

4. Necrospectives and Media Transformations

Myth and History

Going beyond representation, we now examine Nazism and neo-Nazism and the media with regards to Hegel, Baudrillard, Bergson, and Levinas. Questions over authenticity, the disappearance of meaning, history and truth, are evaluated. There is an examination of postmodernism and irrationality and the rise of the right and Donald Trump, and how engaging with neo-Nazism rhetoric has been used to galvanize support for the right. We also realize how the neo-Nazi position is akin to mainstream business practices. There is an explanation of how the media reporting on events eliminates meaning from them with the persistence emphasis on the next event. With reference to postmodernism, how authentic this engagement with neo-Nazism will be outlined.

For Hegel, history does not have the immediate existence of art.¹ The narrative of representation, such as media images, has more veracity, regardless of accuracy, when compared with historical 'truth'. Hegel took the metanarrative approach to the extreme, writing that art 'brings before us eternal powers that hold dominion in history, without any such superficiality in the way of immediate sensuous presentation and its unstable semblances'.² While there might be something higher than art, such as philosophical thought, and religious or moral principles, art points beyond itself, making it superior. Hegel continues to emphasize the importance of the sensuous form in art, typically promoting Greek art over anything else, but there is the caveat that this is only the partial truth. When it comes to God, this is an eternal Spirit which German writers like Goethe, whom Hegel knew well, linked to the spirit of the country.

As with Nazism and neo-Nazism, Hegel and Goethe battled with the notion of the rise and fall of culture and cultures. Hegel's art criticism essentially argues that it was only during a period of decline in the aesthetic qualities of art that good reflection and criticism could take place. Seeing as this period was the birth of German criticism, ipso facto, the art was substandard according to those involved in the criticism, such as Hegel. In the German Nazi state these insights needed to be rewritten. Hitler needed to overcome any doubt about the quality of German art and rewrite history appropriately. But history does not have to be rewritten if the gaze can be

averted, which in 1940s Berlin it was. Over 70 years on, some of the more right-wing commentators during the 2016 presidential race in America praised Trump for his propaganda and his ability to bring theatre into his campaign. Condemned in some quarters as a modern-day snake oil salesman, in others Trump was praised as refreshing. Following Nietzsche, the carnival of festivities was materialized through cruelty, so this form of entertainment becomes the paramount centre of pleasure, and the more violent the better. Christopher Lasch in *The Culture of Narcissism* had placed street protests within this paradigm, condemning them as theatre.

For Jean Baudrillard this return is perverse, given it is an obsessive attempt of the present to put the balance straight by returning to the past. Writing towards the end of the twentieth century, he saw the obsession with the Holocaust as part of a general drift towards a revival of an interest in fascism, in Nazism, and in extermination.³ We are indifferent to the present and to our own condition, leading us to continually rethink the past, the process known as necrospective. Everything has disappeared, so there is a constant returning to the past. This antithetical stance appears liberal and non-dogmatic, but can come across as apolitical, and divorced from humanity. There is an insufficient amount of everything, including history and philosophy, and this leads to the conclusion that there is no point trying to find out any more about the Holocaust, or any other atrocity.

The underlying view that it is the media that governs moral conscience contains some truth. Just as Nazism and neo-Nazism is concerned with the delineation of boundaries, the media functions as the delineation of moral boundaries. From approximately the early 1980s when definitive history and truth was being exploded by critics such as Derrida and Baudrillard, an alternative history was being developed, often based on fictional sources, such as *The Turner Diaries*. This neo-Nazi text became a blueprint, revealing a world where a final battle occurs between the races and the white race wins. The neo-Nazi movement seized on this text as an idealized projection of the future, already written. Science fiction then becomes a form of writing history from the point of view of the survivors, those here with Aryan blood considered to be the strongest. The dominance of the image creates a form of amnesia and there is an entry into the mythic stage, away from history. Here history and projects of the future are idealized fictional zones. Neo-Nazi movements have used this media form, the novel, as a religious and historical text. Importantly, given the void of meaning and telos from history, it is only the novel that is able to depict human consciousness and society.⁴

A question is raised over trying to understand events like the Holocaust because, 'basic notions as responsibility, objective causes, or the meaning

of history (or lack thereof) have disappeared, or are in the process of disappearing'.⁵ It should now seem obvious why this is. Moral or social conscience is a phenomenon 'governed by the media'.⁶ Writing in a time before Twitter, Baudrillard is referring to the legacy of mainstream media controlled by large corporations, the government, or both. He declares that Nazism and the concentration camps are even more unintelligible now because of their reworking in the media. The image has removed their veracity completely, functioning as part of our amnesia. He suggests that it is now possible and legitimate to ask, 'Did all those things really exist?'⁷ This is precisely because of the proliferation of their images in the media. This is not the same as confirming their immateriality. He admits this question is 'an intolerable one', but the point is to ask and examine what makes this impossible logic possible. The media replaces, 'any event, any idea, any history, with any other'.⁸ This scrambling of specifics, this transferring of the present with any past, demolishes both. His point that a full and detailed study of the facts nullifies events and history, making them cease to have existed, gives too much weight to the researcher's endeavours. They may continually delve into the entrails of history, finding certain new truths, but they are not destroying history, as Baudrillard claims.

Post-Auschwitz, when explanations are hard to find, there is a movement from the historical to the mythical. And this mythical is media-led, with one tweet creating a mirage. The mythical and reality merge. The frenzy of the media is explained using the language of nature, sport, and nutrition, such as 'Twitter storm' and 'click bait'. There is an attempt to turn the fantasy and myth into the natural. With the Holocaust and other crimes in order for them to become a myth, 'historical reality must be eradicated'.⁹ Baudrillard is implying we now have entered a world where violence and reality are not manageable, so this is merely positioned onto the past, forging a loss of reality, 'which is now *our reality* [sic]'.¹⁰ This logic may give pseudo substance to neo-Nazi arguments. Those condemning postmodern wrongly misinterpret Baudrillard in the same manner. Pushed to its final conclusion, the summary would be: 'We ourselves no longer exist sufficiently even to sustain a memory, and that hallucinations are the only way we have left to feel alive.'¹¹ What then are these hallucinations exactly? For neo-Nazis, they are perhaps the absolute belief in a Zionist conspiracy, which then feeds their desire for revenge. Baudrillard's discourse can be viewed as a form of hallucination, which has been seductive.

If we want to define certain texts as neo-Nazi or Holocaust texts, it is important to remember that classifying work this way as generic is limiting for, 'genres are agents of ideological closure – they limit the meaning-potential

of a given text'.¹² Typically, the more generic a text the more meaning will be limited. The text is nothing without an audience and critic, so the way media is branded is important. As with Noel Carroll's arguments on the horror film, some of these forms of media have an appeal and are popular due to a form of 'repulsion' and 'disgust', matched by a form of 'pleasure'. While it might at first appear perverse to claim there is a form of 'pleasure', despite the millions of deaths we know the ending is a 'happy' one. Good triumphs over evil. In some degree, the Nazis were defeated, even though neo-Nazism continues, and there is still a subtler triumph. The tropes of the horror genre are applicable here. If we do not brand the Holocaust film or elements connected to neo-Nazism as genres in themselves, but see this as part of the horror genre, then Carroll is still relevant. Carroll's views on genre have a synergy with Baudrillard's work. The audience of horror is seeking that which it would seem natural to avoid. But this engagement might explain why what formerly is natural and unnatural has now merged.

Can the echoes of Nazism through popular culture create its own brand of neo-Nazism? Like all totalitarian ideologies and all religions, Nazism sought to position itself 'higher' than family ties. Any successful religion or state must coexist with the family, whilst containing it. Nazism can be viewed as just an extension of Christianity, which in turn has its origins in a splinter group of Judaism. For Eric Voeglin, there is a millennial prophecy underlying Hitler's discourse, and this was, 'mediated in Germany through the Anabaptist wing of the Reformation and through the Johannine Christianity of Fichte, Hegel and Schelling'.¹³ The Nazi belief in a 'superman' is part of the trajectory that stems from the English Reformation mystics, and their promotion of the 'godded man'. Nazism was in this paradigm a resurrection of Gnosticism. What formed the Nazi ideology was faith in the End, shaped by Christianity, which required a final battle between good and evil.¹⁴ Each age has its version of this battle, with the media latching on to this apocalyptic discourse to maximize the drama. This was startlingly clear in the 2016 Clinton versus Trump presidential campaign, when both sides strategically pushed the point that this could be the end of times. In every month of his presidency Trump has pushed this rhetoric further, in August 2017 threatening war with North Korea.

This profound belief in the End is reflected in Freud's growing conception of the death drive, which had a significant impact on philosophy. Freud had moved out of Nazi occupied Austria due to the destruction of the Nazis. The final stages of Freud's life are intimately linked to how Nazism has come to be recognized globally and then mediated. The countless biographies of Freud explain how he was able to escape persecution due to his connections

and wealth, offering another interpretation of Nazi persecution. Almost 30 years before Freud moved from Vienna to London, he published his essay on the uncanny, 'Das Unheimliche' (1919). This opened up the gates to the questioning of what is real and the notion of a bifurcation between the feelings of being at home and not at home. It has been the primary essay for discourse on the gothic within literary and cultural criticism ever since. Nazism and the Holocaust can be interpreted as part of this, given they haunt texts and often provide the backstory. There has been a resurgence of neo-Nazi ideology and this concerns the related issues of identity and rootlessness. Historically, within the Old Testament, there had always been part of this playing with the notion of the home within the Jewish tradition. Nazism and neo-Nazism deified the homeland.

History, theology, anthropology and philosophy overlap with narrative theory. This narrative can be regarded as a key narrative of history, where traditionally there is exposition, development, the complication (ghosts, for example), climax, resolution, and verisimilitude. When it comes to the paranormal, issues can never be finally resolved beyond the narrative and if beyond genre they are never resolved. The question of the Holocaust, in representation or in fact, sits within this framework. Historically, in the modern age, Nazis and neo-Nazis have been the monsters, normally the absolute evil, continually reworked in media and culture. For the Nazis, the Jews were in abstract the 'specter of evil' with German anti-Semitism having an 'hallucinatory image of the Jews'.¹⁵

Any event past, present and future, in this discourse, is merely representation. Baudrillard was not the first person to state this; he followed Greek philosophers, Middle Eastern mystics, and Guy Debord, who in 1968 claimed that everything that is directly lived has now moved into representation. Given the overwhelming dominance of the media, Baudrillard was probably the first prolific writer on the subject to witness this position most fully realized. For Debord, the subservience to the society of the spectacle leads to the disappearance of personality with authentic experience removed.¹⁶ Under this regime of the spectacle historical knowledge is exterminated.

Seeking explanations is one way of dealing with the Holocaust, and seeking to rid the earth of neo-Nazism is another way of redressing the past. However, as with genre, this linear approach may not be correct because it is a false way of containing the uncontainable. Gilles Deleuze's term the rhizomatic is of use here. For Deleuze, the rhizomatic concerns the non-linear, nomadic and anarchic. Just as today we are haunted by images contained in social media that continually disappear and then reappear, the Holocaust and Nazi iconography does the same, being part

of the rhizomatic. Some artists, such as Francis Bacon, incorporated this iconography, using a layered system of artistic media, via combined images such as historic photographic stills merging with Nazi iconography, copied and overlapped through painting. Past, present and future fuses, and original non-identifiable meaning is created, moving outside the structures of genre. A haunting occurs and reoccurs with this methodology akin to the uncanny. What is now significant is how the mainstream has merged and moved beyond, without being beyond the mainstream, the normal with the paranormal.

Despite a call for clarity, these forms better portray the current condition, where the unconscious is made up of a variety of elements. There is a question concerning the return to the scene, a question that Baudrillard raises repeatedly.¹⁷ What are we looking at, as such, and why this frequent return? In this view, everything has disappeared, and that is the reason we keep looking. What of the suggestion that nothing has been depicted in the first place? There is a further complexity here, when we consider what the past and what memory might be. There are two levels, according to Bergson. The past is memory and the unfolding of time, and then we have the 'ideal past', which is formulating part of the 'paradox of Being'.¹⁸ There is a continual dialectic between an examination of the image and discourse on memory.

The actual is always present for Bergson but the present changes or passes. We can always say that it becomes past when it no longer is, when a new present replaces it. But this is meaningless. It is necessary for it to pass on for the new present to arrive, and it is necessary for it to pass at the same time, as it is present, at the moment it is the present. The image has to be present and past, still present and already past, concurrently. If it was not already past at the same time as present, the present would never pass on. The past does not follow the present that is no longer; it coexists with the present that was. If the media is the moral conscience of the people, there is amnesia with and from the image, and a movement from the historical to the mythic stage. In this mythic stage, neo-Nazism perpetuates the myth of the necessity of violence, but this is no different to perpetuating the myth that Western society always needs conflict and wars to thrive. Whether the representations are violent or not, the form may contain or portray violence.

There is a danger that the representation is then reality and even forms morality and conscience. Neo-Nazism consists of a celebration of violence against the other, and the media itself works violently. There is violence represented in and through the medium; media adds violence to violent culture not by content but by, 'the very fact of their facticity'.¹⁹ This suggests the frenzy of the visible, where the form of the media itself is violent. This

argument is exaggerated, because there is an overuse of the term 'violent'. Just because new technology might break away or rupture from the past, creating a fissure or wound, this assumes a teleological and linear progression. For film such a breaking with the past, aesthetically, is not a linear trajectory, given the complexity concerning continually reworking styles and tropes. Moving back to hauntology, this is resurrecting the ghost. There is a rhizomatic occurrence, where tributaries concerning technology move backwards and forwards, future ages reifying the past, seeking to use the technological medium of the past assuming an authenticity. Like film, memory condenses, simplifies and magnifies, and cannot be present in its entirety. Essentially, meaning in terms of film and memory is subordinated to feeling but memory is more real than the present, in that the present is always filtered through memory. Memory is a construction of the present, constructed by the present throughout the changing present, for consciously there is no such thing as anything but the present. Bergson argued that the past dominates all the present, so there is no such thing as a pure perception. We may have more of a concrete grasp on reality the more we are aware of these past images.

There is simultaneously a seeking after 'truth' and 'reality', and 'authenticity' through technological developments, matched by a desire for 'authenticity', by getting back to 'primitive' filmmaking, such as the Dogme 95 movement. Murder scenes are arguably, 'the most powerful and efficient vehicle for getting to the crux of film aesthetics'.²⁰ This is because they reveal the workings of the film; deadly 'violence' is then a metaphor for montage. Placing 'violence' in brackets is appropriate, because what 'violence' is here can be contested. The 'murder scene becomes a site through which filmmakers reflect on cinema as a set of formal components'.²¹ To maintain the manipulation of film images is absolutely violent is arguable and always contentious. Repeated enough, what is initially a mild metaphor, such as manipulation, is constructed as something extreme, such as violence. With regards to the Holocaust, if the scene of mass murder is never framed at all, and never allowed to be represented, continuing the violence metaphor, this is hardly non-violent in itself. Crucially, this can be conceived, historically and metaphorically, as a vast long take, with gaps in the montage, a film form which is a specific style for which there is no language. This is our morality and conscience, hence the frequent repetition throughout history. A large gap like this, the non-depiction of the gas chambers, for example, allows for the imagination to come into play, but also for it to be obliterated.

In *Son of Saul*, discussed in Chapter 2, the chamber door is shut by the protagonist, and we are placed in the position of the unwitting next victims,

but the camera always draws attention to the survivor, not the victim. With an emphasis on the image, paradoxically, there is the pre-occupation with the nexus of the real. As Hal Foster argued, there is a return to the 'real' subject, in opposition to the excessive emphasis placed in the 1980s on the textual modes of culture, or conventional notions of realism.²² This cultural dissatisfaction is expressed as a return to the shocked subjectivity of a traumatized subject. This is where the Holocaust is relevant. The results of the trauma embody actualized catastrophe and emerge as a revived cultural paradigm. The paradox here is that the white power movements and neo-Nazis argue they are the wounded culture. The obsession with the obscene takes the negative form of the cult of the wounded, diseased, traumatized bodies.

The vast machinery of the Holocaust, which still primarily lays non-visualized, within a perpetual mode of denial, was then followed in the decades since by a transformation in the news media. Documentaries such as *The Sorrow and the Pity* (Marcel Ophuls, 1971) have taken an objective stance to the position of statesmen, resistance fighters, and collaborators. A proliferation of images and 24-hour news has not led to a deeper understanding of global conditions, or even a greater compassion. Despite the theoretical means to depict all-out war, and its devastation, what has occurred is a sanitization of war. The more images that are produced, in whatever form, the less they are seen, with the image supplanting reality. Stock footage is often repeated, like a mantra, offering no further understanding in any form.

Aerial bombardments are invariably shot from a distance, always reflecting back aesthetically to fiction films, such as *Apocalypse Now* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1979), leading to a position where fact and fiction blur. In the fictional forms, such as Coppola's film, there is actually more veracity, with soldiers on the ground facing the explosions, in a number of ironic ways. Rather than photography and the media leading to awareness, therefore, following Baudrillard, it obliterates the existence of reality. Occasionally, when a child is pulled from a collapsed hospital or dies on a beach, their face makes the front pages of newspapers, generating a frenzied storm on all media platforms, until the next event. The focus on the one is supposed to highlight the position of the many, as in the numerous film narratives that focus on the singular protagonist. This inevitably impacts on how populations perceive mass violence. In screenwriting terminology, the protagonist is the one that suffers the most, experiencing the most agony. If the evidence is placed on the one the many are ignored. This is not just the fault of traditional narratives, but of the news media. The natural

progression is to suggest that the one can represent the many. This is how audiences relate to a story and how audiences have been initially educated.

The police and governments drive the notion that destruction is inevitable and unpreventable. This is unwittingly following a tenet that has strong similarities to Baudrillard's belief in the inevitability of evil. Fatalism and a certain predetermination enter the discourse. This is not merely so the authorities can avoid culpability if any event of mass violence occurs, such as a white-power terrorist attack. It has the added social control benefit of allowing extensive freedoms to be drastically curtailed, giving leverage for surveillance to be increased, while offering support for increasing security budgets, boosting the profits of the military and industrial complex. The police frequently move into such industries. Here, in stark summary, is the nexus of the contemporary position, where this theatre of cruelty is not prevented but ostensibly revelled in, staying true to Nietzschean discourse. Here theatre of cruelty is not referring specifically to the work of Antonin Artaud, Jean Genet, Jerzy Grotowski, and Peter Brook, but something far broader and insidious concerning global politics and economics.

The essence of the global media, within this lens, has performed what the Nazis only dreamt of. This discourse maintains the only way to attract the attention of the general populace and to create drama is to perpetuate this theatre of cruelty, or an apocalyptic worst-case scenario. With the rise of Donald Trump in 2016, children, and some adults, believed World War III was imminent and neither side in the presidential race did anything to reduce their fears. This then produces a profound level of conformity, in an attempt to control behaviour, and enables policies to be enforced. Without this theatre there is no wider interest in events. To vanquish violence would remove the audience's interest which is the means to control the audience. People may attempt to switch off, but in reality, the human race is now at a stage beyond this position of withdrawal. Only the minority remain beyond this position. Mobile devices and other methods have become fused with the living physical body, making the transfer of violent images and dominant discourse on violence cellular and biological. Biological and non-biological elements have fused. Arguing there is artificial or false memory produced by images, as juxtaposed with real memory, is inaccurate.

There was a serious attempt to record at least the impact of the Nazi ideology, which would counteract deniers and neo-Nazis proclaiming any denial discourse. Sidney Bernstein wanted to create a documentary that would contain solid evidence of Nazi atrocities, gaining the help of Alfred Hitchcock, and also approaching Hollywood director Billy Wilder, an Austrian refugee from the Nazis. Even straight after the liberation,

film-makers realized that attempts would be made to deny the horrors that had been carried out by the Nazis. After 70 years, the film was restored and completed, directed by André Singer, entitled *Holocaust: Night Will Fall* (2014). Apart from documentary films, such as Hitchcock's on the Holocaust, which was felt to be too hard hitting just after the victory over the Nazis, there were no detailed documentaries. In this sense, the theatre of cruelty was not overtly carried out concerning the actual Holocaust.

With the continual reworking of the Holocaust in later documentaries Baudrillard takes on a striking relevance. The masses, according to this logic, feel a posthumous emotion about these events, 'which will make them spill into forgetting with a kind of good aesthetic conscience of the catastrophe'.²³ What is noteworthy here is the bind between understanding, which must always be limited, and systems of recording, montage, and editing, which will be also always be limited. The Holocaust becomes a documented event, via various methods such as television, but the television does not work as a deterrent to later similar occurrences. Indeed, with augmented reality, including now common headsets linked to videogames, virtual participation in violence is normalized. The apparent loss of authenticity is at the heart of this discourse.

A return to the real is always part of this agenda, and this is where the extreme right fuses politically with the extreme left. They are manifesting their differences by proclaiming they are authentic and true. This is perpetually played out ever since the real event of the Holocaust, with various overlapping acts of violence, differing in scale but often reflecting back to this period. The iconography of the Nazis is transferred onto a variety of national and international groups, each with their own local differences and variations. They may have local differences, but each has the sole aim of ridding the earth of what is perceived to be the racially inferior, bringing back what is felt to be authenticity. This functions in a pseudo-religious fashion, as a form of sacrifice, which leads on to the influence of the occult on Nazis and neo-Nazis. Myths have grown up over the Nazi interest in the occult and the supernatural, which again relates to the notion of the predetermined. There is hard evidence of the Nazis investigating aspects of witchcraft, not from the position of persecuting people supposedly involved in such practices, but the opposite.²⁴

Heinrich Himmler had established an SS unit that explicitly investigated the history of witch trials in Germany, which were far more numerous than in other areas of Europe.²⁵ The Nazi interest in the occult explicitly fed back to the work of influential anthropologists, such as Margaret Murray and Sir James Fraser.²⁶ The latter was convinced that he had found a common myth,

that of a king volunteering to sacrifice himself for his people, throughout Europe. Given the First World War saw devastating carnage, explicitly concerning national and ethnic conflict, there was politically a strong global call to find a common link that would tie all nations together and prevent future carnage. Murray believed that witches in the sixteenth century had not been involved in activities the authorities accused them of, but were part of a pre-Christian fertility cult.²⁷ Popular writers, such as poet laureate Ted Hughes, were also convinced of this. The Nazis then searched extensively in archives related to the period, in an attempt to find evidence to support the theory that Christianity had persecuted German Aryan women.²⁸

This reveals a strand in Nazi and neo-Nazi ideology concerned with a call for a post-Christian belief system, turning accusations of violence back on Christianity. Just because purity is a myth, it does not mean a desire for purity should be ignored. Conversely, it is often at the heart of damaging forms of all ideologies and religions. Of course, neo-Nazi gangs feed into and off youth culture. Childhood is frequently understood as what is natural, inner and positive, contrasted with the artificial world of the grown up. Rousseau posited the child as being at one with nature, but also the notion that the past is always tainted in the present.²⁹ Despite the mystique of this context, none of the interest in the occult was especially underground, or purely part of Nazi ideology. The occult is often portrayed as part of esoteric knowledge on the fringes of the society, but it has been frequently part of the mainstream. For example, British Prime Ministers Arthur Balfour and William Gladstone were interested in psychical research, and both of the established writers Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Ted Hughes were deeply influenced by spiritualism.³⁰ Elements of Nazi occult belief, such as channelling a pure native self, were part of the wider, mainstream, non-German culture, which fed into a literary tradition tied to mystical Celtic belief systems and romanticism.

Historically this strong interest in the occult occurred during a time of huge upheaval following the impact of unprecedented carnage and world war. A fragmented self, as epitomized by the 'hollow man', to use T.S. Eliot's term, was dominating the collective psyche and the rational man was felt to have failed. For Hughes, the importance of the primitive native animal self was now stressed, as it was for D.H. Lawrence. These two figures are now central to not just English culture, but global culture, epitomizing a way of thinking that has become mainstream. Donald Trump in his presidential campaign appealed to this non-rational part of the self, through rational rhetoric, although this manifested itself in numerous contradictory ways. People believed it was insanity that he

was nominated, dismissing him as a joke, and then found it complete insanity that he won. But, rationally speaking, playing into people's basest instincts generates deep interest. Debord revealed the media instigates this irrationality with lies swamping the society of the spectacle.³¹ The mainstream press galvanized this interest, with anything Trump did, such as a tweet, making headline news.

Until the Next Event

Neo-Nazi violence and its mediation through media platforms is central to the theatre of distraction. 'Until the next event' could be the mantra of our times. While the media has one eye on the current atrocity, such as a racially motivated mass killing in America, or a series of violent anti-Semitic crimes in Russia, once reported these are no longer news items, and are stored in a virtual archive. The reporting takes precedence over their reality and content. Indeed, the reporting causes the invisibility. Rather than the future distorting the past, through rewriting history selectively, the future frames the present, voiding it even of the status of an event. The form dictates the content, and Marshal McLuhan's well-known aphorism becomes fact. Indubitably, the medium is the message. There is a constant need to feed the machinery of news media, the audience given the semblance of taking part, through various feeds, adding to an appearance of excitement. To retweet, doing the job of the media, is felt to be an action, giving the veneer of interaction and control. Clicking on a link, an app, or anything similar, offers a simulation of control, stimulating an unconscious spurious belief that a level of influence is occurring.

This simulation, offering the belief in self-agency, is in practice the reverse of power. People follow the live updates on Twitter and Periscope and other platforms, as swathes of innocents are murdered and maimed, giving the followers a fake sense of intervention. Because they in some way 'witness' the events, the image or message is manipulated, and they are part of it. In the realm of simulation, it does not exist without them. A violent ubiquitous loss of signification leads to an implosion of meaning.³² If everywhere socialization is measured by an exposure to media messages, those under exposed are desocialized or asocial.³³ While we think information produces meaning the opposite is occurring which can be termed the 'phantom content'³⁴ Wisdom was replaced by knowledge, then information replaced knowledge. Data, big or small, has now replaced knowledge; who has access to and owns this data is a serious question.

Debord formulated how disinformation was attractive to the dominant society as it contained truths within lies.³⁵ Remarkably, it took until 2016 before an awareness of fake news became ubiquitous. By then people were not overly concerned because news was not about facts but entertainment. Hoaxes and fakery at the centre of the debate over authenticity are at the heart of discourse over the Holocaust, with neo-Nazi Holocaust deniers being so prolific on the Internet that a search for the Holocaust on the Internet comes up first with the debate over its authenticity. When it comes to fake news there is in reality nothing more occurring in this instance than total manipulation. This is more so than previously in history, which had limited forms of communication. People now believe they are actively taking part in and are choosing how they interact with media. This is the participation myth that those connected to media forms, such as Twitter, promote, boosting revenue from advertisers. Sadly, people become excited when they are following an event live on Twitter, because they are feeling part of the action, from a war, a revolution, to a sporting event. This feeling of involvement offers a spurious feeling of power, plus any information or knowledge about a system and event, 'is already a form of the neutralization and entropy of this system'.³⁶

Furthermore, if this information is broadcast it is degraded. The fusion of reality with the image negates reality. The proliferation of the face, via the selfie, or any other overdeployment of the image, destroys the human, given the real face is removed. This has dramatic consequences, if by face we take a broader meaning outside and beyond the mere biological. The Jewish philosopher Levinas is associated with the concept of the Other. This is a presence within which God exists, along with our true identity, and is a conduit to our true identity. For Levinas we can only understand ourselves through this Other. This face is not biological, ethnic, or even social. The face evoked is the concrete appearance of the idea of infinity that exists within me.³⁷ The face then, in this context, ethically fulfils the whole purpose of Levinas' philosophy. The importance of the face is that it is perceived to resist possession or utilization.

This philosophy is beyond knowledge. Levinas invites and obliges me to take on a responsibility that transcends knowledge. The face signifies ethical knowledge, which is there from the beginning: thou shalt not kill. There is then in the face what seems like the impossible: it forces us to receive the idea of infinity, prior to engaging the operations of cognition.³⁸ But an important question is: How can we receive an idea prior to entering ideas? Theodor Adorno claimed the Hegelian system objectifies the subject, raising it in the process to a transcendental status. But for Adorno the separation

in philosophy between object and subject since Descartes is wrong, as they are mutually mediated by each other.³⁹ Created being (totality) is but the trace of the passing of the 'infinitely other'.⁴⁰

The reversal that Levinas refers to is also familiar to those aware of Jungian psychology. 'It is not the self that constitutes the meaning of the Other's existence; rather, it is precisely the opposite: subjectivity is constituted in and through its relation with alterity.'⁴¹ In this sense, one is not aware of his or her individuality until one enters into a relationship with another. This relationship calls the subjectivity of freedom itself into question.⁴² 'Ethics, the welcoming of the Other by the self, is only accomplished through the recognition and maintenance of the radical disjunction of same and other, of subject and object.'⁴³ For Levinas, who was saved the fate of his fellow Jews as he was captured in Rennes in 1941 and treated as French prisoner of war, the violence endemic to sexism, racism, classism, nationalism, and so on, is the denial of the totality of being as the trace of the infinitely other.⁴⁴ Levinas places an ontological awareness in otherness, and this has the possibility of the infinite. Sameness obviously is finite. Neo-Nazism would find such philosophy not just difficult to understand, but anathema to its essential ideology.

From this shift into philosophy we can enter into a more nuanced view concerning an understanding of not just what neo-Nazism is or might be, but what it does. Neo-Nazism negates the infinitely other as present in being, that is, our being and that of another. By demonizing the other, as the extreme difference beyond the same, it removes all traces of the infinitely other within the same. In the totalitarianism that dominates the majority of corporations and industries an element of this neo-Nazism has taken hold. This is not hyperbolic, or merely metaphoric. Only through such mechanisms is difference denied and homogeneity in all its form rules. This is much subtler than any overt practice of obvious discrimination, but quite the reverse. Normally this sits within a framework where equal opportunities are promoted in organizations.

For Levinas it is only through the other that there is any real truth, identity, ontological essence, being, and infinity. Despite the variety and fragmentation of groups, and within groups, neo-Nazis appear united in their hatred of 'the other', broadly defined. This unification, often electronically through the Internet, has numerous levels of paradox. We should be wary of the solidarity formed electronically for unification across the globe, given every 'strategy of the universalization of differences is an entropic strategy of the system'.⁴⁵ Those caught up in the frenzy of the media, and its theatre, are tragically blinkered to this blindingly obvious

point. Paradoxically, chasing the event on Twitter, or any other platform, is no more or less than a remote form of watching a game, in any era, with the bombing of Syria and the Arab Spring fusing via observation with viewing Roman gladiators. Indeed, the framing of these events then nullifies them of their human significance.

The semblance of participation generated by such forms allows for sharers of information to pretend to be journalists, and anyone to feel they are taking part. Depth of analysis and criticism is avoided, and is exchanged for a thrill from a press of a button that might lead to a 'like'. The narcissism and self-referencing of this should never be overlooked. More dangerous is the veneer it gives to the belief in personal people power, as if the public are more engaged when the antithesis is the truth. There is a constant thread concerning audience participation, which is entirely simulated. Only the latter is physically conducted, with the audience present, not hiding behind a device. Through this mechanism of the simulation of participation identity formation takes place, eliminating any dream of authentic identity, allowing for further acts of violence and the removal of freedoms.

Whether the possibility of an authentic identity is a myth is immaterial in this context. Concurrently, figures concerning the use of social media need to be questioned. The racist right-wing organization Britain First is a group that has made broad use of social media, but claiming the number of 'likes' or the number of followers on any social media platform indicates correctly the extent of real support needs questioning. For example, Britain First polled only 1 per cent of the vote in the London mayoral elections in 2016. In December 2016, the former leader of Britain First, Paul Golding, was jailed for two months. Their Facebook page read: 'The High Court has sent Paul to prison for confronting a hate preacher in Cardiff who said it's okay for Muslims to keep sex slaves!' In November Jayda Fransen, leader of the party, was found guilty of religiously aggravated harassment, after hurling abuse at a Muslim woman wearing a hijab. Labour MP Louise Haigh called for Britain First to be listed as a terrorist organization. Terrorists, activists and journalists fuse in this zone.

When a newsreel is played in the Amazon Prime television series (2015 to present) adaptation of Philip K. Dick's 1962 novel *The Man in the High Castle* showing the allies winning World War II and Winston Churchill in a victory parade, the paradox is within this text the Nazis have won the war. But, it should be clear by now that in many ways they have. *It Happened Here* (Kevin Brownlow and Andrew Mollo, 1964), is a similar example, where there is a world where Germany has won the war, and the slogan is, 'Germany and England – a community of race'. The media is an integral

part of this victory, driven by a need to generate fear, creating division and hate. This is not a victory for random splinter neo-Nazi sects that exist in a variety of forms across the globe. That would not be a victory, despite a certain rhizomatic element making it akin to ISIS in its potentiality. Why this current engaged media is far more insidious is that it is a victory within the mainstream, not merely in media discourse, but in ontology. It goes to the heart of being. As Charlie Brooker has made clear throughout most of his Netflix *Black Mirror* television series, there is an appalling loss of identity through attempting to seek approval via social media. Again, using Buddhist terminology, it is not just *sangha* (community) that is lost, but also *Buddha* (truth), and *dukha* (awareness).

In 2016, with a rise in racist discourse and neo-Nazi activity globally, it was easy to forget that previously battles had been fought between and against the far right and the left, leading to deaths on the streets of Britain. People were once unable to hide behind social media, and so allegiances were more publicly expressed. Margaret Thatcher stood for election in 1979, a year when social unrest was becoming the norm in the UK. For example, in April 1979 Blair Peach died after taking part in an Anti-Nazi League demonstration in Southall on 23 April 1979, St George's Day. Three decades later, information was finally released that placed the blame with the police. Reports into his death were only made public in April 2010, when it was identified that the police were probably responsible for the sustained head injuries that killed him. Even three decades later, no one was willing to take responsibility. On the day of the attack against Peach, 3,000 protestors had been protesting against the National Front, with 2,500 police involved. Two years later, London witnessed the Brixton riots, and the public inquiry led by Lord Scarman, indicating Britain was involved in a race war. In the Peach case, evidence was tampered with, eleven witnesses saying they saw Peach being hit by the police, and the police at the event were found to be Nazi supporters.⁴⁶

Regardless of the evidence that surfaced, despite the attention this case received no one was brought to justice. The prime suspect, Alan Murray, went on to work as a university lecturer. This confirms neo-Nazism is not on the fringes of society but at its heart. The media often dramatizes events connected to neo-Nazism to create a theatre of extremism, which is misreporting. With neo-Nazism at the heart of culture, it becomes difficult to differentiate its traits. The Metropolitan Police accepted the accusation of institutional racism in 2015, but only in terms of the police being just a reflection of society, where it was stated this was bound to happen. Following the points previously raised in relation to Baudrillard, there is the

suggestion here that this is inevitable and unpreventable. This followed on from the MacPhearson report, published in 1999, which showed black people were six times more likely to be stopped and searched than white people. Reports do not change cultures, but often function as an excuse for justice. By 2007 this figure had gone up to seven times more likely, and in the following three years the number went up for all ethnicities. By 2012, the LSE reported that a black person was 29.7 per cent more likely to be stopped and searched than a white person.⁴⁷

In a wider context, in 2016 the BBC reported that the figures for 2015 showed that 5.5 per cent of UK police officers were from a black or ethnic minority background, while these groups made up 14 per cent of the population. It is disingenuous to claim that the police just reflect society, as did Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, in 2015. Despite claims to the opposite, the police were not a reflection of the societies they were policing, and their continuing behaviour suggested they were made up of racists, given the level of searches carried out on those from ethnic backgrounds. Outside the police, the number of attacks on foreigners following Brexit went up. The excuse given in America concerning the support for Trump was that the politicians had ignored the white working classes. In any case, there was a celebration of a certain form of animal savagery, which went against humane behaviour. The un-evolved began to triumph and Trump was shown to be channelling the group id of the American people.

The call to return America to the whites was a slogan that fuelled Trump's victory, and he had the whole-hearted support of the neo-Nazis. After his victory, he attempted to distance himself from certain right-wing groups, but the appointments he made to the White House indicated he was allying himself with the far right. There were further suggestions that key controllers of online media channels close to Trump were attempting to influence European elections, such as those in France. Angela Merkel was in a difficult position, given Germany had spent almost 70 years attempting to atone for the Nazis, with Hitler salutes and Nazi material illegal. She condemned the neo-Nazis in America that supported Trump, but also claimed she did not believe Trump was sympathetic to their cause because he had no ideology. Tangentially, it is worth noting that this may have been part of his success.

During his campaign rallies some black protestors were attacked, and Trump harkened back to the early 1960s and 1950s in his rhetoric and media campaign. His argument was that it was right to use violence against black people, letting hatred rule victorious. Elsewhere, his views on Jews are more ambiguous. He had tweeted it was important for him to have Jews

taking care of his money. As soon as his victory was announced, many in Israel called for the dismantling of the Palestinian state. The left-wing press had compared Trump's discourse with Hitler's. Both UKIP and the Trump campaign had almost declared defeat in advance, to make their victories seem even more impressive. The shock Brexit result was an inspiration for Trump. The churning of rumours on the Internet, primarily Facebook, was a factor in this result, but an outright condemnation of Facebook seems naïve. Denouncers of social media forget that the use of social media is voluntary. While overuse of anything may lead to health problems, should we blame the user or the tool? Trump's victory does not negate the growth of the left elsewhere, with Momentum in the UK maximizing the impact of social media. In desperate times of austerity, the majority had chosen to blame the minority, just as in Nazi Germany. Neo-Nazism is formed out of a feeling of being persecuted and then persecuting the other, which can often be led by the media.

For Baudrillard everything is the look, everyone desiring that which is more real than real. All is multiplying and with a 'mad' overdetermination. The present world is that of 'madness'. What is real does not ever occur because things are always in advance of their unfolding causes. This correlates with the previous point made on the manner in which the media moves on from events. Reality has stopped; history has ended. Concurrently, the world is saved by the spectacle, by evil itself, the only liberation being in the 'deepening of negative conditions'. The victory of Donald Trump in 2016 was interpreted in the left-wing press as the return of the revengeful white man, Trump having the support of the Klu Klux Klan, which is older than Nazism and neo-Nazism. Foucault saw a triumph of madness and for Baudrillard there is a triumph by appearance, no one ever being able to enter 'the blind spot around which the battle is arrayed'. A desire to find meaning is madness, and an absolute misunderstanding of the world as play and ceremony. In terms of social media activity, this argument is pertinent, because an involvement in this realm does involve play and ceremony, rather than meaning.

With a denigration of activity, this theorizing can be viewed as a form of madness in itself. After all, what is madness other than the 'absence of the work' (to quote Derrida)? There is a disturbing element to this line of thought that needs exploring further, because actually through his discourse Baudrillard is of course playing with the reader. One minute he states that priding oneself on difference is pointless, because indifference will prevail. The next he states that only the other knows. Unfortunately, despite this insight Baudrillard's mission to turn people to the desire of

the world through the theory of seduction is not particularly innovative. Freud had turned people away from the desire of the mother to the desire of the self. Reason, for Baudrillard, destroys destiny because connections exist already, so all consideration of anything is madness in itself. We can envisage neo-Nazis leaping on this, seeing how destiny is central to their belief system.

Trump and the Rise of the Right

If the rise of neo-Nazi discourse following Trump's victory in November 2016 was inevitable it was nothing new; this discourse was never at the fringes of society. Le Pen in France had been flirting with this rhetoric for over a decade. But what was new was that this type of rhetoric was now not overtly condemned in the mainstream and tabloid media, and it was often seen as a joke to be dismissed as not a real threat. The media in general appeared to be behind the political momentum, unable to catch up with the new dawn of Trump. A victory for Trump was viewed as a joke; until he won. Instead of getting on with the transition and with the job, Trump just continued having social media spats with celebrities, like Alec Baldwin. The television sketches where Baldwin played Trump were not particularly funny, showing him as invariably done through skits, such as looking up ISIS on Google. In this instance Trump had a point, because the humour was not strong, but Baldwin declared he would only stop if Trump published his tax returns. Trump was fighting a war of words, rather than dealing with the real business, but Trump had fully realized that this war of words was where it counted.

The Daily Beast reported on 19 November 2016 that white nationalists and Nazi-saluting Tila Tequila were toasting 'Emperor Trump' in Washington. Again, the comedic angle was emphasized. A strange version of *The Apprentice* mixed with a Philip K. Dick story about the Nazis winning the war and *The Hunger Games* had materialized. A white-supremacist think tank led by Richard Spencer, the National Policy Institute, ran a conference near the White House in the Ronald Reagan Building after Trump's victory. Spencer, it was reported, works to make extreme policies, like 'peaceful ethnic cleansing' and a 'white homeland' mainstream. Tila Tequila, who is a Singaporean Trump-loving ex-MTV personality, with an adoration of Hitler had been condemned by the Anti-Defamation League as a person who will do anything for publicity. Tequila Tila dresses in sexy-Nazi outfits, identifying with the alt-right. Her argument is their ability to attack

via meme wars is good for children, as it is funny, creative, artistic and magic. Certainly, by the end of 2016 the alt-right in America appeared to be winning the arguments within the media meme wars, and this was not limited to America. Trump, after some delays, denied any sympathy with the organization. Spencer then claimed everything overtly neo-Nazi, like the salute they were using, was ironic.

Spencer supposedly invented the term 'alt-right', and promotes the belief if you are not white American you should leave America. Josh Harkinson, reporting on Spencer for *Mother Jones* in October 2016, indicated that Spencer gives fascism a radical chic, which seems like a compliment for just getting a haircut.⁴⁸ Others have played with this for decades, such as David Bowie and Brian Ferry. The level of Spencer's racism is deep and broad: blacks, Asians, Muslims, Jews, and most Hispanics, are not part of his view of the future of America. Can this rise of the right then be put down to the last shudders of the American empire, given Spencer's overt association with the Roman Empire? Empire's do come and go, and ever since the OPEC oil crisis in 1973 where the real global power was based has been questioned. America's role as the global policeman always had opponents at home, isolationism going back to founding of the America, and lasting until 1941. Trump was vociferous in his condemnation of Hillary Clinton's approach to American foreign policy, which had dragged them into two drawn-out wars. Within ten months of his victory Trump threatened all out war with North Korea.

After Trump's victory in the presidential race in November 2016, the actor Tom Hanks made a speech stating this was not the end of the world. Apparently, America would triumph, given it is the greatest country on the planet. At an unusual time in its history, we could question why this one country once again needed to state it was the greatest country in the world. Was this a statement to counteract global threats, such as Russia or China? This rhetoric, trying to inspire optimism, was outmoded, stemming from certain 1950s idealism, and was likely to add fuel to the fire of those that despise America, such as ISIS. Other white separatist right-wing media leaders included Jared Taylor, founder and editor of the white nationalist publication *American Renaissance*, and Peter Brimelow, founder of the website *VDare*. Combined with this was the CEO of Trump's campaign, Steve Bannon, ex-chairman of *Breitbart News*, which was popular as the *New York Post*, but for Spencer these are 'alt-light'. Bannon in November 2016 became the president elect's Chief Strategist and Advisor. Spencer's influences included Taylor, and Leo Strauss, a Jewish German-born professor influenced by Heidegger and Hegel. Spencer's wife Nina, who has been accused of being non-white, a dark-haired Russian, translated the writings

of Alexander Dugin, a Russian far-right nationalist, and they both have appeared on programmes broadcast on the Russia Today television network.

The nationalistic discourse that was always present in America was given greater power by Trump's victory with people moronically chanting 'U-S-A!' as the norm, but again this can be interpreted as a death shudder. Economically hard-hit communities believed that free trade was a curse and the cause of their woes; they were unable to fathom that the world had moved on. Trump immediately set about dismantling trade agreements, in an attempt to boost American industry. This isolationist position on the surface appeared anti-free trade and in this sense anti-capitalist, but it correlated with the neo-Nazi position on creating borders and boundaries. The concept of building a wall on the southern border was a master stroke with one Mexican company even offering to supply the cement. 'Master stroke' is an apt way of describing this, as it functioned as a metaphor and symbol for everything Trump stood for, and fed into neo-Nazi prejudices against the 'other'. The wall was similar to a dam, functioning to keep the floods of immigrants out, a phrase often used in European media.

In Steve Bannon's 2011 film *Generation Zero*, big government and Wall Street are condemned as the two structural central evils, but the director of the film is a former banker, trained at Harvard. Simplistically, the ideas of the 1960s get blamed for America's ills, with these ideas infiltrating every layer of society, such as communism. Newt Gingrich, former Speaker of the House of Representatives, a talking head in the film, discusses the lunar landing, in comparison to Woodstock, which is condemned as hedonistic. There is a declared split in American society between those who apparently work hard and deserve the rewards, and those who are reprobates. The latter are linked to those desiring progress, in terms of gender and race. In this film, the American Enterprise Institute talking heads condemn the rise of youth culture, claiming there is a moral decay. What the film indicates is a desire to return to the mythologized normality of the 1950s, this despite the maker of the film personally going through numerous divorces, and being accused of domestic violence. The film is an attempt to scoop up a broad audience of disillusioned voters, from alienated old people, to neo-Nazis, and to those who hate the elite and the 'system'. This film is for the so-called 'lost tribe', akin to the group of mentioned on the back-cover blurb of the novel *The Football Factory*.

The 1960s are condemned as an era of moral self-righteousness and narcissism. This is termed a betrayal of the past by the elites. One of the talking heads, Shelby Steele, Senior Fellow of the Hoover Institute, condemns the 1960 activists outright, and then the film's narrative leaps to the 1990s

claiming it is the left that is in power, undermining the capitalist system. Free market capitalism is the god here, and anything that may have gone wrong with the system, such as the crash of 2008, is blamed on big government interference. Strangely, the film also appears as a condemnation of extreme greed, as epitomized by Donald Trump. While greed is promoted as being essential to human nature, extreme greed is attacked, to appeal to a wider audience disillusioned with the left. Bannon in this sense could have been Trump's worst enemy, but is here rounding up all those who are lost, or who have seen no benefit from either a Republican or Democratic government. Social engineering is blamed, as are the political elites. Five years before Trump came to power, Bannon made this overt propaganda film, calling for an overthrow of power. Nazi propaganda had condemned the elite as the cause of all ills, calling for a complete overturn of power.

Bizarrely, the film ends as a condemnation of tyranny, with a reference to Hitler and Mussolini, referring to inflation in Germany, and comparing this to the current quantitative easing, with the printing of money as the future of America. Another talking head, John Bolton (former US Ambassador to the United Nations from 2005 to 2006), attacked the decline in American military influence. The message of the documentary: Stop. Obama is condemned for being European, in regards to his approach to health care, education, and the energy system. No details are given. Paradoxically, the wealthy and the elite who made this film are using it to condemn the elites, and even the concept of social justice is attacked.

Similarly, in Bannon's 2011 film about Sarah Palin, *The Undefeated*, it is the elites that are blamed. As Ian Kershaw put it, Hitler's ideology was based on the belief that specific values determined a people's fate: 'blood', or 'race-values'; the 'value of personality'; and 'sense of struggle', the 'self-preservation drive'. These were within the Aryan race, but the Jewish vices were democracy, pacifism and internationalism.⁴⁹ The latter, internationalism, is condemned vociferously by Bannon in his films, and forms part of the main thrust of the attack on Obama. To claim there is no ideology here in any of these Bannon films would be to ignore the obvious points. Putting up barriers, even to the extent of building a wall, is one element of this. Blaming everyone or everything foreign is another aspect. And then inventing an apparent elite linked to social justice, which is vehemently attacked, is another part of this ideology.

Speaking as an ex-employee of Goldman Sachs, Bannon's 2011 lecture at the Liberty Restoration Foundation refers to the 15 September 2008 financial collapse, emphasizing Armageddon. He states there was a need for a trillion dollars to fix the system, and to prevent social chaos, and *Bloomberg*

calculated this as \$5 trillion. Bannon blames this on Medicare, pension funds, and the trade deficit, caused by buying foreign goods from China and foreign oil. Relying on the rest of the world is the problem because anything foreign is the problem. For Bannon, the total assets of America, including all stocks and companies and cash, adds up to \$50 to 60 trillion, with the national debt at over \$200 trillion. The welfare state is to blame. Speaking of his film *Generation Zero*, he claims this title reflects the current new generation, which has zero prospects. For Bannon, they know zero about history. This is part of the Tea Party, a grassroots organization that was not supported by the Republican Party. This for Bannon is the fourth turning in American history and retrospectively appears as the start of the Trump campaign.

What Richard Spencer, Steve Bannon, Donald Trump, and Adolf Hitler all have in common is their absolute condemnation of the media. This goes beyond a normal scepticism. Spencer has used the German term *Lügenpress* (lying press), which is how the Nazis described the media, condemning the press for being run by Jews. In response, in November 2016 Twitter suspended his account and that of other white supremacists. Other alt-right supporters, such as Milo Yiannopoulos, an associate editor at *Breitbart News*, were also criticized. Yiannopoulos was due to return to his old school, the Simon Langton Grammar School in Kent, but the visit was cancelled after officials at the UK Department for Education expressed concerns over safety. This had nothing to do with the planned content of his speech, but concerns that counter-extremists would protest. Langton sixth formers had signed up to the event with parental consent. The school's head of politics, James Soderholm, had invited Yiannopoulos, who had been banned from Twitter for life in the summer of 2016 for making racist comments. Appearing on the *Channel 4 News*, Yiannopoulos in his defence sold himself as a maverick outsider, a gay Jew, claiming his journalism is just mischievous. 'Am I supposed to take this as a joke?', asks presenter Cathy Newman, of statements such as, 'If we allow mass immigration, get ready for mass rape.' He then launched into an attack on 'victim culture', which apparently must come to end, and claimed the wage gap is a total conspiracy theory. However much these people dress themselves up as outsiders, they are straight from the elite themselves, having gone to private schools and colleges. His moment of fame was short lived. After proclaiming the benefits of boys having sexual relationships with men, he quickly resigned from *Breitbart News* and lost a book contract deal.

Within this discourse, political correctness is a 'cancer'. Between the late 1960s and the 1990s there was a movement towards social justice, but

this was not linear. Logically, one would expect a backlash. Yiannopoulos claimed to know what American's were thinking, given lots of people followed him, especially the gay community, despite him now being banned from Twitter. Trump and his allies were apparently functioning as radar for the American repressed id. Yiannopoulos had an exaggerated narcissistic self-importance that was believed by the global. Yiannopoulos gave interviews all over the world, during a period of great uncertainty following Trump's election. Unlike Cathy Newman on Channel 4, most journalists saw him as the refreshing face of modern journalism. Multiculturalism and globalization are the enemy here, for Yiannopoulos, with Islam being anti-gay, anti-women and pro-terrorism. Feminism is anathema. Israel becomes a model for nationalism, globally. Those who found his beliefs outrageous should be condemned as the extremists, for not allowing him to have or express these beliefs. This twisted logic continued after Trump's election. The narrative was they had been silenced for too long and this was their time. Those that demanded equality for all were 'pussies' and they constantly repeated their right to proclaim uncensored discourse, including hate speech and racism.

The fact that Donald Trump retweeted a neo-Nazi's tweet in January 2016 created a mild protest, but this only added to his profile in the run-up to the election. Trump appeared to be able to get away with anything. In a world that had evolved into a system where having respect for others was not abnormal, Trump's abnormal disrespect was admired as refreshing. In this regard, those critics of political correctness were correct. The public appeared to have had enough of being told what was appropriate, a very vague term anyway, and Trump and his associates capitalized on this. The media appeared to keep venerating and courting Trump, because of the need for profiteering from advertising, so no one properly challenged his racism or other outrageous opinions. Trump continually played the game of attacking the 'evil' media, and attacking the election process, just in case people might not vote. Even after they voted for him he claimed the voting system was rigged. Building on a culture of mistrust and conspiracy theories, Trump fuelled the fire, turning people away from some simple facts. Indeed, he even appointed neo-Nazi sympathizers who had no political experience to important positions.

Berating the media for being biased, his war with the press presents an image of someone who will not be pushed around, which again changes the political norm. Trump excluded the press from presidential events, where previously the press had been allowed, such as foreign visits. This lack of transparency and avoidance of questions from the press meant allegations

of incompetency, fear and corruption could be made. Any association between his key advisers and the far-right groups and neo-Nazis was dealt with by a condemnation of these groups. Rather than a two-way process, statements were made, plus tweets written. In the build up to the election before November 2016 social media was crowded with allegations Trump was a fascist. Following his victory, the mainstream press just vaguely asked: Is America drifting towards becoming a banana republic?

Bannon was considered by numerous commentators to be a neo-Nazi, so the closest adviser to the president was now feeding him these extreme beliefs. Early on Trump had tried to distance himself from the Klu Klux Klan. When asked on 26 August 2016 on *Bloomberg Television* about the support of David Duke, former Klan Grand Wizard, Trump said he had never heard of him. But Trump had mentioned Duke as his reason for a previous failed attempt at running for the presidency. In 2000 Trump issued a statement saying he was not running for president with the backing of the Reform Party because Duke was a member. Despite vague attempts at distancing, Trump's rallies still became zones of violence against non-whites. In November 2015 he stated in Alabama that blacks needed to be 'roughed up'. This volatile rhetoric fed an appetite for racial violence that ran deep in the region. When he was less popular he had to tone down his rhetoric, but as his support grew Trump's overt racism was constantly commented on by the media. The first sitting senator to endorse Trump was Jeff Sessions of Alabama, who had been rejected in his application for a federal judgeship in 1986 for apparently saying he had thought the KKK were 'OK'.

Dressing casually, verging on the scruffy with his unshaven face masking his establishment education, navy training, and finance career, no one can consider Bannon, the primary influencer on Trump and the American media, as not from the establishment. And yet his media outlets did a remarkable job in claiming they represented the non-establishment, the voiceless, the powerless and the dispossessed. The possessing class running the state is overt, with people like George W. Bush and Donald Trump in power, although the latter claimed a new dawn of anti-establishment politics. The neo-Nazis were cohering with the interests of high capitalism. As with Trump, they did this via an ideology which was lower middle class.⁵⁰ Both the neo-Nazis and the Bannon propaganda machine castigated the upper-class 'parasites', including bankers, despite Bannon having a career as a banker. This was a form of radicalism of the right, which denies civilization, appealing to the radical in those who, the system has not benefited.

The end-of-time rhetoric pumped out by the Clinton and Trump team prior to the November 2016 presidential election was black and white:

there was a choice between God and the Devil. Hillary was the witch, but anti-Semitism on the right was hard to pinpoint, given Trump had immense support from the Jewish community. Both the left and the right had attacked the technocratic society, ever since it existed. The rhetoric was framed to enable Trump to dismantle the state, reducing the need for any protection of the poor, dropping taxes and changing inheritance tax laws. Comparisons between Trump and Hitler had been misplaced. Initially, he did not have an expansionist agenda. What appears as a self-declared white power movement from the inside, from the outside looks like a white inferiority complex. Right-wing commentators in America saw Israel as a correct model for America to follow, given its aim of an ethnostate.

As the world approached the 2020s, the core conspiracy theory was just a repetition of the 1920s. During this period, the National Socialists claimed the Germans had actually won on the World War I battlefields, and they spread the belief that it was the Jews in government that had betrayed the nation. There was then the conspiracy theory that the Jewish financiers were raiding the economy. This is the perpetual myth repeated again throughout the last hundred years. Richard Spencer's neo-Nazism has total synergy with the views that there are actually two enemies, which is part of the metaphysical struggle. These enemies are: the Jew-Capitalists and the Jew-Bolsheviks. The solution in Germany was for the Nazis to establish a community under a supposedly divine leader, but in America in the 1920s a unification of white supremacist and anti-Semitic organizations did not materialize. In 2016, this unification occurred to a degree, uniting behind Trump, despite him distancing himself publicly from support from organizations like the alt-right.

As fringe groups with undeclared support at the heart of culture in the 1980s and 1990s became mainstream, Trump was guided by Bannon on how to win this vote. A 2016 book on Trump's rise to prominence and his presidential campaign used the word 'Nazi' six times in the context of his presidential campaign, including elements of the iconography of rallies and salutes. Neo-Nazism had filtered into the Trump campaign, and was nothing overtly to do with Richard Spencer's movement.⁵¹ The latent and blatant neo-Nazism that was evidenced at this time to the build up to the November 2016 presidential election reveals the manner in which neo-Nazism can be incorporated into mainstream politics. The period 2015 to 2016 witnessed a global shift. Citizens often cast aside traditional parties, or traditional leaders, opting for the anti-establishment figure, however much in practice this description was inaccurate.

Trump did not materialize from nowhere. His use of Twitter is just one part of his media influence. For four years prior to his presidential campaign, Trump appeared normally by phone on *Fox & Friends*, billed as 'Mondays with Trump'. There was a symbiotic surge in support for Trump and a rise in ratings. According to Nielsen Media Research, between February 2016 and February 2017, ratings increased by 46 per cent. The show had allowed Trump to dominate as a platform for his strange musings, especially on Barack Obama's birth certificate, with citizenship, identity, nationhood, and religion all involved in this. All of his claims were broadcast without any critical invention by the show's hosts, Steve Doocy, Ainsley Earhardt, and Brian Kilmeade. This slot can be interpreted as a free one-man party political broadcast, on the most popular morning show on cable television. The Fox News Channel was formed in 1996, after Australian-American Rupert Murdoch employed Republican Party media consultant and CNBC executive Roger Ailes to be its CEO. Murdoch is still its chairman and acting CEO. The channel is continually criticized for being biased. Headlines on networks such as CNN declared Trump the Fox News president. Never in history had there been such a close relationship between a president and a media outlet.

Overall, it would be wrong to view Trump's election as a new turn encapsulated as a movement towards an unprecedented post-truth era. Media and cultural theorists had been examining phenomena connected to this as far back as the 1970s. If the medium is the message, then Trump's use of Twitter is basically saying: This is the way it is; there is no room for debate. Blasting off 140 characters is a form of headline-grabbing journalism, without the delay and editing of gatekeepers. The whole approach was a rebuke to the editors who believed they had the say on what the general reading public believed to be truth. Despite this, Trump's election was a clear statement to everyone globally that truth, in terms of governance, overtly no longer mattered at all. This was then a subtler shift than has been recognized. Media theorists and philosophers such as Debord in the 1970s and Baudrillard in the 1980s had predicted this. Societies were being managed via media manipulation and knowledge was eroded.

In Austria, after a second election in December 2016, due to postal vote irregularities in the first one in May, some were relieved that the far-right candidate Norbert Hofer was finally defeated in the presidential election. But Hofer's nationalist Austrian Freedom Party did gain 46.7 per cent of the national vote. Anti-immigration parties were all gaining support across Europe, especially in France, the Netherlands and Germany, where elections were taking place in 2017. Supporters of the European Union viewed the

Austrian outcome as a good sign that openness and liberal culture could prevail over the wave of right-wing populism. Trump had capitalized on this postmodern era. This involved no special skills or talent, although there is an extraordinary veneer put on this activity, mythologized as verging on paranormal power, both in its impact and significance. The media generated around these activities leads to this semblance of ability. Always outsmarting your opponent and never being predictable is part of the equation. Capital itself takes on a magical quality. The controllers of this capital, such as Trump, are the magicians. People will do anything to be close to power. Constantly calling the other 'evil' conjures up the concept that evil may exist, deflecting from any other evil perpetrated by the name caller. Unlike his initial candidates in the race for the nomination by the Republican Party, Donald Trump never had to worry about offending anyone, as he did not need any financial backers (or so he claimed). Big business was the stated overt enemy, as it had been to the Nazis. This rhetoric was aimed at appealing to the working classes who felt exploited, and small businessmen who believed they were unable to compete.

Conclusions

Despite very real fears concerning Trump's connections with the far right, any connected neo-Nazi agenda was just a cover. A veneer of neo-Nazi belief is employed to generate support, overtly borrowing from their tactics which is utilized as a tool to gain power. Once in power, various policies are introduced to benefit the actual elite voted into power, as the reward for their support, and to firm up this support, such as drastically reducing taxes, especially inheritance tax. Once defeated on ObamaCare, Trump was nonchalant, as this meant more time could be taken on cutting taxes, bringing him personal benefit. All methods of benefiting those in power are implemented, and appointments strategically made, to hold on to this power perpetually. This form of class warfare by the power elite is then an attempt at regressing society away from progress and equality, which threatens the elite power base. Equality of race, religion, class, and gender are significant. Equality is demonized as inequality, the jargon and slogans being that it is benefiting those who do not deserve it. The UK government had employed the same rhetoric when benefit cuts were announced in 2015.

This is moving towards what is otherwise known as 'crony capitalism', following Luigi Zingales.⁵² Other examples of overt crony capitalism include the activities of Italian politician and media mogul Silvio Berlusconi. Public

relations firms linked to media companies were enabling political agendas satisfying vested interests and promoting certain ideologies. Nothing had changed since Mario Puzo and Francis Ford Coppola wrote the screenplay to *The Godfather Part II* in 1974, which reveals how an extensive power base, financially and politically, is formulated. George Lucas, Coppola's assistant, encouraged him to take the project for financial reasons, after Coppola first rejected it. This trilogy of films (1972, 1974, 1990, all directed by Coppola), based originally on Puzo's 1969 novel of the same name, while focusing on the figure of the godfather, actually unearths how political figures must be bought by underhand businessman. The films explain how institutions, from the family, to the church, to governments and courts, adapt their morals to justify themselves, and this is typically part of capitalism. In the Trump era, the relationship between business and government is no longer underground, but is raised up as quintessentially American.

Racism can be seen to be at the heart of the American dream. The complexities here stem from American racism, in this culturally specific environment, against the Italians, covered in the film. Actual war service by Michael Corleone (Al Pacino) is viewed as making him a true American, and guilt free, regardless of his illegal activities. But when he returns from the war he is alienated from his family, explaining that their methods are not his methods. Michael's patriotism is unquestionable. In a flashback sequence, Sonny Corleone (James Caan) lambasts his brother for putting his country before his family. In this sense, Michael's tribe is beyond the blood ties of the clan, which subverts a form of racism which states only that part of the family clan are pure and worthy. This, however, is still a form of nationalism that can easily slip into extremism. The moral message of *The Godfather* is overt: power always corrupts.

As with the Nazis, the strength of the purity of the family is emphasized. And yet Michael goes beyond blood ties, which is evocative of his strength and wider appeal. Loyalty is beyond blood. Michael's consigliere (lawyer) Tom Hagen (Robert Duvall), essentially an adopted son of the family, is asked whether he wants to fully step into Michael's world. Michael's own family betrays him, causing him to have his brother Fredo (John Cazale) killed. This is the story of America itself. Whether through a cultural product, such as a film, or a politician like Trump who became a reality TV star, there is always an attempt at claiming authenticity, suggesting antithetically a lack of authenticity. This can be interpreted as a crucial aspect of Nazi and neo-Nazi ideology, where authenticity is raised up as both a realistic possibility and an absolute goal. But this is obviously a fallacious quest, given there never was a pure origin, or an absolutely authentic way of being, especially

in an American context. Even the indigenous population of America prior to the European conquest was extremely diverse.

Like others who have drawn on extreme discourse, Trump manipulates the dichotomy between the insider and outsider. The former insider status appeals to the population that feels under threat, and the latter outsider status appeals to those who believe they are now the total outsiders, also under threat. In both cases the enemy is asserted. When extrapolating analogies or parallels and patterns historically we need to be careful, but the tactics of those wishing to keep power have not changed. These were the same myths pushed by the Nazis in the 1920s and 1930s, when they claimed non-Germans had taken over the financial systems and the media. The manufacture of fear along with the message that evil is out there waiting to get you is triumphant. Trump's attack on the media is virulent and a departure. President George W. Bush took the stance of a cowboy in his rhetoric, using phrases such as, 'we're going to smoke them out', referring to how America would deal with terrorists. Bush retrospectively does not look so extreme since Trump's regime won power. Trump's main modus operandi is that he appears to not care, and this generates support and offers what could be interpreted as a nihilistic freedom.

The narrative myth propounded by the Trump camp is that the legacy generated over decades for the marginal and the oppressed are false concerns and human rights are a myth. Both the Nazis and neo-Nazis thrive off hate, and are set up in opposition to what they consider to be the establishment. This same myth is propounded by Trump, overtly and full-heartedly. Why should he care if his stance towards China antagonizes the Chinese and places 40 years of delicate diplomacy under threat? This mantra of the survival of the fittest, or an 'America First'-style manifest destiny, blended with pseudo-post-Nietzsche philosophy, all might be drawn on by various white power groups. These groups or movements claim to support Trump, but he is driven by capitalism; one feeds on the other. The level of paranoia is significant. Both the left and the right are on high alert because of the enemy within. The intense attention paid to finding an enemy both within and without is fundamental to this culture of fear.