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Andrew Hartman. *A War for the Soul of America: A History of the Culture Wars.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015. 384 pp. $18.00, e-book, ISBN 978-0-226-25464-7.

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The American electorate is more divided than at any point in recent memory. Journalists, academics, and political pundits have commented on this phenomenon in a variety of media settings from Sunday morning network talk shows to *New York Times* op-eds. Criticisms of "the media" and its role in this division have even begun to target cable programs, such as *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report*, for their own contributions to a cynical and politically apathetic country. Researchers at the Pew Research Center have contributed empirical evidence to confirm these claims, concluding that polarization is the defining characteristic of American politics. As a result, the notion of self-segregation along racial lines also applies to the manner in which Americans decide where to live, where to shop, and how to vote according to a particular ideological position. A consideration of America's recent past is essential to understanding why polarization defines the character of our contemporary moment and how such division has reached its fever pitch. Lucky for us, the academic study of the culture wars has found its most comprehensive text to date in Andrew Hartman's *A War for the Soul of America*.

My reading of Hartman is selective and thematic in light of space constraints and the audience of this review (scholars of American religion and culture). As a result, I will focus on the original contributions of the text instead of chronicling the chapters individually. Topics in the latter chapters—curricula, art, and the National Endowment for the Humanities—have been written about extensively elsewhere, so I will not spend much time on them. Not only is Hartman's accomplishment an original one, but it also gathers together in one place some of the best material and writing on the culture wars that others have been working on over the past decade. This alone is reason enough to engage Hartman and his many insights into American history since the 1960s.

For Hartman, the beginnings of our politically fraught moment can be found not in the debates over the implementation of the New Deal or the battles over temperance as other historians have argued, but rather in the raucous decade of the 1960s. Compared to the America that many in "normative America" sought to enact and defend —one that touted personal responsibility, individual merit, and social mobility as its creed—the "new America" that emerged during the 1960s possessed its own language, culture, and way of knowing the world that fundamentally challenged the more thickly rendered notions of community and individuality of America's mid-century, as historian Daniel Rodgers has argued in his award-winning monograph, *Age of Fracture* (2011). This new America signaled yet another contentious

moment in American history when various constituencies debated the virtues of competing visions over the *idea* of America itself.

What had changed by the 1960s, however, was the content of such disparate visions. No longer could politics be understood in the traditional fashion, namely, as a venue of legislation and deliberation in regard to the nation's economic forecast or foreign policy concerns. These subjects remained relevant in this period for obvious reasons, yet they were no longer the predominant concerns of the media, federal government, or political parties by the late 1960s. The enemy of the nation was no longer beyond its geopolitical borders, but instead could be identified from the comfort of countless movie theaters, university classrooms, and living rooms the country over. The terrain for these skirmishes, one that Hartman illuminates with great depth in terms of gender, race, religion, and the American mind, followed the undulations of the American cultural landscape itself—high and low, inside and out, daytime and primetime. For sociologist James Davison Hunter, these were skirmishes over the means of cultural production in the United States —in other words, over the means and ends of representation and the subsequent power to disseminate one's message of political uniformity over and against another's. As their name implies, the culture wars have been negotiated and sometimes waged upon the battlefield of culture, an environment very familiar to those on the political left during this period (such as Students for a Democratic Society, SDS), yet depending on who you ask victories in culture have paled in comparison to victories won in politics writ large, including presidential elections. For Hartman, the initial disjuncture experienced by young and old alike between new and normative Americas defined the parameters for how the culture wars would unfold in the late twentieth century as the defining metaphor for our postmodern times. It is his task to explain how exactly this happened, who the most significant contributors were, and what areas of culture witnessed the most martial conflict and why. Hartman proves more than up to the challenge in the pages of *A War for the Soul of America*.

Hartman's monograph is the first history of the recent past as understood through its most pervasive framework, the culture wars. As an intellectual historian, he is most interested in how various cultural and social manifestations of American political culture reflected particular ideas about the nation and its public life. Hartman adds a widely ranging and varied collection of source material to an already burgeoning archive for those interested in the culture wars and their study. He begins his story with an intriguing chapter on the 1960s, the New Left, and its impact on what would become the culture wars in the late twentieth century. The decade's various "epistemologies of liberation" found common cause with New Leftist mobilization, resulting in identity becoming the sole grounding for many of the movements of the period over and against more traditional forms of authority—in other words, universities and government offices. For Hartman, SDS, adept at using culture to its advantage, fired the first shot in the culture wars against the fortifications of normative America only to fail at concrete political and social change. This realization, however, is nothing to lament. "Whereas the New Leftists might have failed in their efforts to revolutionize the American political system," Hartman contends, "they succeeded in reorienting American culture" (p. 12).

Despite the number of Americans who aligned favorably with these developments, equal if not larger numbers were lining up in opposition to such seemingly unbridled and undisciplined behavior in public by the country's youth. Writers and academics, such as Gertrude Himmelfarb, Irving Kristol, and Daniel Bell, began organizing an equal and opposite reaction to the claims of the New Left with their own forms of intellectual production identified as "neoconservatism." Many

of these individuals were quite familiar with the struggles of coming to America as immigrants. As a result, they were quite vociferous in their condemnations of students taking over university campuses in Northern California and New York City because academia symbolized successful meritocratic acculturation and assimilation. For Hartman, neoconservative thought reflected a particular socioeconomic position within the US economy; "the neoconservative mind was the intellectualization of the white working-class ethos." Perhaps most important, neoconservatives "helped make sense of the seemingly incongruous fact that some of the nation's most privileged citizens doubled as its most adversarial" (p. 53).

Regardless of this "adversarial culture" or "new class" interests that saturated institutions of American higher education, a culture that fellow neoconservative Daniel Patrick Moynihan described as dominating "almost all channels of information transfer and opinion formation" (p. 51). Kristol, Bell, and others focused their critical attention on identifying the largely unsettling cultural upheaval in America, its societal impact on the country, and its politics writ large. For these men and women, the very terms of the "orderly society," a term that frequented academic and popular writing at the time (including a series of letters exchanged between President Ronald Reagan and television producer and writer Norman Lear published in ***Harper's*** magazine), were on the line as the cultural sutures of the nation continued to fray and unravel in the face of youthful condemnation. For Hartman, these two cultural factions established the parameters and terms of the culture wars: "This shouting match ... this dialectic of the cultural revolution known as the sixties—helped bestow upon America a divide that would become known as the culture wars" (p. 69). This argument, while perhaps slightly overdrawn, establishes a significant baseline for scholars of the culture wars to begin their analyses of the political and cultural history of the United States since the 1960s.

Hartman's account of the culture wars ranges widely, yet it maintains an admirable attention to nuance and detail in each of the nine chapters, covering such diverse topics as the color line, gender, art, school curricula, and the American mind. For my purposes, chapter 3, "Taking God's Country Back," is arguably the most compelling and problematic section of the entire monograph. It also says a great deal about how scholars study "religion" within the culture wars and how influential Hunter's 1992 publication ***The Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*** has been in such studies, worthwhile or not. While the chapter reflects some of the most recent and cutting-edge scholarship on the Christian Right and its history, it does so by relying on a body of theoretical and historical work that tends to overlook change over time in favor of more synthetic accounts of American religious history since the colonial period. Neoconservative writers, such as Kristol, argued that democracies needed religion as both its foundation and its primary disciplinary mechanism for curbing otherwise uncivilized behavior. For Hartman, this is evidence of neoconservative thought providing the then nascent Christian Right with a "rhetorical weapon" designed specifically for use in the culture wars against those who questioned the need for such a religious foundation. For Lear, Reagan, and others, the orderly society rose and fell depending on its foundations, Christian or not.

Hartman echoes much of the recent work on the Christian Right by arguing that it was the American state in general and the Supreme Court in particular that posed the greatest threat to Christian America in light of the significant church-state court cases of the period, including ***Engel v. Vitale*** in 1962 and later ***Bob Jones University v. United States*** in 1983. The collective reaction to these events and the counterculture in general by various conservative Protestants was

not *reactionary* as one school of thought holds, but was rather tempered and intentional as historian Axel R. Schäfer demonstrates in *Countercultural Conservatives: American Evangelicalism from the Postwar Revival to the New Christian Right* (2011). In light of this research, one can no longer locate causation for the "rise" of the Christian Right in its reactionary behavior against the largely "secular" powers of the American state or court system. The "perfect storm of secular power" that Hartman identifies as the impetus for Christian Right mobilization was arguably not secular at all, but was rather classified as secular by such individuals as Kristol and Jerry Falwell in light of the threat it posed to the nation's health (p. 71). This manifested most clearly in the various conservative calls of the 1980s for "secular humanism" to be defined as a "religion." As American religious historian Tracy Fessenden has argued, Christian expansion depends on its own secularization for much of its epistemic and discursive power. With this in mind, we can begin to ask how the Christian Right deployed and benefited from its own secularization through the use of mass media, direct mailings, and the electronic church instead of categorizing it as always and already oppositional to the American "secular."

Another argument that Hartman's analysis relies on for much of its analytic thrust is that the United States gradually became more secular over the course of the twentieth century because of "the waning in the scope of religious authority" (p. 78). Hartman identifies this as the "paradox of American secularization," namely, that despite such waning "the vast majority of Americans doggedly persisted in religious belief." Drawing largely on the work of historian David Sehat, Hartman sees the lessening of "white Protestant moral authority" as evidence of the gradual secularization of the country (p. 79). Despite the fact that many conservative Christians were once a part of such an authority according to Sehat (and by proxy Hartman), they no longer held claim to it since they were becoming "cultural counterrevolutionaries," in opposition to the seemingly secular counterculture—SDS and federal representatives in the highest and most supreme court. Augmenting his own argument with the theoretical insights of philosopher Charles Taylor, Hartman concludes that the rise of the Christian Right depended on a "secular shift" within the United States based on the dispensational typology that Taylor identifies and applies in *A Secular Age* (2007). The validity of this particular line of thinking, while somewhat common in the historiography of the Christian Right, depends on one fundamental assumption about the relationship between popularization and secularization. For Hartman, it seems as if the lessening of authority cultivated the secularization that Sehat and others see unfolding during the twentieth century.

Writing for the journal *American Quarterly* in 1989, historian R. Laurence Moore offered an alternative explanation for a similar series of events during the nineteenth century. For Moore, "religion," as any number of forms of American Christianity, was anything but a reactionary force against the encroachment of secular power or the dissipation of religious authority. "The various forms of American Christianity, rather than facing a 'secular' competition passively and helplessly, rather than surviving only by colorless imitation of what they professed to deplore, found means to remain a dominant force in shaping the activities of commercial popular culture." "In so doing," Moore argued, "Christianity exerted a major influence on the broad range of cultural meanings that became inscribed in the lives of nineteenth-century Americans." Rather than assuming that popularization meant secularization across the board, Moore contended that popularization contributed to Christian dominance within the United States regardless of its denominational manifestation. Despite the fact that religious authority may have indeed waned over the past century, this does not mean that the country moved from a religious or Christian dispensation to a fundamentally secular one. For Moore's nineteenth-century subjects, "al-

though many particular cultural activities ... lost a specific religious context and sanction, we should not imagine that urban churchgoers who attended the theater or who read novels understood their activity as an affirmation of the secular and a disconfirmation of the religious."[1] For the purposes of this review essay, Hartman's usage of the term "intra-Protestant struggle" is part of a much more useful and constructive framework for understanding the debates between Protestants, Catholics, and Jews during the culture wars of the late twentieth century. In addition, Hartman's analysis in the same chapter on the work and impact of evangelical Frances Schaeffer, whose antistatism and cultural traditionalism found sympathetic ears with many in the Republican Party in the early 1980s, is a much welcomed and needed intervention in scholarly narratives of the rise of the Christian Right.

The most influential study of the culture wars to date remains Hunter's ***The Culture Wars***. Hartman overcomes many of the book's shortcomings, including the overly polarized nature of Hunter's analysis along religious and secular fault lines in American culture and politics, by providing a more nuanced account of the multiple sides and religio-political allegiances that composed the culture wars. Despite the fact that Hartman disagrees with much of Hunter's analysis and emphasis on the role that "religion" played in the culture wars, he nevertheless adopts Hunter's framework when arguing that abortion "illustrated the alternative epistemological universes" that distinguished one side from the other (p. 150). Hunter's account, while problematic at times, nevertheless deftly captures the terms and parameters of the culture wars in a synchronic fashion rather than a diachronic one. In addition, his exploration of how media in general and mass media in particular shaped the discourse and articulations of the culture wars themselves has yet to be either accounted for or used in the burgeoning literature. If, as the neoconservatives argued, new class and adversarial culture interests were best represented in and disseminated through "channels of information transfer and opinion formation," then it behooves us as historians and scholars of the culture wars to investigate the role that media has played in shaping the content of cultural differences between Americans and more important the form that such disagreements have taken since the 1960s (p. 51). Scholars would also benefit from more studies on the "establishment" that many a conservative Protestant mobilized against during the same period. If a moral establishment has indeed remained relatively intact since the country's earliest days, then it cannot simply be a conservative one based on the conservatism enshrined by Reagan's presidency. If anything, this establishment would more than likely have been labeled "liberal" or of the "new class" by Kristol and others writing at the time.

Hartman's text is nothing less than required reading on the culture wars, their history, and their impact on American public life. It is also the field's first comprehensive history of the culture wars and serves as a much welcomed and perhaps more accessible narrative than Rodgers's ***Age of Fracture*** and Robert Self's ***All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy since the 1960s*** (2012). In my estimation, the history of the cultural wars is an ironic one. One of the most powerful clarion calls of the 1960s was that the personal had literally ***become*** the political. We can find no better evidence for the success of this declaration than in the culture wars themselves and their content of argumentation. The culture wars have been nothing if not martial skirmishes and rhetorical disagreements over "culture" both high and low. For many in the culture wars, including the SDS and neoconservatives, culture was anything but ephemeral; it was power—the power to influence, the power to suggest, the power to control nationally syndicated sources of representation. If the personal has indeed become the political, then it has done so at the expense of civil deliberation in the public square. Put more simply, the personal has become the political at the ex-

pense of politics ***becoming*** personal. These conditions make honest dialogue that much more difficult in our contemporary moment, but understanding this dynamic is the first step toward a fuller public life in the twenty-first century.

Note

[1]. R. Laurence Moore, "Religion, Secularization, and the Shaping of the Culture Industry in Antebellum America," ***American Quarterly*** 41, no. 2 (June 1989): 237.