

# **The Kids are Alt-Right: The Intellectual Origins of the Alt-Right**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES IN PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF  
PHILOSOPHY**

**GRADUATE PROGRAM IN POLITICAL SCIENCE**

**YORK UNIVERSITY**

**TORONTO, ONTARIO**

**AUGUST 2019**

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## Abstract

The electoral success and increased media presence of the Far-Right ideology known as the Alternative Right has catapulted the once marginal fringe movement into popular political discourse. The term Alternative Right is used in contrast to Alt-Right, which is a specific subsection of the broader Alt-Right who are associated with Richard Spencer. This dissertation examines the theories that make up the Alternative Right by addressing the question: *“How have the divergent political theory traditions of the Alternative Right coalesced into a new reactionary political ideology?”* The first half of the dissertation defines the Alternative Right and the historical context for the movement. The dissertation defines the Alternative Right by its axioms of the right to difference, the primacy of cultural metapolitics and hierarchical individualism. The second half examines the four major intellectual influences of the Alternative Right: The Techno-libertarians know as the Grey Tribe, NeoReactionary Thought, the European New Right and the American White Nationalists. The dissertation concludes that the divergent political theory of the Alternative Right is unified based on its shared reactionary values, its break from American liberal-conservatism and a consistent focus on the literature of radicalization and critique. The goal of the Alternative Right is a rebirth of racial/gendered consciousness and a new American/European renaissance.

**Dedication**

*For those who wish to see with eyes unclouded by hate.*

## **Acknowledgements**

This dissertation would not have been possible without extensive support and assistance from my supervisor, committee, family, partner, colleagues and friends.

I would like first to thank my supervisor, Shannon Bell, for assisting me throughout the dissertation and Ph.D. Her feedback, guidance and support are the reasons that this is a 300-page dissertation and not still a 30-page dissertation proposal.

I want to thank both the current, former and unofficial members of my committee throughout my Ph.D. The guidance from Stephen Newman, Robert Latham, David Mutimer, David McNally and Elizabeth Dauphine was invaluable for narrowing down my topic, guiding my research and providing the necessary feedback to complete a dissertation.

This dissertation and my entire post-secondary education would not have been possible without my family. My parents Ian and Tammy Jones have helped me in more ways than I can mention, thank you for making this opportunity possible.

I am grateful for the care and assistance that my partner Laura Moore has provided me throughout the dissertation. It was undoubtedly difficult to both finish law school and live with someone who spent most of his days reading extremist literature. Thank you for everything. I would also like to thank your parents Marion and Jerry Moore for all the support they provided while I was in Victoria writing my dissertation.

Studying the Alternative Right has been mentally taxing, and if it was not for my close friends and colleagues, keeping me sane, I do not know what I would do. I want to thank my colleagues: Chris Vandenberg, Kirsten Per Andersen, James Fitzgerald, Brent Toye, Justan Pastusiak and Myles Carroll-Preyde at York University whom I shared long hours within the Graduate Reading Room, Future Café and Robarts Library. I also wish to thank Bojan Pirnat, Laura Metcalfe, Michael Urban, Gregory Furmaniuk and all my other friends who supported throughout this Ph.D.

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## Part 1: Historical Context

The contemporary reactionary phenomenon of the Alternative Right did not appear out of the ether fully formed to scare the public. Nor is it *the only* reason that Donald Trump won the 2016 presidential race. Nor is it *the main* cause of Brexit. Nor is it the second coming of Adolf Hitler and a fourth *Reich*. The Alternative Right is the result of a synthesis of a collection of existing reactionary and Far-Right ideological traditions. For this text, the Alternative Right is defined as an emergent political ideology of reactionary thought (and those who embrace it) rather than a discrete social movement or online community. The Alt-Right is a subgroup of the broader Alternative Right, which represents one of the radical cores of the movement. The Alternative Right should be understood as that collective group which Hillary Clinton invoked in her August 2016 Deplorables speech and the one that Steve Bannon made manifest through his time at Breitbart and on the Donald Trump presidential campaign.<sup>1</sup>

The following chapters address the different political theory influences on the Alternative Right, which groups and traditions the public has misidentified as an influence on the Alternative Right, and how the Alternative Right has coalesced into a semi-unified movement. The first chapter addresses what the Alternative Right is and provides an outline of what are the shared values within the ideological positions of the Alternative Right. The second chapter covers how Trump, the Tea Party, and Nazis have been mislabeled as members of the Alternative Right, rather than as fellow travellers or groups with superficial similarities. The third chapter covers how the Alternative Right and the Alt-Right has emerged as a historical event, covering the movement's three distinct periods: 1968-2007, 2008-2014 and 2014 to the present. The fourth chapter focuses

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<sup>1</sup> Joshua Green, *Devil's Bargain: Steve Bannon, Donald Trump, and the Storming of the Presidency*, Kindle (New York: Penguin Press, 2017), 417.

on how the Grey Tribe of apolitical American libertarians adopted increasingly right-wing cultural values and radicalized into the Alternative Right. The fifth chapter addresses the emergence of the NeoReactionaries Curtis Yarvin and Nick Land as the intellectual vanguards that established the ideology of the digital Alternative Right. The sixth chapter covers the European New Right's contributions to the American Alt-Right and Alternative Right despite its fervent anti-American politics. The seventh chapter covers the American White Nationalist development from a series of marginal think tanks and journals to an internationally recognized movement. The final chapter connects the various threads of intellectual thought and explains how these divergent ideologies are tied together forming the Alternative Right.

## Chapter 1: What is the Alternative Right?

The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influence, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. **Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back.** I am sure that the power of vested interests is vastly exaggerated compared with the gradual encroachment of ideas. – John Maynard Keynes<sup>2</sup>

### What is the Alternative Right?

To paraphrase Abbé Sieyès in 1789 on the verge of the French Revolution<sup>3</sup>:

What is the Alt-Right? *Something.*

What has it been until now in the political order? *Nothing.*

What does it want to be? *Everything*

This text attempts to answer one specific question: how have the divergent political theory traditions of the Alternative Right coalesced into a new reactionary political ideology? This chapter focuses on what the Alternative Right is, defining the scope and contents of the movement intellectually. For this text, the Alternative Right will be a loose label describing the broader Anglosphere ideology of the movement,<sup>4</sup> rather than the specific subgroup of White Nationalists

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<sup>2</sup> John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1936).

<sup>3</sup> Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès, *What Is the Third Estate?* (London: Pall Mall, 1963).

<sup>4</sup> The term Anglosphere is used to describe the English language political community, while this book focuses on American politics and political theory, it incorporates international voices speaking on American politics. Alternative Right figures in Canada speak to American audiences just as the many Canadians and British citizens are influenced by American thinkers. The walls between these nations are fundamentally porous and completely non-existent within online debates where the Alternative Right's ideology was incubated.

that have supported Richard Spencer since the late 2000's, known as the Alt-Right, or the much larger group of right-wing populists found across the globe which cannot be defined by the American political theory.<sup>5</sup> This chapter defines the Alternative Right by answering the following questions: first, what are the different political theory traditions of the Alternative Right? Second, what do we need to understand to examine the Alternative Right as a political theory? Third, what makes the ideology new? Fourth, what are the movement's axioms and traits?

While one is unlikely to find a university course on Alternative Right political theory, one can construct a likely syllabus of what one would look like based on the public statements of Alternative Right politicians and various internet forums explaining the ideology for the uninitiated. The authors and texts discussed within this text do not represent the entirety of Alternative Right political theory. Instead, it is a survey of the various contributors to the political theory of the Alternative Right. The authors and texts have been selected based on their prominence within public statements by Alternative Right politicians, internal citations and references within Alternative Right texts, authors in attendance at Alternative Right conferences, and the works published by Alternative Right publishers and media outlets.

The Alternative Right, despite populist traditions and a predilection for anti-academic rhetoric, is influenced by political theories and philosophical positions first and immediate policy choices second. The Alternative Right sees meaningful policy change as a long-term goal, favoring immediate cultural change, which is due to their fixation on cultural metapolitics, which focuses on shifting the Overton Window (which will be discussed in greater detail later this chapter). As this work will cover the intellectual traditions and philosophical logic that supports this movement,

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<sup>5</sup> Daniel Lombroso, *Rebranding White Nationalism: Inside Richard Spencer's Alt-Right* (USA: The Atlantic, 2016).

it will not focus too deeply on the broader social movement, the tactics, “ground game,” use of social media or Trump’s electoral success. Additionally, this work will not cover the specific contemporary bloggers and activists of the Alternative Right who have propagated the ideology since 2016. Figures such as Milo Yiannopolous or Ben Shapiro are not titans of political theory, and while influential to some, are not recognized for their unique or significant contributions to the ideology. They are recognized as media figures and entertainers producing content for the purpose of political organization or financial gain. Instead, the purpose of this text is to explain the web of connections between the political theory traditions espoused by the Alternative Right, and how they are constructing a broader coalition under the banner of a new reactionary ideology.

While having a substantial presence online between 2008 and 2014, the Alternative Right’s presence in electoral politics began during the summer of 2015 with Trump’s entrance into the Republican primaries. Before the summer of 2016, the term was only used to describe a group of white nationalists connected to Richard Spencer.<sup>6</sup> Its first mainstream liberal media appearance with the name Alt-Right was in a *Mother Jones* article during the summer of 2016,<sup>7</sup> but it was subsequently popularized during a speech by Hillary Clinton less than a month later, where she used the term to label Trump’s right-wing supporters as White supremacists.<sup>8</sup> The intention of Hillary Clinton and pro-Democrat media figures in labelling the Alt-Right as merely a group of neo-Nazi extremists was a strategic attempt to push away moderate Republicans from the populist insurgency lead by Donald Trump and into the Democratic camp.<sup>9</sup> While partially successful at moving moderate Republicans towards the Libertarian and Democratic candidates, the choice also

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<sup>6</sup> Paul Gottfried, “The Decline and Rise of the Alternative Right,” *Taki’s Magazine*, December 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Sarah Posner, “How Donald Trump’s New Campaign Chief Created an Online Haven for White Nationalists,” *Mother Jones*, August 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Green, *Devil’s Bargain: Steve Bannon, Donald Trump, and the Storming of the Presidency*, 350.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 352.

polarized Trump supporters, arguably reducing some of Clinton's support during the close election.<sup>10</sup> Since the 2016 election, the American media has both condemned the actions of the Alt-Right while also normalizing their existence and political stances through extensive media coverage. Those who adopt the moniker of "Alt-Lite" are given ample airtime on mainstream media outlets despite their connection to the more radical elements of the movement.<sup>11</sup> In the aftermath of the 2016 presidential election, the term Alt-Right has become the cultural shorthand for the loose connection of Far-Right populist groups within North America. While not all groups or authors labelled as Alt-Right by the media are followers of the Alt-Right ideology, the less specific use of the label to anyone within the (Far)-Right has made the term much more ubiquitous than it was before 2016.<sup>12</sup>

Before listing the four-main political intellectual traditions of the Alternative Right, it is necessary to quickly clarify some misconceptions about which traditions are part of the Alternative Right.<sup>13</sup> The Alternative Right are not classical fascists, nor are they literal goose-stepping, Browncoat wearing Nazis from the 1930s.<sup>14</sup> The small subsection of the Alternative Right that are neo-Nazis represents a small community within the movement, one that is isolated and ostracized from the moderate members of the Alternative Right. These "moderates" use the moniker Alt-Lite to separate themselves from the radical core as they typically support White Supremacy but not outright White Nationalism, but these followers are still on the far-right of the Anglosphere political consensus and implicitly support radical extremists.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 376.

<sup>11</sup> George Hawley, *Making Sense of the Alt-Right* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 141.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>13</sup> The differences between these groups and the Alt-Right will be examined in detail in the subsequent chapter.

<sup>14</sup> Roger Griffin, *A Fascist Century: Essays by Roger Griffin*, ed. Matthew Feldman (New York: Palgrave, 2008), 190.

The spectrum of the Alternative Right can be understood as a quasi-solar system. In the centre, there are core ideas that comprise the most radical ideas of the Alt-Right, which grow and contract in size, pulling outside ideas in toward the centre and losing followers as they fade. Like stars, these thinkers and ideas pull the different subgroups into uneasy orbits around the radical core ideas of white supremacy, misogyny and anti-democratic politics. Some subgroups and individuals will maintain stable orbits of their own, with little satellite moons of followers, such as the NeoReactionaries who reject the populist impulse of the Alt-Right<sup>15</sup> or the American Renaissance White Nationalists who tend to oppose the Alt-Right's anti-Semitism.<sup>16</sup> Occasionally a rogue planet may enter the system before being banished, such as Milo Yiannopolous who was at best described as Alt-Lite. Rather than a static system that remains constant over time, elements are always moving in relation to each other, growing and fading over time, with irregular orbits temporarily bringing ideas closer to the core. The entire system is the Alternative Right, though the magnitude of the core ideas and their role in defining the movement provide significantly more attraction and pull than those ideas on the fringe with less mass, possessing minor ideological satellites in turn. The ideological pull of other systems can pull some theories away from their original systems or sit in an uneasy middle ground between the two systems, such as the American conservative and Alternative Right's shared rejection of socialism. The system is a spectrum from those core ideas to those on the fringe that could be peeled off to another ideological movement or abandoned if they are at odds with the Alternative Right's radical cores.

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<sup>15</sup> Nick Land, "The Alt-Right Is Dead," Outside In, 2016, <http://www.xenosystems.net/the-alt-right-is-dead/>; Michael Anissimov, "Why the Replacement of Neoreaction with the Alt Right Was a Good Thing," *Medium*, June 2016.

<sup>16</sup> Leonard Zeskind, *Blood and Politics: The History of the White Nationalist Movement from the Margins to the Mainstream*, Kindle (California: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017), 367.

If one understands the radical core of the Alternative Right as a self-described Leninist vanguard party,<sup>17</sup> which influences and radicalizes a broader population, which is receptive to the ideas of the Alternative Right's ideological core, this allows the broader Alternative Right populist movement in the Anglosphere to be examined in conjunction. Otherwise excusing their supporters who are only "mostly in favour of radical right-wing extremism" because they reject the terrorism and hate crimes of the movement's radical core, allows the racism to become normalized. Without this conception of the movement as a spectrum from radicalized core to complacent conservative moderates, any analysis of the movement would fall into a naval gazing quest for perfect taxonomy rather than qualitative examination. Also, this spectrum allows us to understand how to examine the many significant contributors to the political theory and intellectual justifications of the Alternative Right who would reject the Alt-Right label, such as Jordan Peterson or Nick Land<sup>18</sup> who do so for either political or philosophical reasons.<sup>19</sup> As the Alt-Right label is explicitly used to denote the radical sect which is responsible for hate crimes and terrorist attacks, it is simultaneously understood as a rallying cry and a slur.<sup>20</sup>

By using this spectrum, we can also make sense of figures like Donald Trump who have a reciprocal and amicable relationship with the Alt-Right's goals. We know that the ideological cores of the Alternative Right overwhelmingly endorsed Trump, but Trump did not read the

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<sup>17</sup> Errol Morris, *American Dharma*, 2018.

<sup>18</sup> Land, "The Alt-Right Is Dead"; Greg Callaghan, "Right-Winger? Not Me, Says Alt-Right Darling Jordan Peterson," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, April 19, 2018.

<sup>19</sup> This separation between the use of a philosopher's ideas and the personal values of the philosopher themselves is like how Gramsci is appropriated by the European New Right, in particular Alain de Benoist, despite himself being an Italian Marxist locked up by a Fascist government, or Nietzsche's philosophy being used to justify anti-Semitism that he despised.

<sup>20</sup> Julia Alexander, "YouTube Creators Are Trying to Move on from 'Subscribe to PewDiePie,'" *The Verge* (New York, March 19, 2019).

literature of the Alternative Right such as Nick Land's *Dark Enlightenment*<sup>21</sup> or Julius Evola's *Ride the Tiger*<sup>22</sup> before launching his campaign. To suggest that Trump read any of the theorists examined in this text is laughable, but he has indeed been influenced by these thinkers indirectly through social media and his political staffers. Members of Trump's cabinet have been vocal members of the Alt-Right,<sup>23</sup> but Trump is somewhere between a useful idiot for the Alt-Right and a political entrepreneur exploiting the growing popularity of the Alternative Right narrative for personal gain.

It is also essential to make crystal clear that the Alt-Right is barely connected intellectually to the Republican Christian-libertarian movement in the United States which has been bankrolled by the dark money of the Koch brothers.<sup>24</sup> The broader Alternative Right rarely supports these libertarian figures, as they are typically labeled "Cuckservatives."<sup>25</sup> The libertarian think-tanks despite being right-wing are a primary source of ire for the majority of the Alt-Right. The Alternative Right movement is a revolt against mainstream American conservatism,<sup>26</sup> whose fixation on capitalism, profit and electoral success, comes at the cost of defending "Western Civilization" from waves of immigrants, globalist financial elites and perhaps worst of all, the spectre haunting the west, Feminism.<sup>27</sup> It is necessary to abandon a pure binary spectrum between left and right when examining the Alternative Right. This simplistic binary is why the term

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<sup>21</sup> "The Dark Enlightenment," The Dark Enlightenment, 2013, <http://www.thedarkenlightenment.com/the-dark-enlightenment-by-nick-land/>.

<sup>22</sup> *Ride the Tiger: A Survival Manual for the Aristocrats of the Soul* (Inner Traditions, 2003).

<sup>23</sup> Green, *Devil's Bargain: Steve Bannon, Donald Trump, and the Storming of the Presidency*, 374.

<sup>24</sup> Jane Meyer, *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right* (New York: Doubleday, 2016).

<sup>25</sup> David Weigel, "Cuckservative - the Conservative Insult of the Month, Explained," *The Washington Post*, July 29, 2015.

<sup>26</sup> For non-American members of the Alt-Right the revolt is against pro-globalization parties, ranging from third-way social democrats to right-wing conservatives.

<sup>27</sup> Richard Spencer, "What It Means to Be Alt-Right," *Altright.com*, 2017, <https://altright.com/2017/08/11/what-it-means-to-be-alt-right/>; Allum Bokhari and Milo Yiannopoulos, "An Establishment Conservative's Guide to the Alt-Right," *Breitbart*, March 29, 2016.

Alternative Right is more effective at explaining the ideology of the movement, which is not necessarily “more Right-wing” but rather a different type of right-wing politics.<sup>28</sup>

The political theory of the Alternative Right is composed of four broad factions: the gateway ideology of the techno-libertarian community, known as the Grey Tribe throughout this text, the NeoReactionaries of the Dark Enlightenment, the European New Right ideologues and the White Nationalist community within the United States. Other than the Dark Enlightenment, these intellectual traditions are far from homogenous. Disagreements within the respective traditions over who counts as a member and what would be considered canonical within the traditions are persistent. As with any intellectual community, disagreements exist and can be violently hostile, but these communities tend to coalesce into a mostly coherent worldview.

The Grey Tribe has the least cohesive body of literature within the Alternative Right, as it is less a tradition of thought and more a shared digital culture. Its fungible quality comes from its mixture of libertarianism, California ideology and accelerationist theories of politics, centred on technological progress within the information age. In his 2014 article, Scott Alexander coined the term “Grey Tribe”<sup>29</sup> to describe the broader techno-libertarian population as the mostly apolitical pre-Gamergate technophile communities which existed outside of the traditional Republican/Democratic dichotomy of American politics. While much of the literature within the Grey Tribe is premised on the disruption of existing modern institutions and markets due to technology, the movement is known for a politics of tribalism which goes hand in hand with misogynistic and anti-identity politics. It is this tribalism that has attracted a substantial young

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<sup>28</sup> Gottfried, “The Decline and Rise of the Alternative Right.”

<sup>29</sup> Scott Alexander, “I Can Tolerate Anything Except the Outgroup,” Slate Star Codex, 2014, <http://slatestarcodex.com/2014/09/30/i-can-tolerate-anything-except-the-outgroup/>.

male NEET (Not in education, employment or training) population which feels alienated and disenfranchised by western society and progressive culture. It is also this mixture of alienation and physical isolation which has resulted in this group fostering many of the movement's lone-wolf terrorist attacks.

The second group are the NeoReactionaries of the Dark Enlightenment, specifically Nick Land<sup>30</sup> and Curtis Yarvin.<sup>31</sup> The NeoReactionary ideology is premised on a rejection of the liberal enlightenment project, specifically the universal humanism of Liberalism and Marxism. While the Alternative Right is a reactionary populist movement, the NeoReactionaries take a non-populist approach fixated on an elitist reactionary right-wing framework based on "Human Biodiversity" (HBD) (eugenics), the concept of the cathedral,<sup>32</sup> anti-democratic politics favouring monarchy, and an understanding of freedom premised on "the right to exit." They are the group most likely to be found at the radical core of the Alternative Right yet still shun the label Alt-Right, due to its populist and anti-Semitic reputation. Most Dark Enlightenment theory was published online on publicly accessible blogs, which shaped the ideology's intellectual and rhetorical content, rejecting traditional academia as the home of "thought police." The Dark Enlightenment hit its peak in popularity in 2014 before being folded into the more popular Alt-Right movement within the Alternative Right when Nick Land and Curtis Yarvin moved on to other full-time projects. While the movement was small in number, many of the non-populist ideas within the Alternative Right can find their origins within this movement.

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<sup>30</sup> Land, "The Dark Enlightenment."

<sup>31</sup> Curtis Yarvin, "A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations: Chapter 1: The Red Pill," Unqualified Reservations, 2009, <https://www.unqualified-reservations.org/2009/01/gentle-introduction-to-unqualified/>.

<sup>32</sup> A concept coined by Curtis Yarvin to describe the role of government, media and intellectual institutions to police society through cultural norms, similar to the conception of hegemony by Althusser, Gramsci and Foucault.

The third group, that of the various European New Right ideologues, contributed to Alternative Right political theory through both the Far-Right publishing company in London, Arktos, and decades of non-English language scholarship. The texts of Julius Evola,<sup>33</sup> the Post-War Italian Fascist, or Alain de Benoist and Guillaume Faye's work<sup>34</sup> within the French New Right have existed for decades with active European readers. However, the English language audience of the European New Right was limited to right-wing polyglots until the Right-Wing publishing house Arktos began mass translation of European New Right and Fascists texts for online readers in the late 2000s. The European New Right is premised on right-wing cultural politics and the right to difference.<sup>35</sup> The right to difference is akin to the idea of White Nationalism, rather than arguing that say, French culture and the French Ethnicity is the best in the world (or at least better than others), the right to difference argues that White French people should be allowed to live in isolated communities, segregated from non-white influence or contamination. The goal is to preserve the ethnicity and cultural values from the homogenizing influence of globalization and the influx of immigrants into France. The right to difference, unlike post-colonial or indigenous theories of cultural preservation, is based premised on preserving or reaffirming the structures of white supremacy and segregation rather than on correcting the legacy of genocide and colonial practices by imperial nations in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The writings are known for Islamaphobia, anti-immigrant sentiments which include advocating genocide, anti-American foreign policy, anti-globalization policy and a rejection of liberal democracy. The various ideologies of the European

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<sup>33</sup> Julius Evola, *Notes on the Third Reich*, ed. John B. Morgan and E. Christian Kopff, Kindle (London: Arktos, 1996); Evola, *Ride the Tiger: A Survival Manual for the Aristocrats of the Soul*; Paul Furlong, *Social and Political Thought of Julius Evola* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>34</sup> Tamir Bar-on, *Rethinking the French New Right* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Alain de Benoist and Charles Champetier, *Manifesto For a European Renaissance*, Kindle (London: Arktos, 2012); Alain de Benoist, *The Problem of Democracy*, ed. Sergio Knipe and John B. Morgan (London: Arktos, 2011); Guillaume Faye, *Archeofuturism: European Visions of Post-Catastrophic Age*, Kindle (Arktos, 2010); Guillaume Faye, *Convergence of Catastrophes*, Kindle (London: Arktos, 2012).

<sup>35</sup> Tamir Bar-on, *Where Have All the Fascists Gone?* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007).

New Right range from toying with to fully embracing a fascist ideology, and draw upon the conservative revolutionary thinkers that supported the Nazi regime.<sup>36</sup> After being isolated from his position of power within the White House Steve Bannon has dedicated himself to establishing an Alternative Right international through these ideas and the international community who has embraced the European New-Right's ideology.

The fourth and final body of literature comes from the American White Nationalist community. This group is the most public and acknowledged by mainstream news within the Alternative Right, though both their movement and its literature are far from unified. White Supremacy, the belief and systems that elevate whites over non-whites either due to historical legacy or explicit racial hierarchies, is widespread and actively examined by post-colonial critical theory literature. In contrast White Nationalism is the belief that whites should have their ethno-states which exclude non-whites, which is a smaller subsection of White Supremacy. The White Nationalist canon ranges from the works of neo-Nazis like Francis Yockey<sup>37</sup> to the paleoconservative ideology of Paul Gottfried.<sup>38</sup> While existing racialized political ideologies have existed for centuries, the White Nationalist literature examined in this text responds explicitly to the post-civil rights and identity politics era discourse of the left, to present itself as Identitarians, or white identity politics.

### **Three Considerations for those Examining the Alternative Right**

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<sup>36</sup> Julius Evola, *Fascism Viewed from the Right*, ed. E. Christian Kopff, Kindle (London: Arktos, 2013).

<sup>37</sup> Francis Parker Yockey, *Imperium: The Philosophy of History and Politics*, Ebook (Scotts Valley, California: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012); Kevin Coogan, *Dreamer of the Day: Francis Parker Yockey and the Postwar Fasist International* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1999).

<sup>38</sup> Paul Gottfried, "Alain de Benoist's Anti-Americanism," *Telos* 1993, no. 98–99 (1993): 127–33, <https://doi.org/doi:10.3817/0393099127>; Paul Gottfried, *After Liberalism: Mass Democracy in the Managerial State*, Kindle (Princeton University Press, 1999).

For those new to the examination of the Far-Right and the Alternative Right, there are three positions that need to be examined before engaging in a nuanced understanding of the new Alternative Right movement. First, despite the crudeness of some who claim to speak for the Alt-Right, Alternative Right ideas constitute a constellation of coherent political theories, not merely manifestos and internet memes. Second, although the Alternative Right movement boasts only a small number of prominent academics and public intellectuals, their ideas are widely disseminated throughout the movement as memes propagated on social media. Third, the Alternative Right is not characterized by a monolithic ideology; instead, Alternative Right thought draws on a diverse range of intellectual traditions. There are other academic and journalistic texts that can provide tactics for how to respond to the Alternative Right or explain the new political reality in American politics since Trump won the 2016 election. The purpose of this text is to demonstrate the ideological precursors to provide a better understanding of what the Alternative Right is; it is up to the non-philosophers to do something about it.

For the first position, the Alternative Right is a post-liberal ideology rather than a derivative theory emerging as localization of broader fascism or conservative thought.<sup>39</sup> One of the consistent elements across the various Alternative Right political traditions is their attempted rejection of modernity and the establishment of a new ideology to replace existing modernity.<sup>40</sup> The global New-Right varies based on local political theory traditions,<sup>41</sup> the European New Right draws more

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<sup>39</sup> In this case, literally an ideology for the post-modern era, rather than a Poststructural ideology or an ideology for late capitalism.

<sup>40</sup> As with the Fascism of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Alternative Right is fixated on the question of modernity and attempting to overcome the project of modernity. Unlike the American conservatives of the post-war period, the Alternative Right desires not to slow modernity but to find a way around it, though the success of the Alternative Right to imagine a new system to replace modernity is debatable.

<sup>41</sup> Mark Sedgwick, "Introduction," in *Key Thinkers of the Radical Right: Behind the New Threat to Liberal Democracy*, ed. Mark Sedgwick, Kindle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

upon continental theorists, such as the Conservative Revolutionaries,<sup>42</sup> while the English language Alt-Right is known for its libertarian influences. The Alternative Right is paradigmatically different from conservative thought even if they may both be understood as right-wing, just as Postmodernism is different from Marxism while both being generally understood as left-wing. The theorists may come to some of the same conclusions, but their logic is axiomatically different. The Alternative Right and traditional conservatives may agree on some common issues and share an electoral platform within first-past-the-post elections, but their motivations are fundamentally different. The Alternative Right assembles a distinct ideological canon that combines elements of existing schools of thought, which means that the existing literature on libertarians, fascists and other far-right groups have incomplete pictures, and literature on conservative thought provides almost no picture of the Alternative Right ideology or theorists.

The second position responds to the belief that the Alternative Right is made up of unintelligent people accepting the ideology of the elites. The Alternative Right tends to be populist, but that does not mean it is solely populist or without logic. Outside of a political theory class at a major university, it is unlikely that one will find someone who identifies themselves as a liberal because they read John Stuart Mill, John Locke or John Rawls;<sup>43</sup> however, we would still call someone a liberal if they argued for human rights, democracy and private property. The core works of fascism and other non-economic Far-Right ideologies are typically taboo within university classrooms and rarely read approvingly. Therefore only those who actively agree with their politics or have an intellectual curiosity in fascism would read these texts. Despite this, those core readers

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<sup>42</sup> Heidegger, Schmitt and other 1930's German philosophers of the Nazi regime.

<sup>43</sup> James Burnham, *Suicide of the West: An Essay on the Meaning and Destiny of Liberalism*, Second Ame (New York: Encounter Books, 2014).

have disseminated Far-Right ideas through a plethora of different mediums, such as YouTube channels, political wikis, and memes.

The final position is that the Far-Right is a philosophically sophisticated ideology with its systems of logic. Just as the divisions on the left have led to factionalism and intellectual civil wars, the right has been waging wars over the questions of anti-Semitism, racism, free trade, immigration, foreign policy and the role of the state. The logic is alien to those coming from a liberal or left-critical perspective, which is why it is so commonly derided, but to understand the ideology, it must be understood imminently.

### **What makes the Alternative Right so new?**

At first, glance based on media and cultural osmosis, the Alternative Right appears to be a collection of poorly constructed and contradictory arguments, relying on the same traditional arguments espoused by right-wing politicians since the Second World War, though nothing could be farther from the case. What parallels the Alternative Right has with the conservative movement after the Second World War are limited to a handful of authors who are interpreted against the political consensus of Buckley and the *National Review* consensus.<sup>44</sup> Even an influential figure such as James Burnham is read due to his influence on Patrick Buchanan rather than his influence on Buckley.<sup>45</sup> The contemporary Alt-Right has more in common with the anti-communist Birchers than they do with the intellectual movement emerging out of the *National Review* in the post-war era.

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<sup>44</sup> George H Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America: Since 1945*, Kindle (Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2014), 1010.

<sup>45</sup> David Neiwert, *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*, Kindle (London: Verso, 2017), 5874.

The movement is a reactionary revolution responding to the shortcomings and isolation of the neoliberal system of globalization. The Alternative Right argues for an end to the multiculturalism and anti-nationalistic elements of globalization in the name of xenophobic self-determination. The Alternative Right even goes so far as to argue that freedom is incompatible with democracy both domestically and internationally. For the NeoReactionaries in the Alternative Right, freedom is the ability to exit a system one disagrees with.<sup>46</sup> Therefore global accords which limit national sovereignty or anti-hate speech laws are only legitimate if one accepts the choice to live under them. A system of politics in which people can willingly relocate without a sense of defined place is only possible within a post-globalized world where escape and exile are no longer taboo. By opting out of the system, and going Gault, (where one acts as the character John Gault in *Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand and abandons society when it no longer suits their interests)<sup>47</sup> the Alternative Right reject the totality of globalization and humanism. While the Alternative Right cannot escape the influences of conservatism completely, it is not neoliberalism with white supremacy, or libertarianism with populism, but rather a distinctly new paradigm for understanding politics.

One of the primary ways in which the Alternative Right is unique has been its use of concepts and theories borrowed from critical academics (that is the illiberal left). While many critical theorists have drawn upon authors traditionally ascribed to the right for inspiration, such as Michel Foucault<sup>48</sup> or Gilles Deleuze<sup>49</sup> through their rehabilitation of Friedrich Nietzsche, this is not the case for American conservatism. The mainstream conservative right has mostly ignored

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<sup>46</sup> Land, "The Dark Enlightenment"; Michael Anissimov, "How to Exit," *Medium*, June 2016.

<sup>47</sup> Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged* (New York: Random House, 1957).

<sup>48</sup> Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Hommage a Jean Hyppolite*, 1971, 145–72, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2905802>.

<sup>49</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, ed. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

the contributions of left-wing scholars since the Second World War, as the mass migration of left-wing theorists to the American conservative moment occurred in the aftermath of the Second World War and the horrors of Stalinism.<sup>50</sup> An example of this expropriation of left-wing thought and the use of the ideas of the co-option of the struggle of position, public intellectuals and a critic of hegemony found within the work of Antonio Gramsci defines the French New Right.<sup>51</sup>

Another trap to avoid is to assume that the reactionary ideas of the Alternative Right could be resolved if they were simply to abandon racial consciousness and embrace class consciousness. One left-wing reading of the NeoReactionary branch of the Alternative Right movement is that it is an incomplete Marxist analysis of political and economic power within the world. Peter Sandifer's *Neoreaction a Basilisk* even goes as far as to argue that Mencius Molberg (real name Curtis Yarvin),<sup>52</sup> the founder of the NeoReactionary movement, is only one step removed from Marxism, due to his reading of Yarvin's as one of global class struggle. However, Yarvin refuses to go the extra step and draw that connection, instead focusing on the cultural superstructure rather than the economic superstructure.<sup>53</sup> The unacknowledged influence is not Karl Marx but James Burnham's idea of the managerial class.<sup>54</sup> Despite Sandifer's suggestion, Yarvin and the rest of the Alternative Right are opposed to a Marxist reading of society, they may discuss the role of super-structures governing politics, but nowhere within the Alternative Right will you find a Marxist or socialist class analysis. The motivating factor for the Alternative Right's populism, according to its authors, is cultural conflict against cultural elites, not economic ones. This resentment is unsurprising, Yarvin, like many in the Alternative Right, comes from an amateur

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<sup>50</sup> Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America: Since 1945*, 300.

<sup>51</sup> Bar-on, *Where Have All the Fascists Gone?*, 5.

<sup>52</sup> Peter Sandifer, *Neoreaction a Basilisk*, eBook (Danbury, CT: Eruditorum Press, 2016), 43.

<sup>53</sup> Land, "The Dark Enlightenment"; Gio Pennacchietti, "The Foucauldian Cathedral," *Thermidor*, September 2017.

<sup>54</sup> James Burnham, *The Managerial Revolution: What Is Happening in the World*, Kindle Edi (Endeavour Media, 2019).

political theory tradition, relying on forums rather than graduate seminars.<sup>55</sup> Yarvin's formal education is in computer science, while his political theory is autodidactic, following the tradition of other autodidactic right-wing thinkers such as Julius Evola.<sup>56</sup> The result of this autodidactic theory is a fixation on a select bibliography which helps fuel an ideological rather than disciplinary echo chamber.<sup>57</sup>

One thing that interpretations of the Alternative Right which focus on populism ignore is the heritage of the Alternative Right's intellectuals as the outcasts of the academic system. The online forums of the Alternative Right originated in cultural critiques of mass media, rather than forums to discuss economic and systemic inequality. Curtis Yarvin is not trained as a philosopher, but his works have inspired a substantial body of online literature. Even those within the Alternative Right with intellectual pedigree, such as Nick Land,<sup>58</sup> have been removed from the traditional system of academic publication and publish their work online. While not explicitly banned from academics, the movement has established itself outside of the western academic environment, publishing in parallel journals and exploiting the shortcomings of the system to adapt to the 21<sup>st</sup> century digital community. Even though documents such as *The Dark Enlightenment* may have limited readership, it far surpasses many essays published in academic journals locked behind paywalls.

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<sup>55</sup> Colin Lecher, "Alt-Right Darling Mencius Moldbug Wanted to Destroy Democracy. Now He Wants to Sell You Web Services," *The Verge* (New York, February 2017).

<sup>56</sup> Griffin, *A Fascist Century: Essays by Roger Griffin*, 2008, 164.

<sup>57</sup> A NeoReactionary reading list may contain an extensive list of authors, but it lacks pluralism and divergent methodological and theoretical techniques. A single popular historiography can dominate intellectual debates, with the chief reading being biological determinism understood without context or critique from existing literature.

<sup>58</sup> Ian Tuttle, "The Racist Moral Rot at the Heart of the Alt-Right," *National Review*, April 5, 2016; Andy Beckett, "Accelerationism: How a Fringe Philosophy Predicted the Future We Live In," *The Guardian*, May 11, 2017.

The simultaneous creation of a new political canon for the Alternative Right through online publications and reading lists containing a mixture of recognized political theorists and online commentaries has created a parallel space for Right-Wing political education. This non-disciplinary space is a Foucauldian heterotopia where taboo political theory can exist without hegemonic pressure.<sup>59</sup> This parallel space for political theory is all the more enticing as the cost of American university education has risen while the prospects for liberal-arts graduates have fallen.<sup>60</sup> While the left-wing critiques of academic spaces by figures such as Pierre Bourdieu<sup>61</sup> have been well received academically, they have not resulted in widespread academic change within the institutions of universities. The internet has allowed the dissemination of reading lists and texts for Far-Right thought, not only for those who are actively searching for these documents but also for many who stumble upon them accidentally. The content of a Far-Right blog post is appraised based on the number of views, shares, and references to it, all of which occur after it has been published, in contrast, the journal process for academics appraises the document before the public interaction. While peer review is an essential element to maintaining academic authority and the convention. The process of academic publishing is nonetheless disciplinary in its exclusion of dissenting perspectives. The canonical texts of the Alternative Right are therefore not located within official published mainstream academic journals but instead found openly on blogs and in both digital and physical bookstores. By evacuating the academic space, the Alternative Right has evolved outside of the existing ideological structure of academic political discourse drawing upon

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<sup>59</sup> Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias," *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité*, 1984, 46–49.

<sup>60</sup> Elizabeth Currid-Halkett, *The Sum of Small Things: A Theory of the Aspirational Class* (New York: Princeton University Press, 2017).

<sup>61</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus*, ed. Peter Colier (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

a non-academic readership to expand their numbers. The result is not only a new political ideology but a new way of writing political theory.

The initial difficulty facing academics investigating the Alternative Right from a critical theory perspective is the lack of existing philosophical investigations of the Far-Right. Any political theory investigation requires reading an almost entirely new canon without substantial secondary literature to draw upon, and what secondary literature that exists provides limited case studies. Left-wing activists and scholarship prefer researching anti-fascist/racist/sexist strategies rather than a critical examination of the primary literature of the Far-Right.<sup>62</sup> Nuanced readings of the Far-Right are given little intellectual respect from left-wing publications<sup>63</sup>, except the American journal *Telos* which devoted issues to the topic in the 1990s.<sup>64</sup> Liberal to left-wing publications rely on labelling the Alternative Right as Nazis and sensationalizing their positions to isolate them from the broader public. This tactic would have been useful fighting the last intellectual war against rising white supremacy found within the paleoconservative movement during the 1990s, and that was what William F. Buckley Jr. did to take down Pat Buchanan's right-wing insurgency within the Republican party,<sup>65</sup> explicitly attacking the anti-Semitism within American conservatism. Unfortunately for those opposing the Alternative Right, that will not cut it in the present; the Alternative Right cannot be dismissed as merely white nationalists, they are not cartoonish National Socialists. They know how to play by the postmodern deconstructionist and discursive playbook in response to language policing by liberal websites. The tactic of exploiting the postmodern incredulity for metanarratives and universal truths has already been

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<sup>62</sup> Mark Bray, *Antifa: The Antifascist Handbook*, Kindle (New York: Melville House, 2017).

<sup>63</sup> Osita Nwanevu, "There's No Better Term for the Alt-Right than Alt-Right," *Slate*, 2016; ThinkProgress, "Editors' Note: ThinkProgress Will No Longer Describe Racists as 'Alt-Right,'" *ThinkProgress*, November 2016.

<sup>64</sup> Gottfried, "Alain de Benoist's Anti-Americanism."

<sup>65</sup> Neiwert, *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*, 3563.

implemented by United Russia for over a decade when officials addressed western journalists critiquing their anti-democratic politics.<sup>66</sup> By rejecting the term Alt-Right in favour of most sensationalist terminology, the left-wing and mainstream media are allowing the Alt-Right to be considered an un-American aberration, presenting the influence of European theorists and governments as a contagion infecting American liberalism, rather than acknowledging the development of the American specific characteristics of the Alternative Right removed from most foreign influence.

### **The Elements of the Philosophy of the Alternative Right**

While the Alternative Right is not a monolith, it holds to three unified axioms. Two it shares with the European New Right, and the third it takes from its American political theory legacy. As Tamir Bar-On explains in his work on the de Benoist and the European New Right, the European New Right is defined by its focus on the cultural metapolitics and “the right to difference.”<sup>67</sup> Cultural metapolitics is a focus on culture as the primary site of political conflict, in contrast to Liberals focusing on legal rights, the Libertarian fixation on the market or Marxists being primarily concerned with class as the primary site of political conflict. The second is the “right to difference,” in which racial and cultural groups have the right to maintain a segregated and preserved identity in the face of homogenous globalization.<sup>68</sup> The implications of this second point range from an anti-imperialistic and anti-colonial politics of isolationism, to full-fledged genocidal campaigns of exclusion and extermination of minority groups. The third foundational value, which separates the Anglosphere Alternative Right from the European New Right, is the

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<sup>66</sup> Vladislav Surkov, *Texts 1997-2010* (London: Book on Demand Ltd., 2013).

<sup>67</sup> Bar-on, *Rethinking the French New Right*.

<sup>68</sup> This can range from segregated political and digital communities purposing a white ethno-state.

maintenance of individualism within a hierarchical socio-political framework. The principle of individual agency is maintained, despite a categorical rejection of equality and *tabula rasa*. Differences between humans are taken as a given and not something that should be corrected; not all humans should be treated or considered equal according to the Alternative Right, this extends to both individuals and larger social groups. There are no universal liberal human rights other than the right to power within the Alternative Right. These three values extend to justify the differences between the Alternative Right and other political ideologies. Beyond these three values, the Alternative Right shares a series of traits including a shared understanding of class, decentralization, anti-modernist culture, anti-democratic theory, racism or at the least a tolerance of racism, sexism and discrimination, free-speech and rejection of Christian moralism. While not all groups within the Alternative Right share identical or even complimentary traits, these values reflect the assemblage of the Alternative Right positions within the Anglosphere.

***Class: The Tale of Two Rabbles***

The Alternative Right articulates a coherent understanding of class, predicated on the rejection of society's two rabbles. One of the most effective tools to understanding the Alternative Right, and what makes it different from that of conservative political theory, is its disdain for both the rich and poor rabble,<sup>69</sup> rather than just the poor. The rabble is a concept posited by Hegel within *The Philosophy of Right* to describe those who are disconnected from the shared society of the state, the excess of either rabble will lead to the corruption and collapse of the state. The poor rabble, those unable to meet society's material prerequisites, are alienated from society and are unfree. The second set of the rabble, that of the rich, are alienated from the social life of the state

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<sup>69</sup> G.W.F Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen Wood, 20th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 454.

because they have no desire to participate in the state, the rich rabble can afford to buy their way out of the social obligations of the state. The result of this disconnect, poverty and wealth, results in the corruption of civil society. Whereas conservatives dismiss the poor rabble for their outsider status eroding at the state, due to their inability to contribute, and Marxists critique the rich rabble for their alienation from the state and the general population, the Alternative Right finds both groups to be the detriment of society. The “Cuckservatives” and cosmopolitan cultural elites that compose the rich rabble neglect the responsibilities of the social elite to maintain traditional values,<sup>70</sup> stressing masculinity and *noblesse oblige* in the face of tolerance and multiculturalism.<sup>71</sup> Just as the immigrants and minority groups have no part in society as they corrupt the status quo of white society, the rich rabble of cosmopolitan elites, in the eyes of the Alt-Right, sells out the purity of white society for short-term profit.

For the Alternative Right, the modern industrial society is unequal and fixated on the greed of elites who abandon social responsibility in favour of profits, while the increasing immigrant population prevents the remainder of the population from gaining from the increased production of the elites. The capitalist system corrupts the moral economy of society, levelling the function of aristocratic cultural elites. As Nick Land points out in the *Dark Enlightenment*, capitalism is currently incompatible with the cultural responsibilities of wealth,<sup>72</sup> or as Hegel would describe it “The rich man thinks that he can buy anything because he knows himself as the power of the particularity of self-consciousness. Thus wealth can lead to the same mockery and shamelessness

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<sup>70</sup> Weigel, “Cuckservative - the Conservative Insult of the Month, Explained.”

<sup>71</sup> The term cuck refers to men who derive sexual pleasure from their partners (typically wives) having sex with other men with their own knowledge and consent. The term Cuckservative is used by members of the Alt-Right to describe conservative politicians who are cucking white American society by encouraging illegal immigration for short term profits. The term became increasingly popular when the Republican party leadership made a forced pivot towards inclusive immigration after the failure of the 2012 election, this policy was poorly received by the rank and file membership.

<sup>72</sup> Land, “The Dark Enlightenment.”

that we find in the poor rabble.”<sup>73</sup> The key to conservative moralism is the patriarchal morality of the economic and social elites to guide society as an example, yet their fixation on profit and wealth distances these figures from their moral authority; this, in turn, brings us to why the “Cuckservative” is the subject of scorn as much as the immigrant within Alternative Right literature. This bifurcated rabble is at the heart of what defines the Alternative Right’s populism; it is a movement centred around the manufactured concept of “the people” which rejects the dual rabbles of the poor immigrant and the alienated liberal elite. Figures on the Far-Right like Samuel Francis understood that so long as capitalist interests among elites dominate the political economy, there would be no room for a politics of white nationalism.<sup>74</sup> The economic interests of the economic elites would support immigration, which would increase the size of the “rabble,” diluting the influence and core of the American state and its white supremacist traditions.

Populism, rather than being a political tool for mass politics or as a thin-centred ideology, should be understood as a core ideological position within the Alt-Right that has emerged out of a philosophical critique of liberal universalism and the dream of a society removed from class. Additionally, this understanding of class is fundamentally at odds with a left-wing populist project which would argue for the inclusion of the poor rabble into the body politics through class consciousness. For the Alt-Right populist, there is no inclusion of the corrupting influence of the poor or rich rabble, only the reification of the *true* people through racial class consciousness.

### ***Here, There and Everywhere: Deterritorialization***

The Alternative Right and the groups who support the Alternative Right rely on the concept of deterritorialization as a political strategy. Coming from the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix

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<sup>73</sup> Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, 454.

<sup>74</sup> Samuel T. Francis, *Essential Writings on Race*, ed. Jared Taylor, Kindle (New Century Foundation, 2007).

Guattari,<sup>75</sup> deterritorialization is the conception of political, economic and social reality removed from a geographical understanding of community and politics. The practices of a locale are removed from their place of origin and removed from a specific spatial definition. The Tory conservatism of the UK and Canada and the Jeffersonian liberalism that dominated American political thought has failed to respond to the impact of deterritorialization on geographically isolated or alienated communities. The urbanization and centralization of economic, cultural and technological growth within world cities such as New York or Toronto further a cosmopolitan and globalized economy of pluralistic cities. In contrast, the exurbs and rural areas see a population decline, due to decreasing birth rates, urban flight by college-educated youth, low rates of immigration and deindustrialization. The political values of these world cities, in the eyes of the non-liberal cultural-right, establish what can and cannot be said within the geographic and economic hinterlands, which in turn believe that they have no say in the cultural discourse within urban centres.

The Alternative Right has responded to this geographic cultural alienation in two ways, the first being a doubling down on regionalism and isolationism. The work of the Russian political theorist Alexander Dugin is an example of this,<sup>76</sup> focusing on a return to regionalism stressing a politics of culture and the right to difference, like that of the “Clash of Civilizations” argument put forward by Samuel Huntington.<sup>77</sup> Whereas Huntington focused on presenting a new way to understand the coming multi-polar world of international politics, Dugin validates the civilizational project as essential to ending American hegemony. Both authors see civilization

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<sup>75</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, Second Edi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

<sup>76</sup> Alexander Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory*, Ebook (London: Akros Media, 2012), 142.

<sup>77</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?,” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 22, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20045621>.

rather than globalization as the likely outcome of the current pax-Americana, but Dugin despises the American influence on world politics as homogenizing. Theories of the Far-Right like Dugin's often draw upon Deleuze and Foucault to explain the internal failings of the liberal ideological hegemony, rather than embracing a class-based analysis. By retreating from the globalized space and opting out of the global economy through the reduction of immigration and protectionist economic measures, traditional values and culture can reappear. The policy of these members of the Alternative Right argue for a return to a romantic pre-modern system of cultural, religious and ethnic organization of world politics.

It should come as no surprise that many White Nationalists who value racial purity in their communities see only retreat as an option, moving to isolated states in the American heartland away from multicultural cities. They deterritorialized themselves in contrast to earlier blood and soil movements and embraced an exodus to promised lands in rural Montana or New Hampshire to establish white only communities.<sup>78</sup> This willingness to abandon land separates the devoted white nationalists in North America from the relatively static European Identitarians who are limited to the confines of their European nations and ancestral communities.

The second way the Alternative Right has responded has been to embrace the deterritorialization of post-modernity. The technologically minded members of the Alternative Right see deterritorialization as a way to imagine a society akin to the internet communities where it was founded. A digital community has no physical space yet exists on a global scale. The values of a group can be preserved without the imposition of external bodies policing their values and

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<sup>78</sup> Lombroso, *Rebranding White Nationalism: Inside Richard Spencer's Alt-Right*.

individualism. As the existing digital communities exist in segregated online forums, there is no need for a uniform policy.

A consequence of this deterritorialized mindset is that the demographics and locations of the Alternative Right are challenging to pin down. If the Alternative Right were synonymous and perfectly correlated with Trump voters, it would be as easy as reading a map of the electoral college, but this is not the case. Many members of the Alternative Right can be found in heavily Democratic urban centres,<sup>79</sup> and the consistent presence of the Alternative Right supporters in Berkeley suggests that one finds these groups inhabiting the same physical spaces as leftist radicals.<sup>80</sup> While little polling or demographic research exists on the Alt-Right as of writing, based on the locations of authors and group leaders, the Alt-Lite, NeoReactionaries and Grey Tribe members tend to be found within cosmopolitan urban centres, while the White Nationalists are more likely to be found within the rust-belt or the American south.

### ***Anti-Modernist and Anti-Enlightenment***

A consistent element of the Alternative Right is its rejection of the liberal enlightenment project of modernity. The Alternative Right takes a very reactionary reading of modernity and the enlightenment project, which they connect with global financial capital, liberalism, military imperialism and globalization. The Enlightenment is an incredibly broad intellectual tradition that has inspired or influenced most Western political ideologies (liberalism, conservatism and Marxism). Critiquing the enlightenment is nothing new, almost every non-enlightenment thinker has responded to the legacy of the enlightenment, from post-colonial authors to post-modern

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<sup>79</sup> Bokhari and Yiannopoulos, “An Establishment Conservative’s Guide to the Alt-Right.”

<sup>80</sup> Scott Alexander, “Reactionary Philosophy in an Enormous, Planet-Sized Nutshell,” Slate Star Codex, 2013, <http://slatestarcodex.com/2013/03/03/reactionary-philosophy-in-an-enormous-planet-sized-nutshell/>.

leftists to the current Alternative Right. The Alternative Right's rejection of modernity has taken two distinct routes; one is the isolationist desire to return to a pastoral society of racial and cultural enclaves within a diverse and non-globalized world, and the second is technological accelerationism. Modernity's totalizing project of globalization and enlightenment reason eliminates cultural differences in the eyes of many Alternative Right theorists. The pre-modern society's hierarchical society allowed for stability. Under pre-modern feudalism, society is transparent and ordered, while modernity is, in contrast, an opaque and chaotic system. When the hierarchy of society is codified and established, one can live in relative isolation under a stable regime rather than live through anxiety generated by capitalistic creative destruction. This logic maintains the existing reactionary and deeply conservative theories, typically drawing upon theorists such as Burke<sup>81</sup> or Oswald Spengler.<sup>82</sup> For the White Nationalist, white only society in rural Montana would allow for stable pastoral society, though a band-aid solution ultimately for only the most radical, as the NeoReactionary Michael Anissimov pointed out.<sup>83</sup>

The second response to modernity is to "Ride the Tiger"<sup>84</sup> and double down on modernization and focus on a post-modern society of digital communities. Akin to Marxists accelerating capitalism to bring about its destruction, the Alternative Right imagines that accelerating modernity is a solution to the hyper-competitive global world. One of the main influences on the Alternative Right is evolutionary theory, the development of human society is, in the eyes of the New Atheists of the Alternative Right, a continuation of the problem of evolutionary biology. Cooperation and equality, especially tolerance for those with "inferior"

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<sup>81</sup> Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London: James Dodsley and Paul Mall, 1790).

<sup>82</sup> Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, Vintage; R (Vintage, 2006).

<sup>83</sup> Michael Anissimov, "Why There Are No White Nationalists," *Medium*, June 2016.

<sup>84</sup> Evola, *Ride the Tiger: A Survival Manual for the Aristocrats of the Soul*.

genes retard the evolution of humanity as a whole. This ideology is modern day social Darwinism, but rather than fixate on racial traits, and phrenology, decontextualized genetic tests under the name of “human biodiversity” are used to claim that society is artificially suppressing evolution and development. The existing system does not work efficiently and therefore needs to be accelerated through the process of creative destruction, highlighting the contradictions of the system so that they will inevitably be destroyed and replaced with more effective outcomes. The eventual outcome would be the end of the current system of modernity, which would be replaced with a system of neo-feudalism, based on neo-corporatism, which could, according to Yarvin and Faye, maintain long-term cultural and ecological stability.<sup>85</sup>

### *Anti-liberal Democratic Consensus*

The Alternative Right’s most significant departure from the European New Right is its anti-democratic stance. European New Right thinkers and political parties challenge the existing democratic system as ineffective and corrupt, which is nothing unique, even the most adamant liberal democracy theorists would accept that there are shortcomings with the system. In contrast to a reformist position, the Alternative Right views democracy as incompatible with personal freedom. Peter Thiel, the Silicon Valley billionaire, after reading Curtis Yarvin’s NeoReactionary critiques of democracy has gone so far as to state that democracy and individual freedom are incompatible publicly.<sup>86</sup> Some NeoReactionaries go so far as wishing for an absolutist Jacobite monarchy, with a CEO as a king with absolute control over the state.<sup>87</sup> The democratic system, in

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<sup>85</sup> Curtis Yarvin, “A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations (Part 1),” Unqualified Reservations, 2009, <https://unqualified-reservations.blogspot.ca/2009/01/gentle-introduction-to-unqualified.html>; Faye, *Archeofuturism: European Visions of Post-Catastrophic Age*.

<sup>86</sup> Peter Thiel, “The Education of a Libertarian,” *Cato Unbound* (Washington DC, April 2009).

<sup>87</sup> With the caveat that the King can be repealed like a CEO, and that all members of society are given tradable voting shares representing the stock of political and cultural power of the state.

the eyes of NeoReactionaries, the European New Right, White Nationalists and the members Grey Tribe, fails to protect against the domination of the majority against the minority, fetishizes the protection of minority interest groups at the expense of the system and leads to ever-increasing political corruption. The Alternative Right understands democracy as an imposition on the liberty of the individual to exercise their identity in the face of both external cultural expectations and regulations, and the increasing surveillance state apparatus. The Alternative Right contains a substantial number of critiques of democracy, ranging from its failure to provide long-term solutions to problems that cannot be solved during an election cycle to the imposition of cultural values through majoritarian legislation enforcing emancipatory human rights legislation that rejects dissenting hate speech.

Even the strategy of the Alternative Right seeks to reject democracy. Drawing upon Vladislav Surkov's idea of sovereign democracy<sup>88</sup> the Alternative Right has actively undermined the concept of democracy as a legitimate system of governance, ideas that Steven Bannon and Peter Thiel latched onto. Campaigning on the idea that elected officials are career politicians who abuse a corrupt system is nothing new. Surkov and the Alternative Right's political strategy relies on left-wing critiques to legitimate right-wing claims that liberal democracy is ineffective and unfair.<sup>89</sup> Surkov's response to Western journalists decrying the democracy in Russia as unfair and structurally problematic was to read Western academics critiquing Western democracies with the same language that the journalists used to decry Russian democracy. This logical fallacy slight of hand is the precursor to the political tactic par excellence within the Alternative Right, calling factual critiques "Fake News!" Even though Western democracies are far more liberal and

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<sup>88</sup> Surkov, *Texts 1997-2010*.

<sup>89</sup> Thomas B. Edsall, "Democracy Can Plant the Seeds of Its Own Destruction," *The New York Times*, October 19, 2017.

transparent than that of Russia, the journalist is now forced to factually discredit someone who is relying on affective imagery to prove a point.<sup>90</sup> While one party is taking things literally and factually, the other is focusing on the affective image, pointing out the simulacra of post-modern politics and media coverage, the result is two ships passing in the night which never engage each other.<sup>91</sup> When Trump began to discredit the presidential election as rigged, it was easy to respond with empirical facts, but it was difficult to impossible to discredit the aesthetic and affective truth in his statements. Despite decades of statistics to back up racial inequality, the failures of tough on crime legislation, and employment statistics used by liberal and progressive politicians and commentators, the lived experience of an individual will hold more political sway. Trump's efforts to undermine the results of the election before his presumed loss is an excellent example of this, despite no evidence to suggest widespread voter fraud it received substantial media coverage.<sup>92</sup>

### ***Racism: beyond the dog whistle***

The Alternative Right almost universally embraces racism or racialized politics.<sup>93</sup> Rather than implied white supremacy, white nationalists within the Alternative Right such as Richard Spencer argue for white identity politics as Identitarians; embracing White Nationalism rather than White Supremacy is a shift away from the current tradition of racial politics within the American Right since the civil rights movement. While the Republican right has relied on a dog whistle strategy known more commonly as the "southern strategy" since Nixon's 1968 campaign,<sup>94</sup> it has avoided

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<sup>90</sup> Green, *Devil's Bargain: Steve Bannon, Donald Trump, and the Storming of the Presidency*.

<sup>91</sup> Jon Ronson, *The Elephant in the Room: A Journey into the Trump Campaign and the "Alt-Right,"* Kindle (Amazon, 2016); Green, *Devil's Bargain: Steve Bannon, Donald Trump, and the Storming of the Presidency*.

<sup>92</sup> Green, *Devil's Bargain: Steve Bannon, Donald Trump, and the Storming of the Presidency*.

<sup>93</sup> Peter Thiel and Nick Land, both reject the outright racism of the Alt-Right, even figures such as Milo Yiannopoulos or Steven Bannon reject an explicit racist identifier. While they use less than coded language to discuss immigrants as enemies, you don't see them advocating for race science and genocide. This is arguably a very low bar, and only in comparison to Klansmen and Neo-Nazis do they come across as even remotely tolerant.

<sup>94</sup> Zeskind, *Blood and Politics: The History of the White Nationalist Movement from the Margins to the Mainstream*; Neiwert, *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*.

outright policies of black genocide or White Nationalism. White Nationalist movements, either during the civil rights movement or Pat Buchanan's Republican Primary attempts, have been dismissed as fringe elements of mainstream conservatism and were isolated by figures like William F. Buckley Jr. During Theda Skocpol's interviews with Tea-Party members for her book on the Tea Party the phrase "I am not racist but..." was used extensively to argue for racialized claims and opinions by Tea Party members who actively distance themselves from understanding themselves as racist. In contrast to this dog-whistle politics, the Alternative Right openly embraces the racist label, many on the Alternative Right explicitly state "I am a racist."<sup>95</sup>

Even the racist politics of white supremacists and violence against people of colour are not enough for some members of the Alternative Right. NeoReactionary author Michael Anissimov<sup>96</sup> called out white supremacists in 2016 for not going far enough; it is not enough in his opinion to engage in racial politics to suppress people of colour, to engage in White Nationalism one needs to live in white only communities and exclude minorities. According to Michael Anissimov, there are white supremacists, but those who wish to form a solely white nation are either few in number or unwilling to actively engage in these politics by moving to white only communities.<sup>97</sup> The White Nationalists are therefore smaller in number than the broader community of racists, the act of living in a purely white community is challenging, requiring strong motivations that do not exist already. Which is why genocide, when discussed by the Alternative Right is dismissed, not for being morally wrong, but rather for its political inconvenience and impracticality, if they cannot convince

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<sup>95</sup> Neiwert, *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*, 1479.

<sup>96</sup> Anissimov, "Why There Are No White Nationalists."

<sup>97</sup> Matthew N. Lyons, "The Alt-Right Hate Women as Much as It Hates People of Colour," *The Guardian*, May 2, 2017.

millions of people to move to all white communities, how can they convince tens of millions to commit genocide, which is far more personally dangerous and more difficult.

The serious, “stoic” racism of earlier far-right movements stands in contrast with the more playful or comedic rhetorical racism of the Alternative Right. Stoic racism refers to the serious tone used by earlier generations of White Nationalists and supremacists, using their names rather than pseudonyms when addressing the public and demanding to be taken seriously by the press. The use of trolling by members of the Alternative Right, such as Lauren Southern, is one of the factors that separate the broader movement from the smaller ideologically dogmatic neo-Nazi and White Nationalist groups within the Alternative Right.<sup>98</sup> Someone like Andrew Anglin, the founder of the *Daily Stormer*,<sup>99</sup> lacks the ironic sense of humour or play found within the so-called “Alt-Lite” which is occupied by political actors who capture the right-wing public through charm rather than fear. The Alternative Right relies on absurdly racist memes that are often so racist that they can be presented as a “joke.” A member of the Alternative Right may post a photo of a cartoon frog wearing a MAGA hat and a Nazi armband because it is so crass that it is meant to shock the “normies” but hide behind the “it is only a joke” defence if pushed. This “comedic” sensibility comes both from internet culture, on boards such as 4Chan and South Park, which justifies their crass humour as “making fun of everyone equally.” The result is a win-win situation for the broader Alternative Right, either they normalize highly racist jokes they consider “edgy” or the media backlash can be spun to criticize the liberal media or establishment as being too uptight, limiting their “free-speech.” It does not matter if the joke is not “funny” and *actually* hate speech; the results are the same for the movement. This outright racism contrasts with the more popular dog whistle

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<sup>98</sup> Joel Brendan Kelley, “Lauren Southern: The Alt-Right’s Canadian Dog Whistler,” Southern Poverty Law Center, 2017, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2017/11/07/lauren-southern-alt-right’s-canadian-dog-whistler>.

<sup>99</sup> Luke O’Brien, “The Making of an American Nazi,” *The Atlantic* (New York, December 2017).

politics of the mainstream conservative movement where a subtle racist/sexist/offensive reference is hidden as an implicit code that can be waved off if called out as unintentional, the Alternative Right joke, in contrast, is meant to be so absurd that no one can question its intention.

### ***Anti-Feminism and Free Speech***

The Alternative Right sees mainstream conservatism's anti-feminism and oppressive anti-minority politics and doubles down. While the Republican party and mainstream conservatism is no fan of feminism, it does not outright proclaim its hatred of women as a defining characteristic of its ideology. The Alt-Right has discouraged female participation and at times barred them from discussions.<sup>100</sup> 4Chan, one of the primary sites for Alt-Right discussions, is infamous for the perpetuation and publishing of misogynistic content, regularly attacking the feminist community on Tumblr.<sup>101</sup> The Alt-Right is also closely tied to the "pick-up artist" community, who argue for tribalist male chauvinism, the manipulation of women into sex and misogyny.<sup>102</sup>

By proclaiming their hate speech as free speech the Alternative Right and its allies force centrist liberals and those who are dogmatically attached to universal free speech into a difficult choice. While judicial and legislative bodies define the specifics of free speech, the practical everyday fight over hate speech within online spaces and university campuses is a continuous struggle. The progressive left has prided itself with its adherence to free speech and civil liberties for decades, but the Alternative Right's use of discriminatory language that provokes hatred and violence under the guise of free speech undermines this legacy. The result is a catch-22, either the liberal-left shuts down hate speech fueling the resentment for left-wing culture and democracy, or

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<sup>100</sup> Lyons, "The Alt-Right Hate Women as Much as It Hates People of Colour."

<sup>101</sup> Angela Nagle, *Kill All Normies: Online Culture Wars from 4Chan and Tumblr to Trump and the Alt-Right*, Kindle (New York: Zero Books, 2017); Angela Nagle, "The Lost Boys," *The Atlantic* (New York, December 2017).

<sup>102</sup> Hawley, *Making Sense of the Alt-Right*.

the Alternative Right gets to advocate hate speech publicly and argue the same sentiments. The Alternative Right and Far-Right have regularly used individuals from various prominent identity groups to help support their cause. If the mantra is “representation matters” then the Alternative Right will present some token representatives to speak on behalf of entire populations (Jews, women or Queer men). Critical scholars and activists on the left will critique these choices to no end, but by doing so, they complicate the message that they are trying to present. A graduate student or professor with degrees in critical theory can probably tell the difference between the identity politics of a marginalized racial group and the racial supremacy of a white nationalist movement, but an outsider may be confused by the terminology of identity politics. The result becomes a twofold campaign, the first to further the mainstream acceptance of Alternative Right politics, and the second is to discredit the identity politics movement by suggesting false equivalencies.

The Alternative Right is exploiting the theory heavy rhetoric of identity politics as both a site of critique for political gain and to lampoon it within their texts. Despite the extensive non-academic support for movements such as Black Lives Matter (BLM), identity politics requires a historical understanding of the oppression of marginalized groups within society, one which can be challenging to grasp for those outside of the affected community. The intellectual one-upmanship of contemporary progressive culture leaves little space for those using out-dated terms or ideas such as “women’s studies” or “gay rights” opposed to “gender studies” or LGBTQ rights, those who use incorrect terminology are often publicly shamed on social media for their ignorance. The Alternative Right theory and practice undermine these progressive identity politics campaigns, by simply presenting an alternative position, no matter how obnoxious, such as All Lives Matter

(ALM) or the “Alt-Left.”<sup>103</sup> These terms, no matter how recently created and with no correlation to reality, provide a narrative of two-sided political conflict for the media to exploit. The use of the phrase ALM is a nefarious choice of discursive politics, as the name does not contradict the BLM name, but instead forces BLM to justify what its name means through technical language coming from the postcolonial and African American studies discourse.

### ***Rejection of Christian Moralism***

While many members of the Alternative Right are Christian, the movement is also home to a vast array of non-Christians who would have been excluded from the Christian dominated Tea Party or the Paleoconservative movement and treated with absolute scorn by the Christian Far-Right. The Protestant moralism of Christianity within America is marginal within the Alt-Right and the broader Alternative Right. Most of the prominent intellectuals in the movement take Nietzsche’s stance that Christianity is slave morality, or they adopt a new Atheist position influenced by Richard Dawkins or Sam Harris. The European New Right of Guillaume Faye or Alain de Benoist even goes so far as to call themselves pagans and oppose Christianity.<sup>104</sup>

While both Christian evangelicalism and the rest of the Alternative Right agree on many social concepts including the patriarchy, traditional family structure and marginalizing female agency, the rationale for these choices is often very different. For the non-Christian Alternative Right, the rationale for traditional values came from their long-term stability and proven track record, rather than their moral or historical values. For Faye, cultural values and especially

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<sup>103</sup> Kurtis Lee, “President Trump Says the ‘alt-Left’ Was Partly to Blame for the Violence at Charlottesville. Wait: What’s the Alt-Left?,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 17, 2017.

<sup>104</sup> Faye, *Archeofuturism: European Visions of Post-Catastrophic Age*; de Benoist and Champetier, *Manifesto For a European Renaissance*.

religious ones need to be evaluated rather than blindly accepted and passed on.<sup>105</sup> If we take abortion as an example of how the Alternative Right differs from the evangelical Christian morality found within the United States, we see a clear separation. Matthew Lyons argues that the White Nationalist perspective within the Alternative Right stresses its value within a eugenic politics against women of colour and the poor, as they believe that a disproportionate number of abortions come from these women,<sup>106</sup> this also provides the added benefit of eugenically disposing of “defective” white babies. There is no moral “pro-life” argument based on the sanctity of life. Abortion is, therefore, for the White Nationalists a tool of biological determinism to further an evolutionary understanding of White Nationalism, not a policy derived from the bible. From a social Darwinist position, abortion will help lead to the preservation of the white race and combat the demographic decline of the white population within the United States. Another perspective, coming from the *Freakonomics* readers within the Grey Tribe is that abortions reduce the number of babies born into poverty, which reduces the amount of crime in society and is, therefore, a net positive for society both reducing crime and the number of non-whites at the same time.<sup>107</sup> One argument that is absent from Alternative Right literature would be the sovereignty of a woman’s right to choose what happens to their own body, which is the argument of feminists, which the movement despises.

## **A Revolutionary Reactionary Movement**

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<sup>105</sup> The evolutionary value of these existing traditions is a like the difference between survival of the fittest in nature and a system of husbandry to produce a specific progeny. There is no guarantee that left to their own devices that human beings will pass on the right cultural values to the next generation.

<sup>106</sup> Nwanevu, “There’s No Better Term for the Alt-Right than Alt-Right.”

<sup>107</sup> Steven D Levitt, “Abortion and Crime: Who Should You Believe?,” *Freakonomics*, 2005, <http://freakonomics.com/2005/05/15/abortion-and-crime-who-should-you-believe/>.

The Alternative Right is not a new phase of the neoliberal tradition of right-wing conservatism in the United States, but instead a new reactionary ideology. The Alternative Right is a revolutionary movement; it expresses a new understanding of the world rather than merely presenting a series of reforms. Just as Thomas Kuhn describes revolutionary science through the creation of a new paradigm, ideology when merely reformist is a reasonable change adapting existing structures, making them more effective as a tool for shaping our social reality.<sup>108</sup> The Alternative Right demands the end of immigration and the expulsion of non-whites, not “immigration reform.” The Alternative Right supports incrementalism only in the court of public opinion by moving the Overton Window of acceptable discourse.

The political thought and practice of the Alternative Right is reactionary rather than conservative. Whereas conservative thought and practice is of slow reform and the maintenance of the status quo over the long term, reactionaries are fundamentally counter-revolutionaries responding to the changes to the system that have emerged during modernity. Starting with the response to the French Revolution in the 1790s and the concert of Europe, the reactionary platform has been one of organized resistance with a concentrated effort to “put the genie back in the bottle,” returning to a pre-revolutionary social order.<sup>109</sup> For the Alternative Right, there is a split between a passionate desire to return to a romantic and homogenous past and a technologically fixated desire to create a space for a white and male society that overcomes their perceived limitations with the multicultural society.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, ed. Ian Hacking, Fourth (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012).

<sup>109</sup> Corey Robin, *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 24.7.

<sup>110</sup> Land, “The Alt-Right Is Dead”; Anissimov, “Why the Replacement of Neoreaction with the Alt Right Was a Good Thing”; Spencer, “What It Means to Be Alt-Right.”

One of the essential elements of the Alternative Right cultural counter-revolution is its existence as an event which ruptures the *sensible* political reality rather than plastering over issues maintaining the status quo. The Alternative Right rejects the reformist platform in favour of advancing a new set of political and cultural norms that are sensationally unacceptable to suggest in mixed company. Therefore the policy failures of a right-wing populist like Donald Trump are acceptable if the ideas are widely discussed by the media, moving political discourse in line with the new vision of the future, one which redefines the American right-wing.<sup>111</sup> It does not matter if a Wall along the US Mexico border is built or not, so long as it makes it possible for politicians to argue for the end of all non-white immigration on mainstream news so that the next political candidate can fight for a white only state.

While the original use of the Overton Window framework was to expand public acceptance of libertarian free-market policy to replace public education, the Alternative Right has used it to redefine politics along a left-right cultural spectrum.<sup>112</sup> By redefining the right-left political spectrum in the United States along a cultural rather than economic spectrum, the Alternative Right can push for a consistent political project without being outflanked by the economically motivated right wing. The Overton window theory was initially applied to "economic" considerations like school choice; it is also obvious that these policies also have a white nationalist and supremacist backing as well. To have more school choice will, in practice in the United States, lead to legal segregation of racial groups, or at least that is what the white nationalists like Jared Taylor desire. Taylor spends much of his text *White Identity* on the role of school choice and white flight, where

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<sup>111</sup> Spencer, "What It Means to Be Alt-Right"; Bokhari and Yiannopoulos, "An Establishment Conservative's Guide to the Alt-Right."

<sup>112</sup> Nathan J. Russell, "An Introduction to the Overton Window of Political Possibilities," MacKinac Center, 2006, <https://www.mackinac.org/7504>.

that option is not available.<sup>113</sup> Even in the most economic application, the Overton window is used or (being very generous) subverted to further white supremacy. For the mainstream Republican party, this was a side benefit in the form of a dog whistle, but as the Alternative Right has risen to prominence within the American Right, these economic considerations now take a backseat to the racial elements of these policies. Therefore, replacing the right-wing economic reforms of the Republican party with a reactionary cultural revolution.

A revolution and its revolutionaries need not be emancipatory or progressive, as the Conservative Revolutionaries of Weimar Germany demonstrated.<sup>114</sup> Revolutions discussed within the liberal political theory canon respond to the political organization and ideologies of traditional social hierarchy, such as *The Rights of Man*.<sup>115</sup> Mussolini and Hitler both ascribed the Fascist and National Socialist movements as fundamentally revolutionary movements that provided an ideological break from the monarchist and aristocratic conservatism of earlier periods.<sup>116</sup> The Alternative Right puts forward a new understanding of politics post-globalization that is revolutionary rather than merely reformist or a reinstatement of fascist ideals, even though some members are self-ascribed as or labelled Neo-Nazis or Fascists.<sup>117</sup> One of the unifying features of Alternative Right theory is the presentation of a new radically different society for implementation during the revolutionary period caused by the collapse of western democracy or environmental catastrophe.

## **A New Reactionary Ideology**

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<sup>113</sup> Jared Taylor, *White Identity: Racial Consciousness in the 21st Century*, Kindle (New Century Foundation, 2011), sec. 600.

<sup>114</sup> Armin Mohler, *Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918-1932* (Germany: ARES Verlag, 2005).

<sup>115</sup> Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man, Common Sense and Other Political Writings*, Oxford Wor (London, 2008).

<sup>116</sup> M. E. Moss, *Mussolini's Fascist Philosopher* (Peter Lang Inc. International Academic Publishers, 2004).

<sup>117</sup> Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*.

As this chapter has demonstrated, the Alternative Right is a new ideology and a reactionary one. While the movement is populist and reactionary, intellectual concepts are not paper tigers. The logic is alien to the various enlightenment traditions, drawing from the anti-enlightenment theories of both the reactionary tradition and the post-modernist critiques of modernization. The Alternative Right is a distinct political ideology that draws upon a diverse body of non-conservative political theories, yet widespread discussion of the Alternative Right and its motivations keeps returning to inaccurate caricatures of the ideology rather than examining the foundations. As the Alternative Right focuses on 1) the right to difference 2) cultural metapolitics and 3) individualism within hierarchical politics, the combination of these axioms has no adequate populist or mainstream precursor within North American society, as the problems they address are those of a globalized world. The Alternative Right is also in its ideological infancy within the United States, we see no explicitly Alternative Right political parties in North America (as we currently see in Europe). Culturally the movement is still small, with a limited demographic base, but this may change as the rough edges are normalized. The movement's acceptance as merely a populist movement will be a trojan horse for the Alternative Right's ideology to become more widespread.

## **Chapter 2: Who is the Alternative Right?**

### **What is the Alt-Right minimum?**

While the second part of this text describes the various elements of the Alternative Right through comparative political theory, this chapter addresses the far more straightforward problem of what the Alternative Right is not. While most ideologies, political theorists and political agents are not included within the Alternative Right, several political movements and figures are popularly misunderstood as precursors or members of the Alt-Right and broader Alternative Right, this chapter will first address some misconceptions about the Alternative Right and how they engage in politics before addressing the three most common groups mislabeled as the Alt-Right; Donald Trump, Nazis, and the Tea-Party.

### **What defines the Alternative Right?**

To explain why the three groups have been mislabelled as Alt-Right, it is necessary to explore what makes the Alternative Right unique from mainstream conservatism and how it has developed within the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The most comprehensive analysis of who makes up the American Far Right, of which the Alt-Right is a specific, yet still diverse, branch, comes from Matthew Lyons's decades of research and specifically his text *Insurgent Supremacists*.<sup>118</sup> Lyons defines the American Far Right as "political forces that (a) regard human inequality as natural, inevitable, or desirable and (b) reject the legitimacy of the established political system."<sup>119</sup> Which when mixed with the definition of the European New Right by Tamir Bar-On, we get three core values for the American Alt-Right: 1) the right to difference, 2) the primacy of cultural

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<sup>118</sup> Matthew N. Lyons, *Insurgent Supremacists: The U.S. Far Right's Challenge to State and Empire*, Kindle (Oakland: PM Press, 2018).

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

metapolitics, and 3) hierarchical individualism and the subsequent rejection of existing liberal-democracy.<sup>120</sup>

From these three core values we can get something approaching fascism, but the two are not synonymous. If one accepts the definition of Fascism from Roger Griffin, “a palingenetic form of populist ultranationalism” then the Alternative Right can sometimes be understood as fascist,<sup>121</sup> especially when it comes from the voices of America First White Nationalists who venerate Trump with almost mythical fervor. Yet this group within the Alternative Right is not a majority, many of the figures within the Alternative Right are anti-populist, for example Nick Land’s highly elitist framework,<sup>122</sup> or they are ambivalent on the issue of nationalism, like Peter Thiel who actively rejects a nationalist political project. Those within the Alternative Right who are closest to the White Nationalist and populist groups are the most classically fascistic, while those who adopt the broader positions of the Alternative Right but reject the Alt-Right label tend to be less fascistic as they are less nationalist and populist. The connective tissue with fascism found within the entirety of Alternative Right thinking is the palingenesis of reactionary thought, which due to the political context of the globalization of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is embraced without classical fascism’s fixation on state-based ultranationalism.

While the rejection of liberal-democracy can be found across the European New Right and the rise of authoritarian populism, hierarchical individualism is far less prominent within European Far-Right discourse. The reason for its absence is due to the relatively weak tradition of libertarian thought within the old world. Americans and to a somewhat lesser extent, Canadians, are removed

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<sup>120</sup> Bar-on, *Where Have All the Fascists Gone?*, 5.

<sup>121</sup> Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, Kindle (Routledge, 1991), 117.

<sup>122</sup> Land, “The Alt-Right Is Dead.”

from the collective traditionalism of the European system (apart from Quebec and the American South which adopt more European political influences and the legacy of a slave society respectively).<sup>123</sup> The campaigns for “blood and soil” and the preservation of culture can be found more so in Quebec and the American South, while the more radical individualism of the Grey Tribe, NeoReactionaries and campus reactionaries tends to focus on biological determinism and other eugenics research rather than fixate on romantic histories. It is unclear as of 2019 if this will be smoothed out between the European and American Alternative Right, with the libertarian ideas of the American theorists merging with the quasi-feudalist and aristocratic reactionary thought of European theorists.

Lyons takes a humanizing approach to examining the American Far-Right, understanding their membership as human beings; this stands in contrast to how they are typically portrayed as monsters and fictionalized boogiemens; which dominates much of the left-wing and liberal approaches to the Far-Right.<sup>124</sup> These human beings are responding to structural pressures (even if not as "legitimate" as other forms of oppression in the eyes of most progressives) rather than merely unthinking pawns of capitalist leaders and Far-Right demagogues.<sup>125</sup> This methodology, which this text embraces, retains the humanity of the subject rather than imposing a dehumanizing perspective which views the members of the populist and far-right movements as the pawns of big capitalists suffering under false consciousness. This text also takes the position that the Far-Right (not necessarily the Alt-Right) is not just about white males being upset about race or gender.<sup>126</sup> The Alternative Right poses both an existential threat to the social democracy of western liberal-

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<sup>123</sup> Xavier Camus, “A Look at Far-Right Groups in Quebec,” *Canadian Dimension* 52, no. 4 (2018); Neiwert, *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*, sec. 496.5.

<sup>124</sup> Lyons, *Insurgent Supremacists: The U.S. Far Right's Challenge to State and Empire*, sec. 25.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

democracies and a visceral physical threat as its extremist wing murders ethnic minorities and women in acts of terrorist violence.<sup>127</sup>

There are two Alt-Rights, the first is the limited group of white nationalists that emerged in 2007 connected with Richard Spencer, they grew in popularity and reached a temporary crescendo in August of 2017 with Charlottesville, where they faced significant resistance. They are typically understood as the most radical members of the Far-Right. The second Alt-Right, the Alternative Right is the broader coalition of a new right-wing ideology, which is significantly more porous and rhizomatic. The Alternative Right is a constellation of different but associated political theories and practices which, while not goose-stepping to the beat of the same drum are all moving in more or less the same Far-Right direction. It is easy to lump these two groups together, but it would be a mistake to treat them as mutually inclusive or synonymous. The Alt-Lite, the Manosphere, NeoReactionaries, Grey Tribe techno-libertarians, traditionalists and other right-wing extremists do not share the same ideological positions but fit within either Tamir Bar-On's definition of the European New Right or Matthew Lyons' definition of the American Far-Right. The result is a spectrum of overlapping ideas which orbit around a core of radical Right-Wing ideas. Politically it is also necessary to acknowledge the difference between the Alt-Right and the Alternative Right, so that we can label Alternative Right figures such as Paul Gottfried or Nick Land, as members of the Alternative Right as they distance themselves from the Alt-Right subgroup, otherwise Far-Right thinkers could cloak themselves in technicalities and pedantic differences to maintain mainstream acceptability.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Jacob Siegel, "Dylann Roof, 4chan, and the New Online Racism," *The Daily Beast*, June 29, 2015; Alexander, "YouTube Creators Are Trying to Move on from 'Subscribe to PewDiePie.'"

<sup>128</sup> Paul Gottfried, "Don't Call Me the 'Godfather' of Those Alt-Right Neo Nazis. I'm Jewish," *National Post*, April 17, 2018; Land, "The Alt-Right Is Dead."

To demonstrate how the Alternative Right is not solely filled with White Nationalists who hate Jews, one needs to look no further than the technophilic and Men's Rights advocate wing of the Alternative Right. The technophilic groups known as the Grey Tribe, within the Alternative Right typically have little to do with the explicit white nationalist wing of the movement such as the Alt-Right, but it rejects the identity politics discourse of feminist and anti-racist movements. While rejecting reforms to the structural violence that perpetuates racial and sexist policies, the technophilic wing is highly apprehensive of outright white nationalism (though authors within the movement, such as Nick Land, suggest that this is one of public relations rather than moral compulsion).<sup>129</sup> White Nationalism, Neo-Nazism or terrorist attacks are not acceptable for many of the more moderate Alt-Lite members of the Alternative Right. While ranging from apathetic to supportive of racism, the technophilic wing known as the Grey Tribe has a very public and pronounced sexist framework, which they use to justify their hate speech against women and feminists. The technophilic wing of the Alt-Right, intimately connected with the American Tech sector, has intimidated, harassed and shamed female and feminist journalists who comment on the sexist elements of their "community." The prime example of this is the 2014 Gamergate controversy, in which a group of largely male "gamers" attacked female journalists commenting on sexism within the video game industry, many of the journalists, such as Anita Sarkeesian received death threats for their reporting.<sup>130</sup>

The Alternative Right can be read as a response to several different movements within the Anglosphere; the first, the globalized capitalism of neoliberalism; the second, the rise of post-positivist discourse within universities and popular culture; and the third, the acceleration of

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<sup>129</sup> Land, "The Dark Enlightenment."

<sup>130</sup> Matt Lees, "What Gamergate Should Have Taught Us about the 'Alt-Right,'" *The Guardian*, December 1, 2016.

technological change with a specific focus on automation and social media. Each of these areas defines the movement's scope and agenda. First, the response to globalization and neoliberalism, which is the most obvious to the news watching public. The movement's electoral success in 2016 was incredibly shocking for many left-wing commentators,<sup>131</sup> due to its success within traditionally centre-left or left-wing communities within the white working class, with the success of Brexit within the industrial towns in the UK known for supporting Labour and Trump's victories in the Midwest.<sup>132</sup>

Second, the response to the post-positivist and progressive culture on university campuses and throughout popular culture has resulted in a collective feeling of loss or encroachment within the traditional majority white and masculine spaces. While conservative figures have been furthering this narrative since at least William F. Buckley's *God and Man at Yale*, the shift since the 1990s has resulted in a rapid expansion in the number of non-white and non-male voices within mainstream media and universities (though still less than representative of the general population).<sup>133</sup> While traditional Burkean conservatism has been filled with intellectual figures such as William F Buckley or Winston Churchill, the anglophone right has seen a pronounced retreat from the academic and intellectual spaces.<sup>134</sup> As Richard Hofstadter stressed even within the 1960s, the American public rejected cosmopolitan intellectualism, and the electorally minded conservative intellectuals followed the course.<sup>135</sup> The neoconservative/neoliberal movements within the 1980s to the present only furthered this division. The rise of identity politics and the shift from positivist to post-positivist social science has challenged the traditional narratives of

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<sup>131</sup> Charlie Brooker, "Charlie Brooker's 2016 Wipe" (UK: BBC Two, 2016).

<sup>132</sup> David Goodhart, *The Road to Somewhere*, Kindle (London: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>133</sup> William F. Buckley Jr., *God and Man at Yale: The Superstitions of "Academic Freedom,"* 50th anniversary (Washington DC: Regnery Publishing Inc, 2002).

<sup>134</sup> Robert Gordon and Morgan Neville, *Best of Enemies: Buckley vs. Vidal* (USA: Trenolo Productions, 2015).

<sup>135</sup> Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Random House, 1963).

politics and Whig history. The historical narrative from the Far-Right has a long tradition stressing a narrative of decline, with reactionary authors like Thomas Carlyle and Oswald Spengler arguing a decline of the west since the 1800s.<sup>136</sup> These romantic interpretations of the past, reconstructing the narratives of Anti-Bellum south or pre-modern Europe have even less credibility within academic departments, yet they remain popular accounts of history for the left-behinds. Instead of using the academic spaces of their predecessors, the Far-Right has adopted the digital equivalent of the underground press of previous political movements by using internet message boards and independent publishers to spread their ideas. Many of the English language translations of the post-war (neo)-Fascist movements, such as Evola or Dugin, are found out of independent political publishing companies focusing on online distribution rather than mainstream publishing houses.<sup>137</sup> The result has been a retreat onto the internet where a parallel space has formed to create new Right-wing theories.

The conspiratorial work of Curtis Yarvin and the Alt-Right message boards which coordinated Gamergate explicitly focused on the perceived banishment of right-wing and libertarian thought from these public spaces.<sup>138</sup> While libertarian and mainstream conservatives were known for dog whistle politics, they rarely got away with outright racist remarks. The Alternative Right lacks none of the doublespeak, accelerating their hate speech under the guise of free speech with the goal of (de)-politicizing all media and academic spaces to prevent critical or minority perspectives from gaining traction.

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<sup>136</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic In History* (Project Gutenberg, 2008); Spengler, *The Decline of the West*.

<sup>137</sup> Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory*; Julius Evola, *A Handbook for Right-Wing Youth*, Kindle (London: Arktos, 2017).

<sup>138</sup> Yarvin, "A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations: Chapter 1: The Red Pill"; Lees, "What Gamergate Should Have Taught Us about the 'Alt-Right'"; Milo Yiannopoulos, "The Authoritarian Left Was on Course to Win the Culture Wars... Then along Came #Gamergate," *Breitbart*, November 12, 2014.

The third area of change has been the rapid growth in the internet and social media over the past three decades. Due to the geographic isolation of Far-Right activists or their presence within urban centres dominated by liberals and leftists, the publication of Far-Right material was limited. With the internet the proliferation of these ideas has exploded, it is almost impossible to find a significant social media platform that did not have a Far-Right presence, with some platforms such as YouTube promoting Alt-Lite content for significant financial gain.<sup>139</sup> The expansion of social media has resulted in a bifurcation of the American Right between the Alternative Right which is predominantly younger and online, consuming digital content without gatekeeping and the older Fox/cable news audience dominating the older mainstream conservative population.

The culmination of these three trends is a new form of segregation from liberal and global culture. What the Far-Right's authors such as Curtis Yarvin stress is a new kind of isolationism.<sup>140</sup> While opt-in was the framework for understanding the process of globalizing capitalism under right-wing and centrist neoliberalism, the Alternative Right wishes for an option to opt-out; stressing that political freedom comes not from mandatory human rights, tolerance, and participation in an alienating system of global capitalism, but rather the ability to leave a social contract one finds disagreeable.<sup>141</sup> Drawing partially upon the libertarian spirit of Ayn Rand's John Galt, the new conception of freedom stresses a desire to disengage from the political commitments and obligations of democratic life.<sup>142</sup> The Alternative Right is driven by the question "If we live in a social contract, why can't we end the contract and leave? One cannot consent to a contract if they

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<sup>139</sup> Alexander, "YouTube Creators Are Trying to Move on from 'Subscribe to PewDiePie.'"

<sup>140</sup> Curtis Yarvin, "A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations: Chapter 10: The Mandate of Heaven," *Unqualified Reservations*, 2009, <https://www.unqualified-reservations.org/2009/10/gentle-introduction-to-unqualified/>.

<sup>141</sup> Anissimov, "How to Exit"; Land, "The Dark Enlightenment."

<sup>142</sup> Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*.

have no option to refuse it.” Separating this tradition from the earlier libertarian tradition is a complete abandonment of social totality. Rather than demanding the nation or system reflect the libertarian ethos, many in the Alternative Right merely wish to be removed from the system. The choice to opt-out ranges from Brexit to supporters of the Alt-Right such as Peter Thiel, wishing to create a capitalist island in the Pacific Ocean removed from both the taxation and ethical commitments of the American State.<sup>143</sup>

### ***The Big Joke***

Economically and politically the Alternative Right argues for a parallel state system for governance. As with the earlier Fascist movements, the state has both a bureaucratic component, one which is run as a utilitarian law-based system, and the second which is an aesthetic representational government.<sup>144</sup> While most of the society can function within a neoliberal algorithmic way which is highly depoliticized, accepting deregulation or automatic “depoliticized” stabilization, the second part of the state functions for aesthetic purposes. While a liberal government may put forward legislation to address an issue, both to gain political support and to establish a policy, the Alternative Right focuses on introducing a policy that is at its most effective when proposed rather than when implemented. The result is the practice of the “Big Joke.” An event such as the “Muslim Ban” in 2017, presented a clear political image to the American public and the international community, even before it is implemented. Everyday political and economic considerations are depoliticized while the actions of the state on the national or international scale are turned into a spectacle. Donald Trump’s administration has slashed funding and regulation for

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<sup>143</sup> Melia Robinson, “Tech Billionaire Peter Thiel No Longer Thinks His Dream of a Floating Libertarian Utopia Is Realistic,” *Tech Insider*, January 2017.

<sup>144</sup> Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, First Vint (New York: Random House, 2004).

organizations such as FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency),<sup>145</sup> while publicly donating private money to charity. If examined from a utilitarian perspective the policies make no sense, if examined aesthetically like a performance then the government policies make sense. It is a comical performance, where the audience either does not get that it is a joke, is in on the joke or is outraged by the joke. The media follows up on the “Big Joke” by asking “is it a joke?” or pointing out the absurdity of the spectacle while ignoring the non-aesthetic consequences of the legislation that was put forward or made into law.

The best example of this “Big Joke” philosophy is the use of memes by the Alt-Right. While not an essential element of its ideological conception of the world, the movement has been intimately connected with internet memes and the online culture that disseminates these memes. Internet memes are easy to share and often use innocuous images (Pepe the Frog for example), therefore if a post becomes viral the ideas of the Alternative Right can quickly be shared across Twitter, 4chan or Reddit. The Alt-Right subsection of the movement has been the most infamous and successful group to use memes to radicalize and gain followers within the Alternative Right. While the use of memes is not limited to the Alt-Right, as Socialist, feminist, and liberal memes are also easy to find online, the Alt-Right’s use of memes serves a dual purpose, for internal communication and public outcry.<sup>146</sup>

The use of memes such as “I do not want to live on this planet anymore”<sup>147</sup> capture the imagination of the apolitical “south park libertarians’, whose political ideology serves as a gateway to the Alt-Right for younger politically apathetic young men. It is a special message which needs

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<sup>145</sup> Alan Fram and Andrew Taylor, “The GOP May Cut \$1 Billion in FEMA Funds to Help Finance Trump’s Border Wall,” *Time*, August 2017.

<sup>146</sup> Film Crit Hulk, “PC Culture Vs. The Big Joke,” *Birth. Movies. Death.*, February 2017.

<sup>147</sup> Know Your Meme, “I Don’t Want to Live on This Planet Anymore,” Know Your Meme, 2010, <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/i-dont-want-to-live-on-this-planet-anymore>.

to be decoded by those in the know, taken literally or “seriously” these memes miss the point, one needs an ironic sense of detachment to engage and “read” the memes. The heart of the “south park libertarian” thought process is a rejection of every political group or commitment as absurd and contradictory, stressing that one should critique everything, regardless of punching down or up. While unlikely to reject global warming as a hoax, they will target climate change activists for being too political and/or absurd when they mention the impact of factory farming on the environment despite the two ideas being connected. On the other hand, they will decry the government support of large businesses within a supposedly free market system.<sup>148</sup> The objective is to stress a balance between multiple perspectives by targeting the absurdity of both perspectives, that which is emotionally charged rather than derived from rational thought. By aggressively targeting both sides of the conflict and hiding behind an ironic or satirical demeanour, the comedy becomes increasingly antagonistic, as, with a drug, a tolerance slowly builds up over time, requiring more outlandish jokes.

Under the veneer of a joke, an Alt-Right meme will often draw upon shocking imagery in a desire to evoke an affective response, rupture the *sensible* reality in which it is placed. Such an online post intends to trigger the audience, which is both a practical technique to spread the meme, relying on the controversy to gain popularity and a direct critique of the academic and activist culture of inclusion and identity politics. Under the guise of free speech, the authors of these memes can claim an ironic detachment from work, arguing that the intention is to make a joke. Earlier movements on the Far-Right drew upon dog whistle politics, such as the image/word “88” (a reference to *Heil Hitler*, H being the 8<sup>th</sup> letter of the alphabet), but they were limited to codewords for members of a secret club. The contemporary use of memes ranges from the

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<sup>148</sup> Christopher Cannucciari, *Banking on Bitcoin* (USA: Gravitas Ventures, 2016).

shocking exploitation memes which explicitly draw upon swastikas and racially charged imagery to invoke a response, to the premediated meme which turns a non-political figure or gesture into a symbol of hate, with Taylor Swift, the “okay” sign, and the primary campaign of Andrew Yang being examples of this appropriation.<sup>149</sup> Exploiting the space opened up by mainstream liberal and conservative media in response to the campaigns for tolerance and respect for trauma found on college campuses, labelled “political correctness,” the use of these hostile and triggering memes becomes normalized as a response to the “absurdity of political correctness.” The Alternative Right’s hate speech, white nationalist or misogynistic meme becomes the subject of national debate through the amplification by mainstream media by those condemning it and those who in turn condemn those who condemn the hate speech for “overreacting.”<sup>150</sup> By doing so, the Alt-Right exploits the disagreements between what is free speech and hate speech, driving a wedge between Liberals and “progressives” who value hate speech legislation over free speech legislation.

While the trolling element of the Far-Right has gained media attention, the movement would not have captured mass public support if it was focused exclusively on gaining the attention and support from self-avowed white-supremacists and fascist communities. Instead, the movement

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<sup>149</sup> The Alternative Right is known for appropriating figures, gestures, and memes within mainstream American culture and forcing upon them the symbolic value of white supremacy. For Taylor Swift, the Alternative Right presented her as an “Aryan Goddess” and began to imply she was a member of the Alt-Right despite no evidence to support this. For the “okay” sign, the Alt-Right presented it as actually the letters “WP” which means White Power, despite it initially having no connection to the movement. Now any time a Right-Wing figure is presented making the relatively innocuous hand gesture it was reported and presented a symbol of hate. Within several months the gesture has become synonymous internationally with White Power. For the campaign of Andrew Yang, the Alternative Right started to support his policy for a universal minimum income, which found support among the unemployed members of the Alternative Right, this abandonment of Trump for an Asian American offering them “free money” would cause a rift in the Alternative Right online. Yet this support from the Alternative Right for Andrew Yang would make his campaign increasingly toxic online. Ali Breland, “Here’s Why Andrew Yang’s Alt-Right Supporters Think He’s the 2020 Candidate for White Nationalists,” *Mother Jones* (New York, April 2019); Shaun Walker, “Marine Le Pen Makes ‘OK’ Hand Gesture Used by White Supremacists,” *The Guardian*, May 15, 2019; ADL, “Okay Hand Gesture,” ADL, 2019, <https://www.adl.org/education/references/hate-symbols/okay-hand-gesture>; Kenzie Bryant, “Taylor Swift’s Politics and the Death of One of the Internet’s Worst Memes,” *Vanity Fair* (New York, October 2018).

<sup>150</sup> Nagle, *Kill All Normies: Online Culture Wars from 4Chan and Tumblr to Trump and the Alt-Right*, sec. 218.1.

has addressed the growing apathy and disengagement with civil politics, focusing on the rise of technocratic automation and deindustrialization which has reduced the career and life perspective of Millennials and Zoomers.<sup>151</sup> The Alternative Right attracts support from technological enthusiasts who wish for a more utilitarian/efficient society rather than one based on sociological, materialist and historical considerations. The technocratic community may disagree with white supremacy and think that men and women should be paid the same wage, but view affirmative action policies as unfair and ineffective, due to their perceived inefficiency and privileging of exogenous factors. This same community may even pass on the memes mentioned earlier, attacking the perceived problems of social science and humanities’ “political correctness.”

The attacks on “political correctness” are a way of shielding the Alternative Right’s less radical members from intense scrutiny and public shaming. The Alternative Right rejects the mainstream and critical social science scholarship in favour of business and STEM fields. When in power Alternative Right and Alternative Right friendly politicians actively defund progressive departments and universities or establish free-speech laws which allow for hate speech on university campuses.<sup>152</sup> What social science that is supported by the Alternative Right relies on either the mathematical modelling and biological determinism to appear apolitical and ahistorical,<sup>153</sup> or is heavily focused on the concept of “western civilization” to separate whites from non-whites.

### ***Why should they be called the Alternative Right?***

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<sup>151</sup> Generation Z

<sup>152</sup> Chris Selley, “It’s Not Free Speech When the Government Compels It,” *National Post*, August 31, 2018.

<sup>153</sup> Cathy O’Neil, *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy*, Kindle (New York: Broadway Books, 2016).

Ultimately we must use the term Alternative Right to discuss this movement because labelling them all as Nazis, fascists or white supremacists is akin to calling all communists Stalinists, it is both factually wrong and ineffective at examining the issue. Matthew Lyons argues:

... a campaign to abolish the term Alt-right doesn't help us do this and makes it harder. If we want to understand the Alt-Right's strengths and weaknesses, we need to understand what it shares with older white nationalist currents — but also what sets it apart. By contrast, the “don't use 'alt-right'” campaign promotes misunderstanding and ignorance about the movement it's trying to confront.<sup>154</sup>

The Alt-Right has transgressed the language politics of sites such as Stormfront;<sup>155</sup> they are not afraid of being called racists. Even those who decry the white nationalism of the ideological core of the Alt-Right and its anti-Semitism are often proponents of white supremacy, Islamophobia and patriarchal politics. The term Alt-Right has been around since 2008, and it was chosen not to disguise racist remarks, but rather to set the proud White Nationalists apart from the mainstream conservatives who pretend or downplay their racism.<sup>156</sup>

The term Alternative Right allows academics and political activists to describe a broad social trend within the anglophone far-right without being reduced to “*Reducto Ad Hitlerum*” and other logical fallacies which impede the discussion on the nature of the Far-Right. The term “Alternative Right” is an effective discursive tool to describe the assemblage of ideological positions without erasing the disagreements between the Alternative Right and other Right-wing groups, and it separates the movement from the logical framework of classical fascism which arises by calling it “neo-fascism” or “neo-nazism.”

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<sup>154</sup> Matthew N. Lyons, “Calling Them Alt-Right Helps Us Fight Them,” *threewayfight*, 2016, <http://threewayfight.blogspot.com/2016/11/calling-them-alt-right-helps-us-fight.html>.

<sup>155</sup> Lyons, “The Alt-Right Hate Women as Much as It Hates People of Colour.”

<sup>156</sup> Gottfried, “The Decline and Rise of the Alternative Right.”

As Lyons points out, white supremacy is not some monolithic unity, it develops and changes over time, the emergence of dedicated White Nationalism after the civil rights movement is indicative of these developments as the White Nationalists have rejected the possibility of living with other racists and wish to live entirely removed from non-white populations, only after entrenched Jim Crow laws were repealed.<sup>157</sup>

The Alternative Right is not the exact same thing as White Nationalism. The Alternative Right is not the same thing as the Incel movement. The Alternative Right is not a perfect match with Trumpism. The Alternative Right is not to be abandoned because it is marginally more acceptable than the term Far-Right or Extremist Right. It is a distinct political entity that should be understood as it is rather than as a boogiemans haunting the imagination of Centrists and Leftists.

Another reason to call them the Alternative Right rather than fascist or white supremacist is that it downplays the sexism of the movement. Defining the Alt-Right as merely a white nationalist group ignores the aspects of the movement that are merely tolerant of white nationalism.<sup>158</sup> Most of the NeoReactionaries, members of the "manosphere," some of the European New Right, and the techno-libertarians all ignore or downplay their racism where they can. NeoReactionaries may invoke racial eugenics, but this does not mean merely favouring whites. For example when their racial statistics show that Koreans, Japanese or Jewish groups have higher IQs, then NeoReactionaries think they should be subsequently promoted through eugenic policies.<sup>159</sup> Some of the Alternative Right have gone so far as to include minority groups within the movement for both strategic or philosophical reasons. It may surprise people outside of the

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<sup>157</sup> Lyons, "The Alt-Right Hate Women as Much as It Hates People of Colour."

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Nick Land, "IQ Shredders," Outside In, 2014, <http://www.xenosystems.net/iq-shredders/>; Tuttle, "The Racist Moral Rot at the Heart of the Alt-Right"; Land, "The Dark Enlightenment."

Alt-Right to know that there is a considerable number of white nationalist Jews within the Alternative Right who advocate racial hatred against non-whites, but find targeting white Jews completely unacceptable.<sup>160</sup> *American Renaissance*, Jared Taylor's publication, advocates for the inclusion of Jews within the Alternative Right, while many Neo-Nazi groups within the Alternative Right target those same Jewish members.<sup>161</sup> For example, Paul Gottfried who coined the term Alternative Right should be understood as a prominent figure who influenced the Alt-Right even if he is Jewish and disagrees with Richard Spencer's subgroup of the Alternative Right.<sup>162</sup>

Another paradoxical minority group within the Alt-Right is the male homosexual population. As prominently demonstrated in the Netherlands, the Far-Right can rally around homosexuality or women's rights if it is used to gain support against Islam or to return to male tribalism to create a space without women.<sup>163</sup> Just as the Alt-Right's members may support Israel to gain an ally against Islamic groups, by promoting the most superficial elements of Gay rights (opposed to the rights of trans-people or the politics of the broader queer community), the Alt-Right can promote Islamophobia easier.

The inclusion of non-typical followers within the Alternative Right reached its apotheosis in the form of Milo Yiannopoulos, a gay Jewish man who has a fetish for black men.<sup>164</sup> As a former writer for Breitbart and Trump surrogate, he served as an iconoclastic figure soaking up media attention for the Alt-Right. In 2014 Yiannopoulos became infamous as he supported and

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<sup>160</sup> Lyons, "The Alt-Right Hate Women as Much as It Hates People of Colour."

<sup>161</sup> Southern Poverty Law Center, "American Renaissance," Southern Poverty Law Center, accessed October 5, 2017, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/american-renaissance>.

<sup>162</sup> Gottfried, "Don't Call Me the 'Godfather' of Those Alt-Right Neo Nazis. I'm Jewish."

<sup>163</sup> Jack Donovan, *The Way of Men*, Kindle (La Vergne, Tennessee: Lightning Source Inc, 2011).

<sup>164</sup> Joseph Bernstein, "Here's How Breitbart And Milo Smuggled Nazi and White Nationalist Ideas Into The Mainstream," *Buzzfeed News*, October 5, 2017.

publicized the Gamergate movement while working for Breitbart.<sup>165</sup> He used Gamergate as an opportunity to make a stand within the so-called "culture wars," arguing that other mediums have collapsed into left-wing politics after including feminist and identity politics within TV or film.<sup>166</sup> Understood within this logic feminist critiques of video games were attacks on the free speech in video games. Yiannopoulos trolled the public by both providing a "gay friend" to deny claims that the Alt-Right is homophobic, while at the same time engaging in both anti-feminist and anti-queer politics. Despite his publicity and infamy within the mainstream press, Milo was also highly divisive within the Alt-Right, many dismissed him as an opportunist member of the Alt-Lite. Perhaps the most important part of the Milo example is his banishment from the movement and subsequent bankruptcy. The public faces of the Alt-Lite have shifted from fringe figures to those who adopt a more traditional public persona in line with traditional conservatism. When the Alternative Right and the Alt-Right were a fringe idea rather than one with mainstream acceptability, figures like Milo were acceptable. Since 2016 the ideological positions of the Alternative Right have progressed from online chat rooms to viable and growing political perspectives in anglophone politics.

### ***The Overton Window***

The critical political strategy of the Alt-Right from its inception has been the use or widening of the Overton Window. The Overton Window was developed by Joe Overton during the 1990s while working for Mackinac Center for Public Policy in Michigan.<sup>167</sup> Rather than directly write a policy for state officials, the focus of a think tank according to Overton was to

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<sup>165</sup> Zack Beauchamp, "Milo Yiannopoulos: Breitbart's Star Provocateur and Trump Champion, Explained," *Vox* (New York, February 2017).

<sup>166</sup> Yiannopoulos, "The Authoritarian Left Was on Course to Win the Culture Wars... Then along Came #Gamergate."

<sup>167</sup> Russell, "An Introduction to the Overton Window of Political Possibilities."

change the political climate and acceptability of policy. For Overton, the public policy exists on a linear spectrum, and despite the logical arguments and campaigning of political groups only policies within a subsection of that spectrum, the "Overton Window" are possible to implement.<sup>168</sup> Elected politicians cannot successfully engage in policies outside of this window, therefore think tanks and other non-democratically elected organizations are charged with expanding/contracting/shifting the Overton Window to reflect the political positions of that political group.

The Overton Window theory has significant flaws that should be quickly addressed before discussing the influence of the idea on Right-Wing thought and praxis. One significant fault is the idea of narrow linear spectrum politics; it results in one-dimensional policy between a supposed left and right. The system of linear policy choices reflects a mathematical and economic system of public policy that erases the differences between policy options. The original example for the Overton Window is school choice in the United States, placing all options on a spectrum between mandatory universal public education and completely deregulated and unsubsidized education.<sup>169</sup> What this does not question is the nature of schools themselves or even how they would be organized outside of how much choice the parent has in selecting which school their child attends and how much they are willing to pay for out of pocket and through their taxes. The second failing of the idea is that it is effectively a less complicated and nuanced take on Slavoj Žižek's understanding of ideology, where an ideologically defined construction of politics limits the scope of reasonable discourse.<sup>170</sup> The Overton Window is a useful policy tool within a consensus two-party system fighting over the centre within a particular ideology, but the moment that complexity

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (London: Verso, 2008).

and competing ideologies emerge the analytical tool is far less informative as many debates occur on a particular element of public policy without a consensus on what the choices are.

Despite these failings, the Overton Window is a useful pedagogical tool for motivating Right-Wing politics. Rather than attempting to enter elected office and change politics, as the Libertarian movement attempted in 1980, by adopting a praxis based on the Overton Window, the objectives of radical and fringe movements are framed regarding discourse first, and policy change and elected representation second. White nationalist groups know that the politics of a white only state is not only a logistical nightmare but also highly unpopular,<sup>171</sup> therefore since the mid-2000s when White Nationalists adopted the rhetoric of the Overton Window, their goal has been to shift public opinion against people of colour. If the end goal is the white only state, then it is necessary to be able to express that opinion publicly first, to do that they have attempted to normalize racial slurs, symbols of white supremacy and the presentation of minorities as second-class citizens. This explicit racism is one reason the White Nationalists within the Alternative Right endorsed Trump within the Republican primaries so quickly. Even though they knew he would not be able to create a white's only America, he would shift discourse while on the campaign trail, and if he theoretically won the presidency that would be a bonus.

After Romney's failure in 2012 the GOP softened their policy on immigration as an attempt to court the Hispanic vote, two of the front-runners in 2015 before Trump entering the race, Marco Rubio and Jeb were solidly in favour of more open and less racist immigration policy.<sup>172</sup> With Trump's anti-immigrant and anti-Mexican rhetoric on the opening days of the campaign trail, he was shifting Republican discourse away from inclusive politics. Therefore, if the White Nationalist

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<sup>171</sup> Anissimov, "Why There Are No White Nationalists."

<sup>172</sup> Weigel, "Cuckservative - the Conservative Insult of the Month, Explained."

groups supported Trump, they would help shift the Overton Window back towards a more racially charged Republican party, which would help maintain or expand the acceptability of racist politics and discourse for the American public.

The critical difference between the Overton Window as a political project and incremental policy change is that the often smaller political movements lack the resources to implement a minor policy shift.<sup>173</sup> Libertarian thinkers use the abolitionist movement as the best example of the Overton Window working historically; it started with hearing out abolitionists within Congress long before congressional policy changes were made on a National level to end slavery.<sup>174</sup> They also use this example because it downplays the racial politics of the libertarian movement. The focus of the abolitionist campaign was centred on changing discourse rather than improving the material conditions of existing slaves through marginal policy changes. One starts by changing public perception of an unthinkable policy, not with the goal of minor changes that are already acceptable just logistically difficult, but by making it okay to talk about in the public sphere.

### **What the Alt-Right is not:**

Now that several vital tactics and strategies have been laid out, the misconceptions about Donald Trump, Fascism and the Tea Party can be resolved. The objective of this section is not to absolve these groups of misdeeds or to say that they are not politically relevant, but to stress that they are not the same as the Alternative Right.

### ***Donald Trump and the Alt-Lite***

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<sup>173</sup> Laura Marsh, "The Flaws of the Overton Window Theory," *New Republic*, October 2016.

<sup>174</sup> Robin, *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin*.

The Trump-Alternative Right coalition is one of the most challenging topics for studying the Alternative Right as Trump has been the most popular news story in North America since he put his name forward during the Republican Primary in 2015. Much of the journalistic and academic work covering him and his advisors is sensationalist and popular; with every author attempting to provide a new hot take, an easy punchline or a moment of presidential glory to examine under a microscope. This reporting has produced a lot of noise and confusion. When one adds the Alt-Right, which is known for lying to the press, making ironic "jokes," extremism and the amplified echo chambers of social media, it is difficult to find actual linkages rather than aesthetic connections blurred together over time.

As a point of clarification, for Donald Trump, we need to separate the man from his followers, voters and advisors, Trump the man has shown no signs of awareness of almost any theorist mentioned within this text other than perhaps Richard Spencer (who publicly pledged loyalty to him in front of a large crowd of followers chanting Trump's name). Donald Trump has shown no consistent ideological perspective throughout his political life. To suggest that he manifested the Alternative Right ideology to win the 2016 campaign would be absurd. This inconsistency in political views means that his views are sometimes in line with the Alternative Right but not uniformly so or consistently. Studies of the Alternative Right should example Trump in parallel and intertwined with the Alt-Right and the Alternative Right rather than as the same entity or even synonymously. Members of his administration and prominent advisors (past or present) such as Steve Bannon are members of the Alternative Right, but even then, they are typically Alt-Lite rather than members of the radical core. As per the spectrum theory of the Alternative Right introduced earlier, the term Alt-Lite is one of intensity and location rather than of kind.

The insurgency of the Alt-Right within the Republican party should not be understood or read as a deliberate push by billionaire backers like the libertarian Koch Brothers or Mercers trying to gain control of the system. Whereas there are ample volumes written on the influence of the billionaire donor class in the United States, the most famous of which is Jane Meyer's *Dark Money*,<sup>175</sup> the rise of the Alternative Right appears to be a genuine grassroots movement which was only injected with outside billionaire funding when it posed a real chance of influencing the election. It is far more accurate to see the Alternative Right as a counter-revolution against the Tea-Party and their billionaire donors, as Trump's message (taken as a proxy for the resentment of the rank and file of the Republican party who are more likely to hold Alternative Right perspectives than the party elite) was twofold: 1) revanchist white supremacy and 2) draining the swamp. The first message was amplified by the liberal media for being the easy target, but the second was downplayed. Anecdotally, when asking colleagues what Trump's central platform during the 2016 election was, few could identify the anti-establishment and anti-corruption platform that he campaigned on — understanding that Trump's victory in the primaries was due to the endorsement of the Alternative Right in opposition to the mainstream conservative options.

Not all members of the Alternative Right find Trump a spokesperson for their agenda. For example, Michael Perilloux, a NeoReactionary, argued that Donald Trump does not go far enough, he is an actor within a corrupt system, an actor who is closer to the Alt-Right's perspectives than any previous presidential candidate, but still a member of that system.<sup>176</sup> The Alternative Right has seen increased popularity due to Trump's endorsement of their ideas and memes, but it would be difficult to imagine Trump reading any of the political theory literature within the Alt-Right

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<sup>175</sup> Meyer, *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right*.

<sup>176</sup> Dylan Matthews, "The Alt-Right Is More than Warmed-over White Supremacy. It's That, but Way Way Weirder," *Vox*, August 2016.

beyond reading the memes on Twitter and the summaries of their views as translated by mainstream conservatives on cable news programs. Perilloux, a NeoReactionary author, commenting on Trump's claims to the Alt-Right demonstrates this point:

he (Trump) is simply another phenomenon within the arcane workings of the system, as worthy of support as the ebb and flow of the tides. Surely, the unprecedented nature of his campaign warrants excited interest as a historical case-study and promising fore-shock of true restoration, but he is not the king, and we have a way to go yet." (Perilloux as quoted by Dylan Matthews.)<sup>177</sup>

The Alternative Right is still a minority share of the American Right, even if it is a growing share; it is profoundly radical and far more vocal and active than other members of Trump's electoral coalition. While there is no official way of checking, it is likely that many Trump supporters are not members of the Alternative Right and most are not members of the Alt-Right. The Alternative Right was accelerated after Trump's victory; the new standard has been set, it is no longer absurd to believe that a campaign based on hate speech and Alternative Right politics would win a significant general election.

Trumpism and his electoral victory provided a more distinct set of questions than those raised by an examination of the Alternative Right. When examining the impact of the Alt-Right, we are looking at the most radicalized elements of the Right (Alternative or mainstream Right). When looking at Trump's success, we are examining how and why self-described moderates would support Trump and his openly racist policies, which were unacceptable to discuss in public a decade earlier, or how Trump provides the United States with a quasi-authoritarian demagogue as commander in chief.<sup>178</sup> These are indeed terrifying realities for the United States and the world

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Yascha Mounk and Daniel Ziblatt, "Donald Trump Isn't a Fascist; He's a Demagogue. That's Why He's so Dangerous," *Vox*, 2016; Edsall, "Democracy Can Plant the Seeds of Its Own Destruction."

at large, but these do not make him a fascist or a member of the Alt-Right. The study of Trump and his impact on American politics requires an understanding of the Alternative/Alt-Right to demonstrate his success online and through Twitter, just as any reading of the Alternative Right cannot ignore Trump and the influx of populism into the Alternative Right during his campaign.

The Alternative Right, for example, does not see the end of immigration as enough for their long-term success, which is why most members of the Alternative Right see Trump as a stepping stone to a larger project rather than as the “*Führer* for a thousand-year *Reich*.” Demographically the movement takes the claim that more non-white babies are born each year than white ones and deduces that there is no way for the white population to maintain its current percentage of the population. The solutions that the Alternative Right proposes are mixed, Ted Sallis suggests that the white nationalists assert themselves within multicultural discussions, arguing for the preservation of the white race as if it were a minority group being erased through a genocidal campaign.<sup>179</sup> Many in the Alt-Right saw Trump as a chance to push the Overton window towards the white nationalist position(s), knowing that he was never a real white nationalist, as countless members of the Alt-Right are quick to remind readers that his daughter converted to Judaism and married a Jewish billionaire.

During the 2016 election, the Alt-Right effectively discredited mainstream establishment candidates within the GOP by repeatedly calling them Cuckservatives on social media, eroding their claims to the right.<sup>180</sup> As the primaries in 2012 had demonstrated playing to the more radicalized right-wing base of the Republican party had been useful, but it had alienated centrist minority voters, which resulted in most of the GOP candidates softening their stance on

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<sup>179</sup> Lyons, *Insurgent Supremacists: The U.S. Far Right's Challenge to State and Empire*, 2904.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 2941.

immigration. As Trump had positioned himself from the first day of the campaign as the “tough on immigration” candidate, it forced many in the GOP to keep moving to the right with little credibility to chase the polls in a crowded primary field. These attacks extended outside of the candidates, targeting the bastion of mainstream Republican thought, the *National Review*. With repeated harassment of the male staffers by sending them racial cuckold porn and in one case sending images of their children in gas chambers.<sup>181</sup> As per the norm for the Alt-Right, the goal was to humiliate the men by making rape fantasies about their wives and children, the women and children targeted were almost entirely silenced from the reporting and were presented as helpless bystanders. Just as with Gamergate and the broader work of the manosphere, women were treated as prizes to be won or lost.

While Trump and his administration have proven to not be Fascists,<sup>182</sup> at least not by the definitions of any noted historians or political scientists of Fascism, they have adopted some semiotics from Fascist regimes and sympathetic movements. The child concentration camps, known officially as youth detention centres for immigrants, in 2018 include an image of Trump along with a quote from *Art of the Deal*, which echoed the "Arbeit Macht Frei" of the gates of Auschwitz.<sup>183</sup> Trump's America First slogan also calls back to the 1930's fascist sympathizers. Most of these comparisons are aesthetic choices which normalize policy and discursive choices to pull policy and public opinion to the right. It is highly unlikely that illegal attacks or violence will be perpetrated to suppress voting or the government arresting leaders or candidates of the Democratic party. Instead, the institutional practice of voter suppression and gerrymandering of

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 2953.

<sup>182</sup> Corey Robin, “If Trump Is a Fascist, He May Be the Most Backassward Fascist We’ve Ever Seen,” Corey Robin, 2017, <http://coreyrobin.com/2017/01/29/if-trump-is-a-fascist-he-may-be-the-most-backassward-fascist-weve-ever-seen/>.

<sup>183</sup> BBC, “Trump Migrant Separation Policy: Children ‘in Cages’ in Texas,” *BBC*, June 18, 2018.

the Republican party will likely continue. Rather than seeing a Fascist takeover or a Fascist administration, the political shift of Trump's election and administration has been the transformation of the existing Republican party into one more in line with the Alternative Right rather than mainstream conservatism. The Republican party is not controlled by the Alternative Right, somewhat sympathetic members are now given the space to voice their views, with the leaders and the moderates of the party shifting policy positions to capture their more vocal members, just as they did to respond to the Tea Party insurgency of 2010-2012.

The Alternative Right's pull within the Trump administration was significantly eroded after the media catastrophe of the Charlottesville rally in August 2017, when Bannon and Sebastian Gorka were fired.<sup>184</sup> After August 2017 the connection between Trump and the Alternative/Alt-Right was weakened enough that no serious analysis can conflate the two together. A united Alternative Right, even if it was just a dream, disappeared as the movement divided itself in opposition to the white nationalist question, with the Alt-Lite and Manosphere members distancing themselves from the Alt-Right and the Neo-Nazis. While still more unified than the Left in the United States, the monolith that the Alt-Right may have claimed to be was proven false. Since then no group or individual has effectively organized the Alt-Right or successfully claimed leadership of the American Far-Right; though it is unlikely that any figure will attempt to claim the leadership mantle of the Alt-Right so long as Trump maintains a high approval rating among Republicans. As any Far-Right insurgent would either need to replace Trump (if he was impeached or abdicated his position) or gain his complete confidence (no figure has approached this yet).

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<sup>184</sup> Lyons, *Insurgent Supremacists: The U.S. Far Right's Challenge to State and Empire*, 7218.

What made the Charlottesville rally indirectly successful was how Trump convinced the media and much of the public that anti-fascist and left-wing groups were equally to blame for the violence. Soon after the rally, Antifa was labelled by the Department of Homeland Security as supporting "domestic terrorist violence,"<sup>185</sup> and some in the media started using Trump's term "Alt-Left" to claim that social democratic and liberal counter-protestors were militant left-wing radicals. By labelling the centre-left as radicals, the resulting false equivalency has shifted political discourse in the United States rightward, by demonizing non-violent protests, which has been a common practice by those opposing the Civil Rights movement.

Moving past Trump and how he used the Alternative Right for political gain, is the question of how to understand the mainstream Alt-Lite and its relationship to the Alt-Right's radical core? Considering the Alt-Lite as separate from the more radical members of the movement does the larger movement a considerable benefit, as it normalizes there up until recently, radical beliefs. For some core members of the Alt-Right such as Richard Spencer, the Alt-Lite are opportunists who are exploiting the popularity of the movement, the example par-excellence is Breitbart, which had both Steven Bannon and Milo Yiannopoulos as editor and writer respectively. The Alt-Lite tones down the racist rhetoric of the Alt-Right from full-blown proclamations for genocides, while holding to the broader Alternative Right ideology.

Angela Nagle argues for the significance of the Alt-Right/Lite divide, both in her book *Kill all the Normies*<sup>186</sup> and her 2017 *Atlantic* article in December of the same year.<sup>187</sup> The argument is premised upon a divide between the media and White House-friendly members of the Alternative

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 7760.

<sup>186</sup> Nagle, *Kill All Normies: Online Culture Wars from 4Chan and Tumblr to Trump and the Alt-Right*.

<sup>187</sup> Nagle, "The Lost Boys."

Right, such as Steven Bannon, being right-wing political opportunists who see the Alternative Right's platform as a way forward to gain electoral support opposed to the more ideologically driven members of the movement, such as Richard Spencer, essentially arguing for a moderate/fanatic divide (in contrast to a spectrum between radical cores and the moderates). The Alt-Right plays the ideologically driven vanguard to the sympathetic and more numerous Alt-Lite. Many political movements have an ideological core with less devoted followers who hold less dogmatic beliefs. What makes the Alternative Right peculiar is that the inclusion of Jews, homosexuals and non-whites within the Alternative Right is unacceptable for the white nationalist communities within the Alternative Right, the result is a seemingly strange contradiction if we define the Alternative Right strictly as white nationalists. Understood within the framework of the Overton Window vs incremental policy changes, the contradiction is resolved, the debate is one of strategy rather than objective. The core Alt-Right membership advocates for expanding the scope of acceptable discourse with their Unite the Right rallies and the normalization of White Nationalism. In contrast, the seemingly more moderate members of the Alternative Right actively push for acceptable racist policies such as the Border Wall or expanding anti-immigrant legislation, seeing the white nationalists as uncomfortable bedfellows for their larger right-wing project. This is how Trump's older supporters are brought into the Alternative Right, not by Alt-Right memes but by the more "acceptable" Alt-Lite figures.

As Matthew Lyons clearly and emphatically states in his chapter dedicated to the Trump question in his book *Insurgent Supremacists*, "Trump is not a Fascist."<sup>188</sup> While the continuous slandering of American presidents for being "fascists" has been almost universally frivolous, Trump appears, at least at first, as an exception. Trump is the first outright populist American

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<sup>188</sup> Lyons, *Insurgent Supremacists: The U.S. Far Right's Challenge to State and Empire*, 7022.

president in anyone's lifetime and the most vocally opposed to democracy in as long. Yet the fears that Trump would topple the American establishment were put to rest within the first year of his presidency. Despite Republican control of the courts, state legislatures, the senate and congress the party was unable to easily pass unified legislation during the first year of his presidency, let alone take the steps that previous fascist or authoritarian governments took to cement power. As Corey Robin pointed out, on his website, Trump failed to do the one thing that every single Fascist administration has ever done, crush the left immediately upon taking control of the government.<sup>189</sup> If Trump was a Fascist or ideologically committed to the White Nationalist or Alt-Right core of the Alternative Right there would have been more significant advances rather than half measures in his first 100 days. The pressure on the Democratic party to adopt social democratic policies has only increased since Trump was inaugurated, and it shows no signs of slowing. Where Trump's administration has changed politics, it has mostly been through the erosion of political precedence and the normalization of Alternative Right ideas and language, rather than actual policy changes.

### ***The F Word and National Socialism***

Within the study of fascism by non-fascist and anti-fascist thinkers, there is a quest for a perfect encapsulation of fascism into a parsimonious definition. This quest for “Ur-Fascism” or the Fascist minimum is akin to a grail quest; researchers spend years of their lives hunting down a perfect explanation for this ideology; some in response to the trauma of National Socialism’s genocide and terror after a decade in power,<sup>190</sup> while others attempt to stop it from happening here

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<sup>189</sup> Robin, “If Trump Is a Fascist, He May Be the Most Backassward Fascist We’ve Ever Seen.”

<sup>190</sup> Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*; Stanley G. Payne, *Fascism: Comparison and Definition* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1980); Griffin, *A Fascist Century: Essays by Roger Griffin*, 2008.

at home and seek for the germ to be eradicated in its infancy.<sup>191</sup> Italian Fascism was fixated on the role of the state and lacked the fixation on race that dominated National Socialism, which in turn lacked the religious fundamentalism of the Romanian Iron Guard, what common threads that existed must be qualitatively examined and differentiated rather than processed through an easy to read flowchart/diagnostic test to see if something is fascist. The hunt for Ur-Fascism is a failed one from the start; just as pure-liberalism or communism does not exist, the abstracted notion of Fascism is a fantasy. It is an analytical dream for parsimonious theory rather than one of practical use for those facing it down on the street. There was no platonic form of fascism; this is even more true for fascism than for liberalism or communism, which at least have collected works by communists and liberals explaining what their ideology is rather than relying on historians after the fact explaining their ideology.<sup>192</sup> Is there a fascist minimum, is racism and eugenics a fascist idea or a particular trait?<sup>193</sup>

If one wishes to apply the idea of a fascist minimum to the Alternative Right, then perhaps Roger Griffin's definition could be of use: "a political ideology whose core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism."<sup>194</sup> But this definition only applies to the most state centric groups within the Alternative Right, ignoring the more libertarian and isolationist groups. Even if we take an approximate definition of fascism without reducing it to an Ur-Fascism it will be more effective than nothing. Some factions in the Alternative Right are more fascist than others but that means that those opposing or studying the Alternative Right are placed in the unfortunate rhetorical position that "not all" members of the Alt-Right are fascist.

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<sup>191</sup> Lyons, *Insurgent Supremacists: The U.S. Far Right's Challenge to State and Empire*; Chip Berlet and Matthew N. Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort* (New York: Guilford Press, 2000); Umberto Eco, "Ur-Fascism," *The New York Review of Books* (New York, June 1995).

<sup>192</sup> Griffin, *A Fascist Century: Essays by Roger Griffin*, 2008, 183.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

There is no platonic form of Fascism, as with any other ideology, the quest to label the Alternative Right as fascist is therefore one of political tactics and political organization for unified opposition rather than a parsimonious analytical tool for investigation by academics.

The Alternative Right or Alt-Right, broadly understood as the collection of the European New Right, American Alt-Right and other authoritarian right-wing anti-free trade politics, is the new fascism for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Academic authors are scrambling to find the “Alt-Right minimum” where none exists. The movements share some common characteristics, authors and strategies but they are not a uniform monolith, just as the fascism of the interwar period lacked a unified ideological minimum. For this text, the quest for an “Alt-Right minimum” is postponed indefinitely, until the movement fully condenses into a tangible historical entity. Any claims to an “Alt-Right minimum” are snapshots of a singular moment rather than a descriptive model.

One of the more debatable labels for the Alternative Right is that of fascist; the term is widely used and poorly defined by most public figures and academics. It has the unfortunate position as a term that both means something concrete, a nuanced ideological system, and the broadest and easiest term for political evil. If the Alternative Right is to be understood as a continuation of Fascism, the most crucial academic distinction that must be made is that the Alternative Right is not National Socialism. If one reads fascism as a historical phenomenon or as a continuation of National Socialism through skinhead and neo-Nazi movements, then reading the Alternative Right as a fascist movement provides a sloppy portrayal of the movement for minor rhetorical gains. Historiography and contemporary political theory on Fascism argue that National Socialism is one form of Fascism, and for most not even the most generic example of Fascism.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Evola, *Fascism Viewed from the Right*; Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*.

The literature on Fascism since the 1970s has continually pointed to the flaws that arise when National Socialism is taken as the default for Fascist movements. Roger Griffin, a prominent theorist and historian on Fascism, has articulated very clearly that those groups which have taken up the banner of Fascist politics with more than limited success have done so without the Swastika or the Goose Step.<sup>196</sup> Instead, they have separated themselves from the Nazi legacy. Matthew Lyons has also defended the need to understand this movement on its own grounds rather than recycle historical terms.<sup>197</sup> To suggest that “a Nazi is a Nazi is a Nazi,” and that all members of the Alternative Right are Nazis is a problem because the Alternative Right’s members are not goose-stepping card-carrying Germans of the National Socialist party. It would be as absurd as walking into a Democratic Socialists of America meeting and calling them Bolsheviks or calling a group of liberals Whigs, it is intellectually and rhetorically lazy. Either the term has a concrete definition, or it is yet another political insult to motivate the public into action.

There is no denying that the Alt-Right uses the images of the Nazi party to affect the public, internet trolls have been relying on these images for over a decade, but that does not make them Nazis. They are indeed responsible for normalizing fascist iconography and ideas, spreading hate speech, targeting minorities, and in their own words “moving the Overton window” towards Fascism when they use the imagery of the Nazi party. Yet to ascribe to them the label of their imagery would require calling them Vikings or crusaders as well, because they dress up like them and use their iconography online for the purpose of political iconography. It is appropriate to call them fascistic, as they adopt fascistic imagery, but it provides the movement with legitimacy and

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<sup>196</sup> Griffin, *A Fascist Century: Essays by Roger Griffin*, 2008.

<sup>197</sup> Matthew N. Lyons, “CTRL-ALT-DELETE,” *Political Research Associates*, 2017.

credibility to label them the continuation of the Nazi party. As the Alternative Right, are not literal Nazis, it is more appropriate to call them fascistic or fascists.<sup>198</sup>

The Alternative Right is a quasi-fascistic movement, one that draws partially upon a generalizable political theory of fascism detached from the historical conditions of inter-war Europe and the Nazi party, typically through neo-fascist thinkers such as Julius Evola.<sup>199</sup> The ideology of the Alternative Right maps onto fascism if you read fascism as a collection of nationalist authoritarian ideologies that respond to the economic and cultural conditions of modernity within a capitalist society while rejecting communism and democracy. If you are charitable in your readings of Fascism as a political theory then connections can be made, but the public literature connecting Fascism with the Alternative Right is sensationalist and out of date. The popular work by Timothy Synder, *On Tyranny*, for example, is fixated on the realities of the 1930s and 1940s without serious reflection on the changes within the Far-Right over the subsequent 70 to 80 years.<sup>200</sup> Fascist movements support nationalism and typically engage in ultra-nationalistic violence, but this does not always translate into racism and vice versa (liberalism has a significant history of nationalist racism resulting in genocide and liberalism is in many ways the antithesis of Fascism). The fixation on anti-Semitism and racism within National Socialism is underplayed in other successful Fascist movements such as Italian Fascism or the Falangist movements in Spain. The intersection of Italy and anti-Semitism was limited until the Second World War and the introduction of racial laws started in 1939.<sup>201</sup> The period of the Salo republic during the occupation of Northern Italy by Germany during the final years of the war is the only

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<sup>198</sup> Oliver Lee, "Understanding Trump's Troll Army: What Distinguishes Trump's 'Alt-Right' Supporters from the Anger of Other Generations?," *Vice*, March 2016.

<sup>199</sup> Evola, *A Handbook for Right-Wing Youth*.

<sup>200</sup> Timothy Synder, *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*, Kindle (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2017).

<sup>201</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1963).

time that Italy could be understood as adopting National Socialism, during which it was a puppet state and treated as a separate political system by Italian Fascists.<sup>202</sup>

The Alternative Right is still in relative ideological infancy, the movement's fractured origins and divergent literature have done little to clarify a cohesive and easy to label definition. While the Alternative Right has been dominated by white supremacists and other racially focused nationalists, this is only one of the intellectual streams of the movement, even though it is the most vocal. Despite White Nationalists coming from a non-fascist tradition, they are colloquially connected to the Fascists due to the easy semiotic shorthand and a legacy of scholarship equating any racist movement with the Nazi party.<sup>203</sup>

Roger Griffin describes Fascism as a slime mold, one which grows in ideal locations, for example within failing democracies, but is devoid of a true agency of its own.<sup>204</sup> It moves and grows but is limited to ideal environments and lacks a unified brain and is instead a swarm; just like internet movements moving with little centralization or hierarchy. The implication for this rhizomatic structure is its difficulty in suppression, as with a terrorist cell the state cannot cut off the head and solve the problem, but instead, must fight an asymmetric war against the insurgency. Griffin sees 21<sup>st</sup> century fascism emerging from a decentralized and uncensorable threat from a small activist group, leading to the rise of lone-wolf attacks and independently emerging fascist communities, removed from a centralized organizational hub such as an official party. Over time a series of the unofficial state-activist connections, i.e. indirect police and para-military support, will be supplemented by the regional fascist organizations; which will allow local movements to

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<sup>202</sup> Evola, *Fascism Viewed from the Right*.

<sup>203</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: A Harvest Book, 1973).

<sup>204</sup> Griffin, *A Fascist Century: Essays by Roger Griffin*, 2008, 192.

commit hate crimes without incriminating the entire movement or the supportive government.<sup>205</sup> The Radical Right will adopt extremist organizational structures akin to a terrorist cell system, allowing for the flow of radicals into and eventual hijacking of mainstream parties. Griffin also suspects that there will be an exploitation of the left-wing anti-globalization movement which will hijack left-wing critiques of cultural hegemony. Those fascists who are not committing acts of terror will likely adopt an agenda based on the mainstreaming of xenophobia and racism with the intention of creating further internationalized groups with linkages to other far-right movements.<sup>206</sup> All of these characteristics describe the Alternative Right movement to a T. As we see 21<sup>st</sup> century fascism will not dress in the affectation of armed parades of the SA for serious mobilization.<sup>207</sup> It will take the calm, benign garb of the day; they will dress like Richard Spencer in suits with clean-cut haircuts and walk through the halls of power like any other political group. It should therefore not surprise us that the “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville in 2017 was an abnormality for 21<sup>st</sup> century fascism, one that faced far more backlash than nearly any other Alternative Right event, leading to the decline of organized mass rallies.

Aesthetically and affectively the Neo-Nazi rally is a lightning rod for the public outcry from almost every part of the political spectrum. The Nazis have been vilified for decades within American media and are synonymous with evil, dressing up as one elicits only hatred and disgust from the broader public, as even members of the Alternative Right are disgusted by Nazis.<sup>208</sup> The rally in Charlottesville failed because it looked like the worst of both worlds, taking the villainous and violent image of the Neo-Nazi and paring it with dorky looking white college students, in polo

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>208</sup> Kelley, “Lauren Southern: The Alt-Right’s Canadian Dog Whistler”; Gottfried, “Don’t Call Me the ‘Godfather’ of Those Alt-Right Neo Nazis. I’m Jewish.”

shirts, khakis and tiki torches. While the rally would lead to the murder of a counter-protester, the success of the Alt-Right to integrate themselves into the mainstream started to unravel. While Trump would critique "both sides" in a public address in August 2017, tolerance toward the broader Alt-Right, at the cost of some radical support, was maintained.<sup>209</sup> The mass protests and actions during the 2016 campaign and the first half year of the Trump administration were replaced with a diversified campaign of normalization by the broader Alt-Right coalition and the emergence of individual terrorist acts.

Lyons defines fascism as "a revolutionary form of right-wing populism, inspired by a totalitarian vision of collective rebirth, that challenges capitalist political and cultural power while promoting economic and social hierarchy."<sup>210</sup> This definition is helpful, but many elements of the broader Alternative Right are supportive of capitalism but not unified or enthusiastic in their support, with some embracing a TINA (There is no alternative) mindset. While some completely reject finance capitalism, others wish to double down on capitalism, they all almost universally protest the existing liberal-democratic-capitalist system. Lyons's definition helps as an analytical tool for investigating the current far-right. Lyons has stepped away from the Fascist label within his most recent work on the American Far-Right after 2013, mainly because the word has become a boogiemanager rather than an effective analytical tool for providing a taxonomy of which members of the Alternative Right's are "true" fascists opposed to fellow travellers. As mentioned earlier, the quest for Ur-Fascism has left us with little useful terminology for describing contemporary rather than historical fascism. As both Griffin and Lyons suggest, there is no reason to believe that Fascism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will look or behave like the Fascism of the past. It is not classical

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<sup>209</sup> Emma Cott and Andrew Michael Ellis, *How an Alt-Right Leader Lied to Climb the Ranks* (USA: New York Times, 2018).

<sup>210</sup> Lyons, *Insurgent Supremacists: The U.S. Far Right's Challenge to State and Empire*, 162.

fascism; it is something different that has evolved out of a different climate, like a bacterium it has developed an immunity to the common antibiotics that held off the infection for decades.

After decades of the Nazis serving as a cultural shorthand for evil, the term has become almost meaningless, resulting in both the terms *reductio ad Hitlerum* and Godwin's Law, which refers to the frequent practice of calling anything terrible a Nazi or akin to Hitler. The technique serves a rhetorical purpose within the arguments of those wishing to dismiss and marginalize the Alt-Right, which has proven to be mildly useful. Decrying the events of Charlottesville Virginia in August 2017 as the work of (neo)-Nazis served as a useful rallying cry, but it undermined the positions of the subsequent debate concerning the role of Confederate statues and the normalization of white supremacy within America.<sup>211</sup> By positioning the most violent and objectional members of the Alternative Right (predominantly Alt-Right and Neo-Nazi members) as Nazis, the remaining membership looks far better in the eyes of the public. Understanding the Alternative Right as a spectrum between the radical core(s) of the Alt-Right and the "moderate" Alt-Lite prevents the segmentation that has repeatedly occurred after acts of terror by members of the Alt-Right. Alt-Lite members attached to the mainstream anglosphere media or those with significant social media face limited scrutiny after these acts of terror, for example figures associated with the Alternative Right can condemn the acts of violence in Christchurch despite promoting "great replacement" arguments on Youtube and Twitter.<sup>212</sup>

### **The Aesthetics of the Fascist Chic**

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<sup>211</sup> Janet Reitman, "U.S. Law Enforcement Failed to See the Threat of White Nationalism. Now They Don't Know How to Stop It.," *New York Times*, November 3, 2018.

<sup>212</sup> Alexander, "YouTube Creators Are Trying to Move on from 'Subscribe to PewDiePie'"; Brent Tarrant, "The Great Replacement," Document Cloud, 2019, <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/5770516-The-Great-Replacement-New-Zealand-Shooter.html>.

Contemporaries in the Alt-Right imitate the Fascist project, and it is aesthetic ideal, even if the ideal is an impossibility. As there was never a homogeneous past devoid of human migration the pure nation-state or self-determination logic used to justify their racial segregation is a simulacrum of myth with no origin. To play pretend by using a romantic reading of history to form a new state is nothing new, the American and French Revolutions drew upon Rome, the Khmer Rouge the Khmer empire and Nazi Germany drew upon the First and Second Reichs. The absurdity of the present comes not from relying on a romantic and mythological past, but it is placed in a postmodern media culture where everything is understood as remix already. The use of Nazi iconography and aesthetics is both a way to present themselves as “cool/edgy” and to terrify those traumatized by the horrors of National Socialism.

The Alt-Right uses the iconography of the Third Reich because it has aesthetic power more so than their fixation with the political theory and strategies of the Nazi party. Richard Spencer's infamous “Heil Trump” is one of the typical examples of Nazi iconography and symbolism that is used within the Alt-Right, but the use of it is mostly symbolic, rather than a proclamation of the ideology. The image of fascism and the reality of fascism are two distinct elements of the aesthetics of politics. The Nazi label is, for the most part, avoided by members of the Alternative Right with mainstream media attention, especially political opportunists who do not want to be no-platformed and removed from social media platforms. Lauren Southern, an Alt-Right vlogger, rejects the Nazi label, wears shirts declaring “I am not a Nazi!”, while advocating for Islamophobia, xenophobia and anti-feminist politics, walking the pre-Unite the Right line between dog whistling and outright hate speech.<sup>213</sup> Lauren Southern is not alone in this mantra of publicly stating that “they are not a racist” while supporting the Alternative Right with Paul Gottfried, who coined the term Alt-Right,

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<sup>213</sup> Kelley, “Lauren Southern: The Alt-Right’s Canadian Dog Whistler.”

also distancing himself with the same claim of “not a Nazi.”<sup>214</sup> Southern, as with many members of the Alternative Right avoids the explicit racist label of the “unacceptable racist statement,” instead living within the grey area of publicly acceptable racist views of nativism and Islamophobia. Ideologically this serves several essential functions; the first is painfully apparent, the potential member does not want to join an organization that is synonymous with the “bad guys”, repackaging racism into a more acceptable platform that tiptoes around the most racist phrases and positions has been a boon for the movement. Secondly, the Alternative Right can avoid a fixation on the failed politics of the Nazi party and open the movement to contemporary political praxis and statecraft drawing on post-modernist ideas rather than play by a 80 year old political playbook.

These blurred lines throughout the Alternative Right spectrum over who is a “Nazi” and their use of fascist iconography has led to dubious journalistic both-sideisms. Even though white nationalism is on the rise and in the White House and deemed one of the most significant terrorist threats to American society, mainstream news outlets such as the *New York Times* still publish uncritical works on the movement. This coverage reached a zenith with the publishing of the piece "A Voice of Hate in America's Heartland" by Richard Fausset, in which Fausset interviews a white nationalist in Ohio and provides a solid take on his hate crimes.<sup>215</sup> *The Atlantic* quickly lampooned the absurdity of the article in their response "Nazis are Just Like You and me, Except They're Nazis."<sup>216</sup> Quoting Fausset on the Alt-Right interviewee Tony Hovater:

He is the Nazi sympathizer next door, polite and low-key at a time the old boundaries of accepted political activity can seem alarmingly in flux. Most

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<sup>214</sup> Gottfried, “Don’t Call Me the ‘Godfather’ of Those Alt-Right Neo Nazis. I’m Jewish.”

<sup>215</sup> Richard Fausset, “A Voice of Hate in America’s Heartland,” *The New York Times*, November 25, 2017.

<sup>216</sup> James Hamblin, “Nazis Are Just Like You and Me, Except They’re Nazis,” *The Atlantic* (New York, November 2017).

Americans would be disgusted and baffled by his casually approving remarks about Hitler, disdain for democracy and believe that the races are better off separate. However, his tattoos are innocuous pop-culture references: a slice of cherry pie adorns one arm, a homage to the TV show “Twin Peaks.” He says he prefers to spread the gospel of white nationalism with satire. He is a big “Seinfeld” fan.<sup>217</sup>

The article mirrors disbelief that that racist legacy and tradition of the United States would reappear with widespread support as if the only way someone could be a Nazi was to be the embodiment of pure evil. Hovater does not describe himself as a racist, despite thinking that Jews control finance and the media and that he thinks races should be separated and thinks that it would have been better if the Nazis had won World War II.<sup>218</sup> The cognitive dissonance is astounding as if one's personal beliefs had no relation to the reality that they live. While Hannah Arendt's groundbreaking work on the banality of evil was published half a century ago, it provided a far more precise understanding that Eichmann, while a human being with a family, was an accomplice in the genocide of millions of people.<sup>219</sup> The work was also published long after the Nazi party had been eliminated and no longer posed a threat to the world. Eichmann himself was driven across the world, hiding under an assumed name as a manual labourer before being caught. One of the purposes of her work was to demonstrate how anyone can accomplish mass violence and crimes against humanity. In contrast, Fausset's piece provides a megaphone for an active hate group, by downplaying the threat of the White Nationalists like Tony Hovater to pluralistic liberal democracies. This middle ground position has subsequently become impossible after the publicity of the unite the right rally has forced most members of the movement to either leave the movement altogether or tolerate the connection to National Socialism.

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<sup>217</sup> Fausset, “A Voice of Hate in America’s Heartland.”

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*.

### *The Tea Party and Libertarian Neoliberalism*

While the distinctions between the Alternative Right and Fascism or Donald Trump's administration can be examined through ideological difference, the difference between the Alternative Right and the Tea Party is one of demographics. While both movements are right wing, the Tea Party was a loyal opposition to the United States government with the backing of billionaires wishing for lower taxes and deregulation. These aims are the continuation of the neoliberal project for the past thirty years, with the influx of libertarian ideas, in contrast, the Alternative Right has defined itself as a very disloyal opposition fearing government conspiracy and a complete distaste for electoralism. Even the name of the movement, the Tea-Party, comes from a patriotic tradition at the heart of what it means to be American, in contrast, the Alternative Right, especially Curtis Yarvin's NeoReactionary framework, distrusts the revolutionary democracy that formed the United States.<sup>220</sup>

The definitive work on the demographics of the Tea-Party was done by Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, while at this point almost a decade out of date, provides insights into this loyal opposition. The Tea-Party is dominated by wealthy older white evangelical Americans who identify with the Republican party and or conservative ideology.<sup>221</sup> The Tea-Party, at least according to the research of Skocpol and Williamson was about 200,000 people active during 2011.<sup>222</sup> As with other political parties, the core members who actively attended meetings was much smaller than that. The tea-party membership had few public sector workers, except the

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<sup>220</sup> Curtis Yarvin, "A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations: Chapter 2: The American Rebellion," *Unqualified Reservations*, 2009, [https://www.unqualified-reservations.org/2009/01/gentle-introduction-to-unqualified\\_15/](https://www.unqualified-reservations.org/2009/01/gentle-introduction-to-unqualified_15/).

<sup>221</sup> Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, Kindle (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 20.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

military and police, and was mainly middle class.<sup>223</sup> While some libertarian university students were present, specifically around colleges, "Adults 25-45 were not much in evidence."<sup>224</sup> The Tea-Party favours more libertarian-leaning Republican candidates, rejecting more moderate Republicans, which they view as a part of the establishment.

In contrast to the research on the Tea-Party, the John Birch Society, the KKK and other Far-Right movements in the United States, there is insufficient data to tell how many members are part of the Alt-Right let alone the Alternative Right. Based on the public rallies like Unite the Right, we know that they have a lot of young men, but exact numbers are currently unavailable.<sup>225</sup> We know that the Alt-Right is dominated by internet natives who use pseudonyms to communicate, but that does not mean that each account is linked to a flesh and blood person. The Dark Enlightenment subreddit home to one branch of NeoReactionaries had 10,000 members on January 25th, 2017 and 12,000 members as of November 2nd, 2017 and 16,000 members as of May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019,<sup>226</sup> while the Alt-right subreddit had 13,000 on January 10th, Reddit would ban it on the First of February 2017.<sup>227</sup> Though the numbers for these right-wing subreddits pales in comparison to left-wing subreddits such as *r/latecapitalism*, which boast several hundred thousand members.<sup>228</sup> One can be a member of the Alt-Right and not join a subreddit or follow them on Twitter, which makes these numbers only somewhat useful at examining the influence and popularity of this movement.

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<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>225</sup> Neiwert, *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*; O'Brien, "The Making of an American Nazi."

<sup>226</sup> Reddit.com, "Dark Enlightenment," Reddit, 2019, <https://www.reddit.com/r/darkenlightenment>.

<sup>227</sup> Nick Statt, "Reddit Bans Two Prominent Alt-Right Subreddits," *The Verge* (New York, February 2017).

<sup>228</sup> Reddit.com, "Late Stage Capitalism," Reddit, 2018, <https://www.reddit.com/r/LateStageCapitalism/>.

The Tea-Party, like most right-wing populist movements, did not draw upon the poorest or most economically disenfranchised but preferably those who saw an economic loss real or predicted. As Saul Alinsky described them, “*The have some, want mores,*” that make up the reactionary right, in times of crisis identify with the elites more so than the “*have nots.*”<sup>229</sup> They understand the political promise unfulfilled or broken by the social contract is a violation of their rights as citizens. They wish to enforce this contract against the corrupt elites who violated it. The Tea-Party holds revanchist politics of decline that mirrors the politics of the Alternative Right, but this comes from personal experience rather than a promise never fulfilled. They are those who now see a decline rather than those who have only lived through a period of decline and precariousness. A white middle-class voter in their 50's has likely seen prosperous jobs, and believes that hard work pays off within the relative meritocracy of contemporary capitalist, a Millennial or Zoomer who has seen little material progress, living through economic depression and austerity does not have that luxury.

Some elements of the Tea-Party could be described as part of a radical right rather than hard-line economic conservatives, such as the Oath Keepers or Birchers, but this group has been understood as outside of the mainstream of the tea party.<sup>230</sup> While able to attract some fringe groups, the respectability of the Tea Party came from its predominately less than radical conservatism. The Tea Party's two main bases of support were evangelicals and libertarians who were united in support of conservative government and economic policy. The unity over economic policy more than anything else is what separates this movement from the Alternative Right which define themselves in opposition to the globalization and immigration that walks hand in hand with

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<sup>229</sup> Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals: A Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals*, Random House, 1971.

<sup>230</sup> Skocpol and Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 33.

the free markets and low taxes of Libertarian-Conservatism. The objective was to reduce the size of government and taxation, rather than cancel immigration, make American an ethnostate and end the American democracy, as the Alternative Right advocates.

The Tea-Party's anti-intellectualism comfortably fits into the history of American populism, originally imagined as a populist revolt against out of touch and corrupt elites, which is akin to the 1890's Populists or 1930's followers of Father Coughlin and Huey Long.<sup>231</sup> This birth out of populism does not apply to the Alternative Right, which despite an anti-academic platform, was initially created by intellectual groups sharing fringe ideas within online academic salons, it started its life as an elitist project, one based on aristocratic elites and anti-government conspiracy theorists rather than mass populism. The Tea-Party was anti-intellectual, rejecting most contemporary social science, looking down upon experts and those who were in almost anyway connected to the elites. They would read *the Bible*, *Atlas Shrugged*, and the constitution, and the occasional libertarian text, but the Tea-Party did not create a comprehensive political canon of original work which they disseminated to the public, which is what a majority of the early Alternative Right groups devoted their time and energy towards. The academic and intellectual work was isolated to the dark money think tanks. The Tea-Party was also decidedly anti-science, arguing against evolution from the perspective of religion.<sup>232</sup> The Alternative Right, for the most part, are highly scientific in their outlook on evolution, as its way of justifying the eugenic racial policies of White Nationalism. Therefore, science is necessary to the Alternative Right's ideology in a way that is anathema to the Tea-Party's creationist undertones.

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<sup>231</sup> Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and the Great Depression* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983).

<sup>232</sup> Skocpol and Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 165.

While the Tea-Party is disproportionately male, according to Skocpol and Williamson's research 55-60% are men, this is in line with the demographics for the conservative population in the US.<sup>233</sup> They argue that they saw a considerable number of female leaders within the Tea-Party and that the movement was far from a boys-only club. The Tea-Party is far from a feminist project, advocating defunding planned parenthood, typically vocal opposition to same-sex-marriage and rarely saw a problem with austerity targeting single mothers, but the group cannot be considered an anti-woman hate group. In contrast, the Alt-Right is partially defined by an anti-feminist politics, typified by the Proud Boys who are proudly misogynistic.<sup>234</sup> The membership demographics for the Alt-Right is, as always, trying to quantify, but the leadership is overwhelmingly male for the Alt-Right. Female leaders exist within the broader European Alternative Right, but they are rare within the Anglosphere. Even the anecdotal evidence from photographs of Proud Boy rallies or the August 2017 Unite the Right rally shows almost no women in attendance.<sup>235</sup> This is in line with understanding the Tea-Party as a right-wing neoliberal and libertarian movement, which treats women as an atomistic individuals rather than as the submissive property of men, unlike Alt-Right which fixates on the misogynistic oppression of women.

The Tea-Party responded to the first black president with hostility, the racial element of the response cannot be dismissed when one hears the responses from the Tea-Party members who use racialized language to describe Obama.<sup>236</sup> The Tea-Party members held racist views of Latinos and African-Americans, though they also viewed whites as less hard working overall when

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>234</sup> Jia Tolentino, "The Rage of the Incels," *The New Yorker* (New York, May 2018).

<sup>235</sup> Jay Firestone, "Three Months Inside Alt-Right New York," *Commune* (New York, November 2018); Reitman, "U.S. Law Enforcement Failed to See the Threat of White Nationalism. Now They Don't Know How to Stop It."

<sup>236</sup> Skocpol and Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 69.

compared to other conservatives,<sup>237</sup> which implies that the Tea Party is far less fixated on ideas of White Nationalism and supremacy than other Far-Right movements. As the movement was fundamentally focused on economic concerns regarding taxation, adding the taboo elements of racial supremacy would have been counterproductive even if they were widely held private views. The Tea-Party was actively aware of its racial demographic problem, which is why it used token African-Americans at rallies to present a more diverse community. This attempt at racial tokenism did not extend towards Muslims though, where the movement was known for unapologetic Islamophobia.<sup>238</sup> All of this is to say that the Tea-Party reflected the consensus of pre-Trump Republicans to tiptoe around racial discrimination rather than outright embrace the practices as the Alternative Right would subsequently do.

If the diverging takes on race and gender were not enough to separate the Alt-Right from the Tea Party, then the role of young people within the movements should make it crystal clear. The Tea-Party members when polled, rejected American youth for being lazy and entitled, fixating on the poor work ethic of the unemployed students and the new “social justice” education within universities. Despite the empirical data that shows that there were incredibly high rates of youth unemployment due to the economic recession and rapidly growing student debt due to increasing tuition costs, the Tea-Party’s older membership was focused on how in their day one could get a job and pay for university.<sup>239</sup> While the curriculum of the university would be a shared target with the Alternative Right, the antagonistic attitude of the Alternative Right, and their distaste for baby boomer morality and economic perspective are driven by the Alternative Right’s distaste for anti-millennial rhetoric from the Tea-Party’s older membership. The Alternative Right was initially

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<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 72.

understood as a youth movement by the mainstream press, and only later after the foundations were laid online did the movement embrace an older crowd who share Alternative Right conspiracy theories and memes.<sup>240</sup>

Any confusion about what the Alternative Right is comes from attempting to place its square peg into a round hole of existing movements. The Alternative Right is a new reactionary movement that furthers the cause of Far-Right politics based on a combination of racial and gender oppression, traditionalism and anti-democratic politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Laying the blame at any single figure's feet, such as Trump, gives him an undue amount of political agency and undermines the decades of social and intellectual pressure from the Far-Right on American politics. Calling the Alternative Right a continuation of the Tea-Party or Neoliberalism ignores the movement's initial call to action, which was to overthrow the "Cuckservatives" who defined themselves by Neoliberal ideology. Calling them Fascists, at least in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a rhetorical tool rather than an adequate descriptive analysis, which ignores the decades of literature on Fascism which lacks a parsimonious definition of Ur-Fascism. The Tea-Party which led an "AstroTurfed" insurrection on the Republican party establishment was ultimately eroded and subsumed by Alternative Right influences. Even equating the Alt-Right with Trump ignores the rise of the Alternative Right before the presidential campaign of Donald Trump. Additionally, when Trump does leave office, this will not mean the end of the Alternative Right.

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<sup>240</sup> Nagle, "The Lost Boys"; James Kirchick, "Trump's Terrifying Online Brigades," *Commentary Magazine*, May 2016; Bokhari and Yiannopoulos, "An Establishment Conservative's Guide to the Alt-Right."

## Chapter 3: A Quick History of the American Alternative Right

### Introduction

The first questions that should be asked when examining any new ideology are “where it came from?” and subsequently “what is it reacting to?”. The Western non-economic far-right was a minor or tertiary concern within left-wing critical scholarship and the anti-extremist law enforcement for the first decade and a half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>241</sup> The primary object of investigation for critical theorists has been the Neoliberalism of the past three decades.<sup>242</sup> Critical theory literature has focused on the structural state violence rather than the violence of Right-wing terrorists and hate groups found within Western 21<sup>st</sup> century societies. One finds the inverted totalitarianism of Sheldon Wolin or the structural violence of Žižek discussing capitalism and liberal ideology, not armed street violence and hate crimes.<sup>243</sup> The purpose of this chapter is to cover how the Alternative Right has emerged as a response to neoliberal globalization, the rise of left-wing cultural politics such as identity politics and feminism writ large, and the increase in economic-conservatism at the cost of right-wing cultural conservatism.

This chapter covers a brief history of the Alternative Right until 2017, with a focus on the intellectual history of the movement after 2008. The history of the Alternative Right prior to 2017 has had three semi-porous time periods, a precursor period, an incubation period and the contemporary period. While the Alternative Right may draw upon theorists and events before 1968, this is a shared tradition rather than their own unique development. The ideas pre-war

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<sup>241</sup> Reitman, “U.S. Law Enforcement Failed to See the Threat of White Nationalism. Now They Don’t Know How to Stop It.”

<sup>242</sup> Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Second Edi (New York: Verso, 2001); David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>243</sup> Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*; Sheldon Wolin, “Inverted Totalitarianism,” *The Nation* (New York, May 2003).

Fascists or the works of Nietzsche and Heidegger are influential to the movement,<sup>244</sup> but they are not Alternative Right theorists or theories in themselves, and at most appropriated by the movement. These thinkers are part of a shared western philosophical tradition rather than explicitly theorists for the Alternative Right. The precursor period refers to the period between 1968 and 2007, during which many authors now infamous within the Alternative Right were publishing but lacked broad appeal and a minimal English-language readership. The incubation period (2008-2014) contains the gestation and publishing of foundational Alternative Right political theory within the NeoReactionary, Alt-Right and White Nationalist communities, and the rapid expansion of right-wing thought after the 2008 Financial Crisis. The contemporary period started in 2014 when Gamergate and the attempted NPI conference in Budapest brought the Alt-Right and its allies into conflict with liberal and left-wing critics. During this period the Far-Right made a series of increasingly successful electoral gains across the EU and the United States, which catapulted the movement into mainstream discourse. The analysis of this period ends just before Charlottesville's Unite the Right rally which resulted in a fracturing of the populist protests of the Alternative Right that has yet to be sufficiently documented to establish an adequate history.

### **The Precursor Period**

While the members of the Alternative Right may stress an academic legacy stretching back to Burke and the reactionary authors of the 1800s like Oswald Spengler or Thomas Carlyle,<sup>245</sup> these authors, like Nietzsche, Heidegger and Carl Schmitt are not the Alternative Right, nor are they writing about the politics of late capitalism.<sup>246</sup> While each of these authors is an established

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<sup>244</sup> Ronald Beiner, *Dangerous Minds Nietzsche, Heidegger, and the Return of the Far Right* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

<sup>245</sup> Curtis Yarvin, "Why Carlyle Matters," *Unqualified Reservations*, 2009, <https://unqualified-reservations.blogspot.ca/2009/07/why-carlyle-matters.html>.

<sup>246</sup> Beiner, *Dangerous Minds Nietzsche, Heidegger, and the Return of the Far Right*.

precursor to the Alternative Right, they are shared precursors with other non-right-wing groups. While Ronald Beiner's work on Nietzsche and Heidegger demonstrated that these authors are influential on the Alternative Right,<sup>247</sup> they also influence critical left-wing anti-fascist and anti-Alternative Right literature.<sup>248</sup> They can be understood as the pre-history of the movement, whereas the broader culturally focused right-wing emerged in the aftermath of 1968. The Alternative Right literature is not only fixated on an intellectual history for justifying its legitimacy, but most if not all arguments from the American White Nationalists also stress a cultural, racial and biological history stretching back throughout all of Western Civilization and Indo-Europeans development for tens of thousands of years.<sup>249</sup>

As the Alternative Right is a response in part to conservative thought, it is necessary to provide a few remarks to separate the two traditions. Reactionary thought is not necessarily the thought of conservatism. Reactionary thinking is aristocratic and patriarchal, while conservative thought is typically bourgeois and paternal, yet both stress social hierarchy. While conservatism can be found in its infancy as a response to the French Revolution, drawing upon Maistre and Burke for intellectual foundations.<sup>250</sup> The conservative movement has stressed a sense of progressive conservation of the status quo as the default position. Conservatives tend to argue that the French liberal revolution of 1789 went too far while claiming the Jacobin revolution of 1793 as all the proof in the world that one must avoid the politics of revolution, yet it would be unlikely to find a modern-day conservative who would be in praise of the *ancien regime*. A reactionary decries both liberal revolutions as a breakdown in the social hierarchy and the decline of social

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*.

<sup>249</sup> Francis, *Essential Writings on Race*, 92.

<sup>250</sup> Robin, *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin*, 74.

order. Both the conservative and reactionary are nostalgic for a past that is lost or merely a fictive one that never exists.

People on the left often fail to realize this, but conservatism does speak to and for people who have lost something. It may be landed estates or the privileges of white skin, the unquestioned authority of a husband or the untrammelled rights of a factory owner. The loss may be as material as money or as ethereal as a sense of standing. It may be a loss of something that was never legitimately owned in the first place; it may, when compared with what the conservative retains, be small. Even so, it is a loss, and nothing is ever so cherished as that which we no longer possess. It used to be one of the great virtues of the left that it alone understood the often zero-sum nature of politics, where the gains of one class necessarily entail the losses of another. However, as that sense of conflict diminishes on the left, it has fallen to the right to remind voters that there are losers in politics and that it is they- and only they- who speak for them. "All conservatism begins with loss," Andrew Sullivan rightly notes, which makes conservatism not the Party of Order, as Mill and others have claimed, but the party of the loser.<sup>251</sup>

The politics of reactionaries, in contrast, fights with a revanchist fervour utterly rejecting the politics of loss. What makes conservatism, which should be understood akin to Toryism, Jeffersonian democracy or Burkean thought, different from reactionary thought, is that for the reactionary the *ancien regime* should have been maintained and that the project of modernity and the enlightenment have been failures. Reactionary thinking never champions the bourgeois mentality that dominates conservative thought; commerce is not the purpose of existence; hierarchy is essential not merely a precondition for an ordered society. Reactionaries are the continuation of the anti-enlightenment tradition of Jacobites, absolutists and the aristocrats, stubbornly rejecting the liberal values and axioms of a modern world. It is from this position that understanding the Alternative Right must take place, from a historical perspective rather than a

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<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 122.

liberal-economic centric understanding of right-wing politics as one of free markets, low taxes and religious faith.

### ***The American Far-Right***

The history of the Alternative Right runs as a response to the political changes by the American conservative elite during the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century. During the Cold War, prominent conservative and libertarian theorists such as William F. Buckley, Milton Friedman, Fredrich von Hayek, Murray Rothbard and Ayn Rand favoured a war of ideas within both American and international politics.<sup>252</sup> Adopting a liberal framework of education and rational discourse, made possible by free speech protection and tax loopholes, privately funded think tanks appeared across the American political landscape, such as the Cato Institute and the Heritage Foundation. The goal of these think tanks was twofold, convince the public that free-market conservative ideology is the best possible system of political economy and to increase the wealth of those who invest in these think tanks, either through deregulation or tax cuts. Since the 1950s these think tanks have published reports, drafted legislation and lectured on economics and politics from a libertarian or conservative perspective with substantial success.<sup>253</sup> The War of Ideas at least economically has been a success. Even the once left-wing parties have embraced these free-market principles with the rise of Third-Way parties, such as Clinton's "Blue Dog" Democrats.<sup>254</sup> While conservative intellectuals and business owners gained from this free-market ideology, it would sow the seeds for the Alternative Right's emergence.

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<sup>252</sup> Stephen Newman, *Liberalism at Wit's End: The Libertarian Revolt against the Modern State* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America: Since 1945*.

<sup>253</sup> Meyer, *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right*, 17; Robin, *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin*, 356.

<sup>254</sup> Thomas Frank, *Listen Liberal*, Kindle (New York: Picador, 2017).

Before the *National Review's* founding in 1955, there was minimal conservative political scholarship in the United States, at least not a unified intellectual platform with respectability. As Louis Hartz's work on America's liberal tradition demonstrated, the lack of feudalism and the dominance of liberal Lockean political theory left little intellectual soil for the American conservative to construct an independent political identity.<sup>255</sup> This all changed with William F. Buckley Jr.'s founding of the *National Review*. Over the next half-century, Buckley held the various groups in check by providing a degree of authority over the disparate groups on the American Right, providing the intellectual publications for conservative ideas, and the presentation of cultural sophistication.<sup>256</sup> In the subsequent sixty years, the American conservative intellectual community has established itself within both academic and media circles as a legitimate response to American liberalism within the media and in the policy. While in control of the *National Review*, Buckley could limit the publication of any anti-Semitic treatise or radical right conspiracy that one could find in the John Birch Society,<sup>257</sup> this control limited the ability of more radical right-wing groups from gaining a platform within the Republican Party or the broader right-wing coalition. Within this limited media environment, the populist elements of the American right were efficiently barred from achieving the critical mass necessary to expand beyond their existing base of support.

One consequence of fixating on the war of ideas was the right-wing abandonment of populist or popular mass action, both as a discursive technique to rally moderate liberals from the more radical left-wing politics, and secondly to move away from the Fascist right's use of mass

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<sup>255</sup> Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 1991), 37.

<sup>256</sup> Gordon and Neville, *Best of Enemies: Buckley vs. Vidal*; Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America: Since 1945*, 449.

<sup>257</sup> Matthew Continetti, "The Coming Conservative Dark Age," *Commentary*, April 2016.

demonstrations. The populist and popular mass action was commonplace within American politics during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, starting in the late 1960s, with the introduction of the Silent Majority and the Southern Strategy within Nixon's 1968 presidential campaign, the focus of political change within American society shifted towards lobbying and campaign contributions.<sup>258</sup> Voluntary political participation from grassroots activism was replaced by a professional class of political actors and media ad campaigns. After the Civil Rights movement and LBJ's Great Society platform, the once overlapping policies of the Democrats and Republicans began drifting apart, leading to political polarization. While the economic values of both parties would still overwhelmingly favour capitalist free markets, in which a liberal utilitarian framework was the language of debate, the cultural values of the political base of both parties shifted.

The fractures of unity emerged post-Nixon, as faith in the government propelled Ronald Reagan in the presidency, and the re-emergence of radical right-wing groups, including the Klan and neo-Nazi organizations. Lyons places the emergence of the Alternative Right in the 1970s and 1980s as some rightists moved away from the US government, and towards more radical right-wing politics.<sup>259</sup> The consequence of this movement away from the US government, removed the tradition of the loyal opposition, a prerequisite for representative democratic politics. The loyal opposition had allowed peaceful continuity throughout Anglo-American democracies for centuries, with only a few exceptions, such as the American Civil War. These right-wing groups broke with that tradition, ultimately leading to a combative relationship where presidential candidates calling the opposition party treasonous would be normalized, something unthinkable in the 1960s and 70s. The loyalty of these right-wing groups was almost put to the test in late 2016

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<sup>258</sup> Skocpol and Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 88.

<sup>259</sup> Lyons, *Insurgent Supremacists: The U.S. Far Right's Challenge to State and Empire*, 37.

before the November elections, as the then Presidential candidate Donald Trump attempted to ready his followers to reject the results of the election if he did not win, “Of course there is large scale voter fraud happening on and before election day. Why do Republican leaders deny what is going on? So naïve!”<sup>260</sup>

In the United States, the Far-Right paleoconservative movement came out of the Christian evangelical movement and the remnants of the anti-Semitic and anti-civil rights movements, which put forward a millennialist agenda which battled with Republican party elites during the 1990s, only to be put down by William F. Buckley.<sup>261</sup> This group was one of the few genuine threats to establishment Republicans from the right in the post-civil-rights era, and one of the only culturally predicated factions, in contrast to the economic radicalism that was primarily embraced by the party’s insurgency after the financial crisis, the Tea-Party. The other radical group within the Republican party that of the libertarian movement inspired by Ayn Rand’s Objectivism and Rothbard’s Libertarianism<sup>262</sup> failed to find third-party success and efficiently folded itself into the Republican party. Though in 2016 the Libertarian party would achieve some success drawing upon economic-conservatives who tepidly opposed Trump before his electoral victory, but this is an exception to the general non-entity of the Libertarian party in American politics. Rather than attempt to win elections from a third-party position, rich libertarians quietly bankrolled candidates of their choice, influencing the party through think tanks, campaign donations, super PACs and primary challenges. Billionaire libertarians such as David Koch were so well incorporated that by

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<sup>260</sup> Laura Bicker, “US Election 2016: Trump Says Election ‘Rigged at Polling Places,’” *BBC*, October 17, 2016.

<sup>261</sup> J. Arthur Bloom, “The End of the Cult of Buckley,” *Mitrailleuse*, 2014.

<sup>262</sup> Robin, *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin*, 155.

2016 the primaries were being read as an extended job interview for the billionaires funding the party.<sup>263</sup>

By 2009, the conservative elites had completed their transition from waging a war of ideas against the American Left and the left-wing members of the democratic party to directly funding political campaigns of right-wing Republicans, even if they publicly denied this.<sup>264</sup> The 2010 case *Citizens United v. FEC*, which allowed effectively unlimited political campaign contributions made it easier for elite conservative business owners to directly fund the campaigns of those who wished to reduce taxes, decrease spending and further deregulation. The Alternative Right, while existent, only significantly emerged when the GOP political supporters began to acknowledge the failures and injustice that arose out of the policies of these conservative and libertarian elites within the party establishment. The first Alternative Right groups to call themselves the Alt-Right started forming in 2007 and 2008. They argued against the mainstream conservative failures during the cultural War of Ideas (which they had lost on university campuses and in the mainstream liberal media), the influx of immigration due to globalization and free trade agreements, the dawning precarious economic reality that emerged during the financial crisis leaving a generation of young white men underemployed, and the undeniable corruption and influence economic elites had over the democratic system in the United States. Each of these can be directly linked to the failures of mainstream conservative politicians and the super-rich figures who have funded their movement, which is why Republican mainstream candidates such as Jeb Bush or Mitt Romney failed to illicit significant popular support during 2012 or 2016.

### *Neoliberal Hegemony and its discontents*

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<sup>263</sup> Green, *Devil's Bargain: Steve Bannon, Donald Trump, and the Storming of the Presidency*, 230.

<sup>264</sup> Meyer, *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right*, 411.

The Far-Right reappeared after a 30-year disappearance from electoral democracies in the late 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>265</sup> In the aftermath of the Second World War, the far-right was marginal in Western democracies, the far-right MSI (Italian Social Movement) in Italy, for example, managed little more than 4-5% of the popular vote in Italy during the initial post-war period.<sup>266</sup> The removal of the fascist movements from Europe by allied powers through the de-Nazification of Germany and internal cleansing by Franco in Spain and Salazar in Portugal left the groups politically and financially unable to reappear after the war. The exception to this was the rise of Right-Wing terrorist groups, such as those supported by the CIA during Operation Gladio in Italy during the post-war period.<sup>267</sup> While this strategy of tension and the appearance of what the Francis Yockey biographer Kevin Coogan describes as the post-war Fascist international, it was significantly weaker than the Far-Right during the 1930's and limited to terrorist attacks rather than electoral victories.<sup>268</sup>

In the United States, political motivated Far-Right groups would achieve minimal success electorally after 1968, with only the occasional victory of David Duke or an insurgent primary challenge keeping the movement in the collective imagination.<sup>269</sup> Those members of the far-right who had political success were cloaked in conservatism or the new libertarian philosophies of the 1950s and 60s rather than Fascism or traditionalism. The Barry Goldwater campaign and the segregationists in the American South were not Fascists or members of what Matthew Lyons

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<sup>265</sup> Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, 509.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>267</sup> Coogan, *Dreamer of the Day: Francis Parker Yockey and the Postwar Fascist International*, 332.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, 333.

<sup>269</sup> Zeskind, *Blood and Politics: The History of the White Nationalist Movement from the Margins to the Mainstream*, 261.

would describe as the Far-Right, merely right-wing populists that comfortably fit within the existing political narrative of American populism and the Republican party.

In the 1980s the Eurosceptic movement began to reincorporate many of the tenants of Fascist and Traditionalist thought, such as nationalist identity, favouring autarkic development opposed to free trade and an electoral focus on the emotional betrayal of the perceived marginalization of working-class nationals by foreign and immigrant labour. In Europe, the rise of economic free-trade fixated right-wing politics would face more significant opposition from the right. The rise of the neoliberal consensus since the 1980s promoted globalization, free-trade and the prominence of international finance, but this also leads to a more bureaucratic state which based choices on utilitarian calculus rather than a political debate. This calculus which dominated American politics was challenged within Europe. The right-wing Euroskeptics argued for the preservation of domestic culture against globalization, an increased focus on the working class and middle-class ethnic majorities, a group, increasingly ignored by left-wing movements, rather than focus on the utilitarian and financial calculus of neoliberalism. An integrationist pan-European multicultural identity remained a limited movement with success primarily found within the aspirational classes and the trans-national capitalist classes. The Eurosceptic movement stressed some of the same talking points of earlier Fascist movements, that of revanchism and a politics of decline from glory.

On the other side of the Atlantic, the new post-ideology world of Francis Fukuyama's *End of History and the Last Man* did not sit well with many of the culturally right-wing thinkers.<sup>270</sup> A world of economics without politics was uninspired and depressing, not an end state. Critiques of

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<sup>270</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free PRes, 1992).

contemporary conservatives as profit-seeking opportunists is nothing new, even Irving Kristol and William F. Buckley were calling the modern conservative movement uninspired. As Irving Kristol responds in an interview with Corey Robin in 2000:

The Republican Party is tying itself into knots. Over what? Prescriptions for elderly people? Who gives a damn? I think it's disgusting that... presidential politics of the most important country in the world should revolve around prescriptions for elderly people. Future historians will find this very hard to believe. It's not Athens. It's not Rome. It's not anything.<sup>271</sup>

Kristol is not alone in this sentiment, the American Far-Right shared this disgust with the depoliticization of American politics into utilitarian calculus. While critical theorists on the left have maligned the emergence of the TINA mindset,<sup>272</sup> the cultural-right shared a similar nihilistic apathy where they could also see no end to neoliberal capitalism. The perception of American stagnation would be replaced with decline following 9/11 only a year later.

### ***American Decline***

The rise of social media and internet comment sections broke the economic and mainstream-conservative stranglehold of Right-wing American thought in the early 2000s. The various right-wing conspiracy groups, talk radio shows and internet publications found a fertile soil that took some time for the public at large to notice. The aforementioned nihilism and apathy were turned into a search for meaning where there was none to be found, resulting in a wave of conspiratorial thinking. The Alt-Right started as one of those publications in 2007, Richard Spencer's Alternative Right was a movement that began as Buckley died and positioned itself as the antithesis of the mainstream conservative right.<sup>273</sup> Websites such as Alex Jones's Info Wars

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<sup>271</sup> Robin, *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin*, 316.

<sup>272</sup> Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (London: Zero Books, 2009).

<sup>273</sup> Gottfried, "The Decline and Rise of the Alternative Right."

captured this new space by providing populist right-wing conspiracy news, something that would have been unthinkable on network news and marginal on a specialty cable channel. After nearly every terrorist or mass shooting incident Alex Jones would call it a false flag, suggesting that the government faked the Sandy Hook attack on elementary school students to justify gun control legislation.<sup>274</sup> The fact that no substantial gun control legislation was ever passed has been largely ignored by Alex Jones and his supporters. The Far-Right conspiracies of government control and oppression would only be further exacerbated by Obama's election.

By the middle of the Trump administration, the fixation on conspiracy theories would become the dominant framework for conceptualizing news for millions of Americans. Both the radical right's Qanon conspiracy, which suggests that there is a secret conspiracy by the deep state against Trump involving child prostitution and secret coded messages on 4chan, and the centre-left's fixation on an elaborate conspiracy where Russia secretly controls Donald Trump, known as Russiagate, proved to be some of the dominant stories for American cable news programs.<sup>275</sup> Even if these conspiracies are taken as trivialities and novelties, they hold sway over the media landscape in contemporary America, which allows for increasingly radical and absurd ideas to gain credibility and support.

While a small digital community obsessed with conspiracy theories was initially imagined as X-files cosplayers, it has subsequently bled into the real world resulting in acts of violence. In 2009 the right-wing conspiracy theorist Richard Poplawski murdered several cops for trying to

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<sup>274</sup> Neiwert, *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*, 2149.

<sup>275</sup> Julia Carrie Wong, "What Is QAnon? Explaining the Bizarre Rightwing Conspiracy Theory," *The Guardian*, July 31, 2018; Jane Coaston, "#QAnon, the Scarily Popular pro-Trump Conspiracy Theory, Explained," *Vox* (New York, August 2018); Matt Taibbi, *Hate Inc.: Why Today's Media Makes Us Despise One Another*, Kindle (OR Books, 2019).

evict him from his home.<sup>276</sup> These murders, while not as widely covered as later mass shootings, would set the precedent that even minor altercations between right-wing extremists and law enforcement could result in police casualties, resulting in an unofficial policy of non-enforcement of White Nationalist and anti-state violence.<sup>277</sup> The standoff between the Federal government and Cliven Bundy in 2014 presented proof that the US government would not violently threaten the Far-Right on American soil. Between 2016 and 2019 there have been no subsequent significant acts of mass violence by US police against Alt-Right or Far-Right demonstrations. So long as they possessed enough weapons and media attention/support that it would damage the credibility of the US state the more legitimate mainstream right-wing institutions and organizations have done little to stop them.<sup>278</sup> In contrast, left-wing demonstrations face significant threats of physical violence or legal punishments from law enforcement organizations such as the Department of Homeland Security.<sup>279</sup>

Despite the rise of White Nationalist terrorists after the election of Barack Obama, there was little coverage or public belief that they posed a serious threat during the first term of the Obama presidency.<sup>280</sup> Even in the case of Poplawski, his Far-Right and white supremacist views were dismissed and ignored in the immediate aftermath of the incident, only publicly becoming known several weeks later.<sup>281</sup> Later when a right-wing extremist shot Gabrielle Giffords, a democratic congressperson and six others, it was the history of paranoid schizophrenia rather than the ideological motivations of the attack which were publicly acknowledged and condemned.

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<sup>276</sup> Neiwert, *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*, 1885.

<sup>277</sup> Reitman, "U.S. Law Enforcement Failed to See the Threat of White Nationalism. Now They Don't Know How to Stop It."

<sup>278</sup> Neiwert, *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*, 2551.

<sup>279</sup> Jessica Schulberg, "Trump Homeland Security Official Suggested Antifascists Were 'the Actual Threats,'" *Huffpost*, April 5, 2019.

<sup>280</sup> Neiwert, *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*, 1974.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, 1906.

Dylann Roof's murder of several African-American churchgoers in 2015 was initially dismissed as merely an act of mass violence rather than a hate crime until the press was presented with overwhelming evidence that he was a White Nationalist.<sup>282</sup>

As the early rhetoric of the Patriot movement demonstrates, the Far-Right of the early Obama years was less open with their racism.<sup>283</sup> They adopted a system of "colour-blindness" toward racism, rather than strict racist White Nationalism. Despite this "colour-blind" policy the Patriot movement and constitutional originalists often use the term "14th amendment citizens" to describe black Americans as second class citizens added to the country contrary to the founding father's wishes.<sup>284</sup> In practice, Patriot groups rarely kick white-nationalists out of the proverbial bed; though the movement grew extensively during Obama's presidency due to the racial resentment towards the first African-American president. Before the election of Trump and the subsequent Unite the Right rally a year later, colour-blind racism would be a common defence for Right-Wing groups, denying systemic racism while opposing explicit racism. In 2014 the limit for mainstream conservative support for Far-Right groups was explicit racist remarks, where they only denounced Cliven Bundy after he publicly made racist anti-black comments.<sup>285</sup> If the same event were to occur after 2017, it is unlikely racial comments or claims of sexual assault would lead to denouncements by conservative elites.

### **The Incubatory Period**

The massive social shift during 2008 and 2009 created the Alt-Right, the economic and political norms became untethered from the normality of the post-cold war period. While 9/11

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<sup>282</sup> Siegel, "Dylann Roof, 4chan, and the New Online Racism."

<sup>283</sup> Lyons, *Insurgent Supremacists: The U.S. Far Right's Challenge to State and Empire*, 1874.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, 2118.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, 2152.

shook the security of the American population, the cultural hegemony of mainstream American culture was not under significant threat. The Beijing Olympics in August of 2008 brought China to the forefront of the world stage, challenging American economic and political power in a way that had not been felt since the Cold War, a fear of the influence of Russia (which would worsen throughout the Crimean war, the Syrian Civil War and the 2016 election tampering). The financial crisis that occurred a month later liquidated and destroyed trillions of dollars of wealth and destabilized many communities. The subsequent debt crisis almost destroyed the stability of the EU and opened the door to Right-Wing euro-skeptics. This ongoing crisis within the EU would be further exacerbated by the following migrant crisis and the long-term demographic crisis facing many European states. The election of the first black president two months into the Financial crisis motivated the Far-Right into action. All the while 2008 was the first American election that was influenced by Twitter, Facebook and other forms of social media setting the precedence for all subsequent campaigns. The result was a perfect storm that shifted American politics.

The financial crisis and the election of Barack Obama are the moment of conception for the Alt-Right. Before the Fall of 2008, militias and white nationalism were on the decline, even *Taki* magazine, a Far-Right magazine connected to the Alternative Right, published an article on the rise and decline of the Alternative Right in the face of mainstream conservatism.<sup>286</sup> The marginal influence of militias changed with the election of Obama, which was followed by a drastic increase in hate crimes and pro-gun and nationalist movements. In 2007 there were 131 militia groups (armed right-wing nationalist groups) within the United States, which was down from its all-time peak of 868 in 1996, after Obama's election the number increased to 512 in 2009

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<sup>286</sup> Gottfried, "The Decline and Rise of the Alternative Right."

and 1360 by 2011.<sup>287</sup> The Alternative Right and the various Far-Right hate groups have subsequently multiplied even more and have spread across the Anglosphere into Canada and New Zealand.<sup>288</sup>

### ***The Tea-Party and the Overton Window***

The libertarian movement in the United States launched a grassroots campaign by Ron Paul during the 2008 Republican primaries which captured the attention and pocketbooks of a populist insurgency of Far-Right, racist and libertarian Republicans, but Ron Paul's campaign was a fringe candidacy with no real chance of winning the primary.<sup>289</sup> It was not until 2009 that a libertarian movement would gain the public spotlight. The Tea-Party movement started in earnest on February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009 after Rick Santelli, a Chicago trader called for an anti-tax protest.<sup>290</sup> Despite the initial appearance of the Tea-Party as a grassroots campaign, it was always an Astroturf movement (grassroots in appearance but privately funded by wealthy backers who are not actively involved in the day to day of the movement). Jane Meyer's work on the Koch Brothers highlights in detail how billions of dollars of political lobbying were hidden from the public through intermediaries to maintain the façade of grassroots activism.<sup>291</sup> In addition to the millions of dollars in funding, an addition of somewhere between several hundred million to over a billion dollars of in-kind advertising would be provided for the Tea Party through cable news broadcasts advocating for the

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<sup>287</sup> Neiwert, *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*, 2195.

<sup>288</sup> Shannon Carranco and Jon Milton, "Canada's New Far Right: A Trove of Private Chat Room Messages Reveals an Extremist Subculture," *The Globe and Mail*, April 27, 2019; Aja Romano, "How the Christchurch Shooter Used Memes to Spread Hate," *Vox*, March 16, 2019.

<sup>289</sup> Neiwert, *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*, 1766.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, 1797.

<sup>291</sup> Meyer, *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right*.

Tea-Party.<sup>292</sup> This habit would, in turn, help Trump campaign with effectively free advertising on major news outlets.

Despite the initial presentation of the Tea Party as a non-partisan movement by Fox News, the Tea-Party was fueled by Far-Right groups.<sup>293</sup> The rise of the Tea-Party brought in conspiracy groups which had been widely marginalized, such as the Birchers. The Tea-Party's growth was also correlated with the rise in right-wing militias.<sup>294</sup> The mainstream Republican party rejected advances to include the Tea-Party in 2009,<sup>295</sup> as it was initially deemed too radical. The inclusion and attempted infiltration of the Neo-Nazi group, Stormfront, did little to provide the movement with mainstream acceptability.<sup>296</sup> This populist groundswell and insertion of the Far-Right made the mainstream Republican party apprehensive of the tea party, resulting in the rejection of the movement during 2009. The Tea-Party was viewed as a threat to mainstream neoliberal/neoconservative Republicans, but functioned within the party, not against the party.<sup>297</sup> This status quo position contrasts starkly with how Trump and his Alternative Right supporters rejected mainstream Republicans.

As with groups such as the Tea-Party, the Alternative Right focused on the feeling of alienation from both mainstream politics and culture, which complemented the existing fears of economic alienation from the globalized economy that had been present since the advent of NAFTA (North American Free Trade Association). The movement funnelled this resentment and anger towards wedge issues which would further garner support from moderates who would be

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<sup>292</sup> Neiwert, *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*, 1820.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, 1852.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, 2206.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, 2270.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*, 2280.

<sup>297</sup> Skocpol and Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 156.

apprehensive of the Alternative Right's Neo-Nazis and White Nationalists. The White Nationalist support during the Obama administration was rising, between 2012 and 2017 the number of white nationalists on Twitter increased by 600%.<sup>298</sup> Drawing upon the perceived sense of injustice that affirmative action policies and emancipatory political movements of feminism or Black Lives Matter (BLM), the Far-Right, with support from Fox news, Info Wars, and later Breitbart targeted identity politics as its primary political concern. The use of these racial and anti-minority wedge issues goes beyond the politics of typical right-wing political campaigns by fully embracing populist politics. According to Ruth Wodak, contemporary right-wing populism is defined by its use of political minorities as a scapegoat for the current problems of the state, which manifests into a politics of fear and secondly appeals to anti-intellectualism and a return to pre-modernist thinking.<sup>299</sup>

The Tea-Party presented every challenge to the status quo as a source of radical politics, increasing taxes to reduce the debt was socialism; Obamacare was national socialism.<sup>300</sup> Members of the Far-Right pushed for an opening of the Overton window to normalize white nationalism and anti-democratic politics. Early tea party slogans were filled with *ad hitlerum* attacks on Obama in which everyone was labelled an authoritarian or a fascist, which helped stifle later critiques of Trump's authoritarianism, resulting in a situation of "a boy who cried wolf." The Tea-Party was happy to close the Overton window once it included the Tea-Party agenda of a geriatric libertarian right-wing platform. The last thing that the Tea-Party base wanted was a real revolution either from the Left or Right. The economic demands of the Tea-Party were ideological lines in the sand; in contrast, the eventual Alternative Right policies were not fixated on free markets as an end in

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<sup>298</sup> Luke O'Brien, *The Most Dangerous Form of American Extremism* (The Atlantic, 2017).

<sup>299</sup> Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean* (London: SAGE, 2015), 2.

<sup>300</sup> Skocpol and Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 75.

themselves. Instead, they understood that economic policies would allow for cultural victories on a civilizational level rather than an economic one.

### ***The Internet: 4Chan and Reddit***

One of the most frequent questions asked in the literature on the Alternative Right is “how a group of suburban white men became radicalized?” For the outside observer we can see how a white man born into a community known for its racist legacy could become a white nationalist or a Klansmen, but how does a teenager in the suburbs become a radicalized member of a Far-Right hate group? The dominant answer within the literature is that it occurred in online communities such as 4Chan or various subreddits<sup>301</sup>. One significant technological distinction of the Alternative Right movement that separates it from both the Paleoconservatives and earlier white supremacist groups is the reliance on digital technology and social media. Whereas the earlier Far-Right movements were dominated by traditionalist and conservative values, which relied on geographically situated communities, the Alternative Right built on the deterritorialization of the internet to emerge, both in the United States and across Europe.

Early internet culture relied on enthusiast forums which centred around an existing interest outside of the internet. These groups typically coalesced around gaming, anime or TV shows such as the X-Files. Enthusiast forums were almost unanimously driven by anonymous avatars opposed to the social media profiles which use the users’ real name and face as is generally found on social

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<sup>301</sup> Brian Feldman, “Inside /Pol/, the 4chan Politics Board Shouted Out in Minneapolis Gun Video,” *New York Magazine* (New York, November 2015); Siegel, “Dylann Roof, 4chan, and the New Online Racism”; Nagle, *Kill All Normies: Online Culture Wars from 4Chan and Tumblr to Trump and the Alt-Right*; animemoemoney, “A Quick History of 4chan and the Rightest Who Killed It (Guest Post),” Noahpinion, 2015, <https://noahpinionblog.blogspot.ca/2015/05/a-quick-history-of-4chan-and-online.html>; Keegan Hanks, “How Reddit Became a Worse Black Hole of Violent Racism than Stormfront,” *Gawker*, March 2015.

media sites such as Facebook.<sup>302</sup> The most infamous of these communities was 4Chan, the seedy Mos Eisley cantina of the internet; one could see anything if one knew where and how to look. 4Chan included but was not limited to pedophiles, gamers, anime fans, neo-nazis, men's rights advocates, pornography enthusiasts to anything popular but not socially accepted.<sup>303</sup> While other forums had strict moderator enforcement to maintain decorum, such as vulgar language or racism, but as one poster on 4chan said: "On 4chan you can be banned for being off-topic, but not for making racist posts."<sup>304</sup> Moot, the founder of 4chan waged a losing war against racist posts, particularly those found on /n/ or /new/ (the news boards), which would fill up with racist posts and "red-pill" content.<sup>305</sup> Over time the racist comments transitioned from the language of 4chan into "plain-text" right-wing racist rants. Despite initial attempts to contain right-wing and racist thought, the culture on 4chan moved further and further to the right.

Although 4chan was known initially for Anonymous, a decentralized anarchist group known for opposing authoritarian groups and addressing injustice as a vigilante group,<sup>306</sup> it began to take on a more reactionary and self-described "anti-SJW" politics. Movements such as Anonymous captured the anxiety and desire to change society for thousands of teenagers rebelling against the hypocrisy and injustice within modern society. David Kushner's expose on one Anonymous member, Deric Lostutter, who was responsible for revealing documents on the cover-up of the Steubenville rapists in 2012, paints the picture of Anonymous as a group of morally grey internet Robin Hoods. These morally grey Robin Hoods would be replaced by more radical anti-"SJW"/feminist hacktivists that formed the Alt-Right. The idea that any group within the

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<sup>302</sup> animemoemoney, "A Quick History of 4chan and the Rightest Who Killed It (Guest Post)."

<sup>303</sup> Neiwert, *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*, 3690.

<sup>304</sup> animemoemoney, "A Quick History of 4chan and the Rightest Who Killed It (Guest Post)."

<sup>305</sup> A reference to the red pill within the film, the Matrix, which allows Neo to see the truth

<sup>306</sup> David Kushner, "Anonymous Vs. Steubenville," *Rolling Stone*, November 2013.

contemporary Alt-Right or broader Alternative Right would target a group of rich white men for sexually assaulting women is almost absurd, which demonstrates just how quickly these internet communities radicalized during the 2010s.

While 4Chan is the most infamous community due to its highly radicalized Far-right community, Reddit became a site for the Alt-Right merely for its size. Reddit is composed of thousands of different subreddits, which are mini-forums for various interests such as TV, Star Wars, cute animal photos, world news and anything else under the sun. Unlike 4Chan, reddit is akin to Twitter where different political, cultural and national groups share the website, which is why practically every political belief has its subreddit. While some of the most significant communities have hundreds of thousands to millions of members, most communities are tiny, focusing in on a very particular interest or meme. Therefore a subreddit with over 3000 members would place it in the top 2% of all subreddits (as of 2015), this left plenty of room for small niche to hate groups to exist without becoming censored.

Unlike Facebook and to some extent Twitter, Reddit accounts are typically anonymous, which means that views that are unacceptable to share on Facebook because one's work colleagues or family members could see, are easily expressed on reddit. The hate communities on Reddit did not take off until the middle of the Obama administration, for example, the anti-black "GreatApes" subreddit appeared in November 2013, with the purpose of the subreddit to collect stereotypical racist news stories about African-American violence and crime.<sup>307</sup> Within a year this subreddit had expanded across forty-six new subreddits known as the Chimpire, each of which covered a different element of racist news. Despite the proliferation of violent videos and images that can

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<sup>307</sup> Hankes, "How Reddit Became a Worse Black Hole of Violent Racism than Stormfront."

only be understood as hate speech, a user is not allowed to advocate for violence on Reddit, or their account or subreddit will be banned, which is how some of these subreddits were eventually banned. Unlike ISIS or other Jihadist groups online, white supremacist content typically overlaps with elected Republican officials, which is why Twitter refuses to ban their content automatically.<sup>308</sup> For white supremacist content to be banned from twitter, it must be manually targeted and labelled as hate speech that violates the user's agreement with the website.

Some attempts have been made to create Far-Right communities outside of Reddit and Twitter, but they have been a mixed success at best (Voat is one example, a mostly defunct Reddit clone founded in an attempt to migrate away from Reddit in 2014 after Reddit began to police the harassment on many of their subreddits, including /r/FatPeopleHate).<sup>309</sup> After the influence of Reddit and the Alt-Right subreddits were made apparent to the broader public, the moderators have taken limited actions and banned some of the more violent subreddits. By early 2017 most of the significant hate groups and Alt-Right subreddits were banned from the platform. As with almost all Alternative Right content online, the difference between the radical cores of the Alt-Right and the more moderate online posts across the more "moderate" spectrum of the Alternative Right is that the Alt-Lite views which intersect with Republican party policies are given a pass.<sup>310</sup>

## **The Appearance of Alternative Right political Theory**

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<sup>308</sup> Joseph Cox and Jason Kobler, "Why Won't Twitter Treat White Supremacy like ISIS? Because It Would Mean Banning Some Republicans Too.," *Motherboard* (New York, April 2019).

<sup>309</sup> Matt Reynolds, "The Wheels Are Falling off the Alt-Right's Version of the Internet," *Wired* (London, July 2018); Adi Robertson, "Welcome to Voat: Reddit Killer, Troll Haven, and the Strange Face of Internet Free Speech," *The Verge*, July 2015.

<sup>310</sup> Cox and Kobler, "Why Won't Twitter Treat White Supremacy like ISIS? Because It Would Mean Banning Some Republicans Too."

The other significant development during this period was the creation of an Alternative Right canon. Between 2007 and 2013 the NeoReactionary movement emerged online, primarily on libertarian blogs and forums suggesting that the compatibility between democracy and freedom was reaching a breaking point. The theorists of the so-called Dark Enlightenment utilized the technological developments in academic research that Google and internet databases made possible for the first time in human history, the mass proliferation of academic and historical texts over the internet and the rapid dissemination of radical texts without intellectual gatekeeping.<sup>311</sup> Before the advent of Google Books or Google scholar, it would be incredibly time consuming and expensive to access books at university archives or from fringe publishing houses as historians of the American Far-Right have repeatedly demonstrated the publication of Far-Right texts required extensive mailing lists and on the ground organization.<sup>312</sup> For a 16 year old in the 1980's living in a small town they would have to actively search for someone within the Far-Right to explain to them who a figure like Julius Evola was, then manage to find one of the few English translations of Evola either by going to a research university library or finding a Far-Right book vendor. By 2012 a 16-year-old would be presented with a detailed reading list highlighting which texts make up the NeoReactionary canon, what Alternative Right thinkers and Youtube channels they could follow every week and find several active communities to join all within 5 minutes of Googling "anti-white racism."

The development radically changed the accessibility of Far-Right political thought. While an academic text from a reputable publisher will provide citations and an extensive bibliography of suggested readings, it pales in comparison to the convenience of the early Alternative Right

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<sup>311</sup> Yarvin, "A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations: Chapter 2: The American Rebellion."

<sup>312</sup> Zeskind, *Blood and Politics: The History of the White Nationalist Movement from the Margins to the Mainstream*, 31.

blogs during the incubatory period. When reading Curtis Yarvin's blog, one will find public access to every source, term and suggested reading through a hyperlink.<sup>313</sup> His work is still filled with factual errors and logical fallacies, but for the non-academic reader, his work could be shared easily online.

Compounding the growth of these blogs and Far-Right accessibility was the proliferation of English language translations of Alternative Right texts from Europe. With Arktos, Counter Current publishing and Washington Summit Publishing all releasing new and translated copies of right-wing texts online and in eBook editions these radical ideas became infinitely more accessible. Rather than place a mail order for an obscure text, a right-wing organizer could order one on his e-Reader and have it ready to go in seconds. As the Alternative Right grew in infamy during the contemporary period, these texts would provide a legitimating authenticity and legacy to latch on to that internet bloggers and twitter avatars never could.

### **The Contemporary Period**

Just as the Alternative Right's Incubatory period began in August of 2008, the Alt-Right as a defined movement started in the fall of 2014, with the broader Alternative Right existing since the '90s within the Anglosphere. In 2014 the Islamic State was on the rise, global fears over Ebola were sensationalized and gaining wall to wall coverage, and the Republicans were walking into another electoral victory in the midterms.<sup>314</sup> Despite these events gaining massive popularity, it would be the 2014 National Policy Institute conference in Budapest and a violent debate within the video game community, known as Gamergate that would herald in the age of the Alt-Right.

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<sup>313</sup> Yarvin, "A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations: Chapter 1: The Red Pill."

<sup>314</sup> Clare Malone, "From Where I Sit, The Trump Era Began in 2014," *FiveThirtyEight* (New York, February 2018).

## ***Budapest 2014***

The National Policy Institute (NPI) in its current iteration is Richard Spencer's think tank organization for providing legitimacy for the Alt-Right, providing an intellectual face for White Nationalism. In October 2014, NPI attempted to gather American and European members of the Far-Right in Budapest. The combination of this attempted conference and the concurrent Gamergate incident marks the start of the contemporary Alt-Right. The meeting was intended to gather the nascent Alt-Right and Right-wing populists within an academic environment. While the event was a complete failure, after the venue hosting the conference cancelled, the Hungarian prime minister used every legal means to prevent the gathering.<sup>315</sup> Jobbik the Far-Right Hungarian nationalist party cut connections with the conference, and Richard Spencer was barred from the Schengen states within the EU for three years after being arrested by Hungarian police on October 3<sup>rd</sup>.<sup>316</sup>

The line up for the conference was a who is who of the intellectual influences of the Alt-Right. The speakers for the conference included: Alexander Dugin (The Eurasian Fascist who founded the National Bolshevik party and has close connections with the Kremlin as a chief ideologist), John Morgan (The editor-in-chief of Arktos media, the primary publisher and translating company for European New Right and Fascists texts including the works of Julius Evola, Alexander Dugin and Guillaume Faye, Arktos was also a co-sponsor of the conference), and Jared Taylor (The founder of *American Renaissance*, an academic journal for White Nationalist articles), in addition to other prominent members of the European and American Far-

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<sup>315</sup> Heidi Beirich, "White Identity Worldwide" (Montgomery Alabama, November 2014); Hatewatch Staff, "White Nationalists Gather in Hungary, Richard Spencer Arrested," Southern Poverty Law Center, 2014, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2014/10/06/white-nationalists-gather-hungary-richard-spencer-arrested>.

<sup>316</sup> Hatewatch Staff, "White Nationalists Gather in Hungary, Richard Spencer Arrested."

Right.<sup>317</sup> In contrast, later attempts to unite the right on both sides of the Atlantic would be met with significantly more (though still limited) success when organized by the more Alt-Lite figure of Steve Bannon.<sup>318</sup>

After the failed conference the Alt-Right began rapidly expanding its reach and popularity online. Although not directly caused by the failed NPI event, the transition from the intellectualism to the populism of the Alternative Right, especially in the Anglosphere occurred after 2014. As members of the NeoReactionary movement known as the Dark Enlightenment noticed, the intellectualism and salon atmosphere of the Alt-Right transitioned into populist meme-based discussions throughout 2014.<sup>319</sup> The atmosphere of the Far-Right focused less on intellectual arguments that dominated the 2007-2014 period for the Alt-Right's online communities and instead became almost uncontrollable hate sites. The primary theoretical contributors to the Alternative Right reached their peak, with few significant canonical texts appearing after 2014 such as *Leviathan and its Enemies* by the then deceased Samuel Francis.<sup>320</sup> While the rise of militias and the Far-Right during the incubatory period was rapid, the reporting on their growth and political presence was marginal in comparison to the post-2014 coverage, yet other than some selective coverage on Gamergate, mostly as a novelty, these online-centric hate groups faced little opposition. Before 2017 few of the Alternative Right and Alt-Right subreddits, youtube channels and Twitter accounts faced significant deplatforming. The electoral success of the European Far-Right, the emergence of Trump within the Republican Primaries, the popularity of Right-Wing

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<sup>317</sup> Beirich, "White Identity Worldwide."

<sup>318</sup> Maia de la Baume and Silvia Sciorilli Borrelli, "Steve Bannon's Stuttering European Adventure," *Politico*, April 19, 2019.

<sup>319</sup> Land, "The Alt-Right Is Dead."

<sup>320</sup> Samuel T. Francis, *Leviathan and Its Enemies: Mass Organization and Managerial Power in Twentieth-Century America*, Ebook (Arlington, Virginia: Washington Summit Publishers, 2016).

online communities and the outright racism against the Black Lives Matter movement all exploded in popularity around the fall of 2014.

### *Gamergate*

One of the most infamous events in the formation of the Alt-Right was the “debate” within the video game community during 2014 and 2015 known as Gamergate. Gamergate started as a response to the positive feedback that female indie game developer Zoe Quinn received for her game *Depression Quest*. After the initial feedback, her ex-boyfriend launched a near 10,000-word response to her work and their relationship, alleging that the positive feedback for her game was due to a sexual relationship between her and Nathan Grayson, a journalist at *Kotaku*.<sup>321</sup> This post led to a witch hunt against women in the video game industry, feminist critics and those opposed to “ethics in games journalism.” While the video game industry was notorious for low ethical standards when it came to reviews, with widespread and almost continuous allegations of financially incentivizing positive reviews, this was overwhelmingly due to the oligopoly of publishers colluding with the oligopoly of major video game-centric news and review outlets. Reviews for indie games made by individuals or small teams had never seen widespread corruption because the financial incentive was rarely significant enough to justify bribery, considering the scale of an indie game’s budget of a couple hundred thousand dollars at the most compared with a AAA game studio producing games that cost tens of millions of dollars. The corruption in the games industry was due to monopolistic and oligopolistic practices within the highly capitalist video game industry, not sexual favours between indie game producers and reviewers.

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<sup>321</sup> Noreen Malone, “Zoe and the Trolls,” *New York Magazine* (New York, July 2017).

Much of the video game community had built up a persecution complex over the previous two decades before Gamergate, as video games had only very recently received first amendment protection as a recognized art within the United States. American activist Jack Thompson had previously led a campaign against violence and sex in video games between 1993 and 2008, and film critic Roger Ebert had famously declared that video games could never be an art form for the last eight years of his life. Most reviews of games leading up to Gamergate had more in common with consumer reports than with artistic critiques. One of the prime targets during the height of #Gamergate was Anita Sarkeesian, known for her YouTube channel on misogynistic tropes within video games,<sup>322</sup> which were met with intense backlash. The audience mistook critique for an attempt to ban misogyny within video games. Any criticism of a video game which included even the smallest feminist critique was then interpreted as oppressive thought police trying to keep the gamer community down.

The response by the #Gamergate community was clear and overwhelming. In 2014 Quinn, Sarkessian and other women or feminists within the video game industry received death threats, graphic abuse including depictions of rape, and various acts of cyber terrorism including doxing or hacking and leaking their private files.<sup>323</sup> After these initial attacks, members of the Alt-Right such as Milo Yiannopoulos joined the bandwagon, arguing that:

I might be a homo, but I still believe the strong should protect the weak and gamers have very little social capital and a large, well-funded and tightly coordinated industry of left-wing liars talking shit about them constantly.<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>322</sup> Simon Parkin, "Gamergate: A Scandal Erupts in the Video-Game Community," *The New Yorker* (New York, October 2014).

<sup>323</sup> Malone, "Zoe and the Trolls."

<sup>324</sup> Beauchamp, "Milo Yiannopoulos: Breitbart's Star Provocateur and Trump Champion, Explained."

Another member of the bandwagon was Mike Cernovich, who was the Lawyer who defended those targeting Zoe Quinn and the other women targeted during Gamergate;<sup>325</sup> he has since become a vocal Alt-Right figure who puts forward male tribalism and anti-feminist politics. The tactics and strategies used within Gamergate would set the stage for further politics by the Alternative Right, by taking “ethics in games journalism” and extending it into a more significant metaphysical battle for their existence against a threat.

Milo Yiannopoulos presented Gamergate as a part of a more significant culture war, positioning the so-called "hardcore" gamers as apart of an oppressed minority which is unable to express their opinions and are being censored by liberal media.<sup>326</sup> What is shocking about Yiannopoulos's article "The Authoritarian Left Was on Course to win the Culture Wars Then Along Came #Gamergate" is not that he takes the side of the hyper-masculine community, but how he targets the opposition to Gamergate and describes them as neo-Nazis, rapists, liars discredited by the press and scammers.<sup>327</sup> In hindsight, the group Yiannopoulos describes matches those he campaigned with during 2016, despite the irony, what makes this observation relevant is that it demonstrates how Yiannopoulos along with other members of the broader Alt-Lite transitioned into more radical right-wing positions between #Gamergate and the Trump presidency. They shifted from the “moderate” edge of the Alternative Right spectrum and moved closer to the radical cores. Even though Yiannopoulos openly criticized video gamers before 2014, the Gamergate

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<sup>325</sup> Malone, “Zoe and the Trolls.”

<sup>326</sup> Yiannopoulos, “The Authoritarian Left Was on Course to Win the Culture Wars... Then along Came #Gamergate.”

<sup>327</sup> Ibid.

movement proved to be too valuable a movement to ignore, which is why in September 2014 he, and Breitbart, entered into the political consciousness of gamers.<sup>328</sup>

Another aspect of the video game community that bled into the Alt-Right during Gamergate was the understanding of an ideological core with a nearly encyclopedic knowledge of the culture/movement and an opportunistic fringe. Within the video game community behind Gamergate, the concept of gamer meant someone who participated in the video game culture, played violent games such as shooters, grand strategy games or difficult console or PC games. To be a gamer one needed to be a member of the same internet communities, play the same games, watch the same movies and perform the "gamer" lifestyle. Demographically the proportion of people who play video games which could be called a gamer has decreased, with the rise of mobile games which can be played on iPhones (such as Pokemon Go or Candy Crush). With the expansion of arthouse style indie games and a more inclusive selection of games, the barriers to entry have dropped which has allowed more people to play video games. As with the Alt-Right vs Alt-Lite and the NeoReactionary-Alt-Right debates or the concept of white-nationalism, this is one of purity and intensity.<sup>329</sup> What was once an "elite" group with a cultural tradition has been "watered down" by a broader community who lack that tradition, at least in the eyes of the "core" exclusionist community. The private boys club could no longer be maintained, and those ruining the status quo must be removed. This boys only club is further fueled by a persecution complex found within the gaming community which helps justify the logic of the majority being oppressed by the minority, despite little empirical evidence to suggest this.

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<sup>328</sup> Milo Yiannopoulos, "Feminist Bullies Tearing the Video Game Industry Apart," *Breitbart.Com*, September 1, 2014.

<sup>329</sup> Anissimov, "Why the Replacement of Neoreaction with the Alt Right Was a Good Thing"; Land, "The Alt-Right Is Dead"; Lees, "What Gamergate Should Have Taught Us about the 'Alt-Right.'"

Gamergate allowed for the spectrum of Alternative Right views to gain widespread acknowledgement, something that Steve Bannon became keenly aware of.<sup>330</sup> The Alternative Right was united in their opposition to feminism and progressive politics in games, this by itself was an easy sell to the public. A video game that is focused on addressing the affective experience of a depressed person searching for a way out of alienation is not a fun game to play, but it is an artistic game. By isolating the threats to the artists rather than the broader community, and by dog whistling that these artists deserved the threats, figures like Yiannopoulos could normalize the radical right-wing positions while drawing upon radical actions.<sup>331</sup> Just as with Cliven Bundy, the Far-Right took the public stage and argued that the core philosophy is right, but the specifics argued by the ideological cores were at times too far. This motivated the radicals within the Alternative Right with implicit support but kept the media personalities safe from direct quotation as their literal statements were okay to share on social media or mainstream cable news channels. As the Alternative Right has discovered, it is only when some makes absolutely undefendable comments that they will face serious public shame, but the scrutiny will be minor when it is an implicit dog whistle arguing the same core idea.

### ***The Republican Primaries***

What had started as a coup against the party leadership and moderately conservative Republicans by the Tea-Party movement in 2010 and 2012, had reached its apex in the 2016 Republican Primaries, as the saying goes, “First as tragedy, then as farce.” The uneasy coalition between the grassroots Tea Party communities and the Astroturfed ones broke by late 2015. The somewhat concealed Koch Brothers’ Kochtopus (their collection of Super PACS) became apparent

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<sup>330</sup> Morris, *American Dharma*.

<sup>331</sup> Yiannopoulos, “The Authoritarian Left Was on Course to Win the Culture Wars... Then along Came #Gamergate”; Yiannopoulos, “Feminist Bullies Tearing the Video Game Industry Apart.”

to those following the primaries with all the major candidates campaigning for their war chest,<sup>332</sup> with two exceptions Kasich and Trump, both defining themselves in opposition to their backing. The Republican brand had been eroding since the Bush administration, declining approval for the party and the influence of large donors forced the presidential primary candidates to position themselves as outsiders rather than party insiders.

While it became apparent in 2015 and 2016 that the radical right had issues with the mainstream GOP, the insurgency started during the Bush years as the racist right had abandoned the mainstream GOP. The influence of party elites, which had been eroded by the Tea-Party insurgency, met its logical conclusion as the mainstream Republican candidates such as Jeb Bush was outflanked by former Tea-Party members now turned mainstream candidate like Marco Rubio and to a lesser extent Ted Cruz. When the Republican National Committee introduced pro-immigration policies, they were denounced as Cuckservatives, opening up space for the Alternative Right's anti-immigration policies to gain widespread support as the party leadership lost control. The Alternative Right spent most of the primaries attacking them for being soft and unsupportive of the white supremacy issues that they had dog whistled for the previous generation.<sup>333</sup>

The 2016 election also introduced the public to the idea of fake news. Despite decades of academic proof that news was biased, and that journalism was not capable of objective coverage, much of the pundit community was caught off guard. The right-wing politics of Fox News was routinely presented as a blemish in the "otherwise balanced news coverage" as it had spent the

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<sup>332</sup> Ashley Parker, "'Koch Primary' Tests Hopefuls In the G.O.P.," *The New York Times*, January 20, 2015.

<sup>333</sup> Neiwert, *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*, 3627.

previous eight years presenting the Tea-Party and other Far-Right groups as moderate centrists<sup>334</sup>. What was less apparent was the influence of social media to provide political echo chambers for highly political news with no factual basis. The earlier fringe conspiracy programs by Alex Jones and other talk radio stations became more frequent and normalized as Fox news failed to provide positive coverage for Trump and the Alternative Right.

As Trump entered the Republican primaries, he was initially faced with scorn and derision as commentators quickly dismissed his chances within the mainstream press, but the Alternative Right quickly endorsed him. By September of 2015 David Duke, Jared Taylor, Peter Brimelow, Patrick Buchanan and Richard Spencer had all endorse Donald Trump publicly.<sup>335</sup> Even if the Alt-Right was still mostly online and out of the public spotlight, most of the prominent American Alternative Right leaders rallied behind Trump before he had widespread support.

### *Trump Victorious*

Trump won the 2016 election to national surprise. An electoral college victory relies on winner takes all state victories, blowouts in predominately urban and liberal states such as California and New York value as much as a minor victory in these states, which led to Hillary Clinton winning the popular vote but losing the electoral college. The traditionally Democratic states of Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Michigan all went for Trump and became the centre of the infamous narrative after Trump's victory. While the Alt-Right figures such as Yiannopolous never campaigned within the American heartland before Trump's electoral win, the messages of Trump and the Alternative Right struck a chord. Responding to both the failure of the Left, embodied by the Democratic party, to provide an emancipatory politics for labour and the outright corruption

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<sup>334</sup> Skocpol and Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 136.

<sup>335</sup> Neiwert, *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*, sec. 4343.

of mainstream politicians on both sides of the aisle, the Alternative Right's attacks on the intersectional left and Hillary Clinton gained far more popular support than political scientists and pundits imagined possible.<sup>336</sup> Steve Bannon, who came from a blue-collar Catholic Democratic household in Virginia, as with many Trump surrogates responded to the failures of the Democratic and Republican party elites to maintain the middle-class values and economic status after the implementation of NAFTA and other neoliberal policies.<sup>337</sup> The result was the tail wagging the dog, the electoral shift within several swing states justified the rising ideology of the Alternative Right and the so-called deplorables across the board and elevated their influence into mainstream politics.

The Alternative Right's rise to prominence within the American consciousness could not have been possible without the precariously employed and unemployed middle class of the United States voting for Trump in crucial swing states. However, there is little empirical evidence to show that these voters were indeed part of the radical core of the Alternative Right; they may have had MAGA hats, but they were not reading Curtis Yarvin or making their own Pepe the frog memes. The Alt-Right had a significant social media presence, but the radical core of the movement was not significant enough to be the deciding factor in the election, though the popularity of the broader movement may have. The odds of Trump's victory were at best unlikely and at worst deemed a "once in 200 years" event given the 2% odds that many mainstream outlets were giving him.<sup>338</sup> Despite this, as with the Tea Party in 2010,<sup>339</sup> the lack of ground game was ignored by mainstream media coverage after the election, with the specific Alt-Right media figures gaining popularity and

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<sup>336</sup> Trevor Martin, "Dissecting Trump's Most Rabid Online Following," *FiveThirtyEight*, March 2017.

<sup>337</sup> Green, *Devil's Bargain: Steve Bannon, Donald Trump, and the Storming of the Presidency*, 301.

<sup>338</sup> Josh Katz, "Who Will Be President?," *The New York Times*, November 8, 2016.

<sup>339</sup> Skocpol and Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 159.

infamy rather than the appeal of the Alternative Right more broadly in the wake of several decades of wage stagnation, conservative and conspiratorial media pressure and resentment towards Hillary Clinton. Previously fringe figures such as Richard Spencer and Milo Yiannopoulos were given a public spotlight and platform that would have been unthinkable two years earlier, and the normalization of the Alternative Right began in earnest.

### **The Future of the Alt-Right**

While the three periods of the Alternative Right examined in this chapter are porous with extensive continuity, the growth in the movement within each phase has been exponential. What was first some radical fringe figures in the 1980s and 1990s established a space both online and within the Republican party and in the broader anglosphere. The ideas and concepts put forward in the incubatory period are purposefully radical, and even the most optimistic theorist of the Alternative Right would not have predicted the growth of the movement from a small fringe within the Far-Right community to a significant political movement within North American politics with widespread recognition. With the electoral success of the movement and its allies throughout the contemporary period, it could no longer live in the shadows away from public discourse. The contemporary period saw the movement gain mainstream acceptability radicalizing more young men within North American society. This period came to a crescendo in August 2017 in the aftermath of the Unite the Right rally which saw the actively Alt-Right members of Trump's administration being fired.<sup>340</sup> Despite the setbacks in August 2017, the movement has not

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<sup>340</sup> Sophie Tatum, "Gorka: Bannon, Others 'Systematically Undermined,'" *CNN*, August 26, 2017.

disappeared, just disengaged from street level protests, returning to the cultural and digital activism that Alt-Right thinkers such as Curtis Yarvin suggested during the incubatory period.<sup>341</sup>

It is likely that the current trends within the Alternative Right will continue into the near future, with the normalization of many of their ideas and platforms within mainstream American life. While it is unclear if the Alternative Right will subsume the Republican Party or if the Republican party will incorporate their ideas into their platform while maintaining the existing power structure, it is undeniable that the Alternative Right has shifted the ideological positions of right-wing politics within the Anglosphere.

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<sup>341</sup> Yarvin, “A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations: Chapter 10: The Mandate of Heaven.”

## **Part 2: The Political Theorists Who Influenced the Alt-Right**

While the first question of this text is how the divergent political theory traditions of the Alt-Right have coalesced into a new reactionary political ideology, this lacks a clear narrative for the reader to process this development. Gathering a selection of different ideological positions and creating some coherent narrative for the reader is difficult, should the theories be introduced in chronological order, starting with the Post-War Fascists and European New Right before moving to the present online literature. This may at first appear the logical progression for the next four chapters, but this ignores how this ideology has emerged as a significant political force within North America. Few if any members of the movement picked up work on Julius Evola or Samuel Francis then watched the self-help youtube videos of Jordan Peterson as the tipping point leading to their acts of terrorism. Instead, this text will progress through the process of radicalization just as the radicalized alt-right youth experience, first with the online “non-political” right-wing, then progressing through the Neoreactionary influenced works which incorporate race science and a radically anti-democratic conception of the state. At this point, theoretical radicalized youth would further incorporate the existing global political theories of the European New Right, and the classical American White Nationalist literature, neither body of literature, would be encountered by accident and are deliberate choices by radicalized right-wing youth, especially for those too young to remember the Clinton or Bush administrations. While not all members of the Alt-Right are introduced to this literature in this order, this provides the inquisitive reader outside of the Far-Right the opportunity to slowly wade into the ideological deep-end, rather than jump directly in.

## **Chapter 4: The Grey Tribe: South Park Libertarians, Jordan Peterson, the Radicalization of Young Men**

### **Introduction**

The radical cores of the Alt-Right, white nationalists and the broader reactionary far-right movement did not emerge from the void as a political entity; rather it germinated over the better part of two decades within online communities that were initially created to share their mutual enjoyment of popular culture and “edgy” commentary on current affairs. The Grey Tribe is the first stepping stone for many within the Alternative Right and the most important pathway for young men.

Rather than limit the Alternative Right to the small ideological core built by Richard Spencer, this chapter will use a broader definition to capture the movement. The Alternative Right is defined by three axioms, the first is the right to difference, the second is the primacy of cultural metapolitics, and the third is an individualistic hierarchal conception of human society. The right to difference is the right to develop a culture away from the influences of globalization and multiculturalism, which is a politics of segregation and exit. For policy, this means ending non-white immigration, maintaining traditional gender roles and retreating from liberal globalization wherever possible. For the Alternative Right, this could be summarized by the phrase “if you cannot beat them then leave them.” The primacy of cultural metapolitics is the fixation on (mass popular) culture as the fundamental axiom of politics, just as class struggle defines Marxism or individual freedoms and property rights defines liberalism. To change public policy, the culture must change first, which is why the Alternative Right is so fixated on changing sites of culture such as the university and popular media. The individualistic hierarchical conception of human society is typically argued through the negation of equality and egalitarian politics, and the

promotion of tribalism and hypercompetitive survival of the fittest rhetoric. Unlike liberalism's *tabula rasa* argument that all men are created equal, the Alternative Right understands human capacity to be genetically determined, which results in a social Darwinist framework. To understand how and why the Alt-Right and the Alternative Right emerged, one must first understand the ideological and cultural development of the Grey Tribe and the Far-Right mantra of Andrew Breitbart that "politics is downstream of culture,"<sup>342</sup> which is one of the most precise articulations of the primacy of cultural metapolitics within contemporary society.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the fundamental question of how a 16-year-old from a stable family without significant trauma, a modicum of economic privilege and social stability devotes their life to terrorist attacks against women and racial minorities? The answer is one of radicalization, both through the active work of existing Far-Right thinkers and through a culture fundamentally motivated by individualism, shock humour, internalized persecution complexes and toxic hypermasculinity. While the different targets of these radicals may vary, the origin of this dis-organized community is consistently the same. The common thread between many of the terrorist and far-right personalities is a shared origin in the Grey Tribe, a "non-political" community that positioned itself away from Red State and Blue State America during the Bush and early Obama administrations.

The Grey Tribe is the term used to coin the emergent "third-way" within American political life by the blogger Scott Alexander.<sup>343</sup> The Grey Tribe (emphasis on the term Tribe, which becomes a codeword for race in Alternative Right Literature) occupies a mixture of "red tribe" and "blue tribe" mentalities (named after the colours of the Republicans and Democrats respectively). Unlike

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<sup>342</sup> Green, *Devil's Bargain: Steve Bannon, Donald Trump, and the Storming of the Presidency*, sec. 162.

<sup>343</sup> Alexander, "I Can Tolerate Anything Except the Outgroup."

the NeoReactionaries, European New Right, White Nationalists or the subsequent Alt-lite/Right, the Grey Tribe did not consider itself to be right-wing or even particularly political. As Scott Alexander put it in 2014:

There is a partly-formed attempt to spin off a Grey Tribe typified by libertarian political beliefs, Dawkins-style atheism, vague annoyance that the question of gay rights even comes up, eating paleo, drinking Soylent, calling in rides on Uber, reading lots of blogs, calling American football “sportsball”, getting conspicuously upset about the War on Drugs and the NSA, and listening to filk – but for our current purposes this is a distraction and they can safely be considered part of the Blue Tribe most of the time<sup>344</sup>

While the exact timeline of the “Grey Tribe” is unnecessary, it started in earnest in the 1990s with the rise of cyberculture. The Grey Tribe, despite being an American idea is an international community within the Anglosphere, and more broadly the English-speaking digital world. Prominent figures within the Grey Tribe are often international figures who fall within the vague in-between space between the genuine mass-media celebrity and the internet famous YouTuber or tech figure, as will be discussed later, these figures include Peter Thiel, Elon Musk, Jordan Peterson or Steve Jobs. It is necessary first to explain why and how it emerged through a resentment towards mainstream liberal culture and its further path to radicalization.

To understand the transition from the generally “centre-left friendly” Grey Tribe of the Obama years to the outright white nationalist biological determinism of those in the Grey Tribe during the Trump presidency requires an awareness that these developments are not universal but rather a

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<sup>344</sup> Ibid.

general trend. The group is highly individualistic with little centralized organization, members of the Grey Tribe may be self-avowed communists or anarchists, but the more significant trend has been a rightward shift. This chapter will examine Peter Thiel, Jordan Peterson and Brenton Tarrant (the 2019 Christchurch terrorist) as exemplars of the Grey Tribes ideological development and growing radicalization. Peter Thiel, the Silicon Valley venture capitalist, is an anti-democratic billionaire who has privately funded far-right thinkers and political campaigns associated with the Far-Right, such as Donald Trump's 2016 campaign. Jordan Peterson does not consider himself part of the Alt-Right, but he associates and tours with leaders of the Alt-lite and has spent several years radicalizing young men with misogynistic, anti-trans and anti-egalitarian rhetoric and should be classified as a member of the Alternative Right. Brenton Tarrant, while not a significant influence on the movement, is indicative of the radicalization of youth within the Grey Tribe from centre-left positions to outright fascism and terrorism.

### **The Alternative Right Political Theory as a (pop)-Cultural Development**

The development of Alternative Right philosophy was a dialectical progression from cultural resentment towards post-modern politics, economics and culture within a neoliberal hegemony since the 1990s. As shown in earlier chapters, the development occurred in response to globalization culturally and politically. Each step moved the core of the Alternative Right ideology from one of cultural resentment to a full-fledged reactionary ideology. The common origin for the Alt-Right's radical cores is a shared cultural salon focused on culture and media rather than what would be traditionally understood as political praxis. For example, the Alt-Right may target a popular mass media film for starring female leads in a property once dominated by men, while ignoring a local municipal election. This fixation on culture separates them from the existing blood

and soil white nationalism which emerged in response to the perceived abandonment of the white supremacist traditions through the conservative economic and *National Review* consensus.

Older White Nationalists who were initially popular in the 1990s, such as Jared Taylor, may have disliked the idea of multicultural representation in films, but they did not devote the majority of their time and energy to posting these views on Twitter or social media. The White Nationalist project of the 1980s and 1990s was one of militias and armed violence; it took itself seriously. The Alt-Right did not emerge as a typical white nationalist organization; instead it quasi-satirically adopted the white nationalist mantle as it gained popularity drawing upon older Alternative Right figures and literature. When it fully embraced the white nationalist mantle it, Kronos like, began to eat any rivals it could find to make the Alternative Right synonymous with the radical cores known as the Alt-Right. While there was little to no laughter or theatre of the absurd for the White Nationalists of the 1990s, the ideology of the contemporary Alt-Right is defined by humour and satire, which is exemplified by its use of memes.

The culture war debate that has existed since the collapse of the Soviet Union is the effective start for the Alternative Right. With state communism defeated, social democracy replaced with third way neoliberalism, and socialism a non-entity within the United States, the right's boogie man disappeared in the early '90s. As Thomas Frank presents in his seminal work *What is the Matter with Kansas?* the once reliably left-wing pro-democratic regions of industrial America adopted a focused cultural politics based on religious identity and cultural resentment.<sup>345</sup> The erosion of unions and the role of labour within the Democratic party between 1972 and 1992 effectively eroded the role of economic policy as a wedge issue for the American electorate. The

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<sup>345</sup> Thomas Frank, *What's the Matter with Kansas*, Kindle (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2004).

result was a move towards a non-political space where elections were determined by cultural preferences rather than on questions of political economy.

The ideological project of the Alternative Right emerged during the dual political events of the election of Obama and the financial crisis of 2008. Both events are devoid of catharsis, with Obama there was no Camelot of racial equality, only an intensification of racial animosity. For the financial crisis, no one was arrested, and the wealth inequality which existed before the crisis only accelerated in the face of an incompetent left-wing resistance movement against global finance capital. Even though economics was becoming political again, it had spent the previous two decades as a political non-starter for anyone outside of the technocratic discipline of finance and economics. The economic crisis was a joke without a punch line and a tragedy without a cathartic moment of relief. For the philosopher Henri Bergson, laughter emerges when the unexpected happens, but what if nothing happens after the setup?<sup>346</sup> The result is the environment which allowed for the nihilistic radicalism of the Alt-Right to gain popularity.

While the collective anger was building up on the left against the political and economic injustices of the Obama years, it had the familiar targets of institutional violence, a young activist could blame a racist cop, a rapist politician or a transphobic professor, but what can the young white male do when they are angry at their state of affairs? Either they accept that straight white men are on average more privileged within Western societies and focus on a Marxist, feminist or post-colonial inspired path to express their anger, seeing societal failures as an issue of class conflict, race or gender, or they could adopt a more reactionary project to fuel their anger. Given the collapse of an economic left within American and Anglosphere communities, the right became

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<sup>346</sup> Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* (Laughter-Wildside Press, 2008), 5b.

a far more popular path for this cultural resentment. These young men began to target the usual suspects, who had emerged from two decades of right-wing media influence; including immigrants, progressive activists (Queer, feminist and non-white/post-colonialists), liberal elites and the non-military/police state.

The loss of a small amount of social privilege and economic position reverberated strongly within these typically right-wing left-behind communities just as many minority groups gained greater access to human rights during the Obama years. The consequence of this development is a conspiracy. Life is slowly getting worse with less stability, less privilege and less material success. “What is holding you back?” If you reject the empirical reality of stagnating wages, climate change and rising inequality, then the emotional and cultural assumption that there is some group actively suppressing you and attempting to replace you appears increasingly attractive. Conspiracy creates an unfalsifiable emotional outlet for nihilism; you are unable to engage in social change because a small cadre of elites dictates politics, you cannot get into a great university because you are not “left-wing” or “non-white.” The result is a radically undemocratic and individualist mindset, where only true believers can be trusted.

The conspiracy culture which fostered and incubated the ideas of the Alternative Right while they were in the proverbial wilderness is fundamentally attached to the political theory of the Alternative Right. The literature of the Alternative Right must be either, to some degree taboo, for it to be evoked by the Alt-Right’s conspiracy fixated followers, otherwise it must adopt the pretext of a broader culture war. Which is why what English language literature that exists outside of this conspiratorial and sensationalist tradition comes from the Paleoconservative tradition of traditional academics who pre-existed the Alt-Right and cut its teeth on the culture war debate of

the 1990s. Authors and influences from this paleoconservative tradition include Samuel Francis and Patrick Buchanan.<sup>347</sup>

While the scapegoat of a conspiratorial other has been a persistent idea within politics, it has exploded with the internet and the removal of the media gatekeepers. It took billionaires and millionaires and sometimes widespread fraud to fund movements like the LeRouchians of the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>348</sup> These groups needed extensive funding to mail physical pamphlets and purchase airtime on local or national radio and television stations. The conspiracies of the 1990s and beyond were accelerated by the internet and expressed and shared both by the faithful and those laughing at the absurdity. One could share an idea with no time delay, and no financial commitment, so sensationalist ideas propagated themselves, and little is less sensationalist than a good conspiracy theory. Perhaps the two most prominent examples in the age of the Alt-Right have been Alex Jones,<sup>349</sup> who rose to prominence through his digital platform of *Info Wars*, and the QAnon conspiracy that emerged to justify the inability of the Trump administration to arrest the Clintons and other prominent pro-globalization liberals.<sup>350</sup>

Earlier political ideologies and radical movements have adopted elements of conspiracy, targeting free-masons or embracing anti-Semitic conspiracies. The political theory of the Alt-Right is defined and unified by its conspiratorial and sensationalist dimension. Julius Evola, a significant influence on Alt-Right ideology, was a prominent occult fascist, arguing we are living through a mythical dark age.<sup>351</sup> He is one of the key influencers of Steve Bannon.<sup>352</sup> The entire canon of

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<sup>347</sup> Francis, *Leviathan and Its Enemies: Mass Organization and Managerial Power in Twentieth-Century America*; Lyons, *Insurgent Supremacists: The U.S. Far Right's Challenge to State and Empire*, sec. 2421.

<sup>348</sup> Lyons, *Insurgent Supremacists: The U.S. Far Right's Challenge to State and Empire*, sec. 3404.

<sup>349</sup> Ronson, *The Elephant in the Room: A Journey into the Trump Campaign and the "Alt-Right."*

<sup>350</sup> Wong, "What Is QAnon? Explaining the Bizarre Rightwing Conspiracy Theory."

<sup>351</sup> Evola, *A Handbook for Right-Wing Youth*.

<sup>352</sup> Green, *Devil's Bargain: Steve Bannon, Donald Trump, and the Storming of the Presidency*, sec. 364.2.

Curtis Yarvin, another major thinker within the Alternative Right, is one of conspiracy, fixated on Harvard and the political-cultural-intellectual institution of the Cathedral, a conspiracy that cultural Marxism maintains a stronghold on American political discourse and policies.<sup>353</sup> Guillaume Faye, one of the most prominent French New Right thinkers, fixates on the sensationalist theory that Muslims will defy demographic realities and dominate Europe through massive immigration.<sup>354</sup> Nick Land, a once left-wing now NeoReactionary thinker, attracts readers with his cult-like conspiracy of technological cyber-punk dystopia.<sup>355</sup> Even the peripheral authors that provide a gateway for the neophytes entering the Alt-Right such as Jordan Peterson provide a biological conspiracy and religious scripture to function as a quasi-cult leader for groups of young men.<sup>356</sup> These theorists are presented as cool or taboo. It should come as no surprise that this Alt-Right movement has repeatedly called themselves Sith lords and invoked the Red Pill imagery of the Matrix in order to present themselves as radical “edgelords” in on the conspiracy to “cuckold” the white race, men, or western civilization.<sup>357</sup>

As the documentarian Adam Curtis explores within his work *Hypernormalization*,<sup>358</sup> the left was decimated by the double wedge of individualization through the economic system which eroded class solidarity, and with the cultural politics of neoliberalism which fixated on hyper-specificity within intersectional politics. Economically the burdens of self-sufficiency means-testing and the erosion of welfare through austerity forced the individual in the Anglosphere to

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<sup>353</sup> Curtis Yarvin, “A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations: Chapter 3: AGW, KFM, And HNU,” Unqualified Reservations, 2009, [https://www.unqualified-reservations.org/2009/01/gentle-introduction-to-unqualified\\_22/](https://www.unqualified-reservations.org/2009/01/gentle-introduction-to-unqualified_22/).

<sup>354</sup> Faye, *Convergence of Catastrophes*; Faye, *Archeofuturism: European Visions of Post-Catastrophic Age*.

<sup>355</sup> Land, “The Dark Enlightenment.”

<sup>356</sup> Pankaj Mishra, “Jordan Peterson and Fascist Mysticism,” *The New York Review of Books*, 2018; Callaghan, “Right-Winger? Not Me, Says Alt-Right Darling Jordan Peterson”; Shuja Haider, “Postmodernism Did Not Take Place: On Jordan Peterson’s 12 Rules for Life,” *Viewpoint Magazine*, January 2018.

<sup>357</sup> Matt Sigl, “The Creepy Internet Movement You’d Better Take Seriously,” *Vocativ*, December 2013.

<sup>358</sup> Adam Curtis, *HyperNormalisation* (UK: BBC, 2016).

accept their position as individual deprived of any market power. An individual was to be conceived as a firm within a competitive free market, able to accept prices and contribute, but unable to dictate the price or quantity of their labour. The only way to leverage themselves within an economic market was to hyper-specialize their output and human capital. Through this hyper-competitive practice of specialization, the individual could gain economically if successful, but abandon a broader understanding of solidarity with fellow workers within their industry. This process became the default for those working in the tech sector who dominate the Grey Tribe, as they are proficient in programming languages and work independently and often remotely. As cultural politics rose to center stage within American politics, it manifested in an artificial binary between red state and blue state America. On a fundamental level, the divide between red state and blue state America is one of faith and race. The so-called Red Tribe culture is one of protestant evangelical faith and a shared sense of whiteness, while the Blue Tribe culture is one of liberal multiculturalism and secularism.

### **The Grey Tribe**

The Grey tribe is a term coined by Scott Alexander to describe the emergence of a political community of “non-political” independents who opposed both the affirmative action and redistribution of left-wing movements and the traditionalism and community-centric moralism of the American social conservative right.<sup>359</sup> The group more accurately applies to the internet natives who developed an identity of hyper-individualism through online communities; which due to the capitalist nature of the internet, means that the Grey Tribe’s culture and communities are centred around the consumption of a product, media property or lifestyle; for example, Apple products,

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<sup>359</sup> Alexander, “I Can Tolerate Anything Except the Outgroup.”

Marvel Movies, Anime, pornography or Minimalist lifestyles. The result is that the Grey Tribe is inherently capitalist, compared with later centre/left-wing communities found on Tumblr which were critical of the capitalist media they defined themselves by,<sup>360</sup> or the much later anti-capitalist dirtbag left.

For those affluent enough to not view politics as a life and death struggle for immediate survival within neoliberalism, it develops into a cultural identity in which the performance of identity and politics serves as a cultural fixation for establishing an in-group to belong with. One follows a campaign like a sports team, wearing the franchise clothing of their favourite candidates. One picks the candidate that most identifies with their aesthetic preference rather than their ideological platform, resulting in representation as politics. Not politics for representation.

Much of the Grey Tribe ethos can be encapsulated in the legacy of the Californian Ideology, a loose movement from the 1980s. The Californian Ideology is the anti-statist utopian political system of free-market libertarianism found within the Silicon Valley tech sector;<sup>361</sup> while the libertarianism of the mountain states represents a cowboy America of the lone man fighting against nature to carve out a home removed from society. The Californian Ideology draws upon the image of the digital cowboy, an anti-hero figure out of a cyberpunk novel, who embraces the alienation of existence in the face of a crowded world. It is fundamentally a cultural preference which manifests in political ideology. The ideal cultural image is placed at the forefront, with political and economic choices emerging to transform oneself into that cultural image of the individualistic cyberpunk character.

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<sup>360</sup> Nagle, *Kill All Normies: Online Culture Wars from 4Chan and Tumblr to Trump and the Alt-Right*.

<sup>361</sup> Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron, "The Californian Ideology," *Mute* (Berlin, September 1995).

There are two substantial cultural subgroups within the Grey Tribe, the Techno-libertarians and the South Park Libertarians. The techno-libertarian is a subgroup of libertarianism which is premised less on political theory and more on the relationship between individualism and technology. They tend to view themselves as techno-utopians who are aware of climate change but seek to fix the problem through new technology rather than social change. The example par excellence would be Elon Musk and his various speculative capitalist companies like Tesla or SpaceX which seek to address climate problems through technological innovation. The South Park libertarian moniker describes the typically younger male libertarian community that emerged alongside the TV show *South Park*. The critical position of these individuals was their both-side-ism, lampooning both sides of American politics as absurd and calling out the religious fervour of the Republican base and the moralistic crusades by left-wing progressives as equivalents. By rejecting the mainstream views of both parties, they understood themselves as apolitical and non-partisan. This thinking only works in a society devoid of politics, as implied by the end of history thesis, and one where the two parties are equally cartoonish. With the rightward push of the Republican party the a-political space of the South Park libertarian moved to the right culturally while maintaining its fundamentally far-right economic positions. Since the South Park libertarians culturally distance themselves from fundamentalist Christians, they spent much of the Bush years within the same cultural communities as Democrats, but began to wholly separate from these communities with the emergence of the Tea Party and the rise of Silicon Valley culture. Due to their proximity to traditional left-cultural communities, they often presented themselves as Democrats.<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> Alexander, "I Can Tolerate Anything Except the Outgroup."

As we see within the work of Curtis Yarvin, who has constructed a philosophy based on libertarianism taken to its logical authoritarian conclusion, the goal of many libertarians is to centre the political spectrum to a the hierarchical political and quantifiable metric of economic state-power.<sup>363</sup> The non-mappable space of politics is eroded for a single spectrum or 2D graph. It is no surprise that the rise of political spectrum quizzes, which has become a meme in itself, favoured libertarian ideology by measuring everything on the two axioms of the libertarian ideological spectrum (political and economic freedom). If a 16-year-old takes a pop-political quiz online and finds that they map onto libertarian ideology, the result will be little more than a generalizable horoscope or Harry Potter sorting hat of ideology but may result in a new political identity for the uninformed 16-year-old. The nuanced political examination takes a backseat to easily digestible ideological positions which erase political diversity. The results are a group of libertarians in love with capitalism, individualism and consumer culture imagining themselves as apolitical.

For the Grey Tribe, the idea of social privilege is fundamentally incompatible with their attempts to impose hyperrationality with the goal of peak efficiency on social, cultural and economic issues. For example, for the Grey Tribe, gay people should be allowed to marry because it is irrational to deny them negative freedom; it is an artificial inefficiency. The Grey Tribe sees negative freedoms as an ideal for political rights but refuses to go further. Due to a low level of historical and sociological analysis within most Grey Tribe literature, with little acknowledgement of inequalities, either racial, gendered or political, inequalities are an irrational abnormality in the system rather than the result of systemic structural violence. If an analysis completely removes structural violence and the lasting impact of inequalities, then any existing inequalities will be

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<sup>363</sup> Curtis Yarvin, "Why I Am Not a Libertarian," Unqualified Reservations, 2007, <https://unqualified-reservations.blogspot.ca/2007/12/why-i-am-not-libertarian.html>; Andrea Castillo, "A Gentle Introduction to Neoreaction (for Libertarians)," *The Umlaut*, July 2014.

eliminated over time due to convergence or persist due to fundamental and irreconcilable differences. From the Grey Tribe's libertarian inclinations inequality between black and white people within the United States should decline over time and result in an equal society once legal barriers are removed; therefore, affirmative action policies are unnecessary and inefficient. If this is not the case, then the Grey Tribe would argue that we are either not looking at the issue on a long enough time scale, or that there is a fundamental genetic difference between blacks and whites. Even those who critique the more racist elements of the Grey Tribe, such as Scott Alexander, are still tolerant of racial theories arguing that "the people who dismiss the biological hypothesis as obviously stupid and totally discredited (by which I mean everyone) are doing it a disservice."<sup>364</sup>

The Grey Tribe has adopted an atheistic bent, with a strong preference for science, which at times becomes a dogmatic belief structure that emerged out of opposition to the creationist and anti-science dogmatism by the United States Christian fundamentalists.<sup>365</sup> Initially, this was akin to the enlightenment's anti-religious project to confront superstition but has subsequently developed into a cultural practice fixated on replacing not only religious thought but all modes of thinking within the humanities and non-mathematic social sciences. As with other online communities, the Grey Tribe's echo chamber began to crowd out what non-STEM perspectives remained within these digital communities. As non-STEM fields were dismissed and ostracised from the Grey Tribe's social media and online communities, it left a void to be filled.

As the libertarian movement bifurcated itself into the mainstream Christian conservative movement and the atheistic libertarian dogmatists, libertarianism became wedded to evolutionary

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<sup>364</sup> Alexander, "Reactionary Philosophy in an Enormous, Planet-Sized Nutshell."

<sup>365</sup> Lyons, *Insurgent Supremacists: The U.S. Far Right's Challenge to State and Empire*, sec. 2545.

principles. Individual freedom and biological determinism became merged into a new synthesis. For them, if all humans are not equal, and we have evolutionary pressures rather than religious ones, without external morality, those in a position of privilege can embrace an unequal society as natural, and forced or social equality as unnatural. This biological determinism is how many libertarians embraced the Alternative Right. The acceptance of genetic research into intelligence may at first be a simple curiosity as the individual wishes for a metric of comparison, a justification for social success, or a validation of personal intellectual ability. This research, which is one factor of many, is supported by white supremacists, who since the era of phrenology have articulated racial-pseudo science to justify systemic racism and excuse other forms of inequality (such as sexual/gender). As with the liberal arguing for free speech on campus, the libertarian advocating genetic/biological determinism partners up with the far-right due to a fixation on scientific truth claims.

When exposed to these biological determinists and libertarian arguments, those on the Alt-Right suggest that there are only three choices: the Blue Pill, the Red Pill and the Black Pill. The Blue Pill is the acceptance of the existing social order, the default choice when times are good. To take the Blue Pill is to accept the status quo and reject politics through inaction, enjoy the culture of consumerism and embrace mainstream liberalism with limited reservations. The Red Pill is the rejection of the existing social order, a call to action against the cultural elites and any force attempting to limit individualism.<sup>366</sup> The conspiratorial theme dominates the conflict between those who know and those who follow, immediately creating a hierarchy of the human and the non-human. This path is echoed time and again by the biological determinists and right-wing libertarians within the Grey Tribe. The final option is the Black Pill which is a death wish, the

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<sup>366</sup> Yarvin, "A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations: Chapter 1: The Red Pill."

realization that nothing can be done to oppose the forces of the status quo.<sup>367</sup> The Black Pill is understood as the path for Incel suicide attacks, self-destruction and nihilism, and the final step for the radicalized youth who sees no option short of suicide. As Zack Beauchamp from Vox describes it:

The blackpill bundles the incel sense of personal failure with a sense of social entitlement: the notion that the world owes them sex, and that there is something wrong with a society in which women don't have to give it to them.<sup>368</sup>

It becomes a vicious cycle which perpetuates nihilistic misogyny that reinforces itself through isolation from women out of fear of further rejection and failure.

### **The Path to Radicalization**

While it is easy to point at Klan members in the American South, aristocratic Europeans and billionaires as members of the far-right, it is far more difficult for the public to read internet libertarians as these far-right pseudo-fascists. While the Grey Tribe is popular online, with communities growing around providing a space for them to socialize such as Reddit or 4Chan, and others such as Tumblr providing a space away from these groups, they have limited cross over into the lives of non-internet natives. Outside of the occasional late night talk show bit on Gamergate,<sup>369</sup> a funny viral meme, or hearing about a Grey Tribe celebrity like Elon Musk, Mark Zuckerberg or Ron Paul,<sup>370</sup> they blurred into the background of popular culture, occupying a separate space as the group was defined by its "apolitical" behaviour, which does not mean a non-political existence.

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<sup>367</sup> Zack Beauchamp, "Our Incel Problem," *Vox* (New York, April 2019).

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>369</sup> Todd VanDerWerff, "#Gamergate: Here's Why Everybody in the Video Game World Is Fighting," *Vox*, 2014.

<sup>370</sup> Richard Eskow, "Rise of the Techno-Libertarians: The 5 Most Socially Destructive Aspects of Silicon Valley," *Salon*, April 2015.

Around 2008 biological determinism and evolutionary psychology start to appear within the Grey Tribe's lexicon.<sup>371</sup> This started a radical break in the trajectory of the movement, which would result in an ever-increasing Far-Right contingent within the Grey Tribe. The new Atheist movement was fixated on the evolutionary development of humanity and used evolutionary psychology to justify it. Unlike the racist ideas of the KKK or blood and soil white supremacists which required a high initial level of commitment to the concept and community, the emergence of scientific racism through the rhetoric of new atheism, biological determinism and evolutionary psychology was much more benign.<sup>372</sup>

Some of the Grey Tribe has embraced the eugenic and biological elements of contemporary Neoreactionary and white nationalist thought, not due to openly racial hatred but rather due to an ahistorical understanding of human development and inequality. As human evolution has failed to match our technological development, our "software" has outpaced our "hardware." The construction of new ways of understanding the world is applied to hardware that is 50000 years out of date. For the a-historical libertarian, there are only two prominent ways of resolving the biological incompatibility with modern culture; the first is transhumanism and the digital augmentation of the self through mechanical, digital and bioengineered technologies, which are discussed at length in texts focusing on artificial intelligence such as Nick Bostrom's *Superintelligence*.<sup>373</sup> The second is to take a biological deterministic position within politics, which leads to eugenics and "*Umwertung aller Werte*" (Revaluation of all values). As Park MacDougald describes them this group is filled with the Neoreactionaries which "combines all of the awful things you always suspected about libertarianism with odds and ends from PUA (*pick up artist*)

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<sup>371</sup> Alexander, "Reactionary Philosophy in an Enormous, Planet-Sized Nutshell."

<sup>372</sup> Lyons, *Insurgent Supremacists: The U.S. Far Right's Challenge to State and Empire*, sec. 2495; Neiwert, *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*, sec. 3985.

<sup>373</sup> Nick Bostrom, *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

culture, Victorian Social Darwinism, and an only semi-ironic attachment to absolutism.”<sup>374</sup> While 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century social Darwinism relied on pseudoscientific advancements that proved to be overwhelmingly incorrect, the contemporary eugenicists can draw upon a much more specific genetic research for their policies. The bioengineered human or the transhumanistic development of humanity is furthered with little to no reflection for the existing inequalities within humanity. The result is a hypercompetitive world view, which stands in contrast with egalitarian transhumanism which is focused on overcoming the existing inequalities of imperialism, capitalism and physical disability.

The justification for equity and egalitarian practices will become harder to justify when there are widely accepted and practiced forms of biologically constructed and maintained physical/intellectual hierarchy. The *tabula rasa* argument that is a cornerstone for liberal thought going back to Locke is bypassed by this evolutionary conception of humanity. If no two people are genetically the same, and genetics set the bounds of human potential, the biological determinist sees little value in the call for universal equality. Taken to its logical conclusion, human rights becomes a non-entity within the eyes of biological determinists, who simultaneously reject any framework of political thought based on universal equality and replace the existing libertarian conception of universal freedom with a survival of the fittest telos which places the will to power as the universal maximum for justifying any action.

The radicalization from a position of non-religious belief to outright white supremacist race science can roughly follow this trajectory. At first, a young man is exposed to an initial YouTube video, podcast or web post that explains a sophisticated social science phenomenon through some

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<sup>374</sup> Park MacDouglad, “The Darkness Before the Right,” *The Awl*, September 2015.

(often pseudo) scientific solution. For example, the question “Why do pretty women reject average looking men on tinder?” is explained through the Pareto principle, implying that the 20% most attractive men date the 80% most attractive women and the 80% least attractive men date the 20% least attractive women. The solution is overly simplistic, relying on many generalities and easily challenged assumptions, but it is an easy answer to meme and therefore spreads across the internet. The experience of being rejected through online dating is almost universal for young men, so a video like this can have millions of views and find itself shared on many/non-political digital communities. Once they have watched the video, they are more likely to be exposed to similar videos on YouTube through algorithmic recommendations. It follows this up with a video on how to be more masculine and assertive, suppressing your feminine traits. While this raises red flags for those aware of toxic masculinity, a 16-year-old who is still in high school is unlikely to be fully exposed to these critiques of gender norms. Which means that when the next video it recommends is a video on “sneaker fish”<sup>375</sup> the viewer might not clue into the fact that this is used to justify transphobic arguments. The video, which was presented as a harmless animal documentary is a way of indoctrinating a young man into the conspiracy that transwomen are secretly cuckolding them and having sex with *their* female friends and girlfriends. From there he might watch a video that is explaining racial cuckolding, then subsequently how white people do not have as many children as minorities, before long, he is unironically watching videos on white genocide. Over time the young boy who innocently enough wanted to know why he is single and how to get a girlfriend will be pulled into increasingly radical communities.

## **Peter Thiel**

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<sup>375</sup> A specific type of male fish that imitates the appearance of female so that they can avoid being targeted by larger dominant male fish so that they can impregnate females.

Peter Thiel is easily one of the most well known and wealthiest members of the Alternative Right, and the most indicative of the Grey Tribe. His rise in Silicon Valley comes from founding PayPal and then subsequently being an early investor in Facebook. While many members of Silicon Valley support the Alternative Right, Peter Thiel is the best example for exploring the attraction to the ideology. Thiel set up a law firm to fund legal battles with the website Gawker until it was bankrupt, in order to punish the site for outing him as gay in 2007.<sup>376</sup> Thiel is also a well-known backer and employer of prominent Neoreactionary authors such as Curtis Yarvin.<sup>377</sup> In 2016 he publicly donated over a million dollars to the Trump Campaign in October after the infamous "grab them by the pussy" tape was released.<sup>378</sup> Outside of the public eye he has also influenced and hired the top conservative and far-right graduates of Stanford University through his connections to the student journal he founded, the *Stanford Review*.<sup>379</sup>

Peter Thiel's most infamous political proclamation is in his article for *Cato-Unbound*, "...I no longer believe that freedom and democracy are compatible."<sup>380</sup> While private admonishment with democracy has been hand in hand with wealthy elites, this statement would herald the following decade change within the libertarian community from Jeffersonian democracy individualists to libertarian-authoritarianism. Published two months after the start of the Tea Party movement, Thiel's proclamation reframed how libertarian policy would be forwarded, and more specifically how the Grey Tribe in Silicon Valley would move to the far-right.

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<sup>376</sup> Andrew Granato, "How Peter Thiel and the Stanford Review Built a Silicon Valley Empire," *Stanford Politics* (Stanford, 2017).

<sup>377</sup> Lecher, "Alt-Right Darling Mencius Moldbug Wanted to Destroy Democracy. Now He Wants to Sell You Web Services."

<sup>378</sup> Max Chafkin and Lizette Chapman, "The Strange Politics of Peter Thiel, Trump's Most Unlikely Supporter," *Bloomberg Businessweek* (New York, July 2016).

<sup>379</sup> Granato, "How Peter Thiel and the Stanford Review Built a Silicon Valley Empire."

<sup>380</sup> Thiel, "The Education of a Libertarian."

Peter Thiel and Norman Book founded the conservative and libertarian campus publication *the Stanford Review* in the late 1980s, where Thiel published dozens of articles.<sup>381</sup> Thiel has consistently both published political essays and maintained a connection with the members of the *Stanford Review* as a dedicated and connected alumnus. While not managing the organization, Thiel maintains his connections partially to influence, network with and hire the skilled editors of the *Review*. As Andrew Granato points out in his article for *Stanford Politics*, Peter Thiel is aware of a significant number of non-public supporters of Trump who hide their political beliefs due to the "California culture." These hidden or silent voices are part of the unmeasurable Alt-Right, who do not wear MAGA hats but may post online through anonymous screen names.<sup>382</sup>

Thiel has spent much of the past 30 years attempting to radicalize the Grey Tribe of Silicon Valley. Rather than attempt to change opinions through discourse, it became necessary to find an alternative:

I started a student newspaper to challenge the prevailing campus orthodoxies; we scored some limited victories, most notably in undoing speech codes instituted by the university. However, in a broader sense, we did not achieve all that much for all the effort expended. Much of it felt like trench warfare on the Western Front in World War I; there was much carnage, but we did not move the center of the debate.<sup>383</sup>

Before the cultural shift with the rise of the Tea Party, the Grey Tribe and the dark money of the Koch Brothers, the libertarian movement felt maligned within intellectual and social networks; the ideas of libertarians were always on the outside. This culture of isolation in Thiel's view leads to substance abuse, for him the smartest conservatives in Manhattan were alcoholics and the smartest libertarians "escaped not only to alcohol but beyond it."<sup>384</sup> This insight helps explain the fixation

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<sup>381</sup> Granato, "How Peter Thiel and the Stanford Review Built a Silicon Valley Empire."

<sup>382</sup> Ibid.

<sup>383</sup> Thiel, "The Education of a Libertarian."

<sup>384</sup> Ibid.

with escape and alienation within libertarian communities, one which would dominate the even more right-wing movements which emerged from it.

For Thiel, the only reasonable solution for the libertarian is escape/exit, which is where Thiel in 2009 starts to echo the NeoReactionary Curtis Yarvin. As the other prominent NeoReactionary Nick Land argues, NeoReactionary thought is defined by the ability to escape the system.<sup>385</sup> For Thiel in 2009, he sees three ways out: cyberspace, outer space and seasteading. In turn, he sees cyberspace as an opportunity to expand what he did at PayPal and implement digital currencies removed from the eyes of government surveillance and control.<sup>386</sup> Outer space indulges the shared libertarian sci-fi tradition from authors such as Robert H. Heinlein who championed libertarianism in space in novels such as *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*.<sup>387</sup> The more outlandish idea, seasteading, is another libertarian fantasy where man-made islands are created out off the coast of California in international waters without government control and low to no taxation. The critique of this libertarian fantasy was exemplified in the dystopian video game *BioShock* which depicts an underwater sea steading community, based on Ayn Rand's objectivism, as a dystopian horror bound for failure and social unrest. These paths to escape are fundamentally absurd, while socialists joke about "fully automated gay space communism" it is always presented as an absurd utopia and never as a project to waste money on, when Peter Thiel and the Libertarians argue for this complete retreat from society it is presented as a serious solution that they spend millions to implement. The ideology of NeoReaction and libertarianism is fundamentally a nihilistic abandonment of humanist principles, which is exemplified by their understanding of society through culture.

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<sup>385</sup> Land, "The Dark Enlightenment."

<sup>386</sup> Thiel, "The Education of a Libertarian."

<sup>387</sup> Robert Heinlein, *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*, Kindle (New York: Ace, 2018).

## The Incels

Before examining Jordan Peterson, a brief explanation of a subset of the Grey Tribe needs to be explained, that of the Incel, or involuntary celibate. The Incel community emerged as an online community sharing the same disheartening experience of romantic and sexual failure, sharing memes and posts that express how they would be “forever alone.” The presence of single men pining over their lack of dates, girlfriends or wives is nothing new in human history, what is new is the emergence of a community around this largely self-imposed state of social isolation and that some of them commit hate crimes and terrorist attacks against women.<sup>388</sup> While it may be easy to suggest that this phenomenon is merely the result of internet culture and online dating, it has much more to do with the economic and social conditions of younger Millennials and Zoomers which fuels their toxic masculinity. The declining and stagnating white middle class, the rise of internet culture and economic precarity has, for the first time in decades, failed to provide white men widespread access or belief in the American dream. A young person with a university degree who is underemployed is resentful of a system that has betrayed the perceived social contract, not merely because of precarious economic conditions, but due to the loss of privilege within the system.

While many people in American society have less sex than they would like, typically as the American journalist, Jia Tolentino discovered when interviewing virgins, the lack of sex was due to widely accepted structural barriers, such as being poor, fat, trans or disabled.<sup>389</sup> This appropriation of sexual alienation is what makes the self-described Incel movement so disheartening, as with other labels used by the Alternative Right such as "Gamer" or "Identitarian"

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<sup>388</sup> Beauchamp, “Our Incel Problem.”

<sup>389</sup> Tolentino, “The Rage of the Incels.”

the term attempts to whitewash an actual issue or group identity for their exclusionary purposes. Incels marry the (mostly) white-privilege of presumed rewards with the misogyny and violence of masculine identity within a patriarchal society. The result is a group of young men who feel that they are owed sex from female partners, with the onus on consent reversed.<sup>390</sup> While other groups who have less sex than they want are often viewed externally as undesirable due to social-structural barriers, the Incel community that attacks and threatens women for not having sex with them are mostly young and able-bodied. While self-described Incels may call themselves socially inept, subhuman<sup>391</sup> and are often NEETs (Not in education, employment or training), that does not make them structurally oppressed or marginalized groups within American society. A trans, black or disabled person faces widespread systemic oppression, a young (white) man who is awkward and underemployed does not face the same level of systemic oppression, even if they feel that they are being oppressed and define themselves by this identity.

Incels fit into the recurring story of the Grey Tribe, as they are a digital community of anti-feminist young men who reject the realities of other groups within North American society as legitimate. Incels both reject the "Red Tribe's" red-blooded-American culture which values traditional American masculinity and sex within the confines of marriage, and the "Blue Tribe's" progressive feminism that they decry as "white-knighting" (as if respecting the consent and humanity of women was a trick to sleep with them). This is not to say that these views or that incel are dominant within the Grey Tribe writ large, the problem is that these views and followers are not actively removed from larger internet communities and violently attack women in terrorist

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<sup>390</sup> Beauchamp, "Our Incel Problem."

<sup>391</sup> Tolentino, "The Rage of the Incels."

acts. Even a small group of “peaceful” Incels can drive women out of digital spaces leading to further radicalization, further fueling the internal narratives of these groups.

While the 2017 attack in Toronto would popularize the term Incel within the public imagination, the recent Right-Wing manosphere has been responsible for terrorist attacks since at least 2014.<sup>392</sup> Earlier misogynist attacks have targeted women but were not part of a broader online community. The American scholar on the Far-Right Matthew Lyons correctly links the rise of these public attacks with the subsequent fall out of the gamergate movement. Though Lyons also points out that this misogynist wing of the broader Alternative Right often clashes with the white nationalist element of the Alternative Right, typically when the manosphere/Men’s Right advocate is non-white.<sup>393</sup> As the manosphere includes non-whites, this is often at odds with the racial purity demanded by many within the white-nationalist wing of the Alternative Right. Under a strict definition of the Alternative Right which is limited to the Alt-Right radical core centred around the white nationalism of Richard Spencer, these non-white manosphere members would be excluded from the definition, rather than being included as members of the broader Alternative Right.

For the Incel, NEET or alienated young person, the desire for an influential authority figure to force them out of their misery is attractive. The materially successful member of the Grey Tribe can look at Peter Thiel or Elon Musk and try their hand at some form of venture capitalism or tech entrepreneurialism, but most people, especially young Zoomers cannot go to Stanford or make millions farming cryptocurrency. For them, the solution to their problems often come in the form of right-wing self-help and conspiracy vloggers.

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<sup>392</sup> Lyons, *Insurgent Supremacists: The U.S. Far Right’s Challenge to State and Empire*, sec. 2662.

<sup>393</sup> *Ibid.*, sec. 2698.

## Jordan Peterson

Despite Jordan Peterson's outward appearance as a soft-spoken Canadian academic, he functions as a gatekeeper who brings disappointed young men into the Alternative Right. Peterson has rejected the claim that he is a member of the Alt-Right, true he is not a member of Richard Spencer's organization.<sup>394</sup> It is unlikely that he reads Far-Right theorists like Nick Land, Alain de Benoist, Julius Evola or Curtis Yarvin in his spare time, but it is easy to see how his advice serves as a thinly veiled guide to a "softened" philosophy of the Alternative Right. Breaking down Jordan Peterson's ideological positions presents an accessible outline of a NeoReactionary or Fascist-libertarian "self-help" book for Grey Tribe members. His ideas evoke misogyny<sup>395</sup>, biological determinism<sup>396</sup>, selfish individualism<sup>397</sup>, traditionalism<sup>398</sup>, submission to hierarchy<sup>399</sup> and the rejection of cooperative community.<sup>400</sup>

His first objective is to break the world into Chaos and Order, which he denotes as female and male.<sup>401</sup> Unsurprisingly he consistently places masculinity as the objective state to strive for, with chaos/nature/women as an evil out to destroy. One does not need more than a superficial understanding of feminism to realize that this is a thin veil for a sexist hierarchy and the promotion of gender norms. There is no room for the breaking of gender-norms or transgender people within Peterson's framework. This opposition to transgender people is what first provided Peterson with international media attention when he refused to address his students by their gender identity as

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<sup>394</sup> Callaghan, "Right-Winger? Not Me, Says Alt-Right Darling Jordan Peterson."

<sup>395</sup> Jordan B. Peterson, *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos*, Kindle (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2018), sec. 152.6.

<sup>396</sup> Ibid., sec. 309.7.

<sup>397</sup> Ibid., sec. 373.3.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid., sec. 417.4.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid., sec. 779.7.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid., sec. 73.2.

<sup>401</sup> Ibid., sec. 91.1.

per Canadian law.<sup>402</sup> All it takes for Peterson is a single study, anecdote or book to dismiss another perspective, as he repeatedly does throughout his book, suggesting that the book *Gulag Archipelago* disproves the entirety of communism.<sup>403</sup> During his public debate with Slavoj Zizek in April 2019, he admitted to only having just recently read the Communist Manifesto and had no familiarity outside that singular text of Marxist theory before critiquing the ideology at the debate.<sup>404</sup> For Peterson this is not merely a campaign to retain male authority in one's personal life. Instead it is an ideological drive to return to the status quo of evolutionary development in which women are defined by their ability to have children and to serve as rewards for high performing males.

This second objective, the promotion of biological determinism is the key to much of Peterson's success. Rather than rely on debatable social science theories or be forced to respond to social science critiques, Peterson's use of evolutionary science and biological determinism allows him to use non-sequitur analogies and suggest that anything found in nature is the constant norm. In addition to this evolutionary psychological theory, Peterson also draws heavily upon biblical exegesis to further his arguments, marrying biblical passages with quasi-scientific anecdotes. The result of this theory is an ethics absolving maximum that survival of the fittest and the passing down of one's genes can absolve social inequality filled with biblical justifications which provide a degree of moral absolution.<sup>405</sup> This admiration for evolution is attractive to those North Americans who find themselves isolated in communities where evolution is rejected. As with much of the New Atheist movement, many reddit-atheists in his audience feel persecuted for their

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<sup>402</sup> Bernard Schiff, "I Was Jordan Peterson's Strongest Supporter. Now I Think He's Dangerous," *The Star*, May 25, 2018.

<sup>403</sup> Peterson, *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos*, sec. 399.6.

<sup>404</sup> Benjamin Studebaker, "How Zizek Should Have Replied to Jordan Peterson," *Current Affairs* (New York, April 2019).

<sup>405</sup> Peterson, *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos*, sec. 309.7.

lack of faith. As with the Grey Tribe as a whole, the isolation and feeling of persecution, even if there are few systemic pressures against atheists in the Western world, feels real and is magnified by online communities.

Peterson's ideology is akin to Randian Objectivism when it comes to the role of the individual. Peterson actively tells his reader to abandon friends and family members with problems that one might not be able to fix, to instead focus on providing self-care and self-improvement. While Ayn Rand sees everyone as a hero waiting to arise from the oppression of society, Peterson sees everyone as a sinner and a worthless person who has to improve themselves to be worthy of respect.<sup>406</sup> For Peterson systemic pressures absolve the individual of self-worth and agency, his audience is the young (white) male who is lazy, with low self-esteem and resentful of their inability or lack of skills.<sup>407</sup> Since he can draw upon evolutionary theory and not, hundreds of years of social science research into the impact of systemic oppression and inequality, the goal is always the improvement of the under-developed individual. The result is a synthesis of Catholic absolution and guilt mixed with the individualism found within a protestant work ethic, as Peterson shows little knowledge of or experience citing secondary literature within his arguments this may be an incidental rather than intentional synthesis.

What separates Peterson from the other New Atheists such as Sam Harris or Richard Dawkins, is his traditionalism. As much of Peterson's book *12 Rules for Life* is devoted to Christian scripture as it is fixated on scientism and evolution.<sup>408</sup> Repeatedly cultural and evolutionary developments are linked directly to passages in the Bible through an autodidactic hermeneutic

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<sup>406</sup> Ibid., sec. 660.7.

<sup>407</sup> Haider, "Postmodernism Did Not Take Place: On Jordan Peterson's 12 Rules for Life."

<sup>408</sup> Peterson, *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos*, sec. 188.6.

approach. While not fixated on a racial theory like Guillaume Faye,<sup>409</sup> the two-share great praise for the mixture of evolutionary science and a traditionalist framework, which is, in turn, shared across the entirety of the Alternative Right from career opportunists within the Alt-Lite to the terrorist white Nationalists who murder minorities.

Peterson also repeatedly suggests that self-realization concludes with the realization that one is marginal in the social hierarchy and that the best thing one can do is accept it rather than rock the boat. Due to his reliance on questionable statistics about the Pareto principle as a universal norm, commonly known as the 80/20 principle, in which 80% of something is owned by 20% of the population, Peterson typically makes broad claims about inequality and the acceptability of inequality.<sup>410</sup> Because there is no freedom within the system, the individual must embrace their position and enjoy their space and make the most of it. The conclusion to this logic is at odds with the constant idea of progress that Peterson is fixated on. This train of thought is partially due to his fixation on pre-modern ways of thought justified by a dogmatic belief in evolutionary development and by extension biological determinism with extensive Jungian psychology.

The final element to Peterson's ideology is his abandonment of the community and the social. Due to his radical individualism and his fixation on the survival of the fittest, he sees compassion and charity as destructive. In what is either a paper thin allegory for his views on immigration or a carefully thought out anecdote, Peterson suggests that a well functioning group should be exclusive and refuse to include anyone who is "a neglected/poor worker" into the group, doing so will always destroy the group's ability to work. People who are unsuccessful in their

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<sup>409</sup> Faye, *Archeofuturism: European Visions of Post-Catastrophic Age*.

<sup>410</sup> Peterson, *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos*, sec. 119.8.

current situation should not be added to another group. If one cannot help oneself one should not help someone else.<sup>411</sup>

Even if Jordan Peterson does not believe that he is a member of the Alt-Right,<sup>412</sup> does he fit the three axioms for the Alternative Right? Does he argue for the right to difference? Yes, he forcefully argues this for gender relations and norms, and actively invokes racial stereotypes within his book.<sup>413</sup> Does he argue for cultural Metapolitics? Yes, rather than focus on policy he almost universally focuses on maintaining cultural traditions against "identity politics" and "cultural Marxists."<sup>414</sup> Does he argue for an individualistic hierarchy? Yes, he actively promotes a social hierarchy in which only the strongest deserve respect and that those weaker or less intelligent should suffer and die off according to a logic of social Darwinism. His followers have revealed themselves to be young white men, who match the demographics for the Alternative Right.<sup>415</sup> Does this mean that all his readers or followers are members of the Alt-Right? No, but it does mean that he is sufficiently linked with the Alternative Right to be examined with apprehension and not as a "liberal" or "apolitical" figure, but as a political demagogue who radicalizes young men into Alternative Right politics, even if he disagrees with White Nationalism.

### **The Christchurch attack and radicalization**

On March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019 a white nationalist killed 49 Muslims in Christchurch New Zealand on a public live stream. The stream started with the internet meme of "subscribe to Pewdiepie." Tarrant calling out to subscribe to Pewdiepie before starting his livestreamed mass shooting is not merely a throwaway joke but fundamentally one that defines the behaviour of the Grey Tribe.

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<sup>411</sup> Ibid., sec. 224.5.

<sup>412</sup> Callaghan, "Right-Winger? Not Me, Says Alt-Right Darling Jordan Peterson."

<sup>413</sup> Peterson, *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos*, sec. 750.4.

<sup>414</sup> Ibid., sec. 746.8.

<sup>415</sup> Callaghan, "Right-Winger? Not Me, Says Alt-Right Darling Jordan Peterson."

Pewdiepie, an "independent" youtuber has the highest or second highest subscriber count on Youtube as of March 2019, he began a "subscribe to pewdiepie" campaign when his position as the most subscribed YouTuber was challenged by an Indian Youtube channel.<sup>416</sup> The campaign to maintain his position was initially presented as a personal form of self-promotion, while Pewdiepie is known for making pro-Nazi remarks this is less of an embracing of nazi or neo-nazi ideology, but rather a shock politics as one finds on the internet among digital communities. The campaign was supported by the Alternative Right to keep the number one youtube channel in the hands of a white YouTuber rather than a non-white Indian media network. 4chan and other internet communities with significant white nationalist and Alt-Right presence continued and furthered the campaign. This less than subtle white supremacy is one of the reasons why it should come as no surprise for a White Nationalist extremist like Brenton Tarrant to quote him before committing an act of mass murder. The act is a self-aware joke, pointing out to the mass media his absurdity, sharing an internet meme right before he commits an act of serious white nationalist terrorism. Tarrant and like-minded white nationalist extremists communicate on, and through memes and popular culture, unlike the blood and soil white nationalists of the 1990s who were serious in words and deeds, these newer terrorists see no contradiction between "ironic" jokes and mass violence. It is not merely the shared enjoyment of an element of popular culture, but the active attempt to control and subvert online spaces to transform seemingly innocent memes like Pepe the Frog into a symbol for hate that defines the radicalization process of the Far-Right within the Grey Tribe.<sup>417</sup>

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<sup>416</sup> Alexander, "YouTube Creators Are Trying to Move on from 'Subscribe to PewDiePie.'"

<sup>417</sup> Andrew Jakubowicz, "Alt\_Right White Lite: Trolling, Hate Speech and Cyber Racism on Social Media.," *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 9, no. 3 (2017): 41–60, <https://doi.org/10.5130/ccs.v9i3.5655>; Michael Anissimov, "Reactionaries and Our Lesser Brethren: The Meme Brigades," *Medium*, June 2016.

As with the other authors of the Far-Right such as Guillaume Faye, a French New Right Identitarian, the most crucial issue for their white nationalist campaign is one of demographics.<sup>418</sup> For the White Nationalist, their greatest fear is the future in which the white race, is subjected to the dominance of non-whites. The fear is a psycho-sexual one in which they are left impotent and abandoned by their fellow white men. They fear the demographic replacement of the white population due to low birth rates in contrast to the non-white population. Despite these trends being fundamentally material rather than racial, the fear of a non-white America or non-white dominated world is enough for these theorists to advocate for violence against non-whites. For the White Nationalist like Brenton Tarrant there is an overwhelming fear of replacement, from the French New Right to the Alt-Right in Charlottesville, the fear of demographic displacement rallies the White Nationalist Identitarians.<sup>419</sup> Unlike the ideology of the far-right in the 1960s or 1980s, supremacy is not enough; the only way out is isolation and complete segregation from the non-white population. As expressed by Peter Thiel, this is an escape, and from Jordan Peterson, this is the removal of undesirables from the community.

Tarrant's manifesto is less influenced by the American Alternative Right than it is by the transnational Alternative Right literature of the French New Right which embraces both an anti-capitalist and environmental argument. The argument of Tarrant is far less economic than one would find in America: "Millions of people pour across our borders, legally. Invited by the state and corporate entities to replace White people who have failed to reproduce, failed to create the cheap labour, new consumers and tax base that the corporations and states need to thrive."<sup>420</sup> At first, to those unfamiliar with the broader international Far-Right literature of the New Right this

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<sup>418</sup> Tarrant, "The Great Replacement," 3.

<sup>419</sup> Thomas Chatteron Williams, "The French Origins of 'You Will Not Replace Us,'" *The New Yorker* (New York, November 27, 2017).

<sup>420</sup> Tarrant, "The Great Replacement," 3.

seems contradictory, how can it both be anti-capitalist and anti-immigrant, but this is precisely the literature that dominates the European Fascist thinkers of the French New Right, the mantra of anti-cuck Alt-Right sentiment since the summer of 2015. For Tarrant, the impatience of the demographic and environmental catastrophe is like that of Guillaume Faye, an ecological and political crisis that will emerge over the next 20 years that will accelerate to the point of complete collapse.<sup>421</sup>

The concept of "white genocide" does a discredit to the real tragedies of genocide, but the term was never intended initially to elicit sympathy with the victims of actual genocidal campaigns, but rather to evoke fear into those with white supremacist leanings. Genocide and Nazi imagery have been evoked since the early 90's online and have accelerated into its modern conception within the Alternative Right. Rather than adopt either *volkish*, blood and soil or economic justification for white supremacy, the ideological justification from Tarrant and other members of the Alternative Right is one of scientific racism. For the Alternative Right drawing upon the evolutionary deterministic ideas allows the problem to become quantified and legitimated, both because it embraces STEM authority and because it sidesteps any literature on race by social science and humanities that would discredit them.

Tarrant's conspiracies are commonplace on the Alt-Right, whether they be the unfounded suspicion that Marxists not so secretly control the education system (Ben Shapiro, Jordan Peterson and Curtis Yarvin) or the belief that the state is exclusively controlled by corporate backers, which is ironically similar to a Marxist conception of the state. Tarrant is also consistent within the Alt-Right for despising democracy.<sup>422</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>422</sup> Ibid., 21.

As with the other attacks, the lone-wolf terrorism of White Nationalists since Dylann Roof is nominally independent of the larger Alternative Right groups like American Renaissance, or the Proud Boys.<sup>423</sup> The isolation is indicative of the Far-Right online communities on 4chan or reddit, which are communities for the dissemination of ideas but not for organization, in contrast to earlier political groups on the Far-Right like the John Birch Society or the KKK. A telling passage from Tarrant's manifesto is his declaration that his actions constitute a terrorist attack. "Do you consider it a terrorist attack? By definition, then yes. It is a terrorist attack. However, I believe it is a partisan action against an occupying force."<sup>424</sup> In the immediate aftermath of the attack many figures in the Alternative Right including Lauren Southern, a Canadian Alt-Lite vlogger who infamously shot at North African refugee boats in the Mediterranean with a flare gun, quickly made moves to distance themselves from the Christchurch terrorist attack, even when it was unquestionable that they were partially responsible for the radicalization of white nationalists online.<sup>425</sup>

Despite the abundance of memes within the manifesto, Tarrant makes it crystal clear where he stands ideologically within the Far-Right. The following passage from Tarrant's manifesto demonstrates the awareness of the ideological and political debates within the Alternative Right, as Tarrant demonstrates precisely how and where he exists within the broader Alternative Right.

Were/are you a nazi?

No, actual nazis do not exist. They haven't been a political or social force anywhere in the world for more than 60 years.

Were/are you an anti-semite?

No. A jew living in Israel is no enemy of mine, so long as they do not seek to subvert or harm my people.

Were/are you a neo-nazi?

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<sup>423</sup> Siegel, "Dylann Roof, 4chan, and the New Online Racism."

<sup>424</sup> Tarrant, "The Great Replacement," 12.

<sup>425</sup> Kelley, "Lauren Southern: The Alt-Right's Canadian Dog Whistler."

That is a very broad category of people, and the definition is fuzzy at best. So no, I don't believe so.

Were/are you a conservative?

No, conservatism is corporatism in disguise, I want no part of it.

Were/are you a christian?

That is complicated.

When I know, I will tell you.

Were/are you a fascist?

Yes. For once, the person that will be called a fascist, is an actual fascist. I am sure the journalists will love that.

I mostly agree with Sir Oswald Mosley's views and consider myself an Eco-fascist by nature.

The nation with the closest political and social values to my own is the People's Republic of China.

Was there a political figure or party in history you most associate yourself with?

Sir Oswald Mosley is the person from history closest to my own beliefs.

Were/are you a "homophobe"?

No, I simply do not care all that much what gay people do. As long as they are loyal to their people and place their peoples well being first, then I have no issues.

Were/are you "right wing"?

Depending on the definition, sure.

Were/are you "left wing"?

Depending on the definition, sure.

Were/are you a socialist?

Depending on the definition. Worker ownership of the means of production? It depends on who those workers are, their intents, who currently owns the means of production, their intents and who currently owns the state, and its intents.

Were/are you a supporter of Donald Trump?

As a symbol of renewed white identity and common purpose? Sure. As a policy maker and leader? Dear god no..<sup>426</sup>

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<sup>426</sup> Tarrant, "The Great Replacement," 15.

Despite Tarrant adopting a smug comedic tone throughout his manifesto, making references to Spyro the Dragon and Fortnite, his work is inline with other digital Far-Right reactionaries who mix humour into their texts, often creating absurd reactionary memes.<sup>427</sup> Almost every anglophone text among the Alt-Right's radicalized digital members is filled with ironic memes and comedic asides for those “in the know.”

Tarrant's attack while localized to New Zealand, is intended to motivate and radicalize Americans. Throughout the manifesto, he focuses on how American media culture will represent him and his ideological positions in the aftermath of the event, to accelerate violence in the United States.<sup>428</sup> The document is written explicitly for journalists with poor literacy or awareness of the Far-Right's ideology to stumble through passages and amplify his message. The document and the attack focus on a concentrated effort to radicalize young men, both as an explicit call to action to the already radicalized and to weaponize and exploit the popular culture of the Grey Tribe to radicalize them.

## **Conclusion**

The radicalization that is occurring within the Grey Tribe is the culmination of a decade of radicalization within digital spaces. The Far-Right uses its existing presence within a “non-political” space to radicalize young men through “scientific” theories, pop culture memes and self-selecting resentment towards the inclusion of identity politics and minorities within their social, work and digital spaces. The initial apolitical identity of the Grey Tribe's membership was an active rejection of the binary political divide of American Politics, one which itself was understood

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<sup>427</sup> Ibid., 17; Matthews, “The Alt-Right Is More than Warmed-over White Supremacy. It's That, but Way Way Weirder.”

<sup>428</sup> Tarrant, “The Great Replacement,” 19.

through the meme of Blue States and Red States. Without adequate political infrastructure or education, these apolitical communities were easy targets for radicalization by extremist cells.

While the initial edgelord memes on 4chan, reddit or twitter were presented innocently to separate the digital community from normies, it was exploited by Far-Right groups. The comedic elements of the memes were slowly replaced with a reactionary politics that was hidden behind claims of ignorance. The great difficulty is that until an online figure engages in criminal acts or outright terrorism, they can claim ignorance, even as the obvious imagery of misogyny, hatred and intolerance becomes ever-present. Which leaves those attempting to expose these posts, individuals and hate groups for what they are with the unfortunate position, like Justice Potter Stewart, of knowing it when they see it but being unable to give a universal definition or description to separate an innocent meme from an Alt-Right meme.

## Chapter 5: The NeoReactionaries: Nick Land and Curtis Yarvin

### Introduction

Without a doubt, the most bizarre group to influence the Alternative Right are the NeoReactionaries of the Dark Enlightenment. As earlier chapters have demonstrated, the most popular and visible members of the Alt-Right are not the intellectuals of the movement, but rather the public faces, such as Milo Yiannopolous or Steve Bannon.<sup>429</sup> While it is easy to point to White Nationalist figures like Richard Spencer or French New Right authors like Alain de Benoist and find official think tanks and public rallies, the NeoReactionaries are hidden on the internet removed from the public demonstrations and mainstream reporting that has made the Alternative Right infamous. This chapter will examine the influence of the two most significant NeoReactionary thinkers, Curtis Yarvin and Nick Land, and will explore how the six key ideas of NeoReaction are introduced or incorporated into the political theory of the Alternative Right.

Yarvin is a computer scientist and founder of Urbit, a tech start-up backed by Peter Thiel, though he is more infamous online through his pseudonym, Mencius Moldbug.<sup>430</sup> Yarvin used his screen name Mencius Moldbug between 2007 and 2013 to prolifically blog his ruminations on politics, which would lead to the construction of his political theory tradition which would be known as NeoReaction or NRx. In line with the broader Alternative Right, Yarvin presents his NeoReactionary ideas as a rejection of both liberal and conservative ideologies.<sup>431</sup> Yarvin's work is a revolutionary rather than reformist project to replace democratic governance in the United States. He rejects the reformist policies of democratic and technocratic institutionalism that

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<sup>429</sup> Anissimov, "Reactionaries and Our Lesser Brethren: The Meme Brigades."

<sup>430</sup> Lecher, "Alt-Right Darling Mencius Moldbug Wanted to Destroy Democracy. Now He Wants to Sell You Web Services"; Clark, "Nock, Hoon, Etc. for Non-Vulcons (Why Urbit Matters)," Popehat, 2013, <https://www.popehat.com/2013/12/06/nock-hoon-etc-for-non-vulcans-why-urbit-matters/>.

<sup>431</sup> Curtis Yarvin, "An Open Letter to Open-Minded Progressives Chapter 1: A Horizon Made of Canvas," Unqualified Reservations, 2008, <https://www.unqualified-reservations.org/2008/04/open-letter-to-open-minded-progressives/>.

dominates Silicon Valley and their California Ideology. The technocratic ideas of Yarvin are fundamentally accelerationist in nature, fixated on the *long durée* and the inevitability of technological development of human society, which will render the existing political structures ineffective. For Yarvin both liberalism and the social democratic system of the past hundred years were based on the technological limitations of the early industrial era, with advances in computer science, such as the internet, political structures which were once impossible are now logistical possibilities.

His ideas caught the attention of many online, including Steve Bannon, who cited him as a significant political influence.<sup>432</sup> While Yarvin lacks significant training in the social sciences or humanities, (only five undergraduate courses), he exploited his doctorate in computer science to great success through the dot-com bubble, which allowed him to purchase a massive number of rare reactionary texts from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>433</sup> Yarvin prides himself as an autodidact; in contrast, his most crucial intellectual supporter is the philosopher Nick Land, who is a distinguished academic in his own right.

Nick Land is arguably one of the most significant British philosophers of the post-modern period due to his highly influential work on accelerationism while working with the Cybernetic Culture Research Unit (CCRU) at the University of Warwick in the 1990s.<sup>434</sup> While his work has had limited publication, as one will not find his texts in a local bookstore; he was foundational for bridging the gap between traditional academic spaces and the digital media environment. His theories blended fiction and philosophy in a way that would come to define the political theory of online space, which exploits the pop culture obsession and visibility provided by many internet

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<sup>432</sup> Eliana Johnson and Eli Stokols, "What Steve Bannon Wants You to Read," *Politico*, February 7, 2017.

<sup>433</sup> Corey Pein, "Mouthbreathing Machiavellis Dream of a Silicon Reich," *The Baffler*, May 2014.

<sup>434</sup> Mark Fisher, "Nick Land: Mind Games," *Dazed & Confused* (London, May 2011).

natives to provide commentary on philosophical ideas. Then to the surprise of the academic community, he wrote a book-length commentary on Yarvin's political theory on his blog called *The Dark Enlightenment*.<sup>435</sup>

### **The Six Key Ideas of NeoReaction**

As an ideology, NeoReaction is premised on six key ideas. The first is a rejection of the typical academic format of journal articles and published books. Instead, they rely on blog posts and other multimedia texts to present their ideas, both of which have come to dominate the rhetorical style of the Alternative Right. The second is the concept of the Cathedral, which is a right-wing Gramscian-Foucauldian structural framework to express cultural metapolitics and the dominance of public discourse through managerial politics. Third is the concept of Exit, rather than the libertarian or liberal conception of negative freedom, for the NeoReactionaries freedom is fundamentally one of exiting, the ability to leave political contracts. The fourth idea is that of Monarchy, and more specifically, NeoCamerarism and the CEO as head of state. The fifth is a social Darwinist theory of biological determinism. The sixth idea is the articulation of the future, one based on the accelerationist and dystopian realities of hyper-capitalism and the end of modern liberal-democratic nation-states.

While not the first or only political tradition to marry political theory and discourse to the free form media of the internet, the NeoReactionary tradition has been one of the more successful political movements to attempt it. When reading the texts of NeoReaction, the reader is engaged through humour, pop culture references and cyberculture in-jokes. The texts are more akin to a Reddit thread than an academic article. The literature bridges the gap between the serious White Nationalist texts of the 1990s with the comedic and ironic texts of the Alt-Right's radical cores in

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<sup>435</sup> Land, "The Dark Enlightenment."

the wake of Trump's election. One reads the texts of Yarvin or Land carefully but not necessarily seriously or literally.

NeoReaction's fundamental idea is that of the Cathedral. The Cathedral is a conceptual framework to explain a Gramscian or Foucauldian structural analysis of cultural hegemony without relying on materialist or critical theorist genealogies. The Cathedral, for Yarvin, is the liberal academic-state-media superstructure, it polices the expression of radical ideas and maintains a managerial state through interconnected think tanks, universities, news outlets and government agencies.<sup>436</sup> Which is why a libertarian government could never be successful on its own, it would compete with a superstructure which would actively subvert any significant changes to the structure of society. This conclusion is one that NeoReaction shares with the White Nationalists such as Samuel Francis.<sup>437</sup>

While in theory, small local democratic governments could support a libertarian political framework, this would only be possible if a vast majority of the voting population agreed with these libertarian ideas. In practice, there are no geographic communities comprised overwhelmingly of libertarians, therefore for their political identity to be realized they must form separate communities. This desire for separation is where Land articulates the fundamental idea of exit. For NeoReactionary ideas to gain a fertile soil their followers must have the ability to exit from their society and re-establish themselves elsewhere through a process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization.<sup>438</sup> For the NeoReactionary, this is one of the fundamental breaks with

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<sup>436</sup> Curtis Yarvin, "An Open Letter to Open-Minded Progressives: Chapter 9 How to Uninstall a Cathedral," 2008, <https://www.unqualified-reservations.org/2008/06/ol9-how-to-uninstall-cathedral/>; Pennacchietti, "The Foucauldian Cathedral."

<sup>437</sup> Francis, *Essential Writings on Race*.

<sup>438</sup> Land, "The Dark Enlightenment," pt. 1.

libertarian values; one must be able to exit society to be free. To be free one must have the ability to exit the existing society and end their engagement with the social contract.

NeoReaction is an ideology that emerged out of a monarchist, anti-democratic and racialized interpretation of libertarian political philosophy. NeoReaction distinguishes itself from libertarianism through its rejection of democracy. As Peter Thiel suggested in *Cato Unbound*, there is a fundamental incompatibility between democracy and negative freedoms.<sup>439</sup> A democratic government is set up to respond to the needs of minority interests who compete over limited resources. The dispersion of state resources will therefore always be influenced by political calculus rather than a utilitarian one. For a state to be the most efficient and therefore least burdensome on the public it requires, according to NeoReactionaries, a figure who can engage in near absolutist control over the allocation of resources. For Yarvin this could be a monarch, but he assumes that the more likely and preferable system would be one in which a CEO governs the state through a NeoCameralist structure based on the legal structure of joint-stock companies.

NeoReaction is an ideology of biological determinism. While NeoReactionaries are not White Nationalists, at least not in the anti-Semitic tradition of White Nationalism, they do hold to a racially based understanding of the world. For NeoReactionaries ethnic groups have divergent and unequal intelligence and physical capacity. The NeoReactionaries go to great length to prove that whites are not the most intelligent racial group, to not appear to be white supremacists. NeoReactionaries justify their racially based theory of humanity by arguing that Ashkenazi Jews and northeast Asians are smarter on average than white northern Europeans, and therefore all other racial groups.<sup>440</sup> Therefore, in the eyes of some in the movement, they are not White Nationalists

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<sup>439</sup> Thiel, "The Education of a Libertarian."

<sup>440</sup> Land, "The Dark Enlightenment," pt. 4a.

or white supremacists, just followers of race science and eugenics. This justification is flimsy as some within the movement use it as an after the fact technique to justify their hatred.<sup>441</sup>

The NeoReactionaries see the future much like Guillaume Faye, one filled with crisis and accelerated catastrophes.<sup>442</sup> While factually incorrect about many of their claims, rising crime rates or military conflicts,<sup>443</sup> the NeoReactionaries are fixated on the nihilistic malaise of late capitalism. Land and Yarvin reject utopian views of history and see the future of liberal society as one of increasing authoritarian capitalism. For Land, he sees a future of capitalist accelerationism and the eventual singularity when biological, technological and capitalist progress merge into a system solely for itself. Land accepts capitalist acceleration not because he values it from personal preference but because there is no alternative to the system which is driven to self-replicate itself: “Because it (capitalism) appeals to nothing beyond itself, it is inherently nihilistic. It has no conceivable meaning beside self-amplification. It grows in order to grow. Mankind is its temporary host, not its master. Its only purpose is itself.”<sup>444</sup>

### **The Form of NeoReactionary Writing**

NeoReactionary thought represents a fundamental break in the expression and form of political theory, not just within the Alternative Right or Far-Right theory. While political theory has not been relegated solely to the academic library, it would be generous to assume that contemporary political theory literature was widely accessible. These traditional texts are primarily essays in academic journals or book-length monographs on the subject, with the target audience of graduate students and professors rather than the general public. NeoReactionary literature

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<sup>441</sup> Michael Anissimov, “Monarchy, Ethnonationalism, and the Political Position of Neoreactionaries,” *Medium*, June 2016.

<sup>442</sup> Faye, *Convergence of Catastrophes*.

<sup>443</sup> Scott Alexander, “The Anti-Reactionary FAQ,” Slate Star Codex, 2013, <http://slatestarcodex.com/2013/10/20/the-anti-reactionary-faq/>.

<sup>444</sup> Nick Land, “A Quick-And-Dirty Introduction to Accelerationism,” *Jacobite*, May 25, 2017.

transitions between the formalistic language of the academic political theory text into something more accessibly written, filled with jokes and pop culture references with the more difficult terminology explained through hyperlink text footnotes.

This change from formalistic prose to semi-sarcastic monologue was precipitated by the conscious choice by Yarvin and then Land to write for a general audience of those who posted online and were active in the blogging culture of the late 2000s and early 2010s. The gatekeeping of academic presses and journals was replaced by the moderator on larger forums or the author of the piece themselves when self-publishing. Without this academic gatekeeping the texts could present unpopular opinions (based on racist ideas), factually incorrect theories based on intellectually dubious claims,<sup>445</sup> satirical jokes<sup>446</sup> and ramble on for thousands of words. These ideas would be presented as cool and edgy; this was not your liberal professor's political theory.

It would be unfair to claim that the NeoReactionaries invented cool or edgy political theory. Instead, they are adopting many of the same stylistic and rhetorical techniques of the postmodernist tradition. What Postmodernism did to leftist thought is what NeoReactionaries were trying to do to the Right, challenging the primary philosophical elements of political thought by challenging the role of technology, the media, truth and culture within modernity.<sup>447</sup> As Land is well aware, as a former professor of critical theory, the literature within postmodern contemporary political theory is written to be transgressive to the status quo.

A key reason for the success of the NeoReactionary authors was the transition from physical to digital media. One of the more profound shifts between the right-wing educational spaces of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the 21<sup>st</sup> is the ability to access radical texts regardless of one's

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<sup>445</sup> Alexander, "The Anti-Reactionary FAQ."

<sup>446</sup> Film Crit Hulk, "PC Culture Vs. The Big Joke."

<sup>447</sup> Pennacchiotti, "The Foucauldian Cathedral."

physical location. No longer do right-wing radicals and by extension, left-wing radicals, need to create mailing lists to disseminate books and pamphlets to every club or branch across the United States. Yarvin's overwhelming reliance on google books throughout both his "Open Letter" and "Gentle Introduction" established a precedence for the Far-Right, one can cite an article, figure or book with a hyperlink to the exact text one wishes to share with the public.<sup>448</sup> A free PDF of a book that is available after one click will gain significantly greater readership than one available through one's local bookstore given that the reader faces almost no barriers to access; this technique, which would become standard practice online, of citing texts and arguments through hyperlinks paid off. Not only did it provide ease of access to his sources for budding NeoReactionaries, but it also provided a legitimating effect to his arguments, as he had primary sources readily available to provide his NeoReactionary movement with legitimate texts from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. As online discourse often relies on definitive proof, these primary sources gave Yarvin legitimacy that his contemporaries lacked.

The NeoReactionaries only went so far, most of their writings would link to lengthy sources including poorly scanned book chapters. For the younger reader, these ideas were still isolating and inaccessible. Since the texts were produced while Twitter, YouTube and Facebook were in their relative infancy, they were still predominantly texts and blog posts rather than multimedia presentations. When the Alternative Right subsumed the NeoReactionary movement, it did so with more engaging social media techniques including memes, vlogs and live streams. The NeoReactionary texts should be understood as transitional rather than entirely separate from the existing forms used by the canon of political theory.

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<sup>448</sup> Yarvin, "An Open Letter to Open-Minded Progressives Chapter 1: A Horizon Made of Canvas"; Yarvin, "A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations: Chapter 1: The Red Pill."

## What is the Cathedral?

Curtis Yarvin's central idea is the Cathedral. The Cathedral is Yarvin's conceptual breakdown of political power within society, specifically the role of knowledge-power, i.e. nonfinancial and non-military power, through administrative, judicial, media, legislative and academic institutions; effectively those elements of society which run and guide society, instead of the legal rules of who controls the state.<sup>449</sup> The trinity that composes the Cathedral are the liberal university structure, which he labels as synonymous with Harvard, the mainstream media and their liberal journalists and finally the state department and the NGO's that share funding resources and objectives with the United States government.

In chapter four of the "Open Letter to Open-Minded Progressives", Yarvin creates the Cathedral as a thought experiment to explain his version of manufactured consent.<sup>450</sup> Yarvin suggests that there are three broad types of society when it comes to intellectual freedom, the first type is where there is little to no intellectual freedom, the state decides what good ideas are and which are bad. Yarvin suggests Elizabethan England, Contemporary China or North Korea are examples of this type.<sup>451</sup> The second type of society is based on spontaneous coordination, a consensus society.<sup>452</sup> Rather than the state dictating intellectual freedom, it is the universities and media which dictate the terms for the state. Yarvin proceeds to argue that a society in which the most prestigious universities agree with each other and the major media outlets agree with each other would be a type two society, and the most indicative of Western society. The third type is the Popperian Open Society premised on a market place of ideas in which the best ideas win out

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<sup>449</sup> Land, "The Dark Enlightenment," pt. 1.

<sup>450</sup> Curtis Yarvin, "An Open Letter to Open-Minded Progressives Chapter 4: Dr. Johnson's Hypothesis," Unqualified Reservations, 2008, <https://www.unqualified-reservations.org/2008/05/014-dr-johnsons-hypothesis/>.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid.

over the worse.<sup>453</sup> This open society is the idealized understanding of society based on reason, and the least likely to exist due to the steady creep of state and bureaucratic power, as expressed within James Burnham's *Managerial Revolution*.<sup>454</sup> The Cathedral is the conceptual framework to explain this spontaneous coordination found within the consensus society of type two.

Yarvin is fixated on the role of non-state institutions which generate knowledge, which emerges out of his apprehension towards organized Christian faith and their ability to generate truth claims.<sup>455</sup> While a traditional religious institution would abide by a truth claim for centuries, making only moderate variations to the canon, a university, according to Yarvin, changes their truth claims quickly, typically at an accelerating rate. The Cathedral is Yarvin's attempt to answer the question of rapid ideological and social-technological change within universities; why does the "truth" at Harvard synchronize with the "truth" at Stanford almost immediately? For Yarvin, they must either both come to the same truth claim concurrently through semi-independent research consistently, or there must be some interlocking system in which most universities agree with each other. Yarvin ignores the literature on the academic culture within sociology, and the literature on the transmission of ideas within communications and media studies and instead recreates the wheel from a reactionary perspective.

The Cathedral is a superstructure without authorial or conspiratorial agency; it is a political structure that is constructed historically. Over time this Cathedral has constructed a regime of truth, which has normalized surveillance and disciplinary practices. While Foucault highlighted the use of disciplinary practices to marginalize the oppressed and those on the fringe, Curtis Yarvin has no such politics of emancipation. While Foucadians will understand this as a form of pastoral

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<sup>453</sup> Ibid.

<sup>454</sup> Burnham, *The Managerial Revolution: What Is Happening in the World*.

<sup>455</sup> Curtis Yarvin, "Cryptocalvinism, Slightly Tweaked," Unqualified Reservations, 2007, <https://www.unqualified-reservations.org/2007/06/cryptocalvinism-slightly-tweaked/>.

power, to explain the role of surveillance as a method of governance within modernity,<sup>456</sup> the right and precisely the reactionary right has lacked a definitive non-conspiratorial understanding of these relations. The Cathedral is not a conspiratorial structure, which is one of the definitive breaks that it makes from other online radical right-wing ideologies and theories, and places it more in line with Samuel Francis and James Burnham.<sup>457</sup> There is no actual cabal of Jewish financiers; there is no free-mason conspiracy, there is no Illuminati controlling America. Instead, there is a superstructure that reproduces itself with each generation of intellectual thought, always expanding its bureaucracy and in turn corruption. In Yarvin's own words:

Certainly, the synchronization is not coordinated by any human hierarchical authority. ... The system may be Orwellian, but it has no Goebbels. It produces Gleichschaltung without a Gestapo. It has a Party line without a Party. A neat trick.<sup>458</sup>

What Yarvin's politics share with someone like Foucault are clear; the study of politics is the study of creating truth.

Those who function within the Cathedral have always shared the same spaces and culture. Rather than suggesting that the social media bubble created the echo chamber, Yarvin extends it back much farther, arguing that the functionaries of the system since the emergence of liberalism have shared the same culture and campaigns for humanistic doctrines.<sup>459</sup> Take this understanding of culture with the biological determinism that has emerged out of libertarianism and one gets the Memeplex. The Memeplex is a self-reinforcing system that furthers the Cathedral and its values, through a process of normalizing respectable views and ostracizing others. While Yarvin is not the

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<sup>456</sup> Pennacchietti, "The Foucauldian Cathedral"; Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978*, ed. Michel Senellart, First (London: Picador, 2009).

<sup>457</sup> Pennacchietti, "The Foucauldian Cathedral"; Burnham, *The Managerial Revolution: What Is Happening in the World*; Francis, *Leviathan and Its Enemies: Mass Organization and Managerial Power in Twentieth-Century America*.

<sup>458</sup> Yarvin, "A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations: Chapter 1: The Red Pill."

<sup>459</sup> Pennacchietti, "The Foucauldian Cathedral."

only author to argue for hegemonic normality within modernism, his concept of the Cathedral provided a rationalist rather than a moralistic justification for anti-modernity.

For Yarvin the Cathedral maintains a system of liberal moral and cultural norms.<sup>460</sup> While other superstructures fixated on the economic systems of control, Yarvin is focusing on the maintenance of the rhetorical and media control of equality. For Yarvin the promotion and maintenance of equality are authoritarian because it rejects any theory not predicated on those moral axioms, therefore it limits the plurality of perspective and freedom of thought essential to a free society. The Cathedral prevents the freedom of non-liberal thought in practice, even though legal documents allow for freedom of speech; liberals can have their free-speech cake and eat it too. Non-cosmopolitan thought is rejected, and those who put it forward are ostracized and often re-educated.<sup>461</sup> This insight, if it focused on the role of hegemonic society to marginalize oppressed groups would be emancipatory. Unfortunately, Yarvin focuses on those traditionally in hegemonic positions within society. Instead of discussing how pastoral power normalizes heterosexuality at the cost of homosexuality like Foucault,<sup>462</sup> Yarvin sees how the Cathedral prevents biological research into eugenics or biology.

The Cathedral as a framework provides members and supporters of the Alternative Right with a useful rhetorical scapegoat to separate themselves from liberal and left-wing critiques of university spaces. The maintenance of the Cathedral enforced orthodoxy results in intellectual witch hunts at university campuses targeting, typically right-wing and "politically incorrect" language. These "witch hunts" are where a figure like Jordan Peterson comes in. Peterson a

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<sup>460</sup> Yarvin, "A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations: Chapter 3: AGW, KFM, And HNU."

<sup>461</sup> Pennacchietti, "The Foucauldian Cathedral."

<sup>462</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1: The Will to Knowledge* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008).

University of Toronto professor who argues against tolerance in the classroom by refusing to use a student's preferred gendered pronouns.<sup>463</sup>

Despite this framework's appeal, as a way to justify the inability of reactionary ideas to populate the public imagination, the power of academics is relatively limited, due to widespread distrust for professionals and academics within American political culture, as Hofstadter has written about extensively.<sup>464</sup> What power academics have can be better encapsulated by a Gramscian framework of public intellectuals, as the French New Right attempts. As organic intellectuals in a Gramscian framework, the academic shifts public discourse over time, yet lacks the almost conspiratorial power that Yarvin ascribes to them.

Yarvin is partially right when he says: "No one tells journalists and professors what to say."<sup>465</sup> both groups can get away with pointing out the hypocrisies and corruption of the State and major corporations. However, Yarvin ignores the role of the state and major corporations to fire transgressive journalists, blacklist professors and deny them income until they adopt the party line. As with most of Yarvin's work, the power of corporations is presented as a good not to be questioned, or it is something that is lacking significance. Yarvin's pro-corporate position stands in contrast to the White Nationalist and European New Right literature which questions the role of large corporations within capitalism.

### **Exit - How to Resist like a Reactionary**

If Yarvin's primary contribution to NeoReactionary thought was the structure of the Cathedral, then Land's significant contribution was the theory of Exit. The primary function of the *Dark Enlightenment* is for Land to translate the ideas of Yarvin into something that is both more

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<sup>463</sup> Schiff, "I Was Jordan Peterson's Strongest Supporter. Now I Think He's Dangerous."

<sup>464</sup> Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*.

<sup>465</sup> Curtis Yarvin, "A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations Chapter 5: The Modern Structure," *Unqualified Reservations*, 2009, <https://www.unqualified-reservations.org/2009/02/gentle-introduction-to-unqualified/>.

philosophically rigorous and less transparently racist. While the Cathedral and NeoCameralism are valuable ideas, they are at best a reactionary reinterpretation of existing ideas and an aspirational objective for reactionaries if given *carte blanc*. The key idea for Land is exit, which he reinterprets through accelerationism and deterritorialization.<sup>466</sup>

NeoReactionaries do not understand freedom as the liberal ideas of free speech, assembly or religion; these are the freedoms within a system. Within a specific space, one has permission from the state to express views critical of the state. Within the confines of the state, one can assemble with like-minded people. Within the state, one can express one's religious views. With each of these, one is limited by what the state permits as a right, and the state can use legal methods to delineate acceptable expression, assembly or religion without individual consent. If the government states that one is no longer allowed to yell fire in a crowded room, then the individual is forced and coerced into accepting the new contract with the government, regardless of the type of government, monarchy or democracy. The state is, therefore, able to, through democracy or otherwise, force an individual into a contractual arrangement without their consent.

For Land, the solution to this lack of consent is a new framework to conceptualize freedom. Drawing upon Thiel and by extension Albert Hirschman, freedom is defined by the ability to exit a system that one disagrees with.<sup>467</sup> Protesting a disagreeable law can collectively change the law over time, but it does not end the coercion of the state to dictate the conditions of the social contract. Rather than fixating on the right to dissent within a system, freedom is the ability to leave a system, i.e. to exit.<sup>468</sup> Essentially this system of politics replaces the freedom of voice and expression with the ability for free exit from the system which they disagree with, to quote Land: "No Voice, free

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<sup>466</sup> Land, "The Dark Enlightenment," pt. 1.

<sup>467</sup> Thiel, "The Education of a Libertarian."

<sup>468</sup> Land, "The Dark Enlightenment," pt. 1.

exit."<sup>469</sup> The project of the *Dark Enlightenment* and NeoReactionary organization is effectively to organize an exit from the system. While a literal exit from the system may be difficult, as sea-steading and space travel appear to be out of reach within the near future,<sup>470</sup> Yarvin imagines a political praxis for the NeoReactionaries to leave the system which he calls passivism.

Passivism is akin to a Marxist conception of heightening the contradictions within the system rather than adopting reformist measures, or like Julius Evola's suggestion to ride the tiger of modernity, which he labels *apolieta*.<sup>471</sup> Those on the Alternative Right like Yarvin imagined the need to rebuild the political structure from scratch, because any successful NeoReactionary or White Nationalist party would only be able to attempt half measures rather than complete systemic change, due to structural limitations imposed by democratic and modern state bureaucracies. This idea is shared by Samuel Francis when it comes to White Nationalism's impossibility under neoliberal capitalism,<sup>472</sup> Alexander Dugin's dream of a fourth political theory to transcend postliberalism<sup>473</sup> and by Guillaume Faye's dream of Archeofuturism emerging only after the crisis of Western Civilization.<sup>474</sup> The goal of passivism is, therefore, to establish the framework for an alternative to be imagined. This means that the first step is to create a plan b.<sup>475</sup> Yarvin compares plan b to an eject button on an airplane, without one the pilot will do everything they possibly can to save the plane as there is no alternative, but once you include the eject button the pilot can abandon the plane when all hope is lost. When there is no alternative, the responsibility is on the disaffected party to create an alternative from the ground up, then create that perfect and practical

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<sup>469</sup> Ibid.

<sup>470</sup> Robinson, "Tech Billionaire Peter Thiel No Longer Thinks His Dream of a Floating Libertarian Utopia Is Realistic."

<sup>471</sup> Evola, *Ride the Tiger: A Survival Manual for the Aristocrats of the Soul*.

<sup>472</sup> Francis, *Essential Writings on Race*.

<sup>473</sup> Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory*.

<sup>474</sup> Faye, *Archeofuturism: European Visions of Post-Catastrophic Age*.

<sup>475</sup> Yarvin, "A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations: Chapter 10: The Mandate of Heaven."

image in the eyes of the other party. Yarvin argues that it was because the Soviet people had the example of American democracy that they knew that they could transition to a different system of government and allow the Soviet Union to collapse.<sup>476</sup> There was no alternative for the American population in 2009, but by 2016, new ideas and alternatives had started to emerge, but there was nowhere else to go. Under a TINA (There is no alternative) reality, the public is left with a nihilistic acceptance of the status quo, no matter how much they despise it.

For Yarvin, the immediate goal of NeoReactionary political action is passivism, in which the best way to act as a NeoReactionary is to, effectively, leave the system. The official policy of NeoReactionaries is what Yarvin calls the Steel Rule, which argues for isolating oneself from the system while existing within it. As he says in the ninth chapter of his “Gentle Introduction” “the steel rule precludes in no particular order: demonstrations, press releases, suicide bombs ... and any other activist technique, violent or harmless, legal or illegal, fashionable or despicable.”<sup>477</sup> The most that one should do is vote for the status quo or call a representative of the government because both actions submit to the state without challenging it. Only in acts of self-defence does the non-action break. This politics of passivism stands in stark contrast to the politics of the Alt-Right which saw street protest and rabble-rousing as a capable political praxis for drawing awareness, but it also resulted in every group from the *New York Times* to Antifa publicly opposing them. NeoReaction is isolationist in an age of globalization; there is no humanitarian intervention or domino theory for the NeoReactionaries to oppose or support, as Michael Perilloux claims when discussing what NeoReactionary interventionist policy would look like: "NeoReaction does not

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<sup>476</sup> Curtis Yarvin, “A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations: Chapter 11: The New Structure,” Unqualified Reservations, 2009, <https://www.unqualified-reservations.org/2009/11/gentle-introduction-to-unqualified/>.

<sup>477</sup> Curtis Yarvin, “A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations Chapter 9: The Procedure and the Reaction,” Unqualified Reservations, 2009, <https://www.unqualified-reservations.org/2009/09/gentle-introduction-to-unqualified/>.

care about Tibetan sovereignty, which is an internal political issue in someone else's empire, on the other side of the world."<sup>478</sup>

The advantages to passivism for Yarvin are fourfold; the first is the advantage that it disappears from state surveillance.<sup>479</sup> In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is no public space in which to communicate politically without corporate or government surveillance, therefore leaving the "radar" without actively leaving society provides active camouflage. The state's security apparatus must label a NeoReactionary as a threat before they can engage in counter-extremism and anti-radicalization initiatives. Yarvin was right about flying under the radar, the Alt-Right effectively formed and maintained its unified political voice so long as it flew under the radar of most forms of censorship and no-platforming. As the significant Far-Right blogs and activists are no-platformed, they lose their ability to disseminate ideas;<sup>480</sup> in contrast, the NeoReactionaries, who have influenced many of the Alternative Right bloggers have adequately maintained their blogs and networks as they maintain a small group of dedicated followers. As Yarvin points out, he received almost no negative emails during his early period,<sup>481</sup> as his work was mostly discussed on sites like Less Wrong, not over Twitter or YouTube which contain dissenting opposition.

The second argument for passivism for NeoReactionaries is that going out of the way to challenge the left only stimulates it.<sup>482</sup> As the liberal institution is decentralized, it does not matter if one takes down one of their thinkers or blogs with "logic and reason," liberal academics are a hydra, critique one and two more will respond to one's critique. Therefore this active refusal to participate and challenge the left on their own field is, broadly speaking, the reason why outside

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<sup>478</sup> Michael Perilloux, "What's the Neoreactionary Position on Tibet," *Social Matter*, March 2016.

<sup>479</sup> Yarvin, "A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations Chapter 9: The Procedure and the Reaction."

<sup>480</sup> Cox and Koebler, "Why Won't Twitter Treat White Supremacy like ISIS? Because It Would Mean Banning Some Republicans Too."; Alexander, "YouTube Creators Are Trying to Move on from 'Subscribe to PewDiePie.'"

<sup>481</sup> Yarvin, "A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations: Chapter 11: The New Structure."

<sup>482</sup> Yarvin, "A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations Chapter 9: The Procedure and the Reaction."

of those who went looking for them, almost no one on the centre to left-wing political landscape noticed the rise of the Alt-Right internet community until they made the populist shift during 2014 with the advent of Gamergate.<sup>483</sup> Even centrist and anti-extremist organizations tasked with tracking the rise of Right-Wing extremist organizations were limited in their ability to directly confront these groups due to their lack of violence, even if the NeoReactionaries were radicalizing young men into a racist political project.<sup>484</sup>

The third argument for passivism for NeoReactionaries is that it stops a Hitler-like figure from emerging from within the movement. The elitist nature of reactionary thought when presented as a populist campaign, creates fascism, as it promises to share power through the democratic institution of voting and democracy, even if it campaigns on and eventually ends democracy.<sup>485</sup> As Yarvin predicted in 2009, a right-wing demagogue who latches onto the ideas of NeoReaction, such as Bannon or Donald Trump (indirectly) could quickly sabotage the movement, and destroy it in the long run. As Evola suggested, decades earlier, the populism of the Nazi Party was the downfall of fascist and reactionary politics for decades.<sup>486</sup>

The fourth argument for passivism is that it allows for the recruitment of progressives and conservative members.<sup>487</sup> Seeing as Land, coming from a left-wing academic background, embraced Yarvin's framework, it seemed to be successful. For Yarvin, this is how he connects the movement with the broader Grey Tribe readership that he is writing for in his early blog posts. By adopting the veil of neutrality on contemporary issues, the movement did not get the door slammed in their face right off the bat and could coalesce and get passed around without the immediate

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<sup>483</sup> Lees, "What Gamergate Should Have Taught Us about the 'Alt-Right.'"

<sup>484</sup> Cox and Koebler, "Why Won't Twitter Treat White Supremacy like ISIS? Because It Would Mean Banning Some Republicans Too."

<sup>485</sup> Yarvin, "A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations Chapter 9: The Procedure and the Reaction."

<sup>486</sup> Evola, *Notes on the Third Reich*.

<sup>487</sup> Yarvin, "A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations Chapter 9: The Procedure and the Reaction."

response of left-wing and liberal groups. Those in the know were able to share and transmit the ideas of the NeoReactionaries without censorship; they could further a politics of exit and reactionary thought without being fired.<sup>488</sup>

### **Monarchy and NeoCamerism**

Almost the entirety of NeoReactionary thought is to some degree absurd, speculative and verging on science fiction. Perhaps the most outlandish idea of the NeoReactionaries is the reintroduction of the monarchy through a NeoCamerist framework. As Eleanor Lockhart tried to explain in her review of *NeoReaction A Basilisk*, any analysis of NeoReaction that accepts that there are flesh and blood followers arguing for monarchy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century must conclude that one is living in an increasingly absurd world.<sup>489</sup> It is unlikely that one will find a majority of rank and file members of the Alternative Right arguing for the monarchy, even if they hail Trump as their leader and maintain a cult-like following of him online. The underlying idea that the representative state should be replaced with a centralized non-democratic leadership is more enticing than an explicit monarchy, and one which is broadly shared by Alternative Right followers.

Yarvin despises democracy but also sees that it lacks the inertia to maintain itself. He sees the 21<sup>st</sup> century as the end of democracy because the social energy needed to maintain a democracy is drying up, the democratic deficit is increasing, and there is little to maintain the democratic institutions.<sup>490</sup> Land's reading of democracy also shares this concern that democracy will be unable to sustain itself, for Land democracy is fundamentally accelerationist in nature as it increases the

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<sup>488</sup> Rosie Gray, "A Former Alt-Right Member's Message: 'Get Out While You Can,'" *Buzzfeed News* (New York, May 2019).

<sup>489</sup> Eleanor Lockhart, "Cthulhu Shrugged: Neoreaction A Basilisk and the Rise of the Alt-Right," *Medium*, December 2017.

<sup>490</sup> Yarvin, "A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations Chapter 5: The Modern Structure."

speed of its collapse.<sup>491</sup> The fundamental flaw of the democratic system, according to Yarvin, is the rapid turnover of leadership. If the state is held by a monarchy, there is a hereditary compulsion to maintain the system for future generations thus to maximize long term profit. Under a democratic system with fast turnover the system unsustainably exploits society and the economy for profit and corruption on an increasingly short-term cycle.<sup>492</sup> Each democratic government is fixated on the immediate time horizon of the next election cycle. While this fixation on the next election has always been the case, the time horizon has shrunk even faster as the head of the political party is no longer thinking about just the next election, but must face the constant barrage of public opinion polls and the quarterly reports on the economic situation. The head of state is liable to the immediate results of popularity polls, not just the results of polling booths.

The existing system(s) are designed not for the utilitarian long-term governance of the state but the maintenance of the governing party for as long as possible, which is rarely more than several decades, in contrast to states which survive for hundreds of years. Yarvin prefers the term demotism to democracy, as it covers not only liberal democracy, but also Soviet Communism, National Socialism and fascism.<sup>493</sup> Rather than reflect the will of the people, the goal of governance for NeoReactionaries is to govern well, i.e. through a system of utilitarian efficiency. Democratic governance sets too many conditions on ruling and too many incentives for corruption as the government has a tenuous grasp on power, based on the legitimacy of public support and opinion. Yarvin, who condemns the Nazis, sees that fascism emerges out of failed democracies through the merger of populism and reactionary thought, which dilutes the reactionary aristocracy and maintains the failures of demotism, therefore corrupting the movement, while he sees the

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<sup>491</sup> Land, "The Dark Enlightenment," pt. 1.

<sup>492</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>493</sup> Matthews, "The Alt-Right Is More than Warmed-over White Supremacy. It's That, but Way Way Weirder."

conservative governments of liberal-capitalist democracies as a failure because they despise the masses that they rely on for governance.<sup>494</sup> This critique of populist reactionary politics is one that Yarvin shares with Evola, who devotes the entirety of his book, *Notes on the Third Reich* to explain.<sup>495</sup>

The NeoReactionary solution to democracy is NeoCamerism. NeoCamerism is the literal transformation of the state, its citizens, capital, institutions and resources into a corporation, in effect attempting to reimagine the cameralism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Prussian state. All the resources and assets within the confines of the state are redistributed to their owners as shares in the NeoCamerist state based on a technocratic census of all the social, intellectual and physical capital.<sup>496</sup> Each member of the state is given voting rights based on their share of the state, which they can then use to appoint a board and a CEO. Unlike a democracy, which cannot typically remove the head of state quickly, the shareholders within the state could dismiss the current ruling board of directors if they mismanage the state; though Yarvin did not explain how they would remove a CEO who just ignored the will of the shareholders and becomes a tyrant.<sup>497</sup> It is likely that Yarvin has ignored the role of the state to enforce corporate legal structures and forgets that a CEO can be arrested by regulatory bodies. Nor does this justification prevent the CEO from being concerned with quarterly reports any more than a democratically elected leader. This system intends to remove all the soft power and social relationships, which constitute the norms of society, and replace them with a mathematically determined political structure. NeoReactionaries embrace this CEO as king not because free markets are somehow effective, but rather that a CEO-

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<sup>494</sup> Curtis Yarvin, "A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations: Chapter 8: Olde Towne Easte," Unqualified Reservations, 2009, [https://www.unqualified-reservations.org/2009/04/gentle-introduction-to-unqualified\\_15/](https://www.unqualified-reservations.org/2009/04/gentle-introduction-to-unqualified_15/).

<sup>495</sup> Evola, *Notes on the Third Reich*.

<sup>496</sup> Yarvin, "An Open Letter to Open-Minded Progressives: Chapter 9 How to Uninstall a Cathedral"; Land, "The Dark Enlightenment," pt. 1.

<sup>497</sup> Land, "The Dark Enlightenment," pt. 1.

Shareholder dynamic enforces a Mandate of Heaven system of legitimacy, in which a highly technocratic and bureaucratic state would gain from a leviathan wielding absolute control and the ability to depose the CEO through shareholder leverage.<sup>498</sup> For Yarvin this is an attempt to “uninstall the cathedral” and make long term government policy possible.<sup>499</sup>

The central figure within this new NeoCameralist framework is the CEO. For Yarvin this is a half-way point between the hereditary monarch who is inconsistently capable and the short-term president within a democracy. The ideal CEO to run the state is a Steve Jobs or Elon Musk figure according to Yarvin.<sup>500</sup> While Yarvin does not articulate this, the CEO can function as a symbolic representation of the state, as an active force in the lives of the public. The CEO represents both the individual within a libertarian ethos and the corporation as a monolithic entity of capital accumulation. The CEO is the only figure who exists within contemporary society who can run the state and represent the state simultaneously, being both a technocratic figure and a public persona.

NeoCameratism is the rejection of an idealized anarchistic or communist post-state society, one which fundamentally rejects the utopian understandings of anarcho-capitalism and anarcho-sindicalism.<sup>501</sup> Land argues that NeoCameratism is the natural conclusion for the libertarian thought process, where the entire structure of the state is understood through the hierarchy and structure of the corporation. If one removes democracy from Libertarian thought, i.e. to remove the liberalism from the tradition, this NeoCameralist structure would be the result.

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<sup>498</sup> MacDouglad, “The Darkness Before the Right.”

<sup>499</sup> Yarvin, “An Open Letter to Open-Minded Progressives: Chapter 9 How to Uninstall a Cathedral.”

<sup>500</sup> Curtis Yarvin, “An Open Letter to Open-Minded Progressives Chapter 6: The Lost Theory of Government,” Unqualified Reservations, 2008, <https://www.unqualified-reservations.org/2008/05/016-lost-theory-of-government/>.

<sup>501</sup> Land, “The Dark Enlightenment,” 1.

Rather than run the government as if it were a business, the NeoCameralist structure turns the state into a corporation so that it must be run as one.

The foreign interventions by the US government to spread democracy during the Bush administration ring increasingly hollow for the post-Trump American Right. As Melissa Ryan, writing for *Ctrl Alt Right Delete*, pointed out, even though many right-wing elected officials do not agree with or are aware of NeoReactionary thought, anti-democratic sentiments are becoming even more popular with their constituencies.<sup>502</sup> Even if the idea of NeoCameratism is outlandish and unlikely to ever to be implemented, the anti-democratic rhetoric that the movement expresses helps legitimate the erosion of democratic norms, all the while laying the blame at the Cathedral. This theory will further justify the erosion of independent journalism, academic research and government regulation in the name of a reactionary counter “cultural Marxist” crusade.

### **Biological Determinism**

While the Grey Tribe is the least outwardly racist group within the Alternative Right, it would be fair to say that NeoReactionaries have the most technical justification for their racial politics. The elephant in the room for the NeoReactionary movement is racism. Their ideas predominately function with an implicit level of racism that would be generally considered acceptable within North American life, an implicit acceptance of the existing structure of white supremacy and institutionalized racism. The exception comes when Yarvin or any of his racially focused followers begin to include biological determinism and racial statistics.<sup>503</sup> Land, who is a

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<sup>502</sup> Melissa Ryan, “Ctrl Alt Right Delete: Neoreactionism and North Carolina,” *Ctrl Alt Right Delete*, December 2016.

<sup>503</sup> Anissimov, “Why There Are No White Nationalists”; Curtis Yarvin, “Why I Am Not a White Nationalist,” Unqualified Reservations, 2007, <https://unqualified-reservations.blogspot.ca/2007/11/why-i-am-not-white-nationalist.html>.

eugenicist, finds the racism to be the red flag that draws the attention of those who oppose NeoReaction faster than anything else.<sup>504</sup>

There are two elements to the racist theory of the NeoReactionaries; the first is a eugenics argument based on semi-closeted racial antagonism and scientific tests of racial differences. The second is a racial logic of white supremacy and white nationalism which is justified by this race science. The NeoReactionary arguments which focus on eugenics disconnected from race, are more akin to Evola's rejection of the nationalistic racism, where the genetic capacity of peasants and nobility are of equal value.<sup>505</sup> For the NeoReactionaries, there is an obligation for those with high intelligence to pass on their genetic ability to their children. The purpose of evolutionary thought is, therefore, to double as a quasi-religion to provide emancipatory progress for humanity.<sup>506</sup> The result is a more advanced form of Social Darwinism that draws upon genetic testing that was impossible a hundred years earlier.

While the policy choices for White Nationalists are relatively obvious: genocide and anti-immigration policies, the eugenics arguments are perhaps less obvious. Looking at humanity over a long-term time scale means that the long-term success of society requires those with high IQs to have more children. For Land, this system of biological determinism is undone by what he calls "IQ shredders," which pose a threat to the viability of city-states like Singapore and Hong Kong, and in the long run, the development of human society.<sup>507</sup> Significant world class cities like Singapore or San Francisco are home to millions of highly educated individuals with very high IQs, but they are also so expensive that individuals are placed in a position where they cannot afford to live in the city and have children. As a result, the best and brightest from around the

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<sup>504</sup> Land, "The Dark Enlightenment," pt. 1.

<sup>505</sup> Evola, *Notes on the Third Reich*.

<sup>506</sup> Land, "The Dark Enlightenment," pt. 3.

<sup>507</sup> Land, "IQ Shredders."

world, according to Land, are funneled into hyper-capitalist cities only to have a non-replacement rate of children. The result is the most valuable genetic stock being burned out by the capitalist system for their labour with no possibility for replacement. The intellectual capacity of humanity will therefore collapse and decline so long as these cities produce families with few to no children.

By contrast, the racial theory is much more fixated in the traditional White Nationalist sentiments of racial purity. Scientific racism based on the Human Biodiversity concept is used to justify the racial pseudo-science that entered mainstream discourse after the publishing of the *Bell Curve* in the 1990s.<sup>508</sup> The inclusion or at the very least, friendly harbour for White Nationalism within NeoReactionary communities should be seen as the connective tissue which allowed the Alternative Right and the Alt-Right to germinate around NeoReactionary ideas. As Yarvin admitted early on in his writings: “It should be obvious that, although I am not a white nationalist, I am not exactly allergic to the stuff. Maybe this doesn’t need defending. But I feel the urge to defend it anyway.”<sup>509</sup> So long as they shared the common enemy of the liberal multi-cultural progressive dream of equality, the White Nationalists could use Yarvin’s ideas with only minimal changes.

The focus on a eugenics system which is based on IQ tests rather than racial identity also helps explain how the NeoReactionaries are largely pro-Jewish without being Zionists. For figures like Yarvin, the success of Jewish intellectuals and business leaders over hundreds of years is an example of genetic breeding for intelligence and other successful traits. This also extends to Northeast Asians who are also positively received and welcomed into NeoReaction, as the Chinese, Korean and Japanese do well on standardized tests and other "racial tests."<sup>510</sup> However,

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<sup>508</sup> Sigl, “The Creepy Internet Movement You’d Better Take Seriously”; Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (New York: Free Press, 1994).

<sup>509</sup> Yarvin, “Why I Am Not a White Nationalist.”

<sup>510</sup> Land, “The Dark Enlightenment,” pt. 4a.

this is also why the movement is derided by other groups on the Alt-Right, with the website *the Right Stuff* using the term NeoReaction as a pseudonym for Jews.<sup>511</sup> The problem for the NeoReactionary movement with White Nationalists was that their anti-Semitic members levied insults against the Jewish members of the NeoReactionary movement. Without a centralized influential figure to control the anti-Semitism of the NeoReactionary movement, Yarvin predicted that the movement would become highly anti-Semitic and creep towards neo-Nazi fascism.<sup>512</sup> This fear would be proven valid as the Alt-Right take over of the NeoReactionary movement in 2014, and 2015 occurred just as Land and Yarvin began to take a secondary role within the movement and the vocally anti-Semitic Alt-Right leaders like Richard Spencer gained increasing prominence online.

### **The Future for a Western Renaissance**

While Yarvin's ideas of a NeoCameralist future are the work of science fiction, Land has a much more complex and nuanced understanding of the future based on the current inertia of socio-economic structures of late capitalism. For Land, there are only three realistic paths forward for humanity: Postmodernity, Modernity 2.0 and a Western Renaissance.<sup>513</sup>

Postmodernity is the continuation of the existing liberal-democratic structure of western society. Land does not discount the continuation of the status quo as a reality for the near future, but he predicts that it will buckle under its internal contradictions eventually. Western democracies will collapse due to the dual pressures to maintain profits and to maintain the aesthetics of democracy. The quest for continual profits will require a further lowering of taxes, expansion government subsidies and support for large corporations and the entrenchment of political elites

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<sup>511</sup> Lyons, *Insurgent Supremacists: The U.S. Far Right's Challenge to State and Empire*, 2868.

<sup>512</sup> Curtis Yarvin, "An Open Letter to Open-Minded Progressives: Chapter XIII: Tactics and Structures of Any Prospective Restoration," *Unqualified Reservations*, 2008, <https://www.unqualified-reservations.org/2008/07/olxiii-tactics-and-structures-of-any/>.

<sup>513</sup> Land, "The Dark Enlightenment," pt. 4e.

within the Cathedral. The affectation of democracy will require the state to promote ineffective and partial welfare policies domestically and human rights abroad. Land sees the postmodern system as it currently exists as a slow suicide into oblivion, just as Burnham did in the 1960s in his commentary on liberalism.<sup>514</sup>

In contrast to the decline of Western postmodernity, Land sees Modernity 2.0 as the likely alternative.<sup>515</sup> Modernity 2.0 is the non-Eurocentric modernity, which is emerging outside of the West. Drawing upon his time in China, Land argues that the authoritarian capitalist system of China will likely emerge as the dominant political and economic force of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Unlike the postmodernity of liberal-democracy, authoritarian capitalism possesses the capacity to address the crises of climate change and economic inequality through a highly technocratic form of authoritarianism which will merge into a totalitarian system as capitalist acceleration erodes human rights and the liberal values of privacy and self-expression.

Land suggests that the third solution is another Western Renaissance.<sup>516</sup> The first step for a Western Renaissance would be a series of crises within modernity which would require a “hard reboot” of society. Just like Faye’s Archeofuturism or Dugin’s theory of postliberal world order<sup>517</sup>, the existing system would need to be thoroughly discredited. Out of the crisis, the new system would require four significant changes according to Land. First, a system based on constitutional republicanism like neo-Cameralism would need to replace the existing system of representational democracy, which would prevent the political foundations laid by liberalism to reappear. The second change would be a drastic minimizing of government to a night-watchman state, which would be significantly more possible and attainable if the state is also reduced in size to that of

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<sup>514</sup> Burnham, *Suicide of the West: An Essay on the Meaning and Destiny of Liberalism*.

<sup>515</sup> Land, “The Dark Enlightenment,” pt. 4e.

<sup>516</sup> Ibid.

<sup>517</sup> Faye, *Archeofuturism: European Visions of Post-Catastrophic Age*; Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory*.

city-states rather than the size of continental empires. The third step would be the restoration of hard currency and the end of central banking, which would likely be facilitated through cryptocurrencies, as the libertarians have argued for years.<sup>518</sup> This last step would, in turn, assist with the final step, the dismantling of the macroeconomic stabilizers found within most economies.<sup>519</sup> For a Western Renaissance, to exist the new system would be a non-democratic libertarian state based on Austrian Economics while at the same time distancing itself from the liberalism that inspired it.<sup>520</sup>

As Nick Land surmised, Yarvin's initial purpose for NeoReaction was to respond to the failure of the Austro-libertarian movement to create a realistic set of policies that could be implemented on a national level, as there is a push and pull found within a democratic system that prevents libertarian policies from being implemented in the long run.<sup>521</sup> This Western Renaissance is the attempt to provide a political framework for libertarian ideas that are removed from the incompatible liberal structures which would prevent a libertarian society from existing. Land argues that this Western Renaissance just so happens to be the only alternative to a totalitarian capitalist system which would emerge out of the collapse of the existing postmodern system.

The significant difference between Land and his fellow NeoReactionaries is that he acknowledges that capitalism is horrific, but unlike a leftist, he takes this conclusion not as a call to arms but with a nihilistic acceptance.<sup>522</sup> Land is not obsessed with Austrian economic libertarianism; he does not come to the Far-Right as a libertarian, but rather despite it. For Land capitalism is an almost unspeakable horror which lurches ahead without agency, devouring all that

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<sup>518</sup> Cannucciari, *Banking on Bitcoin*.

<sup>519</sup> Land, "The Dark Enlightenment," pt. 4e.

<sup>520</sup> Curtis Yarvin, "A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations Chapter 4: Plan Moldbug," *Unqualified Reservations*, 2009, [https://www.unqualified-reservations.org/2009/01/gentle-introduction-to-unqualified\\_29/](https://www.unqualified-reservations.org/2009/01/gentle-introduction-to-unqualified_29/).

<sup>521</sup> Land, "The Dark Enlightenment," pt. 1.

<sup>522</sup> MacDouglad, "The Darkness Before the Right."

it consumes. Park MacDouglad describes Land's understanding as fundamentally Marxist, summarizing Land's logic as follows:

If one capitalist doesn't want to build smarter, better machines, he'll be out-competed by one who does. If Apple doesn't make you an asshole, Google will. If America doesn't breed genetically modified super-babies, China will. The market doesn't run on "greed," or any intentionality at all. Its beauty—or horror—is its impersonality. Either you adapt, or you die.<sup>523</sup>

For Land, he sees NeoReaction and authoritarian capitalism as one of the only ways to succeed within the capitalist system. It is not a moral one or even one that Land would probably wish for. Instead it is an inevitable progression that capitalist acceleration requires.

Whereas Land views the future as one of capitalism, the racists within the NeoReactionary movement embrace the collapse as an opportunity for White Nationalism and the return to traditionalist values. For Land the return to traditionalism after the collapse is absurd, it is a classical fascist dream of a rejection of modernity into the world of peasant farmers, it is entirely unappealing and counterintuitive. The populist desire for a return to the existing order is the undoing of Reactionary ideas, as it is the merger of populism and aristocratic elitism, which is inherently contradictory. Any attempt to merge these elements in a rejection of capitalist accelerationism will lead to a populist project that will ultimately fail according to Land.<sup>524</sup>

### **Why did NRx fall out of fashion?**

The NeoReactionary movement, which was popular within a tiny group on the internet, could not widely address public discourse or mainstream media. The movement failed to reach outside of itself before the rise of the Alt-Right in 2014.<sup>525</sup> In 2008 the Right-wing anti-American American population was highly limited, the dissenters within the Right were so low in number

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<sup>523</sup> Ibid.

<sup>524</sup> Land, "The Alt-Right Is Dead."

<sup>525</sup> Anissimov, "Why the Replacement of Neoreaction with the Alt Right Was a Good Thing."

that Yarvin jokes about how he is probably the only one under the age of 60.<sup>526</sup> Ten years later the right-wing critiques of contemporary America has drastically increased.

The NeoReactionary movement lasted between 2007 and 2015, before subsequently being eaten up by the Alt-Right's more populist readings of Right-Wing thought. The Alt-Right and their more fascist impulses were easier to share with the general public, in contrast to the more intellectual and elitist aspects of the Alternative Right that the NeoReactionaries favoured.<sup>527</sup> The NeoReactionary ideology served as a gateway for Right-Wing thought removed from the mainstream conservative stigma associated with their politics. The critical difference between the Alt-Right and NeoReactionaries, according to Matthew Lyons, is the populist/elitist divide between the two groups.<sup>528</sup> This divide between populists and elites is less a distinction intentionally crafted and more the consequence of the Alt-Right's ideology finding a home among those whom they did not expect, the rural and suburban voting block. The populist elements of the Alt-Right are disdained by the NeoReactionary movement for obvious reasons; one cannot have a popular movement with a broad base that argues for highly elitist frameworks. Aristocratic systems such as NeoReaction are desirable for aristocrats and those who perceive themselves as elites, but widespread faith in neo-feudalism requires populism.

As the NeoReactionary thinker Michael Anissimov pointed out in 2016:

In the NeoReactionary circles of 2014 or 2015, you could reasonably expect that any random person being involved was probably a voracious reader, with a sense of political perspective built up carefully over years of reading old books. Today, any random person you meet on the alt right is more likely to be a troll whose

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<sup>526</sup> Curtis Yarvin, "An Open Letter to Open-Minded Progressives: Chapter 5: The Shortest Way to World Peace," *Unqualified Reservations*, 2008, <https://www.unqualified-reservations.org/2008/05/015-shortest-way-to-world-peace/>.

<sup>527</sup> Anissimov, "Why the Replacement of Neoreaction with the Alt Right Was a Good Thing."

<sup>528</sup> Lyons, *Insurgent Supremacists: The U.S. Far Right's Challenge to State and Empire*, 2857.

ideological background is limited to statements of the sort that Trump is a cool guy and that mass immigration is destroying America.<sup>529</sup>

The kernel of the NeoReactionary movement has been transplanted into the heart of the Alt-Right but removed of its elitist reading of 200-year-old texts to justify contemporary political thought. This cultural shift is how the Alt-Right is more fascist than the NeoReactionaries, who maintained a nineteenth century understanding of reactionary politics, not merely conservative or fascist.<sup>530</sup>

Anissimov's insider perspective suggests that through meme diffusion the ideas of the relatively small number of NeoReactionaries could have their ideas reach a much larger audience.<sup>531</sup> As Anissimov suggests:

What makes the alt right more effective and adaptive is that it is tied to populist sentiments. It leaves openings for esoteric ideas like anti-democracy to spread, but its basis is on nativism with which normal Americans identify. The alt right is more of a family of loosely allied but also internally competing ideas, making it more of a memetic ecosystem in a way that a movement based around the writings of one person, namely Curtis Yarvin, cannot be.<sup>532</sup>

While the ideas of the movement's political theorists are complex, the memes tend to distill the ideas to their broadest appeal. There is a clear division between the intellectual core of the movement and the general membership, which favours a softer form of the Alternative Right, which is more nostalgic than revanchist.<sup>533</sup> The NeoReactionary movement has transitioned from a small group of intellectuals, in effect a vanguard party, to a much larger social movement that has lost much of its intellectual and cultural elitism.<sup>534</sup> As Anissimov again states:

Theoretical political movements like neoreaction are interesting, but the fact that they refuse to engage with the public and opposing journalists shows that the

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<sup>529</sup> Anissimov, "Reactionaries and Our Lesser Brethren: The Meme Brigades."

<sup>530</sup> Anissimov, "Why the Replacement of Neoreaction with the Alt Right Was a Good Thing."

<sup>531</sup> Anissimov, "Reactionaries and Our Lesser Brethren: The Meme Brigades."

<sup>532</sup> Anissimov, "Why the Replacement of Neoreaction with the Alt Right Was a Good Thing."

<sup>533</sup> Anissimov, "Reactionaries and Our Lesser Brethren: The Meme Brigades."

<sup>534</sup> Ibid.

movement lacked vigor all along. Thus while neoreaction was an interesting precursor to the alt right, that is all it is—a precursor.<sup>535</sup>

In 2015 Park MacDougald described the Alternative Right, from the NeoReactionaries to the White Nationalists, as a constellation of thought rather than a firmly defined ideology; after the movements entered the mainstream this still holds, no single author has defined the ideology of the movement without facing almost immediate backlash.<sup>536</sup> As is the case with most reports on the Alternative Right, the most sensationalist figures rise to the top while the more obscure and influential thinkers and members of the Alternative Right take a Machiavellian position as the men behind the throne. Brett Stevens' views that the long-term outcome of the Alt-Right is that it will eventually be replaced with an organic non-ideological politics focused on hyper-efficient methodology.<sup>537</sup>

While the NeoReactionary movement has been subsumed by the broader Alternative Right, it provides a foundation for the internet natives to latch on. Unlike the White Nationalist tradition or earlier Far-Right groups, the NeoReactionary project was fundamentally one that emerged from the internet. Even if not all of the NeoReactionary ideas have transitioned into the Alternative Right with ease, i.e. Monarchial government, they will continue to provide the foundation of the movement parallel to the ones proposed by the European New Right and the American White Nationalists.

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<sup>535</sup> Anissimov, "Why the Replacement of Neoreaction with the Alt Right Was a Good Thing."

<sup>536</sup> MacDougald, "The Darkness Before the Right."

<sup>537</sup> Brett Stevens, "Why the Alternative Right Will Absorb NeoReaction," *Amerika*, May 2016.

## **Chapter 6: The European Political Theorists of the American Alternative Right: Julius Evola, Guillaume Faye, Alain de Benoist and Alexander Dugin**

The evocative image of the white American male at a Donald Trump rally wearing a “MAGA” hat (Make America Great Again) chanting nationalist slogans seems at odds with one of the primary influences of the American Alternative Right, the work of the Anti-American European New Right. While the Alternative Right has grown increasingly prominent within American political discourse with its fervent America First nationalism, the movement has an ironic influence from anti-American political theorists in Europe. Steve Bannon, Trump’s former chief political strategist, has regularly cited the Italian fascist Julius Evola as one of his primary influences, and Richard Spencer, the founder of the Alt-Right, attempted to organize a conference with many of the contemporary European fascist thinkers in Budapest in 2014.<sup>538</sup> Why does a group of American nationalists draw upon anti-American theorists from Europe?

The Alternative Right is a new reactionary political ideology that combines white-supremacy and White Nationalism, anti-democratic and anti-equality politics, stressing a hierarchical system of political organization. While the capitalist conservatives, known as “Cuckservatives” by the Alternative Right see no problem with globalization and unfettered free-market Neoliberalism, the Alt-Right fundamentally rejects these values. The Alternative Right is not a unified entity with a set dogma or canonical body of work, but the movement is flush with anti-globalization sentiment popularized by European theorists. The Alternative Right draws upon several post-war European Fascists, which will be labelled Eurofascists or Identitarians in this chapter, to separate themselves from the nationalist fascists of classical fascism. While the

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<sup>538</sup> Beirich, “White Identity Worldwide”; Posner, “How Donald Trump’s New Campaign Chief Created an Online Haven for White Nationalists.”

National Socialists or Fascists of the 1920s and 30s fixated on the creation of ethnically homogeneous nation-states, the contemporary fascist thinkers Alexander Dugin and Guillaume Faye are more interested in pan-European and Eurasian fascist projects. The most infamous post-war fascist, Julius Evola even stressed that the failure of the Fascist project in Germany was due to the fixation on racial purity rather than civilizational politics. The internal and external enemies of a Fascist state still exist, but they have changed, primarily focusing on the perceived internal threat posed by non-European refugees and Muslims, and the global capitalists of the American based neoliberal project of globalization rather than Jews or communists, who are secondary within Far-Right discourse.

The Eurofascist influence on the Alternative Right is particularly interesting because the Alternative Right draws upon authors who are fundamentally anti-American. The work of Faye and Dugin place the decline of European and Eurasian civilization in the hands of American global hegemony, while Evola evokes a strong anti-bourgeois and anti-American politics during his post-war writings. Throughout this chapter this paradox will be explored as the Alt-Right's nationalism can and should be understood as a rejection of Americanism on a global stage, one which places the project of neoliberalism and the Washington consensus in the hands of globalists, rather than as an American project. Fundamentally, the Alternative Right is rejecting the synonymy of liberalism and America. By drawing upon right-wing critiques of globalization from European theorists, the Alternative Right can reject globalization without relying on the left-wing writings of the anti-globalization and anti-neoliberal left.

One of the fundamental differences between the European New Right and the American Alternative Right is the faith in democracy, both critique the existing structures as unfair and corrupt, but those on the American side of the Atlantic view Democracy with contempt. The

Jeffersonian idea of a democracy of small landholders is the most favourable light that the Alt-Right takes, and even then those who adopt this view are more likely to be older white supremacists. The younger members of the Alt-Right are mostly in contempt of the system seeing little to be gained under liberal democracy.

## **Arktos**

These European theorists have existed outside of the anglophone community and maintained significant readership in their respective countries for decades, but it was not until the publishing house Arktos began to circulate translations of these texts that their ideas became more pronounced and influential with an anglophone audience.<sup>539</sup> Earlier right-wing groups in America relied on mailing lists to disseminate ideas across an existing community. The white-supremacist text such as *Imperium* by Yockey was not typically found in a local bookstore.<sup>540</sup> Therefore, only those people living within or connected to existing right-wing groups could access right-wing radical political theory. This all changed with the advent of two essential pieces of technology, the first was the internet and the second was e-readers. Hate groups could not set up camp on college campuses because they lacked a critical mass to start the movements. After all, how many students would be able to find Evola's fascist texts or French language copies of Archeofuturism or any other major work of the European New Right, let alone find another classmate who has read these obscure texts at their liberal arts college?

This norm of isolated groups would all change during the early 2000s with websites such as Daily Stormer and groups like the KKK disseminating ideas on message boards and forums,

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<sup>539</sup> Neiwert, *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*.

<sup>540</sup> Yockey, *Imperium: The Philosophy of History and Politics*; Zeskind, *Blood and Politics: The History of the White Nationalist Movement from the Margins to the Mainstream*, 8.

reaching audiences outside of their geographical community.<sup>541</sup> The success of the NeoReactionary community in the late 2000s can at least partially be linked to the movements focus on creating reading lists with links to digital copies of the critical texts or links to online stores to purchase the texts. The key publisher of the non-English texts is Arktos publishing based out of London. A quick look at their authors, translators and those providing introductions and forwards provides the most comprehensive list of Alt-Right theorists and influencers available. Between Arktos, Washington Summit Publishing and Counter-Currents it is easy to find eBooks of every significant text in the Alternative Right, excluding the NeoReactionary authors who publish digitally on open access blogs and authors so famous that they do not need a unique publishing house, such as Nietzsche or Heidegger.

### **The European New Right**

While the American right has been long dominated by the competing ideologies of libertarian and conservative-liberal thought, this is not the case for Europe. The libertarian project of the Austrian economists and the libertarian thinkers such as Murray Rothbard held less sway within the right-wing politics of Europe, which after centuries of aristocratic governance were not as fixated on a capitalistic right-wing politics as their American counterparts.<sup>542</sup> The left was a real issue rather than a paper tiger as it was in the United States, therefore serious consideration for anti or non-capitalist ideas were given the time of day. The result was a thoughtful analysis of contemporary left-wing thought, rather than lip service. Evola's primary object of critique within *Ride the Tiger* was existentialism and the armchair socialists in Parisian salons,<sup>543</sup> whereas American right-wing theorists targeted liberal institutions. One only need to look at *God and Man*

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<sup>541</sup> O'Brien, "The Making of an American Nazi."

<sup>542</sup> Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America: Since 1945*.

<sup>543</sup> Evola, *Ride the Tiger: A Survival Manual for the Aristocrats of the Soul*.

at Yale by William F. Buckley to see how the object of critique was centrist liberalism rather than what would be understood as left-wing politics in Europe.<sup>544</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of 1968, European theorists on the right, particularly in France began to form an intellectual coalition of the European New Right (ENR). Founded as a critique of existing right-wing groups, ENR stressed cultural politics and the right to difference, rather than capitalist and imperial projects that were heartily embraced by free-market liberals and conservatives alike.<sup>545</sup> The key foundational political, philosophical condition of the ENR is the “right to difference” and a focus on cultural conflict. Right to the difference is identity politics for the majority or as Land articulated for the Anglosphere, the right to exit<sup>546</sup>. For the ENR its politics is a war of position, drawing upon Gramsci, the role of the ENR intellectual is to be an organic intellectual shaping politics through a war of ideas. In this way, the ENR is very similar to the American libertarian tradition of the post-war era. The European New Right culturally positioned themselves a hairbreadth away from the more violent paramilitary wings of other Far-Right groups, both party politics and street protests are outdated forms of the political organization according to the leading ENR thinker, Alain de Benoist.<sup>547</sup>

Due to their heavy reliance on positive media presentations, the ENR embrace non-violent protest and professionalism rather than direct anger and aggression.<sup>548</sup> De Benoist takes Gramsci’s idea of the organic intellectual in opposition to the academic or traditional intellectual, stressing that the most effective platforms are the ones normalized and depoliticized, rather than the

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<sup>544</sup> Buckley Jr., *God and Man at Yale: The Superstitions of “Academic Freedom.”*

<sup>545</sup> Williams, “The French Origins of ‘You Will Not Replace Us.’”

<sup>546</sup> Bar-on, *Where Have All the Fascists Gone?*, 80.

<sup>547</sup> Ibid.

<sup>548</sup> Ibid., 7.

intellectual avenues.<sup>549</sup> This strategy dominates the YouTube, twitter and blog rhetoric which avoids the peer-reviewed and disciplinary practices of the academy relying on the marketplace of ideas. While the ENR found some success in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the movement made little electoral ground outside of several “summers” of success in the late ’70s and early ’90s. Since the early 2000s ENR politics would find significant support across western Europe due to the shift towards anti-immigrant, cultural fundamentalism and anti-globalization sentiments targeting the EU and American Hegemony. One which was made possible by the increasing technological access to non-state and non-university spaces for the ideas of the ENR.

The key ideas of ENR are brought over to the Alternative Right through a shared distaste for liberalism and the American cultural hegemony which eradicates the differences and “true-American” culture of the rural heartland. As with the Europeans responding to globalization, the Americans like Samuel Francis or Richard Spencer adopt pastoralism and a fixation on historical conflict.<sup>550</sup> The project of liberal elites, that of a globalized “flat world” is fundamentally at odds with an American traditionalism which draws upon a romanticized past that never happened with a “white America.” The threat to Europe is internalized as a McDonald-ification of American cuisine and the dominance of American media within Europe; the transitioned is personified as a feminization of the once proud European culture. This fear of feminization is the same that dominates the fears of the American heartland through the Alternative Right language of racial cuckholding and “soy boy” culture emanating from the coastal liberal elites.

Within the rest of this chapter, the three primary schools of continental European Far-Right influences will be examined. The connective tissue between these authors is a shared distaste for

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<sup>549</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>550</sup> Francis, *Essential Writings on Race*, sec. 105.5.

the American liberal hegemony, both culturally and economically which is typified by the process of globalization.

## **Evola**

The first of these traditions discussed in this chapter is Julius Evola. Evola was an Italian Aristocrat who was an active theorist and philosopher of traditionalism and fascism from the 1930s to his death in the 1970s. While the German intellectuals who were members of the Nazi party, such as Heidegger and Schmitt, were re-appraised by critical scholars for their academic works and insight,<sup>551</sup> the Italian Fascists have been largely forgotten by mainstream and critical academic investigation. Evola has never seriously been included within anglophone academic spaces as a theorist of note, but he has found a home within radical right-wing thinkers. Evola and his works may be fringe, but his works have a much more significant influence than his name recognition implies, just like the Velvet Underground, everyone who bought a copy of his book started a radical right-wing movement. His most significant American follower is Steven Bannon, the former chief strategist for Trump's administration.<sup>552</sup>

Evola despite his reputation as the post-war fascist theorist is misplaced, not because he is not a right-wing theorist connected to fascism and writing on fascism, but because his works are mostly critiques of the mass populist action and modernist elements of fascist thought. Two of his more political works: *Fascism Viewed from the Right* and *Notes on the Third Reich* provide critiques of the populist mass action of Italian Fascism and National Socialism respectively.<sup>553</sup> He

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<sup>551</sup> Beiner, *Dangerous Minds Nietzsche, Heidegger, and the Return of the Far Right*.

<sup>552</sup> Green, *Devil's Bargain: Steve Bannon, Donald Trump, and the Storming of the Presidency*, 181.

<sup>553</sup> Evola, *Fascism Viewed from the Right*; Evola, *Notes on the Third Reich*.

sees the fascist system, like Alexander Dugin, as a failure, attempting to replace modernism and liberal democratic capitalism with something equally populist and anti-aristocratic.<sup>554</sup>

If Evola is not some secret Fascist theorist with a master plan for making Fascism rise again, why is he on everyone's short list of most significant post-war fascist authors?<sup>555</sup> Evola functions as the Far-Right Marcuse,<sup>556</sup> his works, chiefly *Revolt Against the Modern World*, *Ride the Tiger* and *Men Among the Ruins* are not blueprints for mass action but guidebooks for the new aristocratic elite to find meaning during the period of chaos that is western modernity.<sup>557</sup> Evola does not see an end to the American hegemony of the post-war period. He openly suggests that rejecting and resisting American globalization is hallow; one should ride the tiger and embrace an accelerationist praxis of hyper-modernism to bring about its collapse. Evola sees his own one-dimensional man living within an oppressive world dominated by the faults of bourgeois culture and the threat of Soviet Marxism. Which is why the most consistent theme within his works is not the mass political action of Fascism, but rather the aristocratic individual succeeding within the hierarchical world of a neo-feudalist order, a mantra embraced by the Grey Tribe, NeoReactionaries, most of the later European New Right and many anti-democratic white nationalists. The goal of Evola's texts is to provide a framework for young fascist men to find meaning in a world filled with the chaos and disorder of modernity, something that another intellectual self-help guru of the Alternative Right provides.<sup>558</sup>

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<sup>554</sup> Evola, *Fascism Viewed from the Right*, 70.

<sup>555</sup> Or in the case of Gregor, not a true fascist, but rather a influential fellow traveler who perverted the core ideas of fascism within an obsession for the occult and the aesthetics of fascism.

<sup>556</sup> Bar-on, *Where Have All the Fascists Gone?*, 11.

<sup>557</sup> Julius Evola, *Revolt Against the Modern World*, ed. Guido Stucco (Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions International, 1995); Evola, *Ride the Tiger: A Survival Manual for the Aristocrats of the Soul*; Julius Evola, *Men Among the Ruins*, ed. Guido Stucco and Michael Moynihan (India: Inner Traditions and Bear Company, 2002).

<sup>558</sup> Peterson, *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos*.

Right-wing radicals have been drawn towards Evola for decades for his politics of critique targeting liberals and western Marxists, as well as his justification for elitism in the face of liberal-democratic meritocracy. Just as the individualism of Ayn Rand draws in libertarian youth into the self-delusion of importance, Evola spins a narrative of the heroic individual calling out against the entrenched system of modernity.<sup>559</sup> This narrative is not the straightforward individualism and self-responsibility peddled by members of the Grey Tribe's psychology,<sup>560</sup> but a mythological understanding of reality focused on the self-construction of elite morality. Drawing upon Nietzsche Evola pushes for individual morality predicated on a rejection of slave morality, embracing the master morality of individual *virtu*.

It is not simply the conservative party line that morality is being eroded by bourgeois decadence, it is not the youth engaging in “free love” and drugs, but rather the system's corruption and failures that manifest in the cultural change. Evola rejects the conservative assumption that lax morals are eroding the system, rather the corruption in the system itself results in “the canary in the coal mine” of morality:

Not even the so-called corruption of morals, in its most profane and moralistically bourgeois sense, may be considered the cause of the collapse of civilizations, the corruption of morals is at most may be an effect, but it is not the real cause. In almost every instance we have to agree with Nietzsche, who claimed that whatever the preoccupation with “morals” arises is an indication that a process of decadence is already at work.<sup>561</sup>

Ethical and moral concerns are thus socially constructed norms that one responds to and must be overcome by those strong enough, i.e. aristocratic enough to suffer the outrage of social

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<sup>559</sup> Robin, *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin*, 158.2.

<sup>560</sup> Evola did not write a self-help book like Jordan Peterson, telling a teenager to clean their room is benign and apolitical. It is much closer to Curtis Yarvin's theory of Passivism which was explained in an earlier chapter.

<sup>561</sup> Evola, *Revolt Against the Modern World*, 52.

criticism.<sup>562</sup> For Evola, the primacy of cultural metapolitics is one of strategy to rebel against the bourgeois system of modernity, a first stepping stone rather than where victory can be achieved for right-wing literature. For Evola, good and evil are social constructs that create a *sensible* understanding of the world through a unity of purpose for the masses, and the moral failures are understood as the blemishes on an already rotten and hollowed out apple. The individual who violates these rules of good and evil is bound to suffer from ignoring selections of these rules. For the individual, a morality constructed which fixates on good/evil will attempt to de-individualize the individual through a negation of their existence. For an individual's morality to function on its own, it must establish its positive/negative balance that applies to the self rather than to society at large.<sup>563</sup> The heroic individual transcends the knowledge of one's self and extends further by rupturing that understanding of their reality, returning to the core tenants of "western civilization" according to Alternative Right figures such as Samuel Francis.<sup>564</sup> The transgressive individual breaking the social norms of political correctness is a hero for suffering the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. This individualism in the face of public pressure attracts American readers who reject the multicultural and humanistic project of neoliberal/American globalization.

For Evola the old motto of the Assassins "Nothing exists, everything is permitted" was indicative of the ideal social order, one which only functioned for those within the higher ranks of the organization, while those of lower strata obeyed the heed of the enlightened elites. For Evola true freedom is not an abstract right, but integration through the hierarchical order of the state.<sup>565</sup> It is no surprise that the Alternative Right reader who thinks that liberal culture is personally victimizing them would latch on to these principles and assume that they are part of the aristocratic

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<sup>562</sup> Evola, *Ride the Tiger: A Survival Manual for the Aristocrats of the Soul*, 72.

<sup>563</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>564</sup> Francis, *Essential Writings on Race*, sec. 92.

<sup>565</sup> Evola, *A Handbook for Right-Wing Youth*, 1297.

elite and therefore above the existing system of legal norms. For Evola, the people who can act beyond the *sensible* social reality of existing morality need to be entrenched with the system enough to support that system despite having the power and awareness to end it,<sup>566</sup> not the NEETs (Not in employment, education or training) who populate much of the American Alt-Right.

It is possible to altogether reject the existing moral system and replace it with something new on a societal level rather than that of the individual, but only with a new totalizing moral framework constructed to replace it, which is what Guillaume Faye intends to create within his Archeofuturism.<sup>567</sup> This requirement for a new totality is where the critique of the liberal media elite comes into full force within Evola's work. Evola calls out the emancipatory existentialist professor sitting within some university office, preaching freedoms and emancipation, as a fundamentally selfish and individualistic figure with no imagination for a new social order, only incremental reforms.<sup>568</sup>

The failure to imagine a new world with radically different politics is where the Alternative Right's fixation on cultural metapolitics can draw upon Evola's work, which is itself a right-wing reading of Nietzsche's conception of aesthetics. For Evola modernity has pushed for neutralization and objectivity within the creation of art. The political work of art is pushed to the fringe or given to the state in the form of propaganda. Art in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century according to Evola sits either so removed from acceptable politics to be functionally apolitical or is the work of ideological suppression by the state (or both as the work of the CIA funded Jackson Pollack was intended to do).<sup>569</sup> As with the NeoReactionary authors, the object of critique is the mundane art of modernism

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<sup>566</sup> Evola, *Ride the Tiger: A Survival Manual for the Aristocrats of the Soul*, 62.

<sup>567</sup> Faye, *Archeofuturism: European Visions of Post-Catastrophic Age*.

<sup>568</sup> Evola, *Ride the Tiger: A Survival Manual for the Aristocrats of the Soul*, 102.

<sup>569</sup> *Ibid.*, 152; Frances Stonor Saunders, "Modern Art Was CIA 'Weapon,'" *Independent*, October 22, 1995.

and late-capitalism which merely maintains a status quo or is so removed from the acceptable that it is alien.<sup>570</sup> For the art to be political in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it has to be therefore so low, crass and accessible that it rejects the previous hundred years of art history. The political art par excellence is, therefore, the internet meme, a form of poetry so crass and unsophisticated that it cannot be policed through neutralization and forced objectivity in a claim for universalism. There is nothing bourgeois about the shit-posting internet meme; it mocks the very institution of bourgeois taste or morality. While the aristocratic Evola would have been disinterested in the Alt-Right meme, its function would be appreciated.

### ***Evola and Fascism***

As A. James Gregor makes painfully clear Evola's claim to fascism is very problematic, he is a traditionalist, he is right wing, and he is aristocratic.<sup>571</sup> He critiques fascist ideology repeatedly and is one of the few links between it and the traditionalist paganism that emerged in the post-war period. Evola was an anti-materialist, who rejected modernity and favoured an elitist individualistic ethos, which stands in stark contrast to the materialist, hyper-modern and populist elements of fascism. Even though Evola does not fit with the textbook fascist minimum, his influence on later fascist thought has not been overhyped, just that his ideology better captures the transition towards the Alt-Right and New Right, rather than the fascism of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was Evola's obsession with the occult that gained him favour among the pagan and occult fixated leaders of the Third Reich, his fixation on the Holy Grail had as much to do with his popularity as his understanding of race and right-wing politics. Gregor goes so far to suggest that the only reason Evola is labelled as a fascist is due to poor scholarship, relying on the reputation

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<sup>570</sup> E. Antony Gray, "Towards a Neoreactionary Aesthetic," *Mitrailleuse*, September 2014.

<sup>571</sup> A. James Gregor, *The Search for Neofascism: The Use and Abuse of Social Science*, *The Search for Neofascism: The Use and Abuse of Social Science* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 84.

of Evola's ideas and his self-promotion rather than actual scholarship and critical readings of his texts to categorize his thought.<sup>572</sup>

Above all Evola is an elitist, his worldview is predicated on aristocratic and traditionalist political ideology. He is one of the figures most responsible for the conflated image of the Fascist obsession with the occult, as his work on the grail myth catapulted him into the elite social circles of the Nazi party during the war.<sup>573</sup> For Evola, the modern age lacks a mythological grounding to motivate action, the rationalization of society results in a society of Nietzsche's last man, an isolating end of history. Evola calls this life *Apoleteia*, a state in which the inner self is unassailable by this society and its values; it does not accept being bound by anything spiritual or moral.<sup>574</sup> This is a far-right description of alienation and the disconnection from both society and metaphysics. Evola's path, that of the occult, paganism and mysticism has been embraced by the French New Right thinkers such as Guillaume Faye and Alain de Benoist, and the hyper-traditionalist catholic faith of Steven Bannon.<sup>575</sup> The function of the fascist or traditionalist system is partially to provide a sense of purpose to a capitalist system to resolve the alienation and nihilism inherent within capitalism. It should, therefore, come as no surprise that the occult behaviour of the 20<sup>th</sup> century fascists has been replaced with the conspiracy centric QAnon community in post-2016 America.<sup>576</sup> The quest for an unknowable truth provides meaning when the material conditions of modernity prove to be soul crushing.

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<sup>572</sup> Ibid.

<sup>573</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>574</sup> Evola, *Ride the Tiger: A Survival Manual for the Aristocrats of the Soul*, 175.

<sup>575</sup> Green, *Devil's Bargain: Steve Bannon, Donald Trump, and the Storming of the Presidency*, sec. 364.6.

<sup>576</sup> Coaston, "#QAnon, the Scarily Popular pro-Trump Conspiracy Theory, Explained"; Wong, "What Is QAnon? Explaining the Bizarre Rightwing Conspiracy Theory."

Evola, like the NeoReactionary author Nick Land, argued for a racialized politics predicated on structural White Supremacy but condemned the petty racism fixated on racial blood purity by the far-right.<sup>577</sup> Evola points out that the racism of Italian Fascism is no worse than that of liberalism's racist colonialism.<sup>578</sup> Evola is still a racial thinker, but more in line with the white supremacy of John C. Calhoun and the "civilizing" liberal theories on the subject than the Nazi party's blood-based racism.<sup>579</sup> Evola is a racist thinker motivated by eugenics, decrying particular people as primitives with inferior stock, yet his aristocratic mentality does not connect the racism of the mob, i.e. that of race with the "pure" stock of the aristocracy. Evola would argue that peasants cannot claim the legitimacy to genetic purity of aristocratic elites.<sup>580</sup> What Evola and many NeoReactionaries argue is an aristocratic and hereditary system based on traditional monarchical government.<sup>581</sup> This multilayered racism and eugenics is centred not on cosmopolitanism or multiculturalism but segregation of cultures from interaction, accepting, oddly enough, a relativistic mantra for various claims to legitimacy, Evola's work births into existence one of the central ideas motivating the Alt-Right, that of the "right to difference."

For Evola, the leviathan of the state no longer exists, preferably the state shares and mediates power between groups. There is no longer an absolutist regime, even the leaders of states function in the interest of corporations, industries and interest groups.<sup>582</sup> While liberalism is predicated on the balance of power against the absolutist figure ruling a state, the anti-democratic

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<sup>577</sup> Land, "The Dark Enlightenment."

<sup>578</sup> Evola, *Fascism Viewed from the Right*.

<sup>579</sup> Domenico Losurdo, *Liberalism: A Counter-History* (London: Verso, 2011), 1.

<sup>580</sup> Evola, *Notes on the Third Reich*, chap. 3.

<sup>581</sup> Lecher, "Alt-Right Darling Mencius Moldbug Wanted to Destroy Democracy. Now He Wants to Sell You Web Services"; Anissimov, "Monarchy, Ethnonationalism, and the Political Position of Neoreactionaries"; Klint Finley, "Geeks for Monarchy: The Rise of the Neoreactionaries," Techcrunch, 2013, <https://techcrunch.com/2013/11/22/geeks-for-monarchy/>; Noah Millman, "Monarchists, Neo-Reactionaries and Neo-Fascism," *The American Conservative*, January 2014.

<sup>582</sup> Evola, *Ride the Tiger: A Survival Manual for the Aristocrats of the Soul*, 121.

theorists of the American Alternative Right and specifically the NeoReactionary community can use this fascist critique of the capitalist state to put forward absolutist and anti-democratic politics without relying on left-wing anti-capitalist political theory. Curtis Yarvin's Cathedral mirrors Evola's critique of the bureaucratic state hegemony which stifles the actions and freedom of talented individuals.<sup>583</sup> Additionally, but drawing upon Evola's aristocratic and monarchist stances, the Alternative Right can abandon the *ne-touch-pas* of a totalitarian state, the greatest boogiemane of the American political psyche. Because one does not find the totalitarian conception of the states within the reactionary literature of Evola or the Alternative Right, one instead finds an absolutist framework akin to the early modern period. The assemblage of political power in modernity, with fluid and unstable governmentality, for the Alternative Right, needs to be replaced with a tactile and visualized hierarchy. When combined with the rejection of racial-nationalism in favour of eugenic human-biodiversity, the Alternative Right can take Evola's fascist epistemology and reject the nation-state while justifying the entrenched aristocratic hierarchy.<sup>584</sup>

This separation from fascism's collective politics would attract the Alt-Right's libertarian inclined radical individualists and their indulgence with conspiracy and quests for esoteric knowledge. The individualism of Evola's modern-day aristocracy finds a home in the legacy of neoliberal individualism and the elevation of individuals to elite status within the right. This aristocratic fixation partially explains the obsession within the Alternative Right to recreate something akin to the SS. The SS was envisioned as a new proto-aristocratic knightly order for long-term governance, where the ideal was not necessarily German, but rather a pan-European

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<sup>583</sup> Yarvin, "A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations: Chapter 10: The Mandate of Heaven."

<sup>584</sup> Evola, *Ride the Tiger: A Survival Manual for the Aristocrats of the Soul*, 182.

ideal.<sup>585</sup> The SS is then shifted from a racialized group of Aryans to a broader aristocracy of Europeanness, one that ignores the racial blood politics of Hitler that Evola dismisses.<sup>586</sup>

### **Faye and de Benoist**

The second group examined within this chapter are the theorists Guillaume Faye and Alain de Benoist from the French New Right. While not a household name in the Anglosphere, many of the core tenants of the Alternative Right's political platform, where it exists, are what Faye and de Benoist articulate in their political theory. This is more apparent when the connections between the American Alternative Right and the French New Right are examined on a personal level. Guillaume Faye, for example, is a friend and colleague of the prominent white nationalist Jared Taylor, who wrote the introduction to the English language translation of the *Convergence of Catastrophes*.<sup>587</sup> While Evola argues against the bourgeois reality of American capitalism in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, his project was more anti-liberal than it is strictly speaking, anti-American.

In contrast, Faye defines his political project of Archeofuturism as a rejection of American globalization without reservation, describing the purpose of GRECE, (the Groupement de Recherche et d'Études pour la Civilisation Européenne) the French New Right organization that emerged out of 1968, as "to resist the cancerous Americanisation of their homeland."<sup>588</sup> With the other pillars of his ideology being environmental collapse and anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim fearmongering. Faye positions anti-Americanism as one of rivalry rather than as an enemy to Europe, in contrast to a radical Islamist understanding of America as the enemy. Europe or at least

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<sup>585</sup> Evola, *Notes on the Third Reich*, 6.

<sup>586</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. 7.

<sup>587</sup> Faye, *Convergence of Catastrophes*.

<sup>588</sup> Faye, *Archeofuturism: European Visions of Post-Catastrophic Age*, sec. 6.1.

the concept of Europe is separate from that of the West, not merely Europe and America against Russia and China, but instead Europe and Russia as part of a single political civilization which competes with America.<sup>589</sup> The relationship between civilizations is akin to athletes competing against each other, not armies seeking to kill each other on the field of battle.

One of the fundamental similarities between the Alternative Right and the ideas of Faye is the fixation on ethno-states and the reduction of multiculturalism, as a pretext for preventing immigration by migrants and refugees from the developing world. The influx of immigration is presented as a fifth column that will strike back against Europe in the coming ethnic wars of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, just as the American Alternative Right rejects the immigration of Hispanics and Muslims when possible. Despite Faye's anti-immigrant stance, this does not apply to white Europeans, which is like the acceptance of white immigrants into the US by white nationalist groups which find no problem with the Swedish or Norwegian immigrant but could not stand one from Nigeria or Iran.<sup>590</sup>

Faye branches out from the traditionalist and conservative framework through his ideology of archaism. Archaism, much like the Dark Enlightenment, is the conception of a traditionalist framework of political thought fixated on curating traditions rather than blindly accepting the past.<sup>591</sup> For Faye the purpose of his theory is to merge traditionalist frameworks with an accelerationist ideology to explain the world "after-modernity," "Modernity is backward-looking, whereas archaism is futurist."<sup>592</sup> A conservative politics argues maintenance of the status quo in the guise and rhetoric of conservation of traditions with a decided preference towards a separation

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<sup>589</sup> Ibid., 603.

<sup>590</sup> Ibram X. Kendi, "The Day 'Shithole' Entered the Presidential Lexicon," *The Atlantic* (New York, January 2019).

<sup>591</sup> Faye, *Archeofuturism: European Visions of Post-Catastrophic Age*, 1278.

<sup>592</sup> Ibid., 143.1.

and submission of lower political class. While a true traditionalist theory is akin to constitutional originalists who derive their politics from a culturally significant but arbitrary collection of texts and see the maintenance of cultural traditions and social hierarchies as absolutely fundamental for the continued existence of society.<sup>593</sup> However, these new reactionary traditionalists are actively articulating and imagining a new framework based on archaic values and practices. The Archaist mindset would see no problem with homosexual marriage, it does not pose a political threat to society and can and will be used to discredit those societies which reject it, but the Archaist may reject interracial marriage as it undermines the core ethnocentric beliefs of the society. This allows for the Alternative Right to justify picking and choosing which contemporary issues to support and which to oppose, which is how the movement justifies tolerance towards male homosexuality, but not the broader LGBTQ movement.

As with Evola, Faye sees the project of modernity and by extension globalization as a precursor to the collapse of western civilization. While Faye shares some of the techno-utopianism of the Grey Tribe aficionados such as Peter Thiel or Elon Musk, he cannot imagine a world of billions living in that utopia and can see technological utopianism only emerging after the convergence of catastrophes. Faye argues that there are seven factors which will lead precisely to the collapse of Europe: 1) The metastasis of the European social fabric, due to the cultural collapse of Europe due to immigration and society of the spectacle. 2) An economic and demographic crisis, caused by an increasing proportion of the population becoming elderly, leading to a strain on the welfare state, which is complimented by falling birth rates. 3) Increasing chaos of the global south which will lead to forced industrialization due to colonization, globalization and climate change. 4) A global economic crisis likely caused by a debt crisis fueled

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<sup>593</sup> Robin, *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin*, sec. 24.6.

by a speculation crisis. 5) Growing fundamentalist religious fanaticism, mostly Islamic civil wars and terrorist attacks. 6) The confrontation between global North and South, continuing the xenophobic attacks on immigrants and the conflict over natural resources. And 7) The unchecked pollution of the planet, which exacerbates all other factors due to the environmental collapse of industrial civilization.<sup>594</sup>

In addition to these seven massive convergences, Faye also argues a laundry list of secondary factors, the proliferation of nuclear weapons, organized crime (mostly drug-related), disease, and technological problems connected to viruses. Written in 1999 Faye's list provides a compelling outline of what would be the primary right-wing debates of European and American society during the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Even though Faye's claims and consequences are incredibly over exaggerated, for example his preposterous claim suggesting that Europe would be mostly Muslim by 2020,<sup>595</sup> it provides a compelling nightmare for the radical right which has embraced a conspiratorial logic which rejects dissenting facts which contradict their narrative. Faye's suggestion is not to prevent these crises, as there is little to nothing that can be done to stop them, but rather what to do when the point of crisis occurs. The result is a justified nihilism where the elites can survive at the expense of the rest of the world. Given that his elites are Europeans or North American whites the reader of Faye's text can adopt an almost voyeuristic position, seeing the end of the world like a disaster film. The consequences of centuries of industrialization and imperialism are non-entities to be discussed over drinks at dinner parties and imagined in Sci-Fi novels rather than issues to be addressed. The deaths of millions and perhaps billions of non-Europeans are of little to no concern to Faye and his followers.

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<sup>594</sup> Faye, *Archeofuturism: European Visions of Post-Catastrophic Age*, 1106.

<sup>595</sup> *Ibid.*

While Evola provides an aesthetic theory to conceptualize the failure of left-wing discourse as armchair socialism in the post-war period, Faye faces the cultural rather than academic left of postmodernism and political correctness after the Cold War. Rather than fearing a totalitarian move by the materialist left, the outcome of political correctness for Faye is the internal self-policing of radical thought, which opposes the hegemonic ideology of the existing framework.<sup>596</sup> This take is more akin to Curtis Yarvin's Cathedral than the more traditional American conservative take; the issue is the assemblage of interlocking media institutions rather than an absolutist state.<sup>597</sup> This view by Faye is a more nuanced description of what we find in the contemporary free-speech movement within the Alt-lite. Faye and Yarvin suggest a more continental argument rejecting ideological reproduction, while the Alt-Lite takes firm legalistic constitutionalism which places it within the broader liberal tradition of free-speech movements.<sup>598</sup> Whereas the American Right lambasts a population without political education about censorship, Faye outs the painfully obvious; the state does not censor political correctness. Instead the State engages in distraction: "The system only makes use of brutal censorship in minimal areas: it generally resorts to intellectual diversion, i.e., distraction, by constantly focusing people's attention on side issues."<sup>599</sup> The state censors wartime propaganda (through anti-espionage legislation or anti-terrorism acts) and particular threats to children (child pornography), but what the system of the state, academia and the media does well in a liberal democracy is the "concealment of essential political problems"<sup>600</sup> rather than direct censorship.

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<sup>596</sup> Ibid., 1700.

<sup>597</sup> Pennacchietti, "The Foucauldian Cathedral."

<sup>598</sup> Jakubowicz, "Alt\_Right White Lite: Trolling, Hate Speech and Cyber Racism on Social Media.," Hawley, *Making Sense of the Alt-Right*, 169.

<sup>599</sup> Faye, *Archeofuturism: European Visions of Post-Catastrophic Age*, 188.1.

<sup>600</sup> Ibid., 1723.

The western state provides propaganda through art and media, rather than relying on censorship. The western state is a Foucauldian panopticon, always watching but rarely shutting down dissenting voices.<sup>601</sup> The state is excellent at ignoring the long-term crises of capitalism, demographics and ecology through a fixation on wedge issues (such as gay marriage, doping in sports and legalizing marijuana). The American system of government (which is institutionally imported to Europe) is one of Schmidtian decisionism rather than actual politics, ideological differences are secondary concerns to the well functioning technocratic state. The consequences are a professionalization of the upper management class at the expense of either efficiency or political action, which can be read as a continuation of Burnham's theory of a controlling managerial class rather than a liberal inspired American understanding of censorship.<sup>602</sup> The Alternative Right sees this approach as a refreshing change to the existing libertarian and moral conservative politics of the Right-wing American mainstream media.

Faye refuses to adopt a simplistic understanding of censorship; the dismissal of the ND (*Nouvelle Droite* or French New Right) by reduced media coverage or being silenced under the threat of lawsuits is always written as a soft-totalitarianism of bureaucratic modernism rather than presented as gulag level oppression.<sup>603</sup> These ideas are not the explicit work of the American Right, paranoid of censorship, but more akin to the NeoReactionary understanding of the cathedral, though less conspiratorial than the hyper-paranoid thought of Curtis Yarvin. The only objects of censorship are those of "mythical acts of provocation and ideological tactlessness,"<sup>604</sup> such as the March on Charlottesville or the "*Heil Trump!*" incident by Spencer.<sup>605</sup> Members of the Alt-right

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<sup>601</sup> Pennacchietti, "The Foucauldian Cathedral."

<sup>602</sup> George Orwell, "Second Thoughts on James Burnham," *Polemic* (London, 1946).

<sup>603</sup> Faye, *Archeofuturism: European Visions of Post-Catastrophic Age*, 445.

<sup>604</sup> *Ibid.*, 1025.

<sup>605</sup> Cott and Ellis, *How an Alt-Right Leader Lied to Climb the Ranks*.

are purposefully chosen to gain public censorship as they are tacky and clumsy, even if they are symbols of hate. The breeding grounds of the Alternative Right are not censored as a totalitarian state would censor, they are treated like a game of whack-a-mole, it is okay if the mole is in the hole, just so long as it does not come out of its hole and make too much noise. Additionally, the Alt-Right and its radical core are sheltered by the financial disincentives to isolate or censor these messages lest they ban mainstream conservative figures.<sup>606</sup>

What Faye continuously drives home within the main text, *Archeofuturism*, is the reality that egalitarian materialism is impossible with the current population forecasts, the environmental cost is unsustainable, and thus the outcome will be a Malthusian catastrophe.<sup>607</sup> He turns to Carl Schmitt's "emergency situation" or "Enstfall" as the theoretical tool for conceptualizing the future. As with the other thinkers used by the Alt-Right Faye rejects a progressive conception of human progress, and instead takes a nihilistic conception of Hegelian history. All civilizations must die, but unlike Hegel's Owl of Minerva, there is no beacon of progress leading the way. For Faye, there is no ideology beyond the current systems constructed around modernity, at least no global hegemonic ideology.<sup>608</sup> Only the complete collapse of modernity and the chaos of interregnum can or will see the emergence of a new ideology. The ideology of the European New Right or the American Alternative Right is transitory rather than definitive. For the Alternative Right, this desire for the end is almost universal, with NeoReactionaries like Nick Land imagining a world with no future due to collapse and White Nationalists seeing no possibility for a "white

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<sup>606</sup> Cox and Koebler, "Why Won't Twitter Treat White Supremacy like ISIS? Because It Would Mean Banning Some Republicans Too."

<sup>607</sup> Faye, *Archeofuturism: European Visions of Post-Catastrophic Age*, 1259.

<sup>608</sup> *Ibid.*, 1278.

revolution.”<sup>609</sup> The nihilistic desire to watch the end of the world enchants the ideology’s nihilistic compulsions.<sup>610</sup>

For Faye, the universalist humanist message of human rights fails to reflect reality and results in European cuckolding, which is identical to the North American Alt-Right’s use of cuckolding as a political framework to explain non-white immigration. After the collapse of the globalized neoliberal system liberal human rights will be abandoned and revert to older systems of governance and ethics, such as the placing of punishment over prevention and a focus on hierarchical social arrangements more akin to feudalism.<sup>611</sup> Therefore, regionalism and isolation will return as a solution to the post-globalized world.<sup>612</sup> Regional or civilizational power blocs will resolve conflicts and environmental concerns more effectively than global democracy. Faye’s framework for international relations in a post-catastrophe age would establish a two-tiered system in which the developed technological states would insulate themselves from the neo-medieval states.<sup>613</sup> The balance would be maintained by segregation rather than integration, colonialism and imperialism, which he acknowledges had led to the exploitation of people and resources in the past. Segregating the world into two tiers with little to no flow between the two allows traditional pre-modern economies and societies to exist, rejecting the colonialism which cannot be defended, and it reduces global consumption. The obvious flaw in this system is that there is no safeguard to prevent the domination of the technologically advanced states from invading and exploiting the less developed ones. While this segregated world may appear to Faye as the ideal solution, he presents no practical path forward nor does he provide anything substantial to justify why this

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<sup>609</sup> Land, “The Dark Enlightenment”; Anissimov, “Why There Are No White Nationalists.”

<sup>610</sup> Anissimov, “Why There Are No White Nationalists”; Land, “IQ Shredders.”

<sup>611</sup> Faye, *Archeofuturism: European Visions of Post-Catastrophic Age*, 1553.

<sup>612</sup> *Ibid.*, 1602.

<sup>613</sup> *Ibid.*, 1632.

would happen. His understanding of International Relations is more akin to a science fiction novel than anything that would happen on Earth.

### *De Benoist*

In addition to Faye, there is Alain de Benoist, who is even more influential within the European New Right, as the primary intellectual founder of the ND. De Benoist envisioned his New Right movement as an intellectual salon with think tanks and definitive schools of thought for the next generation of Right-wing intellectuals.<sup>614</sup> What de Benoist imagined is closer to the NeoReactionary camp rather than the Alt-Right's street violence and rallies, where the intellectual core of the movement can flourish without the widespread opposition on the street by anti-fascists groups. Modernity, which for de Benoist is understood as an individualistic, rationalistic, secular and universalizing project is reaching its conclusion.<sup>615</sup> As modernity approaches its interregnum period in which it loses the legitimacy as the defining philosophical framework to envision the world, it will be replaced by the next iteration of a global philosophical framework.<sup>616</sup> Therefore the goal of the intellectuals is to imagine the next world after the crisis, which is a mental framework that de Benoist shares with Nick Land and Curtis Yarvin.<sup>617</sup>

As with the Alternative Right, de Benoist views Liberalism as the main enemy for the traditionalist cause.

Liberalism embodies the dominant ideology of modernity. It was the first to appear and will be the last to disappear. In the beginning, liberal thought contraposed an autonomous

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<sup>614</sup> de Benoist and Champetier, *Manifesto For a European Renaissance*, 54.

<sup>615</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>616</sup> Ibid.

<sup>617</sup> Land, "The Dark Enlightenment"; Yarvin, "A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations: Chapter 11: The New Structure."

economy to the morality, politics and society in which it had been formerly embedded. Later, it turned commercial value into the essence of all communal life.<sup>618</sup>

For de Benoist, the American project of globalization and cultural hegemony is one of commercial erasure. For the Alternative Right, this unease with economic dominance represents a potential stumbling block as American political identity is wedded to capitalism. This is also the pathway for the paleoconservative elements of the Alternative Right such as Samuel Francis or Paul Gottfried to interject and present right-wing support for their ideas.<sup>619</sup>

As with the other right-wing ideologies that have influenced the Alternative Right, the framework of Faye and de Benoist is trapped between a strong desire for a nostalgic past, reiterating the past conflicts into a neat history, and a simultaneous desire and fear for a new radical technological future. Which is, in turn, a dilemma facing the American Right, especially those in the deindustrialized regions. Modernity, for de Benoist, is bookended by the two 30-year wars, the first was from 1618 to 1648 and the second was 1914 to 1945, the rise and the disintegration of the nation-state.<sup>620</sup> The modern state emerged out of an absolutist monarch and Jacobin framework. States are too big for small domestic issues and too small for global concerns. The contemporary state in the 21<sup>st</sup> century faces complexity and scale that was unthinkable when the modernist state system was crafted at the beginning of the age of modernity. The centralized state structure which emerges in the face of globalization leaves local autonomy of regional governments negligible.<sup>621</sup> For de Benoist even the United States is forced to accept foreign interference and pressure, perhaps less so within geopolitics but most certainly culturally. The solution posed by NeoReactionaries, that of completely exiting global and domestic politics, is impractical for the French New Right,

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<sup>618</sup> de Benoist and Champetier, *Manifesto For a European Renaissance*, 23.0.

<sup>619</sup> Gottfried, "Alain de Benoist's Anti-Americanism."

<sup>620</sup> de Benoist and Champetier, *Manifesto For a European Renaissance*, 534.

<sup>621</sup> Faye, *Convergence of Catastrophes*, 1602.

one cannot retreat to an era of microstates and principalities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century which is defined by globalization and superpowers.

In contrast to the American Alternative Right's fixation with the amorphous nature of Western Civilization, which is presented as a monolithic entity within the minds of white supremacists where Notre Dame cathedral and pagan Ancient Greek statues are categorically the same, the French New Right rejects such a homogenizing conception of Europe. For de Benoist, the goal of the French New right is the right to difference for cultural and language groups within their geographical homelands.<sup>622</sup> This should come as no surprise, the McDonalds-ification of French society through American led globalization has been a primary antagonist for the French New Right for decades. The conception of Western Civilization championed within Trump's America is the exact opposite of the one imagined by de Benoist and Faye. These contradictory stances provide the primary source of confusion when examining the influence of the European New Right on the Alternative Right, one which Jared Taylor addresses in the introduction to Faye's *Convergence of Catastrophes*.<sup>623</sup>

## **Dugin**

In contrast to Evola, Faye and de Benoist, the Russian political theorist Alexander Dugin provides a substantial response to the claim that the Alternative Right is fascist. Evola plays with the term, critiquing iterations of fascist thought and specifically National Socialism, but his name is synonymous with the term Fascist. The French New Right is primarily a salon for thinkers to reject American hegemony without agreeing with either the non-aligned movement or Soviet communism, therefore providing a racially motivated right-wing politics that shares the values of

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<sup>622</sup> de Benoist and Champetier, *Manifesto For a European Renaissance*, 435.

<sup>623</sup> Faye, *Convergence of Catastrophes*.

fascism without explicitly stating that they are fascists. Dugin instead champions his fourth political theory as a break from fascism, liberalism and communism, but it would be more accurate to describe his ideology as effectively the 21<sup>st</sup> century fascism within Russia, i.e. Fascism with Russian characteristics. As with de Benoist and Faye, the failures of 20<sup>th</sup> century liberalism are not the prominent left-wing critiques popularized by Western Marxists since the 1960s, but rather culturally focused on the left-behinds and in Dugin's case a fascist reading of Heidegger.

As with Curtis Yarvin, Julius Evola and the other far-right political theorists that influence the Alternative Right, Dugin is primarily critiquing the Whig history of western civilization and the end of history narrative that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union. For Dugin his theory is:

The Fourth Political Theory is conceived as an alternative to postliberalism, but not as one ideological arrangement in relation to another. Instead, it is as an incorporeal idea opposed to corporeal matter; as a possibility entering into conflict with the actuality, as that which is yet to come into being attacking that which is already in existence.<sup>624</sup>

Liberalism for Dugin became a depoliticized and naturalized default for post-modernity, one dominated by the American thalassocracy which allowed for the dominance of global politics through commerce, spectacle and consumer culture.<sup>625</sup> For Dugin the 20<sup>th</sup> century should be understood as the century of ideological conflict between Fascism, Communism and Liberalism, all of which fought over their claim and legacy of the concept of modernity. For Dugin any of the three ideologies could have gained a hegemonic position over the world, in theory, we could be living through a planetary Reich or global communism, what matters to the political theories in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is that these ideas are not taboo. In this way, Dugin provides for a right-wing

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<sup>624</sup> Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory*, 35.9.

<sup>625</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

Americans, who are unafraid of the anti-Russian baggage, an ideological framework for understanding politics and international relations without drawing upon the established neoconservative and neoliberal frameworks that dominate that literature.

As Dugin opens his text “The fourth political theory is a ‘crusade’ against postmodernity, post-industrial society, liberal thought realized in practice and globalization as well as its logistical and technological basis.”<sup>626</sup> The contemporary world order is a kingdom of the antichrist, just like with Evola, Dugin describes this as the *Kali Yuga* or dark ages.<sup>627</sup> This crusade is one which unites race, class and the state into a unified political force in opposition to liberal individualism. Dugin knows that his ideological project must be one for a post-history after the end of history, opposing the ideology of globalization and neoliberalism rather than policy choices.<sup>628</sup> The result is a crusade to move the Overton window of “reasonable” discourse, rather than trying to take on each structure within globalization independently.

In contrast with the political theories of Evola, the NeoReactionaries and the Grey Tribe thinkers, Dugin positions his work as one of geography. Ideological conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not one of left-right, but rather centre-periphery.<sup>629</sup> Dugin, like the other theorists who influence the Alternative Right, draws upon the taboo thinkers for the traditional liberal-conservative right, including interestingly enough, Karl Marx who is taken for his critiques of capitalism and the alienation of modernity –

...as sociology, Marxism is tremendously useful in revealing those mechanisms of alienation and mystification that liberalism uses to justify its dominion, and as proof of its ‘correctness’. Being a myth itself, in its polemical, activist form,

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<sup>626</sup> Ibid., 36.5.

<sup>627</sup> Evola, *Revolt Against the Modern World*, 83; Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory*, 48.3.

<sup>628</sup> Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory*, 93.

<sup>629</sup> Ibid., 238.

Marxism serves as an excellent tool to expose the bourgeois ‘great stories’ in order to overthrow the credibility of liberal pathos.<sup>630</sup>

Dugin argues for taking authors from the margins and pragmatically appropriating their ideas where possible and using immanent critiques of the material as a methodological warm-up for further research.<sup>631</sup> For lack of a better word, Dugin’s pedagogy is one of making the political theory “cool” by introducing taboo and unorthodox ideas to a typically more conservative and reactionary audience. As with NeoReactionaries or the French New Right, the appropriation of post-modern and far left theories allows Dugin’s ideology to penetrate spaces that it would be unable to germinate in.

Dugin’s fourth political theory and the broader Alternative Right attempt a re-introduction of history into the far-right/right wing through neo-traditionalist frameworks, where cultural values from the past are recreated in the present. Whereas the Silicon Valley groups of the NeoReactionaries and Grey Tribe thinkers tend to be less invested in the traditionalist framework, taking the idea of traditionalist symbols for their political use value rather than a nostalgic dream of past glories, excepting for Jordan Peterson whose work is filled with biblical and mythological references. Dugin’s work, like the White Nationalists, fixates on the imagined dream of a Eurasian empire, one which dominates the politics of Central Asia and Eastern Europe, in effect a reimagining of a Warsaw Pact, yet one devoted to the new fourth political theory rather than one based on class, race or economic liberties.<sup>632</sup>

American hegemony is an enemy because it is a monolithic force which prevents other cultures and traditions from surviving. Dugin could even see an isolationist American empire as a

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<sup>630</sup> Ibid., 95.8.

<sup>631</sup> Ibid., 282.

<sup>632</sup> Ibid., 1578.

self contained “large space” where the liberal ideological project could maintain its current culture, economics and Christian values without dominating and erasing the other cultures around the world.<sup>633</sup> If the American empire were willing to drop the liberalism, the Alternative Right would be happy to embrace this isolation from global politics. The globalization project for Dugin is a racist one of genocide as it functions as a monotonic process of annihilation which leads to the death of other cultures and values, where languages die out, and values are forgotten.<sup>634</sup> The ideology of progress specifically is understood as “the moral genocide of past generations.”<sup>635</sup> Despite the forces of globalization emerging out of the United States, this cosmopolitan liberal culture is seen as a threat to the white exurban and rural whites who champion the white nationalist cause in the united states, who also understand this creep as a monotonic force erasing their culture. The entirety of why the American Alternative Right reads Dugin and the other European New Right texts and follow anti-Americanist/globalization scholars can be summed up by one Patrick Buchanan quote: "American acquired the whole world, but lost itself."<sup>636</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Before concluding there are two points of separation between these European theorists and the American Alternative Right that must be acknowledged. The first is the outright rejection of climate change by the American Right in comparison to the European theorists discussed in this chapter. None of these thinkers are climate change deniers, and they see the conflicts that arise out of climate change as a significant threat. Secondly, these European theorists do not embrace capitalism as their American counterparts do. The populist movements in Europe which draw upon

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<sup>633</sup> Ibid., 1901.

<sup>634</sup> Ibid., 988.

<sup>635</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>636</sup> Ibid., 2465.

these theorists are often anti-growth and at times anti-capitalist. Both may agree that the continued exploitation of non-white labour may be seen as the downfall of western civilization due to demographic change, but the American Alternative Right is not going to argue for the end of capitalism or even moderate social democratic reforms to capitalism.

The European thinkers who influence the Alt-Right are not members of the American Alt-Right. While we see a cross-pollination of their ideas with Jared Taylor and Richard Spencer knowing many of these figures personally,<sup>637</sup> Dugin, Evola, Faye and de Benoist were not dreaming of an American Alt-Right when they wrote their works of political theory. Instead, with the help of the publishing house Arktos, the increasing acceptance of Far-Right views within America and the rise of a nationalistic America First policy from Donald Trump, the seemingly contradictory values of the European Far-Right are influencing radical thinkers in North America. For both the American Alternative Right and the European New Right, the threat of globalization is a cultural one which challenges the very existence of their prized cultural homogeneity. Anti-American policy by the European thinkers is not an attack on American people nor is it an attack on American culture per se, but rather the dominance of American culture on a global level, one which is made worse by the convergence of catastrophes as Faye predicts throughout his work of the same name.<sup>638</sup> Subsequently, since the emergence of the Alt-Right, the connections between the European New Right and the American Alternative Right have grown in prominence with key members in both movements meeting to discuss a global system of Far-Right political parties working together just as the theorists have done for nearly a decade.<sup>639</sup>

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<sup>637</sup> Beirich, "White Identity Worldwide."

<sup>638</sup> Faye, *Convergence of Catastrophes*.

<sup>639</sup> de la Baume and Borrelli, "Steve Bannon's Stuttering European Adventure."

## Chapter 7: The White Nationalists: James Burnham, Jared Taylor, Samuel Francis and Richard Spencer

The question of truth or falsity of an ideology is in any case of minor importance. Human beings believe an ideology, as a rule, not because they are convinced rationally that it is true but because it satisfies psychological and social needs and serves, or seems to serve, individual or group interests.<sup>640</sup> - James Burnham, *Suicide of the West*

### Introduction

In the decades following the Second World War, it was difficult to find Far-Right extremist groups within the United States rallying around racial or religious hatred.<sup>641</sup> While the American Right was known for racial resentment and dog whistle politics, with racial policies and an undercurrent of white supremacy, it was a far cry from the emergent White Nationalist ideology that started in the 1990s that continues to the present. The focus of this chapter is to highlight the intellectual traditions and political theorists that the Alternative Right's White Nationalist tradition relies on to justify their claims philosophically.

This chapter will not devote itself to refuting the logic of White Nationalism, as White Nationalism is an ideology of genocide. Proving that there is no such thing as the Great Replacement or substantial racial differences within this chapter will do little to convince those radicalized by White Nationalism to abandon their ways. Instead, this chapter will provide a brief summary of the political theory of White Nationalism as understood by a selection of the most significant thinkers within the Alternative Right and the American White Nationalist tradition.

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<sup>640</sup> Burnham, *Suicide of the West: An Essay on the Meaning and Destiny of Liberalism*, sec. 2289.

<sup>641</sup> Leonard Weinberg, "Violence by the Far Right: The American Experience," in *Extreme Right-Wing Political Violence and Terrorism*, ed. Max Taylor, Donald Holbrook, and P.M. Currie (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 16.

For this chapter, I will be focusing on what George Hawley describes as high brow white nationalism.<sup>642</sup> Taking Hawley's lead, as well as the work of other scholars on the Alt-Right including David Neiwert and Matthew Lyons, the White Nationalist tradition of the late 20th and early 21st century has a discontinuity with the emergent Alternative Right communities.<sup>643</sup> White Nationalism 1.0 as Hawley describes it is filled with groups such as the KKK (Ku Klux Klan) and the neo-Nazi groups attached to the website Stormfront.<sup>644</sup> These movements primarily focused on street protest, electoral campaigns and traditional grassroots organizational structures of the American political system of the twentieth century. In contrast, the Alternative Right typically avoids street protests where possible, those which they have attempted have typically been suppressed by successful counter-protests. These movements also predominately refuse to put forward third-party candidates for election, instead trying to influence existing Republican figures into adopting pro-Alternative Right policies. The Alternative Right has also adopted 21st-century digital organization structures without clear hierarchies or a centralized command structure. The linkage between these two White Nationalist movements ideologically, that is the development of the ideas and values of the Alternative Right from these White Nationalists, comes from the high brow White Nationalists who focused on presenting an academic and professional face to the movement rather than the skinhead gangs or KKK cells.

The skinhead gangs and Klansman rallies of the 20th century are easy targets for even the most gullible media figure to label as white supremacists, in contrast, the academic affectation of the "high brow White Nationalists" is given a pass by media figures seeking to

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<sup>642</sup> George Hawley, *The Alt-Right: What Everyone Needs to Know*, Kindle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1011.

<sup>643</sup> Neiwert, *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*; Lyons, *Insurgent Supremacists: The U.S. Far Right's Challenge to State and Empire*.

<sup>644</sup> Hawley, *The Alt-Right: What Everyone Needs to Know*, 1127.

provide "balanced" programming. Works such as *Blood and Politics* by Leonard Zeskind or *Rise of the Alt-Right* by Thomas J. Main provide in depth analysis of these low brow White Nationalists and are ideal for those who wish to understand these movements in relation to the broader Alternative Right.<sup>645</sup>

The key term to understand the logic of White Nationalism is Identitarianism, which refers to the French New Right conception of their white French identity as a form of identity politics. The idea was subsequently imported into the United States.<sup>646</sup> Identitarianism is the smokescreen term used by White Nationalists such as Richard Spencer to hide the outright racism of their values by shielding themselves with the paper-thin veneer of identity politics.<sup>647</sup> Though some also use the term "white separatism" rather than supremacist or White Nationalist for similar reasons, this chapter will use the term White Nationalist to avoid confusion.<sup>648</sup> While neoliberalism erases the difference between cultures through the "McDonalds-ification" of global culture placing American values as the norm, and identity politics (post-modernism, feminism and post-colonialism) addresses the validity of intersectional identities without enforcing a hierarchy, the Identitarian movement is an isolationist project attempting to remove and prevent the homogenizing elements of globalization for those already in positions of privilege. At its most basic Identitarian politics is the right to difference. First popularized by the French New Right, the idea stresses that existing cultural groups (in particular majority groups within nations) have the right to resist globalization and liberal equality legislation under the justification of cultural

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<sup>645</sup> Zeskind, *Blood and Politics: The History of the White Nationalist Movement from the Margins to the Mainstream*; Thomas J. Main, *The Rise of the Alt-Right*, Kindle (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 2018).

<sup>646</sup> Williams, "The French Origins of 'You Will Not Replace Us.'"

<sup>647</sup> Lyons, *Insurgent Supremacists: The U.S. Far Right's Challenge to State and Empire*, 2568.

<sup>648</sup> Zeskind, *Blood and Politics: The History of the White Nationalist Movement from the Margins to the Mainstream*, 333.

preservation.<sup>649</sup> Rather than adopt a hierarchical segregationist system predicated on cheap labour by minorities, the Identitarian movement implicitly acknowledges a new reality made possible by automation. Whereas the earlier apartheid states relied on a segregated society with a ruling class dominating the capital and specialized labour market, and an underclass of minorities, who take on undesirable jobs, marginalized by state and social structures, the Identitarian system is based on the exclusion of all minorities from the community. These new communities would be founded with the goal and mission for cultural and racial homogeneity.

For the Alternative Right's Identitarian wing, the idea of racial exclusion comes in response to the decades of non-white colonial immigration from former colonies. The "purity" of the Metropole is replaced with reverse colonization from other communities according the White Nationalists. As with many elements of the Far-Right, the historical legacy and decades of economic exploitation by white majority powers, like the US, France, and the UK, are ignored. An Identitarian complains that London and Paris no longer contain supermajorities of white residence, pointing at Lagos or Beijing and saying that those cities can be all Black/Chinese and no one in the west complains, ignoring the contextual arguments for why London or Paris receive non-white immigrants and are multicultural cities.<sup>650</sup> Instead, the Identitarians fixate on the fear that immigrants will overrun their country and do what their ancestors did to most of the developing world.

### **The Foundations for White Nationalist Thought**

While white supremacy was a dominant force during the Cold War, especially during the 1950s and 1960s as a counter-revolution to the civil rights movement, the White Nationalist and

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<sup>649</sup> Bar-on, *Where Have All the Fascists Gone?*

<sup>650</sup> Taylor, *White Identity: Racial Consciousness in the 21st Century*, 524.

mainly Far-Right anti-American state theories were limited. The post-war period was a dark era for the White Nationalist cause in the West due to the horrors of the White Nationalist project of Nazi Germany. The movement was limited to terrorist networks and extremist cells without significant public support. The Far-Right project of white nationalism would find limited support, with only a handful of figures gaining significant prominence in the fifteen years after the war,<sup>651</sup> the most infamous would be Francis Yockey. While the Neo-Nazi movement would re-emerge in the 1960s, with George Lincoln Rockwell's American Nazi Party, and David Duke's re-emergent Klan in the 1970s, these movements were fringe, as Zeskind explains in his history of American White Nationalism.<sup>652</sup> Until the late 1980s, they were relegated to the position of comedic villains in films such as the *Blues Brothers*, rather than prominent figures on the national stage.<sup>653</sup>

By contrast, American conservatism was reborn during this period with the emergence of the *National Review* and the rise of, what would become, neoclassical economic thought by Milton Friedman.<sup>654</sup> This conservative movement, while harbouring racist views was not in-itself a racist project and not a white nationalist one. The Republican party would use the southern strategy to dog whistle to white supremacists, but they were not campaigning on White Nationalist policies. William F. Buckley even went so far as to make it his mission to drive the John Birch Society and Paleoconservative anti-Semites out of the Republican party in the 1960s and 1990s.<sup>655</sup> The Republican party shifted from a party for Ivy league educated elites to one based on the marriage of libertarianism and social conservatism. The White Nationalists and anti-liberal thinkers within

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<sup>651</sup> Lyons, *Insurgent Supremacists: The U.S. Far Right's Challenge to State and Empire*, 643.

<sup>652</sup> Zeskind, *Blood and Politics: The History of the White Nationalist Movement from the Margins to the Mainstream*.

<sup>653</sup> John Landis, *The Blues Brothers* (USA: Universal Pictures, 1980).

<sup>654</sup> Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America: Since 1945*, 902.4.

<sup>655</sup> *Ibid.*, 942.3; William F. Buckley Jr., *In Search of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Continuum Intl Pub Group, 1993).

the movement were primarily kept in check by the fear of the Soviet Union during this period and would only re-emerge in the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union.

Francis Yockey is one of the few prominent figures during this period to provide a racial theory of politics for the Far-Right; though his influence was incredibly limited in North America during his life. *Imperium*, his *magnum opus*, provides a Far-Right theory for a unified European reactionary state to oppose American liberalism.<sup>656</sup> While Yockey's influence was most pronounced during the post-war wilderness of the Far-Right, when the legacy of National Socialism was fresh in the public's imagination, he was still a fringe political figure during his life. He casts a long shadow over the Far Right and its Anti-American and Anti-Liberal legacy posthumously, though the actual significance of his ideas are less pronounced, as most Alternative Right theorists distance themselves from Nazi and Neo-Nazi literature.

Within Europe, Yockey's ideas found fertile soil with most of the European thinkers introduced in the previous chapter. Julius Evola was an early critic of Yockey's *Imperium*, though his critiques were mostly levelled at Yockey for his theological positions on the age of darkness, fixated on the idea of *Kali Yuga* and Yockey's slightly less aristocratic politics.<sup>657</sup> Alain de Benoist was also heavily inspired by Yockey's work, with Kevin Coogan going so far as to suggest that the legacy of Yockey was picked up by de Benoist and his French New Right.<sup>658</sup> It was, in fact, the dream of a European Imperium which brought Alexander Dugin and Alain de Benoist together in 1992 to discuss the dream laid out by Yockey's *Imperium*.<sup>659</sup>

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<sup>656</sup> Yockey, *Imperium: The Philosophy of History and Politics*.

<sup>657</sup> Coogan, *Dreamer of the Day: Francis Parker Yockey and the Postwar Fasist International*, 292, 574.

<sup>658</sup> *Ibid.*, 532.

<sup>659</sup> *Ibid.*, 536.

## James Burnham

James Burnham, unlike almost everyone else mentioned in this text, should not be considered a founding father of the Alternative Right, though his theories lay the structural foundation for the works of Samuel Francis, Paul Gottfried and Curtis Yarvin. His status is more in line with figures like Martin Heidegger or Fredrich Nietzsche, who have widespread readership outside of the Alternative Right. Yet unlike those German thinkers, he is not so well known as to assume that a general audience would be familiar with his work, which is something that even the introduction to his book *Suicide of the West* jokes about.<sup>660</sup>

Burnham started his public life as a Trotskyite in the 1930s before shifting to conservatism and a critique of Stalinism and communism in the 1940s, in the 1950s he co-founded the *National Review* with William F. Buckley.<sup>661</sup> Despite his influence on the movement, Burnham is not a White Nationalist, he was a conservative. Burnham was a conservative through and through, one who emerged before the Neoliberalization and market fixation of the conservative movement. Instead of providing a racial theory for the later White Nationalists, Burnham provides a foundation for the departure from Liberalism that the later White Nationalists use for inspiration.

Burnham is one of the most influential thinkers on the Alternative Right due to his influence on the paleoconservatives, his critiques of liberalism and his conception of a managerial class. For Burnham, the inevitable march of economic life under capitalism or

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<sup>660</sup> Roger Kimball, "Introduction," in *Suicide of the West: An Essay on the Meaning and Destiny of Liberalism*, Kindle (New York: Encounter Books, 2014), 22.

<sup>661</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

socialism is the managerial totalitarian state, one which is doomed to oligarchy. George Orwell summarizes the work of Burnham as the prediction that there would be:

The ever-increasing concentration of industrial and financial power; the diminishing importance of the individual capitalist or shareholder, and the growth of the new 'managerial' class of scientists, technicians, and bureaucrats; the weakness of the proletariat against the centralised state; the increasing helplessness of small countries against big ones; the decay of representative institutions and the appearance of one-party régimes based on police terrorism, faked plebiscites, etc: all these things seem to point in the same direction.<sup>662</sup>

What Burnham argues is a critique of capitalism from the right, one which stresses the limitations of the libertarian dream of free market capitalism. Within the Alternative Right one can see this infiltrate the fixation on bureaucratic growth and managerialism within the NeoReactionaries like Yarvin,<sup>663</sup> and one can see the hesitation with a managerial technocracy of global capitalism influencing Francis and the White Nationalists within the Alternative Right who question the centralization of power. Samuel Francis would go on to expound upon the theories of Burnham at length in his posthumously published *magnum opus* *Leviathan and its Enemies*.<sup>664</sup>

Despite the connection between James Burnham and the *National Review* consensus of American conservatism, he is indicative of the Leftist-turned-Conservative tradition of the post-war period rather than the more contemporary Conservative-Liberal tradition of the late twentieth century. George Nash covers this trend in detail over the course of his comprehensive history of the Conservative movement during the post-war period.<sup>665</sup> Whereas the Conservative-Liberal tradition is based on the idea of a socially conservative liberal-capitalist paradigm, one which saw capitalism as the foundation of the American order, Burnham rallies against the excesses of liberal-

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<sup>662</sup> Orwell, "Second Thoughts on James Burnham."

<sup>663</sup> Yarvin, "A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations: Chapter 3: AGW, KFM, And HNU."

<sup>664</sup> Francis, *Leviathan and Its Enemies: Mass Organization and Managerial Power in Twentieth-Century America*.

<sup>665</sup> Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America: Since 1945*.

capitalism but sees it as a significantly better alternative to Stalinism. For Burnham and those who continue to draw upon him, the mass culture and the consumption found, within what Marcuse would call One-Dimensional life, was a significant issue worthy of concern, yet it was far better than living under Stalinism.<sup>666</sup> Burnham denounced the consumerism of American pop culture, but said: "Coca-Cola might be bad... But 'not quite in the same league with Kolyma,' the Soviet labour camp."<sup>667</sup> This rejection of American consumerism is part of why the Far-Right and anti-capitalist right lacked a real foothold in American political and intellectual life, so long as the Soviet Union existed they had a mutual enemy with the Liberal consensus and were reluctant to undermine the American right in the face of communism.

Burnham established that most of American Society is liberal, and it is evident that this has been the case since the 1930s.<sup>668</sup> No significant political or intellectual change has occurred to deride that claim, at most some conservative and libertarian institutions have emerged since then but they are still a minority within the United States. An even smaller minority of those are non-conservative, and many of those conservatives are effectively Neoliberal or Libertarian in outlook and practice. Only in the American South could one find substantial adherents of non-liberal or anti-liberal politics, at least as of Burnham's writing in the aftermath of the Civil Rights movement.<sup>669</sup> The politics of American liberalism has been one of bureaucratic decisions, it is no longer a political argument between ideology but one of policy:

... nobody but a madman, fascist or crackpot would really question whether democracy is better than aristocracy and dictatorship, whether there ought to be universal education and universal suffrage, whether all races and creeds deserve

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<sup>666</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991).

<sup>667</sup> Burnham, *Suicide of the West: An Essay on the Meaning and Destiny of Liberalism*, sec. 320.

<sup>668</sup> *Ibid.*, sec. 672.

<sup>669</sup> *Ibid.*, sec. 702.

equal treatment, whether government has a duty to the unemployed, ill and aged, whether trade unions are a good thing, or peace better than war.<sup>670</sup>

The non-liberal must couch their rhetoric and ideology in the guise of liberalism to be able to express themselves without being labelled madmen. From this position, all future high-brow White Nationalists would focus on building an intellectual space to discuss White Nationalism because they know that there is no space for their movement marching on the street. To advocate for a white aristocracy would be akin to being labelled a crackpot, which is why Taylor and Francis would make it their mission to provide an intellectual pedigree to their ideas.<sup>671</sup> This fear of being labeled a political pariah is also why figures like Spencer would largely abandon the ideologically charged imagery and focus on shifting the Overton window of public opinion.<sup>672</sup> When these figures failed to heed Burnham's advice for how to exist within liberalism, they would face public scrutiny.

While Burnham was fixated on the threat posed by the managerial state, which Francis and Taylor would latch on to, his framework for critiquing liberalism would remain his legacy for the rank and file members of the Alternative Right. For Burnham the critical argument for opposing liberalism is centred on the fundamental liberal position of progress and change, and that, "liberalism is anti-traditional;" therefore to be a traditionalist/conservative one should be anti-liberal.<sup>673</sup> Burnham is not the first, nor the last author, to argue that the fundamental psyche of post-war liberalism is based on guilt.<sup>674</sup> This is where the idea of racial or civilizational cuckolding occurs, in the eyes of the White Nationalist or supremacist the liberal value of justice and equality

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<sup>670</sup> Ibid., sec. 763.

<sup>671</sup> Beirich, "White Identity Worldwide"; Southern Poverty Law Center, "American Renaissance."

<sup>672</sup> Devin Burghart, "Who Is Richard Spencer?," Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights, 2019, <https://www.irehr.org/2014/06/27/who-is-richard-spencer/>; Lombroso, *Rebranding White Nationalism: Inside Richard Spencer's Alt-Right*.

<sup>673</sup> Burnham, *Suicide of the West: An Essay on the Meaning and Destiny of Liberalism*, sec. 1084.

<sup>674</sup> Ibid., sec. 3301.

results in white people artificially raising non-whites above their ability at the cost of their standing in society. This argument that affirmative action is a form of reverse racism is nothing new. What makes it so nefarious when expressed by Burnham is that he links it to the fundamental values of liberalism. White Nationalism takes this idea of the “suicide of the west” literally within texts such as *The Camp of the Saints*, where an emasculated Europe is unable to stop refugees from conquering Europe.<sup>675</sup> To be a liberal is also to feel guilt for structural inequalities that one has social privilege such as racial ones, therefore in the eyes of White Nationalists, liberals feel guilty for being white. Burnham’s views would be echoed by thousands of conservatives in the subsequent decades, which laid the foundation for the idea that white people and especially liberals have a desire to be racially cuckolded.<sup>676</sup>

### **The Demographic Question and the Long Decline**

The 1990s saw the emergence of high brow White Nationalism. Unlike the earlier populist politics of racist white supremacy, the White Nationalists of the 1990s focused on providing an air of legitimacy for their movement. The essential White Nationalist thinkers during this period are Samuel Francis and Jared Taylor, though they should not be understood as the only major thinkers. Patrick Buchanan, Paul Gottfried and other Paleoconservatives thinkers dominate the White Nationalist tradition both intellectually and politically as well. These thinkers fixated on three initiatives: the scientific racism of demographics and racial IQ tests, the establishment of intellectual journals and the limited inclusion of Jews within White Nationalism, though this was a far from universal policy.

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<sup>675</sup> Jean Raspail, *Le Camp Des Saints* (Paris: Editions Robert Laffont, 1973).

<sup>676</sup> Weigel, “Cuckservative - the Conservative Insult of the Month, Explained.”

The first initiative is the fixation on the demographic question of the Great Replacement, where White Nationalists fear the end of a white majority state. The idea is premised on the dual trends of population decline in western capitalist countries and the increasing immigration of non-whites into Western countries.<sup>677</sup> To maintain a population without immigration, the total fertility rate (TFR) for women must be 2.1 over the entire population; this means that each woman needs to have, on average 2.1 children over their lifetime. If the TFR drops below 1.4, for example, the population will decline by 50% in 45 years.<sup>678</sup> The US had a TFR of 2.0 in 2013, but this was primarily due to the Hispanic population's TFR of 2.35, which means that the white majority population will likely decline in number, while the non-white, mostly Hispanic, population will increase even without immigration.<sup>679</sup> White supremacists see this not only as a decline in absolute terms for the white population but also a relative decline in white western populations. This demographic decline is one of the core ideas behind White Nationalism; it is not enough to end immigration and increase deportations as the non-white population will increase relative to the white population if current fertility trends persist.

The focus of this Great Replacement argument is less about articulating racial superiority, but rather to present a scientific time bomb, the White Nationalist version of Climate Change. The result is an apocalyptic logic of collapse in which the white supremacist public is charged with a project: have significantly more children, end non-white immigration and force non-whites to leave the country through a genocidal policy. This logic would become the primary rationale for

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<sup>677</sup> Bruce Thornton, "The Coming Demographic Crisis" (Washington DC, 2013).

<sup>678</sup> Ibid.

<sup>679</sup> Ibid.

the terrorist attacks of Brenton Tarrant in Christchurch New Zealand in 2019, and the central argument of Faye's *Convergence of Catastrophes*.<sup>680</sup>

The second initiative was to transition, in the public eye, from a group of radical racists synonymous with villainy as depicted in almost all mainstream media, and into an intellectual and political group without any of the intellectual baggage. The image of the Klansman as a bumbling moron kept the legitimacy of traditionalist and White Nationalist ideas in check. The ideas of White Nationalism were only for the racists in the backwaters of America or the bigots living in major cities drowned out by the voices of everyone else in their communities. For White Nationalism to be legitimated, it needed to transition from the ideology of illiterate bigots to the ideas of well-spoken intellectuals in the eyes of the American public. It is also why figures on the Right have devoted themselves to crafting a professional image. This lack of professionalism is why Spencer, Taylor and Greg Johnson have all focused on establishing intellectual journals and salons to express their ideas.<sup>681</sup> The works of Alternative Right figures such as Gottfried are indicative of this change, rather than articulate a conspiratorial politics like Lyndon LaRouche or the John Birch Society; they articulate an intellectual politics which focuses on the ideological debate.<sup>682</sup> For example, within his book *After Liberalism*, Gottfried focuses on providing a right-wing critique of both liberalism and the managerial state through academic dialogue with liberal and conservative authors to provide articulate critiques of liberal democracy.<sup>683</sup>

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<sup>680</sup> Faye, *Convergence of Catastrophes*; Tarrant, "The Great Replacement."

<sup>681</sup> Beirich, "White Identity Worldwide"; Russell Nieli, "Jared Taylor and White Identity," in *Key Thinkers of the Radical Right: Behind the New Threat to Liberal Democracy*, ed. Mark Sedgwick, Ebook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Greg Johnson, "Metapolitics and Occult Warfare, Part 4," *Counter-Currents*, December 2012.

<sup>682</sup> Lyons, *Insurgent Supremacists: The U.S. Far Right's Challenge to State and Empire*, 3404.

<sup>683</sup> Gottfried, *After Liberalism: Mass Democracy in the Managerial State*, 63.

The most significant transition in White Nationalism between the earlier Neo-Nazi groups of the post-war period and the post-cold war era was the creation of intellectual space for publishing the ideas of the Alternative Right and White Nationalism. As has been repeatedly expressed within this text and by the leaders of the Alternative Right, rallies, marches and murders lead to deplatforming and public opposition. Publishing journals, creating think tanks and releasing YouTube videos leads to financial and popular success, while street protests and harassment campaigns lead to isolation and bankruptcy. As Greg Johnson of *Counter-Currents* explained, “Today’s White Nationalist movement might work best on the model of a Montessori school, not a Hitler Youth rally.”<sup>684</sup>

### **Anti-Semitism and White Nationalism**

A significant change within the White Nationalist community during the 1990s, one which mirrored the inclusion of Jewish figures into the Neoconservative movement, was the inclusion of Jewish members within Taylor’s *American Renaissance*. From its inception, *American Renaissance* has included orthodox Jews and explicitly ban David Duke and the KKK.<sup>685</sup> For some White Nationalists, the Jewish community represents a shared ally within American culture. After the creation of Judeo-Christian values as a term in the 1980s, Jewish elites could now be incorporated into the Right-Wing community. The inclusion of Jews within *American Renaissance* is understood as a short term strategy by figures in the movement, such as Wilmot Robertson, so that the more pressing issue of opposing African Americans and Hispanics could be addressed.<sup>686</sup> White Supremacists have mostly fixated on targeting Muslim

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<sup>684</sup> Johnson, “Metapolitics and Occult Warfare, Part 4.”

<sup>685</sup> Zeskind, *Blood and Politics: The History of the White Nationalist Movement from the Margins to the Mainstream*, 367.

<sup>686</sup> *Ibid.*, 375.

and Hispanic immigrants rather than Jews since the start of the 21st century, with anti-Semitism finding less public support within the United States than it used to.<sup>687</sup>

On the surface, the inclusion of Jews within the Alternative Right appears to be contradictory or somewhat paradoxical, but it serves an effective political strategy for the Alternative Right. By including Jews within the movement and supporting Zionism or Israel, groups within the Alternative Right can maintain anti-Semitic ideas and values without being actively labeled Neo-Nazis. For many contemporary White Nationalists Israel is effectively an idealized ethno-state which adopts the isolationist and segregationist policies that they desire for White America or ethnically homogeneous European states.<sup>688</sup> The pro-Palestinian values of Alain de Benoist and other anti-Israeli right wing groups has largely been abandoned.<sup>689</sup> For much of the Alt-Right, especially internationally there is no disagreement between the Zionist Jewish right-wing figure and the anti-Semitic Far-Right political leader, so long as it leads to Zionism and the immigration of the Jewish population to Israel.<sup>690</sup>

Despite the uneasy truce between members of the Far-Right and the American and Israeli Jewish community, anti-Semitism is still an active element of the Alternative Right. The question of how anti-Semitic one should be is one of optics and temporary strategy rather than ideological for the contemporary Alternative Right activist, as the Alt-Right activist Millennial Woes said in Daniel Lombroso's documentary on the Alternative Right for *The Atlantic*: "I didn't want to become an anti-Semitic, it's like the biggest cliché."<sup>691</sup> On a fundamental level, anti-Semitism

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<sup>687</sup> Neiwert, *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*, 453.9.

<sup>688</sup> Tarrant, "The Great Replacement," 15.

<sup>689</sup> Bar-on, *Rethinking the French New Right*, 236.

<sup>690</sup> Zeev Sternhell, "Why Benjamin Netanyahu Loves the European Far-Right," *Foreign Policy* (New York, February 2019).

<sup>691</sup> Lombroso, *Rebranding White Nationalism: Inside Richard Spencer's Alt-Right*.

becomes a question of metapolitics for the Alternative Right, as it will damage the movement's public relations to "ask the Jewish Question," but for many on the Alternative Right this is a fundamental element of their ideology, as we see with Spencer's 20 points.<sup>692</sup> When the Alternative Right embraces Zionism and downplays their anti-Semitism they can make inroads into mainstream conservative America, but when they publicly argue for anti-Semitic violence they face widespread opposition. After all it was the chant of "The Jews will not replace us" in August 2017, among other elements of the Unite the Right rally that fractured the movement, leading to many significant figures within the Alternative Right to lose public office.<sup>693</sup>

The divide over anti-Semitism has resulted in significant division within the Alternative Right, with no other ideological position creating as visible of a divide within the movement. Even significant figures within the broader Alternative Right take umbrage with the Alt-Right for their use of anti-Semitism. The Jewish paleoconservative Alternative Right thinker Paul Gottfried says so much in his own words: "...any suggestion that I might be associated with what is depicted as a neo-Nazi movement is especially offensive. This association, moreover, has nothing to do with reality."<sup>694</sup> It would require a very generous reading of Gottfried's work and his connection with both the French Identitarian movement and Spencer to absolve him of blame for influencing and outright establishing the Alt-Right. Gottfried shares a similar position to that of Nick Land, as a right-wing philosopher who demonstratively influenced and shaped the Alt-Right yet abandoned the movement that quotes his work the moment the movement turned populist and anti-Semitic.<sup>695</sup> Gottfried made note of Hawley's works on the American Right to show that he

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<sup>692</sup> Spencer, "What It Means to Be Alt-Right."

<sup>693</sup> Tatum, "Gorka: Bannon, Others 'Systematically Undermined'"; Morris, *American Dharma*; Cott and Ellis, *How an Alt-Right Leader Lied to Climb the Ranks*.

<sup>694</sup> Gottfried, "Don't Call Me the 'Godfather' of Those Alt-Right Neo Nazis. I'm Jewish."

<sup>695</sup> Land, "The Alt-Right Is Dead."

differs from Spencer on some key ideological points, but these differences are minor.<sup>696</sup> While Gottfried did not attend the Unite the Right rally, he is sympathetic to their cause, arguing for a both-sideism akin to Trump.<sup>697</sup> What Gottfried and the other Jewish members of the Alternative Right indeed mean when they say that they are anti-Neo-Nazi, is that they are fundamentally in agreement with the Alternative Right but would like the category of white to include Jews, as per Taylor's *American Renaissance*.

### **Samuel Francis**

Samuel Francis was an American editorial columnist and white nationalist author of note during the 1980s and 1990s before his death in 2005.<sup>698</sup> While working at prominent think tanks such as the Heritage Foundation, Francis rose to prominence during his time as a columnist for the *Washington Times* where he penned paleoconservative and White Nationalist articles for nearly a decade, before being fired in 1995. Francis declined in popularity until his book *Leviathan and Its Enemies* was published in the lead up to the 2016 election, when his work was reevaluated as a major precursor to Trumpism.<sup>699</sup> Over his career Francis was a confidant to the paleoconservative Pat Buchanan, editing his book *The Death of the West*<sup>700</sup> and an inspiration for Jared Taylor suggesting he establish the journal and White Nationalist organization, *American Renaissance*.<sup>701</sup> Francis's primary contributions to the Alternative Right's intellectual foundations are his theories on how to further White Nationalism and his critique of the managerial state.

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<sup>696</sup> Hawley, *Making Sense of the Alt-Right*; George Hawley, *Right-Wing Critics of American Conservatism* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2016).

<sup>697</sup> Gottfried, "Don't Call Me the 'Godfather' of Those Alt-Right Neo Nazis. I'm Jewish."

<sup>698</sup> Southern Poverty Law Center, "Sam Francis," Southern Poverty Law Center, 2019, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/sam-francis>.

<sup>699</sup> Timothy Shenk, "The Dark History of Donald Trump's Rightwing Revolt," *The Guardian*, August 16, 2016; Francis, *Leviathan and Its Enemies: Mass Organization and Managerial Power in Twentieth-Century America*.

<sup>700</sup> Southern Poverty Law Center, "Sam Francis."

<sup>701</sup> Shenk, "The Dark History of Donald Trump's Rightwing Revolt."

For Francis and the *American Renaissance* tradition, there are essentially three objectives for White Nationalists in the United States. The first is fostering a white racial identity; representing a break from the traditional structural white supremacy. The second is the limitation and halt to immigration and any form of social welfare for immigrants. The third is the end of minority civil rights and affirmative action legislation, which coincides with an agenda of limited government and federalism to reduce the power of the managerial state.<sup>702</sup> These core principles are at the heart of the Alternative Right's fixation on the Overton window. It is impossible to end all immigration immediately or craft a White Nationalist state, as economic considerations and the importation of cheap non-white labour will lead to the same demographic change; therefore, a slower public relations campaign replaces the Klan rallies, lynching and "Unite the Right" protests. There can be no immediate violent revolution for the reactionary White Nationalist cause, as with the NeoReactionaries or European New-Right the objective is a cultural change which allows their ideas to become commonplace.

For Francis, there can be no successful racial segregation with a unified economic system which desires cheap labour.<sup>703</sup> For Francis capitalism, as it exists within the United States, is incompatible with the project of White Nationalism. Racialized low-wage labour will always be in demand in a hyper-capitalist system. Therefore, Francis believes that White Nationalists must reject global finance capital; fundamentally there is no possibility for white isolationism within a transnational capitalist system reliant on migrant labour. The exploitation of labour, which defines a capitalist system, is driven by a fundamental desire to suppress all labour costs/wages;

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<sup>702</sup> Francis, *Essential Writings on Race*, 541.

<sup>703</sup> *Ibid.*, 419.

this is both the liberal economic and Marxist economic understanding of capitalist labour markets.

The result of this anti-capitalist free trade argument is an easily manipulated image of the common ground of the Far Right and the anti-globalization Left. Within a system of no alternative, the hegemonic liberal position within the anglosphere paints all opposition as radical, racist, sexist or undemocratic. Ideologically the reactionary group of the Alternative Right represents a break from the Right's thirty plus years as the champions of unfettered capitalism. The idea that the Alternative Right would dismiss the interests of capital comes as a shock to those who conflate the Alternative Right with the Tea Party or the libertarian movement in the wake of the financial crisis. The pressure of libertarian think tanks on the Republican party and finance capital on the Democratic party has eroded the ability of American liberal hegemonic discourse to conceptualize two disparate ideas at the same time: anti-free trade and pro-white supremacy.<sup>704</sup> Rather than understand this as a break from existing social trends, Francis's position should be understood as the populist backlash against economic elites within the Republican party since the early 1990s, as documented by Thomas Frank's seminal book *What's the Matter with Kansas*.<sup>705</sup>

According to Francis: "Racial separation, far more than 'white supremacy,' is today favored by most whites advocating white racial consciousness, but there appears to be little prospect of the larger white population embracing it in the near future."<sup>706</sup> For Francis, this is the key to understanding the failures of any racial consciousness in the post-civil rights period;

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<sup>704</sup> Frank, *Listen Liberal*; Meyer, *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right*.

<sup>705</sup> Frank, *What's the Matter with Kansas*.

<sup>706</sup> Francis, *Essential Writings on Race*, 2257.

there is no substantial public desire to change one's life to be racially pure. Francis argues that this racial false consciousness is partially why the Alternative Right has fixated on changing public awareness and acceptance of white Identitarian politics. The prospect of a White Nationalist society is not tempting enough for most white supremacists, as they would have to abandon the exploitation of non-white labour, and as the NeoReactionary Michael Anissimov also points out, they rarely feel sufficiently ideologically committed to the movement.<sup>707</sup> The goals of the Alternative Right are presented not by arguing inferiority of non-whites but by arguing for presenting whites as a separate entity, then from there presenting further evidence to justify their distinction. The end goal is the emergence of a racial consciousness, which can then be used to end the immigration of non-whites and begin genocidal campaigns of non-white citizens if possible.

For Francis, any theory of white supremacy or White Nationalism will fail unless White Nationalists can respond to the state and civil structures of the managerial state. For Francis managerial control is in effect cultural hegemony, which he takes directly from Antonio Gramsci.<sup>708</sup> In contrast to the totalitarian regimes of the Soviet Union or Nazi Germany, the United States is controlled through a system of soft-managerial control, where the public is convinced through civil society rather than martial force to maintain control over the population. Unlike the conspiratorial Far-Right theories of “deep state” control, with a cadre of Jewish figures pulling the strings puppet-like, Francis understands that:

Elites... do not simply make up their ideologies or formulas out of whole cloth. The members of elites (excluding cynics and dissidents) generally believe in their own ideologies and try to behave consistently with their implications, and

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<sup>707</sup> Anissimov, “Why There Are No White Nationalists.”

<sup>708</sup> Francis, *Leviathan and Its Enemies: Mass Organization and Managerial Power in Twentieth-Century America*, 1127.

the intellectual foundations of an ideology, whether scientific, religious, ethical or philosophical in character, must be both reasonably sophisticated in argumentation and reasonably honest and complete in the selection of evidence.<sup>709</sup>

The project of managerialization that has occurred during the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries was done out of noble intentions with sophistication, not based on some anti-Semitic conspiracy like the *Elder Protocols of Zion*.<sup>710</sup>

For Francis, there was no way of establishing an alternative ideology so long as liberal institutions maintain a cultural hegemony over the education system. The ideology of a system is totalizing, with all terms of ideology being communicated within the language of the system.<sup>711</sup> For a White Nationalist to spread racial consciousness as Francis suggested they must find a way of expressing their ideology either within the system, such as rationalizing the value of White Nationalism within a liberal paradigm or by subverting the education system to integrate White Nationalism into the American consciousness. For Francis, the primary way of raising this consciousness would be by ending multicultural education and the progressive university space; just like the NeoReactionaries suggested.<sup>712</sup> So long as the liberal managerial class correctly identifies White Nationalism and white racial consciousness as a threat to the liberal order, these Far-Right ideas will face significant opposition and be barred from inclusion within public life.

### **Jared Taylor**

Jared Taylor, born to Christian missionaries in Japan, has dedicated the past 30 years of his life to the cause of White Nationalism and his White Nationalist organization *American*

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<sup>709</sup> Ibid., 2477.

<sup>710</sup> Unknown, *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* (Reedy, West Virginia: Liberty Bell Publications, 1922).

<sup>711</sup> Francis, *Leviathan and Its Enemies: Mass Organization and Managerial Power in Twentieth-Century America*, 2488.

<sup>712</sup> Francis, *Essential Writings on Race*, 2267; Yarvin, “A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations: Chapter 8: Olde Towne Easte.”

*Renaissance*.<sup>713</sup> Taylor's White Nationalism is indicative of the scientific evolutionary racism that came to dominate the American White Nationalists after the Cold War. For Taylor, the evolutionary pressures of colder climates forced humans who settled in North East Asia and Northern Europe to adopt long term survival strategies, since food was not available for a quarter of the year they developed long term thinking abilities.<sup>714</sup> In contrast, those humans who settled in less extreme climates faced less evolutionary pressures and produced less intelligent offspring over time than those in harsher climates. These claims are, of course, highly suspect and racist, but they provide White Nationalists with an excuse for racial superiority that does not fall back upon the Nazi tropes of Aryan superiority based on quasi-mythical histories.

For Taylor and his White Nationalist supporters, the primary obstacle for their movement is how "radioactive"<sup>715</sup> race and IQ differences are for the American public. Taylor is right to call it radioactive, any discussion of "race realism" will result in widespread opposition, as the public response to most racist rallies or terrorist attacks has demonstrated<sup>716</sup>. Even within Alternative Right texts like Land's *Dark Enlightenment*, there is an active awareness of this taboo, where he imagines the reader's inner monologue when he starts to explain Yarvin's biological determinism and theory of evolutionary progress "... you're probably already muttering under your breath, *don't mention race, don't mention race, don't mention race, please, oh please, in the name of the Zeitgeist and the dear sweet non-god of progress, don't mention race ...*"<sup>717</sup>

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<sup>713</sup> Nieli, "Jared Taylor and White Identity," 136.

<sup>714</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>715</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>716</sup> Alexander, "YouTube Creators Are Trying to Move on from 'Subscribe to PewDiePie.'"

<sup>717</sup> Land, "The Dark Enlightenment."

Taylor, like Faye, writes extensive lists of anecdotal evidence for reverse-racism and the great replacement, spending dozens of pages covering every conceivable sensationalist argument that he can find.<sup>718</sup> This should come as no surprise due to the significant influence that the French New Right has had on Taylor's theory of white identity. As with Faye's work *Convergence of Catastrophes*, one must parse through hundreds of racist remarks and comments to find the core ideological positions that justify his hatred.<sup>719</sup> Rhetorically this is done to present the white supremacist underpinnings of his ideology as valid before moving on to the more radical and unacceptable, even for most racists, view that non-whites must be removed from white society completely. Taylor's brand of white Identitarianism went hand in hand with Faye's, which is why Taylor has promoted the Arktos translations of Faye's works.<sup>720</sup>

If Francis critiqued the influence of capitalism to justify immigration, which he saw as a central economic force opposing White Nationalism, then Taylor responds to the cultural defence of immigration. For Taylor:

Real high culture crosses borders by itself, not in the back pockets of tomato pickers, refugees, or even the most accomplished immigrants. What has Yo-Yo Ma taught Americans about China? What have we learned from Seiji Ozawa or Ichiro about Japan? Immigration and transmission of culture are hardly the same thing. Nearly every good-sized American city has an opera company, but that does not require Italian Immigrants.<sup>721</sup>

For Taylor and like-minded White Nationalists, there is no acceptable logic for immigration, especially not one based on importing non-white culture or non-white labour. Why should there be immigrants from other countries if the cultural benefits are separate? Taylor is right that one does not need a Thai person to make a *pad thai* at a Cheesecake Factory any more than a Japanese

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<sup>718</sup> Taylor, *White Identity: Racial Consciousness in the 21st Century*, 2410.

<sup>719</sup> Faye, *Convergence of Catastrophes*.

<sup>720</sup> Nieli, "Jared Taylor and White Identity," 150.

<sup>721</sup> Taylor, *White Identity: Racial Consciousness in the 21st Century*, 2486.

person to manage the projection booth at a theatre playing an anime film, but he is wrong to believe that culture magically appears without immigration or cultural exchanges.

What Taylor does is differentiate himself and the White Nationalists from the Conservative arguments of white supremacists and neoliberals. For Taylor, there is no such thing as the good/bad immigrant dichotomy. His argument breaks with the typical anti-immigrant rhetoric found within the Anglosphere. Liberal and conservative political figures can and have established an uneasy agreement for immigration, such as expanding the number of immigrants,<sup>722</sup> opening up the nation to a more diverse population, while also introducing a point system based on utilitarian and economic calculus over economic productivity and the importation of skilled labour.<sup>723</sup>

Taylor also rejects the liberal melting pot theory of diversity as adaptive and integral to American society. For Taylor, he states that what diversity has furthered in North America is cultural stereotypes rather than an actual mixture of cultural values.<sup>724</sup> What Taylor fears is akin to the European New Right fear of a Disney-ification of culture. Taylor sees that immigration and integration have failed, and where it has been presented as a success it is merely a capitalist excess of crass consumerism. Cultures are reduced to pavilions at Folk-O-Ramas, or Disney Land rides where national dress, food and song is shared to the public for easy consumption and replication. Taylor sees the erasure of culture as the logical conclusion of this project of globalization and consumerism. The result will be an erasure of cultural identity, but one that

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<sup>722</sup> The Canadian Press, “Canada to Increase Annual Immigration Admissions to 350,000 by 2021,” *CBC*, November 1, 2018.

<sup>723</sup> Government of Canada, “Six Selection Factors - Federal Skilled Worker Program (Express Entry),” Website of the Government of Canada, 2019, <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/express-entry/eligibility/federal-skilled-workers/six-selection-factors-federal-skilled-workers.html>.

<sup>724</sup> Taylor, *White Identity: Racial Consciousness in the 21st Century*, 2497.

will be accelerated within predominantly white countries which have high rates of immigration. Non-native (i.e. non-White) immigration into Europe or North America is not matched by white immigration out of Europe or North America into the rest of the world, which results in white countries becoming less white while the rest of the world's nation states can maintain their existing ethnic compositions.<sup>725</sup>

While a consumerist critique of mass culture and especially the appropriation of culture for capitalist consumption is not without merit, the distinction between Taylor's arguments and that of cultural critiques on the left is one of racial bigotry. Taylor's argument is partially valid, but his conclusions and logic are morally unacceptable due to its inherent racism. Taylor's argument mirrors Julius Evola's critique of Theodore Adorno's rejection of Jazz, which Evola argues is a fundamentally racist one, only for Evola to then suggest that Jazz would be better if Jazz was based on Bulgarian folk music (i.e. white European) rather than African folk music.<sup>726</sup> If the first argument by a liberal for Mexican immigration is the advantage of having good tacos or burrito joints, then Taylor's argument, no matter how racist, rings true. The assumption that immigrants are fundamentally useful for the importation of cultural products, such as cheap "ethnic food," then the logic for immigration is no different from the logic of international trade as a way of importing "foreign goods" to appease the palate of consumers. To critique the position of Taylor and the White Nationalists, a non-consumeristic justification for immigration, i.e. one based on humanism rather than capitalism becomes a necessity for the non-capitalist left.

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<sup>725</sup> Francis, *Essential Writings on Race*, 635.

<sup>726</sup> Evola, *Ride the Tiger: A Survival Manual for the Aristocrats of the Soul*, 163.

## **The Contemporary Alt-Right and White Nationalism**

While the predominant goal of Taylor, Francis and the other intellectual figures of White Nationalism was the professionalization and intellectualization of the movement, this was always the first step towards a larger goal. As is common among members of the Alternative Right, the White Nationalists have been campaigning to open the Overton Window rather than get officials elected or passing reformist policies. The most significant change for the movement between the 1990s and the present is the shift from journals and policy to active campaigning and public engagement. This is where Richard Spencer and the Alt-Right take centre stage, rather than produce new ideas for an echo chamber; they seek to engage the public.

## **The Future of the Neo-Nazis**

The Alternative Right uses fascist iconography and aesthetics rather than adopt Nazi state theory or their explicit ideological positions. The result is a fascist ironic cool, where the performance of the aesthetic of Fascism allows for a case of plausible deniability, which is where the "conservative is the new punk" meme emerged.<sup>727</sup> The Alternative Right has become defined by their sense of humour, explicitly articulating racist jokes for their "half-truths" to bring in moderates.<sup>728</sup> Dressing up as a Nazi or posting images of the Nazi party both attempts to break the norm as a joke, while also instilling real fear/discomfort in the minority group targeted by the harassment campaign or rally. For the minority group, the "joke" inspires terror and is unquestionable hate speech, but for the officials in public office or the media, it is consistently

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<sup>727</sup> Hawley, *The Alt-Right: What Everyone Needs to Know*, 1224; Bokhari and Yiannopoulos, "An Establishment Conservative's Guide to the Alt-Right."

<sup>728</sup> Rob May and Matthew Feldman, "Understanding the Alt-Right. Ideologues, 'Lulz' and Hiding in Plain Sight," in *Post Digital Cultures of the Far Right*, PDF (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2019), 27.

presented as a joke that went too far, with plausible deniability lest they are threatened with slander.

Over time the fascist aesthetic or the hatred towards women becomes so commonplace that it becomes difficult to determine what is real belief and what is fake. The consequences of this double speak are clear, as Blaise Pascal said about the proud man's belief in God,<sup>729</sup> so long as one keeps going down on their knees and praying one will eventually find their belief in God. As is the case with the Alternative Right, if a young man keeps making jokes about being a Nazi, they are likely to start acting and identifying as a Nazi. The result is the normalization of Nazi iconography and hate speech within digital communities, as more and more members admit to holding fascistic views (even if they are not literal Nazis or Neo-Nazis). Whereas the readers of *American Renaissance* may have been devoted White Supremacists who joined the movement out of a conviction that was strengthened through the literature, the Alt-Right's radicalization is akin to Pleasure Island from *Pinocchio*,<sup>730</sup> where young men are lured in with jokes and a sense of community before becoming radicalized. No matter the personal story for their radicalization, there is no difference to the victim shot at ironically and one shot at due to a dogmatic belief in a Far-Right ideology.

One of the most illustrative examples of this transition, other than Spencer is Andrew Anglin and his Neo-Nazi website the *Daily-Stormer*. While not specifically a member of the Alt-Right, because he views the movement as too childish, Anglin draws upon many of the same ideas and strategies for his White Nationalist project. As Luke O'Brien in his *Atlantic* cover story on Anglin and the *Daily-Stormer* points out, members of the Alt-Right's most radical circles come

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<sup>729</sup> Blaise Pascal, *Pascal's Pensees* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1958), 73.

<sup>730</sup> Ben Sharpsteen and Luske Hamilton, *Pinocchio* (USA: Disney, 1940).

from diverse political and economic communities, albeit white ones.<sup>731</sup> They are not just the sons of racists and extremists, but rather the product of less apparent radicalization. Anglin himself was a leftist, vegan, drug consuming hippie during his first years at high school before becoming one of the more widely read white supremacists in America. As with many members of the Alt-Right who were radicalized before Obama's election, Anglin listened to Right-Wing talk radio and was a fan of Alex Jones.<sup>732</sup> Anglin, like many other Grey Tribe members of the Alternative Right, was an active poster on 4Chan.

Anglin is one of the relatively few Alternative Right figures directly inspired by Hitler's writings, at least openly, but he also adopts the Alternative Right's ironic and internet-troll disposition which distances himself from the earlier Neo-Nazis. His project on the *Daily-Stormer* is separate from Stormfront and the more serious members of the Neo-Nazi movement because he lampoons the movement's attempts to recreate the 1920s. Anglin's work is motivated by the desire to attract younger members, who must consider White Nationalism a fun club to join rather than homework. The NeoReactionaries made a small movement out of the members who wished to do the homework, reading thousands of pages of reactionary tomes in the process, in contrast the Alt-Right and *Daily-Stormer* attracted orders of magnitude more followers by telling jokes. By relying on ironic and comedic presentations of Nazi ideas and iconography, sites such as the *Daily-Stormer* provide an opportunity for potential members of the Alt-Right to wet their feet before diving headlong into unapologetic racial supremacy. As O'Brien writes on Anglin's techniques for political discourse:

Anglin's editorial approach, which he has explained in various podcasts, borrowed from both *Mein Kampf* and Saul Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals*. From

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<sup>731</sup> O'Brien, "The Making of an American Nazi."

<sup>732</sup> Ibid.

Hitler, Anglin learned to dumb down his argument: Good guys versus bad guys. A few themes repeated over and over. From Alinsky, he learned counterculture tactics: Attack people instead of institutions. Isolate targets. Make threats. One Alinsky rule in particular stuck with Anglin: “Ridicule is man’s most potent weapon.”<sup>733</sup>

The goal of this new White Nationalist wing is to bring in new members who would be otherwise alienated from the project, by first making them laugh. Drawing straight from the playbook of *Breitbart* during Gamergate, Anglin targets individuals that non-radicalized young men would find it easy to make jokes about, bully and harass.<sup>734</sup>

In an inverse of the *18<sup>th</sup> Brumaire*, first as farce, then as tragedy, Alternative Right figures like Anglin radicalize the public, once the jokes have been laid, the more violent behaviour expands. While initial propaganda is published to expand the space for White Nationalist discourse it is done to illicit a response rather than make a concrete policy.<sup>735</sup> Anglin and the contemporary Alt-Right expand upon the ironic detachment of NeoReactionaries, but rather than make jokes and ironically engage the reader with pop culture references, the newer theory is fundamentally intertwined with shit-posting. Shit-posting is the process in which someone posts content online with bad faith so that it can be taken seriously by a third party, typically in such a way that those in the know can tell that it is ironic while the general public will take it seriously. While Anglin and company did not invent shit-posting, they have used it to greatly amplify the voice of White Nationalism. An example of shit-posting is the "March on Whitefish," a planned anti-Semitic march in rural Montana orchestrated by Anglin turned out to be a prank.<sup>736</sup> A little bit of online posting resulted in significantly more blowback and exposure than an actual protest or rally would

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<sup>733</sup> Ibid.

<sup>734</sup> Lees, “What Gamergate Should Have Taught Us about the ‘Alt-Right’”; Yiannopoulos, “The Authoritarian Left Was on Course to Win the Culture Wars... Then along Came #Gamergate.”

<sup>735</sup> O’Brien, “The Making of an American Nazi.”

<sup>736</sup> Ibid.

elicit for the same amount of effort. The media frenzy and threats of violence terrified the town for a month, with minimal effort or public demonstrations, the joke had become a reality. The objective was to sow panic and confusion rather than to cause harm, which can easily be prosecuted directly.

The result of this application of White Nationalist shit-posting is a subdued form of terrorism and insurgency tactics. While most of these posts are insignificant, literally just half-hearted tweets some of them may be a serious threat. So long as the public is afraid that these threats could be real the White Nationalists can achieve significant gains. A terrorist attack without physical violence still causes trauma and provides a political rallying cry from the Alt-Right, and is difficult to prosecute, while the murder of a counter-protester or violent terrorist attack like in Christchurch New Zealand leads public backlash.<sup>737</sup>

### **Richard Spencer and his Twenty points**

Richard Spencer is one of the better-known members of the Alt-Right and one of the most visible White Nationalists in the United States. Attending the University of Chicago for a master's degree, Spencer's thesis was an anti-Semitic critique of Adorno, which he followed up with a Ph.D. in political thought at Duke University before dropping out.<sup>738</sup> Spencer became cynical of the mainstream conservative movement in the aftermath of 9/11. According to Spencer the focus of the Republican party was on democracy building abroad, multicultural patriotism and debt-fueled consumption spending.<sup>739</sup> After dropping out of his doctorate he worked at the White Nationalist *Taki-Mag* where he would coin the term Alternative right with his mentor Paul

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<sup>737</sup> Romano, "How the Christchurch Shooter Used Memes to Spread Hate"; Alexander, "YouTube Creators Are Trying to Move on from 'Subscribe to PewDiePie.'"

<sup>738</sup> Burghart, "Who Is Richard Spencer?"; Talya Zax, "Richard Spencer's Master's Thesis Was an Anti-Semitic Critique of a Jewish Philosopher," *Forward*, 2017.

<sup>739</sup> Lombroso, *Rebranding White Nationalism: Inside Richard Spencer's Alt-Right*.

Gottfried.<sup>740</sup> While working on the website Alternativeright.com Spencer gained some popularity within the White Nationalist community, but abandoned the project in 2012 when he moved to the National Policy Institute (NPI) and established the White Nationalist journal *Radix*.

Taking Gottfried's lead, Spencer spent much of the 2010s publishing the racist texts of the European New Right either through Arktos or through Washington Summit Publishers,<sup>741</sup> the influx of European thought expanded the movement beyond the existing American literature. The results of this expansion were initially modest to outright failures, with the 2014 NPI conference in Hungary being the most obvious. Though the subsequent attempted formation of a New-Right/Alt-Right international by Bannon since 2017 has demonstrated that there is far more to this than merely academic conferences and the publishing of Far-Right books, even if the political project has made limited gains.<sup>742</sup>

The mainstream media only took substantial notice of Spencer in the aftermath of Trump's electoral success. Shortly after the election Spencer held the 2016 NPI meeting in Washington DC where he infamously called out "Heil Trump" before giving a Nazi salute. This is the moment when Spencer became a recognized face for the Alt-Right and the broader Alternative Right. In 2017 at the inauguration for Trump he was punched in the face by a member of Antifa, which became a viral sensation online, prompting many articles on the legitimacy of punching Nazis.<sup>743</sup> This would not be the last time he would face opposition from left-wing

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<sup>740</sup> Gottfried, "The Decline and Rise of the Alternative Right"; Gottfried, "Don't Call Me the 'Godfather' of Those Alt-Right Neo Nazis. I'm Jewish."

<sup>741</sup> Arktos Media Ltd., "Departure from the AltRight Corporation," Arktos, 2018, <https://arktos.com/2018/08/03/departure-from-the-altright-corporation/>; Burghart, "Who Is Richard Spencer?"

<sup>742</sup> de la Baume and Borrelli, "Steve Bannon's Stuttering European Adventure."

<sup>743</sup> Tauriq Moosa, "The 'punch a Nazi' Meme: What Are the Ethics of Punching Nazis," *The Guardian*, January 17, 2017.

groups, as his appearance and organization efforts at Charlottesville later that year would demonstrate.<sup>744</sup>

Spencer's definitive article "What it Means to be Alt-Right", which he posted on the first day of the Unite the Right Rally, lists twenty values or principles for his specific branch of the Alternative Right.<sup>745</sup> While they diverge from some of the earlier Alternative Right positions, it is fair to say that these views are the ones most linked with the radical core. Those who say "I am not Alt-Right" are saying: "I do not abide by all 20 points of Spencer's manifesto even if I agree with most or many of them, just not the first three points which are specifically an anti-Semitic form of White Nationalism." Unlike the other texts covered within this chapter, and this text, which are too large or dense to examine in detail, Spencer's "What it Means to be Alt-Right" is both short and straightforward.<sup>746</sup> Therefore, it is both possible and valuable to compare these twenty points with the ideas articulated earlier in this chapter and text to examine what political theory and ideology has coalesced into the Alternative Right and more specifically the Alt-Right.

The first two points (Race and Jews) establish the Alt-Right as supporters of white racial identity group based on European identity and heritage, "'European" refers to a core stock—Celtic, Germanic, Hellenic, Latin, Nordic, and Slavic"<sup>747</sup> with the caveat that there is a fundamental distinction between Jews and Europeans. This places Spencer's contingent away from the Jewish inclusive *American Renaissance* and represents a break from the earlier Nordic-Aryan focused Neo-Nazi movements of the twentieth century which had no place for Slavic peoples. The pan-European concept of a white race is relatively new and only possible from an American perspective

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<sup>744</sup> Reitman, "U.S. Law Enforcement Failed to See the Threat of White Nationalism. Now They Don't Know How to Stop It."

<sup>745</sup> Spencer, "What It Means to Be Alt-Right."

<sup>746</sup> Ibid.

<sup>747</sup> Ibid.

which downplays the centuries of hostility between the different European nations. Even Guillaume Faye, who imagines a pan-European state bases it off of the assumption that it would be highly federalized to maintain the divergent cultural traditions rather than establish a pan-European identity.<sup>748</sup> Both of these points are by far the most controversial within the article, as both outright anti-Semitism and White Nationalism are the most taboo ideas of the movement and the ones most likely to get the movement censored within the media (except outright terrorist attacks which would face even more repression, though these are motivated overwhelmingly by anti-Semitism, White Nationalism and misogyny).

The third and fourth points (The Ethno-State and Metapolitics) in Spencer's manifesto rephrase the two central values of the French New Right, and the definition of the Alternative Right used for this text, the right to difference and a focus on cultural metapolitics.<sup>749</sup> These declarations are yet again substantial evidence that the Alternative Right emerged out of the intellectual traditions of the French New Right. While the American influences are addressed later in the article, they are policy positions rather than fundamental axioms of the movement. Not only does Spencer draw upon the French New Right, but he also actively rejects the American liberal-conservative synthesis of neoliberal Republicans when he says: "The decrepit values of Woodstock and Wall street mean nothing to us."<sup>750</sup> For the Alternative Right, there is no place for liberalism, the conservative bourgeoisie or multicultural pluralism. As has been stressed by every thinker within the Alternative Right, the goal of the political theory of the movement is to provide an ideological blueprint for a postliberal world.

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<sup>748</sup> Faye, *Archeofuturism: European Visions of Post-Catastrophic Age*, 458.

<sup>749</sup> Bar-on, *Where Have All the Fascists Gone?*, 5; Spencer, "What It Means to Be Alt-Right."

<sup>750</sup> Spencer, "What It Means to Be Alt-Right."

With his seventh, eighth, ninth and twentieth points (Family, Human Nature, Women and Sex, and Personal Duties) Spencer establishes an individualistic hierarchical society, based on a patriarchal family structure, the submission of women into a submissive and nurturing role as "mothers and caregivers" and the biologically determined hierarchy of human beings based on their innate endowments at birth.<sup>751</sup> What Spencer argues in these four points is identical to the values that Jordan Peterson lays out in his text *12 Rules for Life*.<sup>752</sup> Peterson is not the only one to argue these values, but he is one of the most vocal authors on the nature of family structure examined within this text. These domestic values are where the Alternative Right will continue to make inroads with the evangelical Republican base, as they share a unified anti-feminist and pro-traditional family platform. It should also be noted that Spencer makes a point of denouncing the "lonely "porn culture"" of today's youth, calling for a "return to a sexuality that is fruitful and erotic in the truest sense of the word."<sup>753</sup> While these views on pornography would have been implicit twenty or thirty years ago, they have now become essential characteristics of the community of online men within the Alternative Right. This move to de-sexualize fascism is also a significant departure from the highly sexualized definition of fascism for much of the post-war period, as films such as *Salo* and *The Night Porter* demonstrated.<sup>754</sup>

Points five, six, ten and thirteen (White America, Europe, Foreign Affairs and Globalization) are merely a re-articulation of the International Relations policy of the Paleoconservative White Nationalists and the European New Right thinkers discussed earlier in this text.<sup>755</sup> Spencer articulates an isolationist, non-interventionist and anti-globalization foreign

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<sup>751</sup> Ibid.

<sup>752</sup> Peterson, *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos*.

<sup>753</sup> Spencer, "What It Means to Be Alt-Right."

<sup>754</sup> Liliana Cavani, *The Night Porter* (Italy: Ital-Noleggio Cinematografico, 1974); Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom* (Italy: United Artists, 1975).

<sup>755</sup> Spencer, "What It Means to Be Alt-Right."

policy, which opposes the Republican platform for much of the 21st century. Spencer makes no surprising statements here; he calls for a non-interventionist pre-Great War America dominated by White Europeans and for a unified fortress Europe to oppose the influx of non-Europeans in recent decades. Richard Spencer favours a federalized white European state system at the exclusion of minorities, a view he shares with Faye, who expresses this as an alternative to the EU project.<sup>756</sup>

Points eleven and twelve (Free Speech and Firearms) are shared with the majority of the American Right, as they articulate the values of the first and second amendment of the US constitution.<sup>757</sup> There are also points that are limited to the United States, as no other Anglophone state has a comparable gun or free speech culture. Free speech has explicitly become a political strategy for the Alternative Right in the past half decade to counter de-platforming strategies by liberal and left-wing counter-protesters.<sup>758</sup> Both free speech and the protection of the second amendment were presented as central to radicalizing the American right according to the Christchurch shooter's manifesto.<sup>759</sup> While there is little doubt that the American Far-Right would be personally and ideologically committed to the second amendment, their choice to support free speech is unquestionably one of political strategy. There should be absolutely no doubt in any observer's mind that the Alternative Right or their allies, once elected into office would begin to legislate against anti-hate speech legislation and significantly reduce the ability to express opposition to Alternative Right perspectives.

Point fifteen (Economics) is a reminder that the Alternative Right and the Alt-Right are fundamentally critical of the existing economic structure of capitalism. While not all members of

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<sup>756</sup> Faye, *Archeofuturism: European Visions of Post-Catastrophic Age*; Faye, *Convergence of Catastrophes*.

<sup>757</sup> Spencer, "What It Means to Be Alt-Right."

<sup>758</sup> Robertson, "Welcome to Voat: Reddit Killer, Troll Haven, and the Strange Face of Internet Free Speech."

<sup>759</sup> Tarrant, "The Great Replacement," 24.

the Alternative Right read or endorse the near 800-page text *Leviathan and its Enemies* by Francis,<sup>760</sup> the sentiment that managerial and finance capitalism is eroding the freedom of American society is the generally accepted norm, even if the Alternative Right is split on how to resolve this crisis. The rejection of financial, managerial or globalization capitalism is one of the defining characteristics of the Alternative Right's populist support and according to Bannon one of the primary reasons why Trump, who at least rhetorically positioned himself alongside this right-wing populist sentiment, found electoral success in both the 2016 general election and the Republican primaries.<sup>761</sup>

Points sixteen and seventeen (Urban Life and the Natural World) are both indicative of the French New Right's influence on Spencer and the Alternative Right as a whole.<sup>762</sup> The earlier dreams of segregation from society into a rural community in Montana or New Hampshire are rejected as a retreat from the problems facing a White Nationalist project, one which can only result in further decline.<sup>763</sup> The inclusion of the natural world is also indicative of a shift within the Alternative Right to address climate change and environmental collapse, both for the altruistic desire for a white homeland to live a pastoral life, and secondly to curb the inevitable fallout of climate change refugees. While the American Right is hesitant to support or accept the reality of climate change, the Alternative Right understands that coming environmental catastrophe will be an existential crisis that requires immediate political action. These climate change responses will likely focus on excluding climate change refugees from entering the United States rather than reducing CO2 levels.

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<sup>760</sup> Francis, *Leviathan and Its Enemies: Mass Organization and Managerial Power in Twentieth-Century America*.

<sup>761</sup> Morris, *American Dharma*.

<sup>762</sup> Spencer, "What It Means to Be Alt-Right."

<sup>763</sup> Anissimov, "Why There Are No White Nationalists."

Points fourteen, eighteen and nineteen (the Left, the 68'ers and Education) represent the three enemies of the Alternative Right in the United States.<sup>764</sup> The Left and Education are the most apparent enemies, due to the Left's opposition of the Alt-Right's Far-Right fascism through anti-fascist organizations such as Antifa, and the relative dominance of liberal arts within the education system which leads to the reproduction of a liberal capitalist economy of individuals. The Alternative Right and its allies know that for their movement to be successful they must suppress the dissident voices within these spaces, which is why they will continue to legislate against their freedom of assembly and reduce the budgets for liberal arts and humanities programs wherever possible.<sup>765</sup> The Alternative Right and its young members also reject the Baby Boomer generation, which they see as cuckservatives who sold out both the White Race and the future of America for temporary material gain. While they cannot legislate against wealthy conservatives, they can discredit them and isolate them from traditional conservative parties. Perhaps the most indicative moment in recent memory was seeing David Frum, a staunchly Right-Wing Conservative speechwriter for the second Bush Administration, representing the liberal cause of democracy at the 2018 Munk Debates in opposition to Bannon.<sup>766</sup> The Alternative Right has been very successful at discrediting the economic conservatives within the Republican party, as the prospect of Frum representing the more progressive position at a Munk Debate would have been unthinkable even five years earlier.

The most surprising elements of Spencer's list are what he excludes; the two most notable exclusions from his list are democracy and religion. As was introduced in the first chapter and

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<sup>764</sup> Spencer, "What It Means to Be Alt-Right."

<sup>765</sup> Schulberg, "Trump Homeland Security Official Suggested Antifascists Were 'the Actual Threats'"; Paola Loriggio, "Ontario Post-Secondary Schools Free Speech Policies," *Global News*, January 7, 2019; Ada Harris, "The Liberal Arts May Not Survive the 21st Century," *The Atlantic* (New York, December 2018).

<sup>766</sup> Munk Debates, "The Rise of Populism," Munk Debates, 2018, <https://www.munkdebates.com/The-Debates/The-Rise-of-Populism>.

touched upon during the chapters on the Grey Tribe, NeoReactionaries and the European Far-Right, there is a contempt for democracy and mainstream protestant Christianity within the Alternative Right. Unlike Alain de Benoist who is a pagan, Yarvin who is an atheist and critical of religious belief, or the neo-pagan White Nationalist group the Wolves of Vinland,<sup>767</sup> Spencer understands that these choices are too radical and alienating for the vast majority of the American Right. It is unlikely that any significant pagan community will emerge within the United States to replace the evangelical Christian demographic within the American Right. Additionally, Spencer is less critical of democracy in 2017 than most White Nationalists, and Alternative Right thinkers would be, as this was published less than a year after Trump's election and two days before the Alternative Right would be excised from the White House to maintain some degree of popular democratic support for the President's administration.<sup>768</sup> Given the failures of the Far-Right electorally in 2018 it is likely that Spencer's position on democracy will change if Trump loses the 2020 election.

### **Radicalization and the White Nationalist text**

As with the other texts of the Alternative Right, White Nationalist literature is predicated on radicalization rather than academic critique. If one looks at the structure of Taylor's *White Identity*, one sees a path towards radicalizing the reader into a White Nationalist intellectual framework.<sup>769</sup> At first, he presents the failures of integration,<sup>770</sup> which, while racist, is focused on providing some statistics and anecdotes to justify reserved or subconscious bigotry. From there

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<sup>767</sup> Gray, "A Former Alt-Right Member's Message: 'Get Out While You Can'"; de Benoist and Champetier, *Manifesto For a European Renaissance*; Curtis Yarvin, "Why Do Atheist Believe in Religion," Unqualified Reservations, 2007, <https://www.unqualified-reservations.org/2007/04/why-do-atheists-believe-in-religion/>.

<sup>768</sup> Tatum, "Gorka: Bannon, Others 'Systematically Undermined.'"

<sup>769</sup> Taylor, *White Identity: Racial Consciousness in the 21st Century*.

<sup>770</sup> *Ibid.*, 290.

Taylor progresses through several chapters on “The Myth of Diversity,”<sup>771</sup> where he highlights all the minor ways that White Christian Americans make accommodations to other cultures all the while being called racists. It is only after several chapters of mainstream conservative talking points that Taylor accelerates his arguments through a biological determinist framework,<sup>772</sup> and from there elaborates on his project of establishing white racial consciousness. The literature of most White Nationalists is aimed at radicalization and ideological positioning, with few texts seriously engaging with the critiques of racism from the liberal or progressive left.

The pathway is typically the same across the literature, first the dog whistle talking point, that is less racist or offensive than the subsequent arguments. Next is the presentation of failures, typically anecdotal examples of minor racial violence or government failure when it legislates some form of equality or broadly left-wing legislation. Then the Far-Right ideas are presented through scientific or historical rhetoric to cloud them from critiques. From there on, the text is firmly radical and functioning within internal logical structures based on earlier assumptions. This development is essential to the movement’s literature, as the project of the movement has always been a reawakening of racial consciousness. It does not seek to convert the African American scholar or feminist activist to their ideology. Unlike the progressive identity politics movements, the white Identitarians have no domestic allies; you are either with them or against them.

The serious scholarship of the American White Nationalists as expressed in the lengthy texts of *Imperium*,<sup>773</sup> *Leviathan and its Enemies*<sup>774</sup> and *White Identity*<sup>775</sup> represent the dogmatic political theory texts of the movement, but they would find no fertile soil to grow if it was not for

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<sup>771</sup> Ibid., 1071.

<sup>772</sup> Ibid., 2535.

<sup>773</sup> Yockey, *Imperium: The Philosophy of History and Politics*.

<sup>774</sup> Francis, *Leviathan and Its Enemies: Mass Organization and Managerial Power in Twentieth-Century America*.

<sup>775</sup> Taylor, *White Identity: Racial Consciousness in the 21st Century*.

the influx of more digestible theory and texts from the NeoReactionaries, Grey Tribe and Alt-Right theorists. As the European New Right theories have cross pollinated with the American White Nationalist thoughts of the 1990s it has resulted in a far more accessible and publicly acceptable extreme Far-Right theory than anytime in the post-war rights era.

### **Part 3: A New Reactionary Ideology**

#### **Conclusion: The Path of Radicalization**

##### **Introduction**

The central question of this text has been: how have the divergent political theory traditions of the Alternative Right coalesced into a new reactionary political ideology? At this point, the different theories have provided separate maps of the reactionary political world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These maps have provided a framework for the different reactionary groups to establish a somewhat coherent world view independent of the libertarian and conservative ideological consensus of the American Right. Each of these maps, despite showing a path forward is part of a more extensive collection, laying a blueprint for the imagined reactionary world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The map provided by the Grey Tribe shows a path towards radicalization into Reactionary ideological positions out of a seemingly non-partisan and apathetic population. The NeoReactionary map laid an incomplete picture of the world which ignores many of the day-to-day policies of an Alternative Right government but crafted an aesthetic and an intellectual vanguard party identity that helped the early Alternative Right transform into a populist force. The European theorists filled in the edges of the map, showing what postliberalism looked like outside of the North American context, and provided a historical and geopolitical framework that would be either unthinkable or unpopular for the American centric theorists of the reactionary right. The final map, that of White Nationalism secures the picture, providing an activist network to the existing hubs of the Alternative Right so that the individuals on the Alternative Right can see a way forward together.

The Alternative Right's political theory is one of reactionary thought, fundamentally driven by a rejection of neoliberal culture, globalization and the waning of white male privilege. This text has shown that "it is nothing but a prejudice to assume that revolutionaries think while

reactionaries only react;”<sup>776</sup> they have done a lot of thinking and writing. The Reactionaries of the Alternative Right represent a break in American liberal-conservative ideology. These authors have demonstrated an abandonment of liberal tradition that has defined American conservatism for centuries.<sup>777</sup>

The literature examined throughout this text shares three common elements: shared reactionary values, a break with American Liberalism and the idea of a loyal opposition and that the texts are written for radicalization. The Alternative Right is a politics of rebirth and represents a political awakening for this non-liberal American political community. The Alternative Right is a new Ideology and it is a reactionary ideology.

### **Katie McHugh and the Path of Radicalization**

The path to radicalization through White Nationalism is not an all or nothing campaign. As with the young NEET (not in education, employment or in training) who moves from a Grey Tribe edgelord repeating the jokes of South Park with his friends to an anti-democratic misogynist who attacks and doxes women in his spare time, the radicalization of White Nationalism often comes from relatively benign locations. One of the best outlines for this radicalization comes from Rosie Gray’s highly sympathetic article “A Former Alt-Right Member’s Message: ‘Get Out While You Still Can’”, where she tells the story of Katie McHugh and her path to Alternative Right radicalization.<sup>778</sup> Gray’s article, while anecdotal evidence, provides an excellent example to demonstrate how the Alternative Right has coalesced into a new reactionary ideology.

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<sup>776</sup> Mark Lilla, *The Shipwrecked Mind: On Political Reaction*, Kindle (New York: New York Review Books, 2016), 6.

<sup>777</sup> Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America*.

<sup>778</sup> Gray, “A Former Alt-Right Member’s Message: ‘Get Out While You Can.’”

Gray tells the story of how a young white woman from a wealthy family became radicalized. McHugh's initial radicalization first started through the libertarian movement's Joe Sobran and then the works on *VDare* and *American Renaissance*. Gray's article is filled with examples of Alternative Right radicalization stories which fill this text: a mentor saying that he is "not a member of the 'Alt-Right'" but supporting and furthering the ideas of Alternative Right intellectuals (like Paul Gottfried),<sup>779</sup> the radicalization of a young person through libertarianism during the first years of the Obama administration (The Christchurch Shooter),<sup>780</sup> and the quasi-endorsement of white supremacy and right-wing ideas through super PAC money.<sup>781</sup> Nothing within Rosie Gray's article is a surprise or departure from the path to radicalization presented within this text. When Katie McHugh claims, "I was a white nationalist,... I wasn't completely aligned with Irvings's anti-Semitism,"<sup>782</sup> this should come as no surprise, as she stated earlier, she was a follower of Jared Taylor who advocated for the inclusion of Jewish whites into his White Nationalist cause.<sup>783</sup> Nor is it a surprise when she reveals that she is familiar with the NeoReactionary ideology of Curtis Yarvin and Nick Land during 2013, and reveals her boyfriend was practicing passivism.<sup>784</sup> Her time at Breitbart, as one of Steve Bannon's female reporters known as his Valkyries, is presented through the narrative of internal conflicts between the Alt-Light and the more radical Alternative Right rather than an apology for her racism.<sup>785</sup> Even her justifications for her White Supremacy come partially from the IQ focused readings of Kevin MacDonald and the subsequent biological determinism frameworks rather than older Civil

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<sup>779</sup> Gottfried, "Don't Call Me the 'Godfather' of Those Alt-Right Neo Nazis. I'm Jewish."

<sup>780</sup> Tarrant, "The Great Replacement."

<sup>781</sup> Gray, "A Former Alt-Right Member's Message: 'Get Out While You Can.'"

<sup>782</sup> Ibid.

<sup>783</sup> Zeskind, *Blood and Politics: The History of the White Nationalist Movement from the Margins to the Mainstream*, 367.

<sup>784</sup> Gray, "A Former Alt-Right Member's Message: 'Get Out While You Can.'"; Yarvin, "A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations: Chapter 11: The New Structure."

<sup>785</sup> Green, *Devil's Bargain: Steve Bannon, Donald Trump, and the Storming of the Presidency*, 254.1.

Rights era racism.<sup>786</sup> While McHugh is a devoted Catholic, her boyfriend was a member of the Wolves of Vinland, which is an ultra-reactionary neopagan cult.<sup>787</sup>

McHugh's path through the movement is one of acceptability and radicalization. When she is confronted with her racism during her time at Breitbart, she was reminded that: "The important thing in the new conservative digital media, she had realized, was *not* to not be racist but to laugh at those who called you racist."<sup>788</sup> Her radicalization was indicative of the growing acceptability of the movement, and only when the movement pressed its luck did she face significant fallout. When the pressure against Breitbart and Bannon were at their all-time high in the summer of 2017, McHugh was removed, the very summer when the Alternative Right abandoned a quick path to the mainstream as a movement before switching to a campaign of normalization.<sup>789</sup> McHugh's timeline lines up perfectly with the movement's ebbs and flows, with her transition from the devourer of political texts by Far-Right intellectuals between 2008 to 2013 to public supporter for the populist movement between 2013 and 2017.

McHugh's story is not just useful as an anecdotal account of the progress from wealthy libertarian teen to Alternative Right White Nationalist, who was one or two degrees of separation from almost every significant figure within the movement;<sup>790</sup> it helps explain how the path to radicalization and white supremacy is justified. Katie McHugh has no trauma with non-whites motivating her, nor does she come from an impoverished community. She came from a wealthy family and was successful at multiple major news outlets; her economic precarity comes from her lack of healthcare and her extensive publicly available racist remarks. McHugh is proof that

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<sup>786</sup> Gray, "A Former Alt-Right Member's Message: 'Get Out While You Can.'"

<sup>787</sup> Ibid.

<sup>788</sup> Ibid.

<sup>789</sup> Ibid.

<sup>790</sup> Ibid.

the ideology of the Alternative Right and specifically White Nationalism is not one of duping a gullible public through false consciousness. For McHugh, the politics of the Alternative Right was attractive because it provided a sense of community.

### **Shared Reactionary Values**

The ideas within the Alternative Right are cross-pollinated with each other, while direct citations of each other's work are less common, the movement does make use of the same logical systems and ideological positions. The Alternative Right, despite the initial appearance as a monolithic entity within the media, is a diverse group of Far-Right reactionaries, ranging from fascists to libertarians. Despite the diversity in right-wing groups, the movement can be broadly understood within two competing and co-dependent ideological entities, the elitist Alternative Right and the populist Alternative Right. The elitist Alternative Right emerged out of the libertarian movement and the radicalization of the Grey tribe from self-positioned apolitical figures and the techno-libertarians and futurists coming out of online communities. The populist tradition comes from a much older tradition of the Far-Right within American politics and the European New-Right. Each movement relies on the other as a familiar ally, despite the occasionally disagreements over questions of anti-Semitism and capitalist development. Despite these two entities competing over the movement, they should be understood within a spectrum with some groups having more pull over the direction of the movement than others.

The literature comes from shared traditions with semi-unified bodies of literature which share the same readership, even if geographically separated from each other. Both Curtis Yarvin and Samuel Francis for example rely on the work of James Burnham to justify their economic

theories, even though neither directly engage with each other.<sup>791</sup> The development of Right-Wing publishing houses like Arktos or Counter-Currents have directly tapped into this shared readership providing members of the Alternative Right easy access to these reactionary texts.

Ideologically the Alternative Right is relatively interconnected with a shared political project. While there are significant differences between the different traditions of the Alternative Right, which should be examined in further detail by more concentrated scholarship, the broad outline of the movement that this text presents has demonstrated that the movement is in theory connected, even if in practice oppositional. For example, as demonstrated earlier within this text American White Nationalists like Jared Taylor or Richard Spencer, draw upon the thinkers of the European New Right,<sup>792</sup> like Alain de Benoist and Alexander Dugin, who were in turn partially influenced by Francis Yockey, an American Neo-Nazi.<sup>793</sup> The movement, despite the geographic and temporal separation is interconnected. The emergence of the Alternative Right into a political entity is likely, though it may abandon some elements of the ideology for strategic purposes. The advent of new political parties or the take over of existing parties to represent this ideology is very likely, even though these parties may be marginal in popular support.

### **Break from American Liberalism and the Loyal Opposition**

Internationally the Alternative Right represents a break from American hegemony and the possibility for post-liberal world order. While the European Far-Right is the most indicative of this position, with continuously articulated positions of anti-Americanism,<sup>794</sup> they are not the sole

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<sup>791</sup> Yarvin, "A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations: Chapter 3: AGW, KFM, And HNU"; Francis, *Leviathan and Its Enemies: Mass Organization and Managerial Power in Twentieth-Century America*; Burnham, *The Managerial Revolution: What Is Happening in the World*.

<sup>792</sup> Nieli, "Jared Taylor and White Identity," 3638.

<sup>793</sup> Coogan, *Dreamer of the Day: Francis Parker Yockey and the Postwar Fasist International*, 532.

<sup>794</sup> Faye, *Archeofuturism: European Visions of Post-Catastrophic Age*, 6; Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory*, 88.6.

proponents of this platform. The Grey Tribe's quasi-isolationism in the form of Peter Thiel's seasteading<sup>795</sup> or the NeoReactionary position of escape shares these rejections of an ever integrating liberal order.<sup>796</sup> None of the thinkers within this text argue for an international world of global free trade or the Washington Consensus, and therefore should not be considered neoliberal. Some right-wing neoliberals and neoconservatives may find temporary or strategic alliance with the Alternative Right, but they will never see eye to eye on free trade or globalization.

Domestically, at least within the United States, the ideas of the Alternative Right are a rejection of the enlightenment project and the liberal democracies that emerged out of the liberal tradition. If the mission of the *National Review* in 1955 was to “stand athwart history, yelling Stop!”<sup>797</sup> then the mission of the Alternative Right is to tear history asunder forcing it to both return to a traditionalist past and to hurl it into the distant future after the collapse of modernity. There is nothing liberal or modern about the ideological project of the Alternative Right, even the most fundamental political claim, that the legitimacy of the state comes from its people, is at question. The Alternative Right rejects democracy, either by suggesting a monarchical system as the NeoReactionaries do,<sup>798</sup> or a rejection of the right to citizenship and participation by minorities as is the case with the White Nationalists.<sup>799</sup> Fundamentally the project of the Alternative Right is to end liberalism and establish a postliberal order, which requires a drastic restructuring of the American state.

The other significant break from the American tradition of a loyal opposition has been the rise of extremist terrorist attacks by the Alternative Right. This new Far Right is defined by the

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<sup>795</sup> Chafkin and Chapman, “The Strange Politics of Peter Thiel, Trump’s Most Unlikely Supporter.”

<sup>796</sup> Land, “The Dark Enlightenment.”

<sup>797</sup> Lilla, *The Shipwrecked Mind: On Political Reaction*, 6.

<sup>798</sup> Yarvin, “A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations Chapter 4: Plan Moldbug.”

<sup>799</sup> Taylor, *White Identity: Racial Consciousness in the 21st Century*, 437.

rejection of the legitimacy of the established political system.<sup>800</sup> Unlike the conservative opposition to FDR or the neoliberal take over in the 1970s and 1980s, this new right-wing movement will not be satisfied sitting in the wings as an opposition. The Alternative Right, unlike the Tea-Party, is not loyal to the American state. They will abandon the principles and norms of democratic governance and adopt more violent means of politics. As domestic terrorism rises due to the increasing number of white nationalists and far-right extremists, the Alternative Right will become a far more radical group, one which will be addressed by likely limited anti-extremist legislation or corporate no-platforming.<sup>801</sup>

While the smaller group of the core Alt-Right avoids explicit assassinations of public officials, it is unlikely that the Alternative Right will ignore this possibility.<sup>802</sup> The terror attacks by right-wing extremists are not only significant but growing. However, this recognition of the Alternative Right as a violent extremist group is not without its critics; with academics, such as George Hawley, who present the Alt-Right as a relatively non-violent body, saying: “the Alt-Right at present cannot be classified as a violent movement.” which he put on par with counter-protesting Antifa groups.<sup>803</sup> This rhetorical both-sideism is a manipulation of the facts to discount the political violence by Alternative Right affiliates that are violent hate crimes and should be considered acts of terrorism. The terrorist attacks by Dylann Roof,<sup>804</sup> or the increasing anti-Semitic hate crimes occurring in North America, are linked with lone shooters and other figures who are labelled mentally ill rather than members of a more significant political

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<sup>800</sup> Lyons, *Insurgent Supremacists: The U.S. Far Right's Challenge to State and Empire*, 42.

<sup>801</sup> Cox and Koebler, “Why Won't Twitter Treat White Supremacy like ISIS? Because It Would Mean Banning Some Republicans Too.”

<sup>802</sup> Hawley, *The Alt-Right: What Everyone Needs to Know*, 1158.

<sup>803</sup> Hawley, *Making Sense of the Alt-Right*, 170.

<sup>804</sup> Siegel, “Dylann Roof, 4chan, and the New Online Racism.”

movement.<sup>805</sup> The incel van attack in Toronto during 2018 is a perfect example of this,<sup>806</sup> a politically motivated attack that would have resulted in anti-Muslim/immigrant policing if it was connected to an Islamic group, but in the aftermath of the attack, little was established to prevent further acts of terrorism.

### **Theory for Radicalization**

While the two major trends: the shared reactionary values and break from American liberalism are the most demonstrative of a break in political theory. The literature of the Alternative Right is fundamentally a theory for radicalization. The goal of most Alternative Right literature examined throughout this text has been to either provide a critique of liberalism or to radicalize (young, white) men into a reactionary position. Whether it be Curtis Yarvin's "Gentle Introduction" or "Open Letter",<sup>807</sup> the manifestos by Guillaume Faye,<sup>808</sup> or the racial tracts by Samuel Francis<sup>809</sup> and Jared Taylor,<sup>810</sup> the goal of the movement's literature has been one of radicalization from a position of moderate or closeted belief. The texts are also fundamentally written for a public rather than an academic audience. This has allowed them to reach a much broader readership, even those articles published with White Nationalist journals such as *Radix* or *American Renaissance* are easy to access. Even the denser political theory of the NeoReactionaries like Nick Land is still written in a mixture of cyberpunk Ergot and academic jargon to separate it from traditional academic texts.<sup>811</sup> The other major theme of the Alternative Right Literature has been the fixation of always writing to motivate racial and reactionary consciousness. The

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<sup>805</sup> Neiwert, *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*, 506.

<sup>806</sup> Beauchamp, "Our Incel Problem."

<sup>807</sup> Yarvin, "An Open Letter to Open-Minded Progressives Chapter 1: A Horizon Made of Canvas"; Yarvin, "A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations: Chapter 1: The Red Pill."

<sup>808</sup> Faye, *Convergence of Catastrophes*; Faye, *Archeofuturism: European Visions of Post-Catastrophic Age*.

<sup>809</sup> Francis, *Essential Writings on Race*.

<sup>810</sup> Taylor, *White Identity: Racial Consciousness in the 21st Century*.

<sup>811</sup> Land, "The Dark Enlightenment."

Alternative Right, like Alec Baldwin in *Glengarry Glen Ross*, is A – Always, B – Be, C – Closing (the gap between moderates and White Nationalism).<sup>812</sup> The Alternative Right will not be satisfied intellectually or politically until they have established a racial or reactionary consciousness within the White population around the globe.

The American Far-Right during the Cold War era was smothered by the Republican party's simultaneous Southern Strategy and opposition to explicit racism; the anti-Semitic and White Nationalist movements within the American Far-Right were marginalized from mainstream American politics into the early twenty-first century.<sup>813</sup> The energies of the Far-Right movements within the United States, such as the John Birch Society, were directed towards the Soviet Union with the support of anti-communist figures within the liberal-conservatism establishment rather than against the existing political establishment.<sup>814</sup> For much of the Cold War the radicalization of the Far-Right was constantly kept in check by the emergent mainstream conservative movement lead by the *National Review* and William F. Buckley. In contrast the decline of Western Europe within global politics during the post-war period, provided a space for a new third-position for the European New Right to oppose both American-Liberal Capitalism and Soviet-Communism.<sup>815</sup> Those who wished to maintain a nationalistic project in Europe did so in opposition to the American economic and cultural hegemonic pressures of the Cold War era. The European Far-Right was able to establish an ideology independent of liberal-capitalism which was impossible in the United States. This allowed for the European thinkers to create a right-wing anti-materialist ideology, which would germinate in think tanks within Europe before finding its way into the

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<sup>812</sup> James Foley, *Glengarry Glen Ross* (USA: New Line Cinema, 1992).

<sup>813</sup> Skocpol and Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 88; Zeskind, *Blood and Politics: The History of the White Nationalist Movement from the Margins to the Mainstream*, 10808.

<sup>814</sup> Lyons, *Insurgent Supremacists: The U.S. Far Right's Challenge to State and Empire*, 226; Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America: Since 1945*, 9586.

<sup>815</sup> Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory*, 35.9.

hands of American anti-establishment politicians and theorists. In turn this allowed for a coherent reactionary ideology to enter American conservative thought in the 1990s, which led to the radicalization of racial thought, which was compounded by the re-emergence of race science literature within mainstream American discourse with the publishing of *the Bell Curve*.<sup>816</sup> American figures like Richard Spencer or Steve Bannon were hesitant to embrace many of the more materially and ecologically progressive elements of the European New Right such as a progressive climate change policy,<sup>817</sup> but the metapolitical focus on culture and the right to difference have become pillars of the Alternative Right and have begun to influence the Republican party's platform under Trump.<sup>818</sup>

In contrast to the older tradition of the Identitarian and White Nationalist communities, the right-wing radicalization of the Grey Tribe only started in the mid-2000s as the US government failed to allow for either creative destruction or social-democratic Keynesian economic policy in the face of the subprime mortgage crisis.<sup>819</sup> The internet's hands off environment allowed for hyper-individualism and technological disruption, akin to the libertarian fantasies of radical individualism and Austrian economics.<sup>820</sup> While initial libertarian and anarchist movements focused on targeting oppressive institutions and public figures with broad consensus, the movement started to shift further to the right adopting more radical anti-democratic positions and a techno-futuristic fixation on eugenics and technological utopianism.<sup>821</sup> The core of the movement and its online institutions have shifted to the right. The American Grey Tribe, which was once

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<sup>816</sup> Herrnstein and Murray, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*.

<sup>817</sup> Spencer, "What It Means to Be Alt-Right."

<sup>818</sup> Schulberg, "Trump Homeland Security Official Suggested Antifascists Were 'the Actual Threats'"; BBC, "Trump Migrant Separation Policy: Children 'in Cages' in Texas."

<sup>819</sup> Yarvin, "A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations: Chapter 3: AGW, KFM, And HNU."

<sup>820</sup> Alexander, "I Can Tolerate Anything Except the Outgroup."

<sup>821</sup> Alexander, "The Anti-Reactionary FAQ."

apolitical and split between Democrats and libertarians, has become radicalized and toxic, providing a safe harbour for misogynistic and extremist communities.

### **The Alternative Right is a Politics of Rebirth and Political Awakening**

The reactionary state of mind which dominates the Alternative Right is not one of conservatism or preservation of the status quo. Instead, as has been demonstrated throughout this text, it has been one of reaction. For the Alternative Right, the politics of conservatism has been one of stagnation and decline, only a return to the past will allow the movement to claim a place for the white race in the future. In the mind of a reactionary the continued progress of modernity will result in the destruction of the Western Civilization. The goal of the Alternative Right is, perhaps literally, to go back to go to the future. The politics of the Alternative Right is one of retreat and exit, harkening back to a romanticized utopian past or predicting a new idealistic future in which they somehow beat back the progressive forces of modernity.

The Alternative Right represents the rebirth of reactionary ideology within the English-speaking world. While not the state-centric fascism of the 1920s or 1930s, it is a fascistic ideology, as Roger Griffin's definition of Fascism implies: "Fascism is a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultranationalism."<sup>822</sup> As addressed earlier in this text, the Alternative Right is a populist and reactionary project of rebirth. The core mission of the Alternative Right, from the Grey Tribe to the White Nationalists is the rebirth of reactionary consciousness in the face of postmodernity and globalization. This reactionary project, which was initially elitist and decentralized, has subsequently embraced populism.<sup>823</sup> Rather than the elitist project of riding the tiger of modernity until it exhausts itself,

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<sup>822</sup> Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, 117.

<sup>823</sup> Anissimov, "Why the Replacement of Neoreaction with the Alt Right Was a Good Thing."

the contemporary reactionaries draw upon the idea of rebirth to lead the people out of the existing morally and political corrupt society.<sup>824</sup> The question of the earlier elitist reactionaries was how to weather the storm of modernity, the question of the populist Alternative Right is how to thrive during the collapse of modernity. The Alternative Right promises a new beginning for its followers, one which places white men back at the top of the social hierarchy without opposition or competition from non-white men or women.

Alternative Right texts are apocalyptic and dystopian, the future, unless freed from modernity will be one of decadence and *Kali Yuga*, the Hindu word for the final stage of the world that occupies much of Bannon and Evola's traditionalist theories.<sup>825</sup> Evola,<sup>826</sup> Dugin,<sup>827</sup> Bannon,<sup>828</sup> and Faye<sup>829</sup> all stress the current or emergent dark periods of the "end times" which will come about as the liberal system collapses. The only way out of this darkness is for a new renaissance for western civilization, a metaphorical rebirth out of the dying body of modernity. This shared idea of rebirth after a coming collapse can be found across the Alternative Right, it is both the literal name for the White Nationalist journal *American Renaissance*, and the motivation for labelling the NeoReactionary movement a Dark Enlightenment.<sup>830</sup> Just as the first Renaissance emerged between the end of the feudal middle ages and the early modern period in Europe, this current Renaissance is a solution to the end of liberal modernity and whatever emerges within a postliberal world order. For a reactionary renaissance to occur the public must first be radicalized

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<sup>824</sup> Roger Griffin, *A Fascist Century: Essays by Roger Griffin*, ed. Matthew Feldman, Kindle (New York: Palgrave, 2008).

<sup>825</sup> Green, *Devil's Bargain: Steve Bannon, Donald Trump, and the Storming of the Presidency*, 205; Evola, *Revolt Against the Modern World*, 83.

<sup>826</sup> Griffin, *A Fascist Century: Essays by Roger Griffin*, 2008, 156; Evola, *Revolt Against the Modern World*, 83.

<sup>827</sup> Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory*, 50.6.

<sup>828</sup> Green, *Devil's Bargain: Steve Bannon, Donald Trump, and the Storming of the Presidency*, 205.

<sup>829</sup> Faye, *Archeofuturism: European Visions of Post-Catastrophic Age*, 109.

<sup>830</sup> Land, "The Dark Enlightenment."

and possess a white racial consciousness; it is therefore an ideology of counter-revolution led by a vanguard of reactionary intellectual elites.

## **Conclusion**

Returning to the Alternative Right's three axioms, one sees that the right to difference is the right to exit and segregate oneself from the global order. For the Alternative Right, cooperation and integration are not only unpopular but impossible. As the pressures of an integrated world increase, it is likely that the Alternative Right and its followers will take more violent and extreme positions to maintain their current political positions. White Nationalism will be justified under the Identitarian framework of cultural preservation, while the universal human rights under a liberal framework will be undermined. As the Alternative Right is fixated on cultural metapolitics, they can leverage their small but dedicated political base of support through social media. The Alternative Right will do whatever it can to normalize reactionary cultural values and make it as difficult as possible for progressive, feminist and multi-cultural views to be shared in public through extensive trolling and harassment campaigns. Those within the Alt-Lite opposed to the Alt-Right will be able to express their views more effectively without as much censorship as the entire Alternative Right spectrum is normalized. The more substantial gains for the movement, especially since the failures of Charlottesville's Unite the Right Rally, will be the normalization of Alternative Right views into Right-Wing rather than unspeakable Radical Far-Right views. As the ideology is predicated on individualism based on a hierarchical social system, the movement and its ideas may find homes within libertarian and liberal communities so long as its racism is kept in check. Under the guise of scientific research, the ideas of eugenics and biological determinism will become normalized rather than taboo.

The Alternative Right will likely see increasing radicalization, especially as the ideology becomes more definitive. Unless the Alternative Right gains a normalized political party in the Anglosphere, they will resort to violence to express their views. In which case counter-extremism could be funded to address these groups though it is unlikely that significant funding or pressure will be applied to these groups by political parties which have significant support from white supremacists or liberals who value Free Speech more than Hate Speech legislation. If the Alternative Right establishes or takes control of a major right-wing party, perhaps the Republican party in the United States or Brexit party in the UK, it will be all but impossible to de-platform or suppress the extremists within the movement. Politically it would be untenable to ban these parties from the public sphere when opposition parties take control of government. Unlike the fringe extremist movements of the 1980s and 1990s the Alternative Right appears to have significantly more cohesion and public support. Already the act of de-platforming or censoring the Alternative Right's hate speech is viewed as a touchy subject by media corporations and governments, and as the movement is normalized it will be impossible. Ultimately the Alternative Right must be understood as a reactionary counter-revolutionary movement against post-Cold War liberal modernity. It poses an existential threat to anglophone liberal democracies as it erases and marginalizes minority voices. While it is still a relatively small movement, the existing political strategies of deplatforming and counter-protesting to counter or suppress the movement will be ineffective if the movement becomes normalized.

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