



# REBELS

YOUTH AND THE COLD WAR ORIGINS OF IDENTITY



LEEROM MEDVOI

# **REBELS**

**NEW AMERICANISTS**

*A series edited by Donald E. Pease*



# REBELS

YOUTH AND THE COLD WAR ORIGINS OF IDENTITY

LEEROM MEDOVOI

*Duke University Press   Durham and London   2005*

© 2005 DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States

of America on acid-free paper

Designed by Amy Ruth Buchanan

Typeset in Scala with Shortcut display

by Tseng Information Systems, Inc.

Library of Congress Cataloging-

in-Publication Data appear on the

last printed page of this book.

# CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	vii
1. Identitarian Thought and the Cold War World	i
2. Cold War Literature and the National Allegory: The Identity Canon of Holden Caulfield	53
3. Transcommodification: Rock 'n' Roll and the Suburban Counterimaginary	91
4. Identity Hits the Screen: Teenpics and the Boying of Rebellion	135
5. Oedipus in Suburbia: Bad Boys and the Fordist Family Drama	167
6. Beat Fraternity and the Generation of Identity	215
7. Where the Girls Were: Figuring the Female Rebel	265
Conclusion: The Rise and Fall of Identity	317
Notes	331
Works Cited	359
Index	377



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am daunted by the numerous thanks that I owe. So many people contributed to the writing of this book in so many different ways that I hardly know where to begin. For lack of a more elegant idea, I will simply begin at the beginning. I launched a very different version of this project while still in graduate school, at a time when I was blessed with a cohort of some of the most wonderful intellectual comrades I could have hoped for. I thank Shay Brawn, Elaine Chang, Alex Chasin, Lisa Hogeland, Diane Nelson, Kristin Nussbaum, Shankar Raman, David Schmid, and Eric Schocket for their generous help in shaping the questions and issues with which I began this project. I especially want to thank Robert Arch Latham, for his unstinting loyalty and for the way in which he always pushed me to think harder and with greater care. I likewise feel special gratitude to Kim Gillespie, whose indefatigable commitment to my Marxist education changed the way I saw the world. Finally, Benjamin Robinson remains my comrade in mind and heart. I thank him for always being there, as a profound interlocutor but most of all as a dear friend.

My dissertation advisor, Regenia Gagnier, offered me moral and professional support in difficult times, not to mention her thoughtful criticism of this project's early drafts. David Lloyd and Russell Berman were also important faculty mentors whose keen insights I deeply appreciate. I thank Sandra Drake for her warmth and historical acumen. Harry Stecopoulos and Joel Foreman, who both helped me to publish early pieces of this book, gave me the courage to continue the work.

Robert Corber and Donald Pease played vital roles in bringing this book

to fruition. It is they who helped me to imagine the book it might become. I also thank Ranjana Khanna, Tomo Hattori, Ranita Chatterjee, and Karen Engle, who were important intellectual comrades and friends during some difficult years. I especially want to thank Srinivas Aravamudan, whose keen mind and generous encouragement kept me thinking and writing. It was in dialogue with him that I began to explore the vital relationship between postwar U.S. culture and the moment of decolonization.

I thank Jane Newman and John Smith for their caring friendship and for their deep intellectual integrity. They are scholars in the finest sense of the word. My gratitude also goes to Julian Carter, who helped me to think through several key problems in the latter half of the manuscript. Rey Chow, Mark Poster, and Robyn Wiegman, all in different ways, kept me professionally engaged and energized when I needed it. Thank you all. Thanks also to two wonderful people, Fred Pfeil and Henry Schwarz, for showing me what it means to be an engaged scholar. Clara Maclean, a dear friend, was kind enough to read, correct, and engage my work at a crucial moment. I can't thank her enough. I appreciate the rich comments and encouragement that Judith Halberstam offered me for my final chapter. The UC Humanities Center offered me deeply appreciated support.

Several people offered me guidance with this project's final transformations. Rayna Kalas, Nic Sammond, and Andy Hoberek offered me invaluable suggestions as I rewrote the introduction to this book. So too did Miranda Joseph, whose friendship and support have meant so much to me over the years. Amy Greenstadt is the finest colleague and the most generous friend I could hope to have. She is also a profound interlocutor, who rescued me when I was hopelessly lost in revisions of my second chapter. I cannot be too grateful to the two anonymous readers who submitted reports to Duke Press. Their criticisms and suggestions improved the manuscript in incalculable ways. Reynolds Smith and Sharon Torian have been wonderful people to work with at the press. I thank them for all their support and advice.

Sections of this book have been published previously and I appreciate the permission from these venues to reprint them here. One section of chapter one previously appeared in *Minnesota Review* for their special issue on the 1950s, edited by Andrew Hoberek (55:57 [2002]: 167–186). Several short sections in chapter two also appeared in an earlier version of my argument that may be found in the anthology *The Other Fifties: Interrogating Midcentury American Icons*, edited by Joel Foreman (University of Illinois Press 1997). Lastly, chapter four draws substantially from an essay that

appeared in the anthology *Race and the Subject of Masculinities*, edited by Michael Uebel and Harry Stecopoulos (Duke University Press 1997).

My parents, Jorge and Cepora Medovoi, supported me in many different ways as I labored with this book. My brother, Amir, and sister, Ornah, were also great comforts and joys to me. Bob and Martha Klotz were endlessly supportive of me and my family. They are kind and generous people. My closest friend, Jim Fina, kept me feeling loved even when I was most down on myself. The spirit of his care and wise encouragement inhabit this book. Lena Roth and Rosa Celestine both cared for my very young children as I struggled to complete the manuscript. In the most material of ways, my book would not have been possible without them.

My deepest thanks goes to my life partner, Marcia Klotz. What can I say? She saw me through it all. She gave me the most precious of company, she loved me, thought every thought with me, she read every page. I can't count the number of times when she put me back on the right path as I was veering away. She inspires me again and again with her intelligence, her articulateness, her strength of character, and her generosity of spirit. This book is as much hers as it is mine, and I dedicate it to her, as well as to those dear ones that we care for together.



IDENTITARIAN THOUGHT  
AND THE COLD WAR  
WORLD



The study of identity, then, becomes as strategic in our time as the study of sexuality was in Freud's time.

—Erik Erikson, *Childhood and Society*

**T**his book examines the figure of the young rebel in postwar American culture, including such avatars as Holden Caulfield, the beat writers, Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry, and James Dean. These figures emerged at the dawn of the Cold War era because the ideological production of the United States as leader of the “free world” required figures who could represent America’s emancipatory character, whether in relation to the Soviet Union, the new nations of the third world, or even its own suburbs. The personality of the postwar rebel heralded new historical conditions that would soon inaugurate what we now call the “politics of identity.” By the 1960s, new social movements and countercultures would begin to articulate themselves as emergent identities, pitted against a status quo cast as parental, repressive, and authoritarian. The motivating argument of this book is that the very concept of “identity” as it is commonly understood today was a new one in the 1950s. The meteoric rise of “identity politics” and the breakneck speed with which it had eclipsed class-based left politics by the 1960s and 1970s demand a historical explanation that both acknowledges how recently this concept came into use and investigates the ideological grounds from which sprang its rapid appeal.

For some time now, leftist thinkers and activists have grown skeptical

of identity, whether as a proper basis for political action or, more radically, as an ontologically meaningful paradigm. Identity is frequently judged an essentializing category that articulates a political subject by denying difference and enforcing exclusions.<sup>1</sup> Even worse, identity sometimes stands accused of necessarily reiterating the very terms of the social relations of oppression that gave rise to it.<sup>2</sup> Yet, for all these critiques of identity, the discourse itself has yet to be systematically historicized.

Even so trenchant a philosophical critic of identity as Judith Butler, who persuasively argues that identity is the result of our practices and not their ground or origin, has not attempted a genealogy of identity of the sort that, for instance, Foucault once offered for sexuality. *Gender Trouble*, her groundbreaking first book, presents itself as a genealogical study that means to force the question, what kind of politics might be possible after the critique of identity? Nonetheless, in offering only a theory of identity rather than a history, it foregoes a philosophically hard-won opportunity to redescribe identity, not as the universal product of human practices, but instead as a bounded one tied to the contingencies of a historical moment. Butler instead limits herself to providing an antirealist and antifoundationalist ontology of identity. She declines to ask, as a genealogist should, when and how did “identity” become the product of our performative practices? What is the history of its emergence? And what, for that matter, might be provoking its discursive subversion at present?

This book, taking the antirealist account of identity at full face value, brackets what might be called the “identity hypothesis” of most contemporary leftist criticism: the notion that there has always been something we call “identity” in human history whose relevance to any given political situation should be theorized, critiqued, or deconstructed. Instead, I attempt to answer the question of when and why “identity” was first produced. Terms such as “nationalism” or “race” are routinely granted generative histories by their critics—explained as the discursive result of print capitalism or the colonial contest, for instance. Yet with a few exceptions, “identity” has remained without such a history.<sup>3</sup> Why, for example, does it not appear in a book such as Raymond Williams’s *Keywords*? The answer surely has something to do with the fact that, unlike the bulk of Williams’s entries, “identity” is not a word bearing the mark of social struggles dating back to the sixteenth century, nor even to the nineteenth century. It is in fact so recently coined that Williams did not have the historical perspective to trace its development.

As I will show, our contemporary politicized conception of identity first

emerged a mere fifty years ago, as a lynchpin to the ideological contradictions in the Cold War order. Even as anticommunist ideology authorized the suppression of an Old Left rooted in radical class politics, the rise of a New Left, animated by identity politics, was actually abetted by a different face of the Cold War imaginary that envisioned the young American rebel as guarantor of the nation's antiauthoritarian democratic character.

After the 1960s, the narrative of youth, which subtends "identity politics," receded from view as identity became principally attached to race, gender, and sexuality. Nevertheless, its continued presence can be perceived in the youthful face through which the new social movements' insurrectional spirits were figured. The liberation movements of the late sixties (black, Chicano, women's, or gay) articulated as their political subject an *emergent* identity, a young self establishing its sovereignty against the forces of a racist, patriarchal, or homophobic "parent culture." While race, gender, and sexuality have come to represent the manifest content of modern identity activism, age has remained latently present, a structuring element in the post-New Left political unconscious. If we wish to understand why the identity paradigm seems less potent today than it did in previous decades, the answers therefore will likely be found in a historicotheoretical consideration of the end of the Cold War and its attendant identitarian ideology of age. This hidden history of identity is important not only for what it tells us about the recent past but also for how it might frame the political upheavals of the present. How are the political configurations of globalization reworking or engaging the identitarian rhetoric that saturated political culture in the Cold War years? What place might identity continue to have within an emerging *new* New Left associated with antiglobalization struggles? These are questions to which I will return in the conclusion.

### *The Postwar Emergence of Identity*

Prior to the 1950s, the word "identity" did not apply to a collective sense of self, let alone to a notion of self understood as embattled or emergent. It was not modified by the terms of peoplehood as it now is in such locutions as "national identity," "racial identity," or "cultural identity." Nor, with a single exception, did it function adjectivally, as it would in such later locutions as "identity issues," "identity crisis," or "identity politics." In philosophy and mathematics, the word "identity" named a quality or condition of sameness or equivalence between several objects. One might, for instance, argue that the Phoenicians were originally Canaanites by observing the

“identity” of their languages, or one might suggest that there is no identity of interest between capital and labor.<sup>4</sup> Near the end of the nineteenth century, “identity” became an adjective, used only to designate objects manufactured so as to “identify the holder or wearer,” such as identity cards, bracelets, or certificates. In this usage, “identity” indicated a person’s entry in an informational system of reference. One could assume, for instance, a “false identity”—a counterfeit name or social position. Nevertheless, identity did not yet capture a psychological sense of personhood.

Until 1957, the *Reader’s Guide to Periodic Literature* listed only one form of the word “identity”: a subject heading entitled the “Identification of Criminals.” In that year, however, a new entry appears in the periodical: “Identity, Personal. See Personality.” Under “Personality,” one finds a variety of articles listed, including such revealing titles as “What It Means to Find Yourself,” “Traps of Identity,” “Person in a Machine Age,” and “Teenagers in Search of Themselves.” Both the New Left and the counter-culture of the 1960s seem to have made a decisive impact on the establishing of identity as a periodical topic. By 1971, the *Guide* no longer refers its readers to “Personality.” Instead, it begins to log an independent subject heading entitled “Identity (psychology)” that lists such articles as “Identity Crisis in Black Americans Visiting West Africa” and “Masculinity and Racism: Breaking out of the Illusion: The White Middle-Class American Identity Role.” By 1973, the first subcategory appears: “Negroes—Race Identity.” Over the next few decades, other ethnic identities are gradually added to the *Guide*, while the politicization grows more explicit in such article titles as “American Identity Movements: A Cross-Cultural Confrontation” and “Liberated Woman: Identity Crisis.”

These articles, of course, were merely publicizing a lexicon of identity already in use by post-New Left movements to describe the motives and goals of their activism. Although “identity politics” are today typically traced back no further than the mid-1970s, often to the rise of black feminism, its origins are in fact explicitly earlier and more disparate.<sup>5</sup> Already by 1966, for example, “Black Identity” would appear as the subtitle to a key section of a SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) manifesto meant to justify the organization’s famous decision to reconstitute itself as an all-black youth organization: “Any re-evaluation that we must make will, for the most part, deal with identification. Who are black people, what are black people, what is their relationship to America and the world?” (SNCC, 158)

This political usage of identity was an early one, but by no means un-

usual. Nor was it restricted to activists of color. In 1969, for instance, Tom Hayden explained the irreconcilable differences between Judge Hoffman's generation and his own during the Chicago 7 trial with the simple assertion, "Our crime was our identity" (Hayden, 440), arguing that the court had indicted them for living in a "liberated zone" that threatened adult America, not merely with its political opinions, but "even more around 'cultural' and 'psychological' issues" (442). In that same year, the Gay Liberation Front Women stated in their manifesto: "We denounce the fact that society's rewards and privileges are only given to us when we hide and split our identity. We encourage self-determination and will work for changes in the lesbian self-image, as well as in society, to permit the 'coming out' of each gay woman into society as a lesbian" (Gay Liberation Front Women, 606).

In all these cases, it is notable that "identity" is conceived as the product of self-defining and self-affirming acts that confront a punitive, authoritarian Other: "America and the world," Judge Hoffman's generation, or a heteronormative society. The rhetoric of politicized identity hinges on proclaiming the subject's triumphant self-transformation as it detaches itself agonistically from the coerced expectations of "society," "America," or one's "elders."<sup>6</sup> Black politics takes its identitarian turn, for instance, through explicitly asserting the arrival of black power and black pride. To this day, gay identity politics draws on the rhetoric of pride, and not only at annual marches. In the metaphors deployed above by the Gay Liberation Front, we see an early example of how the collective identity's "coming out" functions as a political debut, a coming into one's own "self-determination" that may be replayed by the gay individual. What I will call the psychopolitics of identity begins then, not with a wounded attachment to one's victimization, but rather with a proud declaration of emergence into power, a rhetorical move that has carried strategic value for many decades. The history taken up by this book begins by asking the question, what conditions spawned this new sense of identity as realized psychopolitical sovereignty? How and from whence did this identitarian discourse become available to help launch the new social movements?

*Inventing Identity: Erik Erikson and the  
Cold War Psychopolitics of Youth*

"Identity" as we know it was coined in 1950 with the publication of Erik Erikson's *Childhood and Society*, a text that would exert a powerful influ-

ence on postwar American culture.<sup>7</sup> Erikson's book was the first to define the word "identity" as the normative psychic achievement of selfhood. It was also the first, as Jonathan Arac notes, to attach identity to such elements as individuality, nationality, racial grouping, and even sexual orientation (20).<sup>8</sup> In just a few years time, Erikson's concept of "identity" would become hegemonic across the social sciences, come into use as an exciting new term in the humanities, and win a wide popular following. Many other writers and thinkers would take up the mantra of "identity," but they would refer back endlessly to Erikson's work, and to his first book especially, which became a college textbook bestseller. Robert Bellah is said to have remarked, "If there's one book you can be sure undergraduates have read, it is Erikson's first one. You can't always be sure they've read Shakespeare, but you know they've read Erikson" (Friedman, 335).

Identity discourse rapidly permeated postwar U.S. culture in no small part through its now largely forgotten relation to two key terms: "youth" and the "Cold War." It is rarely remembered that Erikson erected the concept of identity as part of his influential model of the stages of human development, with adolescence playing the pivotal role. Moreover, Erikson relied heavily on the ideological terrain of Second World War and Cold War geopolitics to promote his understanding of the identity concept as part of what would soon become an emergent postwar common sense.

The identity concept began as a key feature in Erik Erikson's account of the human life cycle—the so-called eight ages of man. Erikson schematized individual human development through an ascending series of psychosocial stages, each characterized by a new polarity in the self's possible relationship to the outer world. Despite the title's emphasis on childhood, Erikson's book is actually most concerned with the fifth stage, "puberty and adolescence." Adolescence, according to Erikson, replays all the earlier conflicts of childhood, but now at a level that requires the self to negotiate its way between the poles of identity and role confusion (273). For Erikson, adolescence constitutes the crucial staging ground of identity formation. It names the moment at which a person establishes, not so much a cognitive distinction between self and other (which clearly begins far earlier) but rather what might be considered a *psychopolitical* one.

In Erikson's account, childhood ends and "youth begins" when young people start to wrestle with the basic issue of "what they appear to be in the eyes of others as compared with what they feel they are" (261). In one respect, the "search for identity" that comprises the stage of adolescence for Erikson reenacts a classical political metanarrative of the enlightened indi-

vidual entering into full possession of his/her right to self-determination.<sup>9</sup> Much like the ideals of liberty and independence that it incorporates, therefore, “identity” is a normative term and not just a descriptive one. It names an accomplishment and a positive good. What Erikson adds, however, is a post-Hegelian psychological requirement to the liberal political narrative: the self must be capable of formulating a satisfactory self-image that is determined by neither blind acceptance nor unthinking rejection of the image offered by the other. Identity pivots on what has sometimes been called a “politics of recognition” derived from the Hegelian model of lordship and bondage.<sup>10</sup> However, what specifically distinguishes the politics of identity is that the project of an uncoerced “self-recognition” becomes a prelude and a precondition to achieving recognition by the other. Because youth occupies the transitional stage between childhood and adulthood, it represents, in the context of the liberal theory that Erikson appropriates, a normative passage into self-determination.

Identity’s political potency, however, derives from the fact that it has applied—from its inception—to collectivities as well as to the individuals that comprised them: for Erikson, it was not just persons that sought identity, but also tribes, nations, races, and even sexes. From the perspective of such collectivities, the political ideal upon which the concept of identity drew most directly was that of sovereignty. Like personal liberty, sovereignty too is a political norm, but the rights that it historically designates belong not to individuals but to states, which are entitled first to domestic autonomy (self-determination within their borders) and second to international recognition (acknowledgment and respect for that right by other states).<sup>11</sup> As scholars of international law have shown, however, the doctrine of sovereignty is itself based upon what is sometimes called the “domestic analogy,” in which the liberal individual’s natural rights are writ large, so that each state is itself conceived as an individual among other individuals, equally entitled by natural law to self-determination.<sup>12</sup> State sovereignty therefore acts as the projection of individual liberty onto the level of the body politic. Insofar as identity likewise moves from the individual’s achievement of psychopolitical autonomy to an analogous one sought by the figure of the collectivity, it mirrors the political ideal of sovereignty.

Identity expands upon sovereignty in one very important way, however, for sovereignty, as a normative attribute of states, constitutes in Alexander Murphy’s words a “political-territorial ideal” that takes primacy over peoplehood, or that at the very least makes state governmentality and territory into the obligatory complements of peoplehood. It assumes, in short,

that “the land surface of the earth should be divided up into discrete territorial units, each with a government that exercises substantial authority within its territory” (81). At the level of collectivity, identity may therefore be thought of as a *psychologized conception of sovereignty detached from territory and the state*. It treats both the person and the people as bearing a right to psychopolitical self-determination that precedes any questions of statehood or territory, and that indeed constitutes them as fully endowed persons or a people. Identitarian governmentality (insofar as it conceives one) begins with the self-rule of the personality.<sup>13</sup>

It is no accident that this decisively new locus for sovereignty’s application coincided with the beginning of the Cold War, at a moment when U.S. political culture was being permeated and redefined in complex ways by the critiques of totalitarianism and colonialism. As we shall see, the new discourse of identity aimed to resolve a paradox for the traditional ideal of political sovereignty, namely that a state (like Nazi Germany or like a former European colony) might be nominally independent while its people remain psychologically subjugated. This was a problem that concerned thinkers and writers from many backgrounds, but it received special attention from psychoanalytically trained thinkers, including Wilhelm Reich and Eric Fromm (on fascism) and Franz Fanon (on colonialism). Erikson’s work, and the discourse of identity that it spawned, belong to this tradition.

The politics of identity began in the metanarrative of youth’s psychopolitical struggles, which Erikson brought directly to bear on the broad geopolitical dilemmas posed by the Cold War world. The study of identity, he famously asserted, “becomes as strategic in our time as the study of sexuality was in Freud’s time,” but the reason Erikson considered identity so indispensable a concept was because it enabled analytic judgment of the psychopolitical stakes involved in different paths to industrialization. Though titled “Youth and the Evolution of Identity,” the important concluding section of Erikson’s book does not examine individual identity formation but rather compares the respective national identity crises that the industrial revolution provoked in fascist Germany, communist Russia, and liberal capitalist America. This section of his book thus carves up the world according to the Cold War logic of the Vital Center, with the United States neatly balanced between the right-wing and left-wing extremes of fascist and communist totalitarianism.<sup>14</sup>

Adolescence remained just as central to Erikson’s discussion of national identity as it was to individual identity, underscoring his conviction

that all nations and collectivities possess group psychologies that must pass through a youthful stage of identity formation. Indeed, Erikson's book seems to take as axiomatic (setting the table, as it were, for development theory) that the moment of industrialization represents a collective "coming of age" for nations, in which the achievement of identity appears even more vital than economic growth.<sup>15</sup> Mediating between individual and social psychology, Erikson uses representative youth figures to analyze both German and Russian national identities. In the study of Germany, for instance, Erikson brings Freudian group psychology to bear on Hitler's youth-based charisma. If, for Erikson, excessive rebellion and sycophantic obedience represent the dueling risks of the adolescent struggle for identity, then Nazism emphatically embodied the former pathology. Erikson characterizes Hitler as an ersatz adolescent gang leader whose bid for political power began with an appeal to estranged adolescents, whom he induced to defy their parents. Eventually, Erikson argues, Hitler swayed the entire nation to the antiadult position that Germany had been betrayed by the parental afflictions of adjustment and conscience. In their place, Hitler offered them an aggressive, amoral "imagery of ideological adolescence" (344).<sup>16</sup>

In his discussion of Russia, Erikson directs his study of national identity through the "legend of the young Maxim Gorky," whom he presents as an apostle of an emergent industrial society. Working with a Soviet biopic about the famous novelist and playwright, Erikson interprets the events of the young Alyosha's boyhood in a backward, tribal world on the fringes of the Russian empire. Over the course of his childhood and adolescence, the young Alyosha develops a revolutionary identity that prepares him for a future in the Soviet intelligentsia. Though Erikson endorses Gorky's developing struggle against tsarist feudalism, he also hints at the eventual failure of his Bolshevik solution to Russia's identity crisis, which yielded only a totalitarian "machine logic" captured in such nicknames as "Stalin."

Toward its conclusion, the Gorky section turns decisively to a new topic, as the young Alyosha suddenly becomes representative of something other than merely Russian identity: "We must be able to demonstrate to grim Alyoshas everywhere that our new and shiny goods (so enticingly wrapped in promises of freedom) do not come to them . . . as so many more opiates to lull them into the new serfdom of hypnotized consumership. They do not want progress where it undermines their sense of initiative. They demand autonomy together with unity; and identity together with the fruits of industry" (402). This passage bears a complex relationship to the analysis of

Russian identity for which it serves as an epilogue. Erikson's "we" transparently designates an affluent postwar America. The "grim Alyoshas" of the passage, however, represent not the Soviet Union but instead, as we shall see, the nations of the third world. Moreover, what "we" need to demonstrate to "them" is emphatically not what one might expect in a time of Cold War, namely the perils of Bolshevik revolution, but rather the *lack* of perils posed by "our new and shiny goods." Put another way, the danger that occurs to Erikson following his analysis of Russian identity is not the Soviet threat to America, but instead the third world's erroneous suspicion that American affluence leads to unfreedom. Erikson's seemingly peculiar fear points toward yet another secret of identity's potency as a Cold War political concept.

### *The Age of Three Worlds*

Erikson's "grim Alyoshas" come into focus only if we approach the Cold War era less as a simple squaring off between two postwar superpowers than as what I have elsewhere called a triangulated "age of three worlds."<sup>17</sup> As James Cronin has observed, the Cold War was first and foremost a postwar settlement that, following the defeat of the Axis powers, established highly stable geopolitical spheres of influence for both the United States and Soviet Union, even while it incited vigorous ideological conflict between them. Militarily speaking, the United States and the Soviet Union typically waged their territorial battles through proxy forces, but they confronted one another directly on the ideological playing field as self-appointed harbingers of rival universalisms: the world-historical claims of liberal capitalism and state socialism respectively (5–6).

The special urgency of these ideological conflicts derived from the main historical event of the era: the rapid decolonization of much of the earth. Even as the Soviet Union and the United States competed with one another to widen their respective social systems and spheres of influence, the old European world empires were breaking up. Between 1945 and 1960, Penny von Eschen points out, "forty countries with a total of eight hundred million people—more than a quarter of the world's population at that time—revolted against colonialism and won their independence" (125). U.S.-Soviet rivalry thus did not play out on a dichotomous globe in a simple scenario of "us against them," as a "containment" approach to Cold War culture implicitly presumes. Rather, it took the form of a triangulated rivalry over another universe that only now became known as the "third world."

The emergent nation-states in South and East Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and the Caribbean collectively became, as Eric Hobsbawm notes, “the zone in which the two superpowers continued, throughout the Cold War, to compete for support and influence, and hence the major zone of friction between them” (227). By the mid-1950s, the “three worlds concept” had become the globe’s dominant topological imaginary.<sup>18</sup>

Hobsbawm’s choice of the oddly gentle words “support” and “influence” inadvertently offers a vital observation to be made about the altered geopolitics of the postwar moment: although the United States and the Soviet Union, without question, aimed to win new territories for their social systems, it was no longer permissible to do so in the old modality of empire. The ideological as well as the material waning of formal imperialism, already well under way by the First World War, only accelerated during the Great Depression and the Second World War. By the moment of the post-World War II division of the globe, an anticolonial “global common sense” had firmly found its place as a necessary element in the formation of any hegemonic Cold War discourse. The very term “third world” was thus meant to name a region of the earth for which the experience of colonization was putatively now in the past, and whose present would therefore encounter only problems of “modernization,” not foreign domination.

Put another way, the third world designated a region in which newly sovereign “national characters” were emerging from their former “dependence” upon colonial masters. After the First World War, the Versailles Treaty had fashioned for the tottering colonial order a new political rationale and juridical code whose “ideological origins [lay] in Western legal instruments for the protection of minors and the tutelage of children” (Grovogui, 121). This Kantian rhetoric of colonial nonage, according to which some people were “not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world” imaginatively positioned colonized populations as up-and-coming peoples, approaching though not yet arrived at a state of self-determination (Grovogui, 121). Already by 1918 then, the ruling ideology of colonialism hinged upon the human life cycle as its master metaphor.

The three worlds imaginary of the postwar years constituted a key turning point in this rhetoric, for it envisioned the colonized as having finally begun the passage out of nonage, a transition that Erikson would emphatically associate with adolescence and the quest for identity. Within this network of meanings, the first and second worlds benignly represented, in turn, rival paths to modernization between which the nations of the

third world would have to choose as they passed through national adolescence toward maturity.<sup>19</sup> It is within the terms of this global imaginary of emergent sovereignty that the United States competed with the USSR to win client states among the emergent nations. As the newly elected Harry Truman proclaimed in a 1949 speech promoting a new program of assistance to the third world, “Our aim should be to help the free peoples of the world, through their own efforts, to produce more food, more clothing. . . . The old imperialism—exploitation for foreign profit—has no place in our plans. What we envisage is a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair-dealing” (916–917).

Truman here advances a by now familiar Cold War rhetoric, positioning America as “inherently anti-imperialist, in opposition to the empire-building of either the Old World or of communism and fascism, which collapse together into totalitarianism” (Amy Kaplan, 12). The United States, stressing whatever anticolonial credentials it could muster, presented itself as the only reliable model for achieving national self-determination. It promoted its first world as the genuinely “free world,” a truncated but hopefully expanding version of the free and equal “one world” that Senator Wendel Wilkie had famously espoused following his travels through colonial Asia and Africa in the midst of the Second World War.

One principal way the United States validated itself as the proper model for developing third world nations was by mobilizing its claim to a history of colonial revolt. As even the hawkish secretary of state John Foster Dulles proclaimed in 1954, “We ourselves are the first colony in modern times to have won independence. . . . We have a natural sympathy with those everywhere who would follow our example” (Paterson et al., 504). With these words, Dulles enjoined an influential postwar national fantasy through which the United States transfigured itself from an informal imperial superpower into the first of the world’s postcolonial states. It depicted itself, in other words, not as the imperial parent but as an elder sibling to the world’s new nation-states, which had at last begun to follow in the footsteps of America.

This geopolitical fantasy served several ideological purposes. Not only did it explain why third world nations should gravitate toward the American over the Soviet alliance, but it also bolstered a proprietary relation to the discourse of freedom. As nation after nation cast off the colonial rule of European states, these newly independent countries possessed, on the geopolitical playing field, immediate legacies of national liberation movements that could make a rhetorically stronger claim to the title of the free

world than the United States. The third world's claim on freedom was in many ways furthered by efforts made by many new nations to escape domination by either the United States or the USSR, particularly after the concept of a "third path" gathered force following the 1957 Bandung Conference of so-called nonaligned countries.

In contrast to the culture of containment nourished by the "red scare," Cold War America's phantasmagoric affiliation with the third world led in notably different political directions. Specifically, the newly independent nations of the third world prompted assertions of America's status as their historical precursor, and thus as a postrevolutionary society. Among the most influential of such assertions was Erikson's identity concept, which explicitly shared this Cold War fantasy of a postcolonial revolutionary American character. Decolonization had unleashed, in Erikson's view, a wave of new national self-images whose "common denominator is the freeborn child who becomes an emancipated adolescent" (299). Yet in this respect, they followed a path already blazed by American identity since "the American farmer's boy is the descendant of Founding Fathers who themselves were rebel sons" (399). Implicit in Erikson's reasoning, then, is the geopolitically vital question, would the new freeborn children of the world recognize their likeness to America?

These, then, are the "grim Alyoshas" of Erikson's Russia chapter. The historical Alyosha, it would seem, stands in metonymically for the young Russian nation as it moves beyond feudalism and into a revolutionary moment of "identity crisis." Against the Cold War backdrop for Erikson's book, "Alyosha" names not the Stalinist totalitarian enemy (who will be known by the name "Maxim Gorky") but rather a Russia in the pivotal moment *before* it had become the metropole of the second world, when it was still a third world nation, seeking a path to "autonomy together with unity; and identity together with the fruits of industry." The many other Alyoshas, following suit, would appear to be the new cast of young nations mounting the postwar stage, now poised (like prerevolutionary Russia) to make a choice between state socialism or liberal capitalism as their path to sovereignty.

Erikson, as a famously patriotic emigré to the United States and a partisan of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal, does not even bother to denounce the communist model. It is taken for granted that the young Alyosha's commendable struggle for identity ends tragically in Stalinist tyranny. Communism, the false road to industrialization, promises collective sovereignty and an industrial future, only to send one hurtling back, in the damning words of Cold Warrior Robert Hayek, on the road to a second

serfdom. It may provide unity (a communist empire), but not autonomy. It may deliver the fruits of industry, but only at the bitter price of identity. Gorky's new regime thus proves as unfree as the old one that his earlier self, the young Alyosha, had sought to overthrow.

It remains less clear, however, why Erikson would expect the young Alyoshas of the third world to view America's "shiny goods" as embodying, not its "freeborn" passion for identity but instead yet another "new serfdom," here based upon industrial consumerism rather than communist tyranny. Erikson's poetic language, which describes "shiny goods" as "enticingly wrapped" to seduce their buyers into a "hypnotized consumer-ship," paradoxically draws his reader toward a threat that he ostensibly believes does not exist. In other words, he insists that consumerism does not represent a "new serfdom" for emerging nations even as the rich detail of his description suggests that it must. The passage marks Erikson's profound ambivalence toward American mass consumption as a threat to identity, an attitude that was not untypical of the generalized social anxieties wrought by the new relations of postwar U.S. capitalism.

### *Cold War Suburbs as a Mode of Regulation*

The emergence of identity discourse in the United States was conditioned, not only by the postwar decolonization of the globe but also by the rapid transformations of everyday life within the nation's borders. While decolonization led to an intensified rhetoric of American freedom, the emerging postwar culture of consumption called forth a more complicated response in the United States, one that was often self-congratulatory, but at times also included palpable fears that Americans were becoming more passive and unfree. The identity concept spoke directly to these fears that plagued the social arrangements of postwar life.

Because my reading of the culture of postwar U.S. capitalism relies heavily on the technical and theoretical insights of the French regulation school, it will be necessary at this point to make a slight theoretical detour.<sup>20</sup> Like its post-Marxist cousin, British cultural studies, the French regulation school theorists have developed a complex account of the relationship between economics and culture. While both schools reject the traditional base-superstructure model, however, the regulation school has focused, not on the degree of autonomy between spheres (as has been the tactic of cultural studies) but instead on the extent of their mutual interdependence; special stress is placed on the political, juridical, and cultural

as sites for preconditions of capitalist economies.<sup>21</sup> In lieu of “base” and “superstructure,” the regulation school theorists distinguish instead between what they call a “regime of accumulation” and a “mode of regulation.” The “regime of accumulation” describes the particular processes utilized in production for profit at any given moment in the history of capitalism. The “mode of regulation” describes the ensemble of regulating institutions, formations, and subjects that make for the stability of a particular “regime of accumulation.” In this respect, the regulation school treats cultural and political institutions not as superstructural, but in fact as potentially *infrastructural*, as genuine conditions of possibility for the reproduction of any particular historical form of capitalism.<sup>22</sup>

The 1950s, as it happens, launched an episode in economic history that regulation school theorists have studied carefully under the rubric of the Fordist regime of accumulation. The term “Fordist,” borrowed from Antonio Gramsci, is taken from Henry Ford, who combined a Taylorist production model (fragmenting the work process so as to intensify labor productivity) with compensatory higher wages that, along with a system of credit, would enable his workers to purchase the cars they manufactured. In the crudest sense, Fordism represents an economic system in which an assembly-line model of mass production was articulated with a culture of mass consumption, all under the regulatory guidance of an expanded professional managerial class and a Keynesian welfare state. Roughly speaking, the regulation school traces the roots of Fordism to the Great Depression, which it describes as a crisis precipitated by the incompatibility between an old “competitive mode of [economic] regulation,” the *laissez-faire* political arrangements of nineteenth-century capitalism, and the new Taylorist production model, which they describe as an “intensive regime of accumulation.”<sup>23</sup>

The difficulty posed by this intensive regime’s vast improvements in economic productivity was that it required social demand to keep pace with the potential increase in supply. Left to the vagaries of market forces in a *laissez-faire* “competitive mode of regulation,” late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century capital experienced repeated crises of overaccumulation, culminating in the Great Depression. The solution to these recurring crises came through the development of what the regulation school calls a “monopolistic mode of regulation,” spearheaded by the Keynesian state’s use of fiscal policy (i.e., government spending and taxation) and monetary policy (manipulation of the money supply) to stabilize aggregate demand. Though governmental regulation of the U.S. economy had roots

in early-twentieth-century progressivism, it expanded rapidly with the New Deal, and took hold in earnest when the state took command of industrial output during the Second World War. The proto-Fordist wartime model demonstrated that, by providing big business with a secure market that would allow it to safely increase its output, a Keynesian state could provide much of the institutional structure necessary for capital accumulation.

Seen against this historical preface, the Fordist regime that motored the “peacetime” economic boom appears to have been achieved by finding suitable replacements for the peculiar conditions of the wartime economy, thereby forming, in combination, what I will call the Cold War mode of regulation. Wartime state coordination of industry, in other words, evolved into the standard set of “peacetime” Keynesian legal, fiscal, and financial state institutions. But in another sense, as many have argued, the state of war never ended, as Cold War hostilities led to a perpetually militarizing security state, and consequently, a means of upholding aggregate demand. Postwar Fordism became regulated, to borrow Herbert Marcuse’s term, by a “welfare/warfare state.”<sup>24</sup>

Fordism also entailed a new mode of regulation for labor, similarly modeled on a wartime precedent: an ideology of compelling national interest. During the Second World War, the state had managed its labor problems through a propaganda apparatus that mobilized workers as self-sacrificing Americans willing to labor heroically to defeat their fascist adversaries. Soon after 1945, as it declared a “cold” war with Soviet Russia, the state mandated, once again in the name of national security, that American labor desist from challenging capital. As America’s right-wing fascist nemesis was supplanted by a left-wing communist one, the Cold War succeeded in justifying far greater hostility to the radical politics of labor than had the comparatively benign atmosphere of the war’s antifascist agenda. Left-wingers who challenged the terms offered to labor in the Fordist social contract could be vilified, not merely as unpatriotic saboteurs of a war effort, but as apologists for the totalitarian ideology of the communist enemy.

The Cold War undermined class politics in other ways as well, some more indirect but no less effective. Fordism, for instance, greatly expanded in size a more politically acquiescent white-collar managerial class, both in the public sector, where this class administered the regulatory state, and in the private sector, where it managed the Taylorized workforce on behalf of corporate elites. Though they labored for wages just as surely as their blue-collar counterparts, white-collar workers, as critics have often noted, imagined themselves as a middle class situated between capital and labor,

at least in part because the labor they performed was deemed mental rather than physical. They thus possessed a sort of “knowledge capital,” which set them apart from the working class.<sup>25</sup>

Fordism found its most powerful means of social regulation, however, in the great postwar suburbs, which brought the blue-collar working classes together with the expanding white-collar managerial class into a single system of everyday life. Politically, the suburbs deradicalized labor; culturally, they interpellated Americans as consumers; economically, they propped up social demand. As it matched the new scale of production offered by the Taylorized assembly line with a new mode of mass consumption, Fordism completely transformed the way of life for the wage-earning classes (Lee, 73). During the late forties and fifties, the state helped to finance, build, and administer an entirely new form of the everyday: suburban living. As developers assembled concentric rings of suburban housing tracts around urban centers, government subsidized them by providing the infrastructure necessary to sustain them, including water, power, and crucially, a highway system of beltways and interstates linking the new suburbs to urban workplaces. As workers purchased the new homes, using their hefty wage increases and state-supported Federal Housing Administration financing, they launched what London Jones describes as the single largest internal migration in the history of the United States:

In the twenty years from 1950 to 1970, the population of the suburbs doubled from 36 million to 72 million. No less than 83 percent of the total population growth in the United States during the 1950s was in the suburbs, which were growing fifteen times faster than any other segment of the country. As people packed and moved, the national mobility rate leaped by 50 percent. The only other comparable influx was the wave of European immigrants to the United States around the turn of the century. But, as *Fortune* pointed out, more people moved to the suburbs every year than had ever arrived on Ellis Island. (38)

Suburbanization on such a mass scale allowed automobile companies in turn to market cars that the millions of relocated workers now needed to commute on the new highway system. It also eventually led to the rise of the shopping mall, a suburban alternative to urban commercial districts that added further convenience to new rounds of purchases for the home. In short, suburbanization established the mode of mass consumption necessary for Fordism to stave off another accumulation crisis, absorbing as it did the excess production capacity unleashed by postwar demobilization.

For a working class with few material assets, which had survived the depression in miserable urban tenements or even in tent cities, suburban home ownership was a deeply attractive postwar opportunity. Yet this process of suburbanization quickly came to regulate postwar labor insofar as it led them to reimagine themselves, no longer as proletarians, but at last as fully enfranchised nationals, as Americans whose socioeconomic system could now “deliver the goods” and thus no longer deserved to be criticized. The suburbs facilitated this imaginative work on numerous fronts. To begin with, the suburban home relocated the worker both physically and imaginatively at a distance from the site of production, where worker consciousness might be nourished; in its stead, it offered an environment that reorganized life around the pleasures of private consumption.

The suburbs also radically reordered race and ethnicity to the detriment of class consciousness. During the Second World War the city became a rich space for proletarian affinities, as workers across ethnic and racial groups labored and lived together, building solidarities amidst the war effort.<sup>26</sup> Suburbanization rent asunder this emergent wartime working class. European immigrants, whose class-stratified enclaves in the cities had encouraged a strong sense of themselves as ethnic groups akin to “other” non-whites, were now enticed to the suburbs by appeals to their understandable post-depression era desire to escape urban tenements for the security of home ownership. Once dispersed among the suburbs, however, their prior friendship and kinship networks were increasingly supplanted by patterns of sociable consumption to be shared with their new neighbors. Blacks, Latinos, and Asians, meanwhile, were pointedly excluded from the new suburbs through an ensemble of policies that included “redlining” by banks and the FHA, as well as “restrictive covenants” enforced by developers and homeowner associations.

The Cold War suburbs transformed not only the basic terms of race, but also those of family, gender, and sexuality through its prevailing ethos of domesticity. As it removed people from the city, Fordism eroded the institution of the extended family, erecting in its place a streamlined nuclear family, the new atomic unit of postwar consumer society characterized by ownership of a home, at least one automobile, a television set, refrigerator, washer and dryer, and much more. Like suburbia itself, this new domesticity served a political as well as an economic purpose. As Elaine Tyler May points out, “Purchasing for the home helped alleviate traditional American uneasiness with consumption: the fear that spending would lead to decadence. Family-centered spending reassured Americans

that affluence would strengthen the American way of life. The goods purchased by middle-class consumers, like a modern refrigerator or a house in the suburbs, were intended to foster traditional values" (166). The Cold War American family was thus a radically new institution that paradoxically took on a status as a traditionalist bulwark against communist (and analogized forms of) amorality, thereby easing the transition into a mass-consumption society.

For all these reasons, the postwar suburb must be understood, not simply as a geographical phenomenon, nor even as a new mode of mass consumption, but as a primary Cold War ideological apparatus. A "machine for living," the suburban home (in contrast to the city apartment) hailed its subjects not as a multiracial working class with common laboring interests to defend, nor even as citizen members of a heterogeneous public, but instead as white Americans participating in a national ideal (the much ballyhooed "American dream") that itself needed defending against its communist enemies.<sup>27</sup> Moving to the suburbs was tantamount to doing one's national duty by building the affluence and strength of America's Fordist order.

*From Containment to Identity Culture:  
A New Cast of Cold War Characters*

Insofar as the new regime of accumulation depended upon a Cold War ideological system of social regulation, it can be said that Fordism and the Cold War worked neatly together as the respective economic and the political faces of a powerful postwar hegemony. Cold war discourse proclaimed the new suburbs as the apotheosis of American freedom, a utopian space of national abundance in which people could at last fully realize their individuality by making consumer choices that expressed and satisfied their inner wants. From this perspective, Americans who questioned or opposed the promise of suburbia could be constituted as the internal enemies of American freedom who, like the external Soviet enemy, needed to be prevented from acting out their subversive intentions.

This dimension of Cold War culture in the fifties has been widely investigated by numerous scholars under the rubric of "containment," and Cold War culture is indeed often conceived in the scholarship as above all an ideologically driven system of sociopolitical repression. Originally, "containment" named a foreign policy, first devised by diplomat George Kennan in his famous Long (or X) Telegram, in which the United States aimed

to “contain” or restrict the expansionary intentions of the Soviet regime. As a number of critics have argued, the policy of containing communism abroad provided flexible terms for a repressive cultural logic on the home front that identified various “un-American” characters and forces as domestic equivalents of the Soviet menace.

The most obvious (and also least figurative) example of such Cold War “domestic containment” is surely McCarthyism, the right-wing political campaign that rolled back New Deal progressive politics by accusing its partisans in Washington, Hollywood, and elsewhere of serving Soviet interests.<sup>28</sup> But, as Elaine Tyler May first suggested in her groundbreaking book *Homeward Bound*, a version of containment policy was also brought to bear on postwar gender relations, as fear of the bomb—and the Soviet threat generally—drove women and men into the sense of security offered by suburbia’s powerful new norms of nuclear family living. May’s arguments find revealing parallels in the work of John D’Emilio, Robert Corber, Gerald Horn, Alan Nadel, and others, who have each shown in quite different ways how the “red scare” dimension of postwar culture set in motion far-reaching forms of social regulation, with detrimental effects for unmarried or working women, gays and lesbians, sexual bohemians of all stripes, political radicals, labor unions, racial minorities who challenged white privilege, and numerous other deviants from the norms of the Cold War suburban imaginary.<sup>29</sup>

It would be a mistake, however, to assume a seamless relationship between the material relations of Fordism and the ideological imperatives of the Cold War. Indeed, one of the era’s most distinctive cultural features was an abiding fear that Fordist consumer culture and the Cold War were not aligned, that the new suburbs did not at all constitute the sort of “free world” that the three worlds imaginary of the Cold War required America to be. One highly condensed expression of this fear is found in Erikson’s concern that America appeared more as a system of “hypnotized consumership” than as the preeminent democratic society of the “free-born son.” But while objections to the “soft tyranny” of postwar culture—its suburbs, its white-collar world, its system of mass consumption—were legion, the image demanded of Cold War America as land of the “freeborn sons” made Fordist masculinity into an especially sensitive site of social critique. William Whyte’s renowned sociological study *The Organization Man* and Sloan Wilson’s best-selling novel *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* provided two well-known monikers for a widening critical discussion of the

“new” white-collar, suburban masculinity, as did a high-profile *Life* magazine article entitled “The New American Domesticated Male.”

Too often, scholars have viewed these figures as instituting a new normative model of American manhood, when what they in fact connoted was at best a distressed form of masculinity, and at worst a degenerate one.<sup>30</sup> As Barbara Ehrenreich reminds us, Sloan Wilson’s protagonist represented what she calls an “early rebel,” or a “gray flannel dissident” who was “adjusted; he was mature; he was, by any reasonable standard, a success as an adult male breadwinner. But . . . he knew that something was wrong” (29). William Whyte’s classic treatise likewise polemicizes *against* the Organization Man, denouncing him for his conformist “social ethic” and entreating him instead to “fight the Organization” in defense of his own individuality (13).<sup>31</sup> Indeed, as Whyte suggests in his introduction, for all his Fordist affluence, the Organization Man’s dilemma seemed very similar to that of a people ruled by communist tyranny: “The word ‘collective’ most of them can’t bring themselves to use—except to describe foreign countries or organizations they don’t work for—but they are keenly aware of how much more deeply beholden they are to organization than were their elders” (4). Such criticisms were widely extended, not merely to the Organization Man, but to the suburban world in which he lived. As Helen Puner noted with exasperation in her 1958 magazine article “Is It True What They Say about the Suburbs?” these naysayers included the entire range of “sociologists, psychologists, playwrights, novelists and assorted peerers at the American scene” (42).<sup>32</sup> In the popular forays against the Fordist world, a consistent theme appears: the new system of mass consumption was depriving Americans—and most vitally its men—of their hitherto distinctive autonomy, and thus diminishing the very value of freedom held to distinguish the first world from the second. Suburbia, in one of the jokes that Whyte quotes, was “a Russia, only with money” (310). Timothy Melley has referred to this ubiquitous, often paranoid anxiety of the era as “agency panic,” precisely because it imagined that powerful yet invisible new structures were coming to determine the self’s every action.

Exemplary of this postwar “agency panic” was the most influential sociological treatise of the decade, David Riesman et al.’s *The Lonely Crowd*, a text which argued that the new consumer society (associated with suburbs, white-collar workplaces, and other scenes of the Fordist order) was fundamentally redirecting the American character toward compulsory social conformity: “from invisible hand to glad hand,” as he succinctly puts

it. Where once they were “inner-directed,” by which Riesman and his co-authors mean that they behaved in accordance with an internalized set of moral codes, Americans were increasingly becoming “other-directed,” conditioning their behavior in response to social pressures and communicated directives (13–25).<sup>33</sup>

At the conclusion of their enormously influential text, the authors close with a grim question: might “other-directed” Americans find themselves increasingly reduced to a miserable choice between “adjustment,” in which larger social needs will simply recalibrate their personalities for a proper “fit,” or “anomie,” a state of disfunctionality or failed dissent? Against these equally dismal alternatives, Riesman and company pinned their hopes on a third possibility, that Americans might develop an “autonomous” form of other-directed personality capable of “conforming to the behavioral norms of their society—a capacity the anomics usually lack—but are free to choose whether to conform or not” (242). This figure of the “autonomous other-directed personality” fulfilled a widespread cultural wish of the times. Like the writings of Whyte, Wilson, and many others, *The Lonely Crowd* struggles to imagine how the sovereign American personality might be rejuvenated in the face of a widespread conviction that it had been compromised by Fordism’s cryptototalitarian system of mass consumption.

These common attacks upon the suburban ideal, organizational manhood, and the like, suggest that the much-touted “Cold War consensus” never actually existed. Instead, they indicate that postwar American culture was deeply troubled by ideological tensions between the norms of Fordist suburbia and the America idealized by the three worlds imaginary. While “agency-panicked” critics like Riesman never doubted that the Fordist first world remained more conducive to sovereign selfhood than the communist second world, they nevertheless condemned the former as far from ideal. Soviet Russia’s “modern totalitarianism . . . must wage total war on autonomy,” Riesman noted, but the “diffuse and anonymous authority of the modern democracies is less favorable to autonomy than one might assume” (251).

Like most liberal social critics of the day, David Riesman sought to imagine an autonomous but still Fordist American character, capable of freely choosing its “other-directed” suburban consumption and white-collar employment. One major difficulty with this hope, however, concerned how such an “autonomous” conformity might ever be demonstrated. Fordism, because it articulated mass production with mass consumption, brought into existence an undeniable standardization in the object world of every-

day life for Americans. The advertising system, to be sure, insisted that mass consumption gave Americans the means to achieve individual self-expression. Nevertheless, the standardization of Fordist assembly line products was often seen instead as eroding the sovereign selfhood of Americans. Moreover, if someone has already chosen to live, like “everyone else,” as an Organization Man or to don the ubiquitous gray flannel suit, how might one show that a choice had been made at all? What might visibly distinguish a chosen conformity premised on one’s autonomy from a coerced one stemming from adjustment? Only in refusing to conform to the Fordist standard, it seems, could the individual’s sovereign independence from the directives of others be ascertained. This dilemma was particularly troubling given its appearance at the precise moment when the Cold War required that the sovereign American character be celebrated.

Understood both as the antithesis of second world totalitarian mass societies and as the model for third world developing societies, Erikson’s concept of identity, when understood as a project of self-development for the young, offered a resolution to the ambivalence expressed by critics like Riesman or Whyte. It is here that the immediate and tremendous appeal of the identity concept becomes intelligible, as does its general political utility. The adolescent self-generates his or her identity through a process that must be at least partially agonistic, refusing “roles” and “self-images” offered up by others, and challenging what later critical theorists of identity would term “subject positionings.” In Erikson’s model, successful identity formation depends upon the legitimate exercise of rebellion. The Eriksonian drama of adolescence, therefore, describes the development of an individual or social character that successfully reconciles “autonomy” and “other-directedness” in Riesman’s sense.<sup>34</sup> The patent appeal of the Eriksonian adolescent’s “character” is that she enacts the requisite dramas of rebellion *prior* to adulthood. Thus, if an adolescent exhibits a properly rebellious spirit before growing into a conforming suburbanite or an Organization Man, then she has effectively displayed the American self’s sovereignty without necessarily sacrificing the eventual conformity of the adult.

Given that the containment culture of Cold War suburbia was repeatedly plagued by agency panic, the adolescent, as a figure who represented the autonomous character of American identity, on both the national and individual levels, offered an imaginative remedy. The youthful figure of American identity likewise offered a pleasing mirror image with which to reflect back the gaze of the “young Alyoshas” of the third world. For emergent nations seeking to define themselves as independent of their former

colonizers, what could be a better antidote to the geopolitically deleterious image of a “hypnotized consumership” or an “other-directed” mass than a young America, endlessly restaging its own revolutionary moment in a struggle to assert its emergent identity? Within this field of ideological forces, the ideal of the young rebel thus became the nodal point around which a secondary Cold War formation was assembled: an identity culture whose dialectical relationship to containment culture conveyed a celebratory rather than a panicked relationship to agency.

### *Cold War Youth and the Invention of the Teenager*

The quickly embraced concept of identity was only one in a cluster of lexical terms that articulated the ideologically motivated desire for a youth that could represent Cold War America’s self-determination in a “conformist” Fordist era. Another key term was the “teenager”; yet another was the “rebel.” By the mid-fifties, as these terms came to orbit around an emerging Fordist youth market, they gave rise to a rebel metanarrative. The typical protagonist of this narrative (but not the only possible one) was a figure I shall call the “bad boy” of Cold War American culture. It is through this figure that a definitive political culture of identity first came into existence. Before discussing the bad boy, however, I want to trace his sources in the “teenager” and the “rebel,” each of which offers a slightly different genealogy.

Like “identity,” “teenager” is a word whose recent coinage has been largely forgotten. Not only did both terms enter the lexicon at the same moment, but they did so under similar ideological pressures and determinations. According to historian William Manchester, the word “teenager” made its very first appearance at the close of the Second World War, in an article published by Elliot Cohen in a 1945 issue of the *New York Times Magazine*. From this very beginning, the word claimed a powerful political connotation, as the article’s title, “A Teen-Age Bill of Rights,” readily suggests.<sup>35</sup> In a noteworthy echo of Woodrow Wilson’s fourteen-point program for national sovereignty, Cohen’s article proposes another postwar bestowal of autonomy: a “ten-point charter” drafting the rights of the teenager. In this case, however, psychopolitical rights define the endorsed arena of sovereignty. This politicized vocabulary of rights and charters for teenagers might read today as overblown, pseudopolitical rhetoric, yet for Americans in 1945 it intelligibly responded to an apparent crisis in the historic relations of age inherited by the wartime years.

Only in the late nineteenth century had a space of representation opened up between childhood and adulthood, to be occupied by the “adolescent.” The figure of the adolescent condensed together various socioideological developments in the pre-Fordist era of industrial capitalism that lie beyond this study’s scope, but several important determinants deserve at least to be mentioned. In part, the adolescent represented a difficult compromise between labor and capital over where to draw the line between child and adult labor within the industrial wage system. Meanwhile, in the emerging system of education, the adolescent also became central to norms of reproduction for the professional middle class. Fears of urbanization and overcivilization were also spoken to by the adolescent, whose stage in life allowed for intervention in such nature and recreation organizations as the Boy Scouts. Finally, the adolescent also functioned as part of the legitimization narrative for Western imperialism, which, as earlier noted, was steeped in the symbolics of age dependency and development.

Taken together, these determinants tended to produce the adolescent as a dependent whose physical maturity belied a need for adult supervision and instruction. As Joseph Kett has shown, adolescence became a stressful preparatory stage in life, initiated by puberty, when the instinctual energies of young people presumably climaxed even while they lacked the cultural or psychological maturity needed to master their physical powers. Schooling, broadly understood as subjection to adult pedagogical training, became the central drama of adolescence. This new category of transitional age placed its subjects (who formerly had exited childhood directly into the position of young adulthood), in a formalized state of legal, economic, and intellectual subordination to their elders (Gillis, 98). The very meaning of adolescence, associated as it was with sexual, moral, and intellectual immaturity, precluded youth from the rights of personal autonomy that liberal enlightenment doctrine granted to the mature individual. Youth, in the emergent professional middle classes, became increasingly administered by “new educational and recreational systems of social control” (Gillis, 98). Meanwhile, as a normative ideal, “adolescence” served to pathologize the lives of working-class and immigrant youth, since their participation in “street-corner societies” only confirmed the neglect shown by lower-class families and communities toward these vital years of their children’s development.<sup>36</sup> Far from symbolizing the achievement of sovereignty, then, adolescence represented a condition of—and case for—a lengthening state of dependency.

The Second World War brought the category of adolescence into crisis.

With so many fathers abroad and mothers at work, the proper supervision of adolescents seemed increasingly unworkable, precipitating tremendous anxiety. A campaign of hysteria ensued in the wartime press, supported by social experts who predicted a coming epidemic of juvenile delinquency. As James Gilbert argues, this “rehearsal for a crime wave” derived from widespread social scientific and psychoanalytic beliefs that “delinquency was a problem rooted in the family structure. When this [normal structure] was disrupted, then crime was one inevitable result. Thus as the war split families apart, first by conscription and then because women entered the labor force, children were more and more subjected to pressures that in theory, at least, would lead them to misbehave” (28). The social dislocations caused by the Second World War seemed to place middle-class adolescents, for the first time, on the streets alongside their less privileged peers, whose street culture had long been pathologized by social workers and social scientists as delinquent.

The war did not, in fact, throw an entire population of middle-class youth onto the streets. Rather, the war actually led many young people of all social classes to enter the workforce, much as it had for adult women (Gilbert, 19–20). Youth, in short, became part of the wartime proto-Fordist economy. Many adults, however, perceived youth employment as yet another road to delinquency, since it seemed to provide adolescents with an unacceptable level of independence. “We’ve all heard about teen-age girls who pick up servicemen, and about the easy-come-easy-go way of teen-age boys with newly acquired pay checks,” observed a typical article pleading for recreation facilities for “Teen Ages” (Mackenzie, 27). The war was seen as rushing youth prematurely into adulthood, which was perhaps an anxious way of acknowledging that the young were regaining some measure of adult economic and social privilege lost to them since the invention of adolescence.

It is this politicized context that made possible the “teenager” and such attendant articles as the “Teen-Age Bill of Rights.” In important respects, the new category of the teenager embodied a compromise that became foundational to the postwar regime of age. The young waived any claims on adulthood *per se*, but they retained certain privileges acquired during the war. These rights, moreover, would be explicitly justified in relation to the wars waged against the Nazis and the Soviets. At a remarkably early date, the “Teen-Age Bill of Rights” framed the liberties it endorsed in terms of the Cold War. The text of the charter begins with the “right to let childhood be forgotten,” drawing an emphatic distinction between the dependency

of nonage and the growing capacity for autonomy in the teen years (Cohen, 16). Unlike the “adolescent,” the teenager of the “Bill of Rights” does not require continuous supervision by adults. Indeed, such supervision is presented as both a violation of the teenager’s rights and a political pitfall. The article introduces us to “Don,” “a boy on the debating team who only last week took the affirmative of the question, ‘Should the United States pledge its armed forces if necessary to preserve the peace?’ His teacher said he was very convincing. He knows a lot about the Cardinals, Congress, Crosby and communism, and he’s learning fast. But when he gets home, he’s still a kid. . . . [H]e feels his parents are living in his past, and don’t understand him. There’s nothing quite as infuriating as the tolerant smile—‘After all, you’re still just a child’ ” (Cohen, 16). The article’s language converges strikingly with an Eriksonian concept of identity. Don’s political intelligence promises an important future as an effective defender of American geopolitical interests. Yet the satisfyingly autonomous image Don has of himself threatens to lead into an unneeded confrontation with his parents, who mistakenly continue to regard him as a mere child (or perhaps as a pre-war “adolescent”). Without recognizing that, as a teenager, their son has already begun his quest for identity, Don’s parents also risk failing to honor his corollary rights as a teenager, including “a ‘say’ about his own life,” “the right to make mistakes, to find out for himself,” “to have rules explained not imposed,” and “to question ideas.” The “Teen-Age Bill of Rights,” in short, petitions its readers to honor and respect youth as *the embodiment of emergent identity*.

The ideologically saturated meaning of the “teenager” is also revealed in two child-rearing advice books written by Dorothy Baruch. In her first book of 1942, *You, Your Children, and War*, Baruch expresses concern that, as personal freedoms are suspended in wartime, “our children see in the world about them no very true picture of democratic living. They see, instead, a kind of autocracy in action” (89). Amidst the war on fascism, and on the very eve of decolonization, Baruch calls for a renewal of democratic attitudes toward youth, including respect for their efforts at independence, so as to avoid “either [their] open and extreme revolt, or continuing dependence. The ones who revolted had to prove their independence blindly and with violence. The ones who continued their dependence were trying to prove to themselves by ‘dutifulness’ that they were not wicked after all. They could still be nice and good and obedient children” (101–102). These dual negative options noticeably echo the two pathological extremes of adolescence asserted in the psychological writings of Erik Erikson. Also like

Erikson, Baruch normalizes a middle route between “extreme revolt” or “continuing dependence,” one that leads to the “democratic” formation of an independent identity. By 1953, Baruch had become an active promoter of the new youth lexicon, publishing a follow-up book, *How to Live with Your Teen-Ager*, whose basic philosophy is suitably captured in the title to her final section, “Toward Growing Independence” (167).

The Cold War rationale for teenage autonomy was spelled out in even greater detail by Dorothy Gordon, moderator of the *New York Times* Youth Forums, as she recalls the “indoctrination of the young” she had witnessed in mid-thirties fascist Germany and communist Russia:

Indoctrinated with ideologies utterly opposed to the ideals of democracy, how much did those youngsters threaten the future of America? . . . Suddenly I knew I had to do something about it! A man does not come by his democratic conscience overnight in his manhood. He is not born into it. Instead it must be instilled into his thinking from his alphabet days on in order to make him fit for liberty. I realized then that the greatest hope for a lasting democracy lay in an awareness of the principles of freedom on the part of our youth in America, and that awareness could best come through participation in one of the strongholds of democracy which is freedom of speech. . . . The danger and threat of the totalitarian ideology could best be met by a reaffirmation of faith in our democracy. With that firm conviction in mind, I brought the idea of youth forum discussion to *The New York Times*. (173)

Gordon illustrates here a complicated slippage in postwar youth discourse between the “is” and the “ought” of the autonomous American teenager. Though America’s democratic character could sometimes be dramatized by comparing its independent-minded teenagers with the slavish obedience of a Hitler youth or a communist youth group member, at other times it seemed equally evident that autonomy was a fragile value requiring active cultivation and encouragement. In *The American Teenager*, a “general report” on America’s youth from 1957, culled from detailed social opinion surveys, Herman Remmers and D. H. Radler concluded that, while America’s teenagers exhibited distinctly democratic ideals, their commitments were too often driven by “other-directed” motivations in exactly Riesman’s sense. Teenagers, in other words wanted so much to “fit in” that they exhibited a susceptibility to fascist and communist political precepts. Remmers and Radler considered this situation fundamentally unacceptable in a Cold War world: “The internal stability of any democratic society,

as well as its effectiveness in meeting the challenge of rival ideologies, is dependent on the constant and active exercise of those freedoms and those responsibilities that epitomize the democratic orientation. Passive acceptance of choices made by others is actively destructive to the American ideal" (230). In the end, therefore, Remmers and Radler prescribed something very much like the "Teen-Age Bill of Rights," as a means of shoring up the agential, sovereign status of American youth: "The capacity of the American teenager is vast. Helping him achieve self-realization is more than mere duty; it can become sublime satisfaction. And the debt will be more than repaid. Aided to 'come into his own,' the American teenager will contribute to our society much more than that society could possibly give him. He will be, indeed, an inspiration to his family, his community, and the world" (259).

Such endorsements of the teenager as the bearer of youth's autonomy did not come without struggle. On the contrary, parents and the media would repeatedly bemoan the "scandalous behavior and rebellious nature of the nation's young people" (Oakley, 268). For conservatives in particular, youth's increased claims to autonomy signaled a calamitous deterioration in age relations.<sup>37</sup> The political concession ultimately made to a sovereign teenhood was deeply fraught and circumscribed by powerful fears and rhetorical turns that were themselves clearly associated with the conservative Cold War culture of containment. The bogey of the juvenile delinquent therefore did not disappear with the end of the Second World War. Public anxiety persisted through the fifties that freedom for middle-class youth might devolve into criminality. In the nineteenth century, the middle-class adolescent and the juvenile delinquent from the "other half" had once functioned as a normative binary, with clear class and ethnic lines separating them. The teenager, however, could not be so easily distinguished from the juvenile delinquent, for s/he had incorporated a degree of freedom from adult supervision previously associated only with lower-class youth. Middle-class teenagers might, for example, form gangs of their own that — unlike the Boy Scouts of the prewar eras — mirrored those more frightening gangs associated with delinquent culture.

The suburbanization process did not help matters. The suburbs were widely seen as a space of assimilation into a white, middle-class consumer ethos that would alleviate social conflict. When it came to the new teenage subculture, however, it was not always clear whether ethnic and working-class youth would become middle-class teenagers, or whether middle-class teenagers would absorb the taint of delinquency that for nearly a century