

Mark Fenster

MURRAY EDELMAN, POLEMICIST
OF PUBLIC IGNORANCE

ABSTRACT: *Murray Edelman's work raised significant theoretical and methodological questions regarding the symbolic nature of politics, and specifically the role played by non-rational beliefs (those that lack real-world grounding) in the shaping of political preferences. According to Edelman, beneath an apparently functional and accountable democratic state lies a symbolic system that renders an ignorant public quiescent. The state, the media, civil society, interpersonal relations, even popular art are part of a mass spectacle kept afloat by empty symbolic beliefs. However suggestive it is, the weaknesses of Edelman's theoretical and methodological approach, and the relative strengths of more recent research on the politics of cultural symbols, render Edelman's work unable to serve as either model or springboard for the contemporary study of political symbols.*

Murray Edelman's writings on political symbols posed a series of important questions that fell between disciplines and did not rest securely within any particular methodology. Trained as a political scientist, Edelman abandoned an early emphasis on the operations of federal administrative agencies in favor of studying the creation and continuing legitimation of political order through symbols; and the means by which the public understands and, more commonly, misunderstands political issues and electoral choices. Well before it became common to do so, he questioned rational- and informed-actor models of politi-

Critical Review 17 (2005), nos. 3-4. ISSN 0891-3811. www.criticalreview.com

Mark Fenster, associate professor of law at the University of Florida, P.O. Box 117625, Gainesville, FL 32611, fenster@law.ufl.edu, the author of *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture* (Minnesota, 1999), thanks Trysh Travis and Jeffrey Friedman for invaluable encouragement and comments.

cal behavior, instead arguing that the symbolic basis of political communication and the pervasive role of culture and the media in political and legal systems render the public ignorant, irrational, and quiescent.

As such, Edelman's work could, at least in principle, represent a meeting point among a number of distinct intellectual movements whose present distance from each other seems more the product of the vicissitudes of intellectual history, disciplinary boundaries, methodological biases, and differing political commitments than of necessary conceptual separation. For example, Edelman's work could offer a bridge between different social sciences, pointing the way by which the so-called "cultural turn" in anthropology, history, and sociology (see Novick 1988, 573–629) could meet up with the increased interest among political theorists in culture and voter ignorance, and the focus in social-choice theory, political psychology, and law and economics on heuristics and social norms. Furthermore, given his interest in symbolic communication, mediated images, and ideology, Edelman's theory of political symbols could provide a foundation on which the "cultural studies" movement within the humanities and social sciences (see Denning 2004, 1–10) could study more thoroughly not merely the politics of culture but the culture of politics—enabling its practitioners, as a consequence, more informed consideration of their own politics. Edelman's corpus at least has the potential of offering a roadmap to broader, more collaborative insights among disparate bodies of scholarship.

But in practice, Edelman's work cannot serve this grand unifying cause.¹ The problem lies not in the questions Edelman asked, which are still valuable, but in the ways he sought to answer them. Influenced and ultimately limited by postwar theories of "mass society," by his political tendencies, and by his inclination towards impressionistic social criticism rather than theory building or rigorous analysis, Edelman's work lacks conceptual complexity and methodological sophistication. My purpose is to identify Edelman's weaknesses, and to explain how the questions Edelman placed before us remain worth pursuing through other means.

Symbolic Politics

I begin with Edelman's conception of symbols, and—since this is ultimately what concerned Edelman—the effects of the symbolic core of politics on government and on the public.

Edelman was largely uninterested in providing close readings, historical studies, or precise typologies of political symbols. Rather, as the titles of his major works from 1964 to 2001 make plain, he focused on the “uses” (Edelman 1964) and “construction” (Edelman 1988) of political symbols, the “action” they perform (Edelman 1971), the “success” that they enjoy (Edelman 1977), and the “misinformation” they produce (Edelman 2001). His core thesis was that politics is symbolic and spectacular, and as such misinforms the public and renders it passive. Instead of tackling what Edelman saw as the “real” public interest or solving problems of actual importance, politics addresses psychological desires, offering drama without empirical truth or “realistic detail” (Edelman 1964, 7–9).²

The symbolic political system, Edelman (1964, 117, 131) argued, is pre-constituted and self-regulating, and serves as an unconscious structure of society and social interaction. The symbols of politics have emerged from a general predisposition of modern bureaucracy, technology, capitalism, and democracy, rather than as the product of any willful human agent or group. Intentional human agency therefore plays little role in creating the symbolic system. Edelman thus claimed to reject not only theories presuming the existence of a public composed of individuals who make political decisions based on stable, discernible preferences, but also theories presuming the existence of an ideological system operated by, and for the benefit of, a powerful ruling class.

Edelman’s repudiation of human design as the origin of the symbolic system is obvious enough. He clearly disdained the tendency, which came to dominate much of the discipline of political science during his career, to assume a rational-actor model of political behavior. But, at least in part because of Edelman’s polemical tone and leftist political commitments, his critics tended to cast him as a proponent of a Marxist theory of symbols as instrumental to class rule. The evidence about that, however, is mixed. On the one hand, Edelman (1964, 126) described the political-symbolic system as expressing “the ideology of the community, facilitat[ing] uncritical acceptance of conventional assumptions, and imped[ing] the expression of critical or heretical ideas.” Symbolic political acts—which is to say, all political acts—neither meet, nor are intended to meet, actually existing needs. And symbolic politics distracts from the exploitative and destructive reality that occurs below the symbolic surface, rendering the public a quiescent, unthinking mass that is subject to manipulation.

Indeed, a conformist public is gratified by the notion that the political realm is able to relieve conflict and complexity, resolve the nation's and the world's tensions, and reaffirm the rationality and functionality of government (1964, 9, 14–17, 33–38). Such characterizations of popular politics appear to be stumbling towards a theory of false consciousness.

For Edelman, however, political symbols were not mere tools wielded by “capital” or some secretive, powerful group in order to produce false consciousness and other debilitating or mystifying psychological effects. “There is no implication here,” he wrote, “that elites consciously mold political myths and rituals to serve their ends. Attempts at such manipulation usually become known for what they are and fail. What we find is social role taking, not deception” (1964, 20). Although political symbols might have consequences that incidentally aid elites, Edelman argued, those elites themselves believe in political symbols. As elites, it is precisely their role to take advantage of the symbols that serve their ends, but not to knowingly *produce* them. And while the less powerful are manipulated most perniciously by the symbolic world of politics, everyone—save, perhaps, Edelman and his sympathetic readers—is both a subject and a willing contributor to the spectacle. Symbols permeate the consciousness of (almost) all, to an equal degree.

Edelman's theory of political symbols and ideology, then, appears less dramatic or “vulgar” than the idea of an ideological superstructure produced by an economic base whose central determinant is capitalism.³ However, while Edelman may have disavowed the simplicity of absolute control, his seemingly more complex theory of symbolic power is only superficially distinct from a vulgar instrumentalism. Although elites may be subject to the same symbolic universe as the masses, Edelman holds that elites are better able to discern hidden truths lurking beneath the symbolic surface and utilize them to their advantage. Representing only “a very small fraction of the population,” Edelman's elites (which include, among others, professional politicians, businessmen seeking government contracts, and local reformers pushing for narrow improvements to municipal government) engage in “concrete,” rather than merely symbolic, political activity (1964, 9–10). Eschewing indirect, ineffectual democratic engagement with deceptive symbols and meaningless rituals, elites instead exert real, direct influence and achieve the tangible goals they seek (*ibid.*, 12, 16).

Edelman confidently assumed that he had successfully distinguished

himself from Marxist instrumentalism—and concluded that instrumentalism was something to avoid at all costs. But he nonetheless posited a hierarchy of symbolic production, elite manipulation, and passive reception in which the public is subject to a symbolic spectacle exploited and largely controlled by a privileged minority. His later work continued to argue that the “spectacle”—the term he used to describe the symbolic system he had identified in his earlier work—served as a tactic that elites believe in, help construct, and ultimately exploit (1988, 125).

Had he wanted to elaborate a more complicated, less instrumental theory of ideology in modern societies, he could have delved into the surplus of Marxist, non-Marxist, and post-Marxist approaches that philosophers and social theorists developed throughout the postwar era (see generally Thompson 1990, 28–121). His failure to do so is a crucial weakness in his work.

Although Edelman describes phenomena that are consistent with the large body of research done by public-opinion and political-psychology researchers, which has detailed the depth and breadth of public ignorance (see Somin 1998), his aim is different than theirs. Edelman, I believe, would have liked to perform what the anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1964, 56), addressing political scientists in the same year in which Edelman’s first book appeared, characterized as the difficult task of “examining ideologies as systems of interacting symbols, as patterns of interworking meanings,” rather than as dependent variables of the sort studied in traditional political psychology, or independent variables of the sort studied by public-opinion researchers. For Geertz, the social sciences of the mid-1960s had failed to consider sufficiently “how symbols symbolize, how they function to mediate meanings” (ibid., 57). What Geertz—like Edelman—sought was research that would inquire into *how* people believe, and how their beliefs are shaped by the symbolic universe they inhabit, rather than (or in addition to) what people believe and how they enact or fail to enact their beliefs.

This is tricky stuff, to put it mildly. The study of symbols and ideology inherently resists quantification, because a researcher cannot trust survey and interview subjects to articulate the underlying logic of their beliefs, feelings, and thoughts in a thorough and accurate way. In addition, such research requires consideration of the ambiguous and evolving form and content of symbolic communication, and it deals as much with those ideas and matters that are absent and un-thought, or that lie outside the symbols that are available for expression and reception, as with those that are considered. Moreover, interpretive studies and theo-

ries of culture build slowly and incrementally, based on delicate distinctions and thick descriptions rather than sweeping abstractions, and rarely result in predictive models (Geertz 1973, 24–26). Perhaps understandably, those who would demand the relative security and certainty that positivism and rational-choice theory claim to offer run from efforts like Edelman’s as quickly as Edelman ran from theirs. But if performed well, a cultural, symbolic analysis could enlighten efforts to find and explain the conditions of ignorance and irrationality better than can statistical work or a priori modeling.

Beginning his project at the cusp of the interpretive turn heralded by Geertz’s 1964 paper, Edelman could have helped this movement along. Having identified the problem of symbolic communication, however, he remained stuck at the issue of its causes (“spectacle” and “symbols,” viewed abstractly) and consequences (quiescence). Because he largely failed, over the course of his career, to consider insights from, for instance, the empirical sociology and anthropology of Pierre Bourdieu (1977 and 1984), or Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge (1936), or Gramsci’s writings on hegemony (1971), or Habermas’s concept of the deformed public sphere and fragmented consciousness of modernity (1987, 1989), Edelman’s work is impoverished and limited.⁴ Lacking a clear, robust theory of ideology, and failing to refer to competing ones, Edelman’s work had little with which to replace vulgar instrumentalism, save a slightly less vulgar version of it.

The Symbolic State

Edelman failed to explain whether the state produced or was produced by the system of political symbols he identified—or whether some more complex interrelationship could explain the state’s ability to perform its exploitative and perfidious functions while maintaining its legitimacy. Put another way, he never made clear whether the state is merely a tool of elites, or if it operates with some autonomy.

Consider, for example, his treatment of the symbolic and real processes of federal regulation in the United States. Edelman characterized the typical regulatory program as the result of a massive symbolic campaign in which legislators, regulators, and the media engage in abstract, hortatory pronouncements identifying and describing a public problem and explaining how the proposed program will successfully address it. Assuming their symbolic and bureaucratic roles, lawmakers

and members of the executive branch create, express, and promote widely accepted values of the general public interest. Such efforts comfort the public by suggesting that government shares its concerns and is willing and able to address the pressing issues of the day (Edelman 1964, 54–66). But regulatory programs actually serve merely as symbolic surfaces covering a more complicated, hidden truth: that elites capture regulatory agencies and control governmental allocation of resources by manipulating technical rules, bureaucratic procedures, and the regulatory enforcement process (Edelman 1977, 78–79). Because politicians, bureaucrats, and private interests utilize political symbols to demonstrate to the public the supposed benefits of the legislation they so cleverly manipulate, the sham regulatory system is free of public observation (Edelman 1964, 27; 1977, 148). This process generates significant misperceptions: that policy making is participatory and addresses real social problems; that some groups and their actions are hostile and evil, while others are friendly and benevolent; and that political leadership, through the regulatory state, furthers the public interest (Edelman 1971, 37–41; 1988, 12–36).

As a result, Edelman argued, the state perpetuates both existing hierarchies and the illusion that the public good is being served. He thus proposed a deeply pessimistic critique of the operations and justifications of the contemporary democratic state, in which political-theoretic notions of self-rule, deliberation, pluralist coalition building, and representative government serve merely as promises of what can never be obtained in reality—but can be obtained in the world of symbolic illusion. Edelman's is at least as dark a view of politics as Marx's, but it suggests an even darker possibility: that there is no post-revolutionary future. Had Edelman stipulated that elites create and utilize symbols in a fully knowing and purposive manner, he would have conceded that the individual or collective agency of non-elites is also possible, that political activity could matter, and that incremental or radical political reform might make politics more accountable and participatory, or even enable the masses to lift the ideological veil and seize control of the ideological apparatus. In so doing, he would have conceptualized the state as something other than the inevitable object of elite capture.⁵ But Edelman offered no such hope of disrupting the symbolic realm of politics and ending the instrumental use of the state. He resisted any concession that political change—of whatever variety, whether towards a transformative leftist vision of participatory democracy or a more centrist vision of political reform—was possible. His conclusion, ultimately, was

that politics doesn't matter, since the state, captured by a small set of interests, persuades its citizens of its value through the management and exploitation of legitimating symbols.

From Mass Society to Mass Culture to Mass Politics

Edelman's conception of a pervasive symbolic system sustaining a state of illusions is, like his understanding of the mass public, largely a product of the intellectual context from which he emerged. In Edelman's work, the public enjoys no agency. The only respect in which it refuses the spectacle of modernity is through the willful apathy and ignorance that people demonstrate by declining, or forgetting, to vote (Edelman 1988, 33).⁶ People retreat into their private lives—lives that Edelman described as filled with empty rituals, barren encounters with others, and interests that lead inexorably away from the organization of discontent that would produce meaningful political or social change. This is, indeed, a rational response—not to the low odds of one's vote making a difference, but to the removed, spectacular world of symbols and fetishes.

Political participation, however, is marked by the same quiescence that results from political disengagement (Edelman 2001, 22; Edelman 1988, 35, 96). Even people's political discussions, structured by social convention and the limited symbolic universe they inhabit, serve as an "escape valve" for their discontent rather than as a means to mobilize their interests and activity (Edelman 2001, 22). Alternative visions of a vibrant public incorrectly found a democratic possibility where none existed. The popular, radical utopianism of the "new social movements," as well as the philosophical utopianism of Habermas's public sphere and ideal-speech situation, were all fantasies that could not explain what Edelman (1988, 110, 129–30) saw as the empirical realities of the mass spectacle.

This conception of the public's relationship to politics (and culture) closely resembles that of 1950s and 1960s intellectuals, many of them qualitative social scientists who, like Edelman, were distressed by the rise of modern mass society. Responding to the rise of Cold War politics and the industrial production and consumption of culture, these critics feared that an authoritarian state could be built on the foundation of an American public rendered anxious, isolated, conformist, and alienated by the mass media (Schaub 1991, 15–19).

The concept of “the mass” had emerged prior to America’s entry into World War II. In an influential essay, Herbert Blumer ([1939] 1966, 44) defined “mass behavior” as the “spontaneous, indigenous, and elementary” reactions of “an aggregation of individuals who are separate, detached, anonymous, and thus, homogeneous.” Postwar intellectuals who further developed this concept, including the social scientists C. Wright Mills (1956, 298–324) and David Riesman (1950) and the cultural critic Dwight MacDonal (1962), feared the political control that a mass-mediated mass democracy enabled; the social alienation of the masses by an industrial economy, lonely urban environments, and the impersonal postwar suburbs; and the consolidation of information control that the industrial production and distribution of culture allowed.

Their bleak view was not uncontested. Political centrists described the mass public as sharing a Cold War consensus that, rather than being a signal of creeping fascism, represented an “end of ideology” (Bell 1960) and the triumph of a functional pluralist democracy (Kornhauser 1959). But centrists themselves expressed some of the mass-society critics’ concerns, especially about the relationship between postwar mass politics and the rise of McCarthyism and the “radical right” in the early 1960s (Bell 1960, 103–23; Hofstadter 1966).

Both sets of concerned intellectuals—centrist liberal pluralists, fearful that extremism could threaten representative democracy and the capitalist market; and radicals, fearful that neofascist masses would enable the rise of a “power elite”—worried, to varying degrees, about either the possibility or the existence of a largely passive public (Ross 1989, 50–55). Though voiced in different political pitches, such concerns pervaded the thoughts of public intellectuals and anxious academics during the 1950s and 1960s, when Edelman was being educated and was doing his first research. Mass-society worries filled popular and widely discussed books (e.g., Reisman’s *The Lonely Crowd* and Bell’s *The End of Ideology*), exhaustive social-scientific studies (e.g., Adorno et al.’s *The Authoritarian Personality*), and major articles and special issues of leading literary journals. These concerns also dominated the work of political scientists studying public opinion and scholars in the new field of mass communications, both of whom studied the mass media’s effects on the mass public.

The second edition of Bernard Berelson and Morris Janowitz’s *Reader in Public Opinion and Communication* (1966) is emblematic of

this intellectual ferment. In its eleven parts and more than four dozen entries, the book provides a relatively diverse set of approaches to a variety of questions regarding the production, reception, regulation, and, especially, the effects of the new mass media. Emphasizing the close relationship between public opinion and mass communication, on the one hand; and, on the other, the prevailing political and social concerns of the day—from the Cold War and the threat of nuclear warfare to racial integration and the war on poverty—the book sought to convey the diversity and importance of research on mass culture. Authors in this new scholarly tradition shared the assumption that the “public” had become, well, a mass: a docile blob, plastic enough to be easily shaped by cultural messages.

This historical context helps explain Edelman’s conception of the public as a largely undifferentiated entity, bereft of agency and manipulated by mass culture; of elites as both members of that entity and beneficiaries of its passivity; and of mass politics as a system within which domination occurs. Like Lewis Kornhauser and Seymour Martin Lipset, the mainstream sociologists he cited in his early work, Edelman (1964, 18) was concerned about an emerging anonymous public, seduced and controlled by symbolic messages; and he was frightened about the rise of an excitable, intolerant, and even violent radical right that continually “discovered” non-existent threats to the nation’s well-being (*ibid.*, 167–70). Inverting individualist notions of choice and preferences, he worked from the thesis that “mass publics respond to currently conspicuous political symbols: not to ‘facts,’ and not to moral codes embedded in the character or soul, but to the gestures and speeches that make up the drama of the state” (*ibid.* 172). Modernity was at fault:

Alienation, anomie, despair of being able to chart one’s own course in a complex, cold, and bewildering world have become characteristic of a large part of the population of advanced countries. As the world can be neither understood nor influenced, attachment to reassuring symbols rather than to one’s own efforts becomes chronic. (*Ibid.*, 76.)

Technological and social change had created both an industrial economy and a lonely, frightened crowd, Edelman argued, that needed reassurance and leadership and that, as a result, adopted a form of working-class authoritarianism: a blind trust in strong leadership that left people exceptionally vulnerable to cultural manipulation and irrational hysteria

(*ibid.*, 74–77, 181–82). Like radical critics, he condemned the development of what appeared to be a naturally evolving “consensus” or “pluralistic democracy.” This democracy was a sham, the result of a symbolic system that managed the ignorant masses.

Edelman also shared mass-society critics’ fear of mass culture. In one of his final books, *From Art to Politics* (1995), Edelman offered a vision of high art—both literary and visual—as the paragon of provocative, rather than passivity-inducing, culture. Great artistic works provide depth and ambiguity in their form and content, challenge conventional assumptions and political pieties, and ultimately provide a means to understand truth. By contrast, Edelman argued, popular works of art are largely false, mass-produced “kitsch” that displace attention from the disturbing realities of contemporary life. In presenting this cultural binary, Edelman explicitly adopted the theory Clement Greenberg (1939) had developed in his classic essay, “Avant-Garde and Kitsch,” an influential text among Cold War intellectuals who sought to contain the mass culture that appeared to threaten formal hierarchies of art and culture. For Edelman, mass culture mapped directly onto mass politics, as politicians use kitschy political symbols as a form of propaganda to manipulate the massified public.

Edelman (1988, 126) maintained that high art offers some respite from the onslaught of kitsch, perhaps even an “antidote” that might counter the banality of political symbols with a freer form of expression.⁷ But its potential to do so was limited. A culmination of a twentieth-century tradition of intellectual concern about mass popular culture, the Greenberg critique suggested both that the masses were the victims of industrial society, one product of which was mass-produced culture, and that the masses were themselves at least partially to blame for their own predicament (Gorman 1996, 152–57). Edelman’s distaste for the popular and for the masses shared this powerful fatalism. Like Greenberg, he could see through the triviality of popular taste and was convinced that the masses were wrong, but he profoundly doubted that a symbolic system or spectacle that was so universal and functional to modernity could ever be destroyed or changed.

Its connections to earlier moments of intellectual history haunt and, ultimately, bind Edelman’s work. The mass-society thesis is rooted in skepticism about democracy developed by both conservatives (from Hegel to Tocqueville, Ortega y Gasset, and Schumpeter [1950, ch. 22]) and leftists (Bellamy 2003; Femia 2001). It also parallels fin-de-siècle fears of popular democracy like those found in Pareto’s theory of

“non-logical” actions (1935) and Gustave Le Bon’s conception of the crowd’s “popular mind” (1896). Hence the odd mix of cultural elitism and political anti-elitism in Edelman’s thought. Despite what he saw as obvious evidence of their exploitation by powerful elites, Edelman’s masses are frustratingly ignorant and passive. They know no better than what they are told, and they respond to symbols in predictable ways. These kitschy symbols produce a limited and banal set of beliefs—unlike real art, the subtle road to verity.

Symbols as Propaganda

The mass-society debates were not the only evident influence on Edelman. His work strikingly parallels that of Walter Lippmann in the early 1920s, whose influential books *Public Opinion* (1922) and *The Phantom Public* (1925) expressed profound skepticism about the public’s presumed role in a democracy. Citing the simplistic stereotypes and open-ended symbols upon which the public relies to make sense of the complicated and remote events of politics, Lippmann concluded that power was, and should be, in the hands of small elites, and that the individual in a modern democracy cannot perceive, understand, or direct the government that rules him (Purcell 1973, 105–107). But Lippmann, unlike Edelman, was untroubled by this relationship between elites and the people, and argued for a sophisticated “manufacture of consent” to protect leaders from the vicissitudes of the public (Lippmann 1922, 238–39).

Closer in time to Edelman’s career was the enormously influential scholarship of Harold Lasswell, whose work on propaganda and political communication largely focused on the theoretical and practical issues of how to create a capable, powerful government of progressive experts that could win the consent of the governed by managing public opinion. Propaganda, Lasswell (1927b, 629) explained, is “the management of collective attitudes by the manipulation of significant symbols.” “To illuminate the mechanisms of propaganda,” he wrote, “is to reveal the secret springs of social action, and to expose to the most searching criticism our prevailing dogmas of sovereignty, of democracy, of honesty, and of the sanctity of individual opinion” (Lasswell 1927a, 222).

Appropriating terminology and concepts from across the social sciences, including quantitative methods and behavioral psychology,

Lasswell sought a theory and practice of symbolic propaganda for constructing an effective and modern mass politics (Oren 2003, 137–38). Although his postwar work showed greater sensitivity to democracy as an ideal, he continued to emphasize the role of elite leadership and the managed presentation of information to the masses (Seideman and Harpham 1985, 142–45). Lasswell saw in public ignorance an opportunity for intellectual elites to elevate politics by educating and enlightening the public with the insights of what he confidently called the “policy sciences” (Torgerson 1993, 237–38; Ricci 1984, ch. 3). He exemplified the more typical Progressive-era faith in technocratic democracy, and as such has been the target of criticism from both the Straussian right (Horwitz 1962) and, more recently from populist-left historians (Gary 1999, 55–84; Smith 1994, 55–84; Sproule 1997, 67–71).

Unlike Lasswell, Edelman repudiated both propaganda and the enlightening possibilities of quantitative social science. Edelman even avoided using such terms as *propaganda*—which, like *ideology*, implies the instrumentalism from which he sought to distance himself.⁸ But he shared Lasswell’s assumptions about propaganda’s ability to control a mass populace, as well as Lippmann’s disdain for an apathetic, easily manipulated public. Edelman described as fact that for which Lasswell and Lippmann had hoped (and which the mass-society critics had feared): an all-encompassing system in which the opinions and tastes of the masses are shaped by the dominant political, social, and cultural institutions. Combining a vision of politics as symbolic propaganda with a dread of the results, Edelman offered an unrelentingly pessimistic vision of politics as little more than a comforting, empty illusion.

Edelman’s Absent Methodology

What, then, does Edelman offer contemporary students of political culture? I consider the question in two parts, beginning with methodological issues and closing with some conceptual ones.

Regarding social-science methodology, Edelman, as usual, offered important criticisms but no affirmative insights. He rejected positivist political scientists’ belief that political ideas can be read directly through opinion surveys. He doubted, in fact, that any method could persuasively find evidence of a coherent, informed public opinion, except insofar as that evidence was itself the product of the assumptions and bi-

ases embedded in the research design. It is a familiar point, but one that can hardly be overemphasized: since social scientists can't gain direct access to people's minds, the observation of potentially quantifiable behaviors, such as votes or survey responses, cannot possibly circumvent the social scientist's need to interpret those behaviors in order to *infer* their putative causes in the actors' beliefs. Quantification cannot produce "objective" social science, in the sense of being shielded from the taint of the interpreting scientist's *own* beliefs about the ultimate causes of the behaviors he is quantifying. Counting up people's behaviors is no substitute for interpreting them, and social scientists who treat behavior as self-interpreting, or who try to reduce its determinants to non-subjective (e.g., socioeconomic) factors through statistical correlation, are necessarily hiding their own interpretations of the behavior they study, or their own theories about which factors are causal.

Correlating political actions with putatively objective factors also requires the assumption that the actors reason clearly about accurately perceived facts that will help them achieve the policies that will fulfill their political "preferences," which are "given" to them by the objective factors. But opinion surveys and psychological experiments are inherently limited means of ascertaining what political preferences are in a given place and time, let alone how they are formed (Edelman 1977, 10–11): the limits lie in the researcher's interpretive and causal assumptions, which are too often obscured behind the facade of quantificationist objectivity. Indeed, quantitative studies of public opinion (along with rational-choice models) are at a disadvantage compared to qualitative methods when they purport to bypass (or assume away, in the case of rational-choice theory) the symbolic systems that shape the beliefs, or at least the words, that people experience as causal at the phenomenological level (Edelman 1985, 195–96, 201) (cf. Mannheim 1936, 39–40).

Having raised these issues, however, Edelman left us without any means to make inquiries that would enable further study of the symbolic world. Edelman's own method was to write brief, highly abstract monographs about particular types of political symbols, relying for support on the faith of his readers, the conclusions of a few secondary sources, and his readers' agreement with brief illustrative examples of the interpretations that Edelman favored. This is unimpressive as an academic or even a non-professional intellectual methodology. One can only replicate Edelman's results or appreciate his argument if one already shares his critical position.

Consider, by contrast, C. Wright Mills. He, too, spent copious energy making a mockery of the foolish “rigors” of quantitative “Abstracted Empiricism” (as well as the foolish bloat of “Grand Theory”) (Mills 1959). But at least he offered a portrait of properly crafted social-scientific method (even if he, too, sometimes launched into rhetorical overdrive that left empirical grounding behind), and at least he provided detailed demonstrations of what he meant. Edelman’s works are less the product of a craft in which empirical data (however qualitative) are marshalled in favor of theoretical conclusions than of a camera that somehow churns out snapshots of an always-dysfunctional politics.

At times, Edelman did describe symbolic production and consumption in convincing detail. This occurred most often when he considered specific types of institutions. Because these more narrow analyses led him to explain the social context within which particular means of explaining and understanding power make sense to members of the public, they are much more incisive than his flat, broad theoretical statements. For example, his work on the “helping professions” of therapy, social work, and prisons (Edelman 1977, chs. 4 and 5), although marred by a dystopian conception of those professions’ motivations—coupled with an anomalously utopian assumption that revolutionary political change and de-institutionalization would transform the incarcerated, the poor, and the mentally ill—at least focused on the internal discourses of the latter groups of individuals, rather than solely on the imposition of symbols on undifferentiated masses. Similarly, his early study of regulatory agencies (Edelman 1964, 24–25, 46–53) enhanced the Weberian conception of bureaucracy by considering the symbolic processes of administration that legitimate an organization both internally, for its employees and managers, and externally, for regulated industries and the general public.

Toward the end of his life, Edelman wrote an introduction to a special issue of the journal *Political Communication* in which some of the contributors attempted, of all things, to adapt his work to quantitative inquiry. As part of this *Festschrift*, one article provided a sympathetic literature review of efforts by social scientists to verify Edelman’s views through quantitative research, and while conceding the difficulty of doing so, offered suggestions for future research. Ironically, these suggestions—to historicize; to provide more precise textual and institutional analyses; and to study the actual practices and responses of individuals (Hershey 1993, 135–37)—strayed from, and

implicitly challenged, Edelman's theory of a singular, pervasive, virtually omnipotent symbolic universe. To study symbols closely is, ultimately, to complicate one's interpretation of them—and Edelman's vision defied complication.

Criticizing Edelman for his stark unconcern with methodological rigor may seem unfair, since he did not pretend to be a methodologist. But although he was neither an empirical social scientist nor an exacting builder of theoretical concepts, he wrote with a social-scientific authority that implicitly, and on occasion explicitly, claimed dispassionate distance from the object of his study. Hovering—indeed, towering—above the push and pull of political claims and practices, he did make the pretense of being the master diagnostician of the pathologies of our age. There should, therefore, be some rationale behind the diagnosis, establishing that it is not itself a symptom of the disease. In fact, however, many of Edelman's conclusions about the nature of mass politics were rooted in his own assumptions about the correct position in live political debates. His method, such as it was, buried these assumptions. Thus, when Edelman (1977, 8–12) “observed” the symbolic evocation of contradictory beliefs regarding the poor, he identified the ideological basis of these “stock explanations” for the causes of poverty in, on the right, conservative and classical-liberal assumptions about individual responsibility; and, on the left, liberal claims about institutional and social causes. In disdaining both explanations, he presumed, without explanation or argument, that the obviously correct approach was neither to institutionalize the poor nor to dismantle the welfare state.

Having political commitments is perfectly acceptable; dismissing opposing views as mere bunkum, however, in the course of a critique of political symbols in general (rather than the particular symbols with which one disagrees), renders the assumptions and commitments underlying one's critique impervious to criticism. Edelman's critique of symbolic politics was inextricable from his critique of the substantive politics covered up by those symbols. But his rhetoric and methodology were such that his own substantive political commitments about the real, as opposed to the foolishly “symbolic,” political positions that are capable of swaying the masses were never announced or defended (although they were clearly left-wing).

Once he had established his critical approach, and his reputation, through *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*, Edelman sought neither to persuade nor to prove. He merely reiterated, and thereby reconfirmed, his assumptions. In the end, his work was social criticism dressed up as so-

cial science.⁹ His critique and ultimate rejection of traditional social-science methodology may well have been a heretical and important act for a mid-century political scientist to commit (Bennett 1993, 108–109); but by offering only self-confirming analysis as the alternative, Edelman neither solved the methodological crisis he sought to create, nor succeeded in displacing the approaches he mocked.

Edelman's Neglect of Communications Theory

As a result of these conceptual and methodological flaws, Edelman's work has limited value for either analyzing or transcending symbolic politics. Lacking a non-impressionistic empirical grounding, shunning nuance in favor of broad declarations, and demonstrating a singular lack of faith in anyone other than himself (and readers attracted to his passionate pessimism), Edelman's approach merely replaced the simplistic conception of rational political preferences that he criticized, and the Marxist conception of instrumental ideology that he shunned, with an equally simplistic conception of government-propagated symbols that inexorably and fully shape individual demands and expectations. For the homologies between political behavior, political preferences, and objective interests that he found in mainstream political science, he substituted an equally unambivalent correspondence between political behavior and susceptibility to political myths, individual personality, and, later, such collective factors as gender, ethnicity, and class (Edelman 1971, 63–64; 1988, 100). Indeed, in his final works, long after post-structuralist and postmodern theory and the ethnographic study of media reception had made plain the complicated nature of symbolic meaning, Edelman only grudgingly conceded that political symbols could be ambiguous. But he quickly followed that admission with the argument that such ambiguity does not enable a range of meanings and interpretations that might open the possibility for new symbols and new political possibilities to emerge. Instead, Edelman (2001, 102–3) contended, different groups merely resolve ambiguities of meaning in their own distinct ways, providing elites further opportunity for the manipulative promotion of irrationality and misunderstanding by serving up symbols that will elicit predictable responses.

This view of political communication ignores research in cultural studies, much of which developed after Edelman's initial monograph, but the roots of which can be found in the prewar discovery of "propa-

ganda” (Sproul 1997). Unlike political economists or institutional analysts of mass communications, Edelman paid no attention to the structural foundations of media production and the institutions and processes by which symbols are created (Goodman 2004, 1445–55; Turow 1997), and thus the specific social relationships between producer, text, and audience, and between state and citizen, established by each new communications technology (Carey 1989; Innis 1951). Edelman also ignored the fact that even the most stubborn of rational-actor proponents have recognized the cognitive limits and shortcuts that lead the public to act in irrational, or at least in less than perfectly rational, ways (see, e.g., Lupia et al. 2000). Unlike interpretive and cultural studies of the media, as well as more recent social-scientific studies of media reception, Edelman resisted the possibility that audiences actively interpret mass-produced texts within specific social contexts and settings (Ang 1991). And unlike social-movement theorists, by the end of his career Edelman saw no possibility for widespread collective political action (Gamson 1992, 66–67).

Although Edelman clearly kept abreast of the so-called cultural turn in the social sciences and the social turn in the humanities, which led to an interdisciplinary convergence of efforts to study the relationships among power, social structure, and culture, he had little interest in exploring the complexity of symbolic meaning or the social contexts in which individuals and groups make meaning of politics. Although he occasionally and briefly cited and applied a few of the major ideas of, say, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, he merely appropriated and simplified their more complicated discussions of discourse, institutions, and texts within a barren world of ideological mystification.¹⁰ The issue of whether Foucault or Derrida is a figure to emulate is less significant than what Edelman’s lack of engagement with scholars working on the same issues says about the value of his work for contemporary scholarship. He failed, ultimately, to move beyond the mass-society debates, as scholars in other fields did.

Thus, there is no reason for scholars studying the cultural symbols of politics to consider Edelman’s work; indeed, they tend to ignore it and, ultimately, to overturn many of the assumptions of his approach. Consider, for example, the large body of scholarship published within the past decade concerning the widespread belief in conspiracy theories. The previous wave of academic study of conspiratorialist political extremism had contemporaneously studied the period between McCarthyism and Barry Goldwater’s 1964 presidential bid. This work as-

sumed that extreme anti-communists and anti-intellectual populists shared a pathological attraction to demonology in place of rational political thought (Rogin 1987, ch. 9). For Hofstadter (1966), most famously, populist political extremism constituted a “paranoid style” that lacked the substantive, interest-based foundation required by a functional representative democracy. An element of the centrist critique of mass society, this pluralist view of conspiracy politics presaged Edelman, although without Edelman’s radical political gloss. Had Edelman turned his attention to conspiracy theory and populism, what would he have offered that was substantively different from the consensus/pluralist approach?¹¹ Judging from his other work, it seems likely that in his hands, conspiracy theories and the populist politics of which they were a part would have been just more instances of the political spectacle’s tendency towards mass delusion.

During the past decade, numerous qualitative, interpretive scholars, including anthropologists (e.g., Marcus 1999 and West and Sanders 2003), postmodern political theorists (e.g., Dean 2002), historians (Goldberg 2002; Kazin 1998), and scholars in media and cultural studies and English (Fenster 1999, Knight 2001, Melley 1999), have returned to the topic of political extremism and refined the mass-society approach to political symbols. Rather than posit a symbolic subculture or system that represents or imposes a pathological regime of imaginary politics, this diverse body of work inquires instead into populism’s and conspiracy theory’s narrative and interpretive logic, precise historical contexts, fluid relationship to mainstream political discourse, and effects on the institutional practices of political parties. Historical and close analyses of political texts and practices have drawn a far more complicated picture of how the symbols of populist politics and conspiracy are created, appropriated, employed, and of how they affect their believers. This picture provides a significantly more useful and empirically verifiable understanding of the processes that Edelman identified but that he failed, ultimately, to consider at the level of detail and complexity necessary for the task.

* * *

Because of its internal flaws and the historical context from which it emerged (and to which it remains bound), Edelman’s work embodies two core propensities of left political thought that do not necessarily travel together: a deep distrust of the state and an equally deep disgust with the public. Unlike progressive and socialist leftists who favor state-

based solutions to market failures and capitalist exploitation, and unlike populist leftists who favor the collective private actions of new social movements as a means to expand self-rule and social justice, Edelman was skeptical of the likelihood of any meaningful structural change. Lacking hope, he was left with little but pessimism and cynicism—something he readily admitted. Edelman (1988, 4) equated pessimism with an apparent ability to perceive fully the truth of political symbols, the spectacle generally, and their consequences. His was not an effort to reveal the degradations of mass society or the consequences of propaganda in order to construct a better world, whether through reform, radical change, or, as in Harold Lasswell’s case, utilization of political symbols by experts for functional ends. Edelman certainly preferred a different world, but offered no hope for efforts to bring one about. No, Edelman’s project was a polemic, an elegy for the hapless fools trapped in an endless cycle of ignorance and disaster.

NOTES

1. My focus in this essay is solely upon Edelman’s work on political symbols, and not on his role as teacher or intellectual mentor to other academics. A recent article in a prominent legal sociology journal argues that Edelman profoundly influenced that field, claiming, as proof, the later academic success of many of his former students and colleagues (Ewick and Sarat 2004). I have no reason to challenge the latter claim. But to the extent that the article’s authors also implicitly suggest that an historical reconnection to Edelman’s work would reinvigorate any current field, I disagree.
2. One can find in Edelman’s work instances in which he sought to problematize a binary between the symbolic and the real. In reconsidering *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* for a new printing twenty years after its initial publication, for example, he denied the existence of “an objective political ‘reality’ from which symbols can divert attention” (Edelman 1985, 200). But later in the same essay, he also alleged that some “policymaking . . . directly affects how well people live” but “remains largely unpublicized” (1985, 200, 211).
3. I leave open the question of whether the “vulgar” Marxist theory of ideology from which Edelman and his supporters distinguish his work is in fact an accurate portrayal of the entirety of Marx’s work. I also leave aside, for the moment, whether Edelman’s conception of symbols is much different from the theories of ideology developed by Western Marxist and post-Marxist theorists after 1968—theories that Edelman ignored in his later work, when he should have had access to them.
4. Of these theorists, Edelman wrote only about Bourdieu’s work more than in passing. Bourdieu considered issues of language and symbolic power in

- great detail, both empirically and in building theoretical models that, like Edelman, attempted to avoid reductionist conceptions of ideology (see especially Bourdieu 1977). But even in this case, other than a review of one of Bourdieu's books (Edelman 1992), Edelman never cited Bourdieu or overtly incorporated any insights from Bourdieu's writings into his own work.
5. In his "Afterword" to a reissue of *Symbolic Uses*, Edelman (1985, 198) claimed that his work, "though generally pessimistic about politics . . . carries an optimistic implication: that the forms of behavior we deplore are not inherent in human nature or the personality, but changeable if social and economic institutions change." This statement seems superficially true, as far as it goes. But because Edelman's emphasis was always on the relative immutability of the symbolic system/spectacle's deepest structures—including the mass delusion that covers exploitative social and economic institutions—Edelman's claim about his work seems largely inconsistent with his central thesis, to the point of being disingenuous.
 6. During the 1970s, Edelman (1977, 124–25) conceded that mass, coordinated political resistance could bring about substantive social and political change (such as the expansion of the social safety net and antidiscrimination laws in Western democracies), but he seemed to lose faith in the possibility of such resistance recurring—or even, perhaps, in the extent of the changes in the first place.
 7. In a very curious thread running through one of his books, Edelman (1977, 86–89, 154–55) extended the opposition between high art and degraded mass culture further, into an oddly Randian excess, as he lamented the defeat of the "autonomous person" by bureaucracy and a society mired in mediocrity. Although he never returned to the notion, it demonstrates the latent liberal within him and the relative incoherence of his deeply pessimistic politics.
 8. In this sense, his work is distinct from that of Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky (1988), who similarly disdain Lippmann's normative assumptions, but who find Lippmann's description of the "manufacture of consent"—and the instrumentalism it invokes—accurate.
 9. This is not intended to demean social criticism, but to distinguish between the aspirations of social science (even in a postmodern and post-disciplinary age) and those of criticism, and to clarify the importance of that distinction in evaluating Edelman's work. My frustration is not that Edelman practiced social criticism, but that he and his supporters would claim that he engaged in something more authoritative and replicable.
 10. Equally telling, Edelman used the word *spectacle*, in *Constructing the Political Spectacle* (1988), his last major monograph, to describe the same social phenomena as the "symbols" on which his earlier work focused—without ever discussing or referring to Guy Debord's famous, earlier use of the term in *Society of the Spectacle*, a seminal document of the 1968 student riots in Paris and a foundational text for postmodern media critique. Debord's work, and the associated tradition stretching from Henri Lefebvre to Jean Baudrillard,

and from Marshall McLuhan to the cultural study of the mass media, seems to have provoked little interest on Edelman's part, despite the similarities and overlaps between that field and his own work. Without imposing on him a duty to cite and discuss others' work encyclopedically, one could at least expect some historical acknowledgement of the term *spectacle's* prior, similar use, and explanation of how his usage follows or departs from Debord's.

- II. Edelman might have been expected to differ with Hofstadter by attempting to recuperate *leftist* populists, with whose politics he would have had more sympathy. But this would not have been a departure from his general approach to the symbolic use of populist conspiracy theories.

REFERENCES

- Adorno, T. W., Else Frenkel-Brunswick, and Daniel J. Levinson. 1950. *The Authoritarian Personality*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Ang, Ien. 1991. *Desperately Seeking the Audience*. London: Routledge.
- Bell, Daniel. 1960. *The End of Ideology*. New York: The Free Press.
- Bellamy, Richard. 2003. "The Advent of the Masses and the Making of the Modern Theory of Democracy." In *Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Political Thought*, ed. Terrence Ball and Richard Bellamy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bennett, W. Lance. 1993. "Constructing Publics and Their Opinions." *Political Communication* 10: 101–20.
- Berelson, Bernard, and Morris Janowitz. 1966. *Reader in Public Opinion and Communication*, 2nd ed. New York: The Free Press.
- Blumer, Herbert. [1939] 1966. "The Mass, the Public, and Public Opinion." In *Reader in Public Opinion and Communication*, ed. Bernard Berelson and Morris Janowitz. New York: The Free Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Carey, James W. *Communication as Culture*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.
- Dean, Jodi. 2002. *Publicity's Secret*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Debord, Guy. [1967] 1995. *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. New York: Zone Books.
- Denning, Michael. 2004. *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds*. London: Verso.
- Edelman, Murray. 1964. *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Edelman, Murray. 1971. *Politics as Symbolic Action: Mass Arousal and Quiescence*. New York: Academic Press.
- Edelman, Murray. 1977. *Political Language: Words That Succeed and Policies That Fail*. New York: Academic Press.

- Edelman, Murray. 1985. "Afterword, 1984: Reflections on Symbolism and Politics." In idem, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Edelman, Murray. 1988. *Constructing the Political Spectacle*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Edelman, Murray. 1992. Review of Pierre Bourdieu's *Language and Symbolic Power*. *Contemporary Sociology* 21: 717–19.
- Edelman, Murray. 1993. "Introduction." *Political Communication* 10(1): 99–100.
- Edelman, Murray. 1995. *From Art to Politics: How Artistic Creations Shape Political Conceptions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Edelman, Murray. 2001. *The Politics of Misinformation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Ewick, Patricia, and Austin Sarat. 2004. "Hidden in Plain View: Murray Edelman in the Law and Society Tradition." *Law & Social Inquiry* 29: 439–63.
- Femia, Joseph V. 2001. *Against the Masses: Varieties of Anti-Democratic Thought Since the French Revolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fenster, Mark. 1999. *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Gamson, William A. 1992. "Social Psychology of Collective Action." In *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, ed. Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Gary, Brett. 1999. *The Nervous Liberals: Propaganda Anxieties from World War I to the Cold War*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1964. "Ideology As a Cultural System." In *Ideology and Discontent: International Yearbook of Political Behavior Research* 5: 47–76.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Goodman, Ellen P. 2004. "Media Policy Out of the Box: Content Abundance, Attention Scarcity, and the Failures of Digital Markets." *Berkeley Technology Law Journal* 19: 1389–1472.
- Gorman, Paul R. 1996. *Left Intellectuals and Popular Culture in Twentieth-Century America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith. New York: International Publishers.
- Greenberg, Clement. [1939] 1986. *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 1: *Perceptions and Judgments, 1939–1944*, ed. John O'Brian. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Habermas, Jürgen. [1962] 1989. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Bürger with Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Habermas, Jürgen. 1987. *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 2: *Lifeworld and System*, trans. Thomas McCarthy. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Herman, Edward S., and Noam Chomsky. 1988. *Manufacturing Consent*. New York: Pantheon.
- Hershey, Marjorie Randon. 1993. "Election Research as Spectacle: The Edelman Vision and the Empirical Study of Elections." *Political Communication* 10: 121–40.
- Hofstadter, Richard. 1966. *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*. New York: Knopf.

- Horwitz, Robert. 1962. "Scientific Propaganda: Harold D. Lasswell." In *Essays on the Scientific Study of Politics*, ed. Herbert J. Storing. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Innis, Harold. 1951. *The Bias of Communication*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Kazin, Michael. 1998. *The Populist Persuasion: An American History*, rev. ed. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Knight, Peter. 2001. *Conspiracy Culture: From Kennedy to "The X-Files."* London: Routledge.
- Lasswell, Harold D. 1927a. *Propaganda Technique in the World War*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Lasswell, Harold D. 1927b. "The Theory of Political Propaganda." *American Political Science Review* 21: 627–31.
- Le Bon, Gustave. [1896] 1920. *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*. London: T. Fisher Unwin.
- Lippmann, Walter. 1922. *Public Opinion*. New York: Harcourt, Brace.
- Lippmann, Walter. 1925. *The Phantom Public*. New York: Harcourt, Brace.
- Lupia, Arthur, Mathew D. McCubbins, and Samuel L. Popkin. 2000. *Elements of Reason: Cognition, Choice, and the Bounds of Rationality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Macdonald, Dwight. 1962. *Against the American Grain*. New York: Random House.
- Mannheim, Karl. 1936. *Ideology and Utopia*, trans. Louis Wirth and Edward Shils. New York: Harcourt, Brace.
- Marcus, George E. 1999. *Paranoia within Reason: A Casebook on Conspiracy as Explanation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Melley, Timothy. 2000. *Empire of Conspiracy: The Culture of Paranoia in Postwar America*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Mills, C. Wright. 1956. *The Power Elite*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Mills, C. Wright. 1959. *The Sociological Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Novick, Peter. 1988. *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Oren, Ido. 2003. *Our Enemies and US: America's Rivalries and the Making of Political Science*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Pareto, Vilfredo. 1935. *The Mind and Society* (4 vols.), trans. Andrew Bongiorno and Arthur Livingston. New York: Harcourt, Brace.
- Purcell, Edward. 1973. *The Crisis of Democratic Theory*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky.
- Ricci, David M. 1984. *The Tragedy of Political Science: Politics, Scholarship, and Democracy*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Riesman, David, with Nathan Glaser and Reuel Denney. 1950. *The Lonely Crowd*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Rogers, Everett M. 1986. *Communication Technology: The New Media in Society*. New York: Free Press.

- Rogin, Michael. 1987. *Ronald Reagan: The Movie*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ross, Andrew. 1989. *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture*. New York: Routledge.
- Schaub, Thomas Hill. 1991. *American Fiction in the Cold War*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Schumpeter, Joseph A. 1950. *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 3rd ed. New York: Harper & Row.
- Seidelman, Raymond; & Edward J. Harpham. 1985. *Disenchanted Realists: Political Science and the American Crisis, 1884–1984*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Smith, Mark C. 1994. *Social Science in the Crucible: The American Debate Over Objectivity and Purpose, 1918–1941*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Somin, Ilya. 1998. "Voter Ignorance and the Democratic Ideal," *Critical Review* 12: 413–58.
- Sproule, J. Michael. 1997. *Propaganda and Democracy: The American Experience of Media and Mass Persuasion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Thompson, John B. 1990. *Ideology and Modern Culture*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Torgerson, Douglas. 1993. "Policy Analysis and Public Life: The Restoration of *Phronesis*?" In *Political Science in History*, ed. James Farr, John S. Dryzek, and Stephen T. Leonard. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Turow, Joseph. 1997. *Media Systems in Society: Understanding Industries, Strategies, and Power*, 2nd ed. New York: Longman.
- West, Harry G., and Todd Sanders, eds. 2003. *Transparency and Conspiracy: Ethnographies of Suspicion in the New World Order*