The Limits of Populism: Mills, Marcuse and 1960s Radicalism and Occupy

Mike O'Donnell

Introduction: Scope and Terminology

This chapter explores three main themes. Firstly, extrapolating from the work of Craig Calhoun, it offers a description of radicalism, focusing particularly on populism. This section pertains especially to early nineteenth-century England, but Calhoun considers that the features of radicalism he observes—with due regard for differences of issues and context—tend to recur in certain later social movements (Calhoun 2012, 6–11; 88–92). Secondly, this chapter highlights aspects in the work of Charles Wright Mills and Herbert Marcuse compatible with populism and discusses their relationships to 1960s American radicalism, which is also found to have populist aspects. Thirdly, it examines the 'Occupy' movement using Calhoun's observations on populism and the work of Mills and Marcuse as points of reference. Populism refers to particular, identifiable characteristics, but is not a settled ideology, and

M. O'Donnell (✉)
University of Westminster, London, UK

both 1960s radicalism and Occupy—like early nineteenth-century English radicalism—encompassed other, more clearly defined ideological strands. While social movements arise outside of, and typically in tension with, formal political systems, I conclude by emphasising the importance of transforming the populist impulse into support for progressive rather than repressive change.

The purpose of this book is to make a contribution to imagining social change: the same motive that inspired Mills and Marcuse. In that spirit, this chapter critically describes the interweaving of radical and progressive theory and action in two peak periods, mainly in the United States. It points to certain pitfalls of social movement activism as well as its recurrent strengths. Among the former are the disadvantages of settling for gesture and protest at the expense of sustained and organised struggle. Among the latter is the unyielding search to maintain and extend democratic freedoms and social justice. While history is rarely repeated in precise detail, patterns do recur and it makes sense to learn from them.

The title of Calhoun's book *The Roots of Radicalism: Tradition, the Public Sphere, and Early Nineteenth-Century Social Movements* (2012) indicates a concern with the reactive and defensive elements of radicalism during that period. He states that 'early modern thinkers described analyses as radical when they went to foundations, first principles, or what was essential' (Calhoun 2012, 12). With reference to the popular level of struggle, he goes on to state:

> [A]mong many ordinary people, traditions informed radical protests, community provided a base for sustained radical struggles, and appeals to morality and history were basic tools for reaching beyond present circumstances to claim a chance at better lives. (Calhoun 2012, 19)

Calhoun emphasises that radicalism 'is not best understood as a stable ideological position' and rejects the more recent left-right model of political differentiation as an inappropriate framework for analysing it (Calhoun 2012, 6). He adopts the term populist to describe the character of much radical protest of the period, stressing that such broad ideological and expressive currents predate modern socialism. Craft-workers, artisans and peasants are among the social groups within which populism

might flourish. A desire to regain autonomy undermined as result of industrial and agrarian capitalism was typical of these and other groups affected by early capitalism. He emphasises that:

> the working people excluded from the 'respectable' public were every bit as committed to the idea of autonomy and perhaps more so. Over and again they reiterated the value of independence and castigated elite writers and parliamentarians for depending on patronage. (Calhoun 2012, 128–129)

He observes that 'ideas of autonomy were considerably more prominent than notions of exploitation among traditional English radicals' (Calhoun 2012, 92). The community of the oppressed, rather than an organised political party, is the main frame of reference of populists as they react to diminished autonomy and reduced circumstances. As well as local communities, groups based on, for instance, 'religious currents, leading philosophies, and the working class movement' sustained radical dissent and 'were distinctive in the extremes to which they took antihierarchical ideology' (Calhoun 2012, 269).

Despite his emphasis on the reactionary and traditional aspects of populism, Calhoun maintains that populists may also respond positively to the challenge of change. The struggle for greater autonomy and liberty had a positive political potential, for instance, in the support for franchise extension and the rights reforms advocated by Thomas Paine.

Calhoun challenges the common distinction between old (OSM) and new social movements (NSM), in which the former are considered mainly concerned with material issues and the latter with identity ones. He regards both these features as characteristic of social movements in general. Accordingly, he denies privileged historical status to the labour movement and reinstates the significance of non-socialist radical movements that preceded it. Although Calhoun recognises the diversity of social movements, the removal of the OSM/NSM divide also facilitates recognition of long-term continuities, including those of a populist character. He considers that the NSM formulation is 'historically shallow' and partly responsible for populism being 'commonly treated as an anomaly – not a central and recurrent response to large scale capitalist and centralizing state power' (Calhoun 2012, 285).

The Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology refers to populism as 'an ambiguous term' (CDS 2006, 448). Both the CDS and Calhoun opt to describe and illustrate populism rather than attempt to provide a precise definition. However, Calhoun's retrospective application of the term is justified by the impressive way he employs it to clarify particular continuities in radicalism. In the United States, populism is often thought to have arisen in the late nineteenth century, as small farmers' opposition in the South and mid-West to northern industrialists and bankers. Nowadays, the term is frequently used to describe broad currents of anti-elitist or 'anti-establishment' sentiment with roots in civil society, typically with some impact on the formal political system. The term is often employed disparagingly by established politicians and commentators and, somewhat confusingly, by populists of the right and left.

The typically reactive and ideologically diffuse characteristics of populism cause problems both for theorists and for populists themselves. Populist surges might shift in various directions—reactionary or progressive, anarchist or authoritarian—rendering their trajectory unpredictable for those who seek to guide it, and making it difficult for commentators to unpick a coherent content from it. Here Calhoun's (2012, 278–279) concept of 'consolidation' is useful. The term refers to ways in which radical (including populist) sentiments and ideas might be given more concrete and sustained form. This could usefully include clarifying the common ground between what is (perhaps too rigidly) perceived as either left- or right-wing populism, thus potentially widening the electoral base of radical political parties. One possible direction of consolidation for contemporary populists of a left-radical flavour is to make common cause with democratic socialists and liberal human rights activists, thus reducing the potential for the populist impulse to simply peter out. Here Calhoun introduces a further useful concept, 'social movement field'. This describes a range of groups and smaller movements that may not be formally linked or share precisely the same values, sentiments and ideas but, at least, occur as a recognisable 'wave' of radical activity (Calhoun 2012, 253–254). The extent to which movements with some populist features may be part of such a wider field and may define the latter's character is variable, but I argue that they play a significant part in both cases discussed below.

Mills, Populism and the 1960s Radical Movement

This section discusses populist and what I term 'radical liberal' aspects of the work of Mills and their impact on 1960s radicalism. His work captured the beginnings of radical questioning and unrest, and his analysis of the main structural divide of American society in elite/mass terms led him away from Marxism towards a more populist inclined perspective. However, he did not describe his work as populist. Locating his own values within humanist thought, he helped shape the idealistic sentiments of young activists, albeit that this anchoring was lost in the later 1960s.

An initial point of terminology needs to be made. I use the terms 'New Left' to indicate the political current, 'Counter-culture' to indicate the cultural current of 1960s radicalism in the United States, and the term 'Movement' to include both. The two currents inter-mingled and complemented each other, often to the point of fusion (see Jones and O'Donnell 2010, Chap. 6; O'Donnell 2008, 242). Calhoun states that far-reaching and long-term change—he uses the term 'revolution'—requires a profound cultural as well as an institutional shift and citing Charles Taylor refers to 'strong horizons' of moral judgement (2012, 285). Mills understood these aspects of deep social change and his own aspirations for the future were partly rooted in traditional values. The Movement itself mixed genuine cultural innovation with a revisiting of traditional and naturalistic styles of living and values but the mainstream did little more than flirt with these boundary-challenging developments. Under pressure serious radical ideas and activities became submerged, but were reasserted again more publicly in the 1990s.

Although he died in March 1962 some years before the Movement reached its peak, Mills arguably remained the major ideological influence on it until it began to fragment into ultimately contradictory strands. Many of Mills' themes and arguments, and even some phrases he used, reappear in the speeches and writings of Movement activists. Unsurprisingly, Mills achieved a more sophisticated critique of American society than the generally young Movement activists, but the latter were

better placed to test and develop ideas through practice, whereas Mills remained primarily an academic voice, albeit a powerful one.

Neither Mills' work nor the Movement was 'populist' in any simplistic sense, but the term is useful in understanding significant aspects of both. Mills' writings helped to clarify rising but ill-defined radical sentiment by integrating a range of moral, cultural, psycho-social and political themes: the association between individually felt problems and social structure; the relationship of values to political ideology and action; a growing cultural dimension to the emerging radicalism; the forms and distribution of power in the United States and the country's position in the world.

In *The Sociological Imagination* (1959a), Mills articulated the often-repeated association between personal problems and public issues, a link later powerfully echoed in the feminist dictum, 'the personal is the political'. The potential relationship between personal troubles and public issues that Mills notes chimes with Calhoun's observation that populists' initial 'gut reactions' could prompt collective public responses. From the 1960s, the personal-social-political dimension became a major aspect of emerging identity politics. Mills' sharp psychological awareness and sensitivity to emotional experience are also apparent in his emphasis on the role of culture and values in formulating radical ideology and practice as the following comment made in his *Letter to the New Left* illustrates (the 'magazines' he refers to are two journals that eventually merged to form the *New Left Review*):

As for the articulation of ideals, there I think your magazines have done their best work so far. That is your meaning – is it not – of the emphasis on cultural affairs? (Mills 1960a, reprinted in Horowitz 1967, 252)

Mills went on to state that the left should be 'guided morally by the humanistic and secular values of Western civilisation – above all by the ideals of reason, freedom and love' (Mills 1960a, in Horowitz 1967, 253).

Mills' coupling of humanistic and secular values reflected and reinforced an established theme in radical thought—one that has current resonance when these values are under challenge from Islamic State's theocratic ideology. Viscerally anti-authoritarian, Mills dismissed the

Soviet regime and the American power elite as undemocratic, albeit in different ways (Mills 1959b). Otherwise, he maintained a dialogical relationship with both socialism and liberalism. He directed some of his fiercest rhetoric towards an influential cluster of American liberals whom he considered no longer represented progressive ideals but were promoting a technocratic and elitist liberalism, which he regarded as a fundamentally 'conservative' accommodation to the status quo (1956, Chap. 14). In particular, he berated Daniel Bell, whose 'end of ideology' thesis he referred to as 'a slogan of complacency' and 'a refusal to work out an explicit political philosophy' (Mills 1960a, in Horowitz 1967, 249–51). Mills' *The Power Elite* (1956) is an attempt to fill this vacuum.

Mills' examination of 'the power elite' (1956) is often discussed in juxtaposition to Marxist class analysis especially in relation to his debate with Marxist Ralph Miliband (Miliband 1969). However, its main proposition that the fundamental division in American society is between the elite and the mass is closer to a populist perspective. Although Mills dismissed the notion of the working class as the main agent of change and seemed unable to prevent himself from ridiculing the conformity of the emerging white-collar class, his sympathies nevertheless lay with these less powerful groups, and he reserved his most scathing criticism for the power elite. The combination of Mills moral tone and anti-elitism has an echo of William Jennings Bryan, the most populist of major American politicians. Bryan's anti-elitism was succinctly expressed in the old Jacksonian motto that he often quoted: 'Equal rights to all and special privileges to none' (in Hofstadter 1967, 188).

Mills focused more on inequality of power, particularly the lack of personal and group autonomy, than on material inequality. This resonates with historic and contemporary populism that has also prioritised individual and communal freedoms and grassroots democracy. Mills did not regard the United States as a fully or adequately democratic society. His critique of the power elite hardly needs revisiting, but his thoughts on what might constitute a more democratic society are less familiar (1956, 318–24). He was a consistent advocate of 'publics', by which he meant the informed engagement of individuals and groups in civil and political life. This is a similar scenario to that favoured by contemporary supporters of civil society as the cradle of change. In Mills' case, his

advocacy of publics has a distinct whiff of nostalgia for small-town and rural America, and he expressed doubts about whether such public political participation is compatible with large-scale society. These sentiments have a populist flavour but he most often uses the word 'liberal' to describe the kind of democratic society he advocates, repeatedly contrasting 'a genuinely liberal public' with mass society.

> The idea of a mass society suggests an elite of power. The idea of the public in contrast suggests the liberal tradition of a society without any power elite, or at any rate of shifting elites of no sovereign consequence. (Mills 1956, 323)

Mills' understanding of 'genuine' liberalism cannot be equated with populism but resonates with the latter's characteristic emphasis on popular participation and complementary anti-elitism and with the tendency for populist ideological strands to overlap and intertwine with more developed ideologies. Equally, Mills' secular humanism reflects the ideals of the enlightenment and jars with the ideologically sceptical liberalism of Daniel Bell (1988[1960]) and Seymour Martin Lipset (1972).

Unable to envisage a convincing agency of change in American society, Mills did not even sketch an outline agenda for social transformation. Casting around for signs of radical stirring, he was supportive of the rising tide of dissent among intellectuals and students (Mills 1960a, in Horowitz 1967, 256–9), and, in the last years of his life, he also looked to emerging nations as potential agents of radical progress (1960b).

Mills' comments on bureaucracy find him at his most populist:

> Great and rational forms of organisations – in brief, bureaucracies – have indeed increased, but the substantive reason of individuals at large has not. Caught in the limited milieux of their everyday lives, ordinary men often cannot reason about great structures – rational and irrational – of which their milieux are subordinate parts. Accordingly they often carry out series of apparently rational action without any idea of the ends they serve, and there is an increasing suspicion that those at the top as well – like Tolstoy's generals – only pretend they know. (Mills 1959c, in Horowitz 1967, 237–238)

With typical bravado, Mills jibed at those he regarded as technocratic liberals as 'crackpot realists' and the conformist mass as 'cheerful robots' reprising Kafka and Weber's depiction of modernity as impersonal and dehumanising.

Mills' work, then, provided a broad sense of direction to the new radicals, but not a developed strategy or vision of destination. Unsurprisingly, many got lost on the way to utopia. It is necessary to put the Movement in context before setting out aspects of Mills' influence on it. Typical of a social movement field, it was a collection of more or less loosely connected and mutually supportive groups and organisations. In the early stages of the Movement, the main issues were segregation and the denial of black people's rights in the South, and the Cold War with its associated risk of nuclear annihilation. Both illustrate Calhoun's argument that incipient populism typically involves reaction to perceived injustice or threat rather than the emergence of a fully fledged ideology. While the social base of the Movement was, of course, different from early nineteenth-century English radicalism, as what follows illustrates, the dynamics of modern social movement development offer parallels.

An early positional document reflective of the Movement's emerging perspectives was *The Port Huron Statement* (PHS), written in 1962 by a group from the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). It opens by referring to a generation looking 'uncomfortably to the world' it inherited (Jacobs and Landau 1967, 154). In addition to the issues of racism and the nuclear threat, unease was expressed about the state of American democracy in an appeal for 'truly democratic alternatives to the present, and a commitment to social experimentation with them' (Jacobs and Landau 1967, 157).

The section titled 'Values' in the PHS closely reflects Mills' concern with the moral motivations underlying politics. After commenting that 'not even the liberal and socialist preachments of the past seem adequate to the forms of the present', it repeats verbatim Mills' belief that people have unfulfilled capacities 'for reason, freedom and love' (Jacobs and Landau 1967, 158). A later section, titled 'Politics without Publics', claims in recognisably Millsian terms that the 'American political system is not the democratic model of which its glorifiers speak' (Jacobs and Landau 1967, 164). The document then substan-

tially recounts Mills' analysis that congressional politics function predominantly at a middle level of power, while the power elite controls the heights (Jacobs and Landau 1967, 164–7). However, the PHS mainly focuses on the lower levels of power. Participatory democracy was the young radicals' attempt to address the putative democratic deficit that had so perturbed Mills but to which he was unable to offer a solution.

Among the Movement organisations that adopted participatory democratic forms were the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP) set up by SDS. There is synchronicity between Mills' ideas and many of the practices of the emerging activists. Although the two organisations overlapped in personal and shared similar grassroots values and strategy, they reflected the different parts of the social movement field in which they were mainly located. SNCC was founded in 1960 to promote the democratic goal of ensuring one person one vote in the still largely segregationist South. Initially its practice reflected the pacifism and intimate political manner fostered by Martin Luther King rather than Mills' combative style. Its participatory and discursive decision-making approach and organisation became widely influential across the early Movement. Its ethos is well reflected in the following reflections of SNCC activist Bob Moses:

> What we have begun to learn and are trying to explore about people is how they can come together in groups, small groups and large groups, and talk to each other and make decisions about basic things, about their lives, I think that has application everywhere in the country. (Jacobs and Landau 1967, 129)

Moses goes on to comment on the inadequacy of democracy in the United States:

> Whatever we [i.e., the American people] currently mean by democracy, we don't mean that people should come together, discuss their main problems that they all know about and be able to do something about themselves. (Jacobs and Landau 1967, 129)

Instead, Moses advocates open public discussions to enable participants to establish their own priorities rather than be presented with pre-arranged ones. More directly influenced by Mills, the ERAP project tried to implement and test the principles proposed in *The Port Huron Statement* advocating for a democracy of individual participation in which people shared in the decisions determining the direction and quality of their lives, principles that resonate with the populist tradition. The SDS set up 12 projects in areas of socio-economic disadvantage, with the intention of supporting people to empower themselves. Only a couple of projects lasted more than a few years, which is not surprising given their exploratory nature. Some activists concluded that fundamental improvement in the condition of the poor required structural change.

In different ways, Mills and Martin Luther King provided the kind of charismatic focus that can give direction and impact to social movements. Mills' influence is also highly apparent on the Free Speech Movement (FSM) of 1964 at Berkeley University.

The FSM is a classic case of a movement defending perceived fundamental rights and freedoms against vested interests and bureaucratic control. The initial conflict between students and administration concerned the right of students to political advocacy on a particular area of university-owned property. The debate soon brought into play the relationship between higher education to industry and the nature of bureaucracy. On the former matter, the President of the University, Clark Kerr, was a noted public advocate of close cooperation between the educational and business sectors (Kerr 2001[1963]), whereas FSM spokespeople linked their advocacy of free speech to the principle of academic freedom, notably from capital and the State.

Partly because of activist Mario Savio's celebrated speech attacking the 'end of ideology' thesis which he dubbed 'the end of history' thesis, an issue closely associated with the FSM is the alienating effects of bureaucracy. Savio's immediate target was Kerr and the Berkeley administration but he extended his argument to include bureaucracy as an organisational form, pleading with his co-protestors to put their bodies 'on the levers, upon all the apparatus … and make it stop' (quoted in Teodori 1970, 156). Rhetorics aside, Savio was addressing what he saw as the increasing reliance of modern society on administrative and technological procedures

rather than on democratic communication and direct engagement. His attack on 'the end of history' thesis echoes powerfully Mills' dismissal of Bell's 'end of ideology' thesis (1988[1960]) and the kind of liberalism he represented. Tempting fate, Frances Fukuyama later wrote what can be read as an extended version of Bell's thesis in his influential book, *The End of History and the Last Man* (Fukuyama 1992).

By the mid-1960s, the Vietnam War had persuaded prominent new left thinkers into developing a more defined ideological position, particularly in relation to foreign policy. In a major speech, *Trapped in a System*, Carl Oglesby, the President of SDS, named 'corporate liberalism' which he considered to be 'illiberal liberalism' as a worldwide system of exploitation and inhumanity (in Teodori 1970, 186). Instead, he appealed to humanistic liberalism as Mills had done in the closing pages of *The Power Elite*. Oglesby put the matter bluntly:

> Corporatism or humanism: which? He then evokes the American revolutionary tradition appealing to simple human decency and democracy and the vision that wise and brave men saw in the time of our own revolution. (Oglesby 1970, 187)

A European new leftist might well have presented a socialist position in relation to corporate liberalism. In contrast, like Mills, Oglesby reiterated the progressive tradition of American liberalism. Although Oglesby's position was broadly similar to that taken by Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy in 1968, relatively few of the increasingly disenchanted activists immediately 'consolidated' around it as the Movement began to fork into a variety of directions.

Marcuse, Populism and the 1960s Radical Movement

A refugee from Fascist Germany, Marcuse was a critical theorist of the Freudian-Marxist Frankfurt School. Similar to Mills he adopted a quasi-populist elite/mass perspective on the structure of American society,

regarding the majority of the population as subject to material exploitation and manipulated cultural delusion. Much less of an institutional analyst than Mills, he insisted that a change of 'consciousness' was a precondition to social revolution (1964, 47). Although his seminal work, *Eros and Civilization*, appeared in 1955, it was the publication of *One-Dimensional Man* in 1964 with its vision of cultural liberation that made him an iconic figure to the emerging Counterculture.

Like Mills, Marcuse trawled American social strata for signs of rebellion. *One-Dimensional Man* refers to 'the outcasts and outsiders, the exploited and persecuted of other races and other colours, the unemployed and the unemployable' as 'revolutionary' in 'their opposition to one dimensional society even if their consciousness is not' (Marcuse 1964, 200). He is realistic enough to know that these socially disparate and poorly organised people had little hope of effecting systemic change without the involvement of more powerful groups. He comments in his concluding chapter that '[t]he critical theory of society possesses no concepts that could bridge the gap between the present and the future' (Marcuse 1964, 201). In his *An Essay on Liberation,* first published in 1968, his mood is lifted by the activities of young radicals although he still offers no outline of how change might occur (Marcuse 1968).

Marcuse's pessimism, even more than Mills', was based on the idea that '[r]eason has conquered the world in the image of repression' (1955, 60). Both saw repressive rationality as embodied in large-scale corporate and governmental bureaucracies that treated human beings as functional means. Marcuse went further than Mills, arguing that American liberal capitalism had produced a totalitarian, 'one dimensional society' reflective of a rationality based on *thanatos*, on aggressive competitiveness and repression rather than on *eros*—love, compassion and cooperation. The originality and power of Marcuse's work lies in his proposition that the central tension in human nature is not, as is often thought, between instinct and reason but within instinct itself, between *eros* and *thanatos*. Reason might be harnessed in the cause of either but Marcuse advocated a society reflecting a rationality based on the pleasure principle, that is, as far as practical on the life instincts rather than *thanatos.*

How far Marcuse's work directly influenced the Counterculture is uncertain, but the lifestyle radicalism of the second half of the 1960s synchronised with his theories, at least until many of its practices morphed into the mainstream becoming imitative, mere radical chic and less an indicator of a radical orientation. The Counterculture did not exactly follow his carefully theorised notions of cultural and social liberation. When 'the lid blew off the *id*' as well as creativity, anger and excess also poured out, sometimes confusingly interwoven with idealism. By the late 1960s, liberals of what Mills had designated as the 'end of ideology' school were lining up to condemn the direction the Movement was taking, some seeing it as quasi Fascist (see Bettleheim 1969; Lipset 1972).

In adopting a radical elite/mass theoretical approach and in designating 'the masses' as the focus of their moral and political concern, Mills and Marcuse anticipated perspectives widely expressed in the social movements following the crash of 2007–2008. Further, they were influential in arguing that fundamental social change should be rooted in the values and practice of activists themselves. The diffuse social movement field of which the Counterculture was an often anarchic part reflected these insights, intuitively as much as intellectually. What Calhoun refers to as 'aesthetic production and reception' was important in signifying alternative lifestyles and an aspirational direction of social change (2012, 274–275). However, without parallel political and institutional change of the kind advocated by Mills, alternative culture is at risk of being absorbed, trivialised or remaining peripheral.

Populism and *Occupy*

The elite/masses theme of Mills and Marcuse, influential on the American New Left, recurred in the Occupy movement. Post the 2008–2009 crash, both radical activists and theorists appeared to use the term elite (or elites) more than ruling class although the terms are not necessarily incompatible. However, terms such as 'the 99 per cent' or 'the rest' were generally preferred to the somewhat patronising 'the masses' that is also associated with conservative political theory. However, the key point

from a radical perspective is that the majority of people are seen as exploited, not merely one social stratum. As far as elite theory is concerned, the interlocking of the economic/financial, political and military elites offers an account of power and exploitation less prone to economic reductionism than cruder forms of ruling class theory. These analytical trends prompted some radicals of the left to adopt the term populist in describing their political orientation.

The term 'anarcho-populist' was successfully floated to describe Occupy and other movements that appeared across the Americas, Europe and elsewhere following the financial crash of 2007–2008 (Gerbaudo 2013). While Occupy reflected other ideological strands including Marxism, as did the 1960s Movement, the term 'anarcho-populism' comes closest to describing its direct action tactics, targeting of mass support and communitarian tendencies.

The Occupy movement fits Calhoun's broad description of populism and shares similarities with the 1960s radical movement in the United States. Its reactive element was anger, especially of young people, at the behaviour of the financial elite and at the relentless shrinking of their career and life prospects. The slogan '99% and the 1%' signalled, well before Piketty (2014), the emergence of a global elite increasingly remote materially and culturally from the majority of the world's population.

Todd Gitlin, a former New Left activist and President of SDS, provides a closely observed account of the Occupy protests in the United States. Gitlin avoids overstating the similarities between Occupy and the radical movement of the 1960s. However, the parallels are considerable, and in Gitlin's terms the two movements are part of the same radical tradition that he refers to as '[a] kind of anarchism of direct participation' (2012, 80) but which could as accurately be described as 'anarcho-populist'.

In tones reminiscent of Bob Moses (quoted above), he describes this tradition further:

> There is lineage even longer. Decision making by consensus is of Quaker inspiration, as if to say: Speak and listen, listen and speak, until the spirit of the whole emerges. (Gitlin 2012, 80)

Occupy's tactic of occupying public space, in some cases by camping, evokes those adopted in the 1960s, resembling a cross between a sit-in and a commune. Direct democratic forms of participation were adopted by Occupy and other radical groups including, in Britain, 38 Degrees. The potential for networking increased where the same activists participated in various protests and actions (Diani 2000). The Web greatly facilitated horizontal communication, enabling a global flow of information and ideas and the co-ordination of activities.

As Gitlin describes it, Occupy Wall Street attempted, not always successfully, to model what a different society might look like through integrating ideology and practice. He quotes one activist:

> Occupation is more than just a tactic […] Many participants are prefiguring the kind of society they want to live in. (Gitlin 2012, 73)

The same sentiments were often expressed by activists in the 1960s. By the end of that decade, the idea that a fundamental socio-cultural change in American society was at hand had gone 'viral'. Books such as Theodore Roszak's *The Making of the Counter Culture* (1968) speculated that the influence of the young radicals might transform dominant culture. A survey by the mainstream journal *Fortune* categorised three million out of eight million respondents aged 18–24 as 'forerunners' who took a good quality of life as a given and were motivated by moral idealism and a desire for career fulfilment (Seligman 1969). In reality, even as these works were published, the Movement was in rapid decline. Change on the scale and in the radical form envisaged did not occur. The demise of the Movement and the current low visibility of Occupy raise the issue of whether in order to make long-term impact, social movements should address more directly the task of gaining institutional power. This is not to downplay their historic role as a stimulant to society's conscience and moral imagination. Less well-known than Occupy's symbolic 'performance' in Zuccotti Park is that, in a distant echo of the community projects of SDS, it generated a number of grassroots actions, including a major disaster-relief effort following Superstorm Sandy.

Conclusion

Populism is a significant and formative current in the stream of radical politics. Often it is considered to 'muddy the waters' of radicalism, introducing confusing and disturbing elements of ideological incoherence, mass disorder and authoritarian leadership. Albeit referring to populism of the left, even a *Daily Telegraph* editorial frets about 'worrying populism' (2016). However, as Calhoun argues and this chapter illustrates, populism can voice genuinely democratic sentiments, particularly when drawn into the larger flow of progressive politics. The desire for freedom, negatively from self-seeking elites and positively to establish a meaningful degree of autonomy across personal and public life, deserves to be taken seriously.

The tough challenge to radical thinkers and activists is to focus the democratic potential of populism and to formulate concrete policies that can deliver on sometimes valid but often vague aspirations: thus consolidating populism within the progressive fold. In both the United States and parts of Europe the post-war decline in traditional 'right/left' divisions is reflected in more fluid patterns of political identification and voting behaviour. This creates an opportunity for progressive radicals (as it does for reactionary ones) to win over new constituencies, including from among populist movements. Further, the regular failure in Britain of about a third of the electorate to vote, particularly among the young, offers a so far untapped opportunity to reshape and revitalise the political landscape. Already the social movement sector is giving a lead in the direction of enhanced institutional democracy. Equality is also being re-envisaged in terms that might have wide appeal, for instance, in the form of a participatory citizens' income. Such possibilities offer a glimmer of a realistic utopia. Alain Touraine in *After the Crisis* (2014) attempts to sketch a fuller picture of transformation. He reflects that there remains no single class interest that defines radical politics and that the conflict is now between the global elite and the 'interests of the population' (Touraine 2014, 156). He envisages a crucial role for social movements to pursue not merely sectional interests but universal human rights. This is a long-term vision that transcends populism but also has the capacity to channel the populist impulse in a direction of moral and practical reconstruction.

Works Cited

Bell, Daniel. 1988[1960]. *The end of ideology: On the exhaustion of political ideas in the fifties*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Bettleheim, Bruno. 1969. Obsolete youth: Towards a psychograph of adolescent rebellion. *Encounter* 32 (September): 29–42.

Calhoun, Craig. 2012. *The roots of radicalism: Tradition, the public sphere and early nineteenth century social movements*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology (CDS). 2006. *Cambridge dictionary of sociology*. Ed. Bryan Turner. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press.

Daily Telegraph. 2016. Worrying populism. *Daily Telegraph*, February 28, 17.

Diani, Mario. 2000. Simmel to Rokkan and beyond: Towards a network theory of new social movements. *European Journal of Social Theory* 3 (4): 387–406.

Fukuyama, Francis. 1992. *The end of history and the last man*. London: Penguin Books.

Gerbaudo, Paolo. 2013. When anarchism goes pop. *Open Democracy*. https://www.opendemocracy.net/paolo-gerbaudo/when-anarchism-goes-pop. Accessed 23 June 2014.

Gitlin, Todd. 2012. *Occupy nation: The roots, the spirit, and the promise of Occupy Wall Street*. New York: itbooks.

Hofstadter, Richard. 1967. *The American political tradition and the men who made it*. London: Jonathan Cape.

Horowitz, Irving. 1967. *Power, politics and people: The collected essays of Charles Wright Mills*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jacobs, Paul, and Saul Landau. 1967. *The new radicals*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Jones, Bryn, and Michael O'Donnell. 2010. *Radicalism and social movement activism: Retreat and resurgence*. London: Anthem.

Kerr, Clark. 2001[1963]. *The uses of the university*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Lipset, Seymour Martin. 1972. Ideology and no end: The controversy till now. *Encounter* 39 (6): 17–22.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1955. *Eros and civilisation*. London: Sphere Books.

———. 1964. *One dimensional man*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

———. 1968. *An essay on liberation*. Boston: Beacon Books.

Miliband, Ralph. 1969. *The state in capitalist society*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

Mills, Charles Wright. 1956. *The power elite*. New York: Oxford University Press.

———. 1959a. *The sociological imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press.

———. 1959b. *The causes of world war three*. London: Martin Secker and Warburg.

———. 1959c. Culture and politics: The fourth epoch. In *Power, politics and people: The collected essays of Charles Wright Mills*, ed. Irving Horowitz, 236–246. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

———. 1960a. Letter to the New Left. In *Power, politics and people: The collected essays of Charles Wright Mills*, ed. Irving Horowitz, 247–259. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

———. 1960b. *Listen Yankee: The revolution in Cuba*. New York: Ballantine Books.

O'Donnell, Michael. 2008. Nineteen sixties radicalism and its critics: Utopian radicals, liberal realists and postmodern sceptics. *Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society* 13 (3): 240–260.

Oglesby, Carl. 1970. Trapped in a system. In *The New Left: A documentary history*, ed. Massimo Teodori, 182–188. London: Jonathan Cape.

Piketty, Thomas. 2014. *Capitalism in the twenty-first century.* Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Roszac, Theodore. 1968. *The making of the counter-culture: Reflections on the technocratic society and its youthful opposition*. New York: Doubleday.

Seligman, Daniel. 1969. A special kind of rebellion. In *Youth in turmoil: Adapted from a special issue of Fortune*, ed. Louis Banks. New York: Time Incorporated. https://www.amazon.com/Youth-Turmoil-Adapted-Special-Fortune/dp/B000ND0N60.

Teodori, Massimo. 1970. *The New Left: A documentary history*. London: Jonathan Cape.

Touraine, Alain. 2014. *After the crisis*. Cambridge: Polity.