

# ‘Life is a state of mind’ – on fiction, society and Trump

Bülent Diken & Carsten Bagge Laustsen

... cinema is like a kind of great archetypal womb that contains in embryogenetic potential all visions of the world. (Morin 2005: 169)

It is common today to compare cinema to dreaming. In both cases we are physically immobile but emotionally mobile in a ‘psychological coenesthesia’ (Morin 2005: 97). In this sense cinema allows one to deviate from oneself, become another. By the same token, it deepens the social imagination and may even, in some cases, be ahead of social reality. It can function as an indicator of the virtual, a coming society. This is why social reality sometimes appears as a fallout effect of cinematic virtualities, producing the uncanny impression that reality mirrors cinema and not the other way around.

In this article we seek to build upon this impression along three lines. We first articulate a general commentary on the relationship between cinema and society, introducing the concept of ‘socio-fiction’. Secondly, we analyse Peter Sellers’ *Being There*, an interesting film focused on the relationship between reality and fiction. In this analysis we elaborate on different ways of approaching fiction in a sociological prism. And finally we discuss Trump as a fallout effect of *Being There*. After all, a film is not just an image of a reality, a shadow or appearance of a social fact; sometimes the reality itself seems to have become an appearance of an appearance, a shadow of a shadow.

## **Introduction: a brief note on cinema and society**

This reversal can be partially grounded in social change. Cinema is today one of the most important arenas for the distribution of lay knowledge. As Deleuze said, cinema is the ‘contemporary art of the masses’ (1989: 157-62). It has a distinct power to shape and fold social relations as well as the most intimate and the most public desires and fears. In this

sense cinema functions as a kind of social unconscious: it interprets, invents, displaces and distorts the object of sociological inquiry, opening up the social world to a vast domain of possibilities.

In this prism a film can be approached in two ways. On the basis of an external reading, it can be inscribed into a 'network' of social determinants. A film is a work positioned in a broader field, as something 'necessitated' (Bourdieu 1992) by the social structures and struggles within the artistic field which is itself positioned in relation to other fields such as economic, social, political and so on. Film and the commentary on it, in this perspective, are part of a network. And the task of analysis in this context is to give an insight into the social conditions of the artwork, to liberate from misrecognitions and 'false transcendences' common in the field of art (Bourdieu 1982: 56).

However, an internal reading would hold the view that, as an artistic product, a film cannot be reduced to its network. As an artwork every film contains an excess, an intensity, which transcends its social network, its conditions of production and reception. Indeed, cinema is an art precisely because of this intensive surplus, its sense-making capacity, and analytic sociological concepts cannot capture this surplus unless they themselves (can) engage with artful commentary that can do justice to the artistic aspect of cinema. Significantly in this respect, cinema is an art form that borrows from other forms of art, from the theatre, music, photography et cetera (Badiou 2005: 84). It is 'impure' and the artistic aspect of a film can only be distinguished 'as a *process of purification of its own immanent non-artistic character*' (ibid.). Cinema is necessitated but at the same time it strives for autonomy and 'purification'. The defining characteristic of art is its striving for autonomy, its *attempt* at purification, even when its network prevents it.

Reading a film in the prism of social theory, then, is necessarily navigating in a zone of indeterminacy between artwork and network, in a zone of indistinction between internal and external approaches to cinema. Social theory is itself conditioned by and tied to the real, the society it observes, but it also strives for independence and autonomy, which allows it to develop a critical stance towards its object. As such, as a fiction, 'theory is simply a challenge to the real' (Baudrillard 1987: 124).

Written in this spirit, this article undertakes an allegorical double reading of *Being There* and Trump as instances of what we call socio-fiction. Crucially in this respect, reality and fiction are not two opposed realms. The two realms always interact in subtle

ways, which is why cinema can be a resource for diagnostic social analysis. Hence there is a close relationship between ideology and cinema. Althusser (1984) once claimed that the school and the Church were the most important ideological apparatuses. Today cinema must be added to the list as thinking about memory and counter-memory is increasingly impossible without thinking about cinema. Cinema is interesting for social sciences precisely in this context, in its capacity for dramatization and, in a certain sense, 'actualization' of the cinematic fiction in socio-political settings.

### ***Being There***

*Being There* is a film that deals with the relationship between reality and fiction. The film (directed by Hall Asby) tells the story of the not especially gifted Mr Chance (Peter Sellers) who has lived his entire life as a rich man's gardener, never leaving his house. Hence the only thing he knows about the outside world is through what he has seen on television. However, when Chance's 'employer' dies, the house is put on the market and Chance is forced to leave. Chance leaves the house in his master's fine clothes which he 'inherits'. He has his remote control with him. But he quickly discovers that in the real world nothing immediately obeys the remote control. He is though relieved as he comes past a television business, where his remote control works again in relation to the TV sets on display. Yet, the relief is short-lived as a large car suddenly backs towards him. Anxious to get sued, the car's rich owner Mr Ben Rand and his wife Eve invite Chance to their home, hoping to win his sympathy.

At the *Biltmore Estate* Chance tells Ben about himself and how, under unlucky circumstances, he has been forced to leave his house. Here he is also offered alcohol for the first time in his life. Slightly drunk, he cannot pronounce his name clearly. So 'Chance the gardener' is heard by Ben as 'Chauncey Gardiner', obviously a respected and wealthy family name. In his master's clothes Chance appears, too, to be respectable and wealthy. So Ben concludes that Chance is an unfortunate businessman who went bankrupt. The two fast become friends. Chance keeps talking about his garden, about when it must be sown, claiming that after spring comes summer and then autumn, so the garden must be harvested before the winter, and so on. It's all completely trivial, but Ben misinterprets Chance's statements as metaphors for how the economy will evolve. Appreciating Chance's

‘wisdom’ Ben introduces him to elite political circles, including a good friend of him, the President.

What follows is reminiscent of *The Emperor's New Clothes*. Chance's platitudes are constantly interpreted as an expression of depth. His message of a coming spring, for instance, turns out to be exactly what Ben and the President would like to hear. Being weak in the polls the President is more than ready to welcome any statement economic recovery. Soon Chance starts to appear on television shows where his trivial statements are, again, generously misinterpreted. People identify with Chance for unlike other politicians he uses a simple language and answers questions ‘directly’. His popularity grows so fast that the President's advisors consider him as the next presidential candidate. Chance's lack of background, paradoxically, becomes his strength. Since he is a simulacrum he can be objectionable to no one (see Hamilton 2004).

When Ben dies, it turns out that he has left the castle to Eve, who in the meanwhile has fallen in love with Chance. Towards the end of the film, in Ben's funeral, the President quotes from Chance's wisdom (referring to his winged sentences such as ‘Life is a state of mind’ and ‘Life is what you make it’). On leaving the ceremony Chance picks up a tree which is bowled and fixes it (he is and remains the Chance the gardener). And in the final scene, we watch him approaching a lake. Then he starts to walk on water! Sticking about half way his umbrella into the water he tries to see how deep the water is. But he cannot hit the bottom. Apparently, there is no limit to his magic.

## **Cynicism**

Why does Chance has so much success? He has limited experience, capacity and taste. His inability to relate to reality, however, turns out to be his strength in a society where surface platitudes and appearances mean everything. His complete devotion to television is an asset in a society captivated by visual communication. In this respect Chance reveals an unexpected proximity of human and the animal in his lack of potential-not-to (Agamben 2004: 67). He cannot distance himself from automatic behaviour characteristic of the animal, defined by the impossibility of such suspension, of breaking down its relation to its environment (Ibid. 69-70).

However, cinematic fiction conveys more than television spectatorship. After all, Chance constantly zaps between the channels. He cannot focus on anything, not even

under Ben's funeral. The whole thing flickers in front of him. But the society around him is worse. People happily swallow platitudes. They are not interested in political messages, only in their form. Theirs – ours – is a society in which depth and surface is obliterated, a society obsessed with signs, images and sign systems, an increasingly 'cinematized' society. Hence the mystery of cinema: its obviousness.

And it isn't just the reality of the real that's at issue in all this, but the reality of cinema. It's a little like Disneyland: the theme parks are now merely an alibi – masking the fact that the whole context of life has been disneyfied. It's the same with cinema: the films produced today are merely the visible allegory of the cinematic form that has taken over everything – social and political life, the landscape, war, etc. – the form of life totally scripted for the screen. (Baudrillard 2005: 124-5)

The disneyfied 'society' is nothing more than the myriads of images without depth. Can we not make the same point in relation to Chance himself? His 'pathological' preoccupation with television creates the fantasy that there is a non-pathological way, that the society itself has not become cinematic. Following this logic, the distinction between reality and fiction, between society and film, is impossible to maintain. But does the film not, in a nostalgic fashion, draw precisely upon the distinction between fact and fiction? Or, to put it in other terms, if society is completely hollowed out and reduced to a surface, where can we find the depth and reality, which we can refer to in trying to counter this superficiality?

At one point Ben's doctor discovers that Chance is actually just a gardener. However, he does not say it to Ben and Eve for he can see how much they enjoy Chance's company. They are intoxicated by the surface, by signs, and awakening to the real can only be painful. What we have here is cynicism par excellence. Ben's doctor knows well that Chance is a construction but nevertheless does not act accordingly. Consequently, what is immoral appears as its opposite. It is precisely through the (mis)conception of an 'I' outside the reach of ideology that the ideology is sustained. But cynicism must not be confused with 'false consciousness.' The cynic is aware of the distance between the ideological mask and the social reality but he insists upon the mask. It is in this gap that cynicism, the lack of affect, paradoxically becomes an affect; not as a direct position of immorality but rather as a morality that serves immorality (see Žižek 1989: 29-30).

This is also the point in the film at which the distinction between society and the individual collapses. Hence the film could be criticized for portraying an over-socialized individual who is totally captured by the dominant ideology, fully absorbed by images and

the media. A possible way out might be to understand fiction in a different way, not simply as images and surface, but also in terms of performances, expectations and fantasies.

### **Socio-fiction**

‘Reality’ is always traversed by fiction, by fantasy. Fantasy is not a dreamlike illusion that serves to escape reality but the very basis for social life (Žižek 1989: 45). In other words, reality and fiction are not two opposed realms. Fantasies are on our minds; but they are also manifested in social practices irreducible to individual behavior. Thus fantasy belongs to the strange realm of the ‘objectively subjective’:

What, then, is fantasy at its most elementary? The Ontological paradox, scandal even, of fantasy resides in the fact that it subverts the standard opposition of ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’: of course, fantasy is by definition not objective (referring to something that exists independently of the subject’s perceptions); however, it is also not subjective (something that belongs to the subject’s consciously experienced intuitions, the product of his or her imaginations). Fantasy rather belongs to the ‘bizarre category of the objectively subjective – the way things actually, objectively seem to you even if they don’t seem that way to you’. (Žižek 2006)

The two realms, the subjective and the objective, are always blurred and always interact in subtle ways. We are always within the ‘objectively subjective’. Society never exists ‘as such’ but is only ‘seen’ as distorted through a gaze. Consequently, one could reverse the distinction between reality and fiction:

[T]he ultimate achievement of film art is not to recreate reality within the narrative fiction, to seduce us into (mis)taking a fiction for reality, but, on the contrary, to make us discern the fictional aspect of reality itself, to experience reality itself as a fiction. (Žižek 2001: 77)

Cinema both represents and signifies. It remixes ‘the real, the unreal, the present, real life, memory, and dream on the same shared mental level’ (Morin 2005: 202). The imaginary capacity of cinema, its production of images, is paralleled by the imaginary potential of the human mind. Cinema increases the capacity for interaction between man and his world. ‘Cinema is exactly this symbiosis: a system that tends to integrate the spectator into the flow of the film. A system that tends to integrate the flow of the film into the psychic flow of the spectator’ (ibid. 102). However, the relationship works the other way around as well. Thus it is possible to say that it is not cinema which serves as a royal route to the understanding of the mind but inversely it is the mind, or rather the unconscious, that manifests itself in social reality. The unconscious is exterior (Lacan 1966: 469).

Whereas Morin considers the unconscious as the imaginary capacity of the human mind to overflow social reality, according to Lacan the unconscious is contained within the symbolic order, 'structured like language' (Lacan 1993: 167). The symbolic (language, the law, or what sociology calls rules and norms) is not a self-contained unit. The big Other (society), the entity in which we mirror ourselves (as the nation, as God, et cetera), can only exist as a mirror projection, it can only have an imaginary unity. 'In spite of all its grounding power, the big Other is fragile, insubstantial, properly virtual, in the sense that its status is that of a subjective presupposition' (Žižek 2006). Considering this fictional ground of the big Other, one is tempted to claim that the unconscious is structured like a film.

Fiction cannot be limited to images and representations and thus be understood as secondary phenomena. In a certain sense fiction is primary. Fantasy is the anchoring point of reality. Chance is for Eve and Ben Chauncey precisely Mr. Gardiner – not a gardener, but a representative for the upper class. Likewise, society for Chance is a garden... And one could go on. Thus we read on Ben's coffin: *Life is a state of mind* written on Ben's coffin. Life, reality, is the way we live and make sense of life. What is central here is that life (the real) and mind (our imagination) are drawn together.

Following the same logic, the concept of 'socio-fiction' seeks to bring sociality and fiction together. The concept can, first, be related to the classical ideology critique: 'Society' is grounded in a set of unconscious fantasies which we are all immersed in. But, secondly, it can also refer to the fact that all live life in their own, specific ways. And thirdly, fiction can also refer to the absence of referents while the absence of a solid anchoring in 'reality' means that the attempts to fill this void are necessarily unstable and preliminary. Let us now move towards this third reading of the relationship between film and reality, a reading of the film, which does not contrast these cultural product with reality but considers them as fundamentally ambiguous and therefore also as contested objects in a war of meaning. The notion of modification is central in this respect.

## **Modification**

Filmic narratives and images can be transposed into a more or less ideological space through practices of reading and might as such be transfunctioned for a critical end (Lapsley and Westlake 2006: 51). To this effect, the situationist Asger Jorn overpainted

kitsch paintings to release their utopian potential through what he called ‘modifications’ (Jay 1993: 424). In this way the protopolitical impulses that are managed and channeled through mass culture can be activated (Jameson 1981: 287). However, the situationist ontological assumptions are problematic in that they perceived bourgeois art (or mass culture) as essentially regressive in character and understood their mission as adding to it something that can displace its meaning. In this, they presupposed two ontological layers: the ideological canvas and its avant-garde modifications. Their task was to add something to an already devalued medium, bourgeois art as kitsch.

The situationists expected that experimentation with new forms of art would break the power of the reified image. One way to fight the reified image was to create works of art manifestly marked by its producer’s presence. For instance, Lemaître’s *Syncinema* aimed at transgressing the spectator-spectacle divide by making the actors reappear as physical persons mingling with the spectators. Likewise, Brechtian techniques were applied to reinsert the artist within the filmic narrative. In a similar way, Debord made use of various *Hulements* such as introducing a disjunction between the voiceover and the images to force the spectator out of the dark. Stories were no longer told from nowhere and this forced the spectator to reflect upon the ‘real’, the materiality of the cinematic media.

We encounter a similar disjunction in the final scene of *Being There*, when Chance crosses the lake walking on the water. To be sure, one could interpret this scene as a metaphor: Chance is so lucky that he can walk on water, the people around him invest so much in him that he appears as a Jesus-like figure, and so on. Such metaphors might be interesting but we must instead emphasize the visual element in the scene. We have here two layers that are brought together in the same way as images and sound shortcircuit each other in Debord’s *Hulements*. Consequently, we are confronted with the same artificiality, with the film as a film. The scene is obviously made using the technique of montage, selecting and piecing together separate sections with and without Chance. What is interesting is the place where Chance dots hole in the water with his umbrella. It creates a dissonance: not only do we find ourselves in a world without physical and social gravity (a world without a reality principle), this world is also in itself ambivalent and fragmented.

Freud (1983) had contrasted the reality principle with the pleasure principle. Insofar as the individual’s search for unlimited pleasure is self-destructive, it must be kept in check by another, reality principle. *Being There*, too, plays the two principles against one another. On the one hand, therefore, the film can be read as a critique of excessive emphasis on the



pleasure principle. The film depicts a world which seems to lack references to a reality that can modify, derail or otherwise interact with their imagined worlds. It is a world without a reality principle, a world of pure pleasure. The characters create their own world, exactly as they wish. *Life is a state of mind*. On the other hand, though, the film attempts at introducing a kind of reality check. Its final scene thus forces us to relate to the film *as film*. Along the same lines, the final relativizes the previous scenes, seeking to un-bond, at the same time, the spectator from her libidinal captivation. But it does so not by referring to another solid ground – Chance sticks the umbrella in the water but does not reach the bottom. There is no ground. Hence the film relativizes the visual, the film itself, and hence the social.

### **From Chance to Trump<sup>1</sup>**

‘No, I meant he’s the founder of ISIS,’ Trump repeatedly insisted, refusing to back down from his false claim that Obama was the founder of ISIS. The conservative radio host Hugh Hewitt offered Trump a way out by reframing his claim: ‘I know what you meant – you meant that he created the vacuum, he lost the peace...’ Trump merely replied ‘I don’t care’ and doubled down on literal interpretation: ‘He was the founder. His, the way he got out of Iraq was that that was the founding of ISIS, okay?’ (Bixby et al. 2016 and Kopan 2016).

In his remarkable distance to, lack of reality, Trump is a simulation reminiscent of Chance. Trump does not exist. There are already written thousands of pages about Trump’s incomparable ability to oversee the truth. Most commentators were outraged: how can he afford so completely to ignore reality and, despite all factual evidence, continue claiming those absurdities? Then there came the meta-comments about the futility of indignation, which led to equally little change as indignation did in the first place. Finally, there have been many comments from those who did not believe in Trump, claiming that Trump means what he says. For them Trump is a clown playing with power and he just has found the natural next step in his career as a *performer*: the world’s greatest *reality show*, the American presidential election.

---

<sup>1</sup> Some of the ideas in this section builds upon our previous co-operation with Ask Foldspang Neve. Thanks to Neve for allowing us to re-use them here.

To be sure, one could say that Trump is commodity par excellence of a post-intellectual, hyperreal world. Just as Chance is unable to write or read, Trump seems to be illiterate enough to confuse Paris with the capital of Germany. Just as Chance's, his emptiness is on display. But is it completely invisible to his admirers? Can people (read: the ... Trump followers who seem so incomprehensible) really not see that there will be built no wall against Mexico, that you can't just deport Mexicans or reject all Muslims, or that Obama could not directly have founded ISIS? An answer would be: no, people do not understand the proper context of things for they are intoxicated with our society's multiple opiates. This is the fundamental point of view in the standard Marxist ideology critique. So is it just up to the rebels, philosophers, artists and other lucid thinkers to speak up and reveal the true nature of power. But are people really unaware of things, of the world's true context? Not immediately, if we are to believe Sloterdijk (1988) and Žižek (1989), who describe the form of modern ideology as given by a cynical attitude.

Marx writes in *Das Kapital*: 'they do not know it, but [nevertheless] they do it'. But the modern subject 'knows it, and does it anyway'. The cynic knows that his performances are 'fake', false and simulated. His attitude toward ideology is thus ironic. But despite this ironic distance, he insists on it in practice. The cynic knows that the emperor has nothing on but nevertheless insists on treating him as emperor, because this practice constitutes a community of followers and enables an enjoyment. This understanding of cynicism is akin to Samuel Coleridge's idea that the suspension of suspicion is a prerequisite to enjoy fiction. Any one who watches *Game of Thrones* knows that it is not a documentary but must let herself be carried away in the moment in order to get something out of watching it.

Hence with Trump it won't help to unmask power, to undress it. Trump is a new kind of Emperor, who himself insists that he has nothing on. There's nothing to strip power here as the power basically is not about anything other than the desire to govern. Trump's economic adviser, Andrew Beal, defended Trump's lack of economic policy and his own lack of knowledge about economy as follows: If you're hiring someone to be a chief executive, you don't ask them to lay out every decision they'll make, years ahead of when they'll make it. You hire someone whom you trust, and you let them run things. Beal says he knows that Trump will do the right things to make the economy perform better. 'You're going to say, "How?"' he told me. 'I don't know how. I know that sounds crazy. That's how the real world operates' (High Stakes Database 2016). Managing the economy is like

steering a ship safely through the waters. No one knows the challenges that lie ahead, so the only thing you can hope for is that one has hired a good skipper. And in Beal's eyes it's Trump. Insight and knowledge are subordinate. What it is about is strength of will and impact. Herein lies the greatest danger with Trump, the reduction of politics to passion, which is exacerbated every time commentators approve Trump's 'conviction' and claim that his plain speech is part of his appeal.

Like Chance, Trump is private idiosyncrasies, platitudes, a bit on weapons, populism, wild suggestions, and so on. What's interesting here is that Trump has absolutely no ambition to stage these as a coherent program. The only thing that remains is the desire to govern. Reality is what you say reality is. Beal himself seems to embody this. He challenged, for example, one of the world's brightest poker players, Phil Ivey, and lost of course with a bang: 16 million dollars in three days (Olsen 2016). One wonders, nervously, how much Trump can lose in four years in the White House as the irony of the situation shows its potential for tragedy.

But Trump does not represent a higher rationality. He's just Trump. The question is really whether it is Trump or his voters who are cynical? Or maybe both parties, as when we watch a movie or a show? Everyone knows that it is a spectacle, but they still attends it. Perhaps the most obvious show to compare with Trump's campaign is pro wrestling, which many American commentators already did. For the uninitiated, pro wrestling is a martial arts show, which mixes sports and personal drama, a sort of macho soap. The spectator follows not only the individual fight, the result of which is agreed in advance, but also the story before and after. It is almost always the good against the evil in an epic but two-dimensional universe.

Trump himself has a long background in wrestling, and he has even been in the ring. So he must learned from wrestling that it's all a show, that one must keep on bragging and always search scandal to keep the audiences happy. Give your fans something they can be enthusiastic about, give your enemies something to tear apart, and give the journalists something to write about. Lie is better than the truth.

Trump's approach evokes reminiscences of Berlusconi's background as a cruise ship crooner or, of course, Reagan's and Schwarzenegger's as actors. But wrestling is more basic, and more mundane, and therefore also even more potent as narrative form. It arouses disgust of those who cultivate mindfulness but has a huge and surprisingly broad fan base.

The audience for a wrestling match is of course cynics. They know very well that it is a show, but allow themselves to be carried away anyway. Otherwise it would be futile to see it. So you do not get anywhere by shouting at the crowd up and making them aware that it is not authentic. You will be probably just booed into silence or thrown out. People want to have the show they came for in peace.

Similarly, some of the excitement over Trump among ‘us others’ is grounded in the fact that he readily confesses that he is an emperor without clothes on. He openly taunts the liberal-democratic tradition, where politicians always have argued through half-truths, always have only mentioned the part of reality, which fits into their own argument. Significantly in this context, democracy is a paradoxical concept in that it can always degenerate into a perfect environment for *ressentiment* covered as an apparently moral demand for justice.

This potential for internal perversion is as old as democracy itself; hence the significance of the concept of tyranny in Ancient political philosophy. According to Plato, for instance, tyranny is above all an expression of the perversion of democracy. Democracy can always sweep the principles of good government away with a pretentious, populist gesture: people are offered offices and honored only because ‘they profess themselves the people’s friends’ (1977: VIII 558d). The resultant society is invaded by ‘pretentious fallacies and opinions’ (Ibid. VIII 560c). And when a democratic society falls ‘under the influence of bad leaders’ who intoxicate it with the pleasures of excess (ibid. VIII 562d), democracy passes into tyranny (Ibid. VIII 562a).

To be sure, in this process populism plays a significant role. But with Trump we seem to be confronted with a new, post-political version of populism. Insofar as politics is politicization, ‘post-politics’ signifies the foreclosure of politics. In this sense, post-politics is already a perverted form of democracy, a ‘post-democratic’ politics that eliminates real dispute by assuming that everyone is already included in politics and that remaining problems can be dealt with through expert systems (Rancière 1999: 116). Interestingly, in this sense, as technocratic consensus politics, Trump would seem to be a reaction against post-politics. Yet, he is post-political in another way. Just as society for Chance is a garden, society is for Trump an *oikos*.

In the above interview, the host continues to say that by using the term ‘founder’ Trump just gives the Democrats free ammunition, because it obviously is wrong. Is it not a

mistake? ‘No, it’s not a mistake’, answers Trump. Being a fiction himself, Trump creates his own reality in a way reminiscent of Chance walking on water. And as such we love to puncture his rambling outburst one after one. But there is here an infatuation at play, which cuts deeper than the one Trump’s followers, and perhaps Trump himself, suffer from. Not an enlightened false consciousness, but simply a false consciousness.

Apropos of Disneyland perhaps Trump, paradoxically, is the anchor of our reality today. Just as the real function of Disneyland is to hide the fact that the rest of America is fake, Trump is what enables and sustains the fantasy that our politics is serious and well-grounded. Perhaps the true merit of Trumpism consists in challenging this fantasy. Under our clothes, we are all naked.

## References

- Agamben, G (2004) *The Open. Man and Animal*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Althusser, L (1984) *Essays on Ideology*. London: Verso.
- Badiou, A (2005) *Infinite Thought*. London: Continuum.
- Baudrillard, J (1987) *Forget Foucault*. Paris: Semiotext(e)
- Baudrillard, J (2005) *The Intelligence of Evil or the Lucidity Pact*. New York: Berg.
- Bixby, S & Siddiqui, S & Owen, P (2016) ‘Trump reiterates he literally believes Barack Obama is the “founder of Isis”’, *The Guardian*, 11 August, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/aug/11/donald-trump-obama-founder-isis-most-valuable-player>
- Bourdieu, P (1982) *Leçon sur la leçon*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit.
- Bourdieu, P (1992) *Les règles de l’art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.
- Deleuze, G (1989) *Cinema 2. The Time-Image*. London: The Athlone Press.
- Freud, S (1983) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. London: Penguin.
- Hamilton, CV (2004) ‘Being Nothing. George W. Bush as Presidential Simulacrum’, [http://www.ctheory.net/text\\_file.asp?pick=427](http://www.ctheory.net/text_file.asp?pick=427)
- High Stakes Database (2016) "Trump names poker-playing Dallas Billionaire Andy Beal to economic advisory team" [HTTPS://WWW.HIGHSTAKESDB.COM/7087-TRUMP-NAMES-POKER-PLAYING-DALLAS-BILLIONAIRE-ANDY-BEAL-TO-ECONOMIC-ADVISORY-TEAM.ASPX](https://www.highstakesdb.com/7087-TRUMP-NAMES-POKER-PLAYING-DALLAS-BILLIONAIRE-ANDY-BEAL-TO-ECONOMIC-ADVISORY-TEAM.ASPX)
- Jameson, F (1981) *The Political Unconscious. Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. London: Routledge.

- Jay, M (1993) *Downcast Eyes. The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Kopan, T (2016) 'I meant that Obama founded ISIS, literally', CNN, <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/08/11/politics/donald-trump-hugh-hewitt-obama-founder-isis/>
- Lacan, J (1966) *Écrits*. Paris: Seuil.
- Lacan, J (1993) *The Seminar. Book III. The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis, 1954-55*. New York: Norton.
- Lapsley, R & Westlake, M (2006) *Film Theory. An Introduction* (2nd edition). Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Morin, E (2005) *The Cinema or the Imaginary Man*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Olsen, A. (2015) "Her er Trumps økonomiske rådgiver: Tabte 16 millioner dollars på tre dages poker" <http://ekstrabladet.dk/nyheder/politik/her-er-trumps-oekonomiske-raadgiver-tabte-16-millioner-dollars-paa-tre-dages-poker/6228324>
- Plato (1977) *The Republic*. London: Penguin.
- Rancière, J (1999) *Disagreement*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.
- Sloterdijk, P (1988) *Critique of Cynical Reason*. London: Verso
- Žižek, S (1989) *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. London: Verso
- Žižek, S (2001) *The Fright of Real Tears. Krzysztof Kieslowski Between Theory and Post-Theory*. London: British Film Institute.
- Žižek, S (2006) *How to Read Lacan*. London: Granta Press.