THE FARCE OF FASCISM: A TRAGEDY OF OTHERING AND POWER IN THREE ACTS

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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In his essay *Urfascism*, Umberto Eco outlines the various ideological traits that he perceives to be the basic "familial resemblances" of fascism – one of these traits being "the natural fear of difference". In acknowledgement of growing movements in contemporary American politics that take hostile positions concerning certain minority groups in the United States, *The Farce of Fascism* attempts to reach an understanding of how these groups are marked as different and pushed out of what is considered acceptable in the dominant morality as defined by the will to power. What follows is an investigation of what I refer to as *othering-narratives*; narratives with the purpose of essentializing accidental qualities associated with various identities in their relevant discourses. Furthermore, this project considers the intent of such narratives and how they are propagated throughout society, making comparisons with the methods of othering present in colonial Africa and Nazi Germany when relevant.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family; my father, my brothers, my grandparents, and especially my mother. Rest in peace, mom. I miss you very much.

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I. PRELUDE

Marx remarks somewhere, quoting Hegel, that everything in history occurs twice; Marx's contribution categories the first occurrence as tragedy and the second as farce[1]. Marx had yet to see the kind of totalitarian governments that would develop in the 20th century, however, the form of fascism that, every time it occurs, occurs simultaneously as both tragedy and farce. That is to say, without the intention of downplaying the atrocities that indeed occurred under these fascist regimes, fascism is just as absurd and ridiculous as it is terrifying and horrible.

As an individual, I enjoy a particular place within the canon of world history. Born within a society that at least outwardly championed the ideals of free speech and democracy, riding on an incline of the progression of human rights, at a time where technological innovation put an obscene amount of the world's knowledge and its active discourses in the palm of my hand. And it is from this perch in history that I see, amidst the reality of historic economic inequality and a dramatically changing climate due to rising temperatures, the threat of fascism rising once again, now in the 21st century as in the 20th. As an individual, one with little power or influence to change the direction I perceive the world to be headed, I can't help but laugh at the seeming indifference and inaction of our leaders and those with power that greet each change of the news cycle. As an individual, I can't help but wonder how we got to this point; indeed, the inaction in the face of the perilous swords of Damocles that seem to hang over all of humanity highlights this tragic and absurd situation.

Since one cannot solve all the world's problems at once, this work takes as its aim the understanding of the increasing influence of movements within the contemporary United States of America that may be understood as fascist. It should be noted that, when we speak of fascism

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[1] See Karl Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louise Bonaparte*.

and fascists, I am not necessarily referring to an explicit form of government or its supporters, but rather an ideology and its adherents, a kind of mindset or understanding of the world around us. This goal can best be accomplished through developing a better understanding of what I have come to call *Othering-Narratives*. When we talk about fascism, we must understand that there are many different variations of fascism unique to the contexts and cultures in which they develop; as Umberto Eco explains, "You can play the fascism game many ways and the name of the game does not change" (pg. 14). It has been said before that when fascism comes to America, it will not come in the form of a blatant anti-Americanism or with the founding of a new American Nazi Party, rather, it will come wrapped in the flag and carrying the cross, using these symbols, symbols that are supposed to represent freedom and love, as mere camouflage to conceal its thirst for oppression and hate. It is only upon a broad analysis of the characteristics of this fascism game that the "family resemblances" (pg. 15) are betrayed[2]. Chief among them, that familial trait that is perhaps most characteristic of fascism, the exploitation of humanity's "natural fear of difference" (pg. 20).

To understand the farce of fascism, we will be concerning ourselves first and foremost with this *natural fear of difference* and the ways in which it informs, encourages, and is exploited by othering-narratives. Our discussion of this tragedy will thus be broken into three acts, the first of which will serve to develop this notion of othering-narratives. The second act aims to further explain the function of these othering-narratives as they pertain to modern sovereign societies. The third and final act will conclude our discussion with consideration as to how these othering-narratives are propagated and dispersed throughout society. Our main focus throughout will be on the situation as it exists in contemporary American society, although we will bring in

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[2] The term 'family resemblances' here refers to the wittgensteinian notion of *Sprachspiele* or *language games* and the conception of *Spielen* or *play*. See Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical investigations* (1953).

reference as necessary to times and areas in which othering-narratives saw specific development, namely within the era of colonialization and that of Nazi Germany.

Without further ado, let's raise the curtain.

II. ACT I – IDENTITY AND OTHERING NARRATIVES

To begin our tragedy, we first need to discuss the concept of *identity* in order to lay the groundwork for this tale. As Amartya Sen explains in his appropriately titled work, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*, identity and the sense of belonging can be a positive which harbors contentedness and confidence, however, the improper handling of identity by a population can also encourage and exacerbate violence among different groups. For Sen, it is important that one recognizes the multiplicity inherent to identity, that one can be a part of multiple different groups through birth, nationality, interests and hobbies, struggles and adversities, and other accidental factors, all at the same time. His conception of identity is one that recognizes intersectionality and the inherent multiplicity of identity as a means of avoiding violence, but Sen also maintains that it is important that one be able to choose, to some extent, which aspect of their identity an individual would like to pull to the forefront. Before we continue discussing Sen and his importance with respect to our topic, however, we should first clear up the misconception present in Sen's general understanding of identity. It does not suffice to say that an individual has the ability to identify or choose a prioritization of her identities as she sees fit, as the process of identifying an individual is chiefly an external one, undertaken by the forces of society that work to define us; in other words, we might say that it is not the individual who identifies herself, rather it is the systems of power which work to identify her. As Frantz Fanon writes with regard to the colonial situation; "the colonist and the colonized are old acquaintances. And consequently, the colonist is right when he says he 'knows' them. It is the colonist who *fabricated* and *continues to fabricate* the colonized subject." (pg. 2) In this way, the colonized subject is forced to carry around the identity that is given to them by those with power over them. This sentiment echoes the notion that Nietzsche calls *das Herrenrecht, Namen zu*

geben. As Nietzsche says in the first essay of his work *On the Genealogy of Morality*; "The seigneurial privilege of giving names even allows us to conceive of the origin of language itself as a manifestation of the power of the rulers: they say 'this is so and so', they set their seal on everything and every occurrence with a sound and thereby take possession of it, as it were" (pg. 12). In this way, the identities carried by an individual do not exist in a vacuum; they are often tied to and defined by the hierarchies of power that exist within a society. It is the dominant morality as defined by the will to power of a dominant group which interprets and gives value to the individual. As Fanon puts it, the identity of the colonized subject therefore carries all the associations and conceptions attributed to her by the colonizer. This reality is not one suited, as Sen would presumably prefer, to the avoidance of violence. The external identification and its subsequent allocation of value based on associations made within a dominant moral hierarchy is in itself a violent act. As Achille Mbembe notes in the introduction of his *Critique of Black Reason*; "reducing the body and the living being to matters of appearance, skin, and color, by granting skin and color the status of fiction based on biology… has been at the root of catastrophe, the cause of extraordinary psychic devastation and of innumerable crimes and massacres" (pg. 2).

The colonial situation proves itself, in fact, to be the most appropriate point of entry into our discussion of this kind of othering, as it is in the colonial situation that fascist othering and its subsequent violent procedures first saw the light of day, procedures that would be turned inward and carried out within the colonial center with the rise of the various flavors of fascism characteristic of the 20th century; the big name among them being of course Nazism as developed by Adolf Hitler. In this way, colonialism proves analogous to fascism through their shared tendency of identifying the individual and subsequently assigning her a kind of moral value

based on that identification. In other words, the powers of both systems work to create a hierarchy of supremacy grounded in the rules they establish for identification, which ultimately defines rules of engagement between and divisions of space for differing groups.

Aimé Césaire claims in his work *Discourse on Colonialism* that "colonization works to *decivilize* the colonizer, to *brutalize* him in the truest sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism" (pg. 35). The countless atrocities of the colonial period, the base violence bred through the simple dichotomy of difference, of civilized and savage identities, the attempts to justify the plundering of another's wealth and resources,

> prove that colonialization… dehumanizes even the most civilized man; that colonial activity, colonial enterprise, colonial conquest, which is based on contempt of the native and justified by that contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it; that the colonizer, who in order to ease his consciousness gets into the habit of seeing the other man as *an animal*, accustoms himself to treating him like an animal, and tends to objectively turn *himself* into an animal. (pg. 41)

Ultimately, this condemnable approach to violence, lacking completely in rationality or ethical consideration and instead appealing to the most primitive of instincts inherent to man, to that natural fear of difference, is exacerbated when it is tolerated in any form and especially in the case of its justification. Furthermore, it is easy to see how, due to this utter lack of logical basis, the kinds of practices spurred on by this natural fear of difference in a context such as the colonial period could be moved over and applied in any context where difference can be found – as was the case in twentieth century Europe when practices of colonialism, the labor camp and the concentration camp among them, were introduced to the homeland, revealing

to the very distinguished, very humanistic, very Christian bourgeois of the twentieth

century that without his being aware of it, he has a Hitler inside him, that Hitler *inhabits*

him, that Hitler is his *demon*, that if he rails against him, he is being inconsistent and that,

at bottom, what he cannot forgive Hitler for is not *the crime* in itself, *the crime against*

man, it is not *the humiliation of man as such*, it is the crime against the white man, the

humiliation of the white man, and the fact that he applied to Europe colonialist

procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the

"coolies" of India, the "niggers" of Africa. (pg. 36)

In this way, colonialism is the nineteenth century ancestor of twentieth century fascism[3], both

belonging to the lineage from which a new style of fascism characteristic of the twenty-first

century is emerging. The development of the concentration camp, the implementation of

segregation into separate spaces, and a right to citizenship based upon an individual's standing

within a moralized hierarchy of difference, all seeped from the colonial period into modern

European societies. Despite the differences of colonialism and fascism, their relationship is

maintained through those family resemblances which remain characteristic, chief among them

being the self-subordination to that natural fear of difference. The colonial situation, therefore,

offers us not only a starting point to understand fascist othering, but also shows us its inevitable

end point; violence and the utter domination of the other.

      Now that we have established that identities are often pushed upon people through

hierarchies of power, something which is best exemplified in the colonial situation with regard to

the identity of the colonized, I would like to focus on a particular reductionism of identity that

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[3] For more on colonial links with Nazism, see *German Colonialism Revisited: African, Asian, and Oceanic Experiences* (2014) in which the debate about the status of colonialism on the development of Nazi ideology is taken up in the revisiting of German colonialism. `

Sen perceives in his thinking as we bring ourselves back into the contemporary situation, namely what he calls *singular affiliation*. This reductionism "takes the form of assuming that any person belongs, for all practical purposes, to one collectivity only – no more and no less" (pg. 20). Sen states that this reductionism is extremely popular, especially among certain "social theorists… communitarian thinkers… [and] those theorists of cultural politics who like to divide up the world in populations and civilizational categories" (pg. 20). A related group that Sen fails to mention outright here, one that also enjoys drawing thick, plain lines of difference between populations, civilizations, and their cultures within hierarchies, are fascists themselves. In fact, fascist narratives of identity seem to heavily rely on the assumption that certain individuals belong to one group and one group only. In this way, identification with a certain group can mean being seen as a friend or an enemy, despite any other affiliations the individual may have[4]. This reductionism functions as a tool which can be used to separate the population, in other words, create out-groups, and in doing so strengthen the bonds that hold together the in-group through opposition to these out-groups, and by providing an identity for the in-group which is perceived as shared and uniformly common. I would like to take a moment here to offer a small section from an interview about voting rights for people of color in the United States involving the republican senator of Kentucky and current minority leader in the senate, Mitch McConnel, that illustrates this function of division:

> **Pablo Manríquez:** What's your message for voters of color who are concerned that without the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act, they're not going to be able to vote in the midterm?

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[4] Concerning the dichotomy of friend and enemy, see Carl Schmitt's *The Concept of the Political* (1932).

Mitch McConnell: Well, the concern is misplaced, because if you look at the statistics,

African American voters are voting in just as high a percentage as Americans.

(The Takeaway)

Ignoring the fact that Senator McConnel is conflating the broad identities of people of color with

the narrower identity of black Americans, we can see from this quote that the Senator is

separating the identities of African Americans from 'regular' or 'white' (you can almost hear the

implication of the words in his response) Americans. This verbal slip betrays the division the

Senator has placed between these groups; he seems to be unwilling to reconcile the fact that

African Americans, in addition to being black, are in fact also Americans.

Sen's conception of singular affiliation is important for our understanding of the

development of fascist narratives of othering, but it seems to leave something more to be desired

to properly assess this phenomenon. I would like to add to Sen's concept of singular affiliation

the possibility of incorporating a multiplicity of identities through association that are then

perceived as essential to a given identity. This may seem contradictory at first glance, but I

believe it makes sense once we think about it further in the context of these fascist narratives. In

these narratives, which are founded on a certain degree of xenophobia, it is often the case that

groups that are marked as different by structures of power become associated with a negative

morality as the ways in which they lead their lives don't fit into the idea of what is considered

good and acceptable by the interpretation of the dominant group. Here we will take the example

of the gay man, someone who leads a life outside of what is deemed acceptable in the dominate

morality by way of his sexual orientation alone, and the identities commonly associated with him

in a fascist point of view, that is to say, in a way that perceives him as a threat to the portion of

the population that is considered good and moral: Homosexual men, and to a larger extent other

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members of the LGBTQ+ community, are often incorrectly associated with pedophilia to the extent that many conservatives automatically assume that gay men must inherently be attracted to children. In this way, an accidental quality becomes essential[5] as this narrative continues to propagate and spread within the general population through the exploitation of the concern for children's safety. This is the function of what I have come to call *othering-narratives*; the essentialization of accidental qualities through narratives, particularly in the attempt to *other* a particular group marked as different. Furthermore, to return to our example, gay men are sometimes thought of as 'diseased' or 'infectious' persons, as if their mere existence is a threat to vulnerable children and others in the population who might 'catch the gay'. 'Gayness' as an identity is therefore pushed outside of what is considered acceptable by the dominate morality through the associations offered by the powers that be, an association which is narrativized as an essential quality of the identity. We can see this pattern in various narratives aimed at different groups; The African American is associated with the violent criminal, the drug dealer, the thug, the rapist; The Asian American is associated with the Corona Virus and the opaque handling of the virus by the Chinese Government; The transgender woman is associated with the sexual predator, sneaking into women's spaces with the intent of sexual abuse. These kinds of accidental associations are taken by the dominate morality as essential for these various minority identities, creating a situation which demands an 'answer' in the name of 'protecting' what is perceived as the moral portion of the population. Furthermore, these associations may shift and change over time in order to best fit whatever narrative is being used against a given identity. We

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[5] Accidental and necessary or essential qualities refer to Aristotle's categories in metaphysics. An accidental quality is one that happens to be in a given instance, whereas a necessary or essential quality is one that is necessary for a given thing to have in order to be categorized as that given thing. For example, an essential quality of a chair might be that it must be able to support one who wishes to sit on it. An accidental quality of a chair might refer to what it's made of, how many legs it has, or its color.

see this phenomenon occur frequently with regard to Latin American immigrants. There are two associations commonly linked with the identity of the immigrant that seem to take turns oscillating into the forefront: the association of the job stealer and that of the welfare leach. The associations made with a singular identity can be contradictory or syncretic, as we see here, as long as they work in favor of the narrative that is being established. It should be noted that a lack of consistency in this respect is unimportant, rather, the farcical absurdity of contradiction is embraced as it offers flexibility and utilization to the narrative. As is evident from the adaptable nature of these narratives, the identities they target operate as *sliding signifiers*. In his work *The Fateful Triangle: Race, Ethnicity, Nation*, Stuart Hall uses this term in his pursuits to determine how the concept of "race works discursively" (pg. 43). This means that race (and the other minority identities we have mentioned) are, in a way, defined by their discourses; they

> operate… like a language… [their] signifiers reference not genetically [or essentially] established facts but the systems of meaning that have come to be fixed in the classifications of culture; and… those meanings have real effects not because of some truth that inheres in their scientific classification but because of the will to power and the regime of truth that are instituted in the shifting relations of discourse that such meanings establish with our concepts and ideas in the signifying field. (Stuart Hall, pg. 45-6)

In this way, the associations made between these kinds of identities result from their relationship to the power structures in a given society, which are able to form the discourse around an individual group for whichever purpose. This dominant interpretation of the situation accepts the fictionalized contradiction as fact, allowing the associations to trickle down and spread throughout the rest of the population, turning into ideology for those who adopt or go along with the dominant morality.

In terms of the 'answers' demanded by these kinds of discourses, we can see today how they make their way out of the woodwork, supported on the foundational interpretation of the reality of the identities that these narratives have built up over the years. The Parental Rights in Education bill, commonly referred to as the "Don't Say Gay" bill, was recently passed in the Florida state senate in an attempt to deny children education on gender and sexual minorities, a development which will certainly have consequences with regard to how the subsequent generations in Florida will view and be able to understand these groups. In Texas, similar laws targeting minorities have come forward, including laws aimed specifically at transgender youths, and changes have been made to the state curriculum banning the teaching of certain events and persons associated with the civil rights movement and black history. This shows us how these narratives often result in legal attacks on human rights as certain harmless identities become moralized within the societal hierarchy. Although not necessarily fascist in their implementation (one could certainly argue, however, that such laws were passed in a fashion characterized by minority rule considering recent attacks on voting rights and practices of radical gerrymandering in many Republican held states) these kinds of laws are certainly fascist in intent; they work to categorize LGBTQ+ and racially diverse people through a denial of representation and knowledge, leaving them to be defined in the minds of the public by the associations offered by othering-narratives. It is an attempt to disallow a self-actualization of these groups, to fabricate these identities in the image of a dominant power.

As mentioned earlier, however, singular affiliation can be used to unite as well as to divide, and the associations made with certain identities are not only negative. The narratives used to essentialize certain kinds of positive accidental qualities could be referred to as *allying-narratives*, whose unifying force is utilized by certain agents in positions of power to strengthen

the ties which bind the in-group together by offering a primary identity for all those that belong.

In our contemporary American context, this primary identity is often the identity of the

'American' or the identity formed by 'American' culture and values. In right-wing oriented

discourses, the purpose of this identity is to show that all Americans share the same culture and

basic values, and are thus more alike than anyone born outside of the in-group. One can quickly

conclude that this characterization of a shared identity is inaccurate if one only thinks how

different the culture and values of a person living in urban California would be in comparison to

somebody living in rural Alabama. This farcical identity of the 'American', however, is then

further narrativized as under threat by foreign agents which do not share this identity; mainly

non-white immigrants, African Americans – who are considered representatives of black culture,

something which is narrativized as diametrically opposed to American (again one can almost

hear the inherent 'white' that is implied here) culture – and those who bind themselves optically

to these groups through their political positions and actions. The in-group, benefiting from the

dominant morality, is interpreted as and associated with 'good' whereas the out-groups are

deemed as lesser, 'bad', or immoral. These associations of value judgements are then thought to

be essential because of the narrativization of this situation, the essentialization consequently

justifying any contradicting narratives which may arise. Let's return to the topic of pedophilia to

see the benefits that this kind of narrativization lends to the in-group associated with the quality

of 'goodness'. Former Alabama supreme court justice Roy Moore was accused of nine various

counts of sexual misconduct during his campaign for Senate in 2017, three of these accusations

coming from women who insisted that the sexual misconduct occurred when they were

underage. In this case, Roy Moore's identity as a white republican seemingly cleared him of any

wrongdoing, many republicans in the state refusing to believe that what he was accused of had

actually happened, or even if it did, that it wasn't wrong. By belonging to the in-group whose goals are to further push their morality onto the broader society, he benefited from the assumed essential 'goodness' enjoyed by the group, with republicans in Alabama defending him and his actions and the former justice even receiving a strong endorsement by former republican president Donald Trump. In the December 12th special election, Moore lost to his democratic opponent Doug Jones by only 1.5 percentage points, even though Republicans and those conservatives associated with the conspiracy-theory-bred Q-Anon movement appear to take the threat of state-sponsored pedophilia as a primary concern of their politics. The contradiction and absurdity here is the point; such an absolute adherence to a model of identity based on this kind of singular affiliation breeds a discourse that is without need of facts or to reflect reality, all that matters is that Roy Moore was a 'good' Christian and a white conservative. A more recent example of this kind of hypocrisy comes from congressman Matt Gaetz. In 2020, an investigation was opened by the Justice Department to look into allegations that Matt Gaetz had trafficked a minor across state lines to engage in sexual relations. Despite the reports, records, and testimony from his former friend and accomplice Joel Greenberg, the Republican Party and republicans in general have remained silent on these allegations and the congressman still enjoys popularity among his constituents. More interesting is his relationship with congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Green, who is exceptionally vocal in her stance against the rampant pedophilia she believes exists within the Democratic Party and movements aimed at the acceptance of LGBTQ+ youth. Their colleague and ally congresswomen Lauren Boebert is also noteworthy in this regard, considering that her husband Jayson Boebert was convicted of sexual harassment in 2004 when he exposed himself to a group of underaged girls.

The other aspect of these narratives and the kinds of laws they are to support that becomes clear in the process of linking in-group or out-group identities with positive or negative associations is the ignorance that they rely on to have their full effect; in terms of binding the in-group together, the white working-class man must be convinced that he has more in common with the white technocrat than he does with his non-white or LGBTQ+ coworker; in terms of pitting the in-group against the out-group, representation and knowledge of the identities that exist below the dominate group on the moralized hierarchy of difference in a society must be denied in order to exploit that natural fear of difference so that these negative associations can be made completely and ubiquitously with the help of the talking heads which peddle these othering-narratives in various medias. As Mbembe says in his book *Critique of Black Reason*: "The… foundation for the consciousness of empire has always been the tremendous will to ignorance that, in every case, seeks to pass itself off as knowledge. The ignorance in question is of a particular kind: a casual and frivolous ignorance that destroys in advance any possibility of an encounter or relationship other than one of violence" (pg. 70). This is exactly the kind of ignorance that those who seek to implement a fascist morality are seeking to cultivate in their followers. Just as the colonizer works to dominate the colonized by recreating her in his ignorant image, the fascist wants the contemporary public to see these particular identities as belonging to the degeneracy of our modern culture so that they will support the kinds of violent and aggressive measures the fascist may wish to take against them. Degeneracy[67] is a key word here, as it denotes a moving backwards, as if a given position in the cannon of human history

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[6] Max Nordau's *Degeneration* (1893) concerns itself with what he considers 'degenerate art' and the effects of modernization on the human being, coming to an understanding of 'degeneration' as a kind of mental disorder, a work from an ethnically Jewish doctor which was later twisted by Nazi ideology and essentialized in the context of race science.

[7] For more on the fascist obsession with 'degeneracy', see Fritz Stern's *Politics of Cultural Despair* (1961).

represents the furthest that we can advance and all the progress we have made in social rights and understandings of the human being beyond that point represent a step in the reverse direction. The slogan championed by President Trump during his presidential campaign and presidency comes to mind here, the words *Make America Great Again* and their shorthand *MAGA* emblazoned on the red hats of his supporters. This rallying cry evokes a time and order long passed, a time of a supposedly better economic reality, a time when people were supposedly upstanding and honest, a time when people supposedly still had values, believed in God, and saw the importance of the role of the family in society. When one hears such a phrase, one must ask themselves *when* this old order of morality and security reigned over the nation, and furthermore, for *whom*. The farcical nostalgia of the slogan attempts to rewrite the historical reality of the United States, subtly implying that that palpable feeling of a collapsing society is not a result of our changing climate or our historic economic inequality and political crises, but rather a dismantling of the previous order that lay closer to our country's dark history of cultural and racial supremacy. As Eco writes, one of the "characteristics of Ur-fascism is the cult of tradition…. In the Mediterranean basin, the peoples of different religions (all indulgently welcomed into the Roman pantheon) began dreaming of a revelation received at the dawn of human history" (pg. 16). This revelation that Eco mentions represents a kind of divine and inarguable truth, which has been further and further obscured by the passage of time and decline of cultures. "Consequently", Eco continues, "*there can be no advancement of learning*. The truth has already been announced once and for all, and all we can do is continue interpreting its obscured message" (pg. 17).

III. ACT II – BIO- AND NECROPOLITICAL PROPAGANDA

In this act of our tragedy, we will tackle the reality that these narratives do indeed have a goal that can be understood through the concept of bio- and necropolitics. In our example of gay men, we have established that these othering-narratives that concern themselves with identity are often framed in such a way as to suggest action against these minority groups in the name of protecting a group of higher standing within the dominate morality, e.i. gay people are a threat to children by way of their either predatory or contagious nature and so we must prevent the education of subversive sexual identities; transgender women are a threat to cis women in women's spaces or children due to their "corruptive gender ideology"; black men are a threat to white women; immigrants are a threat to the average working class citizen's job security and the health of our communities; the list of these narratives goes on and on. This phenomenon, however, seems to be intimately tied to Michelle Foucault's notion of biopolitics. Foucault understands this concept of biopolitics in contrast to other, older forms of power and control. Whereas disciplinary technology aided the atomization of modernity and was aimed at the dissolving of multiplicity into individual bodies, a form of power that took the form over man-as-body, the newer technology of biopolitics was aimed in an opposite manner; it was a "massifying [function]… directed not at man-as-body but at man-as-species" (pg. 243). What this means is that biopolitics and its policies are aimed at controlling aspects of the population – birth rates, mortality rates, public hygiene, etc. It "deals… with the population as a political problem" (pg. 245), ensuring a uniformity and regularity among a multiplicity. In this way, the concept dovetails into the Nietzschean understanding of morality – a way of living as defined by the dominant will to power that creates from its subordinates the uniform and predictable animal that is man. As Nietzsche says in the second essay of his *On the Genealogy of Morality* with regard

to his concept of 'bad conscious', this standardization of the human animal constitutes the "The shaping of a population, which had up until [the advent of civilization] been shapeless and unrestrained, into a fixed form" (Nietzsche, pg. 60). The aspect of this biological version of control that is most important to our conversation, however, is the "control over relations between the human race, or human beings insofar as they are a species, insofar as they are living beings, and their environment, the milieu in which they live" (Foucault, pg. 245).

Biopolitics is the power that "takes life as both its object and its objective" (pg. 254), so Foucault asks the question; how will the power to kill look under such a system? How does a system concerned with the health of a population, the longevity of the people, the mortality rate, the birth rate, how does such a system with the understood goal of improving life along these metrics 'let die'? Foucault begins our answer with the concept of race and racism. As Foucault explains, the concept of race is

> primarily a way of introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power's control: the break between what must live and what must die. The appearance within the biological continuum of the human race of races, the distinction among races, the hierarchy of races, the fact that certain races are described as good and others, in contrast, are described as inferior: all this is a way of fragmenting the field of the biological that power controls. It is, in short, a way of establishing a biological-type caesura… within the biological continuum addressed by biopower. (Foucault, pg. 255)

This answer, however, is inadequate, as we have seen in our discussion so far. Difference in race offers us one line of separation in a given population, but we can of course draw other lines. Lines can also be drawn to separate the difference in sexuality, gender expression, biological sex,

and social class within the population, creating a diverse field of biopolitical zones, each one acted upon in a different manner by the powers that be.

There is a second function in this equation that Foucault once again attributes to the division of races exclusively, that being extension of the relationship of war into the civil domain. This relationship of war is defined by the positive relations "'The very fact that you let more die will allow you to live more'… 'If you want to live, you must take lives, you must be able to kill'… 'in order to live, you must destroy your enemies'" (pg. 255). In this way, "racism makes it possible to establish a relationship between my life and the death of the other that is not a military or warlike relationship of confrontation, but a biological-type relationship" (pg. 255). This division of the population, which we have already broadened beyond the divisions offered by race, spurs on a kind of survival of the fittest mentality amongst various groups – something which Achille Mbembe would go on to describe as the essential component of a society of enmity. The fragmented aspects of the population enter a kind of competition where the goal could be seen as a conquering of a groups space and the resources which they take up in order to bolster another group, generally the dominant group. This situation is then exacerbated by the groups differing relations to power; the group that has the most power will consequently be the most effective in the 'making' live and the 'letting' die within the population, able to choose which group is allowed to live, to propagate and proliferate, and which group is doomed to die and disappear from the population. As Mbembe points out in his response to Foucault's concept of Biopolitics, "it has been argued that the Nazi state is unique in its conflation of war and politics (and racism, homicide, and suicide) to the point of rendering them indistinguishable from one another" (*Necro,* pg. 71-72). He maintains, however, that this kind of conflation along with the cold, impersonal rationality that enables the systematic "disappearing" of individuals and

populations alike are characteristic of the mode of power employed throughout modern societies. For him, the mindset of this conflation boils down to "the perception of the existence of the Other as an attempt on my life, as a mortal threat or absolute danger whose biophysical elimination would strengthen my life potential and security" (pg. 72).

This is where colonialism reenters our discussion. As we have gone over in our discussion of Aimé Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism*, the mindset which birthed the atrocities characteristic of Hitler's Nazi Germany was nothing new, but in truth was one that was developed in the mutually dehumanizing practices that colonizers applied to the colonized. In the colonial project, the dominion and control over space became a chief method in dealing with and simultaneously exacerbating the warlike relationship between the colonizer and the colonized which itself attempts to justify the colonial project, even if the European judicial order (*Jus publicum Europaeum*) prevented the European colonizers from considering the colonized as human and thus prevented them from considering the conflicts against the colonized as war in the sense by which it was understood at the time (pg. 77). As Frantz Fanon explains, "the colonial world is a world divided into compartments" (pg. 37). These compartmentalized zones, created by the colonizer, are specifically designed in order to propagate the dominance of the colonizer over the colonized, to subjugate the colonized to the force with which the colonizer governs and indoctrinates her into the tradition which works to justify the colonizer's treatment of her. As Mbembe writes;

> Colonial occupation itself consisted of writing a new set of social and spatial relations on the ground. The writing of new spatial relations (territorialization) ultimately amounted to the production of boundaries and hierarchies, zones and enclaves; the subversion of existing property arrangements; the differential classification of people; resource

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extraction; and, finally, the manufacturing of a large reservoir of cultural imaginaries. These imaginaries gave meaning to the establishing of different rights for different categories of people, rights with different goals but existing within the same space – in short, the exercise of sovereignty. Space was thus the raw material of sovereignty and of the violence it bears within it. (Mbembe, pg. 79)

This division of space and all that it entails in the colonial project can, of course, also be found in contexts such as Nazi Germany. The concentration and segregation of the Jewish population through the establishment ghettos and their subsequent relocation into camps under the pretense of "resettlement" markedly shows how the differentiation and domination of German-Jews was partly accomplished via the control of the spatial relations of the various biopolitical zones. Mbembe refers to this place where the other is confined to, the camp or ghetto or whatever it is to be called, as a "third space", an invisible place that exists outside the realm of the civilized where their rules do not apply. Furthermore, the expansionist practices of colonialism, where a nation attempts to exert their sovereignty in a space that lies outside of the nation's borders, is another similarity shared with the ideology of facism. The desire to dominate and reorganize a foreign space and people for the benefit of the nation, the theft of resources of the space and people for the use of the population within the colonial core resembles the intent underlying such expansionist messaging of fascist regimes such as Nazi Germany's "*Lebensraum*"; in fact, the term *Lebensraum* was used to refer to Germany's own colonial territories in the world of 'savages' and 'animals' (Olusoga and Erichson), before, as Césaire says, returning home to the colonial core, denoting all the space of Europe as a place in which the sovereignty of Nazi Germany could be expressed.

So, if Biopolitics is the power that takes life as its object and objective, the other side of the coin is Mbembe's Necropolitics, that power which takes death as its object and objective, "The capacity to define who matters and who does not, who is *disposable* and who is not" (pg. 80). And it is through the control of space, the division of a shared space into various compartments intended for various groups, each one with a different standing in the moralized hierarchy of difference defined by the dominant powers that be, that necropower is utilized; "The town belonging to the colonialized people… is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there, it matters not where nor how" (Fanon, pg. 39, Mbembe, pg. 79-80). Through the denial of space, the denial of movement, of access to resources, all enforced through the "language of pure force" (Fanon, pg. 38), the subject of necropolitical forces is put in a zone whose very conditions are a threat to her survival, a situation which is justified because her very existence within this space removes her from the moral consideration of the dominant group and thereby denies her personhood. She is disposable, redundant, and as such the power which takes life as its objective skips over her. As Fanon explains; "Obedient to the rules of pure Aristotelian logic, [the zones of the colonizer and the colonized] both follow the principle of reciprocal exclusivity. No conciliation is possible, for of the two terms, one is superfluous" (pg. 38-39).

Césaire maintains that the barbaric practices of colonialism made their way home to inspire the kinds of fascism that emerged in the 20th century, but these practices were not exclusive to the regimes aligned with that ideology. The domination of space and practices of necropolitical exclusion took root in western societies without necessitating the rise of a fascist regimes wherever seeds began to sprout. Countries like France, which extensively took part in the colonial project, did not turn fascist, at least in terms of the governance of their own country,

yet the practice of dividing space into zones of exclusion has become a norm of these societies.

One might think of the various uprisings in the Banlieues of Paris, areas lying outside the city

center where police brutality against immigrants and those of low-economic standing reveals a

clear separation of communities and a difference in legal reactions on behalf of the state.

To return to our subject at hand, the way in which narratives of identity operate as bio or

even necropolitical propaganda within a modern state may already be clear, but for the sake of

the analysis let us take a moment to put this into perspective. Biopower entails a series of

strategies and practices that aim to classify and control the population, just as fascism does. They

are concerned both with the health and wellbeing of the population, a biopolitical statistic such as

birth rates being a relevant example in the face of a reversal on the Supreme Court decision of

Roe v. Wade. Under a fascist mindset, women occupy a core role for propagating the strength of

a nation as understood by numbers, either regarding the work force or the number of soldiers.

With this underlying assumption in mind, it is worth noting that those of same-sex attraction

become unproductive, as they are not like to actively contribute to the growth of the population

in this way. This concern for the health and wellbeing of the population, however, can also be

understood in moral terms for the fascist, where a fear of 'degeneracy' may be brought into the

discussion. Biopolitics is concerned with improving life in a population, overcoming those things

that may be a hindrance to life such as disease. For the fascist, the notion of degeneracy, the

regression or otherwise movement away from what the fascist considers the peak of man, is no

doubt considered a kind of sickness that affects the population. It is here that the reasons for the

fascist narratives of identity and the strategies of their application can be found. These identities,

be they perceived and viewed as biological forms of degeneracy as in the case of race or as

cultural forms of degeneracy as in the case of sexual and gender divergence, are treated as a kind

of moral sickness, realities and behaviors that go against what is considered 'good' by the dominate powers, or what the fascist would have as their dominating powers, in a given society. The attempt is consequently made to then bring these identities into connection with other identities that may be legitimately considered immoral, such as criminals, sexual predators, or pedophiles, as a way of indoctrinating the rest of the population into the morality that opposes these targeted identities and bringing them under the influence of necropower. Once these associations have been made, the identities in question can be excluded from the public space, as is seen clearly in the legal attacks on the education system aimed at the erasure of queer identities and to an extent in the attacks aimed at black history. Having been rendered invisible, the chance grows that these identities will be skipped over by the concern for the wellbeing of the population characteristic of biopolitics, as their wellbeing will not count. Furthermore, because these identities are associated with disease, disease that is talked about as if it has the ability to spread from individual to individual (reproductively in the case of race, culturally in the case of sexual and gender minorities), the fascist can frame any attacks on these groups as a defense of his own group. The narratives that are used to accomplish this moral indoctrination, based on the populations natural fear of difference, go on to exploit another characteristic of the fascist mindset, what Eco identifies as "the obsession with conspiracies" (pg. 21). The fascist nation's identity itself is defined in opposition to what it would like to categorize as the morally undesirable, those who pose a dangerous threat to the 'natural order' of the world. They set themselves up on the side of the 'good' and 'pure' in the dichotomy between that and the 'bad' and 'corrupt', their actions justified through the narrative that they're attempting to remove the other from the public space is a reaction grounded in defense of this purity. It may be argued, of course, that all political groups, left or right, engage in this moral dichotomization. Anti-fascist

would of course decry fascism as being morally 'bad' and 'corrupt', but I would maintain that there is a difference here. The fascist engages in this behavior with the goal of excluding certain groups of human rights, or, put another way, denying the humanity of certain groups. The fascist may say that she is for human rights, that she stands for the 'protection' of children from the 'immoral' homosexual, for example, but her willingness to look the other way when it comes to the sexual abuse of children when perpetrated by her own side shows that this is not her true goal, but rather the means to an end. As Eco says, "the easiest way to construct a conspiracy is to appeal to *xenophobia*; be this xenophobia directed outwards towards the people of another nation or inwards within the nation's own population" (pg. 21).

IV. ACT III – PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS AND POWER

In this climactic and final act, we will now consider how these othering-narratives are applied practically in the context of the contemporary American political scene. In doing so, we will continue to make comparisons with colonial projects and Nazi Germany in order to get an idea for how these othering-narratives developed overtime with the introduction of new medias, leading up to their current form in the political discourse as it exists in the United States today. In addition, we will also take a closer look at the manifestation of power characteristic of the twenty-first century as it pertains to the development of digital mediums such as the internet and their functions within the neoliberal framework.

In the second act, we discussed how the domination of space in the colonial project worked to set up an environment of necropower in order to deal with the undesirables and disposables in a population. As Mbembe said, "(territorialization) ultimately amounted to the production of boundaries and hierarchies, zones and enclaves; the subversion of existing property arrangements; the differential classification of people; resource extraction; and, finally, the manufacturing of a large reservoir of cultural imaginaries" (pg. 79). What I would like to focus on here is the manufacturing of cultural imaginaries, the way in which one builds their identity by imagining themselves as part of a community through adherence to that community's social constructions. As Hector Perla puts it, identities are "socially constructed through narratives, myths of origins, symbols, rituals, and collective memory…imagined by people who see themselves as part of that group". The production of new cultural imaginaries within the colonized society, however, "gave meaning to the establishing of different rights for different categories of people, rights with different goals but existing within the same space – in short, the exercise of sovereignty" (Mbembe, pg. 79). The othering that took place in the colonial context

was one that partly relied on a complete restructuring of the identities of the colonized, accomplished through the integration of these new cultural imaginaries and their subsequent internalization within the dominated population. The question that concerns us here, however, is how exactly the cultural imaginaries were integrated, a question that Mbembe and Fanon partially answer with their focus on space within the colonial context. A more direct answer, however, can be found in the realm of education. As Ngugi wa Thiong'o explains in his work *Decolonising the Mind*, "Berlin of 1884 was effected through the sword and the bullet. But the night of the sword and the bullet was followed by the morning of the chalk and the blackboard. The physical violence of the battlefield was followed by the psychological violence of the classroom" (pg. 9). In this way, education, or, in other words, the medium of instruction, proved vital in the indoctrination of the colonized into the moral system of the colonizers, forcing them to internalize the values of the dominating group in the name of their "cultural benefit", a moral system which strained to justify the abuse levied at these people and their culture while at the same time setting cordial rules for conflict among "civilized" i.e. European nations[8].

In the second essay of his *On the Genealogy of Morality,* Nietzsche puts forth the aphorism; "If a shrine is to be set up, *a shrine has to be destroyed*: that is the law" (pg. 67). As it turns out, the chalk and the blackboard are some of the most destructive and creative tools in one's arsenal when it comes to the construction of a new shrine. To return to the contemporary context once again, this fact can be seen clearly in the Republican party's attacks on public education in America, both legally and culturally. We have already mentioned The Parental Rights in Education Bill, commonly referred to as the "Don't Say Gay" Bill, which aims to limit

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[8] In *Africa and the West: A Documentary History: Volume 2* (2010), a curriculum provided for colonized subjects of colonial Germany shows the ways in which education is used to force the internalization of the values of the colonizers and deny them knowledge of their own cultures (pg. 30).

the public education system in Florida in their inclusion of the lived experiences of sexual and gender minorities in the curriculum for young students. The other such shrine-destroying efforts we've mentioned in states such as Texas have banned books and content that speaks to the history of race relations in the United States in an attempt to deprive younger generations of the darker side of their nation's history and the knowledge collected by those who have experienced slavery, segregation, and racism, both systematically and casually, historic and contemporary. As we have discussed before, these laws are often in part the result of the effectiveness of othering-narratives, which are used as a foundation to justify the existence of such laws. However, these laws also work to bolster the narratives, allowing political influencers to bring the discourse of dehumanization further. In the months since the passing of the Parental Rights in Education Bill, strong associations have been drawn between LGBTQ+ teachers and "groomers", a term generally used to refer to pedophiles who endear themselves to their potential victims, to make the claim that these teachers are "grooming" their students into an ideology that promotes and encourages being gay or transgender by merely acknowledging the reality that some students might have two dads or two moms or two parents who identify as neither moms nor dads. In this way, education is the site of an important battle to determine the moral system of the population and it is due to this circumstance that education inevitably becomes the target of fascist movements who aim to inject their othering-narratives into society. The fascist seeks to deprive the population of any knowledge relating to these kinds of identities from which empathy may develop in order to best foster that fear of natural difference. It is a kind of necropolitical exclusion in its own right, erasing these identities from the discursive space of the dominant group and pushing them into their own conceptual space, keeping them isolated from the rest of the population.

This battle for education and domination over the nation's medium of instruction was, of course, also present in Nazi Germany. Nazi Ideology penetrated the classroom through textbooks and curriculum as well as reenforcing this indoctrination and socialization through youth groups, ensuring that the population would toe the line of the Final Solution with minimal objection guaranteed via state sanctioned othering-narratives[9][10]. In addition to the domination over the nation's medium of instruction, however, the Nazi government also had the aid of recently developed technologies such as Radio and Film to deliver and strengthen these narratives in the minds of the German people. These new mediums brought a new dimension to the propagation of othering narratives, leading to the advent of a propaganda machine, the effectiveness of which had not been seen before. Through state control of radio and the production of films, the Nazi's were able to reach those to old to be educated within the new system in a more effective manner then would have been possible with the old mediums of propaganda such as the political leaflet and newspapers.

The success of this new system, made possible through the advent of these new mediums, was in part due to the centralized nature of control exercised by the government. A centralized system such as this, what we can call the centralized propaganda network, is, as is fitting for the authoritarian government of Nazi Germany,

> hierarchical. [Centralized networks] operate with a single authoritative hub. Each radial node, or branch of the hierarchy, is subordinate to the central hub. All activity travels from center to periphery. No peripheral node is connected to any other node. Centralized

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[9] For more on Nazi propaganda in education, see historian Lisa Pine's *Education in Nazi Germany* (2010)

[10] Adolf Hitler's understanding of indoctrination of youth through education can also be seen in his book *Mein Kampf* (1925)

networks may have more than one branch extending out from the center, but at each level

of the hierarchy, power is wielded by the top over the bottom. (Galloway, pg. 30)

The centralized nature of the propaganda network allowed the Nazi government to deliver their

othering-narratives with consistency and, more importantly, minimal opposition. This was only

possible, however, because of the control they exercised over these mediums. Let us now

compare this situation with the contemporary American context.

We have already established that these othering-narratives are very much tied to power

by way of their relationship with moralization, e.g. the dominant power establishes a morality

which seeks to exclude a group of people. The fact of the matter is, however, that the United

States of America is not a fascist regime like that of Nazi Germany; The government of United

States was designed in a more *decentralized* way, including three main branches of government

that were to keep one another in check and balance the wielding of state power. The United

States government furthermore is not the one directly responsible for the attacks on the

progressive neoliberal system of morality. The attacks on this shrine come instead mostly from

individual actors, some holding positions in government, some not, who desire the construction

of a new shrine in the place of the current progressive neoliberal system, one that will exclude

those who they interpret as immoral. The modern situation, in fact, is one not characterized by

centralized networks, rather, as Alexander Galloway suggests, it is "decentralized networks [that]

are the *most common diagram of the modern Era*" (pg. 31). As Galloway explains; "In a

decentralized network, instead of one hub there are many hubs, each with its own array of

dependent nodes. While several hubs exist, each with its own domain, no single zenith point

exercises control over all others" (pg. 31). The consequence of this development is a form of

decentralized power, a field of many hubs vying for the control of as many nodes as possible.

This contrasts with Foucault's notion of sovereign societies, where traditional power structures exist in only a centralized manner. In this decentralized context however, it is possible for anyone with access to the internet to gain a certain level of power through social influence, in addition to the financial and political influence that the system already allows. The prime example of this power through influence is Donald Trump, who, through use of different forms of independent and private media, was able to stage a coup against the United States government on January 6th, ultimately flexing a power that rivaled that of all our governmental institutions. While it is true that Donald Trump held the power of the Oval Office at this time, as well as assumably some form of influence or another over certain members of his government, these were not the powers which worked to radically transform the republican party and inspired those who participated in the attempted coup to be at the capital on that horrifying day. Trump was able to accomplish those things because of the influence he was able to garner through his use of independent and private media, i.e. Twitter, Fox News, and influence over a news-cycle that he did not have direct control over. Trump, as a hub, was able to connect himself with a large number of Americans as represented by radial nodes and through those connections deliver a critical blow to our democracy.

In accordance with this decentralized mode of power, othering-narratives can operate in a similar manner. It is not necessary that they be delivered from the top down, as was the case in Nazi Germany; they can instead be spread among a vast number of nodes through multiple relatively well-connected hubs that cooperate with one another. These hubs are the political influencers, commentators, and talking heads that we see dancing on our screens. Those actors with larger audiences have a correspondingly larger degree of power which they can use to affect the morality of the country. Tucker Carlson is a big name to mention here. With one of the most

viewed 'news'[11] programs in America, Carlson is able to reach a large number of people,

influencing how they think about certain 'issues' (in other words, the existence of certain people)

with his rhetoric and that of the guests he chooses to bring on, guests that have begun disagreeing

with him less and less since 2019 (@nytimes). Carlson has been an effective distributor of these

othering-narratives, be the target black Americans, immigrants, LGBTQ+ individuals, or even

democrats and liberals. Carlson himself is in a sense a hub connected to other hubs, as is evident

by his relationship with Rupert Murdoc. As he has himself stated; "I'm one-hundred percent his

bitch. Whatever Mr. Murdoc says, I do… I would be honored if he would cane me the way I

cane my workers" (Why Tucker Carlson Pretends to Hate Elites, 7:38).

     TV Personalities and Presidents are not the only ones able to achieve high levels of

influence through their use of decentralized media. Online influencers have been a large part of

the right-wings propaganda network, even if they contribute to such an apparatus in an accidental

manner. Joe Rogan is another popular figure in American political discourse, a conservative who

often invites others onto his platform *The Joe Rogen Experience* to speak their mind. Rogan's

guests are overwhelmingly conservative, and often contribute to present othering-narratives

while on his show with little push back from the host. Rogan would be an example of a large

figure who, despite contributing to what the internet calls the "alt-right pipeline", does so

presumably without intent. These unintentional actors are critical for this decentralized

propaganda network, as guests on shows such as Rogan's don't generally show the true lengths

to which their ideology takes them. The way in which these shows conform to and propagate

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[11] The matter of the credibility of Tucker Carlson's show was one argued in court over allegations of distributing anti-immigrant and racist material. U.S. District Judge Mary Kay Vyskocil stated, leaning heavily on the arguments made by lawyers representing Carlson, that the "general tenor" of the show should be more than enough to inform the viewer that Carlson is not actually reporting facts about topics he discusses as they were, rather engages in non-literal and exaggerated commentary. (Folkenflik)

othering-narratives without attempting to challenge them, however, encourages viewers to look for similar content with similar views, often leading them to more and more radical content creators as the algorithms work to suggest similar content. In this way, a line is made from the Joe Rogans to the Tim Pools to the Steven Crowders to the Nick Feuntes, all without directly implicating the less problematic actors in the rhetoric and behaviors of more extreme figures.

Other notable figures in this pipeline include those who contribute to this establishment of a reactionary morality while simultaneously being part of the minority groups the morality seeks to exclude. Contributors such as Ben Shapiro, Candace Owens, Blaire White, and Dave Rubin work with those with those who advocate for policies that target Jewish, black, transgender, and homosexual individuals and push narratives that work to establish negative associations with these groups, despite themselves possessing those identities mentioned respectively. The movements overall hostility towards these identities is downplayed by these tokens and may be framed as a kind of psy-op on the part of the left designed to "control" and "influence" these communities. Candance Owens, for example, is a big proponent of the "Blackout" or "Black Exit" movement, encouraging black voters to leave the democratic party as a way of protesting the 'racial victim mentality' that white democrats and leftist allegedly seek to develop in black individuals by insisting that structural racism exists and advocating against it to assure their vote. Blaire White and Dave Rubin develop similar narratives for individuals who share their identities, insisting that a lot of the discrimination transgender and homosexual individuals face comes from the left and that they have a place among conservative and right-leaning movements, all while reinforcing negative associations drawn among these groups and insisting that they themselves are "one of the good ones". Dennis Prager, talk show host of *The Dennis Prager Show* and founder of the decently successful propaganda machine *PragerU*, is

quite aware of the value of having these kinds of actors within their movement. In a piece he wrote for the National Review in 2012 about the difference between opposing same-sex-marriage and being anti-gay, Prager writes;

> As it happens, there are far more gays who hold conservative values than many gay activists — or conservatives — realize. And we should embrace these people… I am close to a gay man — and his partner — who lives in the heart of San Francisco. This man is a major fundraiser for Republican candidates. And given his homosexuality and where he lives, his Republican activism is courageous. He should be regarded as a major asset to the conservative cause.

In this way, these kinds of actors are valuable for further enforcing othering-narratives by way of their willingness to peddle them on their platforms while acting as a representative for the larger group. Their identities as conservatives becomes understood as their primary identity, mostly absolving them from the direct ire of the fanbases they develop.

In conclusion, the way in which othering-narratives are supported by and distributed through medias such as the media of instruction and medias of communication are critical for the propagation of these narratives and to the movements which garner momentum from the reactions of the public. Through domination of the medium of instruction, efforts can be made to conceptually erase those identities which the dominant morality would exclude while mass distribution of othering-narratives work to draw associations between these identities and other behaviors that lay outside the moralized hierarchy. With the integration of the internet with these movements, anyone can become a hub for this kind of distribution granted they have a notable amount of influence as determined by their follower count or audience size. Whether or not this distribution is intentional, the mere inclusion of content which acts to support these narratives

can push viewers to more involved actors, either through the volition of the user or through chance, as is the effect of algorithmic suggestions on the websites that enable these kinds of influencers. What further exacerbates this situation, however, is the neoliberal framework itself. In such a system, monetization and profit themselves become a kind of justification. As Mbembe asserts; neoliberalism is "a phase in the history of humanity dominated by… production of the money-form… The vision that defines the neoliberal moment is one according to which all events and situations in the world of life can be assigned a market value" (*Black Reason*, 3). The problem here is the effect this monetization has on national discourse and how it interacts with these decentralized power structures. It is not hard to see how monetization shapes and directs discourse. In the neoliberal system, discourse either generates "clicks" or "engagement" and subsequentially produces revenue via that engagement or advertisements or sponsors, or it does not. In other words, it is quite literally *worth more* to talk about somethings rather than others; discourses, like everything else, seem to possess a market value. In this way, it appears that the market place of ideas itself is influenced not by the quality of the ideas alone but the financial efficacy they may bring with them. This unfortunately only serves to feed othering-narratives in their attempt to wield necropower and exclude and erase portions of the population. Appealing to the growing reactionary sentiment against LGBTQ+ and racial minorities becomes increasingly profitable as the influence of these othering-narratives and those who distribute them grows, creating a positive feedback loop propagated by hate and ignorance.

V. EPILOGUE

The goal of this text has not been to lay the brand of fascism at the feet of contemporary American society, but rather to examine the use and propagation of othering-narratives within movements that hold an ideological world that share commonalities with those familial resemblances of fascism. That being said, the threat of fascism is not one to treat lightly. It appears to loom over us like a shadow that has been growing longer and darker over the course of my political maturation, a stain on the horizon which blots out the sun. "It can't happen here" is a phrase that defines a mindset that was common before Trump defeated Hillary Clinton in 2016 and Trumpism and all its subsequent developments took center stage of American politics, a mindset that becomes harder and harder to believe in earnest with each turn of the news-cycle, the concentric circles of farcical torture wheels that treat those responsible as a kind of legitimate opposition.

The threat of fascism, I maintain, is a real one, and suddenly rights Americans have ensured through the course of our democratic project are now coming under attack. Earlier this year, The United States Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, a precedent which had guaranteed a woman's right to bodily autonomy for almost fifty years, prohibiting the government from forcing her to carry out a pregnancy against her will. With the abolition of this established right, women in the wealthiest country in the world are now in some states unable to access the medical treatments they need as religious doctrine is enshrined into law, preventing doctors from even prescribing unrelated medications on the off chance that they trip on any of the newly introduced draconian guidelines for care. Calls have been made for abortions to be federally banned, a move which would make these circumstances a reality for all women in America. Furthermore, a new precedent has been made from this decision, one which could be

used to challenge other previously established rights, such as the rights to gay and interracial marriage. Laws have already been drafted preventing the medical care of transgender children as well, depriving parents of the right to seek the kind of medical care that their children need. The rate at which rights, some that have been enjoyed by U.S. citizens since before the birth of my parents, face the threat of abolition is truly frightening. It is nothing less than a tragedy.

When I look back over the course of my admittedly limited experience with the political sphere, I can't help but see how this situation has developed alongside the propagation and increasing radicalization of othering-narratives. These kinds of narratives were, of course, present before Trump, before even our modern discursive conceptualization of the term "race", present even before the colonial situation. Human beings have always seen themselves as part of a tribe, defining themselves in opposition to the other tribes within their proximity; the natural fear of difference is, in short, nothing new. We can, however, see that these othering-narratives intensify in the face of fascist ideology, that in fact fascism requires these othering-narratives, requires them perhaps more than any other prerequisite. They are a part of the farce of fascism, the trick through which that natural fear of difference is best exploited, the sham through which our neighbors, those who we truly have so much in common with, can be changed overnight, transformed into enemies due to mere, accidental differences. We all want the chance to live lives of dignity, to be respected by others, we all want a better life for ourselves and our loved ones, to build a society that addresses the problems we face. It falls to us, however, to remember that, and to know that fascism would force us to forget that fact with fear if we let it.

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