

The Rhetoric of American Decline: Paul Kennedy, Conservatives, and the Solvency Debate

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THE DEBATE OVER the ascent and decline of an American empire began in earnest with the 1987 publication of Yale Historian Paul Kennedy's book, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. This book, coupled with Kennedy's numerous public appearances, editorials and reviews, and an extensive article in *The Atlantic*, set forth an extremely volatile argument about the erosion of American power.¹ Kennedy detailed the collapse of societies which, like the United States, assumed the role of a great power among nations and then proceeded to devote more and more of their national treasure to the increase and maintenance of their spheres of influence. Kennedy's survey includes the Spanish, French, and British empires; his evidence consists of his own expertise as a historian, analogies between the course of past nations and that of the United States, and vast stores of quantitative data describing what Kennedy purports is the powerful impact of economic force on a nation's historic destiny. The provocative conclusion Kennedy draws from his research, with respect to the United States, is that the nation is experiencing grave and irreversible economic and military "decline"; this decline can only be mitigated by dramatically restructuring America's military and economic affairs.

Kennedy's audience included informed members of the public but seemed directed primarily to influential leaders within the foreign policy establishment. In fact, many liberals from both within and outside this establishment applauded Kennedy's thesis. They saw his ideas as providing a way to reconstitute America's global role in a post Cold War world and to wrench the public from its Reagan inspired, "rose-colored torpor."² Liberal historians and economists hailed Kennedy's argument as a healthy end of the era perspective and a movement toward "public purpose and idealism, a recoiling against greed."³ In the political arena,

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Kennedy's work attracted much attention from both Democratic and Republican officials, although only certain Democrats openly expressed interest in implementing his views.⁴ Kennedy's argument was aired throughout Congress; experts who advocated his thesis were enlisted as consultants by Democratic presidential candidates and State governors.⁵ A collection of prominent Democratic senators even formulated proposals based on Kennedy's work for what they termed "the end of the New Deal era."⁶

Kennedy's argument could not have come at a more tumultuous period in history. During the mid-1980's, the Cold War began to dwindle as the Soviet empire crumbled in a drastic fashion. We witnessed prodigious shifts in international economic power away from the United States toward Japan and the European Common Market. Political analyst Francis Fukuyama described this time in the most dramatic of terms, calling it "the end of history" as we have known it.⁷ The editors of the *New Republic* welcomed the decade optimistically, seeing it as a moment "no longer dominated by bipolar, ideologically charged competition," yet one requiring a "post-cold war paradigm."⁸ As historian Stanley Hoffman blithely put it, this momentous juncture in history obliged the United States "to rethink its role in the world, just as it was forced to do by the cataclysmic changes that followed the end of the Second World War."⁹ Clearly, for the first time since World War II, events had opened a space for a transitional if not an alternative discourse about foreign affairs. More particularly, the time seemed ripe to challenge the common ground of nationalism which had been the foundation of American foreign policy rhetoric for decades. The apparent end of the Cold War required that we reexamine our image as the supreme superpower, that we remake and reinterpret ourselves in light of a wholly new foreign and domestic agenda.¹⁰

This notion of coping with change was at the heart of Kennedy's position. Indeed, for Kennedy and his liberal allies, the Reagan administration's military and economic policies, which had dominated foreign and domestic affairs during the 1980's, were not only inappropriate for accommodating a fast transition but were actually accelerating America's descent as a "Great Power." But conservative leaders and policy-makers within the foreign policy community, especially neoconservatives—the intellectual architects behind Reagan foreign policies—strongly resisted Kennedy's argument.¹¹ They resisted because they perceived this period of major transition as one necessitating continued commitment to conservative government; they resisted, too, because they believed Kennedy's position to be a direct assault on their entrenched political power. Appealing to the public as well as to their own constituents within the foreign policy establishment, conservatives successfully weathered Kennedy's attack throughout the 1980's and early 1990's and forcefully reaffirmed continued allegiance to global democracy and the Reagan doctrine.

Having established the contours of what has come to be known as the "solveny" debate over American foreign policy, and realizing that the issues involved include the lives and deaths of millions of people and the destiny of powerful nations, we may turn to a rhetorical critique of it. My purpose here is to identify not only what the major points of clash are in the debate but the argumentative modes and dramatic formulae which structure the dispute. I wish to show how the rhetoric of this debate *rules out* certain issues and *transforms* the debate from a conflict over economics into a profound moral and political struggle between ruling elites over who is to maintain political authority. Specifically, I suggest that the ability of the antagonists to defend their political legitimacy during the solveny confrontation depended in part on the ways in which they articulated differing conceptions concerning the limits of American power and the role of "experts" and the "public" in the conduct of foreign affairs. However, as it will be demonstrated, the solveny debate leaves Americans with a tremendously vexing problem—to choose between two different and potentially dangerous views of American foreign policy. One view, advanced by "solveny" thinkers like Kennedy, threatens them with a significant loss of international power and a weakened national image. The other view, advocated by conservatives, threatens recurring vigilance and sacrifice, and future foreign interventions and Cold War should the United States maintain its long-standing international responsibilities. The rhetoric of this dispute leaves Americans with little way of transcending these exclusive definitions of American policy. Indeed, as we shall see, so deeply grounded is the response to Kennedy's argument in an all-encompassing, hegemonic nationalism, that alternative perspectives on foreign affairs have a difficult time gaining a legitimate forum.

TECHNOCRATIC REALISM AND PROPHETIC DUALISM

The solveny debate clearly takes place within what Philip Wander, in examining Vietnam, has called "technocratic realism" and "prophetic dualism." He argues that these argumentative modes are consciously used in American political rhetoric over matters of foreign policy. Technocratic realists see themselves confronting a complex array of economic and political issues, changing political coalitions and alliances, and advanced techno-scientific military systems. To cope with these challenges, technocratic realists eschew ideological pronouncements in favor of "hard-headed calculation" and exact rational analyses, conducted by experts who avoid dangerous emotionalism.¹² As a means of framing foreign policy arguments, technocratic realism includes three inventional principles: movement from simplicity to complexity, elevation of the "expert" to a privileged status, and focus on means rather than ends.¹³

Prophetic dualists, on the other hand, divide the world into the beneficent capitalism and democracy of the West and the dangerous

if not evil communism of the Soviets and their allies.¹⁴ Striking a highly moralistic profile, they picture the United States as uniquely prepared to intervene internationally because of its religious faith, its moral insight, and its democratic background. Prophetic dualism is informed by two inventional principles: First, by a belief in what Wander calls "Individualism."¹⁵ I take Wander to be referring to the idea that individuals can overcome even the most difficult of historical circumstance. Certainly, technocratic realism harbors an important place for individuals; but here the emphasis is on the rational skills individuals possess and less on other sources of enlightenment and action, such as democratic purpose, moral and religious insight, and patriotism. Such a version of individualism characteristic of prophetic dualism is evident in the discourse of several presidents, but especially in the rhetoric of Ronald Reagan. Reagan himself embodied the personae of rugged individualism; his rhetoric spoke of the unlimited potential of individuals to shape their historical destinies and to become central actors in America's quest for freedom.¹⁶ This notion of quest, also highlighted by Wander, represents the second inventional principle of prophetic dualism. In this argumentative mode, America is pictured as a "special" nation embarked upon a perilous crusade against world evil.¹⁷

These argumentative modes reflect what Kenneth Burke, in his *Attitudes Toward History*, calls "frames of acceptance and rejection"—or the highly organized, "characteristic responses of people in their forming and reforming of congregations."¹⁸ Burke claims that as individuals form groups or coalitions, they structure their discourse to these congregations by imposing "frames of acceptance and rejection. . . . the more or less organized systems of meanings by which a thinking man [sic] gauges the historical situation and adopts a role with relation to it."¹⁹ Burke adds that frames of acceptance and rejection can be categorized according to certain "poetic categories," or what I shall call dramatic formulae, that stress a "peculiar way of building the mental equipment" by which individuals cope with the significant historical exigencies of their time.²⁰ Thus, we might talk about a frame of acceptance or an argumentative mode as it is centered on the dramatic formulae of tragedy, comedy, irony, or romance—and inquire further about the particular view of history these formulae entail.

In the solvency debate, Kennedy frames his rejection of status quo foreign policies and his explication of American decline through the argumentative mode of technocratic realism and the dramatic formula of irony; the conservatives frame their defense of these policies through prophetic dualism and the dramatic lens of romance. Political parties or ideologies are not always associated with particular argumentative modes or dramatic formulae; but at certain times, under certain rhetorical pressures, these strategies become useful ways of dissenting against or maintaining established political power and policy positions, and therefore come to characterize one set of discourses over another.

Facing different rhetorical exigencies, liberal Kennedy and his conservative counterparts assume distinctly different argumentative modes. These modes are based on analysis of public speeches, books, editorials, and popular articles of major participants in the solvency debate, including Kennedy and his most vocal critics. Taken together, this discourse constitutes the most significant and widely accessible rhetoric disseminated by members of the foreign policy community.

What can these argumentative modes, their respective dramatic formulae, and their other inventional resources reveal about the nature of Kennedy's attempt to supplant the entrenched conservative position on foreign affairs during the solvency debate? We turn now to address this question.

KENNEDY AND THE ARGUMENT FOR AMERICAN DECLINE

Kennedy's primary rhetorical problem is to arouse action by creating a sense of imminent economic peril. Certainly he entertains other political and ideological ramifications of his argument. In the solvency debate, though, he focuses almost his entire assault on status quo foreign policies through the lens of economics. Kennedy suggests that history cannot be "gauged" in the more simplistic terms of the actions of one state against another; nor can it be comprehended as simply a matter of motivation, personality, ideology, or the role of great leaders and their publics. Structured as it is by technocratic realism, Kennedy's argumentative frame regarding American decline is guided by a scenic orientation to history, insofar as the actions of historical agents take place within and are constrained by a more encompassing economic scene.²¹ However, this scene is complex: economic shifts at one level cause political, social, and military changes at other levels. Furthermore, once these economic shifts take place, left unchecked, they develop a complicated design of their own, exerting what for Kennedy is a nearly inexorable influence over the course of history. Thus, Kennedy's focus on the economic scene is directly related to the technocratic impulse to move from simplicity to complexity.

Writing in *The Atlantic*, Kennedy describes this intricate economic scene in the precise and rational tone of technocratic realism. He notes that although "America's [foreign, military] commitments steadily increased after 1945, its share of world manufacturing and of world gross national product began to decline, at first rather slowly, and then with increasing speed" (29). For him, this initial increase over time, followed by a consequent decline in the nation's relative share of world production, is a natural feature of the economic scene and illustrates the precarious direction of American policy. Economic overexpansion at the base level of scene, combined with enlarging military obligations or what Kennedy calls "imperial overstretch" (32), pose "alarming implications for American grand strategy" at other levels when a nation's military

capacity and political consensus are reducible to its economic base (29). He carefully correlates other disquieting scenic trends—like the nation's falling "manufacturing and agriculture" and its debt-forming "budgetary policies"—with the nation's bleak economic situation (29-30). In the event of another long coalition war, Kennedy concludes, these trends will bring severe consequences and "cannot but be damaging" (32).

As Kennedy's argument unfolds, his tone becomes increasingly ominous and steadily conveys human inadequacy in the face of a powerful and encompassing economic scene. He looks to the tides of history not to focus on the heroic deeds of individuals but to draw analogies between past empires and the United States and to reveal the complex causal nature of the economic scene. He argues that the experiences of past empires have shown that "as the relative economic strength of number-one countries has ebbed, the growing foreign challenges to their position have compelled them to allocate more and more of their resources to the military sector" (33). So, if the scenic process of increasing outputs and decreasing growth is "the pattern of history," as Kennedy believes it is, then we must resign ourselves to our natural fate as a great power. As he concludes rather menacingly, "one is tempted to paraphrase Shaw's deadly quip and say: Rome fell. Babylon fell. Scarsdale's turn will come" (33). For Kennedy, there is nothing any single historical agent will be able to do to overcome this awesome scenic force.

Kennedy's caveat regarding American decline achieves a tone of even greater foreboding when we understand the "ironic" interpretation it imposes on history. Burke identifies the rhetorical functions of irony in a way that anticipates Kennedy's argument: "Irony, as approached through either drama or dialectic, moves us into . . . matters of prophecy and prediction in history. There is a level of generalization at which predictions about 'inevitable' developments in history are quite justified," so we can say "what arose in time must fall in time."²² But for Kennedy, irony appears to be more than a dramatic formula for interpreting historical change—it appears to be part of the very economic scene he is attempting to describe. Burke makes a similar point: True irony involves "an 'internal fatality,' a principle operating from within, though its logic may also be grounded in the nature of the extrinsic scene, whose properties contribute to the same development."²³ Thus, once we understand how we can interpret history ironically, rhetorical prophecies about the rise and decline of events in history can be made "more precise, with the help of irony, in saying that the developments that led to the rise will, by the further course of their development, 'inevitably' lead to the fall."²⁴

In Kennedy's scenic-ironic frame, the highly competitive and labyrinthine world of global affairs reveals the irony that "the Great Power is more likely to spend much more on defense than it did two generations earlier and yet still find the world to be less secure—simply because other powers have grown faster, and are becoming stronger" in

order to keep pace with them (34). Kennedy holds that maintaining international preeminence means great powers must fight wars, even "cold" ones. Yet, ironically, "by going to war, or by devoting a large share of the nation's 'manufacturing power' to expenditures upon 'unproductive' armaments, one runs the risk of eroding the national economic base" (539). In other words, Kennedy's ironic interpretation of history is meant to shatter old myths about American omnipotence, indicating that the attempt to maintain security and international preeminence through military expansion ironically precipitates the very decline and loss of security a great power seeks by its military actions to prevent. The United States, he explains, has employed just this strategy to achieve global preeminence. Yet this approach has led to the nation's precipitous fall from the superior position it strived so arduously to acquire.

Of course, making his sophisticated analyses credible creates a second rhetorical difficulty for Kennedy, particularly in light of the fact that during the 1980's, Ronald Reagan had turned public argument away from technical subjects like the deficit and trade, and directed it toward "loftier" and more ideological concerns.²⁵ Max Lerner is partially correct when he suggests that Kennedy's mechanical rendering of history and economics is attractive because it possesses the "seductiveness common to all 'prime mover' theories. It gives us hope that we can command the course of history."²⁶ More revealing is Kennedy's insistence that his technical diagnosis of America's ills requires technical agents and agencies to implement them, and that overwhelmed non-experts will naturally assent to his more intricate method. Thus, although Kennedy makes no pretensions to "commanding" history, his technical appraisal would seem to offer non-experts no alternative but to concede to him a certain authority for both analyzing and disposing of our terribly complicated difficulties.

Indeed, writing about decline in *The New York Times*, Kennedy shows why the choice over agency should be obvious. He responds to charges that he is an economic determinist by admitting that previous great powers declined not because of economic determinism, "but because cultural and ideological prejudices, an unwillingness to adapt to new methods, a propensity to spend on the present. . . all combined to prevent a renewal of the nation's productive base" (E27). In other words, nations decline because they cannot solve their problems and become blinded by ideological squabbling; their failure is one of agency—they lack historical insight and methodological ingenuity. He insists in *The Atlantic* that America's "statesmen" acknowledge the "need to manage affairs" (37); and following Bismark, he records in his book the necessity for careful management of foreign affairs, noting that nations are but "traveling on 'the stream of time,' which they can 'neither create nor direct,' but upon which they can 'steer with more or less skill and experience'" (540). Technical skill and experience, methodological competence,

analytic statesmanship—these are the unique means, acquired by an elite few, in which Kennedy wishes us to place our faith.

This focus on agencies or means, as Wander and Depoe point out, directs the technocratic realist to instrumentalities, to efficiency over morality, and to the realistic appraisal of national interests. Kennedy draws upon these resources to make economic management appear the most appropriate way of coping with America's woes. In *The Atlantic*, he argues that management alleviates "the relative erosion of America's position" in such a way that decline occurs efficiently, taking "place slowly and smoothly," and allows for proper economic foresight and efficiency, eliminating harmful "policies that bring short-term advantage but long-term disadvantage" (37). For Kennedy, improving America's management skill is in the nation's best interest. He believes the nation possesses the management acumen and the instruments required to achieve successful adjustment: "given the considerable array of strengths still possessed by the United States, it ought not in theory to be beyond the talents of successive Administrations to orchestrate this readjustment" (38). For Kennedy, the nation's instruments for economic renewal "remain considerable" (38). However, the efficient utilization of these instruments depends on a rational assessment of America's capabilities and national interests, on a "judicious recognition of both the limitations and the opportunities of American power" (38).

What role in economic management does Kennedy leave for the public within his argumentative frame? His portrayal of public action and the entire democratic process is as curious as his description of America's future is dark. In *The Atlantic* he takes exception to the suspect "political culture in which Washington decision-makers have to operate," the problems with an "electoral system that seems to paralyze foreign-policy decision-making every two years," the rise of "special interest groups," the mass media "whose raison d'être is chiefly to make money and only secondarily to inform," and "the still powerful escapist urges in the American social culture" (38). Like many technocratic realists, Kennedy expresses here a fundamental distrust not only of a public distracted by "escapist" urges, who "paralyze" policy making or place unreasonable demands upon their leaders—but in the whole process of democratic politics as well. In short, for Kennedy, in an all encompassing, complex scene, only technical agents are fit to examine the data and thus to participate in political debate. Expert elites are to rule at the precipice.

Kennedy's authority would therefore seem to be derived from the inherent credibility of technocratic realism itself. As such, his position has the appearance of an 'ideologically' neutral stance in which the technical expertise of the 'scientist,' not the "paralyzing" and unreliable views of the public, is brought to bear on managing the nation's economic difficulties. And the apparent neutrality of his position is heightened because its political agenda is framed as a response to forces of economic

maturation instead of as a profound national or ideological reconciliation.

Still a third rhetorical problem arises for Kennedy: His decline thesis appeared "unthinkable for [Reagan]. . . Bush and the Republican Party" and the conservative foreign affairs establishment, dethroning America from its superior global stature and thus admitting to "the cardinal sin of weakness."²⁷ Also his discourse is burdened by the fact that as the solvency controversy intensified, conservatives accused him of espousing economic determinism, Marxist Materialism, and dangerous moral relativism. Kennedy's third rhetorical problem, then, entails dissenting against the popular, enduring, and arguably successful foreign policies of the Reagan-Bush era, without seeming extremist.

Perhaps anticipating these charges, Kennedy's frame for dissenting utilizes what Chaim Perelman calls the argumentative technique of "dissociation," where an apparently unitary concept is divided into two parts by associating each part to a philosophical pair of terms. The first part contains an unfavorable connotation, the second is more favorable. Consequently, a previously single term has been split into a positive and a negative term.²⁸ Kennedy *dissociates* the terms "decline" and "relative" into their negative and positive parts. In so doing, he again expresses the technocratic impulse to stress means over ends and the belief in "hard-headed calculation," which together discern *real* problems and policy options from what are only apparent ones. Looking at decline, for example, he explains in *The Atlantic* that the United States must, after major restructuring of its military and economic affairs, also inevitably decline "to the position of occupying its natural share of the world's wealth and power, a long time into the future," what he calls a "relative" decline (36-37). However, when decline does occur, the nation will still remain "a very significant Power in a multipolar world" (37).

In these comments, Kennedy disregards conservative versions of decline as anathema to American experience by stripping the term of any ideological assumptions—decline is simply a "natural" historical phenomenon. Yet he retains the idea of decline as a realistic, "awkward and enduring fact" that should clue our leaders into recognizing "that the total of the United States's global interests and obligations is nowadays far too large for the country to be able to defend them all simultaneously" (36). Properly supervised, decline will leave the nation in a more manageable and defensible position in the new "multi-polar world."

Furthermore, though he is not beyond moralizing, as a technocratic realist, Kennedy tends to avoid strong attachments to moralism. His rhetoric lacks a traditional concept of evil; reprehensible things for him are viewed as technical obstacles. Thus, Kennedy *dissociates* the negative meaning of "relative" as it has been used by conservatives to label harmful liberal policies, from the positive meaning of relativism as he defines it vis-a-vis the "natural" decline of the United States. Kennedy

stresses in *The Atlantic* that his positive meaning of relativism refers to a "perfectly natural" historical process that is in no way moralistic or "absolute" (37). In fact, in the context of Kennedy's overall scenic-ironic frame, the relativized America arising from decline is still a formidable power. As he explains, even in "a multipolar system" where the military balance is "redistributed," "American economic and military strength is likely to remain greater than that of any other individual country but will cease to be as disproportionate as it was in the decades immediately after the Second World War" (37).

Therefore, if the ironic patterns of history, as Kennedy describes them, bind other great powers and doom them to economic erosion even as the United States consolidates its own resources, then American power will not be completely diminished. Hence, by dissociating America's "relative" decline from any hint of moral relativism, and then linking it with natural historical movement and economic management, he tries to make the goal of coping with decline appear no more than a technical realignment, a "readjustment" (38).

Here we have come to what I consider the heart of Kennedy's argument. Contrary to charges that his is an immoral, a pessimistic, or a Marxist-materialist perspective, Kennedy's technical rhetoric attempts to assimilate the most agreeable dimensions of various declinist philosophies of history: the economic orientation of Marxism without its revolutionary spirit or blanket materialism; the systematically derived rise and fall predictions of Spengler and Toynbee without the former's organicism or the latter's semi-religious, romantic framework. Kennedy seems to desire that his dissociated technocratic realism conveys a bodeful yet consolatory message that our civilization is not presently doomed, that we can at least gain a temporary reprieve from the currents of historical change. The rhetorical advantage of Kennedy's policies of retrenchment and his image of a relativized America, is that they are presented as only a limited threat to the legitimacy of American global influence. As a result, they would seem not very extremist at all. As he declares unequivocally in *The New Republic*, "the United States is [and will remain], economically and strategically, the clear leader of the Western Alliance" (33).

THE CONSERVATIVE RESPONSE

No sooner had Kennedy's works appeared in the public forum than did conservatives mount a steely and sustained response to them. Like Kennedy, conservatives encouraged a realistic assessment of American interests and admitted to limited economic, moral, and cultural difficulties; most of them, however, did *not* acknowledge significant decline. Although many conservatives provided their own detailed economic analyses of Kennedy's data, their argumentative frame was dominated by prophetic dualism; this frame resisted Kennedy's attack while it

simultaneously reconfirmed conservative policies and consolidated their standing political power.

Crucial to the conservative response is their ability to make Kennedy's argument appear to be in direct violation of certain grounding principles that have guided American foreign policy since World War II. Both technocratic realists and prophetic dualists have been committed to a foreign policy "ground," albeit they may vary in the degree to which they make explicit or implicit reference to it. The foreign policy ground is an underlying, strongly nationalistic worldview, "shared by various administrations. . . so pervasive, so obvious, so free of challenge that, once articulated, one can but say that such is the nature of foreign policy rhetoric."²⁹ This view personified America as a nation and imbued its citizens in particular, with an overarching purpose, a crusading spirit, and a moral and spiritual center—all of which have raised the nation (and its people) above other countries and formed a topical reservoir from which reasons can be provided to support foreign policy argument.³⁰

What particular inventional resources does the conservative frame utilize to resist Kennedy's assault? How is his argument made to appear in violation of the foreign policy ground? In the solvency debate, conservatives look beyond the complex economic scene and the agencies of economic management toward the acting *agent* and moral *purpose*.³¹ In this way, their frame draws directly from the inventional principles of prophetic dualism and from the foreign policy ground, stressing the essential role of individuals in the course of history. Surely other scenic and agency oriented factors are mentioned, such as dynamic leadership, the flexibility of democratic ideology, motivation and political force, and the human will. Yet these factors appear as manifestations of the historical agent and its purpose to achieve overarching (democratic) moral aims. Rhetorically, the conservative emphasis on agent and purpose is significant—not only does it pose a striking contrast to Kennedy's technocratic realism and what they call his overly "mechanistic" view of history, but identifies certain kinds of agents as opposed to rational experts, who wield their moral will to change the historical scene rather than being constrained or even determined by it.

Hence, ex-Reagan ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick highlights the central importance of agents and purpose. In *The Washington Post* and in her anti-declivist presentations to Congress, she reminds us of the almost mysterious influence of human traits on history. Writing in *The Washington Post*, she complains that Kennedy "seeks to explain too much by economic factors. . . [and] ignores or understates. . . [the] will. . . human purpose and human nature" (A13). For other conservatives, the link between the role of agents in history and democratic purpose is even more pronounced. Former President Richard Nixon devotes much effort in his book, *America: 1999*, trying to refute Kennedy's thesis. For Nixon, the creative impulse possessed by agents is profound.

Americans "do not subscribe to a determinist view of history," like the "negativists" suggest (307). Nixon's view of history is more hopeful, since like him Americans "believe in the primacy of the individual" (316), in moral agents. And these agents, Nixon declares in the absolute tone of prophetic dualism, "are here to make history" according to their own democratic purposes, not to be fashioned by it (319).

The conservative frame is not limited to talk of agents and purpose. For them, even though Kennedy's thesis may seek only a refinement of prevailing ideology about America's international place, they argue as though his views threaten a radical departure from America's moral obligations and its superior worldly standing—as these have been set forth in the foreign policy ground. Equally troubling is their perception that Kennedy represents more than a single dissenter, which would create only a negligible challenge to prevailing conservative foreign policies and political power. In fact, from the conservative frame, Kennedy's argument represents the kind of dangerous liberal thinking that for conservatives has steadily eroded America's founding traditions and the American will. Thus, they work hard in their rhetoric to link Kennedy's notion of decline with the liberalism they spurn. They do so by employing the argumentative technique described by Perelman as "association." In association, a unity is established among disparate elements. By so doing, these elements as a whole can be organized or evaluated positively or negatively.³²

In view of the way in which the foreign policy ground embraces democratic capitalism, we would expect it also to reflect a profound disdain for Communism or any form of Marxism. Indeed, conservatives operating from this ground *associate* Kennedy's argument by noting its affinity for the abhorrent liberal infatuation with Marxist-materialist explanations. In a caustic review of Kennedy's book, cultural critic and historian Paul Johnson is very suspicious of the "campus" Marxism taught by liberal professors which is "unconsciously" revealed in Kennedy's writings (40). Equally suspicious is Owen Harries, editor of the influential neoconservative foreign policy journal, *The National Interest*. Reviewing Kennedy's argument in *Commentary*, Harries dislikes the underlying "Marxist-Materialism" and economic determinism found in Kennedy's work (32-33).

The conservative frame also emphasizes the direct relationship between the rise of liberal declinist ideas like those of Kennedy's and a corresponding loss of national will. Harries bluntly asserts that unless "vigorously contested," these "losing" ideas drain our moral will and, consequently, bring about decline (36). Norman Podhoretz, editor of *Commentary*, worries that liberal views like Kennedy's are corroding America's moral fabric and therefore its ability to hold strongly to the foreign policy ground. Even though Kennedy's argument has very little to do with morality per se, Podhoretz persists in accusing him of espousing "liberal relativism," which depicts the United States and its ideals as

"nothing special in history, nothing of any permanent or universal validity or value" (A25). He fears Kennedy's decline thesis and retrenchment policies will undermine America's moral resolve to overcome historical force, to represent universal good and to maintain its "special" historical stature. Podhoretz opines that should Kennedy's ideas be accepted on a large scale, the decline of American power and its grounding principles would literally become "irreversible—and so would the decline of the democratic values whose survival still depends on the maintenance of [American] power and on our willingness to use it" (A25).

From this conservative frame, Kennedy's decline thesis is not just misguided but iniquitous as well. And by associating Kennedy's views with liberalism's alleged vices, conservative rhetoric transforms the solvency debate into a supreme moral conflict between conservatives fighting for the preservation of America's superior worldly standing and its "universal" moral status, and "relativistic" liberals who seemingly wish to undermine them. The conservative attempt to portray Kennedy and his liberal tendencies as so relative as to be almost anarchic is extremely important for their defense of foreign policy and of a conservative political order in general. As Andrew King has acknowledged, "To cry anarchy is to do more than to brand the activities of the challengers as merely criminal and sinister. As destroyers of society they strike at everyone. They are downright devilish."³³

Finally, conservatives try to transform the solvency debate into a crisis over America's future by denouncing Kennedy's ostensive isolationism. They fear his version of foreign policy, like liberal tendencies since the end of Vietnam toward retrenchment and isolationism, will cause Americans to continue retreating from their overall purpose of spreading and protecting democracy abroad. Again prophetic dualism and the foreign policy ground become the guiding beacons for the conservative frame, that draws upon the prophetic dualist idea of America as a "special" nation engaged in a great crusade—and links it with the moral certitude and religious fervor located in the foreign policy ground. This notion of crusade is given dramatic force through and distinguished from Kennedy's rather melancholic irony by the dramatic formula of *romance*. As a result, conservative prophetic dualism depicts a confrontation between agents of the demonic Soviet Union and powerful soldiers of a moral and God-fearing America.³⁴

Podhoretz epitomizes the prophetic dualist view of America's unique destiny to overcome world evil. He notes that Kennedy fails to appreciate that America represents universal "good," the Soviet Union universal "evil" (A25). Harries still sees the Soviets in demonic terms, as our most "dangerous adversary" (306). Nixon depicts a materially and spiritually superior America much like that described in the foreign policy ground: This special nation is "at the center of the revolutionary progress in man's material condition . . . [and] an ideological beacon—the physical embodiment of a unique philosophy of the relationship between the individual, society, and the state" (305).

Additionally, in a speech designed both to renounce Kennedy's thesis and to reassert the Reagan doctrine, conservative leader Ernest Lefever embraces romantic prophetic dualism; he depicts a sharply divided world along religious and moral lines, where the role of the "Western moral tradition" is to fight "the struggle between tyranny and freedom" (589). American foreign policy, he urges, "must take into account our Judeo-Christian moral heritage," but realize that accepting peace on any terms "is immoral" (590). The United States, he proudly asserts, is not in decline and remains the leading global power with "the moral and material resources to continue as a humane superpower and to lead the freeworld" (591) against "totalitarian regimes" like the Soviet Union (589). Nixon portrays the contest between the United States and the Soviets in vivid, prophetic dualist terms, as a romantic crusade, "a titanic struggle between two clashing conceptions of man and his place in the world... a struggle between the opposite poles of human experience—between those represented by the sword and by the spirit, by fear and by hope" (316). He offers a dauntless mission for this extraordinary country: "We have the resources, the power, and the capacity to continue to act as a world leader. We can be a force for good in the twenty-first century" (306).

PROBLEMS AND IMPLICATIONS

Kennedy's rhetoric had few of the intended or anticipated effects described by its liberal allies. It neither shook the public from its complacency nor convinced conservative foreign policy-makers to overturn established Reagan-Bush foreign policies. That serious policy reformulation was considered at all by conservatives was more a tribute to the rise of Gorbachev, although even here they displayed great resistance, and to a serious economic recession that was forced upon policy makers of all political persuasions. Whether Kennedy's views laid the rhetorical groundwork for a long-term progressive, liberal reform movement is doubtful. History seems to record just the opposite: during 1988, in the midst of the solvency uproar, another conservative presidential administration was voted into place; later, during the early 1990's, the United States adopted a financially costly, highly moralistic interventionist course in the Middle East with America at the center of policy development and military action.

The general failure of Kennedy's technocratic argument cannot be attributed exclusively to the conservative frame employed to reject it. However, the important role of this argumentative frame in defining foreign policy and preserving political power must not be overlooked. Kennedy's technocratic realism, I believe, stripped as it is of clearly articulated assumptions anchored in the foreign policy ground, seems prone to the strongly nationalistic prophetic dualism of conservatives mentioned above. It is also prone to the arguments of other conservatives who have lamented the post-Cold War era as a time for mere

economic calculation, the constant resolution of technical problems, and the satisfaction of complicated and insatiable consumer demands.³⁵ No doubt solvency theorists like Kennedy would welcome this turn toward economics. Rhetorically, however, his insistence on the priority of the economic scene and agencies over moral agents in foreign (and domestic) affairs allows critics easy access to the moral high ground when issues of great concern enter public debate. This is because against Kennedy's insipid vision of technical-economic management, "relative" global positioning, and "steering" the course, conservative prophetic dualism—with its much more robust image of American power—resonates *closer* toward the ground of foreign policy debate. True, Kennedy can argue that his more sophisticated analysis demonstrates how, during the Cold War, America's devotion to its inflated obligations undermined the country's overall strength. But conservatives can assert they possess the moral insight most consistent with the nation's founding assumptions, and claim something more substantial and rewarding for our arduous Cold War exploits than the irreversible deterioration of empire.

In the solvency debate at least, the conservative frame simply seems more convincing than its solvency counterpart: It raises the idea of public moral action and the public's responsibility in the preservation of America's exceptional historical stature over technical deliberation and economic determination. Conservatives thus invite a form of social reasoning, exhorting those in the public attentive to the solvency controversy to weigh their own situations against the danger posed by Kennedy's liberal relative argument and what conservatives reveal to be the public's obvious duty. Of course, the resources for the public's deliberations in matters of foreign policy are made explicit by conservative prophetic dualism, but they also originate from the public's storehouse of social knowledge or common sense understanding about democratic politics and what it means to be an American in the world. This is a storehouse that conservative politicians have been able to exploit successfully during the 1980's. Perhaps the conservative frame examined here draws its persuasive power by tapping into the rhetorical momentum generated by Reagan's conservative Presidency and his own form of narrative, social reasoning. The romantic, heroic quest recounted in conservative prophetic dualism is reminiscent of Reagan's discourse. It offers a special kind of social reasoning to its audience because each audience member is "encouraged to see himself or herself as a central actor in America's quest for freedom."³⁶

Kennedy's technocratic realism, on the contrary, does not take advantage of the inventional possibilities located in the foreign policy ground. Instead, his rhetoric implies that nations and their ruling elites are more important than individuals or flawed democratic processes, that foreign policy works in a social vacuum. Kennedy's rhetorical stress on constant scenic adjustments and refinements, and his attempt to

reduce foreign policy and historical explanation to the mathematics of calculus, decreases the importance of other human traits in foreign policy argument, like emotions, values, social imperatives. Burke adds an equally disquieting note regarding the kinds of explanations offered by Kennedy. For Burke, a dangerous result of materialist explanations that are fragmented or incomplete is resignation and inaction. In fact, he suggests that the kind of "cynical debunking" characteristic of these explanations "paralyze social relationships by discovering too constantly the purely materialistic ingredients in human effort."³⁷ In short, in Kennedy's technocratic realism, the complex range of behaviors and motivations associated with audiences and whole nations is constricted to a manageable single dimension, while the purpose of the public is never really elucidated.³⁸

Curiously, the use of irony in Kennedy's rhetoric would also seem to discourage any notion of public political participation. Irony illuminates what Kennedy takes to be deeper truths about historical change. Irony is also an exceedingly tempering dramatic formula, helping to acknowledge that imperial quests to preserve national security erode the domestic economies these very quests are designed to protect. In this sense, irony signals, as Hayden White observes, an "ascent of thought" toward a more "sophisticated and realistic," more self-consciously "enlightened" view of the world.³⁹ And as Wayne Booth argues, irony brings with it a detachment and thus a sense of superiority in knowing that we have understood the many levels of meaning involved in a situation.⁴⁰ However, the "ascent of thought" irony calls for in Kennedy's argument is discomfiting, for it seems restricted to privileged experts. As Booth explains, those who assume the ironic stance "are the insiders, we know what we know, we have seen the wheels within wheels that make this complex and mysterious world go round."⁴¹ In the solvency debate, this sort of special knowledge implies the development of and participation in a hierarchy in which foreign policy experts are in a position of control while the public emerges as victims or spectators.

More important, despite (or perhaps because of) attempts to naturalize his ironic explanation of historical change, Kennedy may unwittingly foster a cynicism or resignation about our ability to overcome historical movement, and "dissolve all belief in the possibility of positive political actions."⁴² Worse yet, Kennedy's resignation through irony may produce a sense of futility or absurdity. For by apprehending "the essential folly or absurdity of the human condition" in its battle against historical or economic force, irony "tends to engender belief in the 'madness' of civilization," or in the idea that no matter what we do, our civilization must ultimately expire.⁴³

Kennedy's rhetoric therefore suggests the difficulties associated with thinking of foreign policy rhetoric in particular, and our cultural discourses in general, in ironic terms. Richard Harvey Brown, for instance,

has argued that any future, civilizing discourse must ground itself in irony: "The ironist must thus be an explicitly social actor in that to practice her irony she requires a public (willing to be) enlightened."⁴⁴ This conception of rhetorical irony is instructive, but, in my judgment, its applicability dubious in Kennedy's case. Brown assumes an active public audience, willing and capable of becoming enlightened; at best Kennedy assumes that individuals are observers within an ironic scene. Even were they to become so enlightened, the public's role in historical change would be restricted and ultimately not very productive. Possibly this is why Kennedy can so easily condemn the culture of public escapism. It is idle to speak against larger cultural orientations since they are far more intractable than economic policies.

In general, then, rhetorical analysis of the solvency debate suggests the tenuous if not rhetorically manufactured relationship between foreign policy elites and the public. No matter how sophisticated their arguments might be, no matter how specialized the knowledge certain members of their audiences might harbor, participants to public debate over foreign affairs would appear at some point required to construct visions of a morally responsible public. This is because deft ruling elites know that such notions as "the public" or the "national interest" are rhetorical notions molded not only by the immediate context of debate, but also by the legitimizing force of overriding social and political presumptions.⁴⁵ One presumption, deeply entrenched in the foreign policy ground, is that the people generally prefer to view themselves as superior and active agents in a world defined by confrontation between morally opposite forces. This presumption, in the case of foreign policy debate, seems to determine the very boundaries of acceptable discourse.

In national debate, appeals to public involvement in foreign affairs supply rhetors with rich inventional assets from which to build foreign policy arguments. Rhetorical fictions of the public, as Michael McGee and J. Michael Hogan have pointed out, are based in a nation's founding myths and principles; they are inserted into public argument not so much to reflect public opinion but to remind the public of their identity and the sources of their identity. One result of this process is that images of the public help rhetors to "legitimize" collective fantasies, to justify argumentative stances or particular policies.⁴⁶ Another consequence is that the ground rarely gets questioned, since audiences *appear* to have sanctioned it. In the solvency debate, foreign policy arguments that entertain fictions of the public prove effective for conservatives because the policies these arguments entail appear mandated by an active and romantically inclined people. Such potent rhetorical creations of the public as a luxury Kennedy's scenic-ironic frame seems unable to enjoy.

Of course, the debate over American decline does not signal the end of democracy or democratic deliberation. It does indicate, however, that

both policy-makers and the public could be more aware of how different political parties construct their constituencies. It shows that the public should be more skeptical that any notion of "the public" reveals completely the true state of their political or technical power and/or the real nature of their opinions regarding the national interest. At worst, I suspect many members of the public will go on believing in the nation's superiority and in their own heroic destiny; others will expect the nation to pursue more limited goals and a more domestic course. Both groups have a right also to demand from public argument a sense of social hope and new possibility that transcends mere technical figuring or romantic musing. Neither Kennedy nor the conservatives offer much *real* hope or new possibility.

Members of the public might do well to require that their representatives (and the advisers to these representatives) couch foreign policy argument in more accessible idioms. The rhetoric of foreign policy should at once clarify the realistic range and the ramifications of American power, as well as the often obscured connections between foreign policy and its domestic consequences.

CONCLUSION

What does this study tell us about the nature of contemporary foreign policy argument? The solvency debate suggests that as public debate consummates, elements of the foreign policy establishment who successfully espouse the moralistic and romantic brand of prophetic dualism examined here, frequently close off debate. Moreover, political power is maintained because the vision of America's international station defined by prophetic dualism, almost paradoxically, portrays a robust, moral nation locked in inevitable historical struggle, yet one also experiencing halcyon days—a nation thus appearing to require "a heightened dependence on the established [conservative] order."⁴⁷

Certainly technocratic realists, with their own brand of expertise, can shut down debate equally well. In view of this and of the apparent sway of prophetic dualism over public consciousness, we must offer a caution. Sustained allegiance to any hardened argumentative mode or dramatic formula as a way of advocating foreign policies, creates severe problems for the conduct of democratic deliberation. The condescending tone of technocratic realism, the moral zealotry and nationalistic ethnocentrism of romantic prophetic dualism, leave little room for compromise in a world where foreign policy successes and failures will, in my view, increasingly depend on a nation's ability to exhibit just this sort of trait.

The solvency debate might uncover the poverty of our "*end of the century*" invention. Policy analysts may attempt the important and provocative argument that a new age is upon us, that we appear to be entering a period of last things, yet they (and those who oppose them) still hold

fast to old rhetorical resources for conceiving of our historical plight. We are reminded of Robert L. Ivie's observation that since World War II, the rhetorical strategies of both Cold War idealists and realists fostered two extremely different views of American foreign policy, thereby undermining "efforts so far to transcend the choice between chauvinism and pacifism" in American-Soviet relations.⁴⁸ The solvency debate displays similar tendencies toward traditional and exclusionary argumentative modes called upon to inform official talk about administrative policies in the international arena; these modes, at least in the conservative presentation of them, but perhaps in Kennedy's as well, leave us with two incompatible versions of America's historic destiny and the problems that could subvert that destiny.

Consequently, the tragedy of the solvency debate is that technocratic rhetoric tends to marginalize the non-expert public as unqualified to conduct America's business in an increasingly complex world. And what of this business? How is it to be conducted at all? As Burke makes clear, ironic explanation of the kind offered by Kennedy provides only a dialectic perspective which observes but leaves unresolved conflict or contradiction, in this case between economic force and the movement of nations. I confess that Kennedy reveals well the conflicts between history, the foreign policy of great powers, and economics, but it is not clear that the means he generates for coping with these conflicts will ultimately help to overcome them.

Conservative rhetoric fares no better, for it proclaims too much the virtues associated with heroic agents, democratic purpose, and moral action, against the wake of powerful historical movement. Americans have not, historically, done all that conservatives say they have done; Americans cannot possibly do all that conservatives expect them to do. Conservative prophetic dualism therefore tends to distort the importance and worthiness of Americans as individual moral agents. As such, it fosters what Janice Rushing calls a dangerous *hubris* characteristic of much rhetoric dominated by heroic agents.⁴⁹ Relatedly, conservative prophetic dualism promotes a smug complacency about our invulnerability that might blind us to real economic or other scenic difficulties.

Burke nicely summarizes the dangers inherent in the romantic or agent-centered perspective: "the stress upon the term agent, encourages one to be content with a very vague treatment of scene, with no mention of the political and economic factors that form a major aspect of national scenes."⁵⁰ One may, in fact, "deflect attention from scenic matters by situating the motives of an act in the agent," as when conservatives deny the possibility of significant decline in the midst of American resilience and heroism. The problem here is that such deflection tends to overplay the importance of romantic virtues during foreign policy conflict while overlooking pressing domestic matters. One may also "deflect attention from the criticism of personal motives by deriving an act or attitude not from traits of the agent but from the nature of the situation."⁵¹ We observe this when conservatives argue that the world is so

dangerous as to demand nothing but heroic action, immolation, and vigilance. By focusing upon a set of romantic, agent-oriented traits and setting the agent above the scene, conservatives have turned our attention away from other virtues and purposes that might help to refashion our changing world.

In a rapidly evolving post-Cold War arena, in the wake of both startling Soviet reforms and growing economic challenges, unconventional and critical rhetorical thinking might not only be profitable but imperative as well. I believe that history is ripe for a genuine movement beyond our traditional modes of argument. This moment is clearly occasioned by a shift from the Cold War to an as yet undefined era. If Kennedy is right, the choice to return to our romantic past no longer exists. A move into a bleak, scenic-dominated, ironic future of waning influence is still uncertain. Yet other rhetorical possibilities exist for foreign policy advocates, both liberal and conservative. Perhaps one way of transcending present policy arguments and of constructing an alternative rhetorical vision is to locate future critiques and formulations of foreign policy in the *comic* perspective. Comedy supplies renewal at the conclusion of a tiresome century of sterile technocratic analyses and bloody romantic crusades. Comedy builds upon the humbling ironic recognition of chance and folly in human endeavors, and then reinserts an important humanizing influence by acknowledging timely humanistic virtues such as reconciliation, cooperation, and integration. We cannot develop an entire comic perspective on foreign policy here, but we should realize the solvency debate teaches us that, in the near future, the traditional terms of foreign policy argument will have to be reconstituted. What we once took to be the reasons for foreign interventions and for Cold War struggle will have to become radically transformed away from frames that encourage conflict, division, and resignation, to frames that promote integration, the amelioration of past differences, and social hope.

ENDNOTES

1. Kennedy's most popular writing is *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict From 1500-2000* (New York: Random House, 1987). The present analysis concentrates on his book and an article published in *The Atlantic*. Also examined is a Kennedy book review appearing in *The New Republic*. See "The (Relative) Decline of America," *The Atlantic* August 1987: 29-38; and "Boom Business," *The New Republic* February 11, 1985: 31-33. All references are cited with page numbers in the text unless otherwise noted. For Kennedy's recent comments on the solvency debate, see "Fin-de-Siecle America," *The New York Review of Books* June 28, 1990: 31-40.
2. Peter Schmeisser, "Taking Stock: Is America in Decline?" *The New York Times Sunday Magazine* April 17, 1988: 68.
3. Schmeisser 68.
4. Schmeisser 68.
5. Schmeisser 68.
6. Schmeisser 68. Many Democrats, particularly the neo-liberals, remained impressed with Kennedy's scholarly, economic approach but objected to what we shall see becomes one of Kennedy's severe rhetorical hindrances—the veneer of inevitability that appears to infuse "the School of Decline's works" (68).

7. See Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest* 16 (1989): 3-35.
8. See the editors of *The New Republic*, "It's a Small World After All," *The New Republic* September 18 & 25, 1989: 7-10.
9. See Stanley Hoffmann, "What Should We Do in the World?" *The Atlantic* October 1989: 84.
10. See Michael Vlahos, "Look Homeward," *The National Interest* 20 (1990): 49-53. For similar assessments, see John Judis, "Razorback Tory," *The New Republic* April 10, 1989: 40; Robert L. Beisner, "Foreign Policy at Century's End," *The Washington Post Bookworld* February 12, 1989; and Sidney Blumenthal, "The Wake of the Cold War: Beyond the Campaign Debate Over a New Age of Limits," *The Washington Post* June 14, 1988: 1D.
11. The neoconservative works analyzed include Owen Harries, "The Rise of American Decline," *Commentary* May 1988: 32-36; Jeane Kirkpatrick, "A Nation in Decline? Maybe Not," *The Washington Post* March 7, 1988: A13; and Norman Podhoretz, "The Decline of America: A Best-Selling Theme," *The Washington Post* February 25, 1988: A25. The conservative arguments explored include Paul Johnson, "The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500-2000," *The American Spectator* 21 (1988): 39-41; Ernest W. Lefever, "Gorbachev's Challenge to the West: How Should America Respond?" *Vital Speeches of the Day* LIV (1988): 588-91; and Richard M. Nixon, *America: 1999* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988). I generally refer to this collective group as the conservatives or the conservative response.
12. Phil Wander, "The Rhetoric of American Foreign Policy," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70 (1984): 349.
13. Stephen P. DePoe, "Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.'s 'Middle Way Out of Vietnam': The Limits of 'Technocratic Realism' as the Basis for Foreign Policy Dissent," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 52 (1988): 148.
14. Wander 349-350.
15. Wander 344.
16. See Walter R. Fisher, "Romantic Democracy, Ronald Reagan, and Presidential Heroes," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 46 (1982): 299-310; and William F. Lewis, "Telling America's Story: Narrative Form and the Reagan Presidency," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73 (1987): 280-302.
17. Wander 353.
18. Kenneth Burke, *Attitudes Toward History* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1937), i.
19. Burke, *Attitudes* 5.
20. Burke, *Attitudes* 34.
21. Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1969), xv. For his discussion of scene, see pp. 127-70; for his analysis of agencies, see xv-xviii, and 275-291.
22. Burke, *Grammar* 517.
23. Burke, *Grammar* 517.
24. Burke, *Grammar* 517.
25. See Jonathan Reider, "The Center Holds, II," *The New Republic* September 12 & 19, 1988: 45.
26. Max Lerner, "No More 'Number Ones' in the World," *The Wall Street Journal* February 19, 1988: 17.
27. Blumenthal 1D.
28. Chaim Perelman, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* trans. John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), 411-15. Burke correlates a scenic orientation with materialist philosophies. However, I am arguing that Kennedy is attempting to overcome this strictly materialist, deterministic label, through dissociation. See Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* 171-226.
29. Wander 345.
30. Wander 353.
31. Burke argues that the agent and its corresponding idealist philosophies feature individuals who can overcome other elements of the pentad. This agent focus, which highlights the notions of free will, democratic ideology, and moral action, is at the heart of

the conservative response to Kennedy. See Burke, *Grammar* 171. For discussion of the agent in general, see 20, 171-226.

32. *The New Rhetoric* 411-15.

33. "The Rhetoric of Power Maintenance: Elites at the Precipice," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 62 (April 1975): 127-134.

34. Charles Conrad calls this struggle (with its heightened dependence on moral crusades, heroes and villains), as it exists in the rhetoric of the Moral Majority, a romantic one. See his "The Rhetoric of Moral Majority: An Analysis of Romantic Form," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 69 (1983): 159-170. See also Fisher's *Romantic Democracy*.

35. Fukuyama.

36. Lewis 284.

37. Burke, *Attitudes* 106-107.

38. For analyses of the tensions between technical and social reasoning, see Thomas B. Farrell and G. Thomas Goodnight, "Accidental Rhetoric: The Root Metaphors of Three Mile Island," *Communication Monographs* 48 (1981): 271-300.

39. Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse. Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1985) 37. See also, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

40. Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1974).

41. Booth 43-44.

42. White 38.

43. White 38.

44. Richard Brown, *Society as Text: Essays on Rhetoric, Reason, and Reality* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1987), 172-192.

45. Christine Oraver makes this point about domestic debate and the "public interest" in her "Conservationism vs. Preservationism: The 'Public Interest' in the Hetch Hetchy Controversy," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70 (1984): 444-459.

46. Michael McGee and J. Michael Hogan, "In Search of 'the People': A Rhetorical Alternative," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 61 (1975): 234-245; and "Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy: The Case of Illusory Support for the Panama Canal Treaties," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 71 (1985): 302-317.

47. Wander 345.

48. Robert L. Ivic, "Metaphor and the Rhetorical Invention of Cold War 'Idealists,'" *Communication Monographs* 54 (1987): 166.

49. See Janice Rushing, "Mythic Evolution of 'The New Frontier' in Mass Mediated Rhetoric," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 3 (1986): 265-297.

50. Burke, *Grammar* 17.

51. Burke, *Grammar* 17.

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