Chapter 4
Duperation: Deliberate Lying in Postdigital, Postmodern Political Rhetoric

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Introduction

In this first section, I will concentrate on definitions. I will begin by offering some definitions of 'dupery' and of postdigital and then will try to consider the connection between them. The word 'dupe' is, apparently, derived from fifteenth century French and is said to be cognate with 'de huppe' (of the hoopoe), an extravagantly crested and reputedly stupid bird. If you wanted to dupe people, you might try to gull them into thinking you were stupid; this might be because you deliberately present yourself as a caricature, perhaps with an extravagant gold crest – on your head (Online Etymology Dictionary n.d.).

Applebaum (2020) has argued that the dupers are not from the world of the othered; they are from the world of the elite. They can write a fair hand and with a fountain pen, predigital chaps, assuring the right-wing middle class, subliminally, that they are, really, underneath all the blond bombshell eccentricity, the right sort. As MacKenzie et al. (2020) point out, information disorders are not always intentionally spread. My focus here is the deliberate dissemination of misinformation and malinformation. Montaigne (in Docherty 2019: 95) distinguishes between unintentional lying and true liars, if I may risk a paradox: 'those who say the opposite of what they know, to go against one's conscience'. As Kalsnes adumbrates:

> Fake news was named the term of the year in 2016 by the Oxford Dictionary and in 2017 by the Collins Dictionary. In 2017, the usage of the term had increased by 365% since 2016 (Collins Dictionary 2017). The American presidential election in 2016 put the phenomenon on the international agenda. Websites with fabricated content gained massive attention, such as the story that falsely claimed that the Pope endorsed the republican candidate

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> Donald Trump (Ritchie 2016). Shortly after, President Donald Trump politicized the term and used it to discredit established media outlets. But even though the term seems fairly new, the phenomena it covers are old. (Kalsnes 2018)

In my view, dupery is not the child of the postdigital era; nor is the postdigital era the child of dupery, but there is a collocation between the two. Indeed, MacKenzie et al. (2020) provocatively question whether the very design of social media is to be implicated in the problems that we face. I hope to address this later in the section on medium and message.

Turning to the second term in the title, what is meant by the term 'postdigital era'? There have been a number of definitions and meanings growing around the phrase. For some, the term seems to usher a new era where the human, the authentic, replaces the unctuous flatteries of the advertising algorithm, sycophantically reassuring the 'users' that their advertising keyword choices are fantastic. Interestingly, the most optimistic 'spins' on the postdigital era have come from the advertising sector. These are the sites which have engineered their way to the top. Their euphemistic human touch may proceed from exactly the same brazenly cynical motivation. The difference from older forms of advertising is that the 'customer' gets immediate attention and ratification from the advertiser (Daugherty 2019) and even more 'personalisation' (Badara 2019).

Within the academic world, 'postdigital' has received considerable attention also, often linked to calls for greater digital literacy and critical thinking and theory. Knox (2015) argues that the critical theory associated with the Frankfurt School is important in the consideration of digital culture and education. This kind of critical theory emphasises the analysis and critiques of dominant ideologies and understandings. Knox contends that such a perspective shifts the focus from the orthodox fixation with the individual to a richer engagement with the way education itself is shaped through the digital. Yet, it might be the case that within academia, critical thinking is a term so often used as to have become, ironically, hegemonic**.** We exhort our students to think critically, but we do not always spell out exactly what this means. By critical thinking we mean a willingness to question and interrogate what we read and what we see, to investigate, to dig deeper, to weigh arguments rather than simply reproducing them, to challenge our own prejudices and received ideas, and to think, based on evidence from a range of perspectives, not to be supine. Perhaps, deeply embedded in this concept of critical thinking in Europe is a post-war minatory conscience – not to question is to accept, to obey orders, to collude, and to collaborate with a monstrous scale of evil. Montaigne, cited by Docherty (2019: 97), offers a more sanguine but challenging definition: 'Thinking … marks itself out as something that enables the possibility of radical fundamental and political change.'

It is important to bear in mind that we must always question our own ideas, our own assumptions and hegemonies, before we attack, effectively, beliefs we find repugnant. Thinking – critical thinking – is now more than ever critical because the academy itself, as Knox implies, is in danger of viewing education as an individual private gain, at the expense of broader, more humanist vision. This is in line with

scholars such as Barnett (2015) and Collini (2012) who have argued that universities, especially in the more prosperous global 'north' (or affluent West), are increasingly focused on private good rather than public good.

Florian Cramer (2014) offers a wide-ranging and complex commentary on the meanings of postdigital. Significantly, for our focus here, Cramer argues that the postdigital can be disenchanted and sceptical – can look awry in the best sense. He cites The Guardian's revelations about the mass surveillance undertaken by the NSA's Prism programme [American's National Security Agency's National Electronic Surveillance Program] as an example of the postdigital shift from simply gathering daily news, to investigative and critical journalism.

A more laconic definition is critiqued by Tinworth (2012), citing Fraser Speirs; the postdigital era signals a phase where everybody simply accepts digitality as vernacular and hegemonic and nobody passes any remarks about it. Tinworth credits Russell Davies for coming up with the term in 2009, but argues that he made a quasi-apology the following year:

> Post Digital was supposed, if anything, to be a shout against complacency, to make people realise that we're not at the end of a digital revolution, we're at the start of one. The end game was not making a website to go with your TV commercial and it's not now about making a newspaper out of your website. Post Digital was supposed to be the next exciting phase, not a return to the old order. It's the bit where the Digital people start to engage in the world beyond the screen, not where the old guard reasserts itself. (Tinworth 2012)

In contrast to the sceptical and critical exposé of PRISM, Davies seems to balefully view the reassertion of the status quo as a kind of lost opportunity to be more human. There is a chilling implication here too; if you can persuade people that the 'new normal' is unquestioning acceptance of the digital, then the potential for wholescale Dupery is immense. Yet, as Jandrić (2018: 101), citing Whitty and Johnson (2008: 56), acknowledges, 'the Internet has simply provided a new place for individuals to lie'. Whether regarded as an equation or a metaphor, perhaps the third term – the term which connects dupery and the postdigital era, is 'post-truth'.

Post-truth Politics

Jandrić (2018: 101) cites the definition of post-truth offered by the Oxford Dictionaries: 'Circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.' A little later, Jandrić (2018: 106) elaborates an opposition between the rational and irrational in relation to Donald Trump's presidential campaign. He concludes, 'the emotional, the irrational and the instinctive cannot be counterbalanced with truth and reason'. Jandrić (2018: 109) sees post-truth as 'a poisonous public pedagogy oriented towards raising future generations of people with distorted worldviews, opinions and ethical judgements'. However, this is a rather imprecise formulation because how are we to know what distortion really means here.

Koro-Ljungberg et al. (2019: 583) also draw attention to the Oxford Dictionaries' definition, adding that 'post-truth' was the international word of the year in 2016. They cite Mair (2017: 584) who suggests that in the post-truth world, the dishonesty of 'politicans has changed from "covering up" to presenting "alternative facts"'. They further contend that 'post-truth' involves receiving information from inner circles – confirming what has already been found advantageous, inevitably diminishing any possibility of critical thinking. Germane to this discussion, Koro-Ljungberg et al. (2019: 584) cite Butler-Adam (2017) who emphasised the role of academia and the universities in becoming more active in fighting post-truth and untrustworthy data. Some recommendations will be advanced at the end of this chapter.

The potential for dupery is a hardy perennial in all political systems. It might even be argued that lying is a vital part of the game – discreetly withheld 'home truths' and 'nuanced' diplomacy between contending parties, involving not just the withholding of potentially catastrophic truths, but of fudges, obfuscations, dances of angels upon pinheads, and, consequentially, some species of conflict resolution and the avoidance of war. Docherty (2019: 117) cites Hannah Arendt's urbane acceptance of lies in politics: 'No one has ever doubted that truth and politics are on rather bad terms with each other… lies have always been regarded as necessary and justifiable tools not only of the politicians' or demagogue's but also of the statesman's trade.' Turning to contemporary politics, Docherty (2019: 118) offers this caveat: 'We might say that the important thing is not that Donald Trump or Boris Johnson are constitutional and inveterate liars; rather, the important and troubling thing is that they disable the very demand for truth itself.'

Docherty (2019: 116–117) quotes Lyndsey Stonebridge who suggests that the real danger with a political culture that openly trades in lies is that we lose our shared sense of truth; community vanishes and made-up version emerges – the myth of Nationalism. Stonebridge does not define what community is and so there is a danger that we are simply sliding from one myth to another. This 'pervasive chicanery' as MacKenzie et al. (2020: 2) have dubbed it, is dangerous because it is not confined to politicians, but is becoming accepted as normal.

From Postmodern to Post-truth

It may be argued that, up until fairly recently, intellectuals were living in what has been identified as the postmodern era, a term coined by Lyotard (1979/1984). As Nandy et al. (2018) suggest, '[p]ostmodernists believe that society, culture and language are arbitrary and they accepted the limitations of people's disparate views, fragmentation and indeterminacy'. Aylesworth (2015) notes that in postmodernism, 'the model of knowledge as the progressive development of consensus is outmoded'. In this era, and in this rather privileged space, it is considered gauche to speak of absolutes. We accept, as hegemonic, that truth is fragmentary, unstable, contentious, and riven. However, this new hegemony is not, in fact, in the real world, 'true' (if I

may risk a paradox). Many people have not 'done' postmodernism or, for the matter of that, modernism. These are First World, elite, intellectual concerns. Yet, most people are, in fact, postmodern in many ways. People understand that an absolute truth is a *rara avis*. They know history and culture politics are complicated and even downright contradictory. Furthermore, some people have been duped and ripped off, at least once, and so perhaps conclude that lies and dupery are a fact of life and that a sceptical stance is probably about the most realistic option combining coherence and correspondence, if we are privileged enough to have any choices. There remain areas where the desire for the absolute, especially in matters of love and religion, remains strong among some people. There is much talk also about those Enlightenment ideals of being authentic, about being true to ourselves, and of being, above all, rational (Duignan 2019).

Medium and Message: Politics as a Digital Commodity

Digital capitalism is now well established. The simple, reductive, repeated 'messages' of the advertiser can be easily repurposed to create a market for certain kinds of political products – once very hard to sell, but coming right back into fashion. Some imagine propaganda to be a purely political business, but it seems to me that it is also purely business. In the bad old days, politicians bought newspapers, controlled cinema, and popular culture (Föllmer 2020) and peddled their 'line' at a number of levels, from the apparently 'objective' editorial (that myth of truth) to the product placement of certain goods and services likely to support the political position or, if you will, 'cause'.

Digital forms such as Facebook and, even better, Twitter are the media of choice for populist politicians. It must be acknowledged also that they have also been the choice for politicians like Barrack Obama, who would not, I think, be described as Populist. As Marshall McLuhan (1964) has said, the medium is the message. It is not possible to present a nuanced, quietly built argument on Twitter. The 'message' needs to be simple and recursive – like an advertising slogan. 'Make America Great', 'Take Back Control', and 'Get Brexit Done'. The only difference is that political sloganeering deploys a higher ratio of verbs than is the case with advertising which is content to assert, 'Coke is it', 'Because I'm worth it', and 'Beans Means Heinz'.

The Degradation of Language

Docherty (2019: 3) inveighs against the degradation of language in the political rhetoric of our time. As he sees it, this is 'conditioned by boastful egocentricity, insult, diatribe and violence'. As a consequence, such rhetoric 'reduces the range of thought as it infantilises its vocabulary … degraded language … engenders the

decay of daily and living politics.' Like Docherty, my own field is language and literature and so I am trained to be tuned to words. The decay and degradation Docherty speaks of has an almost Hamletian tone, conveying how language itself can betoken that there is something rotten in the State. There are many aspects to this linguistic degradation (Maginess 2019), but in this chapter I can only highlight a few of them. There is, as Docherty (2019) implies, one kind of degradation, which is the increasingly pervasive lexis of insult and name-calling. I will address this in more detail when I consider revenge and insult politics.

There is another kind of degradation which weaponizes language for the purposes of dupery, reassigning the meanings of keywords. The Polish Jewish philosopher Victor Klemperer (Adams 2017) argued that the Nazis commandeered language before they commandeered the country. The word 'radical' is a prime example. Both American Alt-Right and Islamic Fundamentalists have reassigned the meaning of this word. I was brought up in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s and early 1970s and, being from the Catholic minority, viewed the word 'radical' as a very positive word, denoting a commitment to Civil Rights and a challenge to discrimination. Now, for the Alt-Right, this is a very bad word. Yet for Islamist Fundamentalists, it is a good word – denoting approbation for active Conservative values. The unwitting identification of two sets of Conservative movements who consider themselves antithetical contains its own ironies.

Another phrase bristling with irony is 'fake news'. This is how the Alt-Right dismisses news it does not like, with a certain sinister agility, reversing the status of investigative journalistic truth into lies by a lie. And then there is 'libtard'. Here we get two insults for the price of one. 'Liberal' used to be a good word too (though not, in my world view as a young person, as good as radical). Now 'liberal' is collocated with the elite – so liberal values are, thus, repudiated and then fused with 'tard', a contracted form of 'retard', and American slang for a person with learning difficulties. We have the cruel and crass implication that liberals are not smart, but actually have learning deficiencies, and that people with learning difficulties must also be, by inference, condemned for liberal views. Another obvious aspect of how political language has become oversimplified is the reduction to very simple vocabulary and diction; polysyllables or complex words are absent. This is, of course, more suitable for Twitter where there is a very sheer character limit and is paralleled by a grammar which tends to emphasise verbs (calls to action) rather than modal adjectives or the complex embedded clauses to be expected from a conceptual outlook.

Paradoxically, the very call to action, the passionate exhortation to the people to become agents, to engage, to 'Make America Great', and 'to Get Brexit Done', masks an increasingly totalitarian outlook and way of working. The very last thing that the dupers want is for people to be active. They just want them to be sufficiently active to go out and buy the product, accept the message because it is simple, and deliver via a medium that does not allow for elaboration, caveat, and critical or creative thinking. In that sense, the messaging of the dupers on Twitter is like fast food – finger lickin' good – visceral, simple, and instantly gratifying. Then there is the content of the message, the short sharp sub-messages, Build the Wall, China has invented Covid-19 and exported it. Mexicans are violent rapists. The Police are

right to shoot. Everybody should bear arms. In sex and violence, the thrill is not gone. But, trumping sex and violence is the thrill of raw, brazen power; people who lie for me, I will set free.

Some people may not take the euphemistic claims of advertisements seriously, yet some think that simply by repeating the slogans of transformation, often, it may be noted, backward looking, they will come true. 'Take *back* control', 'make America great *again'*. The trick is to get more people thinking like that, buying into that brand. Using algorithms for pernicious purposes, we find our data is 'harvested' (who knew?) from all sorts of apparently unrelated stuff we have done online: what we have bought, what our Facebook reveals, our Twitter, and our Snapchat. I take it to be that since these platforms are all financed (big time) by apparently incidental background advertising, it is in the interest of business to make even more money by allowing other companies to 'harvest' what to us is casual, of the moment, into mathematically powerful, rich data.

This offers a wide proscenium to entertain not the Scottish Ballet (which would be great) but all manner of clever hackers, hawkers, and stakers in hate (the natural children of resentment). However, the far more important attraction is power, specifically power as product, sellable, and reproducible. What the data harvesters have is a commodity which is vital to the supply and demand nexus of the Populists. And, as we have learned, data is Big business, control of 'data' advertising techniques replicable within a totalitarian politics.

The rise of the Alt-Right, globally, has followed the modus operandi of many such movements in history. That rise is not, in any sense a new spectre, somehow created by social media. The sanctioned 'Realist' posters of Stalinist Russia are but one example of how to deliver mass media simple and compelling 'messages' (Beale 2019). Now, of course, I am aware that what we know about all this is often via Western, Anti-Communist 'messaging', yet it would be hard to argue that these idealising posters did not hide an often grim and panoptical reality. I acknowledge that this is a topic so vast and complex that it would be impossible to do anything but glance at it here.

I have used the word 'beliefs' rather than reasoned arguments, and this is because I want to convey the emotional and even visceral intensity of the current brand of politics in many places. Let me be very clear before going any further, I do not believe 'emotional' to be either positive or negative as a psychic space, even though, historically, the word 'emotional' has been negatively applied to women, for example, and equated with irrational or sub-rational, or instinctive. This hackneyed and despicable construction, a lie among many other such oppressing lies, has given people the excuse to dominate and enslave in a great many places and in a great many circumstances. With an appropriating irony, truly deserving the adjective 'mordant', certain current politicians are now stealing the clothes of those who they have historically subjugated. In a sort of recurring impulse of colonisation and domination, the language deployed on social media plays and trades, above all, on the *emotional* and *instinctive* levels of response in the hearer and watcher. As MacKenzie (2020) and Docherty (2019) argue, feelings now seem more attractive than reasons and, indeed, as MacKenzie et al. (2020: 2) astutely note, 'render reasons

unnecessary'. So, could it possibly be that politicians favouring (slavering, you should pardon the punning) a post democratic, autocratic (call it Presidential style) form of rule, akin to Power Management (you're fired, now where is the pussy, so I can celebrate?), will follow the basic Pig in a Poke Dupery manual? The familiar dialectical opposite, the rational, white, male dominating, expansively conquering and mastering 'hero', is, of course, also very much on show, pecking for the cameras.

The Lie of the Real

It is perhaps this brazen posturing which also sponsors another kind of paradox and that is the Populist, Alt-Right pretending to be 'real', to be of the people, to be distinct from the very elite out of which they came, as attested by Applebaum (2020), cited at the start of the chapter. Significantly, Applebaum's target is not just Trump or the British Tories but the Far Right across Europe. 'We are all in this together', the British Conservatives chanted about austerity, when it was blatantly obvious that the pain was not being borne by the elite.

The effect of this faux identification is to manipulate or even disarm the body politic, creating a carnival of confusion in which the citizens are meant to be bedazzled about who or what the real deal is. And since there is a terror of being other, the easiest option is just to follow the leader. Trump boasted that he is there to act for the people, to clear the swamp, and to rebuild the neglected, rusted margins of the kingdom. Anthony Scaramucci, White House Director of Communications, 21 July–31 July 2017, claimed on a BBC programme (2020) that the Presidential tweets emanated from a strategic desire to 'put people on their heels' (i.e. put them into a state of surprise or bemusement). This obvious bullying is theatricalised in Trump's taunts about the leader of North Korea as the 'little Rocket Man'. The transgressive visceral tone is, of course, ironically petty, but part of a riskier playground preening match. It looks as if Trump has won and the little Rocket Man is now part of the ranks of his new best friends.

Famously, or infamously, Margaret Thatcher questioned the concept of society (Thatcher 1987). Perhaps she meant that she conquered class and societal prejudices to come into her particular kingdom and so, no matter how humble, one could succeed. In fact, her father was an important local public figure, part of the Establishment. Not that there was any element of dupery, surely. Or perhaps it is a matter of *L'Etat, c'est moi.* What was good enough for Louis XIV seems to be good enough for a few contemporary leaders who would attempt to dupe us into thinking they are, really, when you get beyond the jokey cartoon, modern day sun kings, astrut in the colonnades, behind their golden cock comb.

From Flattery to Abuse: Cultivating Internal Resentment

The dupers play cynically upon what Foa and Wilmot (2019) have termed a 'resentment epidemic'. Analysing the deepening divide between urban and rural and viewing the protection of the metropolitan centres at the expense of the ex-industrial 'regions' of America, Europe, and the UK, they argue that Populists play on this. And there seems to be in recent times, a kind of compensatory promise to 'do' infrastructure, to tackle the potholes, to build houses. But who will really profit? The marginalised ex-steelworkers and forgotten small towns in America, England, France, or Real Estate? As Birdwell (2018: 255) points out, 'as dupery, myth cannot ensure any salutary social change; since no prediction is rationally justified, no goal assured'.

Applebaum (2020) maintains that this elite (of which she was a part) is powered by resentment; this seems to be becoming rather a theme among commentators. Her argument is that certain figures, already elite, consider themselves to be a mite overlooked. A recent tell-tale biography of the Trump family written by Donald Trump's niece, Mary, also headlines on this theme of resentment and revenge (Trump 2020). So, for some dupers, it may indeed be personal, but of course the duper, waking at dawn, knows that being the lightning rod for resentment is great TV and reckons the gladiatorial to be almost the biggest thrill of all, after his own sneering laughter at the dressed doll he has so lovingly crafted of the Okie from Muskogee. Our old Princes of Thieves, Hyperbole and Euphemism join with red wattled Brother in Arms: Revenge (this is personal, guys – another form of privatisation) and hey presto, the ground is beaked for recycled despotism, totalitarianism: 'post-democracy'.

From Abuse to Revenge

There is much euphemism in the tweeting rhetoric; in the manner of advertising claims, you will look great, the wrinkles will fall off you like scales from a fish, and for your arthritis there is a miracle cure. Snake oil, they used to call it. However, what is perhaps even more powerful is incitement to revenge. Now some have suggested (Applebaum 2020; Trump 2020) that in the case of some of these Populists, the motive is personal – a settling of old scores. That may be true, but far more dangerous, it seems to me, is the licensing, indeed the exhortation towards revenge. The ex-steelworkers and the ex-miners and the ex-brass banders and the ex-beauty Queens get to hear a leader who ventriloquises their anger and vexation and beats up that anger, fuels it, courts, and sparks it. Thus, we have that essential ingredient for conflict – an enemy. The enemy is the plush skinned elite, shimmering in you-will-not-understand theory.

From Revenge to Panoptical Surveillance: The Enemy Within

So, the stage is set for dictatorship and its greatest tool, surveillance. This is one of the oldest tricks in the dupery playbook. Data harvesting is a form of surveillance which can be used in very sinister ways. Interpretation of data on individuals can lead to them being labelled negatively, as, for example, radical Left. And it is not a big step to labelling them as the enemy within. We may recall that the Nazis also adopted a narrative of national persecution, whipping up resentment at the Versailles Treaty, before they demanded greater room and with chilling precision, proceeded to persecute all who were 'other' who were awry, Jews, people living with disabilities, Roma; you name them, we will dispossess them, outcast them, and arrange for their efficient disposal. Lest we forget.

Docherty (2019) suggests that the political Left (as he defines them, the intellectual elite) has in the past decades since the rise of neoliberal capitalism, taken refuge in language and theory at the expense of material facts. He draws upon philosophical discourse to suggest that the Left has chosen internal coherence over correspondence with reality. The danger of this is that it leaves the experts, and their slightly more comprehensible relations, the media, open to the charge of elitism. The intellectuals can then be vilified and ignored and made the whipping boy of Populists and Demagogues.

Resisting Dupery

What do the people who follow the golden crested do about dupery? They collude because they have become convinced where they will survive better, either as those who already hold money and power or as those who have been fooled by Big Talk that they, too, can get to be rich and, if not, then at least they have freedom – to get to say whatever they damned well like about anybody. They can rip the gloves off and blame the foreigners, which is precisely the narrow reservation the dupers have herded them into. They churn up the mud as they try to get out. Mud sticks, but not to the sun kings. They flick with their heavy claws, imaginary dandruff off the shoulders of Europeans. But then there are the other others who are not convinced. There are those who have the temerity not to play the game, to look askance, awry, at this model of humanity. Some of those who look awry are viewed by the 'normons' as different – they are not truly British or American, they are alien. They are beyond the pale.

The French philosopher, Lacan, talked quite a lot about dupery. And he came up with a pun, which is, to be sure, rather lost in translation: The non-duped err. Now, it seems what he meant by this was that if you want to not be duped, you must err (cited in Flieger 1996:106). That seems odd, until it is explained that a semantic shift has taken place – a reassignment of language. Now, for Lacan, to 'err' is good. Lacan seems to imply that erring is part of being human – embracing our fallibility,

our capacity to be wrong, to go wrong. But Lacan means something more specific – for him, to err is to look awry. And as far as I understand, it means that looking at our normality, events or people or phenomena as if we were an alien, a foreigner, is vital. Now, another way of putting this, and perhaps a lot more simply, is that we need to look coolly, quietly, and critically, if we cultivate questioning as a habit of mind, a bit like Socrates. If we look awry, we refuse to accept the official version of events, the myth that the only purpose for us being in the world is private gain, preferably, amorally, and in a spirit of *braggadocio* which might remind us of a an extravagantly crested bird who is, not a fool but a duper, robbing us blind. Behind sight there is insight. And with this looking awry there is maybe some bitterness and anger and even paranoia. However, there may be such a thing as good paranoia as well as the bad paranoia, as Žižek has argued (cited in Flieger 1996: 102). That bad paranoia we have seen before too, the other side of resentment, is the imagination of persecution. We may note how lexically recursive the word 'witchhunt' has become on Trump's Twitter. If the Highest in the Land leads the charge toward the complete casualisation of fakery, of dupery as a national(ist) imperative, it will not be long before it is too late to say 'no surrender'.

MacKenzie et al. (2020: 6) refer to the report of the UK House of Commons Committee for Digital Culture, Media, and Sport Committee recommendation that digital literacy should be the 'fourth pillar' of education, along with reading, writing, and maths. More specifically, MacKenzie et al. (2020: 6) recommend that we begin to fashion techniques for developing emotional scepticism to override our tendency to be less critical of content that promotes an emotional response. Or, perhaps to qualify this slightly, I would add emotional responses propelled by fear, revenge, hatred, contempt for the oppressed, and marginalised.

We might begin by listening to the voices of the oppressed and marginalised, and we might proceed by teaching our children and our students ourselves that unless we create solidarity the nightmare of history will ineluctably advance and in that dark night there will be no escape. There is an important role for universities to enact critical thinking and critical pedagogy, but also for greater consideration of how the academy can become what has been termed 'the engaged university' (Watson et al. 2013). This means greater knowledge sharing and exchange between global north and south, as Munck et al. (2012) and Brennan et al. (2004) have advocated. And it means greater generosity and understanding of the role of universities within society and in the creation of society in terms of encouraging active democracy and participation, of challenging supine adherence to neoliberal values and silence in the face of the rise of intolerant, racist, and hateful politics.

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