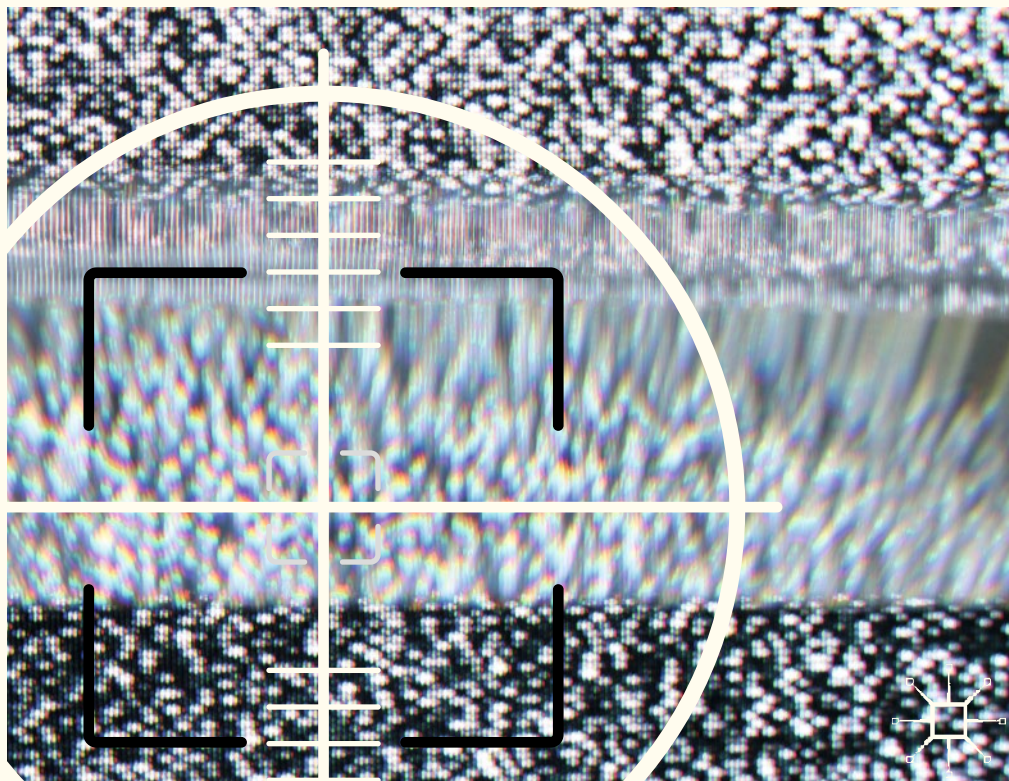# TRUMP'S MEDIA WAR

Edited by
Catherine Happer, Andrew Hoskins and William Merrin

Trump's Media War

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Editors

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Preface

Bewildered, exasperated, and exhausted, the liberal left mainstream news media appeared defeated a year into President Trump's openly declared war against them.

Katy Waldman (2018) in an essay in *Slate* entitled 'There's Nothing More to Learn About Trump' concedes, 'The more we cover him, the more we excite the desire to explain away, account for, and tame his outrageous behavior. But we can't. All we can do is stoke the fever with fresh data points, new revelations'.

Kyle Pope (2018), editor-in-chief of *Columbia Journalism Review*, writes, 'We continue to spend our days, and our audience's time, reacting to the president's bumbling with a level of disbelief and outrage that has boiled over into a stinking froth'.

And several months earlier, Mark Danner (2017) in *The New York Review of Books* wrote,

'It is our outrage, our disgust, our knee-jerk shock and condemnation that animate the play and give verisimilitude to the battle being fought. We are the enemy and our screams of dismay are vital to the drama'.

And yet this 'we', this 'media', that Trump is at war with, is merely a ghost of what was the liberal left mainstream media. The media's disbelief at Trump is increasingly a cover for their own anger at having been pushed out of that place from where they once painted the world in their own colours. The catastrophic fall of the mainstream is not a matter of the digital tsunami upending the business of news but is rather the widespread 'post-trust' (Happer and Hoskins forthcoming) contempt from the left and the right it is now held in. As Angela Nagle (2017, 2–3) describes, 'It

is a career disaster now to signal your left-behind cluelessness as a basic bitch, a normie or a member of the corrupt media mainstream in any way'.

Trump's war on media continues to be fundamentally armed by a uniquely potent mix of a new critical mass of anti-establishment fervour and the mainstream's deep resentment of precisely this, or at least its acting in the vain hope that the multitude will stop hating it and that it will shake off its Trump dependency. The latter seems more likely to arrive—resulting from Trump leaving office—than the former (hatred of the establishment) but only because Trump's period in office has term limits.

To tell the story of Trump's war on media then requires a holistic vehicle that can at least illuminate the right and left's collusion in outrage alongside a vision of the imploding mainstream.

Through a series of short interventions from academics and journalists, this volume interrogates the emergent media war fought by Donald Trump in a fluid digital media ecology. Rather than a standard edited volume of extended essays, we use a series of interconnected clustered themes to set an agenda for exploration of Trump as the principal beneficiary as well as a sign of the shattering of mainstream consensual reality.

This work began through a symposium hosted by the College of Social Sciences at the University of Glasgow in June 2017. We are very grateful to all our participants and our contributors here for their innovative work on this project. Finally, thanks to Lina Aboujieb, Heloise Harding, Connie Li, Martina O'Sullivan, Lucy Batrouney, and the proposal reviewers in helping guide us through to these final pages.

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CONTENTS

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William Merrin is Associate Professor of Media Studies at Swansea University. His research and teaching focus on media and cultural theory, contemporary developments in digital media, and the history and philosophy of technology. Merrin developed the concept of 'Media Studies 2.0', starting the blog of the same name in November 2006 to follow developments in digital media and critically reflect upon the state and future of media studies. His books include *Media Studies 2.0* (2015) and *Digital War: A Critical Introduction* (2018).

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John Tulloch taught and researched between 1973 and 2015 at four universities in Australia (UNSW, Macquarie, Charles Stuart, and Newcastle) and three universities in Britain (Cardiff, Brunel, and Glasgow) after his undergraduate degree in History at Cambridge University, England, and his Masters in the Sociology of Art and Literature (and Media) at Sussex University, England, followed by his Sussex PhD in the History, Sociology and Aesthetics of Anton Chekhov. Tulloch has researched and published for fifty years across (and between) the disciplinary fields of film studies, media and cultural studies, photojournalism theory, literary theory, theatre and performance studies, political science, social psychology, and sociology (with a particular emphasis on 'risk society' theory and debate). In other fields, his most recent books are *Risk and Hyperconnectivity* (with Andrew Hoskins) and *Real Sex Cinema* (with Belinda Middleweek).

Killing the Media

Weaponizing Reality: An Introduction to Trump's War on the Media

Catherine Happer, Andrew Hoskins, and William Merrin

When the world woke on 9 November 2016 to find Donald Trump had won the US presidential election, it was like a break in mainstream, consensual reality. This topped even *Back to the Future*'s joke, when Doc Brown asked Marty, 'Then tell me future-boy, who's president of the United States in 1985?' and his incredulity at being told it was Ronald Reagan, the actor—'Then who's Vice-President? Jerry Lewis?' Reagan, at least, had a political career. Trump was a celebrity-businessman, cameo film-actor, member of the WWE Hall of Fame and reality-TV host who had never held any public office.

Sweeping aside the conventions of professional political polish and presentation, Trump blustered, bluffed, fluffed, and incoherently shouted, threatened and tweeted his way to the presidency, surviving—and even gaining in strength from—character flaws and failures that would have torpedoed a normal campaign. Now he'd defeated probably the best-qualified presidential candidate in living memory. In the aftermath of his election,

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reality itself seemed broken. The fourth wall of the television screen had been smashed and the public had 'hired' the boss of *The Apprentice*.

But Trump wasn't just a sign of a broken reality; he was the beneficiary of it. Mainstream consensual reality had shattered a long time ago; it was just that shattering *hadn't gone mainstream*. Trump was the moment when that alt-reality seized the political stage. His success was the result of a violent abreaction, an outpouring and release of dispossessed discontent that had one credo: continually articulating itself against the establishment, the elite, the mainstream, the political order, the neo-liberal economic order, the global order, the established way of doing things—against, that is, the entirety of the hitherto existing mainstream reality. Much of this discontent was justified, such as the pain of the economically marginalized Rust Belt workers, and there were many good reasons to vote for an outsider against Hilary Clinton's more-of-the-same neo-liberal centrism. But much of the discontent had a more dubious origin and cause, such as the 'Whitelash' of left-behind, angry white males, lamenting the multicultural PC-world where they thought only black lives now mattered and taking revenge on eight years of a black presidency.

There was, if you looked into it, a world of these claims, entire worldviews disconnected from what appeared in the mainstream media, in an inter-linked, pick-and-mix online ecology of information, opinions, facts, narratives, and claims. Trying to decipher the world-view of these Trump voters, the press soon found their scapegoat. It was precisely this unreality that was responsible: it was 'fake news' that had won Trump the election. It was a convenient explanation too, allowing the mainstream media to direct blame at the internet—that upstart threat to their eyeballs and advertising revenue—and especially at the apparent cause of all this fake news, social media.

Within days, Facebook was getting the blame. Most people today get their news from Facebook, the argument went, hence their susceptibility to any and every story appearing in their feed. Fake stories, pushed into its ecology for political reasons, gathered attention and garnered shares and 'likes', projecting them virally through the network, spreading lies through social media and, therefore, through the heart of the social itself. By 11 November, Zuckerberg was on the defensive, telling a Californian technology conference, 'The idea that fake news on Facebook, which is a very small amount of the content, influenced the election in any way I think is a pretty crazy idea…Voters make decisions based on their lived experience'.[1] Zuckerberg criticized the media's interpretation of the result,

saying, 'I do think there is a certain profound lack of empathy in asserting that the only reason someone could have voted the way they did is because they saw some fake news. If you believe that, then I don't think you have internalized the message that Trump supporters are trying to send in this election'.[2]

Others disagreed. On the 17th, ex-president Obama aimed some very-pointed remarks in Facebook's direction at a press conference, saying, 'If we are not serious about facts and what's true and what's not, if we can't discriminate between serious arguments and propaganda, then we have problems…If everything seems to be the same and no distinctions are made, then we won't know what to protect'.[3] The problem was fundamental to democracy: 'We won't know what to fight for. And we can lose so much of what we've gained in terms of the kind of democratic freedoms and market-based economies and prosperity that we've come to take for granted'.[4]

Coming under increasing criticism, Facebook was forced to respond. On 19 November, Zuckerberg reversed his scepticism, acknowledging the issue and announcing new steps to counter fake news. 'We take misinformation seriously', he wrote in a post, 'We know people want accurate information. We've been working on this problem for a long time and we take this responsibility seriously.[5]' He said the company has 'relied on our community to help us understand what is fake and what is not', and claimed Facebook penalizes misinformation in the News Feed, just as it does clickbait, spams, and scams, 'so it's much less likely to spread'.[6] By 6 December, Facebook was reported to be testing a tool designed to identify and hide fake news, and on 15 December, Facebook announced it would now be flagging fake news stories with the help of users and outside fact-checkers. Reader alerts would now lead to stories being sent to five independent fact-checking agencies, including ABC News, AP, Factcheck.org, Politifact, and Snopes. Stories that failed the test would be flagged with the warning 'disputed by 3rd-party fact-checkers'.[7]

This was a significant reversal. Facebook had long denied being a media or news company and claimed not to be responsible for what its users post on it. Indeed, this was the default position of all Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and web platforms, based on Section 230(1) of the 1996 US Communications Decency Act which established the principle of immunity from liability for providers of an 'interactive computer service' who publish information produced by others. The problem was, Facebook's denial was disingenuous. They had a long history of removing material

that offended against their 'Community Standards' and Terms of Service. Only a few months before, in September 2016, they had made headlines worldwide for their decision to delete a post by Norwegian writer Tom Egeland that featured 'The Terror of War', a Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph by Nick Ut showing children, including the naked nine-year-old Kim Phúc, running away from a napalm attack during the Vietnam War.[8] Facebook may not have wanted to be a media company, but they published information and exerted editorial control over it.

Importantly, Facebook also drew from liberal US traditions of freedom of speech and had declared on 12 November, 'I believe we must be extremely cautious about becoming arbiters of truth ourselves'.[9] Their own censorship and control compromised that lofty aim, though not fatally, but the new flagging and fact-checking system put them squarely in the position they had recently disavowed. The fake news scandal finally forced Zuckerberg to accept a different definition of his company. In a post on his own Facebook page announcing the changes, he admitted the business had a 'greater responsibility' to the public than just being a technology company:

> While we don't write the news stories you read and share, we also recognize we're more than just a distributor of news. We're a new kind of platform for public discourse – and that means we have a new kind of responsibility to enable people to have the most meaningful conversations, and to build a space where people can be informed.[10]

Facebook was 'a new kind of platform for public discourse', with 'a new kind of responsibility'.[11] It made for a bad end-of-year for the previously unassailable and reverentially treated social media giant.

Of course, the outrage at Facebook and the technology companies was most vociferously expressed in the traditional news organizations, especially in newspapers. The mainstream press hadn't simply lost the fight with the internet—accepting declining print sales and developing online sites where they mostly gave their work away for free—more importantly, they had lost control of people's attention and interest to social media. There was a deep resentment within journalism that their profession didn't matter as much now. Their entire livelihood was built on a technological system and in an age in which only a select few could broadcast their opinions to the masses. Now, anyone could, and we were more interested in our friends' opinions—or, if we were honest, *our own opinions*—than those

of a professional elite. Journalists had spotted the change. In a column in January 2007 entitled 'Dear reader, please don't email me', *LA Times* journalist Joel Stein honestly expressed his disdain for the public's opinions:

> That address on the bottom of this column? That is the pathetic, confused death knell of the once-proud newspaper industry, and I want nothing to do with it. Sending an email to that address is about as useful as sending your study group report about Iraq to the president.
>
> Here's what my internet-fearing editors have failed to understand: I don't want to talk to you; I want to talk at you. A column is not my attempt to engage in a conversation with you. I have more than enough people to converse with. And I don't listen to them either.[12]

'I get that you have opinions you want to share', he says. 'I just don't have any interest in them'.[13] The Web 2.0 world, therefore, had turned everyone into a writer and publisher. It was true that few said much worth reading, but it was important to them and their friends and it didn't need an audience anyway as it wasn't trying to gather advertising revenue or justify public funding. This is a cultural shift whose import we are still barely beginning to understand.

But social media were also part of the economic threat to journalists' livelihoods. As far as they were concerned, social media was a parasitic organism which allowed its users to post their journalism for free whilst benefiting from the resulting advertising revenue that had shifted from the newspapers themselves. Hence their hostility to social media, their schadenfreude at its difficulties now and the sometimes-self-righteous tone of their fake-news-scandal reportage: whilst social media posted lies that threatened democracy, *they* were the repositories of truth, of quality, of fact-checked information, of verified, objective and impartial reporting. Suddenly, it seemed, journalists had rediscovered their values. They wrote about truth and objectivity as if they were employed by *The Washington Post* or *The New York Times*, standing in a smoke-filled, 1970s newsroom, all wide-lapels and sideburns, pulling all-nighters on the typewriter whilst publishing the Watergate stories or Pentagon Papers. Facebook, it turned out, wasn't the only one being disingenuous about its activities.

Because the problem of 'fake news' isn't confined to social media. What began as a highly-specific problem of deliberately written false stories designed to gain traction online in order to hurt a specific political cause

or candidate soon mushroomed into a broader crisis of truth and trust, a questioning of validity and invalidity, and a recognition of the difficulty of dividing truth from opinion. Informational production and distribution suddenly underwent a very public crisis of legitimacy, with doubts raised over who had the right to lay claim to an audience or to truth. The mainstream media, however, didn't see this coming. Instead, they watched from the moral high ground, certain that the fake news scandal increased their importance and demonstrated their superiority to social media, even if they'd lost their position to them. And then one day, the claim was reversed back onto them.

It was, perhaps, Pope Francis, who kick-started the attack on the mainstream media over fake news. It had been a mantra of the alt-right for a long time, but it didn't really gain traction as an idea until after the election. On 7 December 2016, the Pope weighed into the fake news controversy, telling the Belgian Catholic weekly, *Tertio*, 'I think the media have to be very clear, very transparent, and not fall into – no offence intended – the sickness of coprophilia, that is, always wanting to cover scandals, covering nasty things, even if they are true',[14] he said. 'And since people have a tendency towards the sickness of coprophagia, a lot of damage can be done'.[15] Importantly, he didn't seem to be talking about social media, this was a critique of 'the media'—albeit it a highly-unusual critique, essentially accusing the media and the public of eating shit.

The media were confused. Suddenly 'fake news' was what the alt-right, Trump supporters and Trump himself was accusing *them* of. In his first White House press conference, on 16 February 2017, President Trump immediately demonstrated his departure not only from the preceding administration, but from almost the entire history of presidential appearances, launching into a free-form, 77-minute, near-monologue in which he took aim at anything he suddenly remembered he disliked, including the media:

> The press has become so dishonest that if we don't talk about it, we are doing a tremendous disservice to the American people. Tremendous disservice. We have to talk about it. We have to find out what's going on because the press, honestly, is out of control. The level of dishonesty is out of control. I ran for president to represent the citizens of our country. I am here to change the broken system so it serves their families and their communities well. I am talking, and really talking, on this very entrenched power structure and what we're doing is we're talking about the power structure.

> We're talking about its entrenchment. As a result, the media's going through what they have to go through to oftentimes distort — not all the time — and some of the media's fantastic, I have to say, honest and fantastic — but much of it is not. The distortion, and we'll talk about it, you'll be able to ask me questions about it. We're not going to let it happen because I'm here, again, to take my message straight to the people.[16]

Though the argument lost its way towards the start, this was perfect, Trump-honed 'dog-whistle politics'. Forget the rambling and lack of evidence or cohesion, the key words were all here for his supporters to hear and react to: the press as liars, as out of control, journalism as a broken system, and the media as an entrenched power structure. If, in the final months of 2016 'fake news' had meant false social media stories, from now it increasingly meant the idea that the mainstream media were liars.

This accusation stung because, essentially, it is true. Journalism likes to believe its own mythology. This is the liberal theory of the press as 'the fourth estate': as a mediatory force standing between the people and authority, playing a key role in democracy in informing the public and in holding authority to account through its investigations and publications. The journalist as an indomitable, unwavering, dogged crusader-for-truth and heroic public servant is, however, a relatively recent invention. Journalists had actually begun as one of the lowest classes of people, let alone classes of employment, with one seventeenth-century English pamphleteer referring to them as 'This filthy Aviary, this moth-eaten crew of News-mongers, Every Jack-sprat that hath but a pen in his ink-horn is ready to gather up the Excrements of the Kingdom'.[17] The term 'hack' originated with Hackney carriages, a horse-driven cab that could be hired, before being applied to prostitutes who were similarly hired, and then was finally applied to journalists as hired writers. Though, for many, journalism has never quite left that low-level of company, the late nineteenth-century industrialization and capitalization of the press brought with it a more established role, a mass audience, increased legitimacy, a key role in the political public sphere, and a gradual professionalization of the trade. With that came professional organizations and a professional code of ethics, and with it too came an impressive record of public-interest investigative journalism.

There is no denying this record, but it isn't the full truth of journalism, because newspapers have, from the first, been commercial businesses: they are created not simply to inform or hold authority to account, but

also—arguably primarily—to make money. The impact of the market on newspapers has been fundamental. There is a history of sensationalism and public-interest stories traceable from the broadside ballads sold at public executions, through the illustrated press of the 1830s, the Sunday papers from the mid-nineteenth century, to the mass-market dailies and tabloids of the late nineteenth century–early twentieth century. In the twentieth century, the 'Northcliffe Revolution', which transferred the profits of newspapers from cover-price to advertisements, would redefine the entire future of the newspaper: from then on, pleasing your demographic to accumulate readers was all that mattered.

Clearly, therefore, the press are not simply the repositories of truth they claimed to be in the wake of the fake news scandal, being distorted by market forces to please their readers. But their relationship to truth is also more complex than this and requires a deeper analysis. That analysis would be provided by a new academic field that rose in the late nineteenth century–early twentieth century, accompanying the rise of the modern media: journalism and mass communications research. This wasn't initially a critical discipline. Journalism was taught as a skill, and early communications research was concerned with *serving* the industry and government, being funded by them to study reception in order to increase the effectiveness of messages. Few looked inward at the industry itself, with the Frankfurt School being among the first to question what the communications industry itself was and how it operated. That kind of research only took-off in the post-war period.

The analysis of the operation of media industries has been a central element of post-war media studies. In a sense, the discipline has devoted itself to the exposure of the media and to understanding, if not their fakery, then certainly their *construction* of news and truth. David Manning White's 1950 article on 'the gatekeeper', for example, considered how an individual decided what was going to make the newspaper based on his personal decisions of worthiness; Warren Breed's 1955 article on 'social control in the newsroom' explored how individual journalists learnt how to fit into the editorial line and policy and produce what was required; Galtung and Ruge's 1973 work on 'news values' looked at the criteria employed for the selection of 'news'; Chomsky and Herman's 1988 'propaganda model' defined the 'five filters' information has to pass through to get printed, whilst Bourdieu's 1996 work on 'the journalistic field' traced the invisible background of the profession that is reproduced by each new member.

What these traditions showed is that all media involve fakery: news is not simply a truth in the world that is transparently mediated: it is always a *production* in which a range of biases, values and meanings are incarnated. Very often, as a result of these biases—especially political biases and market-needs—stories are published which serve particular agendas, which are intended to manipulate and cajole, which have an at-best ambiguous relationship to reality or which—if we are honest—are completely made-up. This is because journalism has always been as much about bullshit as about truth.

There were more radical traditions too, querying the 'reality' of media production. One of the most remarkable analyses was Daniel Boorstin's *The Image* (1962), whose subject matter was 'the world of our making, how we have used our wealth, our literacy, our technology and our progress, to create the thicket of unreality which stands between us and the facts of life'. In a world where news is expected and demanded, we have passed from 'news-gathering' to 'news-making', Boorstin writes, leading to the media creation of 'pseudo-events'—of events that are not spontaneous but are planned and produced to be reported, with an 'ambiguous' relationship to reality. Such media events, he says, now comprise more and more of our experience, flooding our consciousness. In giving rise to other events, the pseudo-event makes the 'original' of any phenomenon impossible to discover, ultimately 'reshaping…our very concept of truth'[18] in producing 'new categories of experience…no longer simply classifiable by the old common-sense tests of true and false'.[19] Aided by a 'graphic revolution', the world's complexity is reduced to intelligible and simplified images, 'more vivid, more attractive and more persuasive than reality itself'.[20] This is a world where the image replaces the original, until 'we make, we seek and finally we enjoy, the contrivance of all experience. We fill our lives not with experience, but with the images of experience'.[21]

It was a critique that would inspire Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* (1967) with its description of a 'spectaclist' society—a world where 'all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles[22]', with the images fusing in a common stream, forming 'a pseudo-world apart, an object of mere contemplation[23]'. And it would inspire too, Debord's heir, Jean Baudrillard, and his critique of the media 'simulacra' that were produced as our real experience, eclipsing the real (in a phrase taken directly from Boorstin) by being 'more real than the reality'.[24] This critical tradition is important here because it goes much further than simply identify-

ing news as a construction. It suggests instead that the media create an epistemological environment: they produce entire *realities* that we live in and through.

Much has been written in recent years about the 'filter bubble', of social media and online lives—how much each of us lives in a filtered ecology of information tailored to what we already know and like. And some critics argue that 'echo chambers' are mere myth.[25] Moreover, so many have forgotten life lived in the powerful bubble of an earlier media ecology. For a long time the mainstream, broadcast media functioned as a 'mainstream bubble': a mass, consensual reality which we experienced almost as the horizon of our thought and expectations. Mass media worked on a mass principle, broadcasting to the widest audiences possible, with tastes playing to the mainstream and the broadest demographics. With a small number of channels of information and a dominance of the public's attention, the mainstream media ensured we all, broadly speaking, watched and experienced the same things the same way. Mass media were tightly controlled and couldn't afford to offend either their legal regulators or their advertisers and audiences; hence, they brought us news, information, and entertainment in certain, established and *acceptable* ways. Anything too far from this acceptability wouldn't be broadcast: sexual content could only go so far; certain political opinions wouldn't be covered; and although the views of the public might be solicited, they couldn't just be allowed to say anything they liked.

This began to change before the internet took off, with changes in media regulation and provision. In 1987 the US Federal Communications Commission stopped enforcing the Fairness Doctrine which defined the boundaries for political talk. In August 1988 Rush Limbaugh began appearing on 56 radio stations across the country, leading to a new wave of radio 'shock-jocks' whose success was built on saying things that their listeners thought and in giving a voice to those who didn't think the mainstream represented their opinions. The regulators tried to hit shock-jocks with fines—Howard Stern's employers were fined nearly $2 million—but the market was too great for them to stop. Most of the shock-jocks gave voice to right wing and even extreme right-wing ideas, with their rise linked to their fury at political correctness and at a Democratic incumbent in the White House (causes that today sound familiar). The Clintons, especially, infuriated the right in the 1990s and the shock-jocks gave vent to this hatred. In 1993 the *National Review* described Limbaugh as 'the leader of the opposition'. The other major change was the ongoing expan-

sion of cable and satellite television through the 1990s. In providing more and more channels it fractured the mainstream media, allowing niche interests and programming to flourish and also allowing niche news. The Fox News Channel was established in 1996, for example, to deliver highly partisan and selective conservative news to an audience who wouldn't get this from the more mainstream CBS, NBC, and ABC.

But, yes, it was the internet that would eventually burst the bubble of mainstream media and its reality. On the internet, anything went. It became a haven for extreme material that would never—could never—appear in the mainstream media. The hardest of hard-core pornography wasn't available in the afternoon on the television; 'Two Girls, One Cup' would never show at a cinema near you; and you'd never open up a newspaper and see a Goatse. People with interests and opinions outside the mainstream found a home online, a means to promote their causes and an opportunity to communicate with others that was otherwise unavailable. As Chris Anderson would note, the internet liberated 'the long tail' of lifestyles, ideas, and hobbies that mainstream media and entertainment wouldn't or couldn't cater for.[26] This wasn't necessarily bad. It meant anything from people's more obscure sexual identities and interests to their love of the most niche music or popular culture could find an outlet and others to share it with. Inevitably, however, it included extreme political opinions that had no alternative media space to express themselves in.

The far right embraced the internet early on: the US' leading neo-Nazi website 'Stormfront' was created in 1995, the white nationalist website 'VDare' in 1998 and 'Vanguard News Network' (VNN) in 2000. The Patriot movement, white supremacists, white nationalists, racists, and neo-Nazis all found a home online, building a network of sites and an online presence that would later prove important. There were others too, whose views would coalesce with the far right online into the broad movement that became known as the 'alt-right'. Paleoconservatives, Neoreactionaries, and Accelerationists all had an online audience. 4Chan, founded in 2003, and the centre of online memes and trolling, was part of the anything-goes, libertarian culture of the internet, but its desire to shock and drift to the right would eventually make it and Reddit key sites for the alt-right. The 'manosphere'—the sites and personalities around the 'men's movement' and 'pick-up-artists'—was another online culture, one with a natural affinity with the alt-right due to its misogyny and anti-feminism. Right-wing news sites, such as Breitbart News Network, founded in 2007, all fed upon and into the same online audiences.