

Orange Man Bad. Millennial Journalism and its Ideological War with Donald Trump.

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ABSTRACT

This chapter reveals a hidden ideological war concealed in the relationship between Donald Trump and the media. It is argued that historical and generational forces have led to the emergence of Millennial Journalism – a form of journalism characterized by the use of news narratives. News narratives are simplified, explanatory stories featuring casts of morally good and bad actors. Millennial Journalism casts Donald Trump as a villain – a narrative captured by the popular meme, “orange man bad”. However, journalism’s “narrative turn” did not occur in a vacuum. What is harder to see, is the accompanying ideological shift which continues to play out around us, and of which narrative-led journalism is merely a symptom.

Millennial Journalism developed during the late 20th Century to support and legitimize a particular set of values and assumptions which I refer to as the Millennial Ideology. Donald Trump rejects this worldview and seeks to replace it with an alternative set of values, which I refer to as Trumpism. Trumpism therefore poses an existential threat, not just to Millennial Journalism, but also to the Millennial Ideology. It is in this context that the debate around “fake news” should be understood.

This hypothesis is tested by examining how the BBC portrayed Donald Trump in the weeks following the 2020 election. What is found is a tendency towards narrative-led journalism. This implies that the mainstream media, and the professional journalists who create it, are heavily invested in the Millennial Ideology. This chapter thus shines a light on the ideological dynamics of the relationship between Donald Trump and those responsible for shaping the public’s perception of him.

Keywords: BBC, fake news, Trumpism, Millennial Ideology, populism, Donald Trump, American Dream, Millennial Journalism, news narrative, mainstream media.

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INTRODUCTION

"The Orange Man is bad indeed." (Miller, 2020)

Public perception of politicians is shaped by the mainstream media. Even in the age of social media, for large sections of the public, professional journalism continues to shape conversations and set the agenda of public discourse. As the journalist Nic Newman argues (2011, 28), "mainstream media play a crucial role in defining the agenda of social media – rather than the other way round."

How then does the mainstream media portray Donald Trump? In other words, if the public's perception of Donald Trump is shaped by the mainstream media; what shapes the mainstream media's portrayal of Donald Trump? I will argue that the answer to these questions reveals how a fundamental change in the nature of journalism took place during the last third of the 20th Century. The change is essentially a "narrative turn" in which news narratives determine which facts are reported and drive the editorial agenda. The narrative turn did not occur in a vacuum however. What is harder to see, is the accompanying ideological shift which continues to play out around us, and of which the narrative turn is merely a symptom.

Donald Trump's fractious relationship with journalism is best understood therefore as a clash of ideologies in which the mainstream media seeks to defend both narrative-led news, and the wider Millennial Ideology of which it is an integral part. Donald Trump on the other hand, sees this worldview as obsolete and seeks to disrupt and challenge it. Hence, Donald Trump's accusations of "fake news" can be understood, not merely as a politician demanding a platform for his views, but also as the demand for an entirely different model of journalism and, by implication, a different worldview. On the other side of the fence, both of these demands are stubbornly resisted by professional journalists who believe it is their duty to defend the status quo against Trump.

To explore this hypothesis, I will present evidence of how BBC News portrays Donald Trump. The BBC is chosen because it is legally required to be impartial, and because it is a non-American news organization. Hence its coverage is less likely to reflect partisan political affiliation, and more likely to reflect ideological commitment. What is found is a strong tendency to narrative-led journalism, in which Donald Trump is portrayed to audiences as an impostor and a charlatan. To the BBC, Donald Trump is a temporary aberration, a departure from normality. He is not a serious politician, but a narcissistic showman who has bewitched a gullible public with a dangerous populist ideology. It is a narrative captured by the popular meme "orange man bad."

A House Divided. Trumpism v the Millennial Ideology.

Donald Trump rarely mentions ideology *per se*, nonetheless ideology is rarely absent from his politics.¹ Like the roots of a tree, Donald Trump's ideology nourishes and supports his politics, yet remains out of sight just below the surface, and must be inferred, or decoded, from what he says. For example, at a rally in Georgia (Trump 2020a, 36 mins) he warned that if the Democrats won the election, "Everything you care about will be gone, your whole philosophy is going to be gone". He explained those who shared his views, (ibid, 41 mins), "believe in America, they believe in our values and all that we stand for", adding that his opponents comprised a radical movement that, "hates America and wants to erase our history and everything that we hold dear – they want to rip down our statues." In remarks such as these therefore, Donald Trump is addressing ideological, rather than political concerns. One of the rare occasions when Donald Trump spoke directly about ideology was when he denounced Critical Race Theory (2020b). He referred to CRT as a,

¹Discussions about the distinction between politics and ideology can be found elsewhere. For example, Schwarzmantel (2008, 6) observes that politics can be thought of as limiting itself to remedying specific grievances, "without the aspiration to build a new society", whereas ideology tends to address broader areas of human thought and often promises to create "a golden future".

“crusade against American history, it is toxic propaganda, ideological poison that, if not removed, will dissolve the civic bonds that tie us together. It will destroy our country. That is why I recently banned training in this prejudiced ideology from the federal government and banned it in the strongest manner possible.”

Adding that those who hold this ideology have, “warped, distorted, and defiled the American story with deceptions, falsehoods, and lies” and seek to, “bully Americans into abandoning their values, their heritage, and their very way of life.” So what are “our values and all that we stand for”? What is the Trump ideology? Arguably, Trumpism is best understood as a version of the American Dream. The American Dream is itself an elusive concept, popularized by the historian James Truslow Adams who described it as the vision of (1941, 404),

“a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement... It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of a social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable.”

Trumpism can therefore be understood as descending from the Anglo-American Enlightenment, or Victorian Liberalism. These worldviews valued rugged individualism, personal liberty and rational self-interest. According to the Austrian-British political philosopher F. A. Hayek, (2006, 50) this particular tradition can be traced to, "a group of Scottish moral philosophers led by David Hume, Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson, seconded by their English contemporaries Josiah Tucker, Edmund Burke, and William Paley, and drawing largely on a tradition rooted in the jurisprudence of the common law." This tradition was culturally dominant in the US until the 1960s when it came under fierce and sustained assault by the boomer generation. The boomers, who grew up in an affluent, consumer society, objected to the ethos of self-restraint, duty and deferred gratification which Victorian Liberalism fostered. To the boomers, it was an exhausted and obsolete tradition which tolerated imperfection and encouraged destructive forms of competition. In their quest to build a radically better world, and harvest the fruits of the affluent society, the boomer generation embraced a more Utopian, progressive outlook.

There is no space here to discuss how the geopolitical world order has changed since the 1960s. Instead, following the cultural theorist Peter Turchin, we will simply note that by the early 21st century, the boomer worldview has evolved into the Millennial Ideology – a matrix of values and assumptions shared by those who have been educated in the finishing schools of Western universities. In Turchin’s view (2013) this caste – the inheritors of the campus idealists of the 1960s and 1970s – has become swollen in numbers to the extent that it cannot be easily absorbed into society, a phenomenon Turchin refers to as “elite overproduction.” At the same time, non-elite groups, such as the working class, small business owners and the self-employed, increasingly distrust the Millennial Ideology and find their interests better served by Trumpism. Thus, we have arrived at a moment of social rupture in which socioeconomic pressures pit the two blocs against one another for wealth and political power. Following the demographic-structural theory of Jack Goldstone, the inevitable result is social strife and disintegration. As Goldstone explains (2020, 8), “It is only when states become financially strapped or subject to international pressure, and are deserted by their elites, that popular distress furnishes raw material for mobilizing forces for conflict.”

In summary, we see a Manichean divide – a modern tribalism marked by two hostile ideologies. Those who subscribe to the Millennial Ideology see themselves an educated elite - idealists crusading to make world a better place. They see themselves as uniquely qualified to understand and combat global challenges such as climate change or Covid19. However, they see their benevolent, ethical-political project threatened by Trumpism – a populist, crypto-fascist movement of uneducated deplorables led by Donald Trump. Trumpists, on the other hand, are deeply

suspicious of the future which the elites are preparing for them. Trumpists fear a dystopia in which personal liberty and the American Dream will be abolished and replaced by a technocratic, corporatist state. To Trumpists, the idealism of the Millennial Ideology is a facade concealing a self-serving agenda whose real goal is wealth and power. It is an ideological polarization which burns with a moral, quasi-religious intensity.² For example, the anti-Trump journalist Chauncey Devega writes (2019),

"On a near daily basis, Donald Trump continues to show the world that he is a racist, a white supremacist and an authoritarian. There is another word that can and should be used to describe Donald Trump. He is evil."

Trumpists however disagree. The Trump campaign fundraiser Pamela Martin for example (NTD 2020), sees journalists such as Devega as part of a corrupt, elite media weaponized against them,

"brainwashing and keeping people down and keeping people's mouths shut... This is a spiritual battle, a physical battle, and it's coming down, because for so long, they've been trying to control us, it will no longer happen".

It is journalism's role in this complex ideological theater to which we now turn.

The Narrative Turn. From Liberal Journalism to Millennial Journalism.

Journalism is not a static, fixed thing. It changes to reflect the dominant ideology of the age. A profound change in the nature of journalism took place during the last third of the 20th Century. The change, which has been described as an "interpretative", or "explanatory" turn, has been noted by scholars, though it remains an under-researched and poorly understood phenomenon. The American communications scholar Kevin Barnhurst (2014, 135) writes that journalists increasingly felt that it was their duty to explain how the world worked to the mass of people who lacked the qualifications to analyze things for themselves. Thus the desire to, "make sense of a world too complex for average citizens to understand led inexorably to the expansion of explanatory news."

The explanatory turn marked a change in direction away from the tradition of Victorian Liberal journalism which privileged factual reporting and was careful to maintain a fire gap between fact and opinion. According to Barnhurst, (op cit, 118) the explanatory turn was already well underway by the mid-1970s when,

"interpretation had become widespread in American news (Johnstone et al. 1976), mentions of how and why events occurred and emphasis on explanations reached a zenith in newspapers, just as movements to make news more explanatory pressed on mainstream journalism from all sides."

The journalism scholar John Pauly (2014, 601) notes the same transformation, pointing out that a new generation of boomer journalists "were ethical in a way that we have not fully recognized" and that their journalism was marked by the, "social construction of moral purpose". The explanatory turn was also therefore an ethical-political turn. The goal of news became not to describe the world, but to change it and improve it. Journalists became increasingly invested in the, "the wider moral purposes they hope their stories will serve." (ibid).

By the early 21st century, the explanatory turn had evolved into a narrative turn in which a certain set of agreed explanations had become dominant. Once established, these news narratives became

²The extent to which Trumpism, the Millennial Ideology and populism should be considered genuine "ideologies" is moot. Following Mudde (2004, 544) they may perhaps be conceptualized as "thin" ideologies.

institutionalized and resistant to change. All journalism tells stories. However, in the traditional, Victorian Liberal model, journalism's arrow leads from the reporting of fact, to opinion and narrative. Whereas in narrative-led journalism, the direction of this arrow is reversed. Instead of constructing fact-driven narratives, journalism produces narrative-driven facts. As Majin explains (2021), "When journalism's arrow is reversed, we discard the facts that least support our narrative. Instead of constructing narratives to help us make sense of the world, we find ourselves constructing worlds to help us make sense of our narratives." News narratives are rarely stated explicitly, instead they are assumed. They reflect the unspoken ideological creed of professional journalists. Questioning the narratives therefore implies criticism of the creed, which, in turn, implies disloyalty to the group and marks the skeptic as an outsider. According to Majin (2021), contemporary news narratives can be understood as,

"morality plays with casts of good and bad actors. Journalism reinforces these narratives by selectively publicising the bad deeds of bad actors, and the good deeds of good actors. Facts which don't fit the narrative are suppressed, ignored, institutionally forgotten, or reinterpreted."

Another fundamental change in journalism is the nature of the journalists who produce it. By the 21st century, a job once performed largely by non-university educated "hacks", had metamorphosed into an elite, high-status profession requiring a university education. As the American writer Kevin Mims observes (2020),

"When you read the biographies of the young writers for most elite publications these days, they are all very impressive but in many ways depressingly interchangeable. The same handful of colleges, the same handful of majors, and employment at the same handful of publications. When they write memoirs, they don't write about the hardships of poverty but rather the hardships of privilege".

The British political journalist Peter Osborne points out that journalists are members of an elite caste with shared values and a shared worldview. As Osborne writes (2008, 259),

"The Media Class and Political Class share identical assumptions about life and politics. They are affluent, progressive, middle and upper-middle class. This triumphant metropolitan elite has completely lost its links with a wider civil society... politicians and the media have far more in common with each other than they do with voters, readers and the public."

Osborne argues that contemporary journalism's role became increasingly the construction of a make-believe ethical-political universe – a moral fantasy of what ought to be (op cit, 242), "a semi-fictitious political world whose most striking features were media events and fabricated stories."

By 2020, Millennial Journalism found itself in a state of barely disguised ideological warfare with the man who symbolizes the rejection of their entire worldview. As the independent American journalist Matt Taibbi observes (2020), when the goal is the defeat of Trumpism, being economical with the truth is morally justified,

"The instinct to shield audiences from views or facts deemed politically uncomfortable has been in evidence since Trump became a national phenomenon... we may freely misreport reality, so long as the political goal is righteous. It was okay to publish the now-discredited Steele dossier, because Trump is scum."

In summary, mainstream journalism has become Millennial Journalism – an ethical-political, factual genre characterized by the prominent use of news narratives. Millennial Journalism emerged out of, and in order to legitimize, the Millennial Ideology. The Millennial Ideology is implacably hostile to

Trumpism. Donald Trump intuitively understands these underlying political and ideological dynamics. He has attempted to bypass Millennial Journalism by Tweeting directly to his 89 million followers.³ Hence, one of the impacts of the Trump Presidency has been to sharpen the divide between those who trust Millennial Journalism, and those who do not. The latter turn to independent, fringe journalists or social media in search of alternative sources of information and alternative, non-elite narratives. Hence, we see two rival epistemic universes in which different statements of fact are accepted as true. Each tribe denies the other's beliefs and regards them as either errors born of ignorance, or, increasingly, willful lies and propaganda.

Orange Man Bad. How the BBC Portrays Donald Trump.

In democratic societies, politicians frequently rail at the media and accuse them of partiality. But Donald Trump's attacks on journalism represent something far deeper than a politician frustrated with criticism of his policies. According to some estimates (Trackalytics, 2020) as many as 7% of his 52,000 Tweets – i.e. more than 3,600 – refer to fake news. These Tweets often express the view that mainstream journalists are ideological foes waging war on Trumpism and the American Dream. For example (2017), “The FAKE NEWS media (failing @nytimes, @NBCNews, @ABC, @CBS, @CNN) is not my enemy, it is the enemy of the American People!” Donald Trump is therefore aware that the mainstream media's Millennial Journalists are the ideological enemies of Trumpism. In his view, it is the future of civilization itself which is at stake. As he told a rally in Florida (2016), “The Washington establishment and the financial and media corporations that fund it exist for only one reason: to protect and enrich itself.” Adding that these people (ibid), “don't have your good in mind. Our campaign represents a true existential threat like they haven't seen before. This is not simply another four-year election. This is a crossroads in the history of our civilization.” Donald Trump recognizes the difference between narrative-led, Millennial Journalism, and the impartial style of the Victorian Liberal tradition, and he recognizes the different ideologies they serve. Hence, to Donald Trump, Millennial Journalism is not really journalism at all – it is counterfeit, it is fake news (ibid),

“the corporate media in our country is no longer involved in journalism. They are a political special interest, no different than any lobbyist or other financial entity with an agenda... For them, it is a war – and for them, nothing is out of bounds.”

To test this hypothesis, we shall examine how BBC News portrays Donald Trump and attempt to detect whether the BBC adopts the impartial methodology of Victorian Liberal journalism, or the narrative-led methodology of Millennial Journalism. Doing so will reveal the hidden ideological roots which are attached to these rival systems. The BBC is chosen for this exercise because it is legally obliged to treat political subjects with “due impartiality”. Its Editorial Guidelines (BBC 2020) stress that, “audiences should not be able to tell from BBC output the personal opinions of our journalists or news and current affairs presenters on matters of public policy, political or industrial controversy.” In other words, theoretically the BBC should not engage in narrative-led journalism, but should adopt a position of neutrality between Trumpism and the Millennial Ideology. The fact that the BBC is not a US media organization, makes it more likely that what is detected stems from ideology, not Republican or Democrat partisanship.

Before proceeding, it is helpful to note the key roles played by two prominent BBC journalists; Jon Sopel, North American Editor, and Justin Webb, co-presenter of the *Today* program, and himself a former North American Editor. In 2019, BBC Books published Sopel's *A Year at the Circus: Inside Trump's White House*. Early in this book, Sopel wrestles with how to cast Donald Trump and what narrative to construct. First Sopel (2019, 11) wonders whether the President should be portrayed as

³ Trump was permanently banned by Twitter on 8th January 2021. Twitter explained that the President's Tweets violated its "Glorification of Violence Policy" (Twitter, 2021).

a, “Bond villain, stroking a white pussycat, while carefully figuring out every move that will ultimately deliver him world domination.” Next (16) Sopel considers casting Donald Trump as the cartoon villain from *Wacky Races*,

“The Dick Dastardly *de nos jours* careering along some mountain road, crashing into other vehicles, brakes failing, the wheels about to fall off, body parts crumpled, the engine about to seize, black smoke belching out of the exhaust pipe.”

But Sopel remains dissatisfied, reflecting that Donald Trump surrounds himself with characters who are (17), “deeply flawed individuals – amateurs, grifters, weaklings, convicted and unconvicted felons”. Finally inspiration strikes, and Sopel casts Donald Trump as the showman, T.P. Barnum. It is a role which combines vulgarity, narcissism and dishonesty in equal measure (36), “Barnum liked creating his own hoaxes and designing his own reality.” Therefore (37), “the central guiding narrative of this exceptional administration has been the battle between a president who sees himself as the all-powerful ringmaster; and those around him.”

The Barnum narrative is also adopted by Justin Webb. For example, in a newspaper article he told readers that Donald Trump delights in deceiving people by blurring the distinction between fiction and truth (Webb 2020a). “Think of the inventor of the modern circus, P T Barnum” urged Webb, “In 19th-century America, he thrilled people with freak shows, human oddities, weird things that boggled the mind. It was not clear whether Barnum’s circus performers were real or fake but nobody cared. They loved it.” Webb also argues that Trumpism is an immoral, populist force which produces an uneducated, visceral mob incapable of rational thought. Webb writes that Trump supporters (2020b), “simply do not have access to anything we would regard as balanced information. And what they do read only whips them into more of a frenzy.” There is thus, strong preexisting evidence that both Sopel and Webb see the role of journalists as being, at least in part, to construct and manage news narratives.

BBC Today – A Case Study.

Due to space limitations, we will focus largely on BBC Radio 4’s flagship news and current affairs program *Today* during the post-election period 10th November to 10th December 2020. Throughout these four weeks, Donald Trump repeatedly claimed there had been widespread election fraud. These claims were dismissed by the BBC across all its output. For example, (BBC 2020a), “The president has been making unsubstantiated claims that Mr Biden was only able to win the election through electoral corruption, but no proof has emerged so far to support the allegations.”

On November 10th, the Reverend Dr Sam Wells (2020), told listeners to *Today’s* religious slot, *Thought for the Day*, that, “The last chapter of the race for the White House has been hard to watch.” Wells appeared to reference the familiar Barnum narrative and advised Donald Trump to “get off the stage” and face “the unpalatable truth” that he has failed. Wells offered his opinion that Donald Trump was unable to let go of his “fantasy of perpetual fulfillment and personal gratification” and concluded that the President was “paralyzed by the fear of his own failure”.

The same show featured a news report from Ben Wright (2020) who repeated the BBC’s editorial stance that “Donald Trump has produced no evidence of fraud, and it’s Joe Biden preparing for power.” Audiences were told that there had been, “days of unsubstantiated claims by Donald Trump” and quoted a member of the Biden campaign who described the President’s claims as “far-fetched”. In other words, the BBC is assuming that the elections were uncontaminated by fraud, and placing the burden of proof on Donald Trump to demonstrate otherwise. However this is a circular argument, and not as journalistically fair-minded as it might at first appear. Since the BBC cannot know with certainty that the elections were clean, impartiality demands a stance of open-

minded ignorance. It should be noted therefore that assigning the burden of proof to Donald Trump is a conscious act.⁴

However a far more narrative-driven segment was broadcast at 08.25. Here, Justin Webb introduced BBC presenter and classicist Natalie Haynes, and the author of the political thriller *House of Cards* Michael Dobbs (Webb, 2020c). “Should we pity Donald Trump?” asked Webb in a facetious tone of voice, “he’s reported to be eating too many hamburgers, refusing to accept the inevitable.” Haynes explains that the lesson from history is that, “absolute power is a very risky thing to get out of”, adding that, “I think we’re all probably thinking a little bit of the Emperor Nero aren’t we?... He is forced to take his own life... it really reminds me of the post-election White House.” Haynes responded with laughter to the suggestion that Donald Trump resembled the heroic Achilles, and suggested Agamemnon as a better fit because he was, “incredibly petulant, enormously ineffectual, other people have to do all the decision making because he just stands there helplessly stamping his foot and demanding things.” Haynes went on to explain that the Emperor Caligula was killed by his own bodyguard and wondered whether there were contemporary parallels, “I saw on the BBC only over the weekend, they’re saying that if the President doesn’t leave on the given day, he’ll be taken out of there by the secret service.” Haynes’ concluded her interview by returning to Rome’s most infamous Roman tyrant, “My favorite I’m afraid is Nero who has to kill himself, but he can’t bear to because he’s too cowardly.”

This piece of broadcasting is quite remarkable. What sort of journalism is it? It is not factual reporting, nor is it impartial analysis. It is perhaps best described as psychodrama which is an extreme form of narrative-led journalism. The psychiatrist Jacob Levy Moreno developed the idea of psychodrama as a form of creative therapy in which subjects act-out traumatic events from their lives as if they were performing a play. Moreno explained the therapeutic benefit of giving a participant the power to mediate his relationship with the universe (1987, 11), “what matters is the expansion of man in relation to the needs and fantasies he has about himself. He becomes the master... instead of the servant... he is free from the fetters of facts and actuality.” In psychodrama, participants can play the role of God and replace the world as it is, with the world as it ought to be. A common theme in psychodrama is crime and punishment, and the victory of good over evil. The American sociologist Andrew Singleton notes the essentially tribal nature of these “combat narratives” which serve to validate the morality of our group, and demonize those with different values and beliefs. As Singleton explains (2001, 178),

“the social practice of storytelling about evil is arguably the most important way of communicating to others the experiences which sustain a community and a community’s sense of itself... These stories about evil are ‘combat narratives’, depicting, in some way, a war between the forces of ‘good’ and the forces of ‘evil’”.

Two days later, *Today* interviewed Jon Sopel who explained that there now existed two, “parallel universes”; the universe of President-Elect Joe Biden, who was offering a “return to normality” and a “sense of calm” - and the universe of Donald Trump, the doomed tyrant in his palace, who was, “not following advice, he’s confounding people, alarming people, destabilizing people.” Sopel told audiences that the Trump era should be viewed as a brief “dysfunctional” period which was passing. According to Sopel’s narrative, the old status quo was now being restored (2020b), “The days of government by Tweet are gone... and it’s back to a different way of doing business, and I think an awful lot of people around the world – diplomats in Washington and people in other departments – will find that reassuring.”

The following day’s episode of the *Americast* podcast featured Sopel alongside BBC colleagues Emily Maitlis and Anthony Zurcher. The podcast featured an interview with former President

⁴An interesting comparison can be made with media coverage of “Russiagate”. Here, the burden of proof was reversed and Donald Trump assumed to be a Russian agent on the basis of unsubstantiated rumor and hearsay. For a discussion see (Majin 2019).

Barack Obama who promoted the narrative that, by making “false claims of election fraud”, Donald Trump was delegitimizing democracy and treading, in Obama’s words (Sopel 2020c), “a dangerous path”.

Once again, this cannot be considered an impartial stance. The BBC portrays Obama’s worldview with approval as correct and normal, whereas Donald Trump’s is framed as one of fantasy and madness. Hence Sopel refers to Donald Trump and his supporters by exclaiming, “It’s Alice in Wonderland isn’t it!” to which Zurcher adds, “it’s living in an alternate reality... they’re trying to convince themselves it’s not over.” (Timecode 06.20). The BBC also presents Donald Trump’s claims of election fraud as the cynical maneuvering of a crook, with Sopel asking, “Is he frightened of prison?” while Maitlis speculates that Donald Trump “could choose to self-pardon, to pardon himself and his family.” (13.00) In the *Americast*, narrative appears has taken over entirely. There is no attempt to report facts impartially and objectively weigh the evidence relating to election fraud.

A week later, the BBC had an opportunity to publicly demonstrate its commitment to due impartiality when Donald Trump’s legal team set out their case for election fraud at a press conference. Rudy Giuliani, the President’s attorney, read out extracts from witness affidavits and attacked the media narrative that Donald Trump has produced no evidence of fraud. Referring to a witness statement, Giuliani told reporters (Giuliani 2020), “Maybe you could say she's lying, but you can't say there's no evidence. This is what we call evidence!” However, in the heat of the press conference, Giuliani’s hair dye began to run and formed unsightly streaks down the side of his face. When this happened, or when he mopped his brow, (ibid 34.54) there was an audible crescendo of camera shutters as press photographers captured the unflattering images. Dismayed by this, Jenna Ellis, Donald Trump’s Senior Legal Advisor, challenged the media to abandon its addiction to narrative, and allow audiences to hear their side of the argument (ibid, 53.00-55.00),

“The facts matter. The truth matters. And if you are fair reporters, you will cover that fairly and appropriately and you will allow coverage of our media team here and our legal team. That is absolutely shocking, that all you cover are around the margins, and I’ve seen all of you taking pictures right now, and I can anticipate what your headlines are going to be. If you are not willing to talk about the evidence that has been presented, then that is absolutely unacceptable for journalistic standards”.

The following morning’s *Today* relegated the story to the 08.55 slot which is usually reserved for lighter subjects. Justin Webb (2020d) played 25 seconds of Giuliani before interrupting the context-less sound bite with an audible sigh of disapproval and told listeners, “Well, let’s draw a veil over what he was actually saying.” Webb explained that,

"Everyone's attention was increasingly not on those words, but on what was happening down the side of his face. Because two lines of what appeared to be brown dye were coming down. They were in many respects the most memorable part of the news conference."

Webb then introduced the Guardian newspaper’s Beauty Columnist Sali Hughes, who told listeners that Giuliani was probably using a temporary form of hair dye. “Ah!” exclaimed Webb, “So he hadn’t done it properly!... What would your advice be to him?” To which Hughes replied that one should not choose a temporary dye, “if you’re the middle of a very heated temper tantrum” - a comment which drew a chuckle of approval from Webb. Webb then asked whether men should color their hair “as they grow older”. In response to which Hughes observed that Donald Trump also dyed his hair and from this one could infer that, “hair colorant is obviously quite a significant decision within that administration.”

The BBC's coverage of the election fraud press conference is a strong example of Millennial Journalism. Here, the Barnum narrative demands that Giuliani and Ellis are cast as clowns. Consequently, their evidence can be dismissed with mockery and laughter, and Giuliani is ridiculed as a buffoon having a "heated temper tantrum." When narrative-led news dominates, the journalist's role is to serve the narrative. Uncomfortable information which would threaten the narrative is suppressed, trivialized and delegitimized.

Conclusion. The Metamorphosis of Journalism.

There is strong evidence that narrative-led, Millennial Journalism has become the norm at the BBC and supplanted the impartial, Victorian Liberal model. The BBC's output clearly signals to audiences what they should think, and how they should feel about Donald Trump. The BBC's framing of Donald Trump as 'orange man bad' is therefore evidence that the early 21st century is marked by profound ideological conflict. Journalism is in the front line of this ideological struggle, and nowhere is this more apparent than in the battle fought over how to portray Donald Trump and shape how audiences perceive him. This is because Donald Trump symbolizes an entire worldview, i.e. a matrix of assumptions, values and beliefs about what is real and what is moral. Delegitimizing Donald Trump the man, also delegitimizes the Trumpist worldview, and *ipso facto* legitimizes the Millennial Ideology. It is an ideological war in which the stakes are very high.

The conceptual framework sketched in this chapter helps us make sense of Donald Trump's frequent claims that the mainstream media produces "fake news". "Fake", in this context, means ideologically incongruous, or ideologically inappropriate. In other words, mainstream, Millennial Journalism is entirely legitimate from the point of view of those who subscribe to the Millennial Ideology. Millennial Journalism's goal is to help make the world a better place, as understood by the Millennial Ideology. This over-riding objective supersedes the requirement to search for the truth and report it honestly regardless of the consequences. In Millennial Journalism, the ethical-political consequences are all important – the end justifies the means.

However, from the perspective of Trumpism, Millennial Journalism does indeed produce "fake news". That is, it masquerades as objective Victorian Liberal journalism, but abandons the norms of objectivity and impartiality, and selectively includes and excludes information in order to construct news narratives. Millennial Journalism is offensive to Trumpists because it appears dishonest, and also because its goal is the destruction of their values, hopes and aspirations. The mainstream media of the early 21st century thus paradoxically produces journalism which is simultaneously both legitimate and fake – depending upon one's values and on which side of the ideological divide one stands. Thus, the mainstream media's portrayal of Donald Trump tells us at least as much about the divided nature of contemporary society, and the state of contemporary journalism, as it does about Donald Trump.

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Biography

Dr Graham Majin worked as a broadcast journalist and professional film maker for more than 30 years. At the BBC he was an on-screen reporter, news editor, senior producer and documentary maker. After leaving the BBC, Graham set up his own media production company, and produced and directed a wide range of video content and animations for clients including global brands, charities, environmental NGOs and numerous SMEs. Graham is currently a Senior Lecturer in Documentary Journalism at Bournemouth University where his research interests include fake news and how the concept of journalistic truth is understood differently by audiences, journalists and academics. His research is inter-disciplinary and draws on media theory, cognitive psychology, philosophy and intellectual history. Graham recently gave evidence to the House of Lords' report 'Breaking News? The Future of UK Journalism'.