislation. Insisting alternately that racism was no longer relevant, that America was now "color-blind"—"in a world where racial privilege is structured into everyday life," Andrew Barlow reasons, "the best defense of racial privilege is to deny that it exists"⁸¹—and then turning around and assuring whites that it was *they* who were the victims of reverse discrimination, the ex-actor cynically appealed to white privilege. He proved immensely successful: In 1980, 22 percent of the Democrats—virtually all of them white—defected to vote for the GOP candidate.⁸²

"On issues of race," historian Dan Carter states, "Reagan compiled an abysmal record in his sixteen years as governor of California and president of the United States."⁸³ As both governor and president, the ex-Democrat consistently opposed civil rights legislation. In California, he attempted to repeal the Rumford Act, which outlawed housing discrimination based on religion or race, and even criticized the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. "That his policies are not only unfair," Roger Wilkins charged in 1984, "but also demonstrably racist is crystal clear."⁸⁴ Time after time, the Great White Hope sponsored legislation that sacrificed the interests of blacks and other minorities for those of the wealthy elites that he knew and loved.

"His friends," a Reagan biographer noted, "were people like himself, successful self-made men who enjoyed the good California life. . . . Like

Reagan, many of them had left behind humble origins to come west to find their destiny. They, too, had invented themselves. Their proudly displayed trappings of success, Mercedeses and Jaguars, their oceanfront and desert vacation hideaways, were emblems of worth."⁸⁵ These friends included multimillionaires, notably oil geologist Henry Salvatori, brewer Joseph Coors, and publisher Walter Annenberg.

In fact, the president seemed to have little compassion for the less fortunate members of society generally, the main victims of his supply-side economic policies. Yale University scholar Harold Bloom later gave a candid assessment of this aspect of Mr. Reagan's inheritance: "I think that the United States has been almost destroyed by Ronald Reagan and his legacy. He came into office that charming, smiling fellow, and he assured us we could all emancipate our selfishness, and that is what we have proceeded to do on a national level. And I think we have done terrible things to the poorer people in this country."⁸⁶

Not only poor Americans suffered under his watch. During his administrations, Reagan launched wars against a series of lightweight nations—Lebanon, Libya, Grenada, Nicaragua, and El Salvador—all of them inhabited by people of color. Reagan may have been "remarkably popular" among white Americans, but minorities were considerably less sanguine in their judgment; by a three-to-one majority, blacks agreed that the ex-Hollywood actor was a racist.⁸⁷

Of course, this charge is considered blasphemous today by conservatives, who can brook no criticism of their favorite president—witness their successful 2003 campaign to have CBS pull its television miniseries on the Great Communicator (it was not celebratory enough).⁸⁸ During the past decade, right-wingers have waged a concerted crusade to raise the status of the Alzheimer's-afflicted former president (whose approval rating was a modest 40 percent in 1987), and with considerable success.⁸⁹ Shortly before his death, they attempted to elevate Reagan to secular sainthood by promoting a campaign to have his visage replace that of Franklin D. Roosevelt on the dime. Only Nancy Reagan's intervention put an end to this initiative; her husband, after all, had voted for FDR on four occasions.⁹⁰

A New England patrician, George H. W. Bush could afford to take the high road on racial issues, but even he was perfectly willing to use the race card as an electoral tactic. Trailing Michael Dukakis in the 1988 presidential campaign, a desperate Bush agreed to let Lee Atwater and advertising man Roger Ailes air the notorious Willie Horton ad, an inflammatory piece of racial propaganda. Released from prison on a furlough program instituted in Massachusetts by then-governor Dukakis, Horton, a black man convicted of homicide, escaped and committed a brutal rape before he was recaptured. The controversial ad linking Horton with the Democratic candidate played on widespread racial fears among voters and saved the day for Bush.⁹¹

When the going got tough, George Bush Jr., too, turned to what had by now become the most reliable vote getter in the Republican arsenal—race baiting. Trailing John McCain in the polls during the Republican primaries in 2000, Bush had his operatives in South Carolina use racial innuendo to discredit his foe, win the state election, and practically assure himself the party nomination. No one ever discovered the identity of the person who put into circulation the vicious fabrication that the Arizona senator had had a love child by a black prostitute, but Karl Rove's fingerprints were everywhere.⁹²

Fear of Immigrants

Fueling racist fears in the beginning of the twenty-first century has been the huge influx of immigrants, mainly Latinos, both legal and illegal, due to the liberalization of U.S. immigration laws in the mid-1960s. Unlike the great waves of immigrants one hundred years before, predominantly European in origin, the overwhelming numbers today are people of color. Groups such as the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), founded in 1979 by John H. Tanton, and U.S. English, the oldest and largest English-only organization, cofounded in 1983 by Tanton and S. I. Hayakawa, fan anti-immigrant resentment. A retired ophthalmologist, Tanton (b. 1935) has founded or cofounded thirteen anti-immigrant organizations, including three considered hate groups by the Southern Poverty Law Center.⁹³ Opportunistic politicians quickly climbed on the bandwagon as well. The most strident jingoists in the public arena in recent years have been Ross Perot, Pat Buchanan, and Representative Tom Tancredo. As social historian David Montejano has observed, "The 'crowded lifeboat' has become the metaphor of choice for anti-immigrant pundits."⁹⁴ "By the mid-1990s," he asserts, "the anti-immigrant campaign had become generalized into a sweeping anti-minority one."⁹⁵ Not surprisingly, the anti-immigration campaign has been heavily subsidized by the Pioneer Fund, a right-wing foundation that makes no apologies for its extreme views.⁹⁶

Racial hysteria has been most pronounced in California, the destination of about one-third of these newcomers entering the country. "The political backlash resulting from recent demographic transformations has been perhaps more extreme in California than elsewhere," the urban sociologist Janet L. Abu-Lughod concurs, "a backlash that, because of the 'over-representation' of remaining Anglos on the voter rolls, has up to now been relatively unrestrained by counterforces."⁹⁷ Colorado has not been far behind.⁹⁸

Mexicans, the largest single national group entering the country since 1960, are dramatically changing the ethnic landscape of the Golden State,

particularly the southland.⁹⁹ Predominantly Indian, most Mexicans see themselves, and are seen by others, as nonwhite. These hardworking immigrants (how often do you see a Latino panhandler?) are the most convenient scapegoats when the economy suffers a downturn, something that California experienced in the late eighties and early nineties.¹⁰⁰ Anti-immigrant sentiment during the severe recession gave rise to a number of popular state measures. These included Proposition 63 in 1986, making English the official language; Proposition 187 in 1994, denying state services to illegal immigrants (subsequently declared unconstitutional); Proposition 209 in 1996, banning government affirmative action programs; and Proposition 227 in 1998, repealing bilingual education.

The enthusiastic support for these ballot initiatives among voters, particularly in the southern part of the state, reflects the growing fear of people of color, both native and foreign born. "Hispanics in America today," claims English First president Larry Pratt, "represent a very dangerous, subversive force that is bent on taking over our nation's political institutions for the purpose of imposing Spanish as the official language of the United States."¹⁰¹

This view is popular among some members of the intellectual elite. Samuel P. Huntington, the respected Harvard political scientist, is the most prominent of these critics. Given their massive numbers and non-European origins, Huntington sees the new immigrants, particularly Mexicans, as a major threat to the American way of life, which he defines as Anglo and Protestant.¹⁰² While he met with almost universal acclaim in right-wing circles, so outspoken was the Ivy League scholar in expressing nativist (by his own admission) views that he evoked a storm of protest among laypeople and academics alike.¹⁰³

Abu-Lughod, who spent almost a year living and working in Los Angeles, recalls a graphic illustration of this paranoia: Along the half mile of upscale residences between her apartment and the UCLA campus, she once counted 176 signs threatening trespassers with "armed response" from private protection agencies.¹⁰⁴ Out in the more modest suburbs of Los Angeles, ethnic tensions often result in hate crimes and other manifestations of a "low-intensity race war."¹⁰⁵

This anxiety caused by a rapidly changing demography is not confined to California and the Southwest, where Mexican barrios have been in place for over two hundred years. The 2000 U.S. census shows that Mexican-origin people have become a national, not simply a regional, minority, and some 40 percent of them are immigrants.¹⁰⁶ Numbering 38.8 million in 2003, *mexicanos* and other Latinos—a category that has now surpassed blacks as the country's largest minority—constitute 14 percent of the U.S. population, and their numbers will only escalate in the future, given high birthrates and current levels of immigration.¹⁰⁷ Already in 1997, 80 percent of the children enrolled in the Los Angeles Unified School District, the

second largest in the nation, were of Spanish-speaking background.¹⁰⁸ Because many businesspeople see immigrants as a cheap source of labor as well as a means of breaking unions, the Republican Party is split on the question of immigration, as the campaigns surrounding the California propositions have illustrated.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, party strategists have not hesitated to manipulate nativist sentiments for their own ends.

Exploiting Racial Fears

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, only heightened American fears of both immigrants and people of color. The Bush administration's manipulation of anti-Islamic and anti-Arab prejudices to gain moral and financial support for the war on terrorism both at home and abroad—as well as partisan advantage—did not escape Islamic community leaders in the United States, whose support of Bush was lukewarm in the 2004 election.

Adept at manipulating racial fears to advance the conservative agenda, Republican politicians and political pundits reserve out-and-out racist remarks for the friendly confines of their country clubs—with notable exceptions such as legendary race warriors Jesse Helms and Pat Buchanan. In public forums, the racism generally emerges in coded language, such as diatribes on welfare queens, busing, terror, immigration, affirmative action, and ghetto crime.¹¹⁰

Consider New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani's actions during his 1999 quest for a U.S. Senate seat (ill health later forced his withdrawal). During the hotly contested campaign, the fifty-five-year-old Catholic Italian American candidate launched a blistering attack against the depiction of a black Virgin Mary by black artist Chris Ofili. He did so without mentioning color, a calculated strategy that gained him, despite his marital infidelities, not only Catholic votes but white votes generally. The historian David R. Roediger comments on the significance: "Without mentioning race—indeed precisely by not mentioning race when it was patently obvious—Giuliani placed himself in a growing line of politicians who mobilize white votes with ostensibly raceless words."¹¹¹ While politicians excel at the game, media pundits, including Sean Hannity, Michael Savage, David Horowitz, Bill O'Reilly, and Ann Coulter, have elevated it to high art. "In fact," a Wallace biographer concludes, "George Wallace would probably come across as a mealymouthed moderate when juxtaposed with today's right-wing-radical talk-show hosts."¹¹² And books by these pundits, who pretend to be color-blind, are always best sellers—so much so that mainstream book publishers are joining right-wing stalwarts such as publishing house Alfred A. Regnery in aggressively pursuing conservative authors.¹¹³

All These Beautiful White People

What explains the phenomenal success of 1994's *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*, an eight-hundred-page bestseller written by Charles Murray and the late Richard J. Herrnstein, which argues that whites are genetically superior to blacks? The book, labeled "a manifesto of conservative ideology" by the late Stephen Jay Gould, received wide coverage in the media.¹¹⁴ As Andrew Barlow notes, "One can gauge the extent to which racism is becoming intensified by the emergence of genetic racism."¹¹⁵ Given the changing intellectual climate, even mainstream conservatives now feel almost as comfortable as the Far Right in reviving the discredited idea of biological racism.

Racism is today much more than an electoral ploy; it pervades the American Right. Everyone recognizes that this is so with the ultraright conspiracy-obsessed radicals in the Ku Klux Klan, the Aryan Brotherhood, the LaRouche network, the Church of the Creator, the Christian Identity movement, and literally hundreds of other fringe groups that cannot make up their mind who they detest more—Jews or racial minorities. The bigotry of these ultras—manifested in the scapegoating of a variety of historically disenfranchised groups in addition to the ethnics—is well documented by Chip Berlet and Matthew N. Lyons in their 2000 study, *Right-Wing Populism in America*. But, as the authors also illustrate, racism and the manipulation of racism for partisan advantage, though less pronounced, typify the more respectable Right.

Since most mainstream conservatives continue to disavow biological racism, their true sentiments are much harder to gauge. Occasionally, in unguarded moments, slips of the tongue reveal deeper prejudices by mainstream conservatives, as in 1980 when Nancy Reagan gushed to a group of admirers in New Hampshire that she wished her husband could be there to "see all these beautiful white people," a faux pas she immediately regretted.¹¹⁶ Two well-publicized incidents in 2003 illustrate the point. The first occurred when Republican senator Trent Lott from Mississippi wistfully evoked segregationist policies at a celebration of Strom Thurmond's hundredth birthday, a gaffe that forced him to step down as majority leader in the Senate. Later, fellow right-wing champion—and famous drug addict—Rush Limbaugh, who for some odd reason was hired as a football commentator by ESPN for its *NFL Sunday Countdown*, felt obliged to suggest on the air that the National Football League had given star treatment to Philadelphia Eagles black quarterback Donovan McNabb because of his race rather than his ability, an inflammatory remark that led to his resignation.¹¹⁷ In both cases, right-wing media pundits displayed uncharacteristic compassion, coming to the defense of the two "victims" against their "politically correct" critics.

Establishment Blacks

Playing the race game can be tricky. While conservatives unceasingly appeal to their base, well-to-do whites, they also desire to recruit greater numbers of minority voters into their ranks. This campaign has enjoyed little success. Only 10 percent of the black vote went to Bush in the 2000 election.¹¹⁸ The GOP has enjoyed only slightly better luck in pursuing an allied strategy—one suggested by none other than Karl Marx himself—co-opting leaders of the oppressed community.¹¹⁹ Party strategists have been able to entice a small cadre of minority intellectuals and pundits into their ranks, people worth their weight in gold. Typical is Linda Chavez, whose *Out of the Barrio*, an attack on entitlements for Hispanics, received funding by the John M. Olin Foundation, the Angeles T. Arredondo Foundation, the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, and the Strake Foundation. Her latest book, continuing in the neoconservative tradition of beating up on lightweights, is an attack on labor unions.¹²⁰ Other Hispanic heroes of the Right include the late Richard Estrada, Roger Hernandez, and Ruben Navarrette Jr.¹²¹ Among blacks, the best-known conservative voices are Shelby Steele, Thomas Sowell, Walter Williams, Larry Elder, Ward Connerly, Armstrong Williams, and Ken Hamblin.¹²²

The strength of antiminority sentiment is so pronounced among conservatives, however, that even these subsidized fellow travelers—most of whom enjoy close ties to right-wing think tanks—have often found themselves alienated from the GOP mainstream. In 1988, for example, a private memo by John Tanton, cofounder of U.S. English, was leaked to the press. The communication was so vitriolic in its condemnation of the alleged sexual debauchery of Latinos that an irate Chavez, then chair of the English-only organization, resigned her post in protest.¹²³ A few years later, when the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) helped to finance the publication of Dinesh D'Souza's *The End of Racism*, essentially endorsing racism, two prominent black conservatives affiliated with the AEI, Robert L. Woodson Sr., founder of the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise, a Washington, D.C.-based research and development agency, and Glenn Loury, a professor of economics at Boston University, left the think tank, charging racial bigotry.¹²⁴

Finally, many political opponents suspect that it was his party's failure to seriously address black issues and to take him seriously that led J. C. Watts, ex-University of Oklahoma football star and the only black GOP representative in the House, to quit Congress in 2002.¹²⁵ (Though declining to run for reelection, the Southern Baptist preacher, who sits on the board of directors of Clear Channel, continues to be politically active, serving as chair of GOPAC, an organization that develops GOP candidates for state office.)¹²⁶ In light of this poor track record, one wonders how comfortable Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice could have felt on the

2000 Bush team, especially the latter, whose function as national security adviser was essentially usurped by Dick Cheney.¹²⁷

Voting for Colonel Sanders

After reviewing "conservatism's awful racial record," Conason concludes, "To anyone familiar with this shabby history, the inescapable question is not why more minorities don't flock to conservatism and vote Republican. The wonder is why any would at all."¹²⁸ Among the perplexed is Watts's own father, Buddy, who once quipped that "a Black man voting for the Republicans is like a chicken voting for Colonel Sanders."¹²⁹ But the GOP cannot be too disappointed. On balance, the subtle racism it promotes gains it more support among mainstream voters than it loses among minorities. Herein is found the key to much of its success in recent decades.

"The dominant politics of this era," according to scholar Andrew Barlow, "has been to galvanize and appeal to white middle-class voters' fear of falling. From anti-immigrant policies to attacks on civil rights policies such as affirmative action, to a high-profile war on drugs, to the expansion of prisons and the use of the death penalty, to the war on terrorism, politicians have become highly skilled at creating dangerous foes to attack and contain."¹³⁰

Right-Wing Catholics

Fear, too, is the key to understanding another aspect of modern conservatism: the pivotal, though little-appreciated, role played by Catholics among both the GOP rank and file and, more especially, among the leadership. As one surveys the roster of right-wing operatives during the past half-century, one is struck by the unusually high numbers of adherents to the Catholic faith: Joe McCarthy, William Buckley Jr., Brent Bozell III, Paul Weyrich, Richard Viguerie, Patrick Buchanan, R. Emmett Tyrrell Jr., William Simon Sr., William Bennett, Phyllis Schlafly, Antonin Scalia, Clarence Thomas, Michael Novak, Robert Novak, Bill O'Reilly, Sean Hannity, John McLaughlin, Dinesh D'Souza, Alexander Haig, and many others. While Protestants, particularly born-again Christians such as George Bush and Tom DeLay (and John Ashcroft is gone but not forgotten), seem to have a firm grip on the levers of power in the three branches of government, Catholics play a disproportionately large role as both policymakers and boosters of the Conservative Revolution.

This phenomenon, paralleling the rise of the New Right, has roots that go back several decades. After World War II, many American Catholics supported the anticommunist scare tactics of Jesuit-trained Joseph McCarthy,

just as years before they had embraced the fascist and anti-Semitic cause of Father Charles Coughlin. The presidential candidacy of John F. Kennedy in 1960 did not receive universal support from his co-religionists. It is estimated that more than a quarter of YAFers were Catholics during the sixties.¹³¹ Robert Welch, its founder, guessed that about half of the early members of the John Birch Society embraced Catholicism.¹³²

In 1972, for the first time a Republican presidential candidate, Richard Nixon, garnered a majority of the nation's Catholic votes.¹³³ Ronald Reagan and the first George Bush, too, won Catholic majorities. (Among Reagan's Catholic supporters in 1980 was onetime liberal antiwar champion and former Democratic senator Eugene McCarthy.)¹³⁴ The rightward drift of American Catholicism has continued into the present.¹³⁵ Although Pope John Paul II condemned the illegal U.S. 2003 attack on Iraq as an unjust war, the great majority of American Catholics, over 60 percent, remained loyal to the younger Bush and backed the war effort. Arguably, the most popular single Catholic politician in recent years has been right-wing zealot Pat Buchanan.

During the Clinton years, many Republican strategists, among them Ralph Reed and Paul Weyrich, noting the growing conservatism among socially mobile Catholics, argued that an alliance between Catholics—who currently constitute one-third of the national electorate—and Protestant evangelists made perfect sense. Both religious groups see eye to eye on a variety of social issues, especially abortion, “the catalyst which has galvanized the trans-denominational right,” according to Professor William Dinges of the Catholic University of America.¹³⁶ Consequently, since the mid-1990s, efforts to construct this alliance, orchestrated by GOP operatives, have been under way.

The results, however, have been mixed.¹³⁷ Anti-Catholic views die hard, especially among southern Protestants (Bob Jones University, a conservative Baptist college in South Carolina, for example, remains a notorious hotbed of anti-Catholicism).¹³⁸ Possibly the biggest stumbling block, however, has been a deep division between the two sides on the question of welfare. While GOP conservatives lose little sleep over the lack of responsibility of rich people, notably corporate executives and Republican presidents, they are constantly preaching to the poor about meeting *their* obligations. The conservative attitude toward welfare—which in their view diminishes personal responsibility—and more generally toward the poor, is somewhat hypocritical, yet a view that Christian fundamentalists share. (Despite George Bush's desire to see welfare administered by churches, when federal money does not fall into their laps, these Christian conservatives are not that compassionate.) Catholics see it differently. “Ironically,” writes a South African journalist surveying life in the United States at the turn of the century, “the Catholic Church has deepened its commitment to social

justice at a time in history when their congregants are typically no longer have-nots, but have instead become highly educated members of the middle and upper middle classes. As Catholics are swept into the mainstream, they have, it seems, neither forgotten their roots nor lost their social consciousness.”¹³⁹ Though the Catholic hierarchy, more than the rank and file, does have some strong conservative sentiments—illustrated recently by the efforts of some Catholic prelates to deny the sacraments to liberal Catholic politicians (e.g., John Kerry) who support abortion (right-wing prochoice Catholic politicians such as Arnold Schwarzenegger and Tom Ridge, intriguingly, rarely come up in these discussions)¹⁴⁰—it is well to remember that Catholic bishops in the United States have consistently supported nuclear disarmament. Following the pope's lead, these bishops also condemned the U.S.-led war against Saddam in 2003. Traditional Catholic conservatism, then, among both the church hierarchy and the congregations, is tempered by a concern for the general welfare.

Certain other aspects of Catholicism, on the other hand, lend themselves toward a typical conservative agenda. According to George Lakoff, conservative and liberal moral systems are based on different models of the family; more specifically, they are products of two different ways of raising children.¹⁴¹ Liberals are brought up in nurturing environments (“nurturant parent model”) and develop altruistic attitudes. Conservatives are products of a strict upbringing (“strict father model”) that encourages discipline and respect for authority. Lakoff is on to something. Certainly the Irish-dominated Catholic Church in the United States, austere and puritanical, has been characterized by a pronounced authoritarian bent, not only in its organization but also in its teachings. Neither one of us remembers his Catholic training as an experience that would encourage open discussion of issues, theological or otherwise. In our generation, religious instruction pretty much boiled down to memorizing the *Baltimore Catechism*.

More important, however, than psychological links are sociological ones. White Catholic descendants of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century immigrants from Ireland, Italy, and other western European nations are predominantly middle-class. The majority, having abandoned the cities, inhabited more and more by people of color, now live in white suburbs. With their increasing affluence came a significant shift in political attitudes.¹⁴² “As many Catholics climbed the socioeconomic ladder,” a religious scholar notes, “tax cuts became more attractive than minimum wage hikes, and property values more important than union membership.”¹⁴³ More specifically, these ethnics tend to be lower-middle-class, the very sector that Weyrich claims as his base of support.¹⁴⁴ Many historians have seen this social group as the backbone of the fascist movements that arose throughout Europe in the aftermath of World War I. No one was

more critical than social psychologist Erich Fromm, who described the “social character” of the German lower middle class in this way:

As a matter of fact, certain features were characteristic for this part of the middle class throughout its history: their love of the strong, hatred of the weak, their pettiness, hostility, thriftiness with feelings as well as with money, and essentially their asceticism. Their outlook on life was narrow, they suspected and hated the stranger, and they were curious and envious of their acquaintances, rationalizing their envy as moral indignation; their whole life was based on the principle of scarcity—economically as well as psychologically.¹⁴⁵

While scarcity is hardly a distinguishing characteristic of the American lower middle class, Fromm sees the defining characteristic of this group, in *any* capitalistic society, as insecurity. They work hard to achieve upward mobility, but their economic situation is always precarious, hence their frustration. As Ehrenreich argues in her provocative 1989 book *Fear of Falling*, even those elements of the middle class who are relatively secure financially, the professional-managerial elites, are beset by the fear of losing it all, an anxiety that has distanced them from the social sectors beneath them and encouraged the abandonment of a liberal political perspective.¹⁴⁶

When threatened, the bourgeoisie are quick to look for scapegoats. In Europe, they find them in the Jew (the roots of the Holocaust are to be found in the Middle Ages, and even beyond). In the United States, the counterpart of anti-Semitism is racism. During their Great Migration from the South to the northern industrial centers from the twenties to the sixties, the largest internal migration in U.S. history, it was blacks who represented the main threat to the well-being of white ethnics. Subsequently, the influx of Latino immigrants into this country has only added to their anxiety, one that the New Right has deliberately fomented.¹⁴⁷

The manipulation of a large part of the working and middle class to vote against their own interests by stoking their fears of people different from themselves is a major accomplishment of the conservative propaganda machine that Weyrich and other New Right strategists developed in the sixties and seventies. Fervent believers in the Machiavellian dictum that the end justifies the means, these youthful radicals were prepared to do whatever it took to defeat their ideological opponents. Their win-at-any-cost attitude permeates every aspect of modern-day conservatism and is undoubtedly one of their most enduring legacies. In their zeal to propagate the conservative gospel by creating a mass movement, as we have seen, they felt few scruples about mobilizing resentment and fanning fear as organizing principles.¹⁴⁸

76. Isaiah Berlin, quoted in Earl Shorris, "Ignoble Liars: Leo Strauss, George Bush, and the Philosophy of Mass Deception," *Harper's Magazine*, June 2004, 70.
77. Peter Hart and Steve Rendall, "Meet the Myth-Makers: Right-Wing Media Groups Provide Ammo for 'Liberal Media' Claims," *Extra!*, July/August 1998.
78. The Media Research Web site (www.mediaresearch.org) has a glowing biography of Bozell, credited with being "lecturer, syndicated columnist, television commentator, debater, marketer, businessman, publisher, and activist."
79. Michael Lind, *Up from Conservatism: Why the Right Is Wrong for America* (New York: Free Press, 1996), 87.

Chapter 4

1. Michael Parenti, *America Besieged* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1998), 149–50.
2. Michael Massing, "The Press: The Enemy Within," *New York Review of Books*, December 15, 2005, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/18555>.
3. Cited in Robert W. McChesney, *The Problem of the Media: U.S. Communication Politics in the 21st Century* (New York: Monthly Review, 2004), 21.
4. Republican candidates have "received a majority of newspaper endorsements in all but two presidential elections since 1932," according to Steve Rendall and Peter Hart, *Arizona Republic* (Tucson), January 20, 2002.
5. Joe Conason, *Big Lies: The Right-Wing Propaganda Machine and How It Distorts the Truth* (New York: Dunne, 2003), 40.
6. A relatively complete list of Murdoch holdings is found in Robert W. McChesney, *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times*, rev. ed. (New York: New Press, 2000), 96–98. For Fox's partisanship, see Seth Ackerman, "The Most Biased Name in News: Fox News Channel's Extraordinary Right-Wing Tilt," *Extra!*, August 2001. News Corp.'s ownership of a major network is not unique: NBC is owned by General Electric, CBS by Westinghouse, ABC by Disney, and CNN by Times Warner (Ted Turner and friends).
7. As of 1999, media companies controlled about twenty-eight major league sports franchises in the United States. McChesney, *Rich Media, Poor Democracy*, 44.
8. Mark Hertsgaard, *The Eagle's Shadow: Why America Fascinates and Infuriates the World* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2002), 93.
9. Jonathan Alter, "Rush, to Judgment," *Newsweek*, October 20, 2003, 50.
10. Arian Campo-Flores, "Rush's World of Pain," *Newsweek*, October 13, 2003.
11. McChesney, *Problem of the Media*, 116.
12. Edward Monks, "The End of Fairness: Right-Wing Commentators Have a Virtual Monopoly When It Comes to Talk Radio Programming," *Register-Guard* (Eugene, Ore.), June 30, 2002.
13. Mary C. Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties: The Conservative Capture of the GOP* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 335. In 2005, Will was awarded a \$250,000 prize by the right-wing Bradley Foundation

for outstanding intellectual achievement. Bradley awards were given to Charles Krauthammer and Thomas Sowell the year before. Dave Astor, "Is George Will's \$250,000 Prize Yet More Payola?" *Editor and Publisher*, February 25, 2005, http://www.editorandpublisher.com/eundp/news/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1000817846.

14. Quoted by Nicholas Lemann, "The Wayward Press," *New Yorker*, February 14, 2005, http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/?050214fa_fact1.
15. Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, "Pew Research Center Biennial News Consumption Survey," July 8, 2004, http://www.pewtrusts.com/pdf/pew_research_news_060804.pdf. The study also indicated that 25 percent of the public regularly tuned in to Fox News Channel, and the majority of Fox viewers (52 percent) identified themselves as political conservatives.
16. Jeff Cohen, "Television's Political Spectrum," *Extra!*, July/August, 1990. For a relatively comprehensive list of right-wing talking heads, and of the conservative groups that employ them, see Charles L. Klotzer, "How Many Commentators Can You Identify?" *St. Louis Journalism Review*, November 2001, 28–29.
17. McChesney, *Problem of the Media*, 105.
18. According to the Major League Baseball Players Association, the average baseball salary was \$31,543 in 1971, \$143,756 in 1980, \$597,537 in 1990, \$1,895,630 in 2000, and \$2,372,189 in 2003. *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 25, 2003.
19. McChesney, *Problem of the Media*, 106.
20. Eric Alterman, *What Liberal Media? The Truth about Bias and the News* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 21. For a good example of a journalist who leads such a privileged life that he is almost completely blind to the problems that beset fellow Americans, see David Brooks, *On Paradise Drive: How We Live Now (and Always Have) in the Future Tense* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004). See, too, the devastating critique of the Brooks book by Nicholas von Hoffman, "Don't Worry, Be Happy," *The Nation*, June 21, 2004, 30–32.
21. Alterman, *What Liberal Media?*, 33.
22. Scott Smallwood, "Survey of Ivy League Professors Finds Few Conservatives," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 1, 2002. College faculties are in fact more liberal in their politics than the U.S. population at large. A faculty survey by the University of California at Los Angeles Research Institute in 1995–1996 yielded the following results for university professors: far left, 6.4 percent; liberal, 44.8 percent; moderate, 35.2 percent; conservative, 13.4 percent; and far right, 0.3 percent. The totals for professors at other four-year colleges: far left, 4.8 percent; liberal, 37.5 percent; moderate, 37.8 percent; conservative, 19.5 percent; and far right, 0.4 percent. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, August 28, 1998.
23. According to Arianna Huffington, Cheney's staff met "with executives from Exxon Mobil, ChevronTexaco, ConocoPhillips—and yes, Halliburton—to discuss who would get what in a post-Hussein Iraq." "Profiting from Iraq," *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 21, 2003.
24. As CEO of Halliburton, Cheney had no qualms about doing illegal business with rogue nations like Iran, Iraq, and Libya. "Richard B. Cheney," Paul Begala charges, "is a poster boy for all that is wrong with the Bush Republican economic philosophy." *It's Still the Economy, Stupid: George W. Bush, The GOP's CEO* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 143–44. Arianna Huffington's assessment

of Cheney is even more severe: "The vice president is one of those ideological purists who never let little things like logic, morality or mass murder interfere with the single-minded pursuit of profitability." "Profiting from Iraq," Tom DeLay's ethical conduct has been so reprehensible (fund-raising improprieties and expensive junkets financed by lobbyists, among many other transgressions) that even staunch right-wing journalists like Debra Saunders, "DeLavish, DeLoutish, DeLayly," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 25, 2005, are critical. DeLay himself dismisses public criticism as part of a liberal conspiracy to destroy the conservative movement. R. Jeffrey Smith and James V. Grimaldi, "Lobbyists Allegedly Paid for DeLay Trip to Russia," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 6, 2005.

25. Senator Alan Simpson, quoted in Bill Clinton, *My Life* (New York: Knopf, 2004), 692.

26. Media coverage of the 2000 presidential race was overwhelmingly pro-Bush, according to a Brookings Institution study released immediately after the election. This study is cited by Mark Crispin Miller in J. H. Hatfield, *Fortunate Son: George W. Bush and the Making of an American President*, 2d ed. (New York: Soft Skull, 2001), xii. Bush collected more than \$193 million and Gore just over \$133 million, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. Of course, four years later, running against John Kerry, Mr. Bush easily topped his previous record, collecting \$367,228,801, <http://www.opensecrets.org/presidential/index.asp>.

27. Eric Alterman, "Corrupt, Incompetent & Off Center," *The Nation*, November 7, 2005, 12; Paul Krugman, "Questions of Character," *New York Times*, October 14, 2005.

28. Bernard Goldberg, *Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distort the News* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 2002). See, too, Ann Coulter, *Slander: Liberal Lies about the American Right* (New York: Crown, 2002).

29. McChesney, *Problem of the Media*, 102.

30. Alterman, *What Liberal Media?* 10–11.

31. Michael Parenti, *Democracy for the Few*, 4th ed. (New York: St. Martin's, 1983), 189.

32. McChesney, *Problem of the Media*, 115.

33. Steve Rendall, "Fox's Slanted Sources: Conservatives, Republicans Far Outnumber Others," *Extra!*, August 2001. Of the fifty-six partisan guests, fifty were Republicans and six were Democrats.

34. Hertsgaard, *Eagle's Shadow*, 16.

35. McChesney, *Problem of the Media*, 122.

36. One of the few major journals to categorically reject the war was the *New York Review of Books*. See Scott Sherman, "The Rebirth of the NYRB," *The Nation*, June 7, 2004. Though hardly considered "mainstream," being a progressive journal, *The Nation*, too, refused to join the misguided crusade.

37. See Evan Derkacz, "Voice of America," *AlterNet.org*, February 14, 2005, <http://www.alternet.org/mediaculture/21250/>.

38. William D. Hartung, *How Much Are You Making on the War, Daddy? A Quick and Dirty Guide to War Profiteering in the Bush Administration* (New York: Nation Books, 2003), xxii.

39. McChesney, *Problem of the Media*, 123.

40. Eric Alterman, "Hawks Eating Crow," *The Nation*, June 7, 2004, 10.

41. See Seymour M. Hersh, "Torture at Abu Ghraib," *New Yorker*, May 10, 2004.

42. During the war, "Fox TV openly discarded traditions of journalistic impartiality and, like right-wing radio talk shows, acted as a cheerleader for conservative and chauvinistic attitudes," Godfrey Hodgson, *More Equal Than Others: America from Nixon to the New Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 238–39.

43. Ed Bark, "TV War Coverage Was More Show Than Tell," *Contra Costa Times* (Walnut Creek, Calif.), May 1, 2003.

44. For numerous examples, see Daniel Benaim and Priyanka Motaparthy, "TV's Conflicted Experts," *The Nation*, April 21, 2003, 6–7.

45. Hertsgaard, *Eagle's Shadow*, 106.

46. See Mark Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2002). The failure of the Democrats to challenge Reagan is one of the major reasons the media followed suit, according to Hertsgaard, "News Media Were Willingly Seduced by Reagan's Charm," *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 13, 2004.

47. William Safire, quoted in Bill Clinton, *My Life*, 698.

48. Clinton, *My Life*, 531.

49. Christopher Marquis, "U.S. Considers Charging Aristide with Corruption," *Contra Costa Times*, April 6, 2004.

50. Bill Moyers, "This Is Your Story—The Progressive Story of America," text of a speech to the Take Back America conference sponsored by the Campaign for America's Future in Washington, D.C., on June 4, 2003, <http://www.comondreams.org/videos03/0610-11.htm>.

51. A Pew Research Center survey on campaign news and political communication, released on January 11, 2004, indicated that 21 percent of people ages 18 to 29 regularly turn to television comedy shows for their presidential campaign coverage. See Cameron Jan, "Cable TV's 'Daily Show' Catches Politics off Guard," *Contra Costa Times*, June 21, 2004.

52. Doyle McManus and Bob Drogin, "Speculation Rages over Who Leaked Agent's Name," *Contra Costa Times*, October 1, 2003; James Risen, "Leak Shows CIA, White House Strains," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 2, 2003.

53. Tony Norman, "Why Isn't Bob Novak Going to Jail?" *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, February 18, 2005.

54. Anna Quindlen, "Free Pass for the President," *Newsweek*, October 6, 2003. Some journalists may have gone overboard in accommodating the president; in early 2005, it came out that prominent conservative columnists Armstrong Williams, Maggie Gallagher, and Karen Ryan were paid "consultants" for the Bush White House (one of them, Williams, was paid \$240,000 to plug the No Child Left Behind Act).

55. Jim Hightower, *Thieves in High Places* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2003), 35.

56. McChesney, *Rich Media, Poor Democracy*, xiv.

57. Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting, "FAIR Issues New Study on PBS's *MacNeil/Lehrer* and ABC's *Nightline*," May 21, 1990, <http://www.fair.org/reports/macneil-study.html>.

58. People for the American Way, *Buying a Movement: Right-Wing Foundations and American Politics* (Washington, D.C.: People for the American Way, 1996), 12.

59. Blaine Harden, "Religious Broadcasters Pushing Public Radio off Air," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 15, 2002.

60. Steve Rendall and Daniel Butterworth, "How Public Is Public Radio? A Study of NPR's Guest List," *Extra!*, June 2004.

61. Michael Hirschorn, "Little Men on Campus," *New Republic*, August 5, 1985.

62. Jean Stefancic and Richard Delgado, *No Mercy: How Conservative Think Tanks and Foundations Changed America's Social Agenda* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 110.

63. Bill Berkowitz, "Movement Building on the Internet: Christian Right and 'Free Market' Think Tanks Collaborate in Cyberspace," *Media Alliance* media file, <http://www.media-alliance.org/mediafile/19-3/rightwing.html>.

64. Berkowitz, "Movement Building on the Internet."

65. Peter Hartlaub, "Guilty or Not, Here She Comes—Nancy Grace Brings Mob Justice to CNN," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 20, 2005.

Chapter 5

1. See Paul Krugman, "Design for Confusion," *New York Times*, August 5, 2005, who disparages "supply-side economics, a doctrine whose central claim—that tax cuts have such miraculous effects on the economy that they pay for themselves—has never been backed by evidence."

2. Cornel West, "Exiles from a City and a Nation," *Observer* (London, U.K.), September 11, 2005.

3. West, "Exiles from a City and a Nation." See also David Leonhardt, "U.S. Poverty Rate Was up Last Year," *New York Times*, August 31, 2005.

4. Micki McGee, "Belabored: The Cult of Life as a Work of Art," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 16, 2005, <http://chronicle.com/weekly/v52/i0404601701.htm>.

5. Lawrence Mishel and Ross Eisenbrey, "The Economy in a Nutshell: Wages & Incomes Down, Poverty & Debt Up," *Counterpunch*, December 23, 2005, <http://www.counterpunch.org/mishell12232005.html>. Surveying the period from the Clinton administration to the end of 2005, Mishel and Eisenbrey see the acceleration of five major trends: (1) the rise of corporate profits and the decline of workers' wages, (2) the increase both in the number of Americans burdened by debt and in the amount they owe, (3) the failure of job creation to keep up with population growth, (4) the growth of the poverty rate, and (5) the escalation of health care costs.

6. On the role of conservative organizations such as the American Enterprise Institute in the "Constitution in Exile" movement, which emphasizes total deregulation, see Jeffrey Rosen, "The Unregulated Offensive," *New York Times Magazine*, April 17, 2005.

7. Nicholas D. Kristoff, "The Larger Shame," *New York Times*, September 6, 2005.

110. Molly Ivins, "The Masters of Mean," *Mother Jones*, March/April 2002, 29.
111. David Von Drehle, "Bennett Admits High-Stakes Gaming," *Contra Costa Times*, May 3, 2003; Jonathan Alter and Joshua Green, "Bennett: Virtue Is as Virtue Does?" *Newsweek*, May 12, 2003, 6.
112. Kevin Phillips, "Neil, Prince of Bush," *Harper's Magazine*, May 2004, 79.
113. Conason, *Big Lies*, 153.
114. For a good overview of Bush's sordid business dealings, see Begala, *It's Still the Economy*, *Stupid*, chap. 8.
115. Randall Balmer, "Bush and God," *The Nation*, April 14, 2003, 7.

Chapter 6

1. Kevin Baker, "We're in the Army Now: The G.O.P.'s Plan to Militarize Our Culture," *Harper's Magazine*, October 2003, 42. It is hard to disagree with the author's somber assessment of the opposition: "The Democratic Party is a cobweb, waiting to be swept away. In a unique disaster, it has been simultaneously de-pedded and beheaded; bereft of a dedicated, activist core and any meaningful leadership" (41).
2. Thomas Frank, "Lie Down for America: How the Republican Party Sows Ruin on the Great Plains," *Harper's Magazine*, April 2004, 33. This is essentially the question posed by a puzzled Godfrey Hodgson in his provocative book, *More Equal Than Others: America from Nixon to the New Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 295–96.
3. Michael Lind, *The Next American Nation: The New Nationalism and the Fourth American Revolution* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 183.
4. Godfrey Hodgson, *The World Turned Right Side Up: A History of the Conservative Ascendancy in America* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996), 282–83.
5. George Lakoff, *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 416; Jean Stefancic and Richard Delgado, *No Mercy: How Conservative Think Tanks and Foundations Changed America's Social Agenda* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 144–47.
6. "Nothing—not low education, not full-time work, not long commutes in urban agglomerations, not poverty or financial distress—is more broadly associated with civic disengagement and social disconnection than is dependence on television for entertainment." Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 231.
7. Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 141.
8. Norman Solomon, "The Orwellian Zone," in *Time for Choices: Deep Dialogues for Deep Democracy*, ed. Michael Toms (Gabriola Island, B.C., Canada: New Society, 2002), 52–53.
9. Robert W. McChesney, *The Problem of the Media: U.S. Communication Politics in the 21st Century* (New York: Monthly Review, 2004), 86.
10. Haynes Johnson, *The Best of Times: America in the Clinton Years* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), 215.

11. Morris Berman, *The Twilight of American Culture* (New York: Norton, 2000), 55.
12. Clinton reportedly earned \$10 million to \$12 million on his book. Sharon Thiemer, "Bush Cabinet Members Should Land on Their Feet," *Contra Costa Times* (Walnut Creek, Calif.), January 10, 2005.
13. The best examples of firms using celebrities to endorse their products without public awareness of the fact that these are paid advertisements are drug companies, who are known to shell out between \$20,000 and \$2 million for the service. Jeff Stryker, "Behind Celebrity Endorsements," *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 7, 2004.
14. Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, 132.
15. Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, 135.
16. Lewis H. Lapham, "Buffalo Dances," *Harper's Magazine*, May 2004, 10.
17. For the actor's campaign strategy, see Tim Goodman, "Schwarzenegger's Snug Union of Showbiz, Politics a Scary but Inevitable Next Step," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 2, 2003.
18. Dion Nissenbaum, "Schwarzenegger's Donors Test His Image as Ethical Outsider," *Contra Costa Times*, April 5, 2004.
19. Carla Marinucci and John Wildermuth, "Lockyer's Shocking Choice in Recall," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 19, 2003.
20. Mike Davis, "Recall Spun out of Thin Air," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 19, 2003.
21. E. J. Dionne Jr., *Why Americans Hate Politics* (New York: Touchstone, 1991), 15.
22. Molly Ivins, "The Uncompassionate Conservative," *Mother Jones*, November/December 2003, 47.
23. David Corn, *The Lies of George W. Bush: Mastering the Politics of Deception* (New York: Crown, 2003), 1. For a lengthy catalogue of misrepresentations associated with the president, see Jerry "Politex" Barrett, ed., *Big Bush Lies* (Ashland, Ore.: River Wood Books, 2004).
24. Coulter is undoubtedly the most successful graduate of the National Journalism Center (NJC). Based in Herndon, Virginia, the NJC was established in 1977 by Stanton Evans to train a cadre of right-wing journalists.
25. Susan Rasky, quoted by Edward Guthmann, "An Outbreak of Partisan Warfare on the Best-Seller List Is Encouraging Authors to Stoke the Fires of Readers Hungry for Political Squabbles—and the Bay Area Is Fertile Ground for Bush-Whackers," *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 2, 2003.
26. The president, in fact, carefully avoids the citizenry—except for military audiences. "Bush," it has been observed, "may be the most isolated president in modern history, at least since the late-stage Richard Nixon." Evan Thomas and Richard Wolffe, "Bush in the Bubble," *Newsweek*, December 19, 2005, 33.
27. Berman, *Twilight of American Culture*, 61.
28. Mark Hertsgaard, *The Eagle's Shadow: Why America Fascinates and Infuriates the World* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2002), 20.
29. Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 222. Moreover, what mesmerizes the youth is not C-SPAN but MTV, or worse still, ESPN. Spectator sports are truly the opium of this particular generation. Nor are they alone. As a society, we are so enamored with this kind of entertainment that we're more willing to pay a professional

baseball player, Alex Rodriguez—an adult human being playing what is essentially a children's game—\$25 million a year for ten years rather than provide a \$100,000 salary for a schoolteacher. Moreover, the head football coach of the leading state-supported university is probably the highest-paid public employee in most states of the Union, making more even than the governor—which tells us volumes about our value system.

30. Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America* (New York: Holt, 2002), 210.

31. Ruth Rosen, "The Right to Be Ordinary," *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 8, 2003.

32. Morris Berman, *booktv.org*, March 25, 2001.

33. Alan B. Kruger, "Tax Cuts Confuse Americans," *Contra Costa Times*, October 16, 2003.

34. Robert D. Kaplan, "Was Democracy Just a Moment?" *Atlantic Monthly*, December 1997.

35. C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 10.

36. David Cay Johnston, "Lower Income, Lower Taxes for the Wealthy," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 28, 2003. This figure was down from the \$313,500 of the previous year. (Sociologists generally define class on the basis of income since wealth, a more accurate barometer of class, is much more difficult to assess.)

37. Barbara Ehrenreich, *Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), 199–200. During this period, according to Ehrenreich, managers and professionals constituted about one-fifth of the U.S. population.

38. Robert B. Reich, "As the World Turns," *New Republic*, May 1, 1989, 28.

39. Lewis Lapham, *Money and Class in America: Notes and Observations on Our Civil Religion* (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1988), 6.

40. George Lakoff, quoted in Rick DelVecchio, "Berkeley: Why Would 1,000 People Crowd into a Church to Hear a Talk by a Linguist?" *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 18, 2004.

41. See Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (New York: Norton, 1992), and Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004).

42. This argument is well articulated by Amy Goodman, *The Exception to the Rule: Exposing Oily Politicians, War Profiteers, and the Media That Love Them* (New York: Hyperion, 2004), who concludes that George W. Bush "has used the war on terror as its rationale for the biggest crackdown on civil liberties since the McCarthy era of the 1950s" (10).

43. Leonie Huddy, Stanley Feldman, Charles Taber, and Gallya Lahav, "Threat, Anxiety, and Support of Antiterrorism Policies," *American Journal of Political Science*, July 2005, <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/toc/aips/49/3>; Noam Chomsky, "Resort to Fear," *Z Net*, July 21, 2005, <http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?ItemID=8347>.

44. Joseph E. Stiglitz, *The Roaring Nineties: A New History of the World's Most Prosperous Decade* (New York: Norton, 2003), x.

45. William C. Berman, *America's Right Turn: From Nixon to Clinton*, 2d ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 3.

46. Kevin Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor: Wealth and the American Electorate in the Reagan Aftermath* (New York: Random House, 1990), 8.

47. See, for example, Thomas Edsall, with Mary Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: Norton, 1991), 28, 254.

48. Berman, *Twilight of American Culture*, 28.

49. Naomi Klein, *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies* (New York: Picador, 2000), 242.

50. Klein, *No Logo*, 242.

51. Klein, *No Logo*, 247.

52. Lind, *Next American Nation*, 202.

53. Named the most admired firm by *Forbes* magazine in 2003, the Arkansas-based chain is "the darling of Wall Street," according to Elizabeth DiNovella, "The True Costs of Low Prices," *The Progressive*, January 2005, 45. For the utterly dismal working conditions at this much maligned enterprise (by liberals), see Liza Featherstone, *Selling Women Short: The Landmark Battle for Workers' Rights at Wal-Mart* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), which is reviewed by DiNovella above.

54. David Gates, "The Pop Prophets," *Newsweek*, May 24, 2004, 46.

55. According to pollsters Marc Sapir and Mickey Huff, "U.S. citizens have existed under a cloud of media and government induced fear" since the Creel Commission at the start of the First World War. "The Public Opinion Polling Fraud," *Z Magazine*, October 2003, 43.

56. William Greider, *Who Will Tell the People: The Betrayal of American Democracy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 275.

57. Greider, *Who Will Tell the People*, 275.

58. Joe Conason, *Big Lies: The Right-Wing Propaganda Machine and How It Distorts the Truth* (New York: Dunne, 2003), 8.

59. Ehrenreich, *Fear of Falling*, 163, 183.

60. David Brock, *Blinded by the Right: The Conscience of an Ex-Conservative* (New York: Three Rivers, 2002), 67.

61. Larry Everest, *Oil, Power and Empire: Iraq and the U.S. Global Agenda* (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 2004), 298.

62. George Soros, "America's Global Rule," *American Prospect*, June 1, 2003, <http://www.prospect.org/web/page.w?section=root&name=ViewPrint&articleId=6807>.

63. Thomas L. Friedman, "Learning to Listen," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 17, 2003.

64. See, for example, Noam Chomsky, *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance* (New York: Metropolitan, 2003), chap. 4.

65. Greider, *Who Will Tell the People*, 276.

66. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 2d ed. (New York: Routledge, 1994), 123.

67. See, particularly, *Chain Reaction*, 148, 158.

68. Southern electoral votes in the 2004 presidential election went 153–0 for Bush. Michael Nelson, "How the GOP Conquered the South," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 21, 2005.

69. Eric Foner, "Shedding Lincoln's Mantle," *The Nation*, August 7, 2000, 5.
70. Diane McWhorter, "Dixiecrats and the GOP," *The Nation*, January 27, 2003.
71. David R. Roediger, *Colored White: Transcending the Racial Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 24.
72. Hodgson, *World Turned Right Side Up*, 123.
73. Hodgson, *More Equal Than Others*, 213.
74. For the competition between new white suburbs and older suburbs inhabited by people of color, see chap. 7, "Beyond Blade Runner," in Mike Davis, *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998).
75. Andrew L. Barlow, *Between Fear and Hope: Globalization and Race in the United States* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 38.
76. Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation*, 100. An indispensable guide to an understanding of racial attitudes in the South is still W. J. Cash's timeless classic, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Vintage Books, 1941).
77. George Wallace, quoted in Dan T. Carter, *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich: Race in the Conservative Counterrevolution, 1963–1994* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 2.
78. Andrew Hacker, *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal* (New York: Scribner's, 1992), 206.
79. John A. Andrew III, *The Other Side of the Sixties: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of Conservative Politics* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 217.
80. Carter, *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich*, 30.
81. Barlow, *Between Fear and Hope*, 48.
82. Edsall, *Chain Reaction*, 164. "Reagan was not racist in the narrow meaning of the term," according to Michael Schaller and George Rising, *The Republican Ascendancy: American Politics, 1968–2001* (Wheeling, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, 2002), 95. Rather than being overtly racist, the Teflon President was one kind of person who simply did not see minorities even when they were present; people of color were practically nonexistent in his universe. (Nixon at last had his Bebe Rebozo, who was in fact his best friend.) "Ronald Reagan," journalist Joe Conason recalls in *Big Lies*, "once greeted his own black Secretary of Housing and Urban Development as 'Mr. Mayor,' because he didn't have any idea who the man was" (129). Yes, President Reagan was a great patriot, but one gets the distinct impression that his America was the one he nostalgically recalled from his midwestern boyhood, the lily-white America of Norman Rockwell.
83. Carter, *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich*, 55.
84. Roger Wilkins, "Smiling Racism," *The Nation*, November 3, 1984, 437.
85. Haynes Johnson, *Sleepwalking through History: America in the Reagan Years* (New York: Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1991), 50.
86. Harold Bloom, "How to Read and Write," *Booknotes*, September 3, 2000, interview with Brian Lamb.
87. Carter, *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich*, 68; *New York Times*, January 19, 1986. Robert C. Smith, professor of political science at San Francisco State University and the author of the *Encyclopedia of African American Politics*, ranks Reagan as the second worst U.S. president, right behind Andrew Johnson. Mark Simon, "Seeds of Discontent Sown in Bay Area," *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 11, 2004.
88. "Republican Group Wants to Review Reagan Film," *Contra Costa Times*, November 1, 2003.
89. David Greenberg, "Everybody Loves Reagan: How a Divisive President Became an American Idol," *Slate*, November 13, 2003, <http://slate.msn.com/id/2091175/>. Gallup polls indicate that Reagan's job approval rating during his eight years in office averaged 53 percent, slightly below average for all presidents Gallup monitored. Tony Hicks, "Outpouring of Praise Overlooks Problems," *Contra Costa Times*, June 10, 2004.
90. The relative merits of the two presidents, however, is not in doubt among most scholars, although few would go so far as ex-conservative pundit Michael Lind, who, writing in 1995, concluded, "Our only four-term president looms above the other American statesmen of the century, including his cousin Theodore, like a whale above porpoises. Truman and Johnson were footnotes to the testament of FDR; Reagan, a quibble in the margin." *Next American Nation*, 377. The illustrious historian Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., writing a week after Reagan's death, gives this terse summation of our nation's fortieth president: "He had 'the vision thing' in abundance—alas, not too much else." "He Knew How to Lead a People": The Dean of American Historians Assesses President Reagan's Faults and Virtues," *Newsweek*, June 14, 2004, 44.
91. Not all anxieties manipulated by the Bush team in 1988 were racial in nature. In fact, one observer feels that "George Bush managed to win the presidency by spreading alarm about flag-burning, a nonexistent threat that older voters remembered with horror from twenty years before." Thomas Frank, *One Market under God: Extreme Capitalism, Market Populism, and the End of Economic Democracy* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 27.
92. Robert B. Reich, "The Rove Machine Rolls On," *American Prospect*, February 1, 2003, <http://www.prospect.org/web/page.wvfsection=root&name=ViewPrint&articleID=6689>. See, too, Lou Dubose, Jan Reid, and Carl M. Cannon, *Boy Genius: Karl Rove, the Brains Behind the Remarkable Political Triumph of George W. Bush* (New York: Public Affairs, 2003), 142. "Rove's record has been consistent. Over 35 years, he has been a master of dirty tricks, divisiveness, innuendo, manipulation, character assassination, and rolling partisanship." "Rove's Role," *Boston Globe*, August 28, 2005.
93. "Chavez," *hispanicvista.com*, "Anti-Immigration: Hate in CAPS & Gowns, Part II: The Web of Hate," October 24, 2003, <http://www.hispanicvista.com/html3/102403comm.htm>.
94. David Montejano, *Chicano Politics and Society in the Late Twentieth Century*, ed. David Montejano (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 242.
95. Montejano, *Chicano Politics*, 246.
96. Stefancic and Delgado, *No Mercy*, 24, 36. For the Pioneer Fund, see Chip Berlet, "Into the Mainstream," *Intelligence Report*, Summer 2003, 57–58.
97. Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *New York, Chicago, Los Angeles: America's Global Cities* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 383.
98. See Rachel L. Swarns, "Capitol's Pariah on Immigration Is Now a Power," *New York Times*, December 21, 2005.

99. David G. Gutierrez, *Between Two Worlds: Mexican Immigrants in the United States*, ed. David G. Gutierrez (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1996), xv. On Mexican immigration into the United States, see Manuel G. Gonzales, *Mexicanos: A History of Mexicans in the United States* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 224–31.
100. For anti-Mexican sentiment in the United States during the past generation, see Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*, 5th ed. (New York: Pearson Longman, 2004), chap. 15.
101. Lawrence (Larry) Pratt, quoted in Stefancic and Delgado, *No Mercy*, 17. Pratt founded English First, another highly financed English-only organization, in 1986.
102. See Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004).
103. "Who Are We?" is Patrick Buchanan with footnotes," comments religious scholar Alan Wolfe, "Native Son: Samuel Huntington Defends the Homeland," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2004, 121.
104. Abu-Lughod, *New York, Chicago, Los Angeles*, 425.
105. Davis, *Ecology of Fear*, 405–11. The suburbs east of Los Angeles are a good example. See David Holthouse, "California Conflict: As Minorities Move into the Region Known as the Inland Empire, White Supremacists Unleash a Hate Crime Backlash," *Intelligence Report*, Fall 2005.
106. Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco, *Crossings: Mexican Immigrants in Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 7. Linda Chavez argues that most Latinos are middle-class, in *Out of the Barrio: Toward a New Politics of Hispanic Assimilation* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 102; but, given the modest skill and educational levels of Latino immigrants, this conclusion seems highly unwarranted.
107. "Latinos Rise Nationwide," *National Geographic*, November 2003.
108. Abu-Lughod, *New York, Chicago, Los Angeles*, 548.
109. Stefancic and Delgado, *No Mercy*, 22.
110. Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation*, 118.
111. Roediger, *Colored White*, 40.
112. Carter, *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich*, 120.
113. Kevin Canfield, "Profit Motive Propels Publishers to the Right," *Contra Costa Times*, August 10, 2003.
114. Stephen Jay Gould, quoted by Hodgson, *World Turned Right Side Up*, 343.
115. Barlow, *Between Fear and Hope*, 10.
116. Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation*, 132.
117. "Limbaugh Quits as NFL Analyst over Race Remarks," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 2, 2003.
118. Columnist Cynthia Tucker reflects what most blacks feel about the man: "Bush has never been willing to rein in the racists in his party. That's because he needs them; their dirty work helps to ensure GOP victories. The president may not be a bigot, but if you stand on bigots' shoulders, what does that make you?" "Bush's Rapport with Racists," *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 28, 2005.
119. Lind, *Next American Nation*, 161.
120. Linda Chavez and Daniel Gray, *Betrayal: How Union Bosses Shake Down Their Members and Corrupt American Politics* (New York: Crown Forum, 2004).
121. Navarrette's political orientation is not consistent, but anyone who seriously argues, as Navarrette does in "Bush the Moderate Emerging," *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 1, 2004, that George W. Bush is actually a misunderstood political moderate has to be categorized as a strong conservative.
122. For an overview of black conservatism, see Deborah Toler, "Black Conservatives," *The Public Eye* (Web site of Political Research Associates), September 1993, <http://www.publiceye.org/magazine/v07n3/Blackcon.htm>.
123. Chavez, *Out of the Barrio*, 91–92; Berlet, "Into the Mainstream," 58.
124. Berlet, "Into the Mainstream," 54; Conason, *Big Lies*, 140.
125. Conason, *Big Lies*, 133.
126. Jeff Sharlet, "Big World: How Clear Channel Programs America," *Harper's Magazine*, December 2003, 43. For a perceptive biography of Watts, see Amy Waldman, "The GOP's Great Black Hope: He Talks Like Kemp but Votes with Gingrich. Whose Side Is J. C. Watts On?" *Washington Monthly*, October 1996, <http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2001/9610.waldman.html>. Apparently, Watts enjoyed scant success in recruiting blacks for state GOP offices: "Out of 218 African-American state legislators, 214 are Democrats," Ellen Goodman, "GOP's 'Ladies First' Strategy Is Clever Political Play," *Contra Costa Times*, May 24, 2005.
127. Mark Hosenball, Michael Isikoff, and Evan Thomas, "Cheney's Long Path to War," *Newsweek*, November 17, 2003, 40.
128. Conason, *Big Lies*, 142.
129. Buddy Watts, quoted in Kimberley Wilson, "Thoughts on Republican Outreach," *Enter Stage Right*, June 1999, <http://www.enterstageright.com/article/articles/0699reputreach.htm>.
130. Barlow, *Between Fear and Hope*, 76.
131. Paul Gottfried and Thomas Fleming, *The Conservative Movement* (Boston: Twayne, 1988), 23.
132. Andrew III, *Other Side of the Sixties*, 105.
133. Paul J. Weber, "Catholics and the 2000 Election," *America*, October 28, 2000, <http://www.americamagazine.org/articles/weber-catholic-vote.htm>.
134. Jon Wiener, "No Success Like Failure," *The Nation*, May 3, 2004, 53.
135. Bush captured 52 percent of the Catholic vote in 2004. Don Lattin, "Christian Strategy: Go Beyond 2004 Election's Hot-Button Issues," *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 7, 2004.
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137. Lattin, "Christian Strategy."
138. Fundamentalist Protestants are "historically the most anti-Catholic group in American society," notes Susan Jacoby. "Vatican Makes Common Cause with Fundamentalist Protestants," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 3, 2004.
139. David Cohen, *Chasing the Red, White, and Blue* (New York: Picador, 2001), 211–12.
140. Molly Ivins, "Our Own Nuremberg," *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 15, 2004.

141. Lakoff, *Moral Politics*, 12.
142. In the aftermath of John Kennedy's election to the White House in 1960, the sociologist E. Digby Baltzell predicted that despite the Democratic victory, Catholics would increasingly abandon the party they had traditionally supported for the republicans as they achieved middle-class status. *The Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy and Caste in America* (New York: Random House, 1964), 315.
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144. Paul Weyrich, quoted by Greider, *Who Will Tell the People*, 278.
145. Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, rev. ed. (New York: Avon Books, 1965), 236.
146. Ehrenreich, *Fear of Falling*, 10–15, 249.
147. Alan Crawford, *Thunder on the Right: The "New Right" and the Politics of Resentment* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 5.
148. Chip Berlet and Matthew N. Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism in America: How Close for Comfort* (New York: Guilford, 2000), 7, who quote Jean Hardisty that effect.