

TV Genre, Political Allegory, and New Distribution Platforms

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Philip Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*, recently adapted by Amazon Studios, has ceased to be an "alternative reality." The allegorical (other-speaking) narrative Dick put together in the early 1960s in which the United States has been occupied by National Socialists and Japanese imperialists has morphed in a little over 50 years into the genre of creative non-fiction. Dick was careful about disguising his fascism. For example, he admits to practicing esotericism in a 1974 letter to Heinlein, and admitted in a letter to Claudia Bush that same year that he knew better than to title his next book *Thus Spoke Zoroaster*, lest he give away the Nietzschean, fascist agenda. Dick did not hesitate privately to quote Mussolini, if anyone has doubts about the extent of his embrace of fascism.

In the context of the upcoming presidential election, we have shifted from the esoteric to the exoteric. It's no accident that "Stranger Things" has arrived on the scene to let us know about the rupture in the esoteric fabric that served to disguise the ugliness, and we now have direct access to the "upside-down world" where monsters exist, and threaten this world. In the current moment, the established media (e.g., "[The Late Show](#)") may display un-problematically the fact that fascism is here in the form of capitalism-in-desperation. Only a handful of months prior [to Colbert's linking the swastika to Donald Trump's candidacy](#), Amazon Studios had paid the MTA in New York to place advertisements for "The Man in the High Castle" on subways. In November of 2015, some New Yorkers and politicians [complained about the advertisements](#). Between November and June of this year, some New Yorkers went from being offended by what the swastika signifies to embracing it as another example of comedic cleverness.

What might be of interest within the conversation on the topic of political allegory and *The Man in the High Castle* is the fandom surrounding Dick's works and their spinoffs via Hollywood films and television, fandom visible among the most educated in North America, from Ursula Le Guin to Alice Sola Kim to Neil Gaiman, all of whom seem utterly unaware of Dick's fascist politics and self-proclaimed esotericism. This has also been true of our most astute media theorists and philosophers of the past hundred years who have been blind to the Nietzschean and Dickian programming, many of whom have devoted their political energies to various movements within identity politics, with no intention of undoing the capitalism that underpins their careerism. Geoff Waite calls this group "manipulated Nietzscheans" (see his *Nietzsche's Corps/e* (1996) that includes almost all the Posties (posthumanists, postcolonialists, postmetaphysicals, postsocialists, postmodernists, etc.).

It's time to resurrect Susan Sontag's 1975 phrase "[fascinating fascism](#)," for it addresses the scopic drive of fascism along with its capacity to augment the profit principle, alongside its strange power that prevents its victims from recognizing that they have been co-opted (Sontag's lament about Leni Riefenstahl). Rather than scrutinizing junk culture's allegiances with national politics in the U.S., many leftists find their self-interests aligned with the new, exoteric version of Dick's vision that is now our present. Does it surprise anyone that Larry Wilmore, Colbert, John Stewart, and others have thanked Fortuna for bringing Donald Trump into the 2016 campaign? For the first part of the Republican primary

season, the Huffington Post, seeing what anyone could see, placed Trump articles into the entertainment section of the Huffington Post. The spectacle of fascism, partially rooted in the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*, is symptomatic of this evolutionary, predicted moment in capitalism (e.g., Katharine Burdekin's *Swastika Night* of 1937). -- Bruce Krajewski