

Staging a dialogue between Autonomist Marxists and Post-Marxists: The case of the alt-right multitude

Politics

1–18

© The Author(s) 2024



Article reuse guidelines:

sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: 10.1177/02633957241273626

journals.sagepub.com/home/pol**Beatriz Lopes Buarque** 

London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), UK

Abstract

Albeit in different ways, both Autonomist Marxists and Post-Marxists have proposed radical democratic theories. To Autonomist Marxists, the latest advances in capitalism would pave the way for global democracy. To Post-Marxists, the plurality of social movements would push society towards a radical model of democracy. Despite their contributions, both Autonomist Marxism and Post-Marxism have left underdeveloped the possibility that digital, affective capitalism could push society towards the opposite direction of global and radical democracy. This article explores the hypothesis that contemporary capitalism may have given birth to a multitude that aims at consolidating White, Western, and masculine supremacy. It argues that fantasies that have, for centuries, sustained the racist, xenophobic, and sexist ideological dimensions of capitalism have brought together multiple groups and individuals that have engaged in the collaborative production of conspiracy theories conveying the common belief that an idealised White/Western identity is under attack: the alt-right multitude. By merging part of the key features of the multitude proposed by Autonomist Marxists with what is known as a ‘Žižekian-Lacanian-Post-Marxist theory’, this article stages a dialogue between both schools of thought, opening new directions for research on how capitalism intersects with issues of race, ethnicity, and gender.

Keywords

alt-right, Autonomist Marxism, fantasies, multitude, Post-Marxism

Received: 11th November 2023; Revised version received: 24th March 2024; Accepted: 13th May 2024

Introduction

Writing a few years before the turn of the 20th century, when the advent of the Internet accelerated processes of globalisation on both economic and cultural levels, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000: xiii) redefined the antagonism between the proletariat

Corresponding author:

Beatriz Lopes Buarque, London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE, UK.

Email: b.lopes-buarque@lse.ac.uk

and capital theorised by Karl Marx, arguing that capital has gradually materialised under the form of Empire – a global complex made of networks characterised by the exploitation of the ‘communicative, cooperative, and affective labour’ of the multitude. Instead of focusing on the subjugation of the working class as most traditional Marxists, Hardt and Negri (2000, 2004) emphasised its revolutionary and liberatory potentials, describing the multitude as a sort of global working class that would eventually lead to the collapse of the capitalist mode of production, paving the way for global democracy.

To them, new forms of immaterial labour, such as the affective labour that creates and manipulates affects, would end up prompting the multitude to direct ‘technologies and production toward its own joy and its own increase of power’ (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 396). It is as if the collaborative production promoted and exploited by contemporary capitalism would activate the multitude as a social and political being that would use its commonalities (what it produces in common) as a ‘weapon’ against global capital. By encouraging individuals to freely express themselves and work in collaboration, contemporary capitalism would eventually facilitate the appearance of a ‘living social flesh’ (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 192) that would ‘destroy the natural order of authority in all domains from the family to the kingdom’ (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 195).

Even though the Autonomist Marxist multitude has brought a new breath to Marxism, envisaging a global working class as a ‘subject of power’ (Hardt, 2005: 13), to many authors, the concept is riddled with inconsistencies. Bowring (2004) highlights that despite being conceptualised as a plural and heterogeneous social being, the Autonomist Marxist multitude exaggerates class unity, implying that multiple individuals from all over the world will naturally revolt against global capital. Laclau (2018 (2005) 241) makes a similar argument, arguing that the work of Hardt and Negri presupposes a ‘natural tendency to fight oppression’. To Žižek (2007: 48), the main weakness of the Autonomist Marxist multitude is the fact that it echoes the ‘fantasy of capitalism self-revolutionising perpetual movement’, assuming that a ‘new, higher social order (communism) is possible’ (Žižek, 2007: 53).

While arguing that the networks that lie at the heart of global capital would give shape to a revolutionary multitude, Hardt and Negri (2000) neglected the hierarchies that have been exacerbated by global neoliberal capitalism (Boron, 2005; Bowring, 2004). As observed by Boron (2005), by drawing upon the work of Business School professors, the authors adopted an enthusiastic view of globalisation that is much similar to the one that is at the heart of neoliberal thought, failing to recognise how the supposed new empire has served to maintain old imperialist structures, reinforcing existing hierarchical structures.

Even though it can be argued that technological advances have encouraged cooperation, it does not necessarily mean that existing hierarchies have become flexible as defended by Hardt and Negri (2000). While promoting privatisation and deregulation, neoliberal capitalism has updated existing forms of exploitation, reinforcing the subjugation of parts of the population. Micocci and Di Mario (2020 (2018): 39) point out that neoliberalism has played an important role in the maintenance of the capitalist mode of production, accommodating the coexistence of different political setups as long as they do not question the ‘project of a market-oriented society’. The authors emphasise similarities between neoliberal ideology and fascism, drawing attention to their mythical essence: both ideologies are based on myths that justify the domination (and alleged superiority) of some actors. From this perspective, the diversification of the waged workforce represented by a growing number of immigrants working in Western countries can be interpreted as a new form of subjugation to White/Western capital. Under the

neoliberal aegis, immigration is not a form of providing equal opportunities to multiple individuals regardless of their ethnicity. Rather, it is a ‘means to promote labour market competition and help fuel economic growth’ (Davidson and Saull, 2017: 712).

Besides weakening trade unions and updating forms of exploitation of the work of non-Whites, non-Westerners, and women (deemed as ‘cheap labour’), neoliberalism has contributed to the rise of the populist radical right, giving part of the working class (the perceived native citizens) an opportunity to articulate themselves as the ones ‘truly’ entitled to social welfare benefits (Davidson and Saull, 2017: 712). Even though the most recent wave of far-right politics described by Mudde (2019) as the populist radical right blames progressive and neoliberal elites for favouring immigrants, it has actively used neoliberal myths of individualism and freedom to reclaim a privileged status in society. These myths have played a key role in the emergence of a far-right subculture known as alt-right. According to Finlayson (2021: 16), alt-right networks conform to the affects and aesthetics of neoliberal thought, encouraging multiple individuals (mainly White/Western men) to ‘battle to free the self from the illusions of liberalism’. The entrepreneurial motivation to ‘prove oneself superior to others’ (Finlayson, 2021: 15) has prompted many individuals to engage in the collaborative production of racist, xenophobic, and sexist messages, expanding alt-right networks.

If neoliberal capitalism has influenced the appearance of networks that aim at reinforcing existing hierarchies, then it can be hypothesised that contemporary capitalism might have given shape to a multitude much different from the one envisaged by Hardt and Negri. Without acknowledging that neoliberalism has reinforced existing hierarchies, the fathers of the Autonomist Marxist multitude could not envisage this possibility.

To investigate this phenomenon, this article proposes a reinterpretation of the concept of the multitude by staging a dialogue between Autonomist Marxists and Post-Marxists. Both Autonomist Marxists and Post-Marxists have started in Marxism, but they have taken on different directions. Whereas Autonomist Marxists have remained loyal to the Marxian antagonism between capital and the proletariat, Post-Marxists have embraced the plurality of antagonisms that coexist in the capitalist mode of production. In different ways, both Autonomist Marxists and Post-Marxists have proposed radical democratic theories. To Autonomist Marxists, contemporary capitalism would eventually result in global democracy through the creativity and liberatory potentials of the multitude (Hardt and Negri, 2004). To Post-Marxists Laclau and Mouffe (1985), the plurality of antagonisms inherent to capitalism would result in a radical type of democracy that would deepen and expand existing liberal democratic principles.

Even though Post-Marxism has been largely associated with the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, in this article, I draw upon what Homer (2016: xiii) calls a ‘Žižekian-Lacanian-Post-Marxist theory’. One of the main characteristics of the work of the Slovenian Slavoj Žižek is its ambivalent relationship with Marxism (Homer, 2016; Parker, 2004). His first work – *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989) – was published in Laclau and Mouffe’s series *Phronesis* and it was recommended by both authors as an essential reading to those committed to the construction of a ‘democratic socialist political project’ (Laclau, 1989: xv). Later on, Žižek distanced himself from the radical democratic project formulated by Laclau and Mouffe, rejecting any association with the Post-Marxist theory defended by them. His main critique is that while moving ‘from essentialist Marxism, with the proletariat as the unique Historical Subject’ to a ‘postmodern irreducible plurality of struggles’, Laclau and Mouffe ended up accepting ‘capitalism as “the only game in town”’ (Žižek, 2000a: 95). To Žižek, the emphasis on various

social movements has functioned as a diversion from capitalism. In dialogue with Laclau and Mouffée, Žižek (2000a: 96) argues that what is needed today is a reconciliation between class struggle and postmodernism. Instead of opposing class struggle and social movements, Post-Marxists should recognise that class struggle is the structuring principle of plural specific struggles. It is precisely here that Žižek takes on a different route when it comes to democracy. If economic constraints produced by capitalism are at the heart of existing social movements, then it is unlikely that specific struggles will result in radical democracy. While exposing the links between liberal democracy and capitalism, Žižek (2000b) only envisages one way out: revolution. Even though Žižek has distanced himself from post-Marxists Laclau and Mouffée, his attempts to revitalise Marxist principles have induced some authors to refer to him as a Post-Marxist (Homer, 2016; Sim, 2013).

Whereas both Autonomist Marxists and Post-Marxists aligned with Laclau and Mouffée have not considered the possibility that the latest advances in capitalism could push society towards the opposite direction of global democracy and radical democracy, the type of Post-Marxism introduced by Slavoj Žižek allows us to consider this hypothesis.

As observed by Dyer-Witheford (2007: 191), both Autonomist Marxism and Post-Marxism provide partial accounts of the ‘politics of networked commonality for the twenty-first century’. By staging a dialogue between Autonomist Marxists and Post-Marxists and using the alt-right as a case study, this article makes a contribution to this debate, demonstrating that some concepts explored by both Autonomist Marxists and Post-Marxists can be used together to provide a new perspective on the collaborative production that lies at the heart of contemporary capitalism. Moreover, this article introduces a novel way of looking at the digital political phenomenon known as alt-right, exposing its deep connection with contemporary capitalism.

In this article, I argue that due to its racist, xenophobic, and sexist phantasmatic ideological dimensions, capitalism has given birth to a multitude that aims at consolidating White, Western, and masculine supremacy through the collaborative production of conspiracy theories conveying the belief that an idealised White/Western identity is under attack. Instead of projecting itself as a counter force to global capital, the alt-right multitude has reclaimed its alleged rightful place in global capital, projecting itself in opposition to a multifaceted culturally defined ‘new class’ allegedly committed to multiculturalism and affirmative action. A ‘new class’ comprised of ‘bureaucrats, intellectuals, civil servants, climate scientists, gender theorists, feminists, public sector workers, journalists, screenwriters, specific ethnic groups’ (Finlayson, 2021: 11).

The article consists of four main sections. First, it reflects on how Autonomist Marxists theorised the concept of the multitude, to then elaborate on the argument that the alt-right has behaved as a multitude in light of both Autonomist Marxist and Post-Marxist concepts. In the following section, I explore some of the racist, xenophobic, and sexist fantasies that seem to have induced the alt-right to behave as a multitude. The article concludes with a reflection on the main commonalities produced by the alt-right multitude.

The Autonomist Marxist multitude

The concept of the multitude was first used as a theoretical object of investigation in the 17th century when Baruch Spinoza described it as a new political category that was different from the plebs and the vulgus. Instead of being solely against those in power (characteristic of the plebs) and instead of being reduced to a crowd of ‘ignorant’ people

(characteristic of the vulgus), the *multitudo* (multitude) would synthesise both traits. Historical processes would make the governed 'exist as a multitude', becoming an uncontrollable social being that would be capable of driving political change (Balibar et al., 1989: 116). To Spinoza, multitudes played an important role in the constitution of modern states. Nevertheless, instead of celebrating their power, he was especially concerned about the threats posed by the multitudes to the stability of the states.

A few centuries later, Autonomist Marxists Hardt and Negri revisited the concept, but they focused on a specific type of multitude: the one that would be capable of destroying capitalism. According to Autonomist Marxists Hardt and Negri (2000, 2004), latest advances in capitalism would contribute to its own demise, bringing about a revolutionary being that would finally set society free from global capital, paving the way for global democracy. Drawing upon Deleuze and Guattari's understanding that capitalism is a 'desiring-machine' (Deleuze, 2004: 267), Hardt and Negri (2004) envisaged the moment in which the affective flows produced by global capital would culminate with the appearance of a revolutionary social being. The multitude theorised by Hardt and Negri (2004: 100) would be the 'only social subject capable of realizing democracy, that is, the rule of everyone by everyone'. As a plural, heterogeneous, and independent 'living flesh', the multitude would be capable of challenging the power of global capital, creating 'a new, alternative society' (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 159).

Even though the Autonomist Marxist multitude is mostly associated with the work of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, it is in the *Grammar of the Multitude* – a short book written by an Italian Autonomist Marxist – that one can find a more detailed analysis of the affective dynamics that lies at the core of the multitude. Instead of focusing on the destruction of global capital, Virno (2004) takes a step back and reflects on the factors that would give shape to the multitude as a social and political subject.

Virno (2004: 38) argues that the contemporary multitude is primarily rooted in shared experiences of dread associated with the feeling of 'not-feeling-at-home'. The many found in the multitude are constantly oscillating between fear and anxiety. Contemporary capitalism under the aegis of globalisation seems to have reinforced the feeling that we do not know exactly where we are. Uncertainty and insecurity have reached such high levels that fear and anxiety have become part of the daily routine (Bauman, 2007). The state and a permanent job no longer provide enough security and, to cope with the 'dangers of this world' (Virno, 2004: 35), many individuals have no other option but using their thinking to 'get a sense of orientation and protect themselves' (Virno, 2004: 38). The dreadful feeling of 'not-feeling-at-home' shared by many prompts them to look for a refuge in 'common places' (Virno, 2004: 38): similar linguistic structures (metaphors, allocations) that make individuals feel protected or with a regained sense of orientation. The common characteristic of contemporary multitude, in Virno (2004: 35), is based on 'a modification of the dialect of dread-refuge'. Instead of seeking refuge after identifying the source of dread, 'danger manifests itself for the most part as a specific form of refuge' (Virno, 2004: 35). Places that used to offer some certainty and security (e.g. jobs, the state) have now become a source of dread, prompting multiple individuals to seek 'alternative forms of protection' (Virno, 2004: 35), alternative refuges.

The multitude is, consequently, comprised of multiple individuals who place the experience of dread at the 'centre of their own social and political praxis' (Virno, 2004: 34). They are simultaneously strangers and thinkers who have collaboratively produced commonalities to cope with the fear and anxieties produced and amplified by global capital. By referring to thinkers, Virno (2004) is not talking about specific types of knowledge but

about general knowledge that operates as a refuge precisely because it precedes the individual: it is a type of knowledge that is socially shared and, precisely because of that, it operates as the common. The common that gives shape to and is produced by the multitude today is basically a compilation of ‘different, sometimes diametrically opposed, strategies of reassurance’ (Virno, 2004: 35). While individually trying to cope with the dread associated with the feeling of ‘not-feeling-at-home’ (Virno, 2004: 38), many individuals start behaving as a collective, as a multitude that transcends physical boundaries. It explains Virno’s (2004) decision to refer to the multitude as a mode of being in which ‘the many [is] seen as being “many”’ (Virno, 2004: 41).

Both Hardt and Negri (2004) and Virno (2004) emphasise the differences between the multitude and another political category, the people. Whereas the people are dependent on ‘an equivalential articulation of demands’, forming a ‘stable system of signification’ that discursively separates it (the people) from those in power (Laclau, 2018 (2005) 74), the multitude is comprised of ‘multiple social subjects whose constitution and action’ (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 99) is based on what they share in common. The common that brings the multitude into being does not establish stable frontiers between it and power as those found in the people. It is as if the frontiers of the multitude were more porous, often emphasising some demands, often focusing on others that are not necessarily equivalent to the former. In the people, subjects may express different demands. However, they end up articulating a ‘global demand’ that clearly delimitates the antagonism between the people and power (Laclau, 2018 (2005) This ‘global demand’ is absent in the multitude. It starts and remains as a ‘plural and multiple’ social being that cannot be reduced to ‘sameness’ (Hardt and Negri, 2004). Instead of being a unitary social being, restricted to a specific location and united in a ‘global demand’, the multitude remains multiple and deterritorialised insofar as different strategies of reassurance are simultaneously deployed to cope with various perceptions of danger in different parts of the world (Virno, 2004).

Different from Hardt and Negri (2004), Virno (2004: 14) underscores the ambivalent essence of the multitude. At the same time that it can operate as a driving force towards an equal society, it can take the opposite direction. If the common produced by the multitude does not ‘tend to common affairs’, that is, if it is solely produced out of anguish, then the multitude may produce ‘terrifying effects’ (Virno, 2004: 40). Despite this difference, both Hardt and Negri (2004) and Virno (2004) remained loyal to the classic Marxian antagonism between capital and the proletariat, casting a shadow on the variety of antagonisms that have been historically produced and perpetuated by the accumulation of capital.

Staging a dialogue between Autonomist Marxists and Post-Marxists: The case of the alt-right multitude

As an attempt to revitalise Marxism, Post-Marxists have criticised class reductionism and favoured pluralism. Influenced by the emergence of new cultural theories (poststructuralism, postmodernism, second wave of feminism), some scholars have tried to reorient Marxist principles to accommodate them to a ‘rapidly changing cultural climate’ (Sim, 2013: 1) in the aftermath of 1968 protests. Žižek built bridges between Marxism and Lacanian psychoanalysis, exploring antagonisms based on race and ethnicity through the concept of theft of enjoyment.

According to Žižek (2016: 75), when encountering an individual from a different race or ethnicity, an individual may project

‘its *jouissance* onto [the other], attributing to this [other] full access to a consistent *jouissance*. Such a constellation cannot but give rise to jealousy: in jealousy, the subject creates or imagines a paradise (a utopia of full *jouissance*) from which he is excluded’.

In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the concept of *jouissance* (or enjoyment) refers to the ‘excessive satisfaction or kick we get from doing something transgressive, irrational, or even wrong’ (Kapoor, 2020: 14). *Jouissance* implies the existence of a barrier that prevents the subject from fully enjoying something, the object of desire. Jacques Lacan (2007) paid considerable attention to the relationship between anxiety and *jouissance*, defending that what triggers anxiety is the fantasy that there is a ‘surplus *jouissance*’ to be enjoyed. To him, anxiety is the only affect that ‘does not deceive’ (Lacan, 2016: 160) insofar as it indicates the existence of an object of desire. What makes one feels anxious is the fantasy that there is something else to be enjoyed, some fullness. Even though reaching some fullness (surplus *jouissance*) is impossible insofar as it is a construction of the mind, the subject is constantly looking for it and, interestingly, the ‘very circular movement of repeatedly missing its object’ (Žižek, 1999: 297) is a source of *jouissance*. In this sense, anxiety and the pursuit of surplus *jouissance* are directly connected to the drive that keeps us engaged with an object of desire. From a Žižekian perspective, for instance, racism and xenophobia are sustained by fantasies that have projected some races and ethnicities as entitled to enjoy some fullness (of power, of territory).

Besides contributing to existing efforts to understand some of the antagonisms that coexist in capitalism, Žižek’s engagement with psychoanalysis resulted in another analytical tool that may illuminate aspects of the capitalist mode of production that tend to go unnoticed by traditional and Autonomist Marxists: the concept of ideological fantasy. Reflecting on Marx’s concept of ideology in light of Lacanian psychoanalysis, Žižek (2008 (1989) 30) argues that the fundamental level of ideology that has been crucial to the maintenance of capitalism is ‘not that of an illusion masking the real state of things but that of an (unconscious) fantasy structuring our social reality itself’. The main problem is not the lack of awareness of the ideas that have influenced social behaviour. It is, conversely, the fact that despite knowing them, many individuals keep behaving under their influence. Many people know that capitalism is based on mass consumption. Nevertheless, they keep desiring more and more products and services. Paradoxically, they enjoy their exploitation, and it is precisely this enjoyment that has ensured the maintenance of capitalism. In Žižek’s terms, capitalism is based on the fantasy that individuals are free to consume as much as they want. By buying a product, instead of exercising their freedom, one is exploited by capital.

It is worth noting that Autonomist Marxists also acknowledged the role played by desire in the maintenance of capitalism, drawing upon the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Even though Hardt and Negri interpreted their work in a very specific way (Abbinet, 2006), overlooking, for instance, the symbiotic relationship between capitalism and ‘reactionary unconscious investments’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 2000: 257–258), the authors remained loyal to Deleuze and Guattari’s argument that what the unconscious produces is meaningless, distancing themselves from psychoanalysis. Albeit sophisticated, the analysis of capitalism as a ‘desiring-machine’ (Deleuze, 2004: 267) casts a shadow on why some desires have historically served to maintain the privileged status of some segments of the population. In one of his texts, Deleuze (2004: 243) emphasises the difference between the concept of a ‘desiring-machine’ and psychoanalysis, explaining that he is not interested in ‘what it means’ but how desire works and functions. Why has

capitalism facilitated the recurrence of some desires? Why has this continuity reinforced hierarchical structures, fuelling plural antagonisms? The concept of ideological fantasy proposed by Žižek (2008 (1989)) offers some answers. Besides the ideological fantasy described above, one can identify many others that have historically sustained the capitalist mode of production, facilitating the subjugation of part of the population to capital. In other words, fantasies that have nurtured the antagonisms produced by the accumulation of capital.

As observed by Mattheis (2022), since colonial times, Black women have been denied femininity as if they were born to be constituted as subjects that need to be domesticated. Writing from Brazil, Castro (2019) reached a similar conclusion while reflecting on the denial of some collective subjectivities. Until today the fantasy that Black women are inferior has sustained exploitative practices as illustrated by the fact that Black women who work as cleaners in Brazil are still called by the pejorative term ‘domestic workers’, and only recently, they have been given the right to have a union.

Engaging with Lacanian psychoanalysis, Kapoor (2020) reflects on how White supremacist fantasies were instrumental to ensure the economic subordination of Third World countries. By equating Western civilisation with progress and moral values, White Europeans and North American men projected themselves as legally entitled to help Third World countries make ‘socioeconomic and political advancements’ (Kapoor, 2020: 242). In sum, these are only some of the fantasies that have sustained the reality that power must be on the hands of a White/Western and masculine elite as if this segment of the population was naturally entitled to occupy a privileged position in society.

By staging a dialogue between Autonomist Marxists and Post-Marxists, it is possible to expand the concept of the multitude. If we acknowledge that neoliberalism has fuelled the plurality of antagonisms found in capitalism and recognise the role played by fantasies in their constitution, it can be hypothesised that latest advances in capitalism may have given birth to a multitude that is driving society towards an even more unequal future. Instead of bringing together multiple individuals against global capital, it seems to have united those who have historically benefitted from the accumulation of capital: White/Western men. That is precisely the nature of the alt-right.

It is telling that the descriptors often used to refer to the alt-right are very similar to the ones used by Autonomist Marxists to elaborate on the multitude. In the literature, the alt-right has often been described as an amorphous, independent, deterritorialised, decentralised digital phenomenon whose danger lies precisely in the fact that it is a ‘reproduced mass’ (Turner, 2019: 189). The Autonomist Marxist multitude is described as a ‘hybrid, fluid, mutant, deterritorialised’ (Virno, 2004: 14), ‘new flex, amorphous flesh’ (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 159).

Many authors have observed some connection between the alt-right and contemporary digital, communicative, affective capitalism. According to Turner (2019), the emergence of the alt-right is directly linked to the obligation to participate characteristic of late capitalism. Daniels (2018) explored how the appearance of the alt-right was powered by algorithms, pointing out that search engines have often recommended White supremacist websites as if they were credible sources of information. Munn (2019) reached a similar conclusion while exploring how YouTube has functioned as an alt-right pipeline, facilitating encounters with racist content. Other scholars have focused on how digital platforms have allowed the alt-right to influence public debate through its established networks. Whereas Lewis (2018: 3) provides a detailed analysis of the alternative influence network that encompasses ‘scholars, media pundits, and Internet

celebrities', Finlayson (2021) focuses on how digital, participatory, and shareable media has facilitated the appearance of 'ideological entrepreneurs' – individuals who use their status of writers, academics, intellectuals to disseminate ideas against progressive reforms and social justice. In different ways, the above-mentioned studies explore how capitalism has facilitated the emergence and maintenance of the alt-right. Nevertheless, they do not explore in detail the relationship between the alt-right and contemporary capitalist model. By bringing together some Autonomist Marxists and Post-Marxist concepts, it is possible to observe that the alt-right has behaved as a multitude and, hence, it can be considered a product of capitalism.

The alt-right is

'an international set of groups and individuals, operating primarily online though with offline outlets, whose core belief is that "White identity" is under attack from pro-multicultural and liberal elites and so-called "social-justice warriors" (SJWs) who allegedly use "political correctness" to undermine Western civilisation and the rights of White men' (Hermansson et al., 2020: 2).

Instead of gravitating around a well-defined political doctrine, it is around a common idealised White identity and the conspiratorial belief that this identity is under attack that the alt-right has coalesced. At first glance, the alt-right seems to conform to the duo plurality-commonality described by Autonomist Marxists as a fundamental trait of the multitude.

As a digital phenomenon, the alt-right has used different tools to construct an idealised White identity. Whereas some of its adherents have resurrected an interest in scientific racism (Hawley, 2017; Hermansson et al., 2020; Winter, 2019), promoting, for example, race realism—an alleged school of thought that defends that 'racial and ethnic distinctions are rooted in biology, rather than being mere social constructs' (Hawley, 2017: 26), other groups and individuals have found the concept of spiritual race elaborated by Julius Evola more appealing, viewing race as something that is 'revealed in one's intellectual attitude and outlook, with those of a higher 'race' being innately oriented to properly spiritual concerns, making them naturally fit to command' (Rose, 2021: 53). The tools used to construct an ideal White identity may vary, but all of them project Whites (especially men) as sort of guardians of Western civilisation because they are underpinned by White supremacist discourse. Broadly speaking, the idealised White identity shared by those found in alt-right circles echoes fantasies that have been around since colonial times, fantasies associating Whiteness with 'myths of progress, civilisation, education, refinement' (Fanon, 2008 (1952) 170).

White supremacist discourse has established a false equivalence between an ideal White identity and an ideal Western identity, projecting White men as the 'Master Builders, the Master Minds, and the Master Warriors of civilisation' (Ferber and Kimmel, 2000: 201). It is as if Western civilisation was the product of the hard work of White men. In the alt-right, one can find both individuals who defend the creation of White ethno-states and those who avoid engaging in White identity politics by positioning themselves as guardians of Western civilisation. Throughout this article, I will use the term White/Western identity to refer to the perception of identity shared by those encompassed by the alt-right with an intent to emphasise that the alt-right cannot be reduced to groups and individuals who openly engage in White identity politics.

Feminist scholarship has underscored the plural nature of the groups and individuals encompassed by the alt-right, pointing out that gender and sexuality issues have appealed to both those united in racial solidarity and those united in Western chauvinism (Kelly, 2017). After all, if Western civilisation is allegedly the product of the hard work of White men, it is supposedly dependent on well-established hierarchies between men and women.

In sum, the alt-right may have started very committed to the White identity politics promoted by the online magazine *AlternativeRight.com* set up by Richard Spencer in 2010, but it has quickly expanded to multiple digital platforms and started attracting the attention of anti-globalists, anti-feminists, anti-LGBTQIA+, anti-immigrants, anti-Arabs, anti-Jews, anti-Latinos, and those who are against the so-called social justice warriors. In an uncontrollable and fluid way, the alt-right seems to have become a 'living flesh' (Hardt and Negri, 2004) that has engaged in cultural wars, actively attacking institutions and companies that are perceived to be controlled by an elite that 'has anti-White/[anti-Western] interests' (Johnson, 2018).

Since 2010, several alternative media outlets and think tanks started using the Internet as the main medium to disseminate the belief that an idealised White/Western identity is under attack. While observing the traffic of 10 websites aligned with the alt-right, Main (2018) noticed that all of them combined received on average 4.4 million visits per month between September 2016 and February 2018. The alt-right has made wide use of hashtags, memes, and trolling to have its ideas 'algorithmically amplified, sped up and circulated' (Ganesh, 2020: 893). By clicking on a post, watching a video, 'liking' it, commenting on it, and sharing it, multiple individuals are almost instantly contributing to the reproduction of racist, xenophobic, and sexist ideas due to algorithms 'biased towards the superlative' (Lim, 2021: 190). The more engagement a certain post makes, the more it will be recommended. It is as if the alt-right has put algorithms to work for it, resulting in the wide circulation of its ideas.

Even individuals who do not follow ideas advanced by the alt-right have ended up contributing to their dissemination while watching its videos, hitting the button 'dislike', commenting on posts, and sharing them with an intent to warn their friends of the existence of this racist phenomenon. Searches for the term alt-right picked on Google in August and November 2016, immediately after Hillary Clinton mentioned it while referring to an extremist ideology linked to Donald Trump's campaign during the presidential elections (Thompson and Hawley, 2021). The motivations behind views, searches for the term 'alt-right' on Google, comments, and shares across different digital platforms are not captured by algorithms. Only our bodily reaction, that is, our affects expressed through views, 'likes', comments, shares, and searches have been quantified and transformed into 'assets, goods, services, and managerial goods' (Karppi et al., 2016: 1), allowing the alt-right to acquire a life of its own.

Gradually, the alt-right has started behaving in a similar way to the multitude theorised by Autonomist Marxists insofar as it seems to be 'the outcome of a centrifugal movement: from the One to the Many' (Virno, 2004: 42). It may have started around a group of Whites (especially men) who openly defended the creation of White ethno-states, but it has gradually encompassed groups and individuals anxious about a perceived growing presence of non-Western immigrants, women, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community in places and positions that used to be predominantly occupied by White/Western people and men. Gradually, it has encompassed a myriad of culturally defined antagonisms that do not necessarily share similar demands: Whites versus Black, Westerners versus non-Westerners, men versus women, heterosexuals versus homosexuals, Christians

versus Jews, Christians versus Muslims, and so on. Interestingly, the alt-right seems to be more heterogeneous than the multitude theorised by Hardt and Negri (2000) insofar as it lacks any sense of unity. As observed by Bowring (2004), one of the ambiguities of the Autonomist Marxist multitude is that it was theorised as a heterogeneous social being while simultaneously evoking some sense of class unity that would project it against imperial power. In the case of the alt-right, it is difficult to speak of unity because whereas parts of it openly challenges the power supposedly exercised by Black individuals, another one primarily attacks neoliberal elites allegedly committed to multiculturalism, and one can also find those who oppose women in leadership positions. Instead of well-defined, the boundaries among these different segments of the alt-right are under constant negotiation.

The affective dynamics of dread and refuge described by Virno (2004) as a key feature of the multitude is manifested in the alt-right in a very peculiar way. Instead of revolving around relations of production, anxieties are felt on racial, ethnic, and gender grounds. In order to cope with the danger represented by the perceived overwhelming presence of non-Whites/non-Westerners, women, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community in places and positions that used to be predominantly occupied by White/Western people and men, many groups and individuals have found refuge in conspiracy theories animating fantasies that reinforce the perceived superiority of Whites/Westerners (especially men). Many of the fantasies that have been accessed as a refuge in the alt-right have, for centuries, sustained the racist, xenophobic, and sexist ideological dimension of capitalism.

The dynamics of dread and refuge that lies at the heart of the alt-right multitude

Both neoliberalism and the strengthening of globalisation seem to have driven many White/Western individuals (especially men) to share a feeling of ‘not-feeling-at-home’ (Virno, 2004: 34). In line with the neoliberal orientation to maximise profits regardless of social implications, companies started investing in international markets, leaving White/Western workers (especially men) ‘at a significant disadvantage vis-à-vis cheap, non-White labour’ (Esposito, 2019: 103). Permanent jobs that used to be considered safe spaces have become more difficult to reach and keep. With less job opportunities, many White/Western men have lost their sense of identity (Kimmel, 2017). Consequently, another space that used to be considered safe, the nucleus of the family, has gradually become a source of dread. Without a job, White/Western men can no longer occupy their alleged rightful superior status in the family. The crises of masculinity experienced by many White/Western men in recent years are directly linked to an aggrieved entitlement (Kimmel, 2017). Among many Whites/Westerners, there is a strong perception that there has been a sort of reversal in the gender scales that has left no space for ‘real men’ and ‘real women’ as if to be real, one had to conform to heteronormativity and ideals of white masculinity (virile, intelligent, superior, hard worker) and white femininity (docile, emotional, inferior, mother).

The supposed reversal in the scales of power has also been felt in racial and ethnic terms. The fact Black individuals have started occupying management positions, the growing immigration rates facilitated by globalisation, and the popularisation of post-colonial and de-colonial theories seem to have induced many Whites/Westerners to feel that they are no longer safe in their cities, states, academia, and even social media. To them,

these spaces seem to have become a source of dread. It is as if ‘all of a sudden’ they have become ‘strangers’ in their own hometown. When the United States elected their first Black president in 2008, Barack Obama, the veil that had for centuries marked Black people with two souls – an American and a Black one (Du Bois, 2007) – seemed to have been finally removed. Not only in the United States but in many European countries and former colonies, Black individuals have increasingly refused to see the world through the White gaze and the Internet has encouraged exchanges of experiences.

Drawing upon Žižek’s concept of theft of enjoyment, it can be said that anxieties associated with the feeling of not-feeling-at-home in the alt-right multitude seem to be derived from the fantasy that someone else is allegedly fully enjoying something that was supposed to be limited to White/Western individuals (especially men). Since the state, their hometown, their jobs, and their homes are no longer perceived as safe spaces, White/Western individuals (especially men) had ‘no other option’ but to seek refuge in ‘common places’ of the mind (Virno, 2004). Such refuge was found in conspiracy theories that animate all sorts of racist, xenophobic, and sexist fantasies that project White/Western individuals (especially men) as the ones entitled to some fullness of power.

As observed by Wojczewski (2022: 153), conspiracy theories are ‘fantasies *par excellence* insofar as they promise to fulfil our desires for identity, knowledge, control, autonomy, agency’. They discursively project some individuals as the victims of a supposed malicious plan orchestrated by ‘a small group of powerful persons, the conspirators, acting in secret for their own benefit against the common good’ (Uscinski and Parent, 2014: 32). Besides pointing out an enemy (Berlet, 2009; Prooijen and Jostmann, 2013) and providing an explanation that makes sense (May, 2017), conspiracy theories can satisfy social motives, enabling individuals to maintain a positive image of the self (Douglas et al., 2019).

In the alt-right, conspiracy theories have functioned as toolboxes where individuals can access various racist, xenophobic, and sexist fantasies that reinforce the alleged superiority of Whites/Westerners, especially men. These fantasies seem to be so deeply entrenched in the collective unconscious that they have been shared as ‘common places’ (Virno, 2004). Even though it would be impossible to access all the fantasies animated by conspiracy theories, some of them can be accessed because language gives us partial access to what occurs in the unconscious (Lacan, 1998). In the following paragraphs, I illuminate some of the fantasies animated by three conspiracy theories often found in alt-right circles: White genocide, cultural Marxism conspiracy theory, and the great replacement theory.

White genocide conspiracy theory

White genocide is a conspiracy theory that became very popular in the 1990s with the publication of the *White Genocide Manifesto* by the former knight of the Ku Klux Klan David Lane (Michael, 2009). The manifesto summarises in 14 points why Jews allegedly want to exterminate White people. By depicting Jews as an ‘absolute evil’ (Hofstadter, 1964), the conspiracy theory allows White/Western individuals (especially men) to constitute themselves as an ‘absolute good’ that is supposedly morally entitled to use violence to defeat ‘evil forces’.

White genocide conspiracy theory animates several racist, xenophobic, anti-Semitic, and sexist fantasies that have historically reinforced the ‘superiority’ of White/Western men: because White/Western men are assumed to be ‘heroic warriors’ (Ferber and

Kimmel, 2000: 198), they are ‘morally entitled’ to exercise full power over territories, private companies, and the bodies of White/Western women, protecting them from the Black ‘sexual beasts’ (Fanon, 2008 [1952]: 124–135) and the ‘seduction of Jews’ (Žižek, 2008 [1989]: 141). Whereas Black and non-Western individuals are constituted as a threat on a corporeal level (they are ‘primarily’ interested in corrupting the ‘purity’ of White women, especially girls), Jews are depicted as the mastermind behind the alleged plan to exterminate the White race. Jews are so ‘evil’ that they have taken control of the government to ‘implement their anti-white plan’.

Fantasies echoing the corporeal threat posed by non-Whites/non-Westerners are especially evident in ‘The Mantra’ blog post made by Robert Whittaker, one of the leading voices spreading the White genocide conspiracy theory in alt-right circles (Wendling, 2018: 77–78): ‘everybody says the final solution to this RACE problem is for EVERY White country and ONLY White countries to “assimilate”, i.e. intermarry, with all those non-White’.

Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory

Cultural Marxism is another conspiracy theory that offers access to many racist, xenophobic, anti-Semitic, and racist fantasies. According to cultural Marxism or the Frankfurt School conspiracy theory, a group of Marxist intellectuals (who also happen to be Jews) fled Nazi Germany and infiltrated American universities, mainstream media, and the film industry aiming at disseminating multicultural and progressive ideas, which would ultimately lead to the destruction of (White) American identity (Mirrlees, 2019; Woods, 2019). Its core message is that freedom of thought and speech have been compromised to serve ‘(Jewish) Marxist purposes’. Whereas in White genocide conspiracy theory the belief that White/Western identity is under attack is mainly corporeally felt (the bodies of White individuals are allegedly disappearing), in cultural Marxism conspiracy theory the alleged attack is mentally felt. Freedom of thought, of speech, and the control of the apparatus of truth have been allegedly ‘stolen’ from White/Western individuals (especially men). The ‘absolute evil’ personified in the figure of (Jewish) Marxists is blamed for having supposedly enjoyed full control of the minds while managing the apparatus of truth and entertainment. Besides ‘brainwashing’ White/Western individuals to embrace multiculturalism, (Jewish) Marxists have allegedly imposed the idea that White/Western women can have full power over their bodies, deciding to not have babies or changing sex; that non-Whites/non-Westerners have the full freedom to express their identity and censor the speech of Whites/Westerners.

Several fantasies can be accessed through cultural Marxism conspiracy theory. The main fantasies seem to be that White/Western individuals (especially men) are entitled to enjoy full freedom of speech and exercise full power over the apparatus of truth (media companies, educational institutions). When it comes to truth, for centuries, White/Western individuals (especially men) have positioned themselves as responsible for ‘bringing truth to the savages’ (Fanon, 2008 (1952) 126). Their alleged superiority is based on the assumption that they are ‘naturally’ more educated and more intelligent than non-Whites/non-Westerners. Besides reflecting on truth from a racial perspective, it is possible to reflect on it from a gender standpoint insofar as education and ideals of objectivity have been historically associated with men, reinforcing the fantasy that White/Western men are ‘naturally’ entitled to speak the scientific truth (De Beauvoir, 2011 (1949) Both cultural Marxism and White genocide conspiracy theories animate fantasies that place women in

an inferior position as if they were dependent on men from the moment of birth. This is especially apparent in the description of neomascularity proposed by the American blogger Roosh V (the pseudonym of Daryuth Valizadeh) as an antidote for men who have been ‘brainwashed’ to accept ‘Western degeneracy’: ‘aims to aid men living in Westernised nations that lack qualities such as classical virtue, masculinity in males, femininity in females, and objectivity, especially concerning beauty ideals and human behaviour’ (Neiwert, 2018: 253).

The great replacement conspiracy theory

As observed by Harwood (2021), anxieties around the potential replacement of White/Western individuals are not new. Nevertheless, they gained a new breath with the publication of the book *Le Grand Remplacement* in 2011 by the French writer Renaud Camus. With this book, information concerning the supposed replacement of White/Western individuals started circulating as a theory, authoritatively advancing the belief that ‘White European populations are being deliberately replaced at an ethnic and cultural level through the migration and the growth of minority communities’ (Davey and Ebner, 2019: 5). Even though there is a clear overlap between the great replacement and the White genocide conspiracy theories, they convey different messages. Whereas the White genocide provides explanations for the alleged extermination of White people, the great replacement theory addresses an apocalyptic fate that would ‘culminate with the end of civilisation as it has been created by White Europeans’ (Davey and Ebner, 2019: 8). The replacement echoed by the great replacement theory is not restricted to demographic changes. Not only will White Europeans be ‘replaced’ but also the civilisation, freedom, and education ‘built’ by them. Before culminating with the total demographic replacement of White Europeans, their supposed (good) moral values, refinement, and education will be allegedly replaced with the supposed low moral values, savagery, and criminality brought by non-White and non-Western immigrants.

Overall, the great replacement conspiracy theory gives access to many fantasies animated by the White genocide and cultural Marxism conspiracy theories. For instance, it echoes the fantasy that White/Western men are ‘naturally’ entitled to enjoy full freedom and exercise full power over the bodies of White/Western women insofar as their ‘purity’ can be corrupted by non-Whites/non-Westerners. In addition, and more crucially, the great replacement conspiracy theory gives access to the fantasy that White/Western men are ‘naturally’ entitled to exercise full power over their alleged territories, controlling access to benefits and ensuring the survival of Western civilisation.

The ‘absolute evil’ projected by the great replacement conspiracy theory is mainly incarnated in the figure of Muslim immigrants (Cosentino, 2020). Nevertheless, it can also be represented by Jews and liberal elites (Davey and Ebner, 2019). By constituting Muslim immigrants, Jews, and liberal elites as an ‘absolute evil’, many Whites/Westerners (especially men) have reinforced the alleged superiority of White/Western identity, not rarely defending the use of violence to ‘protect’ what is ‘rightfully theirs’: full freedom; full power over territories, full benefits, full access to the bodies of White/Western women.

Fantasies associating non-White/non-Western immigration with decay and, simultaneously, projecting White/Western identity as ‘naturally’ superior are especially evident in this fragment from an interview given by the science-fiction writer Theodore Beale – known as Vox Day in alt-right circles – to Wendling (2018: 46): ‘Been to Paris lately? All that diversity is turning it into a dangerous, filthy place that no one even wants to visit’. In this quote,

the usage of the terms ‘dangerous’ and ‘filthy place’ echoes fantasies that associate non-Whites/non-Westerners with violence and dirtiness as if they were ‘naturally’ inferior to Whites/Westerners.

White genocide, cultural Marxism, and the great replacement conspiracy theories may convey different messages, project different enemies, and speak to different audiences. Nevertheless, all of them offer access to fantasies that project Whites/Westerners (especially men) as ‘naturally’ superior to others. These fantasies are so deeply rooted in the collective unconscious that they have been accessed as a refuge. Complex social events such as mass immigration and the decline in job opportunities are reduced to an antagonism between ‘absolute good’ and ‘absolute evil’ in which White/Western identity is projected as an ‘absolute good’ that is in peril. Despite the different messages and fantasies animated by White genocide, cultural Marxism, and the great replacement theory, these three conspiracy theories convey a common belief: that an idealised White/Western identity is under attack. This is one of the main products of the alt-right multitude.

A multitude that goes in the opposite direction of global democracy

By consciously engaging with online material about White genocide, cultural Marxism, and the great replacement theory, multiple groups and individuals have collaboratively produced two types of commonalities. On the conscious level, they have reinforced the belief that an idealised White/Western identity is in peril. On the unconscious level, they have reinforced the fantasy that power is an attribute of White/Western identity. I call it master fantasy because it lies at the core of many racist, xenophobic, and sexist fantasies. It is because White/Western identity is assumed to be superior that many White/Western individuals (especially men) feel entitled to enjoy full power. It is precisely because this fantasy is so deeply rooted in the Western collective unconscious that conspiracy theories offering access to it have been used as a refuge, strategies of reassurance to cope with anxieties derived from the feeling that full power has been ‘stolen’ from White/Western hands.

The alt-right is a problem of the now as argued by Turner (2019) precisely because it has exploited the affective dynamics of contemporary capitalism to project itself as a force of resistance when, in fact, it essentially aims at maintaining the status of a White/Western (and masculine) elite. Metaphorically speaking, it is as if the Internet was a big theatre and we were watching alt-right actors performing as a multitude, a revolutionary social being. By sharing the feeling of not-feeling-at-home, multiple White/Western individuals (especially men) were engaging in the collaborative production of conspiracy theories. They were united by the common belief that an idealised White/Western identity is under attack. When the show is over and the curtains fall, they reveal their true face: the multitude is, in fact, made of the same segment of the population that has, for centuries, enjoyed the accumulation of capital: Whites/Westerners, especially men. Albeit united by a common belief, they are fighting different enemies that are perceived to be part of a ‘new class’: Black individuals, non-Western immigrants, women, the LGBTQIA+ community, liberal elites, and so on. Instead of driving society towards global democracy, the alt-right multitude aims at consolidating plural hierarchies (Whites over Blacks; Westerners over non-Westerners; men over women).

Continuing with the metaphor of the theatre, this article tried to bring both Autonomist Marxists and Post-Marxists to the backstage to see the true face of the multitude produced by contemporary capitalism. Until now, scholars did not consider the possibility that the

alt-right may have started behaving as a multitude. Autonomist Marxists could not anticipate its emergence while turning a blind eye on the nexus between neoliberalism and existing hierarchies. Post-Marxists mainly criticised the concept of the multitude theorised by Autonomist Marxists without sufficiently trying to address its inconsistencies. By bringing together concepts from Autonomist Marxism and Post-Marxism, this article demonstrated that a productive dialogue between both schools of thought is possible, suggesting new directions for research on the intersection between capitalism and issues of race, ethnicity, and gender.

Understanding the alt-right as a multitude may reinforce the need of a renewal in critical theory as suggested by Žižek (2000a). Instead of limiting ourselves to a specific strand of Marxism, perhaps we have reached a moment in which theoretical encounters have become a necessity. Without acknowledging the racist, xenophobic, and sexist phantasmatic ideological dimensions of capitalism, it is difficult to envisage an exit and only an exit will pave the way to a truly democratic system. The main question now is: if capitalism has been historically sustained by racist, xenophobic, and sexist fantasies that have allowed it to produce a reactionary being disguised as a revolutionary multitude, how can we address the influence exercised by these fantasies? A revolution through education may be the way, but this topic I shall develop in another article.

Acknowledgements

This article would not have been possible without the exceptional support of my supervisors, Professor Martin Coward and Dr Andreja Zevnik. Their questions and recommendations motivated me to make this contribution to political theory. I would also like to express my gratitude to the University of Manchester for funding my doctoral studies.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: The author received a studentship from the University of Manchester to conduct the research of this article as part of her doctoral studies.

ORCID iD

Beatriz Lopes Buarque  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1947-4946>

References

- Abbinnet R (2006) *Marxism after Modernity: Politics, Technology and Social Transformation*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Balibar E, Stolze T and Giaccotti E (1989) Spinoza, the Anti-Orwell: The fear of the masses. *Rethinking Marxism* 2(3): 104–139.
- Bauman Z (2007) *Liquid Times: Living in the Age of Uncertainty*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Berlet C (2009) *Toxic to Democracy: Conspiracy Theories, Demonization and Scapegoating*. Somerville, MA: Political Research Associates. Available at: <https://politicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/2018-10/Tox2Dem-exec.pdf> (accessed 19 November 2020).
- Boron A (2005) *Empire and Imperialism: A Critical Reading of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri*. New York: Zed Books.
- Bowring F (2004) From the mass worker to the multitude: A theoretical contextualisation of Hardt and Negri's empire. *Capital & Class* 28(2): 101–132.
- Castro MG (2019) Mulheres sindicalizadas: classe, gênero, raça e geração na produção de novos sujeitos políticos, um estudo de caso. In: Hollanda HB (ed.) *Pensamento Feminista Brasileiro: Formação e Contexto*. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: Bazar do Tempo, pp.213–238.
- Cosentino G (2020) *Social Media and the Post-Truth World Order: The Global Dynamics of Disinformation*. Cham: Palgrave Pivot.

- Daniels J (2018) The algorithmic rise of the alt-right. *Contexts* 17(1): 60–65.
- Davey J and Ebner J (2019) *The Great Replacement: The Violent Consequences of Mainstreamed Extremism*. London: ISD. Available at: <https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/The-Great-Replacement-The-Violent-Consequences-of-Mainstreamed-Extremism-by-ISD.pdf> (accessed 19 April 2022).
- Davidson N and Saull R (2017) Neoliberalism and the far-right: A contradictory embrace. *Critical Sociology* 43(4–5): 707–724.
- De Beauvoir S (2011 [1949]) *The Second Sex*. London: Vintage Books.
- Deleuze G (2004) *Desert Islands and Other Texts 1953–1974*. South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e).
- Deleuze G and Guattari F (2000) *Anti-Oedipus; Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. London: Athlone Press.
- Douglas K, Uscinski JE, Sutton RM, Cichocka A, Nefes T, Ang CS, et al. (2019) Understanding conspiracy theories. *Political Psychology* 40: 3–35.
- Du Bois WEB (2007) *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dyer-Witheford N (2007) Hegemony or multitude? Two versions of radical democracy for the Net. In: Dahlberg L and Siapera E (eds) *Radical Democracy and the Internet*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.191–206.
- Esposito L (2019) The alt-right as a revolt against neoliberalism and political correctness: The role of collective action frames. *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 18(1–2): 93–110.
- Fanon F (2008 [1952]) *Black Skin, White Masks*. Dublin: Penguin Classics.
- Ferber AL and Kimmel M (2000) Reading right: The Western tradition in white supremacist discourse. *Sociological Focus* 33(2): 193–213.
- Finlayson A (2021) Neoliberalism, the alt-right and the intellectual dark web. *Theory, Culture & Society* 38(6): 167–190.
- Ganesh B (2020) Weaponizing white thymos: Flows of rage in the online audiences of the alt-right. *Cultural Studies* 34(6): 892–924.
- Hardt M (2005) Into the factory: Negri's Lenin and the subjective caesura (1968–73). In: Murphy TS and Mustapha A (eds) *The Philosophy of Antonio Negri: Resistance in Practice*. London: Pluto Press, pp.7–37.
- Hardt M and Negri A (2000) *Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hardt M and Negri A (2004) *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. London: Penguin Books.
- Harwood M (2021) Living death: Imagined history and the Tarrant Manifesto. *Emotions: History, Culture, Society* 5: 25–50.
- Hawley G (2017) *Making Sense of the Alt-Right*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hermansson P, Lawrence D, Mulhall J and Murdoch S (2020) *The International Alt-Right: Fascism for the 21st Century?* London: Routledge.
- Hofstadter R (1964) *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Homer S (2016) *Slavoj Žižek and Radical Politics*. New York: Routledge.
- Johnson G (2018) Politics, metapolitics, & hegemony. *Counter-Currents Publishing*, 1 February [online]. Available at: <https://counter-currents.com/2018/02/politics-metapolitics-and-hegemony/> (accessed 19 November 2020).
- Kapoor I (2020) *Confronting Desire: Psychoanalysis and International Development*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Karppi T, Kähkönen L, Mannevuola M, Pajala M and Sihvonen T (2016) Affective capitalism: Investments and investigation. *Ephemera* 16(4): 1–13.
- Kelly A (2017) The alt-right: Reactionary rehabilitation for white masculinity. *Soundings* 66: 68–78.
- Kimmel M (2017) *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era*. New York: Bold Type Books.
- Lacan J (1998) *On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Lacan J (2007) *Seminar XVII: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Lacan J (2016) *Anxiety: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*. Padstow: Polity Press.
- Laclau E (1989) Preface. In: Žižek S (ed.) *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. London: Verso Books, pp.ix–xvi.
- Laclau E (2018 [2005]) *On Populist Reason*. London: Verso Books.
- Laclau E and Mouffe C (1985) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso Books.
- Lewis R (2018) Alternative influence: Broadcasting the reactionary right on YouTube. *Data & Society*, 18 September [online]. Available at: https://datasociety.net/wpcontent/uploads/2018/09/DS_Alternative_Influence.pdf (accessed 21 November 2022).
- Lim M (2021) Algorithmic enclaves: Affective politics and algorithms in the neoliberal social media landscape. In: Bolter M and Davis E (eds) *Affective Politics of Digital Media: Propaganda by Other Means*. New York: Routledge, pp.186–203.

- Main TJ (2018) *The Rise of the Alt-Right*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institute.
- Mattheis A (2022) #TradCulture: Reproducing whiteness and neo-fascism through gendered discourse online. In: Hunter S and Van der Westhuizen C (eds) *Routledge Handbook of Critical Studies in Whiteness*. New York: Routledge, pp.91–101.
- May A (2017) *Pseudoscience and Science Fiction*. Cham: Springer.
- Michael G (2009) David Lane and the fourteen words. *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 10(1): 43–61.
- Micocci A and Di Mario F (2020 [2018]) *The Fascist Nature of Neoliberalism*. London: Routledge.
- Mirreles T (2019) The alt-right's discourse on 'Cultural Marxism': A political instrument of intersectional hate. *Atlantis* 39(1): 49–69.
- Mudde C (2019) *The Far-Right Today*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Munn L (2019) Alt-right pipeline: Individual journeys to extremism online. *First Monday* [online] 24(6): 10108. Available at: <https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/10108> (accessed 19 November 2022).
- Neiwert D (2018) *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*. London: Verso Books.
- Parker I (2004) *Slavoj Žižek: A Critical Introduction*. London: Pluto Press.
- Prooijen J and Jostmann NB (2013) Belief in conspiracy theories: The influence of uncertainty and perceived morality. *European Journal of Social Psychology* 43: 109–115.
- Rose M (2021) *Philosophers of the Radical Right: A World after Liberalism*. London: Yale University Press.
- Sim S (2013) *Post-Marxism: An Intellectual History*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Thompson J and Hawley G (2021) Does the alt-right still matter? An examination of alt-right influence between 2016 and 2018. *Nations and Nationalism* 27(4): 1165–1180.
- Turner J (2019) Death by a thousand hyperlinks: The commodification of communication and mediated ideologies. In: Battista CM and Sande M R (eds) *Critical Theory and the Humanities in the Age of the Alt-Right*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.173–192.
- Uscinski JE and Parent JM (2014) *American Conspiracy Theories*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Virno P (2004) *A Grammar of the Multitude*. New York: Semiotext(e).
- Wendling M (2018) *Alt-Right: From 4Chan to the White House*. London: Pluto Press.
- Winter A (2019) Online hate: From the far-right to the alt-right and from the margins to the mainstream. In: Lumsden K and Harmer E (eds) *Online Othering: Exploring Digital Violence and Discrimination on the Web*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.39–63.
- Wojczewski T (2022) Conspiracy theories, right wing populism and foreign policy: The case of the alternative for Germany. *Journal of International Relations and Development* 25: 130–158.
- Woods A (2019) The hydra of suspicion: Conspiracy theories and the radical right. *Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right*, 17 June [online]. Available at: <https://www.radicalrightanalysis.com/2019/06/17/the-hydra-of-suspicion-conspiracy-theories-and-the-radical-right/> (accessed 22 November 2022).
- Žižek S (1999) *The Ticklish Subject*. London: Verso Books.
- Žižek S (2000a) Class struggle or postmodernism? Yes, please! In: Butler J, Laclau E and Žižek S (eds) *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*. London: Verso Books, pp.90–135.
- Žižek S (2000b) Repeating Lenin. *Lenin Symposium*. Available at: <https://www.lacan.com/replen.htm>
- Žižek S (2007) Multitude, surplus, and envy. *Rethinking Marxism* 19(1): 46–58.
- Žižek S (2008 [1989]) *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. London: Verso Books.
- Žižek S (2016) *Against the Double Blackmail: Refugees, Terror and Other Troubles with the Neighbours*. London: Penguin Books.

Author biography

Beatriz Lopes Buarque is a Politics scholar whose expertise lies in the intersection between digital media and issues of race, ethnicity, gender, and power. She has written about the far-right politics of truth and is especially interested in how stigmatising conspiracy theories have circulated as truth in online spaces.