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ABSTRACT

This study is a rhetorical analysis of Richard Nixon's early-career anti-communist conspiracy rhetoric. In conspiracy scholarship, two tracks have emerged: the paranoid style and the political style of conspiracy. Nixon, though, as a tricky rhetor, does not fall neatly within either of those styles, instead he samples from both styles over time and even within single speeches. After synthesizing the two styles into a method, I analyze three early Nixon anti-communist conspiracy texts between 1946-1962 which span those years and cover various genres. Text one is Nixon's "Maiden Speech" to the House of Representatives in 1947. It is mostly in the paranoid style of conspiracy. Text two is the 1960 presidential campaign pamphlet "The Meaning of Communism to Americans," which is mostly political. The third text is the first chapter of Nixon's 1962 memoir <u>Six Crises</u> – the chapter is titled "The Hiss Case." This text constructs the communist conspiracy fully within the paranoid style while simultaneously creating a "liberalist" conspirator fully in the political style. Due to Nixon's fluidity between rhetorical styles, I introduce the concept of pragmatic agency to account for his conspiracistic rhetoric, which falls between the political and paranoid.

Conspiracy, Pragmatism and Style:

An Analysis of Richard Nixon's Antecedent Anti-Communist Conspiracy Rhetoric

By

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B.A. University of Minnesota Duluth, 2008

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

> "If you want to make beautiful music, you must
> play the black and the white notes together."
> – Richard M. Nixon

Nearly forty years after his resignation, Richard Millhouse Nixon, the 37th President of the United States of America, is still regularly discussed in American media and pop culture. Although much of the discussion of Nixon revolves around the Watergate scandal that ended his presidency, Nixon's complex personality and long political career solidified him in our collective conscience as an iconic, but fractious figure. Movies in the past two decades have alternately portrayed Nixon in disparate fashions: as a paranoid, alcoholic, and on the edge of sanity (Oliver Stone's *Nixon*, 1995); a scheming buffoon and a victim of circumstance (Andrew Fleming's *Dick*, 1999); or a recent portrayal, adapted from a hit British play, of a stubborn but apologetic Nixon admitting to the American people he made mistakes throughout the Watergate investigation (Ron Howard's *Frost/Nixon*, 2008).

Iconic photographs from Nixon's career, as well as gestures and phrases associated with him, remain in the public lexicon. The phrases "I'm not a crook" and "what did you know and when did you know it" are repeated ad nauseum, while adding "-gate" to the end of every political scandal (and sports scandal) is a media trend.[1] He is tritely mimicked through homage to his double peace sign and thumbs up, while Nixon's negative physical aspects (jowls, sweaty upper lip, five-o'clock shadow, pointy nose and deep set features) are characterized by cartoonists and remembered by political analysts during the debate cycle in every election years.[2]

On the other hand there is another, positive, legacy of Nixon remembrance. In the large photographic archive there are other enduring pictures of Nixon with his family, with Dwight

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[1] Andrew Malcolm, "Watergate, the hotel, has a Bidgate after Foreclosuregate," *Los Angeles Times*, 7/21/2009.
[2] John Self, "The First Debate over the Debates: How Kennedy and Nixon Negotiated the 1960 Presidential Debates. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 35, (2005): 361-63.

Eisenhower, and debating Khrushchev – promoting him as a faithful husband and father, liked by Ike, and an ardent anti-communism, respectively. To round out the photos, there are some which remind us of President Nixon's major foreign policy successes. Not only did his foreign policy maneuvers catapult Nixon to re-election over challenger George McGovern in 1972 by the largest margin of victory by any Republican President ever, but the discourses originating from photos of Nixon shaking hands with Mao and Brezhnev remind us that Nixon "opened China" and "made peace" with the Soviets.

Especially Nixon's work with China is remembered. Whereas Reagan gets much of the credit for ending the Soviet 'threat,' an opera commemorates Nixon's trip to China. This piece, "Nixon in China," is the only opera based upon a president, and has had a long run. It premiered in the mid-1980s, and has continued to play and be recorded in various cities and countries around the world (although, ironically, it has not yet premiered in China). The opera has grown in popularity in the past decade – and therefore, Nixon has made in-roads not just in Hollywood and pop-culture, but also in "high culture."

If not multiplicitous enough, public memory of Nixon increased in polysemy through his post-presidential authorship. After resigning, Nixon authored nine books, mostly on foreign affairs,[3] and began the revisionary work on his disgraced public image. Then in his final living act, the Nixon drama took an ironic turn. Although the other presidents succeeding Nixon spurned his advice and what they saw as his foreign policy meddling (his trips abroad and his professorial books), Democratic President Bill Clinton brought Nixon back into the presidential fold on matters of foreign policy, especially in regards to the new Russian Republic and the other former Soviet Bloc states. In this symbiotic friendship, the former Governor of Arkansas got a

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[3] Ronald Lee, "The Featuring of the Will in History: A Rhetorical Exploration of Richard Nixon's Post-Presidential Writings," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 75, (1989): 453.

much-needed foreign policy tutorial, and a fallen President finally achieved elder-statesman status. The men became close just in time, because Nixon died within the term, and sitting President Clinton gave Nixon's eulogy in 1994.[4] Thus, Nixon rehabilitated his image as much as possible.

More than these multiple public memories of Nixon and his continued cultural cachet, though, his pragmatism and conspiracism make his rhetoric a fascinating artifact. I am not the first to regard Nixon and his rhetoric as an apt case for rhetorical criticism. Although much scholarship in the field, like our culture as a whole, primarily focuses on Nixon's presidency, and when scholars use his early career, it is usually done as a means to explain his presidential failure, post hoc. Rhetoricians such as Edwin Black, Roderick Hart, Lee Sigelman and historian William Chafe have all explored Nixon's "dual personality" – or his strange desire for privacy despite pursuing the most-public of careers. All of these authors (save for Black) primarily focus on this privacy becoming secrecy and paranoia in Nixon's Presidency.[5] Black does study Nixon's upbringing, family, and faith, but focuses solely on Nixon's campaign literature while further promoting the public man/private man distinction.[6] Other communication scholars, such as Mark Feldstein, Ronald Lee, John Self, Thomas Goodnight, John Poulakos and historian Kim McQuid have focused on press coverage of Nixon, as well as his image management through mass media. This set of articles also focuses mainly on Watergate and the aftermath of Nixon's resignation, with the exception of scholastic discussion on the 1960 Nixon-JFK debate. Finally, several rhetoricians, such as L. W. Rosenfield, Edwin Black, and historian Eric Foner have

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[4] Thomas Rosenstiel, "Richard Nixon: 1913-1994: Clinton plays an ironic role for Nixon funeral," *Los Angeles Times*, 4/25/1994.
[5] Lee Sigelman, "The Presentation of Self in Presidential Life: Onstage and Backstage With Johnson and Nixon." *Political Communication* 18, no. 1 (2001): 1-3.
[6] Edwin Black, "Richard Nixon and the Privacy of Public Discourse." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 2, no. 1 (1999): 1-2.

studied two famous early-career Nixon texts: the "Checkers" speech and the "Kitchen Debate" with Nikita Khrushchev. The former has been studied in terms of apologia, though, and the latter in terms of feminist critique, centering on Nixon's reference to American women as "housewives."

Before previewing my work, however, two of the aforementioned articles must be discussed in more detail due to their treatments of pragmatism and conspiracy. The first, by Roderick Hart, deals with pragmatism, and also purports the usefulness of biography in rhetorical criticism.[7] The article uses Nixon's biography primarily to further the dual personality thesis, however, and only briefly includes "pragmatism" in a list of four other predominant Nixon personality traits.[8] Where Hart's article focusses much more on those other personality traits, my study purposefully examines biography to emphasis the notion that Nixon's (rhetorical) pragmatism was ingrained from childhood.

The second article I must expound upon is the co-authored piece by Goodnight and Poulakos. Despite the intriguing fact that the article's title[9] includes two of my major concepts – conspiracy and pragmatism – the article does vastly different work than this study. First, the article only considers conspiracy from the inherently-negative paranoid style – a style that I show in my "Method Chapter" has been problematized in a subsequent stream of conspiracy scholarship (the political style). Second, this article only looks to Nixon's late career and pits his credibility against the credibility of the *Washington Post* journalists, Woodward and Bernstein, who scooped the Watergate scandal. Third, this article uses an outdated form of criticism in the field: fantasy theme. Lastly "pragmatism" and "fantasy" are used in this article as a conceptual

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[7] Roderick Hart, "Absolutism and Situation: *Prolegomena* to a Rhetorical Biography of Richard M. Nixon," *Communication Monographs* 43 (1976): 204-28.
[8] Hart, "Absolutism and Situation," 204-06.
[9] G. Thomas Goodnight & John Poulakos, "Conspiracy Rhetoric: From Pragmatism to Fantasy in Public Discourse," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 45 (1981): 299-316.

binary to weigh the credibility of Nixon against the journalists. The authors argue Nixon's "pragmatism" waned as his side of the Watergate story became increasingly fantastic to the public. In contrast, the journalists' "pragmatism" waxed as their account became more publically believable and moved away from its early status as a fantastic conspiracy theory about the President. However, I dispute this article's fundamental premise, that pragmatism is defined as being necessarily not-fantastic, and the resulting claim that the two terms are in an opposite and inverse correlative relationship. Studying Nixon texts, I argue nearly the opposite – that pragmatism is a mode of agency for Nixon to make alternating political and paranoid claims even within one text. Some of his claims are factual and some are fantastic, and that rhetorically demonstrates Nixon's pragmatism.

The aim of this study is to cover Nixon's early career and anti-communist conspiracy rhetoric. To do so I analyze three Nixon texts from 1946-1962, and pose possible implications for conspiracy theory. My implications, through future research, could very likely illuminate Nixon's paranoid presidential behavior and his eventual downfall, but that period falls outside the limits of this study. Therefore, I start at the beginning and look forward, in contrast to the many scholars who have started with Watergate and looked backward.

In his early life and political career I take an interest in Nixon's home-life, his father's Methodism and his mother's Quakerism, as well as his debate, acting and poker playing experiences. These and other factors, I argue, shaped his pragmatic personality. I am also interested in the development of his issue of expertise, free-market capitalism, and how that affected his anti-communist conspiracy rhetoric. This study also looks at Nixon's use of religious terminology and his rhetorical variations on the theme of scapegoating – depending on whether he is scapegoating individual communist agents or scapegoating the broader ideology of

communism. Furthermore, I research whether Nixon uses different rhetorical strategies in texts depending on his purpose in denouncing communism domestically or internationally. Finally, I also investigate Nixon's complicated friendship with Joseph McCarthy, and how their different rhetorical strategies likely led to McCarthy's political exile and Nixon's political ascendency.

By studying Nixon's rhetoric, I do not intend to prove that Nixon believed in a communist conspiracy (which the texts prove at face value), but instead, make a practical as well as theoretical contribution to the study of political rhetoric. First I synthesize a method of criticism out of existing conspiracy scholarship. Then, I focus on the agency of Nixon's anti-communist conspiracy rhetoric in that rhetorical criticism, arguing for the theoretical inclusion of pragmatism in order to account for Nixon's complex conspiracy rhetoric.

Many Nixon texts could be construed as somewhat conspiracistic. The three primary texts I have selected, though, are highly conspiracistic, cover the entirety of Nixon's early political career (1946-1962), and derive from vastly different rhetorical situations. The first text, "The Maiden Speech" was delivered by Nixon in the House of Representatives in 1947. This was Nixon's first (maiden) address to the House. It was an appeal from the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), delivered by committee-proxy Nixon, for the conviction of "contempt of congress" by suspected-communist Gerhart Eisler. The second text is a pamphlet from the 1960 presidential campaign titled "The Meaning of Communism to Americans." The third and last text comes from Nixon's book Six Crises, and is the first chapter, titled "The Hiss Case." In this text, Nixon, newly out of public office, reminisces about his early public career, tries to vindicate his communist conspiracism, and positions himself for future office.

In addition to Nixon, conspiracy theories have cultural cachet in America. Our republic can trace its conspiracy discourse as far back as independence, and this discourse continues to

permeate our society today. The early rise of Freemasonry led many to believe the group's

members were *conspirators* attempting to control the country. In reaction to perceived

conspiracies, oppositional groups of *conspiracists* – those who believe a conspiracy exists –

arose to expose those cabals. Among the most-notable conspiracist group are the Ku Klux Klan

and the John Birch Society ("Birchers"). Conspiracist groups have often been viewed as small

collectives of lunatics (such as the 9/11 "Truthers" and Obama "Birthers"). Yet, populist

conspiracist movements have influenced national politics in the past and present, and often have

spokespersons who are top-level politicians. Some of the most politically influential conspiracist

groups have been the anti-masons, apocalyptic Christians, anti-slave power Republicans, and

anti-communists. These mainstream conspiracist movements have all had famous leaders, and

perhaps became mainstream because of the support of such influential figures. Respectively

these movements were represented by former president John Quincy Adams (who wrote his

book *Letter on Freemasonry*, in 1833 – just five years removed from the presidency),[10] Reverend

William Lloyd Garrison,[11] senate candidate Abraham Lincoln,[12] and a young Richard Nixon.

Conspiracy theories, furthermore, have not subsided in the media age. Although one may

assume increased access to information would waylay conspiracism, various media continues to

cover and even produce conspiracy fodder. Televisions shows such as *The X Files* and

Conspiracy Theory with Jesse Ventura, the book <u>The Da Vinci Code</u>, and movies such as "JFK"

and the "National Treasure" series are just a few examples of the proliferation of conspiracy

materials. Furthermore, the internet is rife with conspiracism. Now any radical or mild

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[10] Arthur Goldwag, *The New Hate: A History of Fear and Loathing on the Populist Right*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2012, 173.
[11] Michael Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy: Chase, Sumner, and Lincoln*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2005, 18-43.
[12] David Zarefsky, "Conspiracy Arguments in the Lincoln-Douglas Debates," *Journal of the American Forensic Association* 21 (1984): 63-75.

conspiracist group (such as neo-Nazis, a plethora of anti-government groups, or parents concerned about vaccines) with the wherewithal to make a simple website, blog or Facebook page can broadcast their views and biases to anyone who can conduct an internet search. It appears *conspiracism* (belief in conspiracy) is as rampant as ever.

Scholarship has intermittently studied the concept of conspiracy. Historians and public intellectuals, such as Hofstadter, Goldberg and Goldwag, have written tomes tracing major conspiratorial and conspiracist groups throughout American history. Sociologists and psychologists have researched the paranoia and fear which give rise to conspiracism. In the field of rhetoric, scholars have studied the argumentation of conspiracists. Beginning with Kenneth Burke, conspiracy arguments were described as rhetorical devices used by madmen such as Adolf Hitler, whose "private mind translated into the vocabulary of nationalistic events."[13] According to Burke, whose textual analysis of *Mien Kampf* foretold much that would transpire later, the mass appeal of Hitler's conspiracism was his scapegoating of Jews. Scapegoating is a process of placing blame on some innocent 'other' and exiling or sacrificing them, as the "curative unification by a fictitious devil-function."[14] Often scapegoating and conspiracy go hand-in-hand, because, "it may well be that people, in their human frailty, require an enemy as well as a goal."[15] But while the field of rhetoric greatly expanded due to Burke's other works, his work on scapegoating and conspiracy was not emphasized for many years. As I describe in Chapter 3, in the 1960s the *paranoid style of conspiracy* was finally taken up again and more-fully theorized. More recently, as scholars study the works of mainstream conspiracist rhetors,

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[13] Kenneth Burke, "The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle'," in *Philosophy of Literary Form*, 3rd ed., California: University of California Press, 1973, 210.
[14] Burke, "The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle'," 218.
[15] Burke, "The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle'," 219.

such as early Republicans Abraham Lincoln, Salmon Chase and Charles Sumner,[16] it became

obvious that not all conspiracists were on the fringe of society – as these three men were

prominent enough to found one of our two existing political parties. Therefore, theory

culminated in the *political style of conspiracy*, with its own evaluative criteria. This style more

adequately addresses the discourses of mainstream conspiracists.

The paranoid and political styles have been constructed as distinctly separate, however,

and are therefore restrictive to rhetors who do not neatly fit within one style or the other. As I

discuss in my analysis, Nixon does not fit well in either style, across years or even within single

speeches – sampling from both styles in whatever configuration a given situation necessitated.

By studying three of his mainstream, yet conspiratorial and complex rhetorical texts, I hope to

expose the insufficiency of this paranoid-political stylistic binary. Therefore I take up the

concept of "pragmatic agency"[17] to study Nixon and his early-career rhetorical fluidity in order

to bridge the gulf between existing conspiracy styles.

Plan of Study:

This study first reviews Nixon's early life, in order to establish the context for his

complex rhetoric and political ascendency. Therefore I situate, in the terms of Herbert Wichelns,

"The man, his work, [and] his times."[18] Chapter 2, "Background," begins with a brief discussion

of Nixon's formative years: family hardship, Quakerism, debate-teams, amateur acting, and

experiences in Duke Law School and the Navy. Next I provide an overview of each text's

relevant contextual information, including the broad and immediate rhetorical situations of each

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[16] Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 47-152.
[17] Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969, 128.
[18] Herbert A. Wichelns, "The Literary Criticism of Oratory," in *Landmark Essays on American Public Address*, Davis, CA: Hermagoras Press, 1993, 3.

text – specifically the exigency, audience, constraints.[19] The context of "The Maiden Speech" in early 1947 includes America's Post-WWII mindset, the second Red Scare, Nixon's first political campaign victory in 1946 and his immediate appointment to HUAC. Between this first text and the second primary text (the 1960 Presidential Campaign Pamphlet "The Meaning of Communism to Americans") Nixon gained national fame by prosecuting the Alger Hiss case in 1948, propelling him first to Senate election in 1950 before becoming Vice President on the Eisenhower ticket in 1952. Interestingly, as McCarthyism ended and the Korean War began, Nixon's political cynicism increased, and his focus shifted from domestic communism to international communism and the Cold War. Finally, in contextualizing this study's third major text ("The Hiss Case" chapter in Nixon's 1962 book, *Six Crises*), I trace Nixon's 1960 Presidential loss to John Kennedy, and the beginning of his "wilderness years" – between 1961 and 1968, during which time Nixon was out of public office. Thus, the rhetorical purpose of Nixon's book was that of a private citizen trying to protect the viability of his political future. In this endeavor, Nixon wrote earnestly, trying to vindicate himself by offering proof for the anti-communist conspiracism he used early in his career.

Chapter 3, on "Method," begins by situating conspiracy style within the broader discussion of style within the field – both its classical and contemporary treatments. First I use Aristotle and Cicero, demonstrating that style has been a major rhetorical concept since the Hellenistic age, and one of the five "canons" of rhetoric since the Romans. Next the chapter traces modern excavations of style, and its usefulness in politics both as *decorum*, and as a collective aesthetic that can unite the people of an era. Situating style as such enables me to segue into the existing styles of conspiracy scholarship – the paranoid style and the political style

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[19] Lloyd F. Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation." *Philosophy & Rhetoric* vol. 1, no. 1 (Winter 1968): 6-8.

of conspiracy. These styles have been theorized as distinctive in their ideological framing, fear appeals, and the four distinctive inner-textual evaluative criteria ascribed to each style. After homing in on this gap between these two current styles of conspiracy, I situate Nixon's complicated conspiracy rhetoric. Since Nixon samples from both the paranoid and political style, depending on the occasion, I introduce pragmatism and a focus on agency to the existing scholarship in order to adequately account for Nixon's combination of paranoid and political elements in each text of analysis. In sum, I make a robust critique of the existing style binary, and position Nixon as a conspiracist who uses pragmatism as a form of agency with which to move between political and paranoid styles – not only from text to text, but within a single texts.

In Chapter 4, "Analysis," I apply my synthesized, critical method to three Nixon anti-communist conspiracy texts. Through comparative textual analysis, this chapter demonstrates that Nixon takes on a pragmatic, conspiracistic agency as he samples from both the political and paranoid styles in each text. A cautionary note is warranted though: in none of these three texts does Nixon ever solely use a political or paranoid style – he always, pragmatically, uses both. The question becomes "to what degree?" does Nixon use each style in each text. Dependent on the situation, the first text is mostly-paranoid in its conspiracism, the second is mostly-political, and the third is fascinating because Nixon constructs two conspirators – one, the communist, is constructed as wholly paranoid, while simultaneously Nixon introduces a second, "liberalist," conspirator, wholly in the political style of conspiracy. Over time, I argue, Nixon relies on various configurations of ideology, fear appeal, and evaluative criteria from the paranoid and political styles, and rhetorical proofs to pragmatically fit the decorum of his rhetorical situations. The result of this pragmatic style of conspiracy rhetoric is Nixon's increasing name recognition, as he styled the anti-communist conspiracy rhetoric of his era.

Finally, in my concluding "Discussion," I extrapolate implications from my analysis. These implications form the basis of my recommendations for future research, which could prompt and significantly inform further rhetorical criticism of Richard Nixon's presidential successes and the conspiracistic failure of Watergate, which led to his resignation. Future research may well uncover other pragmatic conspiracists, and further theoretical developments in conspiracy scholarship. Ideally, future research would be able to theoretically map an entirely separate style of conspiracy rhetoric situated squarely between the political and the paranoid styles – the pragmatic style of conspiracy.

The limitations of this study, however, do not extend to fully developing that new style, as more case studies and evaluative criteria would be necessary. This study is limited to Nixon's antecedent, conspiracy rhetoric, as exemplified from 1946-1962. Furthermore, this study only analyzes three primary Nixon conspiracy texts, although many more of his speeches within this time frame may prove to be conspiracistic. The three selected texts are not only highly conspiratorial, but involve different rhetorical situations which allows for perspective by incongruity. Lastly, these three texts span the entire era of Nixon's early public career. Although these texts could be analyzed with other rhetorical methods, this study's critical approach is from synthesized conspiracy theory, adding the notion of pragmatic agency to account for Tricky Dick's rhetorical fluidity.

CHAPER TWO

BACKGROUND

Birth through WWII:

From birth, Richard Nixon was an interesting character in a colorful cast. Born in 1913, the second of four sons, he was named after Richard the Lion-Hearted by his Quaker parents. His family was the primary, formative influence on Nixon's personality, work ethic, and pragmatic political career. By sketching a characterization of his faith and family in this chapter, I explore relevant biographical factors that led to the pragmatism and anti-communist conspiracism of Nixon's early career.

Nixon's parents were opposites. His mother, Hannah, was the daughter of Quakers who spoke the plain language (thee and thou). Although Hannah did not use the plain language of her ancestors, she was serious, practical, soft-spoken, and sincere in all she did. Frank Nixon, Richard's father, was a gregarious Methodist who later converted to Quakerism when he met Hannah. Frank was a good-natured dreamer but also a loud, argumentative man. He was also politically active, but pragmatic in his approach – having been raised Democrat, voted Progressive, and finally settled on Republican.[20] Frank tried his hand at lemon farming in Yorba Linda, California, but when the farm failed due to drought, he sold the land, moved the family down the road to Whittier, and bought a grocery store the family ran until he and Hannah retired.[21]

Primarily, Richard Nixon took after his mother. From boyhood, Nixon was serious, even "gloomy." He was a hard worker at the family store and studious at school, but he was also aggressively argumentative and competitive. He lacked a true sense of humor – especially in group settings – and although he was not loud like his father, he used words as weapons.

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[20] Steven Ambrose, *Nixon: The Education of a Politician 1913-1962,* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987, 11-16.
[21] PBS Home Video. *Nixon,* "The Presidents" series, WGBH Educational Foundation: Boston, 2008. DVD, 170 min.

Furthermore, he was distrusting of nearly everyone outside his family, and was incredibly sensitive to criticism – although throughout his life he constantly gravitated to the most public of offices and political positions which inherently invited criticism. Combine this with "his excellent memory [which] helped him store up grievances."[22] As a result, Nixon was nearly friendless throughout his life.

Nixon also acquired positive characteristics during his boyhood. In addition to having a good work ethic, Nixon, like his father, was a dreamer, who believed he would one day escape poverty and become a lawyer. Unlike Horace Greely's call to "Go west young man," Nixon always dreamed of escaping his West coast, rural poverty for East coast, urban luxury. From his mother's Quaker values, Nixon learned to be fastidious, obedient, tolerant, and modest. Moreover, as someone who was interpersonally shy yet publically confident, Nixon's persona can be encapsulated by the weekly Quaker "meeting," in which typically-reserved parishioners are encouraged to share before the congregation.[23] These traits that emerged from "meeting" would later be described as Nixon's "dual personality,"[24] or as disparate onstage/backstage behavior.[25]

Even though Nixon primarily took after his mother in temperament, his father is responsible for his political politics and penchant for pragmatic argument. The first training Nixon received in debating was at the supper table. "Like Frank, he enjoyed [argument] for its own sake."[26] Classmates in primary school remembered that he would ask hypothetical questions ("Would it be wiser to marry a pretty girl or a smart girl?"), then argue each side in turn. One

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[22] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 28.
[23] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 26-31.
[24] William H. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II,* 4th Edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, 373-429.
[25] Sigelman, "The Presentation of Self in Presidential Life," 1-22.
[26] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 38.

classmate recalled, "No matter what was discussed, he would take the opposite side just for the sake of argument."[27] Therefore, from a very early age, Nixon had a penchant for pragmatic debate, regardless of the issue or position.

The family-dinner debates led to a notable career on the Wittier High debate team. In this forum Nixon even impressed his coach: "He was so good it kind of disturbed me. He had this ability to kind of slide around an argument instead of meeting it head on, and he could take any side of a debate."[28] Later these skills would help Nixon win election to the House of Representatives against Jerry Voorhis[29] and stand up to Nikita Khrushchev in Moscow during the "Kitchen Debate."[30]

Nixon's other favorite high school activities were his public speaking class and his forays into acting, where he learned to be a crowd pleaser. Even though he could not shake his stoicism, he could well up with tears for an audience. Nixon later admitted to David Frost that he never cried except in public.[31] Upon high school graduation, Nixon put his debate and acting skills to use when discussing his college decision. Although he was accepted to Harvard he could not afford to leave Whittier. But no matter how disappointed he was, he denied any disappointment whatsoever. From this point on "His ability to deny what others regarded as obvious became his way of dealing with things beyond his control."[32] This is a clear harbinger of Nixon's later Watergate and impression management strategies.[33]

At Whittier College, a Quaker school, Nixon continued to be head of his class. Having already, tragically lost two brothers, he tirelessly pushed himself to succeed – trying to be three

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[27] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 38.
[28] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 46.
[29] Black, "Richard Nixon and the Privacy of Public Discourse." 2-6.
[30] Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom*. Norton, 1998, 271-73.
[31] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 49, 70.
[32] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 53.
[33] Sigelman, "The Presentation of Self in Presidential Life," 17-8.

sons in one for his parents. Although Nixon felt guilty for being alive while his brothers had

died, he also felt cheated by their deaths and by God.[34] When added to his pragmatism, this

resentment led Nixon to question his Christian faith at a fundamental level. Being Nixon was not

deeply philosophical or principled, he treated a faith decision pragmatically, as he would a

competitive debate topic, eventually deciding to reject Christianity while at university. He never

returned to devout faith.[35]

While at Whittier College, Nixon became even more involved in debate. He still loved to

argue for argument's sake, and saw debate as "a healthy antidote to certainty, and a good lesson

in seeing the other person's point of view."[36] On most political issues Nixon held neutral

positions, however, on economic issues "He became a convinced free trader from his debates."[37]

This helps to understand why Nixon was such a fervent anti-communist, and why he chose to

start his career speaking out against a communist conspiracy ("The Maiden Speech"). Later, at

Duke Law School, his pro-capitalist and anti-communist ethos led Nixon to view himself as a

conservative, while, due to his broader neutrality, his Southern, conservative classmates viewed

Nixon as a classic liberal.[38]

After graduating law school, Nixon worked briefly as a California lawyer, and married

Pat – a fellow actor in a local play. However, after Pearl Harbor, Nixon's career trajectory

changed. "As a birthright Quaker, he was entitled to an exemption from service. As a potential

politician, however, he certainly knew that it would be disastrous to his ambitions if he did

nothing to help win the war."[39] Therefore, Nixon networked with Duke alums and landed a

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[34] PBS, *Nixon*, 2008.
[35] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 58-59.
[36] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 68.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 84.
[39] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 101.

wartime job in the Office of Price Administration (OPA). At OPA Nixon both saw the inner

workings of Washington D.C. and became indignant at the size of the bureaucracy and number

of New Deal progressives he saw doing harm to free enterprise.[40] Moreover, Nixon was so bored

at the OPA that the former Quaker soon requested active Navy duty. Upon entering the Navy,

Nixon was more conservative and capitalist than ever, while pragmatic/political ambition

dictated his every career move.

Although Nixon did not achieve the heroics of a John Kennedy, he did rise through the

Navy ranks, eventually becoming a commanding officer. Two things were notable in Nixon's

Navy tenure, however. First, he excelled as a poker player. Not only did this make him a lot of

money, but also his calculated style and patient tactics allowed him to wait for the perfect

moment to bluff.[41] This ability to be timely and tell bald face lies would later be crucial in the

Voorhis debates. Secondly, to pass the time on ships and naval bases, Nixon read and re-read the

Bible, continuously.[42] Although this may have been familiar and comforting for a former Quaker

far from home, this practice is a puzzling form of ritualized pragmatism for someone who had

analytically chosen to no longer be a Christian. Perhaps Nixon enjoyed pragmatically

juxtaposing his former and current beliefs.

First Election & Freshman Congressman:

When WWII ended, Nixon was discharged from the Navy and mounted a run in 1946 for

the office of U.S. Representative from California. His formidable opponent was Democratic

incumbent Jerry Voorhis, who was popular among constituents. Nixon was unknown, but the

Republicans had momentum in their domestic and international policy.

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[40] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 103.
[41] PBS, *Nixon*, 2008.
[42] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 111-12.

Internationally the uneasy alliance which existed between WWII allies had disintegrated. While the USA and USSR could work together against a common Nazi enemy, once that enemy was gone the allies turned on one another, and "communism replaced the Nazis and Japanese as the number one threat to the American way of life."[43] Combined with alarm about the atomic bomb, its new level of destruction, and its possible proliferation, American fears mushroomed into what would later be called the Second Red Scare, or the Red Hunt.

Domestically, 1946 was a terrible year. With price controls lifted from commodities, inflation skyrocketed to its highest point in the century. Although it was hoped that ending food rationing would stabilize the food supply, progress was slow and a large black market arose. While inflation drove prices up, wages had been stagnant since 1942. As a result, 1946 saw the largest number of labor disputes and union strikes in the century. Thus, internationally and domestically, current events spelled disaster for the Democrats, who had controlled the Executive and Legislative branches for an unprecedented sixteen years.[44]

Republicans made the most of the opportunity, encouraging voters to take out their frustrations on the Democrats, who according to Republicans were advocating "socialism at home and surrender abroad."[45] This slogan effectively conflated the New Deal with socialism, and socialism with communism. Nixon used this tactic to beat Voorhis. The primary momentum shift in the election came in the first debate, when Nixon associated two PACs who endorsed Voorhis with the communist party. When Voorhis asked Nixon for proof,

> Nixon grabbed a piece of paper, held it dramatically aloft, and began striding across the stage toward Voorhis. He was simultaneously Richard the actor, the debater, the courtroom lawyer, the clean-cut Quaker kid seething with righteous indignation, … [and] the poker player who could bet more than a year's salary on a bluff.[46]

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[43] *The 1940s: War Recovery and Rebirth,* The 20th Century film series.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 129.
[46] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 132.

The performance "surprised and befuddled"[47] Voorhis, who never recovered.

As 1947 started, Nixon and the Republicans assumed their new role as majority in the House of Representatives, and they sought to avenge sixteen years of Democratic rule. One way Republicans attacked Democrats, especially the current administration of Harry Truman, was through HUAC investigations. Nixon was able to secure an appointment to this high-profile committee (and the Labor Committee), since the Republicans had so many freshman members in Congress. Therefore, "Nixon had a point position on the two most important issues on the Republican agenda, curbing the unions and rooting out the subversives."[48] Eventually, it was his involvement in HUAC, exposing communists in the Truman Administration, that gained Nixon national recognition.

First Text: *The "Maiden Speech" and its Rhetorical Situation*

These historical events constituted the rhetorical situation of Representative Nixon's "Maiden Speech" to the House. The speech was primarily a HUAC committee report on the testimony of Gerhart Eisler, who was alleged to be the chief liaison between the Communist Party-USA and the Kremlin. The exigency leading to Nixon's speech was vast. The post-war domestic unrest and international fear of communism and atomic proliferation, outlined above, contributed to the speech's broad exigency. But the immediate, or controlling, exigency of the speech was centered in the new Republican majority in Congress, and its perceived mandate from the American public to right the New Deal's wrongs, especially the creeping communist conspiracy it had not addressed.

The immediate audience for Nixon's "Maiden Speech," on 18 February 1947 was the House of Representatives. Addressing an issue as volatile as a communist conspiracy, however,

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[47] Black, "Richard Nixon and the Privacy of Public Discourse," 2.
[48] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 142-43.

Nixon got significant press coverage, which constructed a broader, national audience for his speech. Finally, the constraints of the speech were also significant. As an unknown freshman congressman, Nixon lacked ethos. But as I discuss in the analysis chapter, Nixon's pragmatism and heavy reliance on pathos and logos overcame his lack of ethos, and the subsequent vote to convict Gerhart Eisler of contempt of Congress was nearly unanimous. In sum, Nixon gave a "deeply impressive" speech, according to Newsweek.[49]

Following his conviction, and before sentencing, Eisler fled to Poland by ship. Considering this turn of events, even those skeptics who originally doubted the evidence or thought Nixon too dogged, now supported the investigation. Vindicated, Nixon was appointed to chair his first HUAC sub-committee just three days after the "Maiden Speech."[50] Following their success and positive press, Nixon and the HUAC committee began further investigations, culminating in the riveting Alger Hiss case. All in all, Nixon "could hardly have dreamed of a better start"[51] to public life.

Aftermath of "The Maiden Speech"

Nixon was interested in more issues than just "Red Hunting," though, in contrast to his conspiracistic successor Joseph McCarthy. Unlike McCarthy, Nixon was not wholly paranoid, and did not see communist conspirators everywhere he looked. Taking cues from his success as a poker player, Nixon did not go all in on every hand. Thus, when a bill outlawing the communist party came before HUAC the month after the Eisler case, "From the outset, Nixon was openly dubious about the wisdom of the proposed legislation."[52] Following his lead, the bill died in committee. Nixon took a more pragmatic approach toward the American Communist Party (CP),

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[49] Quoted in Ambrose, *Nixon*, 147.
[50] Ambrose, *Nixon,* 147-49.
[51] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 147.
[52] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 149.

co-authoring the Mundt-Nixon bill, which would not outlaw the CP, but instead require all American communists to register as Party members.[53] This bill also failed to pass.

Another particularly curious example of Nixon's pragmatism while on HUAC involved the famous Hollywood hearings. It was after all Nixon who first suggested the hearings, and "unspoken in Nixon's remarks, but always there, was the implication that the Jewish studio owners and the Communist movie writers were involved in a conspiracy" to disseminate communist propaganda in the movies.[54] But once the hearings started, Nixon quickly identified that the committee was outmatched by their Hollywood witnesses. When he saw who held the better cards, Nixon folded his hand, and did not attend another session of the hearings.

This proved to be the right decision, as everyone who remained deeply involved with the Hollywood hearings lost public support. Eventually though, when HUAC presented the findings of the Hollywood hearings to the House, Nixon had to get re-involved with the case to protect his committee's legitimacy. Following an anti-Semitic digression by another committee member, Nixon had the unenviable task of "saving face" thrust upon him. "Nixon began by apologizing to the House for HUAC's 'tendency to indulge in emotionalism and to get off on collateral issues which have nothing to do with the issue at hand'."[55] The implication of this account is that without Nixon's well-spoken, well-reasoned pragmatism, the HUAC committee quickly devolved into a paranoid sideshow. Moreover, it seems as though while Nixon was willing to directly attack individuals and construct them as perfected conspiratorial scapegoats (Eisler), he was reticent to perfect the entire communist ideology into a conspiratorial scapegoat. This pattern of scapegoating individuals instead of communism as a whole would reverse during the

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[53] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 161-64.
[54] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 159.
[55] Quoted from *Congressional Record, House* in Ambrose, *Nixon*, 160.

1950s, as a Republican administration took power and worldwide Soviet influence grew. However, Nixon still refrained from *perfecting* the broad scapegoat of communism.

1948 to 1960:
THE HISS CASE:

As the 1948 election approached, both Democrats and Republicans played on America's fear of communism for their own gain. Democrats controlled the executive branch, and adhered to the Truman Doctrine to fight communism abroad. Republicans controlled the legislature and could instigate probes and investigations. This was strategic for conspiracists, such as Nixon, who believed the executive branch was repressing files detailing cells of communist conspirators within the administration.[56] Thus, when highly-partisan Truman called a special session of Congress in order to embarrass Republicans, the stage was set for the Alger Hiss Case.

Nixon's star witness was ex-communist and current "Time Magazine" editor Whittaker Chambers. "Chambers explained he had come forward to warn his country of the scope, strength, and danger of the Communist conspiracy in the United States."[57] But what troubled Nixon most was that although Chambers had twice before told the Justice Department his story (in '43 and '45), no major investigation had resulted. "To Nixon this inaction proved that either the Truman Administration was criminally lax in its security procedures or was shot through with traitors."[58] Among the communists Chambers named, the major accusation was against Alger Hiss, who had served in various sensitive capacities in the FDR's State Department. Over the years, Hiss had planned a UN conference in California, accompanied FDR to the Yalta Conference, and was friends with many high-ranking Democrats, Republicans and Supreme Court Justices.[59]

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[56] *The 1940s: War Recovery and Rebirth,* The 20th Century film series.
[57] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 176.
[58] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 167.
[59] Richard Nixon, *Six Crises*, Doubleday & Company, 1962, 3-4.

Two days after Chambers named him as a communist, Hiss, now the president of the Carnegie Endowment, insisted on appearing before HUAC to deny the charges. This was different from every other person Chambers named, all of whom had to be subpoenaed to appear, and who pled the 5th throughout their hearings before fading out of the spotlight. Hiss on the other hand requested to appear, answered questions, denied knowing Chambers or ever being a communist; "Hiss's performance before the Committee was as brilliant as Chambers' had been lackluster."[60] Afterwards, when all other members of HUAC were prepared to drop the Hiss investigation, only Nixon, a "master bluffer and amateur actor himself," knew Hiss was bluffing.[61] Furthermore, only Nixon perceived that Hiss had qualified all his answers, and that the issue had shifted from one of communist affiliation to one of acquaintance: "Did Hiss know Chambers or not?"

Nixon decided to pursue the case further, and began to visit Chambers' home for interviews. Although Nixon trusted Chambers' story he neglected to ask if Chambers had any material evidence that proved Hiss had spied by funneling State Department documents to the Communist Party. However, at the end of Nixon's last visit, on his way to the car, Chambers mentioned that Mr. and Mrs. Hiss were Quakers. "Then suddenly Chambers snapped his fingers and said, 'Here's something I should have recalled before. Mrs. Hiss used to use the plain language in talking with Alger'."[62] Nixon, a former Quaker, knew only a bona fide friend of Hiss's would know such a detail. From that revelation onward, Nixon never doubted Hiss's guilt, even though he did not have the support of his party.

With new evidence, Nixon interviewed Hiss a second time. Shockingly, Hiss retraced his steps and "declared that he had perhaps know Chambers after all, but under a different name" –

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[60] Nixon, *Six Crises*, 5.
[61] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 171.
[62] Nixon, *Six Crises*, 1962, 22-3.

George Crosley.[63] Then, when Nixon arranged for the two to meet, Hiss positively identified

Chambers, even though in the first hearing Hiss stated he could not identify a picture of

Chambers. Thus, Hiss was charged with perjury. When Chambers produces stolen State

Department documents (the "Pumpkin Paper") he had held for Hiss, the charge was increased to

treason for spying.[64] After battling the Administration for control of this evidence, Nixon's

investigation paid off as a grand jury indicted Hiss on two counts of perjury (as the statute of

limitations for espionage had expired).[65]

Nixon won the case, and stood in the spotlight alone. Although there was enough press

coverage to share, the fact that Republicans did not assist Nixon in the investigation meant he

was instantly famous. Moreover, Nixon had gone toe to toe with the Truman Administration, the

Democratic Party, and the whole executive branch (DOS and DOJ), while owing only a small

debt to the cooperation of J. Edgar Hoover. Finally, Nixon found "he thrived on crisis, actually

enjoyed it and did his best when he was under pressure."[66] This was a revelation for Nixon who

would later write a book titled *Six Crises*, in which the first chapter recalled the Hiss Case.

(Since the book was written in 1962, this chapter is chronologically the third major text of this

study.) "Overall, the Hiss case … made [Nixon] into a world figure with an unlimited future."[67]

SENATOR NIXON & JOSEPH McCARTHY:

Although the Hiss case was a great success for Nixon, the result was that the House of

Representatives was now too small a stage. Since the Democrats took back the House majority in

late 1948, Nixon was merely a minority member. Although he remained on HUAC, "he was

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[63] Ambrose, *Nixon,* 180.
[64] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 189, 195; PBS, *Nixon,* 2008.
[65] PBS, *Nixon*, 2008.
[66] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 196.
[67] Ibid.

something of a moderating influence,"[68] as he focused on the Senate contest of 1950. Thus, unlike McCarthy, achieving the convictions of two communists did not make Nixon fanatical, or paranoid regarding communism.

Unlike the common folklore around his 1950 Senate race against Helen Douglas, Nixon was not the lone aggressor smearing the perfect reputation of a helpless woman. Douglas was a formidable campaigner who emerged from a nasty Democratic primary, before instigating attacks on Nixon's "record, his proposals, and his character."[69] Nixon reciprocated, and although he did not overtly attack her sex, he did make personal mention of her husband's celebrity as an actor. Nixon also insinuated that the couple was connected with communism. However, "He did not say that she was a Communist… but he could count on it that many people would make the connection for him."[70] As will be discussed in the method chapter, this argumentative technique based on implication has been called a "conductive argument," and is a hallmark of the political style of conspiracy. Eventually, Nixon won the election by a landslide, and the lasting proof of its mean-spiritedness survives in the candidates' respective monikers: Helen "the Pink Lady" Douglas, and "Tricky Dick" Nixon.

The two years Nixon spent in the Senate, '51-'52, were typified by negativism and cynicism throughout the chamber. But although Nixon was partisan and outspoken against Truman's policies, McCarthy displaced him as the anti-communist standard bearer. "McCarthy's charges were so extreme, his inability to back them up so obvious, that he made Nixon look like a scholar and statesman in comparison."[71] Although Nixon still spoke against communism from time to time, he had begun to denounce the advance of international communism, whereas

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[68] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 197.
[69] Black, "Richard Nixon and the Privacy of Public Discourse," 8.
[70] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 223.
[71] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 212.

McCarthy claimed he possessed a list of names of communists currently in the Administration (McCarthy's "Wheeling Speech," 2/9/50). One fundamental difference separating the two was that while McCarthy did not care about the future of his own party (the Republican Party), Nixon began to function as party liaison – explaining liberal and conservative positions to various Western and Eastern factions of the party and bridging the gap between moderates and the old guard.[72] Again Nixon eschewed extremism and instead used pragmatism as a way to leverage his political career as party liaison.

One incident from this time exemplified McCarthy and Nixon's differing tactics, if not their diverging temperaments. The incident occurred at a dinner which both men attended along with another guest, Drew Pearson – a journalist who had criticized McCarthy very harshly. With Nixon observing, McCarthy and Pearson exchanged verbal barbs until the impulsive McCarthy asked the Quaker, pacifist Pearson to step outside. Pearson refused, but as he later left the dinner, McCarthy physically attacked him in the coatroom. McCarthy had already grabbed Pearson by the neck and kneed him in the groin, when Nixon walked in on the fight. As McCarthy saw Nixon he continued to slap Pearson at full force and said, "That one was for you, Dick." Nixon then stepped between the two men, saying, "Let a good Quaker stop this fight."[73] Thus, Nixon literally stood between a pacifist Quaker and a paranoid conspiracist and performed pragmatism. If Pearson represents the childhood faith Nixon had partially left, McCarthy represented the extremes of anti-communism Nixon never fully imbibed.

But although Nixon and McCarthy were not in fact close friends or identical in their conspiracism, publically they were seen as closely tied. Some viewed Nixon as "McCarthy in a

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[72] PBS, *Nixon,* 2008.
[73] Mark Feldstein, "Fighting Quakers." *Journalism History* 30, no. 2, (2004): 76-7.

white collar."[74] When Nixon was being vetted as a Vice Presidential nominee by Eisenhower's team in 1952, this public perception of closeness had to be addressed. This association put Nixon "pretty much out of the Communist-hunting business" for the time being, while he "frequently told McCarthy privately that he had to do more homework," and to not make accusations after Eisenhower was elected.[75] McCarthy adhered to this agreement partially, but by 1954 he was back to his old ways, and finally Vice President Nixon publically denounced McCarthy. After the mid-term elections that year the Senate censored McCarthy and he was never again politically significant.[76] For this, Eisenhower praised Nixon, who "managed to take care of McCarthy without splitting the party."[77]

VICE PRESIDENT:

Candidate Eisenhower picked Nixon as a running mate in 1952 for a plethora of reasons: as liaison Nixon was liked by all Republican factions, his youth offset Eisenhower's 'maturity,' he secured California's electoral votes, and had served with distinction in both the House and the Senate.[78] As Vice President from 1952-1960, Nixon gained extensive international relations experience, particularly in communist countries. Therefore, "As Vice-President, Nixon stayed away from domestic anti-communism as an issue, but he made international Communism his number-one issue, a special area of expertise and experience."[79] Some of the trips on which Nixon closely saw the workings of the communism system were to Southern Asia, Africa, South America and the Soviet Union.

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[74] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 312.
[75] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 235-37.
[76] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 337-41; Feldstein, "Fighting Quakers," 82.
[77] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 338.
[78] PBS, *Nixon*, 2008.
[79] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 615.

The two most significant trips were to USSR and South America. In South America, communism was gaining popularity and influence, and Nixon's 1958 goodwill tour of the continent almost met a tragic end. The trip got progressively more hostile, as riots in Peru and Ecuador drew lots of press coverage, and demonstrations turned to near-riots. Finally in Caracas, Venezuela, the crowd attacked with more than spit and pebbles; they barricaded the road and swarmed Nixon's car with pipes, small rocks and clubs. The windows were smashed, but the driver finally maneuvered the VP to safety.[80] Of course the trip, and especially the attack, was great press coverage for Nixon back home, as he was portrayed as not backing down from a fight. Not only did Caracas help Nixon's 1960 presidential stock soar, but as J. Edgar Hoover put it, "one very positive result of the South American trip was that it made anti-Communism respectable again in the United States" after McCarthyism.[81] Thus, Nixon had first laid the groundwork for McCarthy, silenced McCarthy without splitting the party, and then rehabilitated anti-communism, albeit internationally, in the wake of destructive McCarthyism.

International anti-communism was a platform on which Nixon could build, and he wasted no time. On January 1, 1959 Nixon met privately with the new Cuban President, Fidel Castro. Nixon tried to confront Castro about communism and implored him to hold free elections. The meeting altered neither man's perspective, but was respectful. In fact Nixon's initial recommendation to Eisenhower was to tentatively support Castro while steering him toward US policies.[82] Later, when Castro's government eschewed American medaling and instead made an alliance with the Soviet Union, Eisenhower suggested an invasion of Cuba by ex-patriot Cubans living in the United States, and Nixon became the foremost supporter of the planned invasion.

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[80] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 466-75.
[81] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 481.
[82] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 515-16.

Later in 1959, after Secretary of State John Foster Dulles died, Nixon got the chance to travel to the Soviet Union for the opening of an American cultural exhibit.[83] This was Nixon's chance to meet Khrushchev and see the inner workings of the Kremlin. Throughout the trip a feisty Khrushchev sparred with Nixon, the aggressive, debate-loving Quaker. The highlight of the trip came when Nixon and Khrushchev toured the American cultural exhibit in Moscow. Stopping in the display of a modern kitchen, the two men began debating the virtues of capitalism and communism in what is now known as the "Kitchen Debate." Although it got very heated, and was "a disaster in terms of conventional diplomacy, Mr. Khrushchev was still smiling at the end. He had an argument with another politician today and an audience to go with it, and naturally this was a politician's idea of fun."[84] Back home, Nixon's popularity rose even higher in the 1960 presidential projections.

1960 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN:

As Nixon sealed his party's nomination for President in the summer of 1960, he encountered some roadblocks. First, although Nixon was a loyal Vice President to Eisenhower, and always put Ike's agenda above his own, Eisenhower was always cagy about his support of Nixon. In the campaign this meant Ike did not advocate strongly enough or often enough for Nixon's record or experience.[85] Nor did Ike formally campaign for Nixon until only two weeks before election day. Comparatively, "Give 'em hell" Harry Truman had great fun campaigning for John Kennedy, taking many spirited shots at Nixon and the Republicans.

Another constraint Nixon faced in his campaign was Eisenhower's policies. Ike's isolationist and small government agenda was growing less and less popular with the public, yet

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[83] Foner, *The Story of American Freedom*, 271-73.
[84] James Reston, *New York Times*, 7/25/1959, quoted in Ambrose, *Nixon*, 525.
[85] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 600.

Nixon had to publically support the President – even though, for example, Nixon wanted to raise defense spending.[86] Furthermore, Nixon had a hard time differentiating himself from Kennedy, especially since they "had no difference at all on the perceived great issue of 1960, how to stop Communist expansion into the free world."[87] The final constraint resulted from Nixon's own personality: his inability to fully trust anyone prohibited him from accepting any advice about running his campaign. This led to three regrettable decisions. First of all, his handpicked vice presidential running mate, Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., became a drag on the ticket.[88] Second, Nixon made and upheld a time-consuming pledge to visit all fifty states at some point during his campaign (at a time when campaigning started after Labor Day). Third, and strangely enough, Tricky Dick's campaign was far too nice.[89] Although Nixon could have raised many personal issues against John Kennedy (upbringing, family, Catholicism, etc.), he decided to run a positive campaign that was "presidential" in tone. Nixon also urged Republican's everywhere to avoid the religion issue, and even when Protestant evangelist Billy Graham offered to write an op-ed denouncing Kennedy's Catholicism, Nixon refused.[90]

Second Text: *"The Meaning of Communism to Americans," and its Rhetorical Situation:*

In August 1960, Nixon released the campaign pamphlet "The Meaning of Communism to Americans." This document is my study's second major Nixon text against the communist conspiracy. Although the broad context for this document encompasses much of the previously-outlined history, there were also immediate exigencies, audience and constraints constituting the rhetorical situation of this text. Regarding exigency, although Soviet-Cuban relations were an ongoing concern, the immediate catalyst for the pamphlet was Nixon's confirmation at the

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[86] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 514.
[87] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 572.
[88] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 580-81.
[89] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 568.
[90] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 566.

Republican National Convention, and his need to move away from Eisenhower's non-interventionist foreign policy. As one observer remarked, Nixon's problem was that "He's got to stay close enough to Eisenhower to win the nomination, and far enough away to win the election."[91] Eisenhower's tenure was so peaceful that the American people had started to look for a challenge to overcome, to prove that the US was stronger than the USSR. Nixon's campaign pamphlet strongly repositioned the Republican Party against international communism immediately after he won the nomination. The second exigency for the pamphlet was the fact that the public perceived Nixon and Kennedy's positions on international communism to be the same. Thus, with this lengthy, detailed pamphlet, so heavily reliant on logos, Nixon was trying to distinguish himself from Kennedy. If holding the same position, Nixon could at least sound more knowledgeable regarding communism.

The audience for the pamphlet on communism was the American public. This was one of the most evenly split elections in American history, and the moderate, presidential-tone of the pamphlet appealed to undecided voters in the middle. With more registered Democrats than Republicans nationally, Nixon especially needed independent votes and cross-over votes to win. Thus, his communist pamphlet fit into Nixon's broader, genteel campaign by logically, even pedantically, questioning international communism on ideological grounds.

One constraint Nixon faced in releasing his anti-communist pamphlet was that as the Vice President he could not overtly criticize Eisenhower's non-interventionist foreign policy, even though he personally disagreed with much of it. Second, Nixon could not be too aggressive or conspiracistic in this pamphlet, as the country was still wary of anything reminiscent of McCarthyism. Therefore, this study considers whether this rhetorical situation constructed one of Nixon's most pragmatic works on the communist conspiracy.

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[91] Eric Sevareid, Ed., *Candidates 1960*, 102, quoted in Ambrose, *Nixon*, 509.

Aftermath of Communism pamphlet and 1960 election results:

When the votes were tallied John Kennedy won the 1960 election by the slimmest of

margins. In spite of Nixon's positive (nice) campaign, the constraints of promoting

Administration policies he did not fully support, and his inability to connect genuinely with

voters, he got half the votes in 1960. Perhaps when he was out of office and had a chance to

ponder, Nixon decided he would revert to the more aggressive and dirty campaigning which had

won him seats in the House and Senate.

One incident from the JFK-Nixon debates is of note for its pragmatism. Many have

commented on the first televised debate, in which JFK's rested, tan appearance contrasted

Nixon's sweaty, exhausted appearance and led a majority of viewers to state Kennedy won, even

though radio listeners preferred Nixon.[92] For my purposes, however, an instance from the fourth

debate is more useful. The day before the fourth debate, Kennedy publically advocated arming

an ex-patriot Cuban force to invade Cuba. Nixon was irate with JFK for jeopardizing the plan

that Nixon himself had helped conceptualize and had pushed behind the scenes for it to be

executed before the election to boost his poll numbers. But instead of detailing his involvement

with the covert operation, or leaving the issue alone, Nixon used the platform of the fourth

debate to adamantly argue against his actual position on the prospect of an ex-patriot invasion of

Cuba.[93] This moment was the culmination of Nixon's lifetime of pragmatism – debating himself

on the presidential stage.

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[92] John Self, "The First Debate over the Debates: How Kennedy and Nixon Negotiated the 1960 Presidential Debate. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 35, (2005): 361-65.
[93] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 592.

OUT OF OFFICE: NIXON AS LAWYER AND AUTHOR
Text three: *The Rhetorical Situation of <u>Six Crises</u>, "The Hiss Case" chapter*

After losing the presidential election, Nixon promised Pat he was done with politics. The family moved back to California, and Nixon returned to practicing law. But in 1961 Nixon was only forty-eight years old, and although he was making more money in legal fees and his syndicated political column than he had ever earned as a politician, he never was driven by money. Instead, something Thomas Dewey told him in 1952 was still echoing in his head: "Make me a promise: don't get fat, don't lose your zeal, and you can be President someday."[94] Thus, Nixon decided to write a political memoir in 1961, which would let the Republican establishment know his ongoing political zeal remained. Given the right opportunity, this zeal would trump his promise to Pat.

The book, <u>Six Crises</u>, became a best seller, and displayed Nixon at his best. Starting with "The Hiss Case" and ending with the 1960 election, the book also covered Caracas, Khrushchev, Ike's heart attack, and the fund crisis (Checkers Speech). "Overall, it reminded voters…that he had vast experience in government, and that he could be a good loser."[95] A primary objective of the book was to position Nixon for either a possible bid for 1962 California governor, or the 1964 presidential election.

This study focuses only on the first chapter of the book, titled "The Hiss Case." That chapter reminisces about the communist conspirator who made Nixon famous, and is much less restrained in tone than his 1960 campaign pamphlet about communism. Regarding the rhetorical situation, "As with any memoir, it [gave Nixon] an opportunity to put forward his own point of view on his political career and, in some measure, achieve *vindication*"[96] regarding his early

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[94] Richard Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, Simon & Schuster, 1990, 84.
[95] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 639.
[96] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 636 (emphasis mine).

career anti-communist conspiracism. Thus, the exigency for the text is Nixon's 1960 presidential

loss, positioning for future political races, and his need for vindication. The audience for the

book was broadly the American public, but specifically the Republican establishment. If the

establishment kept Nixon in mind, he could have future political life, and to ensure this, "Nixon

sent out hundreds of autographed advance copies to prominent Republicans…throughout the

country."[97] The constraints of the text related to timing. Although he was positioning himself for

future political office, Nixon considered the '62 California Governorship to be the wrong office

at the wrong time, since he knew little of and cared little for state politics. But Nixon also

calculated that neither he nor any Republican could beat Kennedy in 1964.[98] Nixon had the time

and impetus to write, but if he waited too long, beyond those two elections, his memoir risked

being forgotten before his next campaign. Regardless of the timing of elections, however, Nixon

was out of politics and he was not constrained in his candor about the communist conspiracy –

especially Alger Hiss. Reminiscent of his "Maiden Speech," Nixon is honest and aggressive as

he uses the chapter on "The Hiss Case" to re-establish political ethos.

In the aftermath of the Six Crises, Nixon did in fact run for the '62 California

governorship, and lost to a popular incumbent. Two reasons Nixon ran were, first, if he won he'd

avoid the '64 Republican nomination, and second, because pressure mounted within the

Republican party for a moderate candidate at a time when the California GOP was in danger of

being overrun by the conspiratorial John Birch Society.[99] As such, Nixon was put forth as a

moderate, Republican foil, to these paranoid right-wing conspiracists.

In concluding this chapter, it has become apparent that Richard Nixon is a complex,

pragmatic rhetorical figure. From his humble, Quaker beginnings, to his meteoric rise as the

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[97] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 639.
[98] PBS, *Nixon*, 2008.
[99] Ambrose, *Nixon*, 644.

second youngest Vice President, and defeat in his first presidential race, this study seeks to tackle the over-arching issue of whether Nixon's conspiracy rhetoric and pragmatic agency correlate with the trajectory of his career. Nixon's use of conspiracism was more successful than McCarthyism or the Birchers' brand of conspiracism, and this study investigates the rhetorical strategies that enabled Nixon's success. Drawing upon his experiences as a debater, actor, and poker player, Nixon seems to have negotiated a pragmatic path through the ranks of government and through the anti-communist conspiracism in the post-WWII/early Cold War era.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

In this study's three primary texts Nixon denounces the communist conspiracy in various ways. As discussed in Chapter Two, Nixon's "Maiden Speech" of 1947, the 1960 campaign pamphlet "The Meaning of Communism to Americans," and his 1961 book chapter, "The Hiss Case," were crafted to fit different rhetorical situations. In analyzing these three conspiracist texts, I primarily use a synthesized method of conspiracy evaluative criteria to critique how paranoid or political Nixon's conspiracist texts are. But before embarking on analyzing the texts, I explain the perspective I use and the method of analysis drawn from it.

Two styles of conspiracy rhetoric have been theorized in the scholarship – the paranoid and political styles. As I will later discuss at length, the paranoid style is used by conspiracists on the fringe of society as a form of dissent, warning against all-powerful, allegedly evil, cabals. The political style, in contrast, is used by mainstream rhetors who use conspiracism as a form of political agency, often to build consensus and form party factions in coalitions. Political conspiracists view conspirators as mistaken rather than evil, and defeat-able rather than all-powerful. Since these two styles have been positioned as distinctly separate, the stylistic binary becomes restrictive to rhetors who do not neatly fit into one style or the other, such as Nixon.

Before critiquing the binary, however, we must fully understand existing conspiracy styles. Thus, this chapter first accounts for "style" more generally and situates it in the field – as style is a rich concept in both classical rhetoric and has recently been revived in contemporary rhetorical theory. Then I describe in detail current conspiracy styles and their methods of evaluative criteria. Lastly, in this chapter, I suggest the concept of pragmatic agency to account for Tricky Dick's ability to seamlessly bridge the gap between the political and paranoid stylistic camps.

STYLE

Aristotle and Cicero

If you enroll in a public speaking course today, likely the first lecture you would hear would include the "Five Canons" of public speaking theory. In addition to *invention*, *arrangement*, *memory* and *delivery*, the fifth canon is *style*.[100] Although these five canons were formalized by the Roman rhetorician Cicero, they originated in Greek theory, specifically Aristotle's seminal work *On Rhetoric*. Aristotle, however, did not strictly delineate between style and delivery, and as such, his definition of style is difficult to exact. His specific definition of style as "to be clear"[101] at first seems extremely inadequate. But upon further inquiry, one finds Aristotle was more interested in the continuum of the "virtue of style" and its parameters than he was in giving a specific, prescriptive definition of what style is and how a speaker can obtain it. Therefore the two poles of excess that anchored Aristotle's virtuous continuum of style were "too banal" and "too dignified."[102] As long as the speaker was somewhere between these two poles, the speaker's style would likely be appropriate for and clearly understood by the audience. Only later did the Romans divide Aristotle's four canons into five and codify *style* as having four aspects: appropriateness, clarity, ornament, and correctness.[103]

As evidenced by contemporary handbooks on public speaking, it is Cicero's more prescriptive conception of style as its own canon that has been preeminent throughout the resurgence of rhetorical studies in the twentieth century. The result was that for much of the twentieth century, Cicero's restrictive account of style foreclosed the concept's usefulness as a

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[100] Dan O'Hair, Rob Stewart & Hannah Rubenstein (Eds.). *A Speaker's Guidebook,* 5th ed., New York, NY: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010, 9-11.

[101] Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, 2007, 197.

[102] Stanford Philosophical Encyclopedia, online: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-rhetoric. Accessed 1/26/2013.

[103] Ibid.

critical category. Late last century, though, Robert Hariman revived the canon with his seminal

book Political Style: The Artistry of Power.

Hariman

The need to revisit style was largely based in Hariman's frustration that "Established

academic conceptions of style hardly prepare one to take seriously the aesthetic dimension of

political experience."[104] To begin his project, Hariman first archaeologically excavates

Aristotle's conception of style as a more useful means than Cicero's definition from which to

expand contemporary scholarship on the neglected canon. Although starting with definitions of

style as "an inventory of techniques of verbal composition" and "the aesthetic economies

available to speakers in particular situations," Hariman also includes "the recognition that

discourse has to be *appealing* if it is to be effective."[105] This demonstrates that Hariman is

influenced, at least in part, by the Burkean expansion of rhetoric from just the available means of

persuasion in a given situation, to include the *identification* of speaker and audience. This

becomes clear in Hariman's conclusion, in which he quotes from Burke's Rhetoric of Motives:

"the critic nonetheless is oriented toward 'a general *body of identifications* that owe their

convincingness much more to trivial repetition and dull daily reinforcement than to exceptional

rhetorical skill'."[106] Using this to guide his discussion on style, Hariman argues that part of the

identificatory work that needs to be done by the speaker is in his or her adaptation to the most

appropriate style – the one that stylizes the right language in the right way for present situation.

"In a word, our political experience is *styled*."[107] As such, much of Hariman's book enumerates

four "master styles" (realist, courtly, republican, and bureaucratic), and how an actor may stylize

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[104] Robert Hariman, *Political Style: The Artistry of Power*, Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1995, 7.
[105] Hariman, *Political Style*, 3.
[106] Hariman, *Political Style*, 178.
[107] Hariman, *Political Style*, 2.

his or her discourse to be effective in environments that operate in those master styles.[108] The author explains that of these four, only the *realist style* (which is the "common sense of modern political theory") and *bureaucratic style* (which constitutes hierarchy, as in "office culture") are modern.[109] Next, the author posits that studying the pre-modern *republican style* ("a model of oratorical virtuosity…in a parliamentary culture") and *courtly style* ("centered on the body of the sovereign, displaces speech with gestures, and culminates in immobility") assist the critic in understanding the crumbling of modernity into our post-modern world.[110] In other words, pre-modern examples help make sense of contemporary events which are otherwise irrational and inexplicable within a realist or bureaucratic stylistic purview.[111]

The number of existing and emerging styles is unknown, and if "Style becomes an analytic category for understanding a social reality," there may be a unique style to each social reality. As such, there is "no doubt that there are other styles – for example, a revolutionary style,"[112] in addition to the paranoid and political styles of conspiracy.

After excavating Aristotle's original continuum of the virtue of style, and expanding the notion of stylistic appeal through Burkean identification, Hariman has made possible his major contribution – joining with style the classical notion of *decorum*. Decorum is a useful concept because it operates on two levels: "as a set of conventions and as a theory of conventions."[113] Unlike Cicero, and his four rules (virtues) of style, "'decorum' articulates not so much a set of rules as a process of invention," equipping speakers not only with savvy linguistic technique, but also with the social knowledge "to discern, evaluate, and appropriate elements of artistry across a

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[108] Hariman, *Political Style,* 4, 177.
[109] Hariman, *Political Style*, 4.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Hariman, *Political Style*, 5-7.
[112] Hariman, *Political Style*, 12.
[113] Hariman, *Political Style*, 180.

wide spectrum of human activity."[114] I argue that Richard Nixon's conspiracy style was successful because through adhering to the decorum of the situation, he was able to pragmatically adapt his rhetoric to the constraints in each situation.

Vivian & Maffesoli

While Hariman outlines distinct master styles, a new conception of style was introduced to the field by Bradford Vivian, which accounts for the changing aesthetic qualities of stylized politics. To make his intervention, Vivian starts with French sociologist Michel Maffesoli's definition of style as the "crystallization of an epoch," or the "collective expression of a cultural moment '…which writes or orients the epoch'."[115] This definition of style, unlike ridged master styles, is a "conception of style [that] encompasses the heterogeneity of cultural forms irreducible to discrete analytic categories."[116] Whereas the number of situations and the number of styles within Hariman's framework may expand until collapsing under its own weight, with Maffesoli's redefinition of style, a critic is able to study a pragmatic actor, like Nixon, who deftly employs "the overlapping of styles."[117] In my analysis I discuss whether Nixon's rhetoric in fact did orient his era. Moreover, was his hybrid use of paranoid and political conspiracism the epitome of a style accounting for cultural heterogeneity – the unity that bound post-WWII disunity within the Republican Party?[118] Before answering these questions through analysis of Nixon's conspiracist texts, however, it is necessary to have a thorough understanding of the existing paranoid and political styles of conspiracy and the theoretical roots of pragmatic agency.

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[114] Hariman, *Political Style,* 181.
[115] Bradford Vivian, "Style, Rhetoric, and Postmodern Culture," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 35, 3, 2002, 226, 228.
[116] Vivian, "Style, Rhetoric, and Postmodern Culture," 230.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Vivian, "Style, Rhetoric, and Postmodern Culture," 229.

THE PARANOID STYLE

The foundational work on "paranoid style" was written in 1964 by political scientist Richard Hofstadter. Although Hofstadter traces the paranoid style back to the country's founding and a suspicion of the Illuminati and the Masons, he noted a recent proliferation of right-wing paranoia, "ultra-conservatism," and fringe politics. Although the book discusses the Second Red Scare, McCarthyism, the John Birch Society, and Barry Goldwater[119] at length, surprisingly, it does not focus on Nixon's conspiracy rhetoric, even though he and Hofstadter were contemporaries. This may be an indication that Nixon's antecedent conspiracism was not fully paranoid or not yet recognized as such. Although traces of a paranoid style in rhetorical theory can be detected in Burke's work on Hitler and scapegoating,[120] it was Hofstadter who named the style and gave it its first full theoretical treatment.

The hallmark features of the paranoid style in Hofstadter's theory included pedantry – "the almost touching concern with factuality."[121] This pedantic nature amasses huge quantities of, often trivial, details, and weaves each bit into an over-arching narrative that explains everything. This means that paranoia appears coherent "– in fact the paranoid mind is far more coherent than the real world."[122] The amassing of 'evidence' however does not prove the conspiracistic conclusion of a paranoid narrative, so the paranoid conspiracist necessarily makes a "paranoid leap" from their disparate facts to a fantastic conclusion.[123] These fantastic conclusions enable paranoid conspiracists to perceive cabals as all-encompassing: "The paranoid spokesman sees the fate of conspiracy in apocalyptic terms – he traffics in the birth and death of

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[119] Richard Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," In *The Paranoid Style in American Politics: and Other Essays*, 3-40. 1ˢᵗ Paperback Ed. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996.
[120] Burke, "The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle'," 191-220.
[121] Richard Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," *Harper's Magazine*, (1964): 85.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," 79.

whole worlds, whole political orders, whole systems of human values."[124] Since the fate of the

world is threatened by perceived all-encompassing cabals, the paranoid conspiracists' world-

view, both ideological and ontological, solidifies into "the spiritual wrestling match between

good and evil which is the paranoid's archetypal model of the world."[125] Thus, the paranoid

conspiracist is deeply fearful because of their personal/ideological view of history, pedantic

attention to factoids, and their sense-making process of leaping from 'facts' to the all-

encompassing conspiracies and omnipresent conspirators who allegedly coordinate world events.

     Regarding paranoid conspiracist leaders, Hofstadter claims they have certain

characteristics. Instead of using the Burkean language of "perfecting a scapegoat," Hofstadter

discusses "villains" (conspirators) and how "vivid" (perfected) paranoid conspiracists

rhetorically construct those villains.[126] Some paranoid conspiracist leaders, who become extreme

and "militant," such as Adolf Hitler, constructed the "International Jew" as vivid villains who

orchestrated Germany's problems. Other paranoid leaders are "uncompromising," such as Joseph

McCarthy, "Since what is at stake is always a conflict between absolute good and absolute evil,

what is necessary is…to fight things out to a finish."[127] As prefaced in my Background Chapter,

McCarthy fought to his finish in the Senate. Nixon, however, did not imbibe the militancy or

uncompromising nature of a paranoid leader, as my analysis shows. In sum, although not

solidified into a systematic method of analysis, many original elements of Hofstadter's theory

were taken up by rhetorical scholars, and later put into a framework of evaluative criteria.

     After thirty years of intermittent rhetorical studies from the paradigm of the paranoid

style, two scholars advanced a four-part critical method of "Evaluative Criteria for Conspiracy

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[124] Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," 83.
[125] Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," 85.
[126] Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," 82.
[127] Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," 83.

Arguments."[128] The first criterion is "sign reasoning." This type of reasoning is common in

conspiracist narratives, which unite disparate facts into a grand sense-making story. It also

demonstrates the power of association through narrative, in that "Lacking documentation, the

entire fabric of this narrative depends on association."[129] As long as the story eschews internal

contradiction, some will be persuaded by associative, sign reasoning that relies on suggestion.

The second criterion is a reincarnation of Hofstadter's pedantry, in which a conspiracist

accumulates a "wealth of trivial detail… [which] serves no true informational function."[130] This

process "transforms all data into indisputable 'evidence'."[131] The presentation of this pedantic

evidence skews a conspiracist's argumentative structure – leading the authors to their third

criterion: quasi-logical arguments. These arguments mimic traditional syllogisms, and may fool

the untrained auditor, but under scrutiny, "the use of logical fallacy, particularly the false

dilemma, [which] exemplifies coercive communication" can be exposed.[132] Therefore, the ability

to spot a false-dilemma signals a quasi-logical paranoid argument.

Young and Launer's final evaluative criterion is "assuming the conclusion."[133] Akin to

"begging the question," the "circular reasoning" fallacy, or Hofstadter's paranoid leap, this

erroneous causation is propagated by pedantically substituting "repetition for proof,"[134] while the

conspiracist treats correlation as causation. This type of self-sealing argument re-inscribes all

details – even opposing details – into the argument's circular rationale. The conspiracist's

imperative for drawing a stark conclusion directly follows their construction of a false dilemma

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[128] Marilyn J. Young & Michael K. Launer, "Evaluative Criteria for Conspiracy Arguments: The Case of KAL 007," In E. Schiappa (Ed.), *Warranting Assent: Case Studies in Argument Evaluation.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995, 3-32.
[129] Young & Launer, "Evaluative Criteria for Conspiracy Arguments," 9.
[130] Young & Launer, "Evaluative Criteria for Conspiracy Arguments," 11.
[131] Creps, 1981, 100 – as cited in Young and Launer, "Evaluative Criteria for Conspiracy Arguments," 18.
[132] Young & Launer, "Evaluative Criteria for Conspiracy Arguments," 25.
[133] Young & Launer, "Evaluative Criteria for Conspiracy Arguments," 15.
[134] Young & Launer, "Evaluative Criteria for Conspiracy Arguments," 17.

through the use of vilification and either-or language. "The appeal of the conspiracy story is its self-sealing nature," which is primarily derived through circular reasoning.[135] The overall effect of assuming the conclusion, along with the other paranoid criteria, is the construction of a complete sense-making, conspiracistic worldview that accounts for all troubling events and simplistically answers all lingering questions.

Young and Launer, having clarified the original theory, are mostly in agreement with Hofstadter on the methods and effects of conspiracism. The primary distinction between the foundational work and Young and Launer, though, is the latter recognition that conspiracism can sound logical. Yet, other rhetorical scholars continue to operate out of the paranoid tradition and view all conspiracy theories as illogical and on the fringes of society. The rise of conspiracism in the internet age has even led some, using the paranoid paradigm, to lament the "failure" of the social sciences to expunge conspiracism through rational argumentation.[136]

Toward a Political Style of Conspiracy

A critique of the paranoid style developed, though, which first took on Hofstadter's "vivid villain" concept. These rhetoricians, unconvinced that all conspiracy rhetoric was a product of the lunatic fringe, returned to Burke's early work on the concept of "scapegoating," and began theorizing a shift away from "paranoid" rhetoric to "conspiracy" rhetoric. "Paranoia" had begun to foreclose the serious study of such rhetoric, and the less-negative connotation of "conspiracy" enabled new criticism and theory.

Although Burke viewed Hitler as a madman, this does not mean Burke wanted to ignore Hitler's mainstream conspiracy rhetoric. In fact, Burke posits, "A people trained in pragmatism

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[135] Young & Launer, "Evaluative Criteria for Conspiracy Arguments," 26.

[136] Steven R. Goldzwig, "Conspiracy Rhetoric at the Dawn of the New Millennium: A Response," *Western Journal of Communication* 66, (2002): 492-506.

should want to inspect this magic,"[137] and not merely dismiss the rhetoric as the paranoid product

of a lunatic. The realization that conspiracy rhetoric could be in the political mainstream allowed

scholars to challenge Hofstadter's basic assumption that paranoid/conspiracy rhetoric was only a

negative, fringe phenomenon. Eventually the "political style of conspiracy" emerged from this

critical conspiracy scholarship.

Although not yet named the "political style," some of the initial resistance to paranoid

scholarship began with an examination of Watergate (the scandal which ended Nixon's

presidency). Since the Watergate scandal started within the President's administration and

affected the highest office of government, it was clear that "The 'paranoid style' had moved

away from ideological extremes to the *mainstream* of political life."[138] Therefore, Nixon used

mainstream conspiracy rhetoric.

Tracing the movement of a conspiracy discourse from fringe to mainstream was soon

called "mapping." The most important study tracing conspiracy arguments analyzes the Lincoln-

Douglas Debates as its case.[139] Those debates demonstrated that conspiracy arguments (against

the slave power conspiracy) could migrate into and remain in mainstream discourse, rather than

being relegated to the paranoid, "lunatic fringe." Studying the debate, Zarefsky argues during

times of societal strain, conspiracy claims can help a politician differentiate his or her position

from a rival with a similar position. Conspiracy arguments "forc[e] a wedge between apparently

similar positions and thereby requir[e] of the people a real choice."[140] Essentially, conspiracism

gives agency to the political conspiracist through the conspiracist's 'explanation' of anomalies

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[137] Burke, "The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle'," 192.
[138] G. Thomas Goodnight & John Poulakos, "Conspiracy Rhetoric," 299 (emphasis mine).
[139] David Zarefsky, "Conspiracy Arguments in the Lincoln-Douglas Debates," *Journal of the American Forensic Association* 21, (1984): 63-75.
[140] Zarefsky, "Conspiracy Arguments in the Lincoln-Douglas Debates," 73.

and unknown evils or in creating space between like arguments.[141] Even though Lincoln and

Douglas used conspiracism with self-sealing logic, their rhetoric was politically useful.

Other theorists further enriched mainstream conspiracy theory. Historian Robert

Goldberg traced the migration of five modern conspiracies[142] from fringe to near-mainstream,

before each conspiracy theory receded to the fringes of American society.[143] But whereas

Zarefsky's early work and Goldberg's book tried to identify mainstream conspiracies *within* the

paradigm of Hofstadter's paranoid style, Michael Pfau, working with Zarefsky, began to

articulate an entirely different style, at century's end. Using conspiracy scholarship and

Hariman's work on the political style, Pfau eventually put forth the "political style of

conspiracy," which he argues is fully outside the paranoid paradigm.

The major purpose of Hariman's book was not only to redefine style as decorum, but to

also use the redefinition of style practically to study "political experience."[144] Therefore, when

style/decorum is united with politics (defined as a way of acting in and thinking about the

world),[145] a practical definition of *political style* emerges for the critic: "a coherent repertoire of

rhetorical conventions depending on aesthetic reactions for political effect."[146] Depending on the

era, cultural attitudes, and the amount of fear within a society, rhetorical conventions adapt to

each epoch – as a rhetor adapts to an audience. "In order to understand the social reality of

politics, we can consider how political action involves acting according to a particular political

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[141] Zarefsky, "Conspiracy Arguments in the Lincoln-Douglas Debates," 71-4.

[142] The Five conspiracies in the book are the JFK assassination, UFO cover-ups, the New World Order, Apocalyptic/Antichrist conspiracies, and Anti-Semitic conspiracies.

[143] Robert Alan Goldberg. *Enemies Within: The Culture of Conspiracy in Modern America.* Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2001.

[144] Hariman, *Political Style*, 7.

[145] Hariman, *Political Style*, 195.

[146] Hariman, *Political Style*, 4.

style."[147] Therefore, a new frame was needed, from which the critic could understand conspiracism as an appropriately styled response to the social fears of a time – as in the formative years for the Republican Party (Lincoln) or in the early Cold War (Nixon). Moreover, Hariman argues political styles have certain hallmarks which typify them, because "As a style succeeds, it articulates specific rules of usage for the composition of self."[148] This insight into political style and stylistic rules gave Pfau and Zarefsky a framework from which to vigorously re-investigate conspiracy rhetoric and critique weaknesses in the paranoid-style paradigm.

New Evaluative Criteria: The Civic Republican Frame

Together, Zarefsky and Pfau's first move was to directly engage Young and Launer on the notion of "evaluative criteria." After Young and Launer had proposed evaluative criteria for the paranoid style (1995), Zarefsky countered with suggesting narrative criticism for Abraham Lincoln texts, since Zarefsky did not believe Lincoln was in the paranoid style, or used the evaluative criteria Young and Launer put forward (1997). At the same time, Hasian examined the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion," and problematized the low evaluative bar set by narrative criteria: fidelity and probability – which he argued this anti-Semitic text, as well as *Mein Kampf*, met.[149] This posed a theoretical need, since "Obviously, [conspiracism] is unable to stand up to the rigorous formal standards of logic and argument. On the other hand, it is too easily able to pass muster according to criteria of narrative evaluation."[150] This statement acted as a wedge, from which Zarefsky and Pfau began working on a theoretical solution.

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[147] Hariman, *Political Style*, 9.
[148] Hariman, *Political Style*, 7.
[149] Marouf Hasian Jr., "Understanding the Power of Conspiratorial Rhetoric" 198-212.
[150] Michael Pfau & David Zarefsky, "Evaluating Conspiracy Arguments: The Case of the Texas Annexation Controversy," In *Argument at Century's End: Reflecting on the Past and Envisioning the Future,* Thomas Hollihan, Ed., Annandale, VA: National Communication Association, 2000, 430.

Using the case of the slave-power conspiracy, Zarefsky and Pfau "undertook a preliminary approach to evaluation founded upon the notion of frame," particularly "considering frames comparatively."[151] Comparing the various argumentative (ideological) frames involved in the debate over slavery's expansion into Texas and other western territories, the authors argued "it will be possible to evaluate whether [a conspiracistic] explanation of the Texas annexation controversy was more or less likely in relation to alternate explanations."[152] Therefore Zarefsky and Pfau map the frame of Northern, Civic Republican, conspiracists.[153]

Civic Republicanism is a meta-ideology which conceives of the state as the entity that secures the public good and ensures liberty. This framing "views the republic…as fundamentally fragile and finite, continually threatened by conspiracies on the part of ambitious individuals as well as self-interested factions."[154] But the ambitious individuals in the slave-power conspiracy were not constructed as diabolical or omnipotent – as would a paranoid conspiracist. The civic republican frame instead ascribes the motive of gaining political power (a natural human desire within this frame) to the conspiracy and viewed the conspirators as merely using "the available political means of the nineteenth century American political landscape in order to further their agenda."[155] A prudent civic republican, therefore, must be eternally vigilant against myriad conspiracies which are trying to topple the fragile state and consolidate power for conspiratorial ends. Within this "worldview, then, conspiracy discourse was the purview of the vigilant and

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[151] Ibid.

[152] Ibid.

[153] Northern Conspiracists believed Southern slaveholders were in league with the British to annex Texas into the United States as a slave state. This new state would tip the balance of power in congress, and allow the South to nullify the Federal tariff and trade goods cheaply to Britain in repayment of their relinquished stake in seeing Texas remain a sovereign nation. Texas was annexed in 1845.

[154] Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 40.

[155] Pfau & Zarefsky, "Evaluating Conspiracy Arguments," 433.

virtuous citizen and politician rather than the crackpot or lunatic."[156] In sum, civic republicanism attributes agency to cabals, but it also gives agency to vigilant citizens who "might slow, or temporarily prevent, the state's decay," even allowing space for conspiracists to warn the polity about alleged conspiratorial danger in a politically-intelligible style.[157] This ideological frame is unlike less-mainstream meta-ideologies (Puritanism[158] or Fascism[159]) that have been connected to paranoid conspiracy rhetorics.

Comparing the civic republican conspiracist frame to three other prevalent frames of the time, Zarefsky and Pfau conclude that this frame was not inferior. Each of the other frames was problematic in their own way – somewhat un-factual, untruthful or selective historically. One competing frame even furthered a rival conspiracy to the slave-power conspiracy (e.g. this was a Southern frame of resistance to Texas annexation denouncing an International Abolitionist Conspiracy).[160] Zarefsky and Pfau conclude that as critics, they categorically cannot say this was a paranoid conspiracy because of its cautious framing and because these civic republican arguments, although "perhaps somewhat exaggerated, appear to have contained at least a germ of truth."[161] Moreover, they warn about the difficulty of evaluating conspiracy claims, since critics "are themselves affected by frames that influence their views of politics, of what counts as conspiracy, and whether the term is inherently pejorative or more neutral."[162]

Thus, Zarefsky and Pfau began their reclamation work of conspiracy arguments through the Texas Annexation case study. Not only did these authors warn critics of bias, they posited the word "conspiracy" is neutral (not negative) and conspiracists as occasionally correct. In sum,

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[156] Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 41.
[157] Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 98.
[158] Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 23-34.
[159] Hasian, 1997, 195-214; Burke, 1973, 191-220.
[160] Zarefsky & Pfau, "Evaluating Conspiracy Arguments," 430-32.
[161] Zarefsky & Pfau, "Evaluating Conspiracy Arguments," 434.
[162] Zarefsky & Pfau, "Evaluating Conspiracy Arguments," 432.

"What some call conspirac[ism] is little more than a sound strategy."[163] When individual rhetors use conspiracistic arguments, moreover, strategies such as appeals to authority and appeals to history (especially to the British Enlightenment or classical Roman history) seem to work especially well.[164] Recounting these histories enables rhetors to embody revered, authoritative, figures such as Edmund Burke or Cicero – an ethos-building technique Pfau would subsequently call *imatatio*.[165]

Civic (Republican) Fear

Before discussing Pfau's full revision of Hofstadter's paranoid style with his political style, however, the relationship between civic republicanism and fear needs to be explicated. In order to argue that conspiracism in a political sense can be somewhat factual and ethical, a new understanding of fear appeals was theorized. Traditionally, fear appeals have been understood by rhetorical scholars as "instance[s] in which a rhetor 'tries to get a target audience to adopt a course of action by portraying the only alternative as some horrible disaster (usually death or sever injury) that is very fearful to the audience'."[166] This conception does not fit the anti-slave-power conspiracist rhetors during the Texas Annexation fight, though, since the conspirators were never constructed as wholly diabolical or omnipotent, as paranoid conspiracists would have done. Thus, it was noted that traditionally paranoid fear appeals operate "according to a logic of dichotomization"[167] which "'sharply divides the respondent's available options into two mutually exclusive actions' in which 'the *only* way you can avoid this very fearful outcome is to take the

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[163] Zarefsky & Pfau, "Evaluating Conspiracy Arguments," 433.
[164] Zarefsky & Pfau, "Evaluating Conspiracy Arguments," 430.
[165] Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 96.
[166] Michael Pfau, "Who's Afraid of Fear Appeals? Contingency, Courage, and Deliberation in Rhetorical Theory and Practice." *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 40, no. 2 (2007): 219.
[167] Pfau, "Who's Afraid of Fear Appeals?" 219.

recommended action'."[168] These dichotomous fear appeals fail, however, to accurately describe the fear appeals of prudent civic republican conspiracists uniting political opposition to Texas Annexation.

Using Aristotle's work on Politics, Pfau argues that classical theory suggests two types fear an orator may instill in an audience. The first is a divisive "dichotomous fear;" the second is a unifying "civic fear." As opposed the dichotomous fear, *civic fear* can be constructed if an orator first raises awareness about an underappreciated object of fear (such as a cabal), portrays the object of fear as "close at hand (spatially and/or temporally)," claims audience action can thwart the threat, and inspires courage-to-act within the audience, "[i]n order to open a space for deliberation about the range of possible actions capable of addressing the object of fear."[169] Thus, these two contrasting fear appeals work to opposite ends, since dichotomous fear "bypass[es] collective reason," aiming "to foreclose all options except for the course of action recommended by the speaker,"[170] while, on the other hand, civic fear encourages the polity to discuss and then address the problem collectively.

Prime examples of civic fear appeals and civic republicanism come from Pfau's book on the Political Style of Conspiracy: Chase, Sumner and Lincoln, which studies early Republicans and their anti-slave power conspiracism. Interestingly, Pfau argues the distinction between dichotomous and civic fear is "a distinction that parallels this study's findings regarding the distinction between conspiracy rhetoric at the fringe and center."[171] Of course, speakers may take fear appeals too far, and become dichotomous fear mongers like Joseph McCarthy. Nixon, though, was careful to typically remain within the civic republican frame and ere on the side of

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[168] Douglas Walton, Scare Tactics, as quoted in Pfau, 2007, 219-20.
[169] Pfau, "Who's Afraid of Fear Appeals?" 232.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 168.

civic fear appeals in most of his anti-communist conspiracy rhetoric – although at times he pragmatically blends ideological frames and feigns dichotomous fear appeals.

Fear and frame are in addition to the four evaluative criteria demarcating the political style from the paranoid style. Frame precedes and shapes a speech and fear is an effect of hearing a speech's suasive appeal. The four criteria of the political style discussed in the next section of this chapter, however, are not formative or an effect of the text, but rather they are within the argumentative structure of the texts. Each of these criteria emerged from Pfau's case studies of Lincoln, Chase and Sumner rhetoric.

THE POLITICAL STYLE

The working definition of *ideology* for this study is "a symbolically mediated set of interact[ing] assumptions, beliefs, values, feelings, and attitudes by which humans make their world meaningful."[172] But what specific criteria typify the rhetoric of civic republican conspiracists? Like his co-authored work with Zarefsky on Texas Annexation, to distinguish the political style from the paranoid, Pfau focuses not on the lunatic fringe, but on an explicitly political movement which utilized anti-slave power conspiracism to mobilize the electorate and build a coalition in the 1850s. This political coalition still exists, and is called the Republican Party.[173] This new party inched away from more radical (and primarily religiously zealous) abolitionists and instead took on a secular, more moderate anti-slavery view. This moderating move united former Whigs, Free Soilers, Know Nothings, and even persuaded some Northern Democrats to join the new party. Conspiracy rhetoric was a major factor uniting the anti-slavery factions into an ever-unifying Republican Party. Therefore, while previous, paranoid-paradigm scholarship "set the stage for the marginalization of conspiracy discourse by establishing the

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[172] Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 40.
[173] Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 174.

presumption that conspiracy rhetoric is fundamentally irrational, unethical, and unhealthy for the political system,"[174] Pfau uses the conspiracy rhetoric of early Republican Party leaders to refute all these presumptions. The result is the "political style of conspiracy."

Four major characteristics delineate the political style from the paranoid.[175] First, the political style employs a comic plot – unlike a paranoid conspiracist who perceives a tragic plot. Comic conspiracists view cabals as "driven by misunderstanding and error and are resolved when participants learn the truth and overcome their misperceptions."[176] Therefore, the comic view is somewhat optimistic. "Tragic plots, on the other hand, are driven by a tragic flaw or condition and are resolved in a climactic tragic event that leaves little room for optimism regarding human agency."[177] Thus, a tragic conspirator is malicious, possibly evil and can only be overthrown in a type of apocalyptic struggle.[178]

> The relationship between tragic radicalism and violent means, of course, reflects a logic of proportionality – tragic narratives of all-powerful conspiracies represent threats whose magnitude requires recourse even to violence.[179]

At times Nixon perceives the communist conspiracy as nearly world-wide and all-powerful, but in the first two texts of analysis, he remains within a comic plot – suggesting a minimal number of caveats about communism to not fully foreclose the possibility of communism being mistaken rather than malicious. In the third text, however, Nixon uses a tragic plot in his anti-communist rhetoric.

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[174] Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 175.
[175] Five characteristics from Michael Pfau's book: *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 2005.
[176] Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 28.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 31 – this comes from work on William Lloyd Garrison, whose move to post-millennial eschatology eventuated his endorsement of violent means to combat the slave power, following John Brown's raid.
[179] Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 32.

Second, a political conspiracist sees a recent "key cardinal function" (origin) for the

conspiracy rather than the age-old, irreversible origins paranoid conspiracists perceive. "[In]

most narratives of conspiracy, one particular event will serve as the key cardinal function of the

conspiracy narrative."[180] Pfau compares two William Lloyd Garrison speeches and two Salmon

Chase speeches to illuminate this criterion. As Garrison became more radical in his abolitionism

in the 1830-40s, he saw an ever-earlier key cardinal function. Garrison's earlier rhetoric named

the conspiracy's origin as the Compromise of 1820, but eventually he claimed the Constitution

itself (that "covenant with death, and an agreement with hell") was the "point at which the slave

power initially gained ascendancy and was able to fully control subsequent events."[181] Following

his new perception of the Constitution and its framers as diabolical, Garrison's progressing

paranoia led him to abandon his former pacifism and advocate that the country, evil to its

founding document, be violently overthrown.

Conversely, Salmon Chase's conspiracism moved in an opposite, increasingly-political

direction, due to his ever-more-recent key cardinal function. While Chase first claimed post-

Revolutionary War apathy was the key cardinal function of the slave-power conspiracy, later he

named the Kansas-Nebraska act of 1854 (a contemporary event) as the recent key cardinal

function. Further contrasting Garrison, when Chase spoke of the origins of the slave power

conspiracy, he used secular terms rather than radical religiosity, and the effect was the

unification of political factions into the Republican Party. Pfau concludes "These comic

emplotments, along with shorter conspiracy narratives, encourage more effectual efforts against

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[180] Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 27.
[181] Ibid.

the slave power"[182] – demonstrating the synchrony of the first two political-style evaluative criteria.

Third, political conspiracism uses *conductive arguments*, which place the suasive onus on the audience and their ability to make a conclusive leap which has only been hinted at by the rhetor. Trudy Grovier defined a conductive argument as a "non-deductive," particularist mode of argumentation, characterized by "a sort of reasoning in which (1) a conclusion about some individual case (2) is drawn non-conclusively (3) from one or more premises about the same case (4) without any appeal to other cases."[183] Pfau's pinnacle example of conductive argumentation is Lincoln's 1858 campaign speech, "House Divided."

This conspiracistic speech constructs the Union as a metaphorical house, which cannot stand if it is divided by rampant regionalism (North and South). Lincoln, who was running for Senate against Stephen Douglas, suggests a Democratic slave-power cabal is protecting the 'peculiar institution' of the South in exchange for support of four northern politicians: Senator Douglas, the former and current Presidents (Pierce and Buchanan), and Supreme Court Chief Justice Roger Taney, who issued the Dred Scott decision (allowing slave holders to bring their 'property' into free *territories*). If civic fear was not instilled in Lincoln's audience to unite and courageously stop this slave power conspiracy, he warned that another high court ruling (the suspected Dred Scott II) would also allow slave owners to bring slaves into free, northern *states*.[184] Lincoln uses humor and implication to make his case, but refrained from "mak[ing] the final deductive leap characteristic of much [paranoid] conspiracy discourse."[185] Instead, it is a non-conclusive placement of four suspected conspirators ("timbers") into a metaphorical "house"

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[182] Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 34.
[183] Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 132.
[184] Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 128-29.
[185] Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 119.

frame-work, while avoiding pedantic recollection of national events, self-sealing logic, deductive argument, or paranoid leaps to conclusion. Instead, Lincoln unites this third criterion of the political style with the first two: a recent key cardinal function (Dred Scott case, four years prior), and a comic plot of mistaken, not malicious, Democratic antagonists in the political mainstream.

Concerning antagonists, we come to the fourth and final criteria of the political style: a non-perfected conspirator as scapegoat. Although this is the least explicit criterion in Pfau's work, the "House Divided" speech gives a great example of how to construct a conspiratorial scapegoat without perfecting it. Burke and Hofstadter used a paranoid paradigm in which "The symbolic function of the scapegoat – both individual and collective – is said to be enhanced insofar as the scapegoat's evil and power are emphasized or exaggerated" – or *perfected* by the conspiracist(s).[186] For example, "Garrison's perfection of the slave power scapegoat helped to build and affirm abolitionist identity."[187] Yet this perfection, combined with a tragic plot, promulgated dire pessimism and foreclosed mainstream political engagement. The result was that many abolitionists gave up, while a few resorted to violence, as evidenced in John Brown's massacre of enemy slave-power conspirators, who he viewed as evil, perfected, scapegoats.

Alternatively, in the "House Divided" speech, Lincoln rhetorically constructs Stephen Douglas as a banal, non-perfected scapegoat. Using humor, metaphor, and statements of likelihood (not certitude), Lincoln ethically characterizes Douglas as incompatible with Republican values. If young, inexperienced Republicans are only "living dogs," Lincoln argues they are still preferable to a has-been, "dead lion" Democratic Party leader.[188] Although Douglas

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[186] In Michael Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 5.
[187] Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 162.
[188] Ronald Reid & James Klumpp, (Eds). *American Rhetorical Discourse* (3rd ed.), Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press, 2005, 405.

was an out-spoken anti-slavery voice in the past, Lincoln argues that years of compromising with the South turned Douglas into a Southern apologist, effectively enabling the slave power conspiracy. Lincoln concludes, "Judge Douglas, if not a dead lion, for this work, is at lease a caged and toothless one"[189] for the continuing anti-slavery work. Furthermore, Lincoln lawyerly states, "I wish not to misrepresent Judge Douglas's position,"[190] while even refusing to foreclose the possibility that Douglas "may rightfully change when he finds himself wrong."[191] As for scapegoating the Democratic Party as a whole, although Lincoln twice calls them the "enemy" in the conclusion of the speech, he qualifies this by saying the once "disciplined, proud, and pampered" Party is now "wavering, dissevered, and belligerent."[192] Therefore, not only are Douglas and his Party non-perfected scapegoats, but Lincoln's civic fear appeals inspire courage among Republicans to the appropriate actions of political unity and moderation in the anti-slavery movement. In sum, this banal, politically-conspiracistic scapegoating is far from the perfected scapegoating of vivid villains described in Hofstadter and Burke's work on Hitler and paranoid conspiracism.

Following his case studies and four new criteria, Pfau concludes that there are "two distinct yet… parallel species of conspiracy discourse with distinct traditions:" the paranoid style, and the political style of conspiracy.[193] Unlike theorists who argued conspiracism only originates at the fringes of society and can never fully reach the mainstream, Pfau concludes that the political-style originates in the mainstream and can remain there for quite some time if the

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[189] Ibid.
[190] Ried & Klumpp, *American Rhetorical Discourse*, 406.
[191] Ried & Klumpp, *American Rhetorical Discourse*. 405.
[192] Ried & Klumpp, *American Rhetorical Discourse,* 406.
[193] Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 169.

conspiracistic group builds a political coalition against a recent conspiracy, through a comic

narrative plot, while refusing to perfect the conspirator as scapegoat.[194]

       The political style also disrupts the lineage of conspiracy.

> [W]hile the paranoid style was the first…category of conspiracy discourse within the
> academy, its historical origins may be relatively recent. As a number of scholars – and
> the findings of this study – have made clear, however, a very different and *much older*
> form of conspiracy discourse characterizes the texts at the center of this study:[195]

the political style of conspiracy – which can be traced back to Cicero. This is much older than

the history of the paranoid style (which has only been traced to the British Enlightenment).[196]

       Therefore, this style of political conspiracy in the mainstream, with ancient roots, leads to

two major implications – one rational and one ethical. First, the critic should avoid assumption of

irrationality, because, "It may help the critic to recognize that some conspiracy claims –

especially those concerned with the increasing concentrations of economic and political power –

deserve our serious attention if not outright support."[197] Returning to his early work with

Zarefsky on the seeming factuality of some conspiracist claims in the civic republican frame,

Pfau has now intensified those implications to outright support of some political conspiracism,

propagating the contemporary example of Ralph Nadar's rational, anti-corporate conspiracy

claims.

       Second, ethically, the political style is unlike the paranoid style. The result of its framing,

fear appeals and four evaluative criteria is that:

> the political style of conspiracy discourse is not ethically problematic in the same sense
> as the paranoid style, and it seems erroneous to equate ethically…the paranoid,
> eschatologically-charged, and anti-Semitic New World Order conspiracy theories
> inspiring contemporary terrorist Timothy McVeigh with the corporate conspiracy
> theories of Ralph Nader.[198]

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[194] Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 174.
[195] Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 167.
[196] Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 157-58.
[197] Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 178.
[198] Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 179.

Therefore, Pfau suggests a different method of analysis, so scholars will not conflate, and effectively undo, his careful bifurcation of these vastly different styles of conspiracy. Since he finds strictly neo-classical, narrative, or close-textual methods all insufficient for studying conspiracy rhetoric on their own, Pfau suggests "an evaluative approach that compares conspiracy claims to alternate interpretations within thoroughly contextualized accounts of political controversies seems more sensible."[199] Pfau calls this method a *Comparative-Textual* approach.

This suggested method concludes Pfau and Zarefsky's detailed mapping of the political style, with its four intra-textual criteria, civic republican ideological frame and civic fear appeals. Their long project to revise conspiracy research in the field carries the weight of astute scholarship. In the end, in my estimation, Pfau certainly met his goal: "to do for conspiracy discourse at the center what Hofstadter has done for conspiracy rhetoric at the fringe."[200]

Recapitulation of Existing Styles

Following this lengthy discussion of style, and conspiracy scholarship in the field, I should quickly summarize the elements of the paranoid and political styles which I am looking for in my analysis Richard Nixon's conspiracistic texts.

4 Paranoid-Style Criteria:
1. Construction of a *Perfected Scapegoat*, or "vivid villain."

2. The *Pedantic* accumulation of 'facts,' and the tragic situating of those factoids into narrative meta-structures.

3. The use of *Circular (self-sealing) Argument*, which assumes its paranoid conclusions.

4. Construction of a conspiracy as an all-powerful, *All-Encompassing Cabal*.

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[199] Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 178.
[200] Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 180.

4 Political-Style Criteria:

1. Construction of a likely, or probable, *Non-Perfected Scapegoat.*

2. *Conductive Argument* in which premises are placed next to each other spatially, although the rhetor refrains from conclusively connecting the premises or assigning causation.

3. The use of a *Comic Plot* by a conspiracist rhetor, casting conspirators as mistaken, not evil, and conspiracies as erroneous and revisable, not all-encompassing.

4. The cabal's origin is contemporary: a *Recent Key Cardinal Function.* As such, the cabal can be challenged, reversed, or even overcome by vigilant citizens.

Although these two distinct styles of conspiracy rhetoric have been theorized in the field, my initial readings of conspiracistic Richard Nixon texts did not allow me to place him squarely within either the paranoid or the political style. Nixon's tricky rhetoric and political ascendency was at first perplexing, but style gave me a point of intervention. "The key to political success might be knowing (however intuitively) when to be aesthetically sensitive and when to be relatively anesthetized, and knowing when to activate a political style and when to keep it under wraps."[201] As I read and re-read the three texts that comprise the artifacts of my study, some paranoid elements could be seen in Nixon's conspiracy rhetoric, which are more "aesthetically" noticeable, or stylized. However criteria from the political style, which is more "anesthetized," could also be identified in each text. This coincides with Hariman's claim that a knowledge of "decorum in order to understand and act to advantage within a social situation was… an essentially pragmatic approach."[202] Therefore, as I observed the separation between existing conspiracy styles seems to collapse within Nixon's anti-communist conspiracy rhetoric, it became apparent that Nixon's pragmatic assessment of rhetorical situations and the accompanying decorum directed his pragmatic movement between the paranoid and political styles of conspiracy rhetoric. Thus, this study adds the concept of pragmatism to the existing

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[201] Hariman, *Political Style*, 191.
[202] Hariman, *Political Style*, 182.

paranoid and political styles as a way to explain Nixon's stylistic overlapping and sampling from both political and paranoid criteria.

DRAMATISM & PRAGMATISM

The "dramatistic" method of rhetorical criticism enables my addition of the concept of "pragmatism" to conspiracy theory. Since Nixon was an actor, bluffer, and debater, dramatism also fits his personality. Using the theatre as a model, Kenneth Burke suggested a dramatistic method to examine speakers' motives. The five investigative terms of his Dramatistic Pentad are: "Act, Scene, Agent, Agency, Purpose."[203] Each text in my analysis has the same agent/actor – Richard Nixon – however each text performs a different act (gain fame, appear presidential, and vindicate), occurs in a different scene (rhetorical situation), while adjusting the veracity of Nixon's agency (conspiracism) to accommodate his various purposes. This study is focused on Nixon's pragmatic overlapping of paranoid and political conspiracy styles, and I argue his stylistic fluidity created conspiracist agency (the means, or instrument) in Nixon's rhetoric.[204]

In determining dramatistic motivation, *ratios,* or "principles of selectivity," emerge.[205] "Otherwise stated: A ratio is a formula indicating a transition from one term to another,"[206] with the generating term listed first. For example, if agency is the generating term for a certain purpose, it would be expressed as the ratio *agency-purpose*. This specific ratio can be restated as a means-to-an-end.[207] Ratios are not just one-way streets, but more of an implication, as *purpose* is "implicit in agency, since tools and methods are for a purpose – and one of the great reasons for the appeal of pragmatism today… may reside in the fact that it retains ingredients of

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[203] Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969, xv.
[204] Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*, 275.
[205] Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*, 18.
[206] Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*, 262.
[207] Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*, 289.

purpose."[208] I argue, therefore, that Nixon pragmatically used varying degrees of conspiracism to accommodate the purpose and rhetorical situation of each text; an agentic means for political ends.

When *agency* is the generative term in the ratio, moreover, it is implicitly linked to pragmatism. In "the featuring of *agency*," Burke writes, "the corresponding [philosophic] terminology is *pragmatism*."[209] Pragmatism can be taken up by any major philosophy through its emphasis on particulars (like nominalism), practicality (utilitarianism), and "disdain for verbal solutions, useless questions and metaphysical abstractions" (realism).[210] Since pragmatism is a common mediation in all philosophies, it could be taken up by any political actor, "quite as the instructions for operating a machine are the same for liberal, Fascist, or Communist"[211] – or as I argue, conspiracist. Pragmatism, therefore, transforms theories into instruments,[212] and makes the underlying ideology of conspiracism less important – whether it is more paranoid (e.g. fascist) or more political (e.g. civic republican).

Nixon's belief in conspiracy theories became instrumental through his pragmatic rhetoric. Therefore, the agency (conspiracism) generating Nixon's motive in his anti-communist texts stems in part from his underlying, implicit pragmatism, documented in chapter two (analytical debater, who argued for the sake of argument). This instrumental agency is not that of an ideologue or someone with unshakeable beliefs (or "bedrock values"), but by an actor desiring political expediency. Throughout Nixon's political ascendency, this was often the charge labeled against him – he was steered by no moral compass, but rather self-interest.

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[208] Ibid.
[209] Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*, 128.
[210] William James, as quoted in Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*, 275.
[211] Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*, 276.
[212] Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*, 275.

Not only does pragmatism's de-emphasis of ideology fit Nixon, also the view that "the pragmatist looks for the 'cash value' of an idea"[213] resonates with Nixon's strident capitalism and anti-communism. Effectively, the post-WWII Republican campaign slogan depicted Democrats as soft on socialism at home and communism abroad. This conflates both ideologies and market structures in the minds of voters. In my analysis of Nixon's second text especially, it becomes clear that the pragmatic trope of capitalism as the *faith of freedom* "retains the stress upon agency, in using a mode of thought according to which a thing's value is tested by its economic usefulness."[214] Therefore, both Nixon's issue of expertise (his pro-capitalism and anti-communism) and the agency with which he denounced it (overlapping conspiracist styles) were pragmatic.

As I describe in my analysis, "such [individual rhetorical] agency is fundamentally shaped by existing discursive and aesthetic conditions, which vary from one social context to another."[215] I argue Nixon pragmatically adapted his rhetoric to audiences, adjusted his veracity to match situational exigency, and styled his conspiracism to fit the constraining decora of the moment. The effect of this pragmatic style is a collective style that invoked "a meaningful resonance among disparate, even 'contradictory,' social interests,"[216] such as the isolationists, hawks, eastern/liberal Republicans, conservatives, the religious, and other factions of the early Cold War Republican Party. Nixon's rhetoric and fluid conspiracist style seems to have struck a harmonious cord among social, and Party, disunity of the day. Astutely matching rhetoric and situation, Nixon accrued agency, gained power and political offices, while pragmatically styling his rhetoric to fit the decorum of each aesthetic or anesthetized situation.

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[213] Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*, 277.
[214] Ibid.
[215] Vivian, "Style, Rhetoric, and Postmodern Culture," 241.
[216] Vivian, "Style, Rhetoric, and Postmodern Culture," 230.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS

This chapter does comparative-textual analysis of three early-career Nixon anti-communist conspiracy texts. The three texts span fifteen years – starting with Nixon's first speech as an elected official in 1947, then a campaign pamphlet from his failed 1960 Presidential campaign, and finally "The Hiss Case" chapter of his first book, written in 1962 at the beginning of his "wilderness years" out of public office. For each of these texts I use the synthesized method for evaluating conspiracy rhetoric developed through the literature review in my Method Chapter. I consider which of the four paranoid and four political-style elements are in each text. Words, phrases and sentences from my close readings of these texts evidence my analysis.

The "Maiden Speech," 1947

In the "Maiden Speech," Nixon calls for the House of Representatives to recognize the utter "contempt" alleged communist conspirator Gerhart Eisler demonstrated in a HUAC hearing. In the first sentence of the speech Nixon intimates that the conspirator in question is part of larger "foreign-directed conspiracy." Again in the second sentence Eisler is designated as "The principal character of this conspiracy" in the United States. Then in paragraphs three and four of the speech, Nixon mentions "Two other conspirators and comrades of Eisler." Thus, words derived from "to conspire" are used four times in this short speech,[217] clustered in the introduction, to prepare the auditor for all the shocking, conspiratorial, details to follow. While Nixon only constructs a vague foreign conspiracy, he concretely casts Eisler and his "comrades" as conspirators. Throughout the rest of the speech, Nixon offers evidence to prove Eisler is not only a communist who held a HUAC meeting in contempt, but he was atop the American Communist Party apparatus while he actively plotted and "advocated the overthrow of our Government by force and violence" (Para. 20).

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[217] The "Maiden Speech" is only twenty-two paragraphs long.

Although this early conspiracist speech fits three criteria of the paranoid style, it is not solely paranoid, as it has a recent key cardinal function. 1933 is the year Nixon, quoting an FBI report, claims Eisler began to "shuttle back and forth between Moscow and the United States" (Para. 1). Since the speech was given in 1947, the key cardinal function is only fourteen years old, and is therefore recent. Had Nixon gone farther back, or made claims that about Eisler or Moscow being "corrupted from their beginnings," a case could be made for paranoia. As is, the key cardinal function is recent and squarely in the political style.

The three paranoid-style evaluative criteria in the speech are the perfected scapegoat, pedantic accumulation of detail, and circular argumentation. Interestingly, though, the speech is also within the civic republican ideological frame. In the following analysis each of these criteria, as well as the incomplete conspiracistic criteria, are detailed.

Considering first the paranoid style, Nixon clearly perfects his scapegoat, Gerhart Eisler. Nixon saw Eisler not only as the liaison between the American Communist Party and "Communist International" conspiracy, but also the "master mind [of] the political and espionage activities of the Communist Party in the United States" (Para. 1). Multiple uses of the words "foreign," "international," and "alien" allow Nixon to use associative reasoning to connect Eisler with conspiracy mostly outside the USA. Since Eisler was born in Germany and now resides in the USA, he left "war-ravaged Europe" and has infiltrated the "safe haven" of America (Para. 2). Therefore, he not only displayed ungratefulness to the country that offered him refuge, but he began attacking that country's government. When the American government called Eisler to testify before HUAC regarding his activities, "he did not come as a grateful political refugee" but as "an arrogant, defiant *enemy* of that government" (Para. 2, emphasis mine).

To further perfect Eisler as conspirator, enemy and scapegoat, Nixon cites FBI Chief J. Edgar Hoover at length (Para.s 7-9). Quoting Hoover corroborates Nixon's HUAC report and greatly strengthens the freshman representative's ethos through the double-voiced nature of the rhetoric. Hoover states repeatedly that Eisler is an "agent" of the Communist International, and has been in contact with Communist "functionaries" in the United States at least since 1933. After fourteen years of faithful service, Eisler has become "the mysterious but supreme authority on communist activity in the United States" (Para. 11). The effect is that Eisler's activities constitute a clandestine pattern of "evasion and duplicity" (Para. 9). To prove this charge, Nixon again uses information from the FBI to detail Eisler's re-entry into the United States from one of his trips to the Soviet Union. This evidence allegedly shows that Eisler filed for asylum status and denied "under oath" that he had 1. communist ties, 2. family in the USA – even though his sister and wife were in the USA, 3. and had previously lived in the United States. To execute this deception, Eisler used an alias (Para. 14). Thus, Nixon added *liar* to his growing vocabulary for his scapegoat.

In case the terms liar, alien, enemy and conspirator left any doubt about perfectedness, however, Nixon raises the hortatory bar one last time in his speech, quoting the damning testimony of Eisler's estranged sister. Directly engaging the claim that HUAC lacked hard evidence and was persecuting Eisler for his "different political faith" alone, Nixon quotes Eisler's sister as saying Eisler was an "arch terrorist of the worst type" (Para. 16).

Justifying her use of the term "terrorist," Nixon makes his most specific and volatile claim yet: Eisler was passing US secrets to a "Canadian atom-bomb spy ring" (Para. 16). Therefore not only was Eisler trying to "tear down and destroy the government which furnished him refuge during the war years" but was even trying to corrupt Canada – our neighbor and ally

(Para. 16). Of course, Nixon provides no evidence of how Eisler got US atomic secrets or who his Canadian contacts were. But this specific claim of espionage increases the charge from malicious conspirator, to frame Eisler as a traitor leaking our most important national-security secret. Within the context of the early Cold War, Nixon's anti-communist rhetoric is potent, especially his fear appeal regarding nuclear proliferation. Any "agent" supporting communism and leaking atomic secrets in that era would be a "terrorist," and a fully perfected scapegoat.

The second paranoid-style criterion in the "Maiden Speech" is Nixon's pedantic attention to detail. In the speech's first paragraph, Nixon is careful to make note of all six known aliases used by Eisler. The audience is told each alias had a specific purpose; "Hans Berger" was Eisler's alias when writing, "Edwards" when at communist meetings, "Brown" when traveling, "Eisman" for the payroll of front organizations, etc. Nixon also spends two paragraphs elaborating on Eisler's dubious US passport application in 1934. Allegedly Eisler conspired with friends to forge the passport application: Leo Josephson's handwriting, under Samuel Liptzin's name, with a picture of Eisler, and a signature from a fictitious "witness" (Para. 12). After the passport was issued, Eisler sailed, under false pretenses, to Moscow for communist training. Of course Nixon accounts for loose ends, saying both Liptzin and Josephson were subpoenaed by HUAC, although they both furnished excuses and did not attend. Nixon ominously promises that HUAC "will deal with Mr. Josephson and Mr. Liptzin at a very early date" at "subsequent hearings" (Para. 5).

Regarding travel, Eisler's global movements are pedantically traced in the speech's biographical section on Eisler's life and family. Born in Germany, he joined the communist party in Austria, "trained to be an agent of the Communist International" in Moscow – learning "revolutionary tactics, in espionage, [and] sabotage" in the Lenin School, before taking "His first

assignment as a Comintern agent… in China in 1928," and finally sent to the USA in 1933

(Para.s 10-11). This pedantic account of Eisler's birthplace, family, schooling and CP

assignments is replete with family names, town and ship names, port-of-entry cities, and mention

of all the biggest communist countries. These details work to construct a tragic narrative

enumerating the perfected scapegoat's malicious motives. Overall, this shows Nixon's pedantic

attention to detail, and clearly displays this second element of the paranoid style.

The third paranoid criterion is the use of circular argumentation. Although circular

argumentation is not overwhelming, a major premise of Nixon's argument and his call to action

rest on a circular argument. This circular argument occurs when Nixon argues Eisler's "refus[al]

even to be sworn before the committee" caused Eisler to commit "contempt" of congress (Para.

2). But going a step further, Nixon leaps to the conclusion that Eisler's refusal to testify was not

just contempt, but in fact was further evidence of his guilt. Two points contradict this logic

however. First, the right to remain silent contradicts this circular argument. As a lawyer, Nixon

knew this, and even admits in "The Hiss Case" chapter that Hiss's willingness to talk was the

reason Hiss perjured himself. The second contradictory point to Nixon's second circular

argument was argued by Representative Vito Marcantonio (D-NY) in response to Nixon's

speech. Citing the transcript of the HUAC meeting in question, Marcantonio quotes the

Chairman asking, "Mr. Eisler, do you refuse again to be sworn?" Eisler responds, "I have never

refused to be sworn in. I came here a political prisoner. I want to make a few remarks, only three

minutes, before I be sworn in and answer your questions" (Para.s 27-28). This quote allows

Marcantonio to argue that the phrase "willful contempt" is the question at hand, and that it is "a

legalistic phrase" which, technically, Eisler has not committed (Para.s 26). Marcantonio contends

that HUAC had no "concrete evidence" against Eisler, and as a result tried to pin him down on a

procedural technicality (contempt), but in fact "This was not *willful* contempt" since the witness was willing to answer any and all questions after making a statement (Para.s 25, 32). In sum, Marcantonio argued, "the committee's insistence on its procedure was unreasonable and this is the decisive factor in this case" (Para. 32). In other words HUAC "establish[ed] its own procedure" disallowing an opening statement, thus foreclosing the possibility of swearing in Eisler – and forcing his hand into "contempt" that was never "willful" (Para. 32). The fact that Rep. Marcantonio caught this circular argument is the effect of the presence of this third and final criterion of paranoid conspiracism in Nixon's speech.

At times Nixon alluded to a worldwide communist conspiracy, but always stops himself short. Had Nixon constructed an all-encompassing cabal, it would have been the fourth paranoid element. Whenever Nixon labels the "Communist International" and gives it near-global reach through Eisler's biography – (East) Germany, Austria, the Soviet Union, China, and "war-ravaged Europe" – Nixon then eschews a totalized view by looking stateside. Communism may be a powerful conspiracy spreading outward from its headquartered in Moscow (Nixon mentions "Moscow" seven times), but he inspires courage in his audience by mentioning it has not claimed the United States. As such, it is still "a foreign-directed conspiracy" perpetrated by "aliens." Through these terms Nixon effectively constructs the conspiracy as 'other' in order to inspire civic fear in his audience, the belief that they can keep communism out of the allied countries, prevent the conspiracy from becoming worldwide, or possibly even reverse the spread of the conspiracy. Although this depiction is not a comic plot, it uses civic fear to inspire courage.

In this speech, moreover, Nixon uses the civic republican frame. Nixon's rhetoric enables him to embody the role of a prudent/vigilant citizen, whose goals is to warn the people of danger, while maintaining a balance of liberty and state authority. After his pedantic description of

Eisler, Nixon instructs his listeners to adhere to common virtues, and be as vigilant as he is in

protecting the country. Nixon holds up a copy of Eisler's passport application and "suggest[s]

that every member, at his convenience, study it, because it will give you an insight into the fraud

and intrigue which is employed by the communist agents to carry out their work" (Para. 11). For

those still not clearly seeing the threat, Nixon "recommend[s] a reading of the full transcript of

the testimony before the committee" (Para. 15). Nixon's believes that imitating his vigilance

would lead any prudent Representative to convict a communist conspirator such as Eisler.

Interestingly, the one representative (Marcantonio) who clearly had read the HUAC transcript

disagreed with Nixon. However, as a socialist and member of the American Labor Party,

Marcantonio lacked ethos in the area of prosecuting communists and cast a lone dissenting vote.

Marcantonio's argument lost to Nixon's pragmatic conspiracism. In his closing lines, Nixon

typifies the civic republican notion of freedom when he first admonishes the House to "defend

vigilantly" the fundamental rights of free speech and press, only to then reiterate how fragile the

state is:

> But we must bear in mind that the rights of free speech and free press do not carry with
> them the right to advocate the destruction of the very government which protects the
> freedom of an individual to express his views (Para. 21).

This sentiment expresses the ideal civic-republican balance between the people's freedom and

the state's power.

Overall, this first text gives many insights into the early conspiracist rhetoric of freshman

representative Richard Nixon. Nixon's pedantic construction of a communist conspiracy, with

Gerhart Eisler as perfected scapegoat, and evidence of at least one significant circular argument

shows the presences of three clear paranoid criteria. Also, with the speech's deductive reasoning

(not conductive) for a vote to hold Eisler in contempt, its non-comic plot, and perfected

scapegoat, the single political-style element evident in this first text is its recent key cardinal function. Therefore, the preponderance of conspiracy argumentation is in the paranoid-style.

Nixon's pragmatic combination of styles adds nuance to his rhetoric, though. And even though this speech was mostly in the paranoid style, considering evaluative criteria, the speech was clearly framed by a civic republican ideology and inspired civic fear in its audience, both of which are connected to the political style in existing literature. The effect of the speech was that the House voted to overwhelmingly pass Nixon's motion to find Eisler in contempt, and since Eisler promptly fled the country, it seemed likely to many that at least some of Nixon's claims were true – possibly even some of the paranoid-style claims. Due to his pragmatic style and civic republican fear, I argue Nixon is a paramount case for studying conspiracy rhetoric. He crystallized his epoch, and quickly moved from House, to Senate, to Vice President, and ran dead even against John Kennedy in 1960 for the office of President.

"The Meaning of Communism to Americans," 1960

The second text I analyze was written and released by presidential candidate Nixon immediately after he won the nomination at the Republican National Convention in 1960. It was a campaign pamphlet deemed "one in a series of discussions on the issues of our times by Richard M. Nixon, Vice President of the United States."[218] This text is less paranoid and more political than the first text – actually pragmatically equal in incorporating two evaluative criteria from each style. The text is also at least four times longer[219] than the "Maiden Speech," and its rhetoric is more complex. From an aesthetics standpoint, the speech is much more stylized than text one. Nixon uses many tropes, such as metaphor, analogy, anaphora/epiphora, triads, and

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[218] Pamphlet: "The Meaning of Communism to Americans," by Vice President Richard Nixon, issued by volunteers for Nixon-Lodge, 8/21/1960.
[219] Eighty-nine paragraphs, instead of twenty-two paragraphs in the "Maiden Speech."

generally uses memorable language – including the sentence containing the one explicit mention of "conspiracy" in this speech: "I intend in a later statement to discuss the tactics and vulnerabilities of the Communist conspiracy and how we can best fashion a strategy for victory" (Para. 14). The rhythm of the phrase and rhyming of "vulnerabilities of the…conspiracy" with "strategy for victory" is stylistically pleasing.

In addition to being more polished stylistically, Nixon is also more tempered in his rhetoric. Reasons for avoided the hortatory excesses of the text one are bi-fold. First, Nixon has now been in politics much longer and has matured in his rhetoric. The paranoid-style rhetoric that put Nixon on the national map necessarily became more restrained with each successive step from Representative to Presidential candidate. This is the opposite-inverse relationship between paranoia and office that Joseph McCarthy did not pragmatically understand like Nixon. Second, since Nixon and Kennedy had nearly identical, hawkish views on communism, the didactic tone of this pamphlet allows Nixon to teach the electorate that it is not enough to just "abhor communism" (Para. 4). If the abhorrence comes from a place of ignorance, than we may become susceptible to the charms of Marxism. Therefore, the importance of "understanding" the "threat" of communism is what Nixon is trying to impress upon the audience. By embodying the role of expert, Nixon distinguishes himself from Kennedy, while aiming to teach the true communist philosophies of history, law, and economy. This objective results in a patronizing tone, however, as Nixon over-emphasizes the understandability of the matter with an abundance of qualifying adverbs (*basically, essentially, obviously, purely, simply, accordingly, fundamentally,* and other expressions: *plain fact, of course, elementary).*

Although there are some appeals in the speech from the civic republican frame, it is not the clear ideological frame of the speech. At times Nixon does appeal to a civic republican

notion of history as cyclical to combat Marx's notion that the progression of history will inevitably usher in the rise of communism. Nixon argues against Marx, however, claiming American thinkers fit "into an almost classic pattern known from antiquity" (Para. 85), while Marxism is not progressive, but rather re-enacting a "familiar quandary" in the USSR which can be seen elsewhere in history (Ibid). At other times, Nixon appeals to our Founding Fathers in order to combat Marx and Engels as the *founders* of communism.

Despite these civic republican gestures, though, the overall didactic nature of the speech aligns more easily with a liberal pluralist frame, which is guided by reason for the purpose of guaranteeing rights. But although the "republican assumptions nurturing conspiracy discourse in the nineteenth century receded in favor of a liberal pluralist ideology," the two ideologies share a "suspicion of concentration of power" and thus conspiracism stays "salient even within a (modern) pluralist paradigm"[220] used by Nixon as he takes on the role of expert info-provider in the second text.

To further complicate the speech's ideological frame, Nixon uses an extremely heavy dose of religious terms and imagery. This indicates Puritanism as an additional ideological frame, and pits Nixon as the priest who must teach the people about the bad religion (communist) and its false prophets (Marx and Engels). Nixon describes the USA and USSR in a series of contrasting religious terms. America's "faith of freedom," individualism and capitalist system allow for free will, whereas the Soviet's blind faith in communism leads to a forced communist system, or a type of controlling predestination (Para. 67). As America is guided by its scripture (the Constitution), its absolute truths, and "ancient wisdom" of a pantheon of "great thinkers" ("Confucius, Mencius, Plato, Aristotle, St. Thomas, Kant and Bentham" – Para. 80), the Soviet Union is awash in the relativism and false "prophecies" of its communist scripture

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[220] Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 161, 172.

(the Manifesto), making an unprincipled people susceptible to the "cult of personality" around Marx, Engels and Lenin (the Soviet anti-trinity).

To nuance his criticisms, Nixon stratifies the adherents of communism. Depending on their level of "devotion," Nixon parses "non-believers" from "believers," and splits believers into "old believers" and "new converts." The true believer follows "orthodox" "doctrine," even the economic "dogma" "preach[ed]" by their "high priest." But if a member of the proletariat doubts the false prophecies of the founders or attempts to hold the priests (the dictators of the proletariat) to their own "consecrated phrase" – promising to "wither away" – then those doubters are accused of "heresy" and victimized to preserve unity within the communist faith. Throughout this discussion Nixon either divides the USA from the USSR, or divides the Soviet system into what they say (belief) and what they do (action). Nixon argues, through religious terms, that the communist theory does not frequently match the practices of Soviet policy. Although the Soviets have had some success (in the space program for example), Nixon sees an irreparable contradiction at the heart of their system, and makes his own prophecy: short-term political success, but long-term destruction due to their negative founding philosophies (Para. 85).

Overall, avoiding explicit conspiracy rhetoric and referring to communism through religious terminology is effective. First, this maneuver from the puritanical frame includes less-hortatory conspiracy rhetoric and more presidential-sounding religious rhetoric. Although, Nixon continually uses terministic binaries to describe the USA and USSR, his deft substitution of religious vocabulary for conspiracistic terms avoids fear mongering and explicitly dichotomous fear appeals in the paranoid style. His terms divide us from them, and divide and weaken the Soviets internally but without a clear call to action, it is difficult to categorize Nixon's fear

appeals as wholly dichotomous. The liberal pluralist frame and didactic tone of the overall speech restrains civic fear and refrains from the warnings and appeals to prudence which civic republicans use to inspire courageous action. Therefore using puritanical terms within a mostly liberal-pluralist ideology allows Nixon to use a more didactic tone and avoid dichotomous fear appeals. Overall, the effect of substituting religious terms for terms derived from "to conspire" is that Nixon can still denounce the communist conspiracy, while rarely having to name it as such. Thus Nixon is pragmatic in his ideology, fear appeals, and terminology, before even considering the inner-textual evaluative criteria.

The two criteria from the political style are a non-perfected scapegoat and an overall conductive argument. Nixon does not use a comic plot in this speech – briefly evidenced by his plain statement that communism in USSR is a "comedy of errors that is unfortunately also a tragedy" (Para. 67). This means that although Nixon finds the communist philosophy laughably absurd, the fact that it overtook Russia and now oppresses the Russian people is a tragedy. In articulating these mixed sentiments, Nixon avoids a uniform plot.

The text has neither a recent key cardinal function regarding communism nor the Soviet Union. Regarding the former, Nixon argues communism has been twisted since Marx and Engels wrote the Manifesto in 1848 (Para. 22). Regarding the latter, Nixon claims that Russians have a penchant for tyranny that even predates the Soviet Union – "an explanation for this condition [is] in Russian history with its bloody and irregular successions of czars" (Para. 50). Neither of these accounts of the conspiracy's origins is recent.

The first clear criterion of the political style in the text is the non-perfected scapegoat. This may result from the text's didactic nature, but Nixon hesitates to perfect either the ideology of communism or the Soviet Union as conspiratorial scapegoat – even when he is on the doorstep

of perfection. By example, Nixon first calls communism not only "The major problem confronting… the [US]," but also "free people everywhere." Nixon then changes gears, writing "this struggle probably will not be decided in the military…. The battle in which we are engaged is primarily one of ideas" (Para. 6). Here Nixon eschews mention of the "militant aggressiveness of international communism" (Para. 1), and chalks it up to what is "probably" just a clash of faiths. This language of uncertainty is a caveat that de-escalates Nixon's prior, harsher characterizations of communism. Then after another harsh paragraph criticizing the "weaknesses of communism as a system" (Para. 9), Nixon adds an odd paragraph that addresses the strengths and accomplishments of communism in education and science (Para. 10). This pragmatic gesture is strategic, though, placating readers who know "the curious fact that the literature of communism contains so many praises for the achievements of capitalism" (Para. 21).

The rest of the text is mostly comprised of exhaustive discussions on the economic, legal, and historical philosophies of the communist faith. Throughout, Nixon teeters on the brink of perfecting their faith as scapegoat, even listing failed communist "prophecies" and the moribund proclamation that "the communist brain will inflict serious damage on itself by the tortured rationalizations with which it has to explain each successive bad guess" (Para. 65). But when the reader thinks communism is beyond reclamation, Nixon again retraces his invective – conceding the "achievements of Russian technology." The catch however, is that "none of the solid accomplishments of modern Russia came about by methods remotely resembling anything anticipated by Marx, Engels, or Lenin" (Para. 78), and instead were brought about when communism made capitalistic concessions in the market – what Nixon twice calls the "gray market." Because the Soviets are internally divided between Marxist fanatics and the many "intelligent" citizens who pragmatically veer from Marxist devotion, "the fringe of serious

thought represented by active communist belief has become abraded to the point of near

extinction" (Para. 67). Therefore, for Nixon, the abraded ideology and the divided polity of

Russia are non-perfected scapegoats in the communist conspiracy.

The second clear political-style criterion in the text is the overall *conductive*

argumentative structure. The argumentative structure revolves around three explicit *philosophies*

laid out in the preview: "I want to discuss communism as an idea – its economic philosophy, its

philosophy of law and politics, its philosophy of history" (Para. 11). To this I would add the

implicit inclusion of communism's moral philosophy in the text. The text, however, does not

cover each philosophy in a linear order, and they do not deductively lead to one unifying claim

or inductively build a comprehensive conclusion from these parts. Instead, the text intertwines

sections of argumentation on each topic, then covers and recovers those same topics with added

nuance. Together, Nixon argues that through these intermingled philosophies, "communism has

appeared as a kind of nightmare" (Para. 77). Here Nixon could have conclusively said

communism is *the nightmare* to Americans, or the biggest among a few nightmares – but he did

not. Nixon conductively leaves communism as just a kind, that moreover, is "shot through and

through with absurdities" (Ibid). Without a clear call to action in the speech's peroration, the

audience is left to make sense of how this loose argument against the philosophies of

communism affects them, and the intuitive auditors may well make a conclusive leap about the

need to continually educate themselves and guard themselves and America at large against the

wiles of communistic absurdities. This conclusion is not explicit, though.

Considering elements of the paranoid style in the text, two are clearly present – pedantry

and circular arguments. As previously stated, a scapegoat is not perfected in this speech, and

neither is communism constructed as an, all-powerful, all-encompassing cabal. Instead Nixon

argues communism is internally divided and weakening in the Soviet Union. Nixon is not trying to incite another Red Scare, instead he is trying to reinforce American's disdain for communism through education, and the possible bi-product may be that poor and "vulnerable" countries, such as Cuba, may be empowered through this knowledge, and eschew communism's siren song.

The first clear element of paranoia in Nixon's conspiracism can be seen in the text's circular arguments. As Nixon's texts lengthen and progress in style from the "Maiden Speech" to "The Meaning of Communism," the number of fallacies also has increased – including circular logic (which is not mutually exclusive to conductive argumentation, especially in a lengthy, complex and pragmatic text). The first circular argument is Nixon claim that communism is no longer a major threat to America since we abhor it so much. If abhorrence slides into ignorance, however, than we again are vulnerable to an alluring communist philosophy. "We cannot be content with simply an intuition that communism is wrong" (Para. 7). This line of argument allows Nixon to claim that blind hatred is insufficient, since the blind could be misled or proselytized by another belief – blind faith in communism. In sum, ignorant Americans may be wooed by communism, but intelligent Russians will be wooed by the freedom of capitalism.

The other significant circular argument in the text deals with the concept of compromise. Here Nixon puts the Soviets in a tight double bind, claiming that when they stick to Marxist ideals and theory they are fanatics, but when they compromise and temporarily introduce capitalistic market principles, they are weak and hypocritical (Para. 36). Thus, communism is bad because it is unlike capitalism, but if it makes an "embarrassing concession" (Para. 37) to capitalism it is worse because the system is then wracked with duplicity. The assumption is that Marxist theory is inherently negative, thus all Soviet policy guided by that theory is unredeemable.

The second definitive element of paranoia in this text is Nixon's *pedantic* discussion of communist ideology and Soviet policy. In a pamphlet titled "The Meaning of Communism to Americans" one should explain the *meaning of communism*; however, writing twenty-four detailed pages on an ideology's historical, legal and economic philosophies, and enumerating corresponding Soviet policies, is excessive in the campaign-pamphlet genre. This pedantic discussion of communist philosophy and Soviet policy starts on page two and ends on page seventeen of the pamphlet (Para.s 7-84). In this section Nixon walks the reader through Marx and Engel's theory. First Nixon outlines their stages of history, progressing from feudalism to capitalism and communism (Para. 17). Accompanying each stage Nixon mentions the corresponding dominant class – aristocracy, bourgeoisie, and proletariat, respectively. Nixon then quotes more than a paragraph of the "Manifesto" (Para. 22) before becoming embroiled in the Soviet economy. Here Nixon delving into the excruciating economic minutia of wages, inflation, taxes, supply and demand, principle, market forces, cronyism, etc. All the while Nixon contrasts their system to the benefits of capitalism, such as, "Managerial efficiency promoted by substantial economic incentives in the form of bonuses" (Para. 28). Many passages like this exemplify pedantry indicative of the paranoid style.

Nixon then sets up a binary between constitutional democracy and tyranny, which shapes the rest of the text. Regarding law, ours is a "check on power" that ensures rights; their law is an "expression of power" that becomes all pervasive (Para. 54). Although our voting age (21) may be higher than theirs (18), they can only vote for one party (Para.s 47-9). Shifting from law to the false prophecies of Marx and Engels, Nixon outlines the "tacit and explicit" prophecies that he believed were proven false (Para.s 63-5). This segues into the "brutalities and absurdities" of communism, a faith full of "fictions and contractions" (Para.s 66-74). Significantly, Nixon here

lays out the "three ingredients" for the communist faith: 1. organize the masses into a "faceless army;" 2. direct them down the path of progressive history toward communism; 3. juxtapose these believers against non-believing scapegoats to preserve a unity described by Nixon as a "double identification" – "History belongs to the proletariat, the proletariat belongs to history" (all quotes, Para. 74). This is theory, though, and in a pointed fashion, Nixon ends with the brutalities of Russian leadership, exemplified in the power struggle for the office of Premier after Lenin's death. Nixon alludes to that battle between Trotsky and Stalin, emphasizes that Stalin is a tyrant, and concluding with a quote from Aristotle that would haunt Nixon's own presidency: "we do not permit a man to rule, but the principle of law, because a man rules in his own interest, and becomes a tyrant" (Para. 87). The presence of tyrannical rule is self-serving in Nixon's argument: the Soviets lack law, because its founders outlined non-legal philosophy. Furthermore without law, there can be no morality for Nixon, thus communism is immoral. He ends the pedantic text with this roundabout, possibly *circular* argument – his two paranoid criteria at once.

Overall, in this campaign pamphlet a middle-career Nixon pragmatically employs elements of the two conspiracy styles equally. At times, the movement between styles in this second text is perplexing, especially when Nixon avoids seemingly obvious rhetorical moves: stopping short of constructing an all-encompassing cabal, taking a position between tragic and comic plotting, dividing without using dichotomous fear appeals, and blending three macro-ideologies (liberal pluralism, civic republicanism, and Puritanism). Moreover it is practically befuddling when Nixon mentioned the "strengths" of communism that tempt converts. But only one year removed from his trip to USSR and forging mutual-respect with Khrushchev in the "Kitchen Debate," Nixon's begrudging praise of some communist "strengths" is strategic.

Although he does not mention Khrushchev by name, Nixon clearly alludes to him, writing, "It must not be forgotten that modern Russia was for an indefinite period prior to 1953 governed by a tyranny" (Para. 87). Mentioning the year Khrushchev came to power as the year tyranny ended in the Soviet Union positions Nixon, if elected, to continue the diplomatic relations that began with the "Kitchen Debate." Thus, not only is conceding one or two accomplishments to communism a reasonable strategy for a presidential campaign and this logos-centric pamphlet, but restrained praise of both the Premier and a few of his country's accomplishments may be a harbinger that Nixon already wanted his legacy issue to be detente with the USSR – which he eventually achieved with Brezhnev in 1972.

Therefore, Nixon is pragmatic on multiple levels: 1. using two criteria from both conspiracy styles, 2. looking for the "cash value" of communist theory so as to understand it and teach it to the people, and 3. moving between texts, Nixon has gone from predominantly paranoid in the first text's conspiracy rhetoric to being equally political in this second text – if only the evaluative criteria are considered. Considering his melded ideology and the absence of dichotomous fear appeals, I argue the balance tips slightly to favor the political style in "The Meaning of Communism to Americans."

"The Hiss Case" (from Six Crises, 1962)

In the third and final text, Richard Nixon's conspiracism is its most pragmatic. In this book chapter, "The Hiss Case," Nixon reminisces about the case that brought him national fame, prosecuting the high-profile American communist, Alger Hiss. This case, in the summer and fall of 1948, came about a year and a half after "The Maiden Speech" and Gerhart Eisler. But by the time Nixon's memoir was published, he had been off the HUAC committee for over a decade: first as Senator for two years, then Vice President for eight years, and at the time of publication,

out of politics following losses for President in 1960 and Governor of California in 1962.

Therefore, Nixon writes to rehabilitate his national profile and position himself for future

political office. To do so he writes about his greatest political hits and the first of his Six Crises

was prosecuting Alger Hiss.

Time had not softened Nixon's memory of Hiss, though. The veracity with which Nixon

denounces the communist conspiracy, and Hiss as a conspirator, had not faded in the ensuing

fourteen years – as evidenced in the tone and pedantic recounting throughout the seventy-one-

page chapter titled "The Hiss Case." My focus within this lengthy text is the last eleven pages, in

which Nixon uses words derived from "to conspire" six times (pp. 61-71). In these pages Nixon

reverts to styling Hiss and communism in the paranoid style (similar to text one). Nixon, though,

after years of dealing with communism, is finally fully-paranoid, and constructs the conspiracy

in all four evaluative criteria indicative of the paranoid style. In doing so, Nixon attempts to

defiantly recount the Hiss case, supersede those who have continued to portend Hiss was a

victim, and vindicate his antecedent political success – which had often been criticized as fame

obtained leading a Hiss witch-hunt.

Fascinatingly, just as Nixon buries the communist conspiracy in a paranoid grave, the

political style arrests the pragmatist. While pedantically perfecting an all-powerful communist

scapegoat, Nixon simultaneously introduces a new "liberalist" conspiracy fully in the political

style – with all four political-style criteria attributed to this new conspiracy. Nixon uses this new

conspiracy to vindicate himself from the lingering critique of "red herring" heaped on the Hiss

investigation by none other than Democratic President Harry Truman. Speaking against a former

President is a major constraint, which Nixon fit by using the political style to construct Truman

as a mistaken, non-perfected scapegoat. The detailed analysis and discussion below examines

why a pragmatic conspiracist may place these paranoid and political conspiracies side by side within this third text.

Communist Conspiracy: Paranoid Style

Considering Nixon's paranoid conspiracism, the entire chapter clearly perfects Hiss as scapegoat – the first evaluative criteria. After naming each member of Hiss' spy ring and their important positions in either government or industry, Nixon concludes that Hiss and his gang were not ordinary spies. "Some, like Hiss, reached positions so high in government that they could influence policy directly" (p. 63). Nixon believes the (alleged) affected American policy aligning it with the Soviets. Therefore, looking back, Nixon writes that he is very pleased to have had the honor of being part of a case that resulted in "a guilty man [being] sent to prison who otherwise would have remained free" (p. 70). Hindsight and the fact that a jury convicted Hiss of perjury in 1949 build Nixon's ethos on this point – hence the full-perfection of Hiss as scapegoat.

Although he offers little proof on this point, Nixon alleges Hiss was maliciously spying for, and in cahoots with, the Kremlin. The reader is reminded of the Pumpkin Papers (p. 67), and that this evidence proved Hiss stole at least seventy classified documents from the US government. But even more than this material treason, what disturbs Nixon is *why* Hiss worked as a communist conspirator. Nixon checks off all the "typical" reasons for someone to become a traitorous spy: bribery, power, psychological trauma, being duped or "led astray by his wife" (p. 66). These reasons may not be excusable, but they are conscionable to Nixon. But none of these were the reason behind Hiss' espionage. According to Nixon, "[Hiss] joined the Communist Party… because he deeply believed in Communist theory… principles, and [their] 'vision' of the ideal society still to come" (pp. 66-7). Compared to bribes or power, Nixon sees belief in the

absurd communist faith as unforgiveable. Fleshly temptations snare the weak, but a deeper belief in communism is totally depraved: "Hiss followed his beliefs deliberately and consciously to the utmost logical extreme" – becoming a spy (p. 67).

The second paranoid criterion is Nixon's depiction of an *all-encompassing* communist cabal. In the two previous texts Nixon refrained from making the international communist conspiracy a real domestic threat, but not now. Out of public office, Nixon finally attributes an all-pervasiveness nature to the cabal. The aim of this rhetorical move may be to incite fear in Nixon's audience, and a desire for a strong leader who has a track record of ardent anti-communism. Unlike the first two texts, Nixon does not claim America is a final bastion of freedom, or a safe haven. Instead he equates American communism "part and parcel" (p. 65) with the communist international. "The Hiss case, for the first time, forcibly demonstrated to the American people that domestic Communism was a real and present danger to [national] security" (p. 62). Moreover, the Hiss spy ring was not weak and alone; the threat of "Communism *in* the United States is multiplied a thousandfold because of its direct connection with… the world Communist conspiracy centered in Moscow" (p.65 – emphasis mine). To further emphasize this fearful linkage, Nixon repeats the phrase "Communist conspiracy *at home* and abroad," (p. 69, 71 – emphasis mine), twice at the end of the chapter, including the final line. These terms reify Nixon's previous speculation about the growth of the communist cabal, first internationally and now domestically. Reflecting on the Hiss case over a decade later, Nixon thinks the threat did not go away with Hiss' conviction or the dissipation of Hoover's Red Hunt and McCarthyism. Instead, Nixon warns, in perhaps his most paranoid moment, "that most dangerous period of a crisis, [is] after the battle is over" (p. 69). This gives Nixon license to be perpetually on guard, wary of the "invisible" manifestations of conspiracy that could be anywhere (p. 65). Nixon now

depicts communism as a "chimera" (p. 68);[221] a grotesque and fantastical monster.[222] Thus

constructed, communism is an apocalyptic union of two paranoid criteria: an all-encompassing

cabal, and a fully-perfected scapegoat.

The third paranoid element in this text is the presence of circular arguments. The most

obvious circular argument in the text is Nixon's denunciation of both the "radical right" and the

"radical left" (pp. 65-6). Positioning himself as mainstream, Nixon uses this "radical" binary to

observe the left baldly denies the existence and "danger of Communism at home," even after the

Hiss conviction. This denial of clear evidence by the left forces the radical right to be

reactionary, and search for more communists to expose. When leftists cry foul regarding civil

rights and liberties, it refuels indignation among hardline conservatives convinced of the

presence of espionage (think McCarthy) and the left's willful blindness to it. The right then uses

any means to justify its ends. Soon, Nixon argues, radical left and right turn on each other with

charges of conservative "red-baiting" and labeling liberals as "pink."

The fourth, and last, paranoid element in the text is Nixon's pedantry. Throughout the

chapter Nixon repeats the details of the Hiss case in minute detail. Not only does Nixon give a

specific timeline of events (testimony before committee, sub-committee, grand jury and trials)

and the corresponding press coverage, but Nixon details the uncovering of each key piece of

evidence (the apartment, rug, car, typewriter, pumpkin papers, and even a "prothonotary

warbler"), the struggle with the Truman Administration and Justice Department, and recounts

verbatim large portions of transcript from all hearings with Whitaker Chambers, Alger Hiss, and

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[221] The origin of the word "chimera" is Greek for "she-goat." The most common depiction of this farcical, fire-breathing monster is that of a creature with a lion head and body, a goat head emerging from the middle of the creature's back, and a serpent's tail – the tip of the tail is the snakehead. Thus the creature has three heads.
[222] *Webster's New World College Dictionary*, 4th edition, Foster City, CA: IDG Books Worldwide, Inc., 2001, 255.

Mrs. Hiss. Nixon ends with a recap of the two trials and eventual conviction of Hiss, and a coda

stating each principles' personal outcome – including length of prison sentences and the current

occupations for Chambers and Hiss. In Nixon's fashion, and in the paranoid style, it is a long,

pedantic retelling, never passing up an opportunity to display Nixon's vigilant meticulousness.

Liberalist Conspiracy: Political Style

Even as he lays the anti-communist conspiracy to rest, Nixon turns his attention to an

alleged "liberalist" conspiracy. This maneuver allows Nixon to still play the victim, even after

the communist threat has been perfectly scapegoated in Hiss. Attributing the conceptual term to

political journalist Eric Sevareid (p. 67), Nixon strategically uses "liberalist" to disassociate

himself (a "classic liberal") from the Democratic demagogues who criticized his conduct in the

Hiss hearings. Similar to his substitution of religious terms in the second text, Nixon

pragmatically understands it is best to avoid the use of *conspiracy* vocabulary implicating

mainstream, American, political figures. Truman is the case in point. Whenever Nixon comes

close to associating Truman too closely with conspiracy, or liberals with communists, Nixon

balks, and instead says "liberalist."

The first criterion of the political style is the recent key cardinal function of the liberalist

junta. Nixon claims the origin of liberalists protecting communists only dates back to 1939 –

when Whitaker Chambers first accused Hiss of being a spy (p. 63). The fact that the Justice

Department made no enquiry into Chamber's allegations at that time, or the "several times

thereafter," proves to Nixon that FDR's New Deal and Truman's Square Deal were tinted pink.

Fortunately Nixon and HUAC opened a full investigation of Chamber's charges in 1948,

preventing further infiltration of communists into governmental positions. Although Nixon

interprets these circumstances as the willful protection of communists by liberalists, the key cardinal function of this conspiracy was recent, and thanks to Nixon, righted within a decade.

The second criterion of the political style is Nixon's non-perfecting of Truman as scapegoat. Truman's duplicity on the matter of communism confounded Nixon at first. This is due to the fact that "No one would question the tough-minded anti-communism of the man who had so boldly initiated the… Marshall Plan" (p. 64). But nevertheless, Nixon saw Truman as the leader of the general "pooh-pooh[ing]" of the Hiss case by "the press and intellectual community" (p. 69) through Truman's numerous references to the investigation as a "red herring." Nixon eventually attributes Truman's "unusual conduct" (p. 64) to the influence of his 1948 re-election campaign, because such "blindness" (p. 63) to clear facts, and "stubbornness" (p. 64), could have no other explanation for Nixon. Instead of heeding new evidence in a non-partisan manner, Truman pandered to his "liberalist" base and downplayed the threat of domestic communism. Playing politics may have been negligent, but it was not a sinister-enough motive for Nixon to perfect a former President as scapegoat. After all, Nixon was familiar with the brand of pragmatism that places gamesmanship and political self-interest ahead of consistency.

Nixon's gamesmanship segues into this text's comic plot, its third political-style, anti-liberalist rhetorical element. First Nixon writes Truman "inherited" the Hiss-case cover-up from the FDR years (1939). Furthermore, Nixon does not fault the incoming Truman Administration for following "an outworn political rule of thumb: leave the political skeletons hidden in the closet with the door locked" (p. 64). When Chambers, HUAC, and Nixon unlocked that door and produced evidence against a former State Department official, however, the liberalist plot shifted from "laxity" to "negligence" (p. 63). Being misled by "blindness" and "stubbornness," though, is still a far cry from the traitorous evil Nixon attributed to Hiss and the paranoid communist

conspiracy. Therefore, Nixon casts Truman as a non-perfected scapegoat character in a recent, and comic, liberalist plot to refrain from investigating Chamber's allegations that communists were in the government.

Lastly, Nixon uses two conductive arguments in this text – one minor, one major. The minor conductive argument loosely associates Nixon and Chambers. Using the passive voice in his grammatical construction, Nixon writes two sentences in this text – one in the first full paragraph and one in the last – in which the reader actually does not know the antecedent of the sentences. Is Nixon referring to Chambers or himself? The first sentence is a précis of the Hiss case quoted from Chamber's book Witness: "Here, 'the two irreconcilable faiths of our time, Communism and Freedom, came to grips in the persons of two conscious and resolute men'." The ill-cited passage and its odd placement in the paragraph make it difficult to diagram the subject of the sentence. The reader knows the man representing the faith of communism is Hiss, but does Chambers or Nixon represent the faith of freedom? Being unclear in Chamber's original book, Nixon's quotation makes the double-voiced claim doubly confusing as to who really represents the faith of freedom. In the second quote, Nixon writes in a long last sentence: "through that case, a guilty man was sent to prison who otherwise would have remained free; a truthful man was vindicated who otherwise would have been condemned a liar" (p. 71). The guilty man is Hiss, but this quote is even less clear in specifying whether the truthful/vindicated man is Chambers or Nixon. Another option open to the reader's interpretation is that Nixon is conductively attributing these qualities to both Chambers *and* himself.

The second, more important, conductive argument is Nixon's dual-construction of both communist and liberalist conspiracies within the text. As I have shown in this analysis, the speech creates a communist conspiracy in the paranoid style, replete with all four criteria. Next

to that, without saying the word "conspiracy," Nixon creates the "liberalist" in the political style

of conspiracy, including all four of its criteria. Deftly, Nixon never claims the two are "co-

conspirators;" instead, he relies merely on the spatial placement of the two side-by-side. Placed

in that way, they enter the readers mind side-by-side. Then, similar to cerebral hemispheres, their

contact allows a conductive transmission, in which the conspiracistic qualities of the perfected

communist jump the synapses, conducting a charge into the second, "liberalist," hemisphere.

This process is the macro conductive structure of the speech, but can be seen in micro when

Nixon recalls the "prevailing opinion in the country… was probably that the Communists were

nothing but a handful of noisy but relatively harmless left-wingers" (p. 62). Nixon here conflates

left-wingers/liberalists with communism in one sentence, without writing, verbatim, "liberalists

are communists." Especially those in the media, universities, and the bureaucracy are

"vulnerable" to the communist appeal (p. 67). These groups of liberalists happen to be the people

Nixon would later rail against in the transcripts of his secret oval-office tapes.[223] Only then, the

"liberalists" had become Nixon's perfected scapegoats in a tragic plot against his presidency.

Like Hofstadter's theory of a paranoid leader, it seems Nixon imbibed an increasingly personal

view of history in his late career. Future scholarship may study if in fact *conspiracy* was the only

thing conducted from the communist to the liberalist. Or does this text, and its conduction, also

mark the beginning of what would become a complete transmission of Nixon's *paranoia* from

communist to liberalist scapegoat?

     To conclude the third text, and my analysis chapter, a word about ideological framing and

fear appeals is in order. Even though Nixon uses the paranoid style in this text's anti-

communism, I argue he uses the civic republican frame overall. Whether warning about

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[223] Kenneth Hughes, Jr., "Nixon vs. the Imaginary 'Jewish Cabal'," *History News Network*, 2007. Accessed online at hnn.us/articles/42970.html, 2012.

improved screening for federal employees to prevent future espionage (p. 63) or encouraging

readers to use the principle of *freedom* as a "method to fight communism" (p. 65), Nixon

continually warns citizens to be vigilant in guarding the fragile state.

Where civic republicanism and civic fear appeals have worked in tandem previously,

however, this text diverges. In his construction of a liberalist conspiracy in the political style,

Nixon divides the populous. Furthermore, in creating conductive categories of Hiss/communist

and Truman/liberalist, Nixon creates associative binaries. Since these two types of conspirators

and two styles of conspiracies are in cahoots, Nixon claims the co-mingling strengthens the

movement of the chimera into "every part of the world" (p. 62). Exposing this "decay of the

philosophy called 'liberalism'" into a "heresy called Communism" (p. 62) inspires dichotomous

fear, which paralyzes the reader. Therefore, in addition to constructing two conspiracies in

different styles, Nixon goes one pragmatic step further, and crosses ideological framing in the

political style with dichotomous fear appeals in the paranoid style.

Analysis Recap.

Through my analysis of these three texts, I have described Nixon's long-term strategic

use of pragmatic conspiracy rhetoric. In his first text, the "Maiden Speech," I find Nixon to be

mostly paranoid, using three paranoid evaluative criteria and only one from the political style.

Although Nixon uses some dichotomous fear, the preponderance of his fear appeals is civic,

within the civic republican frame, calling for courage and civic action.

In the second text, a pamphlet titled "The Meaning of Communism to Americans" from

Nixon's 1960 Presidential campaign, I find two evaluative criteria from the political style and

two from the paranoid style. When the text's liberal-pluralist ideological frame, absence of

dichotomous fear appeals and clear call to action are considered, however, the text moves toward the political end of the conspiracy spectrum.

In the third text, after his losses for President and Governor of California, Nixon finally constructs the communist conspiracy in a fully-paranoid style, including all four paranoid evaluative criteria. In this complex text, however, Nixon then starts to construct a new conspiracy, the "liberalist," wholly within the political style – including all four of its criteria. Therefore within one text I find two complete conspiracies pragmatically being constructed in two separate styles. If not pragmatic enough, Nixon does all this within the civic republican frame while inspiring dichotomous fear. This mixing of framing and fear is a-typical, compared to a more typical use of civic republicanism to inspire civic fear and appropriate action. Therefore, across the span of the three texts, and even within individual texts, Nixon's movement between stylistic criteria, ideological framing, and fear appeals exemplifies his pragmatic conspiracy rhetoric.

DISCUSSION:

In this study, I argue Richard Nixon's conspiracy rhetoric falls outside the paranoid-political binary. At this stage of his career, Nixon is unlike the archetypical examples of paranoid leaders in Burke and Hofstadter's work – unlike the militant leader, Hitler, and the uncompromising leader, McCarthy. Furthermore, Nixon's rhetoric is also dissimilar from Pfau's archetypical example of a political conspiracist – Abraham Lincoln. Through rhetorical criticism of three Nixon texts, my assessment has emerged: Nixon's rhetoric pragmatically uses both existing styles, and that is the primary reason he does not neatly fit the mold left by former conspiracy rhetors in the scholarship.

Nixon's pragmatism, which was shaped by his upbringing, results in his strategic, self-serving rhetoric, and his correlative political ascendency. It seems that Nixon understood a core conspiracist principle in his rhetorical attempts to gain or regain political fame: "audiences are more easily inflamed against *conspirators* than against *conspiracies*."[224] In other words, a person (communist) is more tangible than an idea, and easier for an audience to conceptualize, direct blame at, and punish. As an unknown Representative, with a Democratic Administration in power (Truman), Nixon was willing to inflame his audiences though hortatory conspiracy rhetoric, look state-side, and perfect individuals as scapegoats (Eisler and Hiss). But when Nixon became well-known and a member of the current Republican Administration (Eisenhower), he attempted to sound reasonable/presidential, using non-hortatory rhetoric, with an international focus, to create a non-perfected, abstract scapegoat (communism).

Thus, Nixon pragmatically understood, however intuitively, when to be aesthetically sensitive, and when to be stylistically anesthetized. This understanding led to his corresponding use of more-paranoid or more-political conspiracy rhetoric depending on the situation. I argue this knowledge of, and adherence to, "decorum in order to understand and act to advantage within a social situation was… an essentially pragmatic approach."[225] This pragmatic approach, through understanding and action, was the crux of Nixon's conspiracy rhetoric and was likely what made it effectively epitomized early Cold War style.

Overall, Nixon perceived rhetorical situations more deftly than his contemporaries. He more quickly perceived political exigencies, better adapted (pragmatically) to situational constraints, and styled his political rhetoric to changing decorum more fittingly than other anti-communist conspiracists of his time. This may be evidenced by the fact that the era was

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[224] Pfau, *The Political Style of Conspiracy*, 119 – emphasis mine.
[225] Hariman, *Political Style*, 182.

infamously named for McCarthy, while Nixon, through another pragmatic response to the political climate, read the tealeaves, tempered his anti-communism while under Eisenhower, and ultimately left McCarthy holding the bag. Only after Nixon was out of politics and trying to regain the limelight did he again discuss domestic communism, glorify his own role in "The Hiss Case," and refocus on hortatory rhetoric against a tangible conspirator. Therefore, throughout Nixon's first political ascendancy, his brand of politically-savvy pragmatism propelled him in front of ever-growing audiences, where his adaptability and conspiracism gained a large political following.

A few implications about conspiracy rhetoric within the field can be extrapolated from this study. First, conspiracy is not only paranoid or political, it can also be pragmatic. In studying a tricky rhetor, it is evident that pragmatism, the underlying philosophy of an agency-focus, was the underlying philosophy that fueled Nixon's rhetorical fluidity. Second, conspiracism is a form of agency for a rhetor, and if it is "pragmatic conspiracism," it is doubly agentic. This is because if one used the phrases "pragmatic agency" (in Burkean terms) or "agentic conspiracism" (in Zarefsky's terms) both would be redundant, as a pragmatically-focused philosophy *precedes* agency, and conspiracism *is* a type of agency. Furthermore, if one wrote "pragmatic conspiracistic agency," I argue it would be akin to writing "agency agency agency." A third implication of this study is that if a scholar is looking for a pragmatic conspiracist, he or she may initially select a rhetor who imbibes an economic viewpoint of free-market capitalism. This is because, as Burke reminds us, capitalists look for the "cash value" of an idea.[226] Thus in capitalistic rhetoric the speaker, their method, and the topic may all be pragmatic. Nixon, I argue, is an ideal case study, since his upbringing, his issue of expertise (pro-capitalism/anti-communism), and the agency with which he denounced that issue (overlapping conspiracy

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[226] Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*, 277.

styles) are all pragmatic. A possible example for further study on pragmatism may be Ron Paul,

and his pro-free market/anti-Federal Reserve rhetoric. A fourth implication of this study is that

conspiracist rhetoric not only can pragmatically contain both paranoid and political evaluative

criteria, but a tricky conspiracist can also use multiple ideological framings across speeches or

within a single speech. Although Nixon primarily used civic republican framing in the first and

third texts, he also employed a liberal pluralist frame when embodying the role of didactic expert

in the second text, and at least partially used a Puritanical frame as evidenced by his liberal use

of religious terminology. A fifth implication of this study regards fear. It seems that focusing on

a tangible scapegoat (conspirator) promotes dichotomous fear and a tendency toward paranoia.

Focusing on a vague conspiracy (like communism as a whole), on the other hand, allows the

pragmatist to use civic fear appeals and remain more consistently within the political style.

Finally, this study implies that a pragmatic rhetor such as Nixon varies his or her use of

rhetorical proofs. This is evidenced in the three primary texts of this study as Nixon

predominantly relies on pathos, then logos, and then ethos respectively.

Future scholarship may determine if events in Nixon's presidency, such as Watergate and

his resignation, correlate to my findings on his antecedent rhetoric. My suspicion is that as the

placement of communist and liberalist side-by-side in the third text conductively transmitted

conspiracy from the former to the latter, likewise, as Nixon's presidency grew more isolated, that

insulation caused another conductive transmission to the liberalist – this time a transmission of

paranoia.

Despite what future scholarship may find conducted from early to late Nixon, his early

conspiracism has been useful in re-investigating the different conspiracy styles, and bridging the

formerly distinct paranoid-political binary. Future scholarship may likely find other rhetors who

do not fit that pre-existing binary, and like Nixon, move between the two styles, sampling from the evaluative criteria of each. Another option is that a wholly new style(s) of conspiracy rhetoric may emerge. If other rhetors are found to use pragmatism similarly to Nixon, it may be possible that a distinct "pragmatic style" of conspiracy could emergence, whereas hallmarks may include fluid ideological framing, a philosophical focus on agency, varied fear appeals, rhetoric centered on the inherently-pragmatic issue of capitalism, alternating focus on conspirators and conspiracies, and intermittent reliance on rhetorical proofs. For now, however, this study does not posit a wholly new style of conspiracy. Rather I have shown that Richard Nixon's rhetoric can reconfigure the paradigm of conspiracy styles as his pragmatism allowed him to move between and sample from the existing paranoid and political styles of conspiracy rhetoric.

Nixon's pragmatic style adhered to various decora and crystallized his epoch. For his time, Nixon's style was collective – a "cultural expression of an aesthetic *vibration*: this vibration may be harmonious or violently discordant… but collective style invokes a meaningful resonance among disparate, even 'contradictory,' social interests."[227] In other words, I believe this study's epigraph[228] is not just about Nixon's musical abilities, but characterizes, however coincidentally, his pragmatic style of conspiracy. "[Playing] the black and white notes together," in jazz makes a "blue note," and styles that musical genre. Likewise, Nixon's conspiracism (playing the paranoid and political notes together) was an overlapping of styles, he uniquely used to style his rhetoric and vivify his era – uniting Republican factions, fitting rhetorical situations, and pragmatically guiding his rising political star.

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[227] Vivian, "Style, Rhetoric, and Postmodern Culture," 230.
[228] "If you want to make beautiful music, you must play the black and the white notes together," Richard M. Nixon.

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- CRS 655, *Rhetorical Criticism*, Professor Amos Kiewe
- CRS 690, *Media and Politics: Maymester in Washington D.C.*, Professor Lynn Greenky
- REL 616, *The Torah as Scripture*, Professor James Watts
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