

PARANOIA, (PARA)CINEMA, AND THE RIGHT-WING MINDSET:

Making Sense of *My Son Hunter*

Copyright 2024 The Author(s)



Creative Commons License

This work is licensed under a
Creative Commons Attribution-
NonCommercial-NoDerivatives
4.0 International License.

Abstract: This article aims to make sense of *My Son Hunter* (The Unreported Story Society and Breitbart News, 2022; dir. Robert Davi). The first part of the analysis discusses *My Son Hunter* as an example of right-wing counter-cinema that tries to simultaneously tap into the cultural prestige associated with feature filmmaking *and* provide niche audiences with “paracinematic” pleasures. The second part of the analysis explores cinematic form and filmmaking techniques in *My Son Hunter*, demonstrating how the movie extends a promise of “truth” via an affective bombardment that draws on melodrama and paranoid fiction, as well as the flexible modes of docudramatic approximation. The overall effect is to make logic and argumentation superfluous, which is indicative of how the film can be regarded as both symptomatic and productive of a “post-truth” condition.

Keywords: *My Son Hunter*, right-wing media, Breitbart, American politics on film, “paracinema,” “post-truth,” paranoid fiction, conspiracy theory films, melodrama, docudrama

My Son Hunter is a crowdfunded, low-budget feature film, released by Breitbart News in 2022. It sets out to make two main points: first, that Joe Biden is a criminal and a master of political influence peddling (in which capacity he has aided and abetted genocide in Communist China and been an accomplice to all kinds of crime and corruption in Ukraine); and second, that the mainstream media, big tech, and the deep state are involved in a massive coverup of the truth about the Biden family.

My Son Hunter is in all ways imaginable a “bad object.” Critics have described it as “embarrassing,” “amateurish,” and “wildly boring,” seemingly in agreement that this is a poorly made film (Chilton; Fry; Ramirez). Many were put off by what they perceived as an irresponsible trafficking in disinformation, propaganda, and populism, and a fueling of paranoia and political polarization. One reviewer argued that *My Son Hunter* “poses little threat to the viewing public,” its “foamy-mouthed partisanship” bound to alienate “the saner majority” within minutes (Bramesco). But he also noted that if “American politics has taught us anything, it’s that ignoring extremism does not make it go away”—hence his choice to review the film, in spite of the sense that this film does not deserve the time and energy of “right-thinking citizens” (Bramesco).

My Son Hunter may be an uncomfortable watch, yet I agree that there are good reasons to try to make sense of it. This article’s attempt to do so proceeds in two steps: I begin by situating the movie in the larger context of American right-wing media. This contextualization is anything but exhaustive, but it will offer some explanations of why *My Son Hunter* exists, how it fits into a wider media system, and what purpose a feature-length film about Hunter Biden’s laptop can possibly serve in this larger context. The second part of the analysis unpacks how the cinematic form and the political project of *My Son Hunter* converge at the same point: the destabilization

of the concept of truth. Here I explore what kind of film this is and how it works in order to achieve its various functions, and I sketch a larger argument about the affective power of narrative cinema, and about the flexibility and the rhetorical force with which some movies can bend reality and truth to their will—at least for the right audience.

A detailed discussion about cinematic form will help us tease out implications about film, media, politics, and “post-truth” that go beyond this particular movie. But *My Son Hunter* also carries a political charge that is specific to the case. The Hunter Biden laptop affair—which revolves around a misplaced laptop containing sensitive, or even incriminating, information about the Biden family—is presently at the center of American politics. The moment the Republican Party regained control of the House of Representatives in January 2023, a series of investigations into Hunter Biden’s business dealings were launched, with the hopes of finding conclusive evidence of President Joe Biden’s involvement, and hence grounds for impeachment (Carney). There might be evidence of crime and corruption in the material amassed by the House Oversight Committee (Committee on Oversight). But when the impeachment investigation was launched on December 13, 2023, fact checkers were quick to note that it was based on misleading claims (Farley). On March 21, 2024, the *AP* reported that the impeachment inquiry was winding down, having produced “no hard evidence of presidential wrongdoing” (Mascaro).

Hunter Biden, for his part, has already faced criminal charges related to tax crimes and gun law violations. These cases have taken various twists and turns, which voices on the right have seized upon as an opportunity to accuse the Justice Department of applying double standards. In their view, the Biden Justice Department has made former President Donald J. Trump a target

of politically motivated investigations while simultaneously doing its best to let Hunter off the hook—perhaps even intervening to protect the President’s wayward son (Amiri; Lauer et al.). Trump, meanwhile, faces multiple indictments on state and federal levels for his efforts to overturn the 2020 presidential election and for his role in the events that led up to the storming of the Capitol on January 6, 2021, all while simultaneously running for President again (Richer and Tucker; “Trump Indicted”; Tucker et al.; “What We Know”).

Congressional hearings and legal proceedings are tied in with the ways in which Hunter Biden’s laptop feeds into the construction of a right-wing political imaginary. American politics has increasingly become a question of narrative—of conjuring certain political realities into existence by means of storytelling—rather than rational deliberation and fact-based discourse.¹ Movies are important in that context. With regard to *My Son Hunter* specifically, its apparent weaponization of paranoia and conspiracy theory seems extremely current, while also resonating with traditions in American politics and popular culture that run long, deep, and across the political spectrum.

Issues of paranoia, culture, and politics have been addressed in Frida Beckman’s recent book *The Paranoid Chronotope*. Beckman’s focus is on postmodern literary fiction and the “post-critique” debates within academia, but the questions regarding power, truth, and identity that she explores are highly relevant with respect to *My Son Hunter*, too, and can be illuminated from a different angle via an analysis of this film. Indeed, it is an *expressive* movie in the sense suggested by Steven Shaviro; that is, it is both symptomatic and productive of a set of social relations (2). It speaks explicitly about a “post-truth” condition, but through its form, it also helps produce this very condition. This is what the analysis that follows will demonstrate.

The Hunter Biden Laptop Affair—Now a Not-So-Major Feature Film. But Why?

There is a long tradition of leftist Hollywood critique, from Horkheimer and Adorno’s “The Culture Industry” to Marxist re-readings of classical Hollywood cinema in *Cahiers du Cinéma* and *Screen* in the 1960s and 1970s, and onward to later critiques of the economic and ideological operations of “global Hollywood” (Fairfax; Horkheimer and Adorno; Kleinhans; Miller et al.; Rosen). From that perspective, the mere existence of Hollywood is a testament to a fundamentally undemocratic subsumption of cinema under global capital and a neoliberal world order (Grieverson 4). Meanwhile, other scholars have been more interested in the political practices and partisan leanings of stars, studios, and Hollywood moguls. This winding history includes as much conservative as liberal activity, and studies of it have debunked the myth that Hollywood has always been a bastion of liberal values, leftist causes, and political correctness (Ross 3–4). Yet, even so, and in spite of the fact that Hollywood’s right might have had the most concrete political impact, it could be argued that the Hollywood left won a “cultural war” and that a “liberal political culture [has] prevailed” throughout much of film history (Critchlow 6, 213; see also Critchlow and Raymond 233–35). This is certainly what many conservatives today would argue. As one columnist in the conservative news and opinion outlet *The Daily Wire* argued, “Hollywood’s gatekeepers will never allow the Right to enter its gilded gates to tell our stories” (Courrielche). However, in the current media landscape, Hollywood studios no longer have the same kind of control over the means of production as was once the case. The production and distribution of feature films can now be set up as a right-wing enterprise, with a promise to generate an independent, conservative, counter-cinema. And this is exactly what has recently begun to happen, as is evident in investments in feature film production by right-leaning media

platforms such as Fox Nation and *The Daily Wire*. *My Son Hunter*, which was financed through crowdfunding, produced by the independent production company The Unreported Story Society, and distributed by Breitbart News, is one manifestation of this trend.

Breitbart News is what media scholars might refer to as an “alternative news site” or as “hyperpartisan media” (Heft et al. 21; Holt). Another term is “junk news,” since sites like these give the impression of presenting the news, but without bothering to adhere to professional journalistic standards (Schroeder 2; see also Hedman et al. 2–3). There is an invocation here of non-partisan institutional media and objective journalism as self-evident norms. But these can be seen as anomalies in the history of American news, manifestations of a specific phase of the twentieth century during which political polarization was low and media competition limited. Arguably, a reversion to a predominantly partisan news landscape was underway already in the 1960s, when American politics began to repolarize, and media markets started to break apart (Ladd 6, ch. 2–4). A slightly longer history of Breitbart, then, goes back to the conservative use of direct mail in the 1960s, and continues with Rupert Murdoch’s acquisition of the *Post* in the 1970s, the breakthrough of Rush Limbaugh and conservative talk radio in the 1980s, the establishing of Fox News, the launch of the Drudge Report in 1994, and the subsequent explosion of partisan political communication all over the internet (Martin 126–29).

Scholars across the political spectrum have argued that the impact of partisan right-wing media is partly explained by the shortcomings of institutional, or mainstream, media. One account suggests that it is logical that platforms for alternative viewpoints would emerge, considering the widespread liberal bias of the established news media (Kuypers 148).² Another account suggests that conservative media fill a gap that

opened up when mainstream media abandoned the working classes (Martin 6–7, 126–31). It is also common to describe right-wing outlets as a separate sphere in the media landscape, as indicated in terms such as “conservative media empire,” “conservative media establishment,” and—especially—conservative “echo chamber” (Jamieson and Cappella; Rosenwald 171). Analogously, in the current moment of 24/7 digital connectivity, in which political polarization and competition and fragmentation in media markets have reached new heights, it is often argued that a key function of conservative digital outlets such as Breitbart is to “bypass” the large, institutional, gate-keeping media organizations, and to get “direct access” to masses of people (Kuypers 148; Martin 129).

Ultimately, however, partisan internet-based media and institutional media coexist in the same “hybrid media system,” and the political use of social media, for example, is oftentimes designed not so much to “bypass” as to influence professional media (Chadwick 262–63). The struggle over agenda-setting seems key here. Indeed, one function that alternative news sites fill within the hybrid media system is to provide a tool for populist movements to try to set the agenda in a contested public sphere—they represent a kind of counter-public (Herkman and Matikainen 151; Schroeder 3). In some instances, the legacy media gradually adjust their agenda. Alternatively, the mainstream media’s disregard and disdain can be donned as a badge of honor, and the alternative media can position themselves as a voice that speaks truth to a powerful elite. In both scenarios, the relationship between “junk” news and legacy media is best described as simultaneously symbiotic *and* antagonistic (Herkman and Matikainen 150–52; Schroeder 8–9).

Visitors to the Breitbart website in June 2023 would quickly have discovered that one of the

trending topics was “Biden Crime Family.”³ Against the wider background just described, we can think of this as a part of a concerted effort to push the notion of the “Biden Crime Family” onto and upward in the public agenda. And as of 2022, there is also a feature film. What role does a movie play in this context of agenda-setting within a hybrid media system? The obvious answer is that digital media afford many opportunities for the monetization of (political) engagement. There was simply a market for a film like *My Son Hunter*. But what about the political logic? I stress the question because it seems reasonable to assume that within the larger machinery of American conservative media, a single movie has limited impact on the furthering of a conservative political agenda compared to juggernauts such as cable news and talk radio. So, what is going on?

One possible answer can be traced to the spirit of the late founder of Breitbart News, Andrew Breitbart, and his oft-cited slogan that “politics is downstream from culture.”⁴ The idea is that ultimately, and in the long run, it is “culture”—through its ability to shape worldviews—that sets the conditions of political discourse and action. Breitbart attributed particular importance to the movies. Consider his plea in a 2009 speech for a redirection of political campaign donations to moviemaking:

The people who have money, every four years at the last possible second, are told, “You need to give millions of dollars, because these four counties in Ohio are going to determine the election.” I am saying, why didn’t we invest 20 years ago in a movie studio in Hollywood, why didn’t we invest in creating television shows, why didn’t we create institutions that would reflect and affirm that which is good about America? (Breitbart, qtd. in York)



Figure 1. Andrew Breitbart.

A lifelong Angelino, Breitbart developed a public persona as the conservative who dared to voice the truth about Hollywood from the inside. A key source of insight into his views on Hollywood is *Hollywood Interrupted*, co-written with Mark Ebner. This book is a masterclass in umbrage-taking at the excesses of Hollywood celebrity culture. It merits attention in the context of this article for several reasons, first among them its (perhaps disproportional) ascription of cultural power to the movies. “Pop culture matters. It infects everything,” the authors argue (Breitbart and Ebner xx). Reading *Hollywood Interrupted*, and hearing Breitbart talk about it in interviews, one gets the impression that he had internalized a twisted version of Hollywood’s myth about itself as the dream factory and the most important purveyor of the American way of life (e.g., Hoover Institution). In a later book, Breitbart offered this reason for writing *Hollywood Interrupted*: “The biggest point that I wanted to make was one I’m still making: *Hollywood is more important than Washington*” (Breitbart 97; emphasis in original). From that perspective, feature films—the trademark commodity of Hollywood cinema since the 1910s—stand out as the gold standard of pop culture, and hence, based on the Breitbart doctrine of culture and politics, of major political significance.

Hollywood Interrupted also merits attention for its discourse on the media writ large. The book

is not so much a takedown of Hollywood as such, as a media critique. More specifically, it is a damning condemnation of legacy media's fawning attitude toward Hollywood royalty and its uncritical coverage of a celebrity culture. As the authors see it, the "politically correct entertainment media" has failed to hold Hollywood celebrities accountable for their immoral behavior and political hypocrisy (Breitbart and Ebner 219). This line of critique is coupled with a techno-utopianism that was relatively new when the book appeared in 2004. For example, the book suggests that "noncorporate news media outlets on the Web" (together with AM talk radio and Fox News) present a major challenge to the "ideological monopoly of the celebrity soapbox"; it expresses hopes that blogs and "e-zines" might help boost engagement among a public that has grown sick of "the mainstream media monopoly"; and it posits that the Internet is "ground zero for America's revenge on the Hollywood beast" (Breitbart and Ebner 216, 325, 330). We see here how media critique is mobilized in a larger political struggle. In fact, the book's fifth part, titled "The Left Wing," reads like a roadmap to today's "culture wars," peppered with talking points about "political correctness," "self-censorship" and "the mainstream media" that have lingered long and well into the present.

None of this is meant to suggest a direct causal relationship between *Hollywood Interrupted* and *My Son Hunter*. But there is a kinship of political sentiment, and many of the key ideas of *Hollywood Interrupted*—the reverence for cinema as a cultural form, the critique of the "mainstream media," the investment in a "culture war," and the faith in "alternative," internet-based media to set America back on the right course—coalesce in *My Son Hunter*. Additionally, the film's very existence can be said to make a Breitbartian claim—however anachronistically—for the special prestige and cultural power of narrative feature films. Otherwise, the right-wing media

platforms that are investing in feature film projects would have directed their resources elsewhere.

There is a glaring weakness to this explanation: *My Son Hunter* is emphatically a niche product—any prestige would be felt only within small pockets of society. But for these audiences, a feature film can offer a particularly intense, vivid, and memorable visualization of things they already believe to be true. And for them, *My Son Hunter* is the kind of film that might bring events and characters to life in a way that will shape how they make sense of future mediated encounters with the same events, people, and places—be it through popular culture or more firmly fact-based discourses. The cinematic images may even take a certain precedence over reality—whatever "reality" means in this context. From a broadly postmodernist viewpoint, the "real" events and characters that *My Son Hunter* references must be recognized as already mediated through and through. As Fredric Jameson has suggested, when JFK features in audio-visual representations, the point of reference is not Kennedy, the actual person, but "Kennedy," a purely televisual, or mediated, figure (49–51). Similarly (although on a miniscule historical scale in comparison), we know only of "Hunter Biden." This means that making sense of *My Son Hunter's* configuration of "Hunter Biden" requires an analysis of cinematic form.

***My Son Hunter*: Cinematic Form and Filmmaking Techniques**

What kind of film is *My Son Hunter*? Some reviewers noted similarities to *The Big Short* (Adam McKay, 2015), especially its similar use of a presentational and postmodern style that relies on direct address and a mixture of filmmaking techniques and visual elements (Fry; Stevens). This is not far off the mark, and terms that scholars have deployed in discussions about *The Big*

Short—e.g., hybridity and multi-levelled incoherence—apply to *My Son Hunter*, too (e.g., Clayton). The latter can be approached as, in turn, political satire, conspiracy theory thriller, paranoid propaganda film, docudrama/biopic, and melodrama, and it features a mixture of formal elements and filmmaking techniques associated with all these modes of representation. To see how this works, however, we first need an overview of the film's structure and narrative.

My Son Hunter opens with a six-minute tri-partite prologue. The first scene introduces Joe Biden (played by John James) and a Secret Service agent played by alt-right heroine and “cancel culture” martyr Gina Carano (see Parker and Crouch). When Carano's character explains that “this is not a true story . . . except for all the facts,” she addresses the camera straight on, breaking the fourth wall—the first of many instances of direct address in the movie. Part two of the prologue consists of a faux news segment (anchored by a Rachel Maddow lookalike), which introduces the main character of Grace Anderson (played by Emma Gojkovic), whom we meet here as a participant in a Black Lives Matter rally. We see looting, fire, violence, mayhem—American carnage—covered by the news as “peaceful protest”; we understand that the theme of the mainstream media's hypocrisy is front and center. Next up, Hunter Biden (played by Laurence Fox) arrives at a nightclub in Los Angeles. A tracking shot follows him through the premises. He snorts cocaine and enters a backroom. Stripppers abound. “Time to fucking party!” he shouts. Freeze frame and cue the title credit. Now the movie properly begins. Hunter takes the party to the Chateau Marmont. He becomes infatuated with the exotic dancer “Kitty”—we know her as Grace Anderson the protestor. Hunter and Grace/Kitty engage in intimate conversation about Hunter's family background, the tragic loss of his mother and brother, and his troubled relationship to his father. Eventually Joe Biden

arrives on the scene. A lengthy conversation between father and son takes place in the backseat of a black SUV. Joe berates Hunter for the misplacement of not just one, but two laptops, both of which contain highly sensitive information. We learn about Hunter's past immoralities (substance abuse, fathering children out of wedlock, having an affair with his dead brother's widow), and, more importantly, of various acts of crime and corruption that the movie implies have been carried out at the behest of and for the benefit of Vice President Joe Biden—the bad guy in this film. The Bidens' backseat conversation is intercut with scenes of Grace/Kitty conducting her own research into the Hunter Biden laptop affair. She cannot find anything but “positive stuff” about the Bidens. Hunter's body man Tyrone (played by Franklin Ayodele) explains: “that's because you're using Google and the mainstream media. You need to use the alternative search engines.” The fact that Tyrone is African American is meant to dispel Grace's/Kitty's notion that only “alt-right white supremacists” dwell in such areas of the internet. Similarly, the movie needs to insist that Grace/Kitty is *not* a Trump supporter. She is just interested in the “truth” about the Bidens. This “truth” is revealed in rough outline through Hunter's confessions, the SUV backseat exchange, and Grace's/Kitty's investigations, but the specific details are presented in an extended two-part sequence that makes up the centerpiece of the movie. Part one starts with Gina Carano's Secret Service agent directly addressing the camera; her voice is then carried over a montage of images that visualize how the Bidens engage in the trading of political influence for cash and other forms of crime, corruption, and conspiracy in Ukraine. The movie also explains how the mainstream media has been complicit in a massive cover-up, dismissing any accusations against the Bidens as “Russian disinformation.” Part two takes us back to Chateau Marmont and another Hunter Biden confes-

sional. Here the attention shifts to China, and alleged connections between the Bidens' business dealings here and the Chinese Communist Party's repression of its own population, a catalog of crimes that the movie suggests ranges from mass surveillance and politically motivated mass imprisonment to systematic raping and "live organ harvesting." Grace/Kitty is appalled but wants to help Hunter—he is an innocent victim, and Joe Biden is the real criminal, in her view. At this point, however, news of the (first) impeachment of Donald Trump breaks. "It's going to be wall to wall 'Orange Man Bad!'" Hunter giddily exclaims. With public attention fully deflected, the Bidens are safe. But there is a twist: the entire conversation between Hunter and Grace/Kitty has been taped, and she is in possession of the recording. It's a moral conundrum, but she decides to go public. Legacy media is unwilling to touch the recording, and the SoMe companies "and their algorithms" help bury the story. But not entirely. Grace's/Kitty's scoop is making the rounds in some faraway corners of the internet, where it is finally discovered by one brave truth seeker: Rudy Giuliani. "Rudy releases recording of Bidens!" a Fox News headline announces. Hunter is arrested, Joe Biden busted, and Donald J. Trump wins reelection in a landslide. Of course, this is the movie's counterfactual happy ending. Its "real" ending is on a more somber note: "truth itself has become a fairytale." Cue the end credits and a final montage of archival footage of Joe Biden and selected news coverage of Hunter Biden.

This lengthy summary might indicate why one reviewer described her viewing experience as "an attempted red-pilling in real time" (Stevens). It might also indicate how—especially (but not exclusively) for an audience more favorably inclined—this movie offers an abundance of paracinematic pleasures through its unapologetic allegiance to oppositional taste (political and cinematic), its ceaseless winking and nodding, and

its general commitment to collapsing the boundaries between text and context.⁵ Consider this straight-to-the-camera remark by Gina Carano's character about two thirds into the film: "oh, and one more thing: it's a little off topic, but . . . Epstein didn't kill himself." Off-topic, indeed, but not so strange after all, if we imagine that the filmmakers might have had a certain type of paracinematic viewer in mind.

Paracinematic elements make up one dimension of *My Son Hunter's* hybridity and multi-levelled incoherence. Another one is based on its generic multiplicity. The film moves quite quickly between different modes, registers, and genres, but I would suggest that it starts out in the vein of political satire with absurdist elements. Key here is the representation of Joe Biden. He is introduced in the opening shots as a hair sniffer—an allusion to the (ultimately non-substantiated) accusations levelled against Biden during his run for President in 2020 concerning a long history of interacting with women in ways that were at best awkward, at worst tantamount to sexual harassment. Biden's hair sniffing thus has serious implications, but is, I believe, part of a cluster of motifs that are designed to work primarily in a comic register and with the purpose of making a silly figure of Biden. He walks into doors, he holds his phone upside down, and he does not understand that emails are retained by both sender and receiver.

Simultaneously, the movie depicts Joe Biden as corrupt to the core—as the kind of man who seeks political power purely to "get his cut" (an oft-repeated phrase in the film). This attempt to recast the public persona of Joe Biden involves a reversal of the political narrative: the seeking of political office purely for the purpose of personal gain is exactly what many people on the left would pin on former US President Donald J. Trump. There is an analogy here between the movie's political rhetoric and the Trump administration's fondness for throwing accusations

against Trump back at the accuser. The “Putin’s puppet” moment in the final presidential debate between Trump and Hillary Rodham Clinton in 2016—Trump: “no puppet. No puppet. You’re the puppet!”—seemed ridiculous at the time, but foreshadowed things to come. In the movie, one analogous example occurs when Joe and Hunter Biden get into an argument about sexual misconduct. Joe is not one to judge, Hunter suggests, citing accusations from numerous women, of whom Tara Reade received significant media attention. The Vice President shrugs it all off: “oh, come on, I could be out in the middle of Fifth Avenue with Tara Reade and the media would still be talking about Trump’s ‘grabbing pussy.’” Here, then, the movie alludes to two notorious statements by Donald Trump, but rejigs them to support the movie’s case against Biden: *he* is the sexual predator, not Trump, and *he* is the one who can act with total impunity, thanks to “the media,” not Trump. An even more remarkably meta variation on the same theme occurs in the movie’s mid-section, in the part narrated by Gina Carano’s character, when she explains what the Bidens have been up to: “quid pro quo with Ukraine. Brilliant strategy. Then accuse Trump of making a phone call doing the exact same thing they were doing.” Here the movie (inadvertently) divulges its own strategy of turning the tables, but through a projection onto the Bidens and the mainstream media. Whether intended by the filmmakers or not, any conventional sense of logic, reason, and truth slips away as we are sucked into this mise-en-abyme of *tu quoque* “arguments.”⁶

As indicated, the movie’s takedown of Joe Biden hinges on a conflicting depiction of him as at once a bumbling fool *and* the criminal mastermind behind a conspiracy of global dimensions. Correspondingly, *My Son Hunter* slides back and forth between (attempts at) humorous political satire and sequences that work in the modality of the conspiracy theory thriller. Again, the use of characters is key, most crucially Grace/Kitty,

the stripper with a heart of gold. Much of the film’s forward momentum relies on Grace’s/Kitty’s discoveries about the Biden family’s influence peddling, the contents of the misplaced laptop, and the massive media cover-up. Grace/Kitty is clearly the hero of the film, and, true to the genre of paranoid fiction, she embodies the restoration of individual agency in the face of large and sinister social forces (Beckman 44; see also Arnold 171–72; Pratt 1). We could say that *My Son Hunter* works—narratively as well as epistemologically—in an “investigative-deconstructive” mode (Pratt 55). Similar to the detective in film noir, it is Grace’s/Kitty’s role to deconstruct and defictionalize a fabricated reality served up by the powers that be. For her, and for audience members who are on the same wavelength, this results in a radical reconfiguration of what she/they know about the world (Pratt 55–58).⁷

There are several additional points of connection between *My Son Hunter* and the larger category of paranoid fiction. One is the deployment of filmmaking techniques that will strike some audiences as unabashed cinematic propaganda, but that audiences that align themselves with the intentions of the filmmakers might experience as a forceful indictment of the “Biden crime family.”⁸ The darkly paranoid mid-section of the movie is particularly telling—there is a twisting of facts and a use of innuendo and a one-sidedness that seem to be designed to manipulate the viewer’s perception of what the Bidens were really up to. And there is a calculated montage of sound and image that permits the film to make a series of wild accusations against the Bidens without stating them outright. One example is the ninety-second sequence that speaks about the Bidens’ alleged connections to Russian organized crime, which does not explicitly state that the Bidens are murderers—but it does not have to, thanks to a highly suggestive use of sound and image allusions. The structuring of intra-character and character-viewer address here

and elsewhere in *My Son Hunter* illustrates the movie's lack of interest in creating a classically realist illusion. The same can be said for how the characters move freely in time and space, as in the example above, as well as a later sequence in which Hunter and Grace/Kitty appear in the scenes they narrate in conversation. In this way, there is a collapsing of time and space, a sometimes dizzying pace of movement through these dimensions, and a disavowal of realistically motivated spatial and temporal relations. The exact coordinates of the conspiratorial totality remain murky, yet we sense that "everything is connected."

Whether one regards the film as propaganda or as something else, the techniques described here increase the movie's power of persuasion. Crucially, the approach to time-space and sound-image relations, and the reliance on innuendo, allusion, and implication to forward the argument, allow *My Son Hunter* to have it both ways. All honest attempts at fact checking are conveniently nullified. Unsurprisingly, when faced with questions about the film's factual base, producer and co-writer Phelim McAleer suggested that "it's a movie, right, it's not a documentary" ("Hunter's Laptop"). This is a misapprehension of the concept of documentary, but leaving that aside, it also contradicts his statement later in the same interview that "our background is in journalism" and that *My Son Hunter* presents "a great untold story" that is important to get out to "millions of people" ("Hunter's Laptop"). Also, declaring that the film is a fictionalized version of events does not negate the fact that its entire *raison d'être* is based on the movie's opening statement that "this is not a true story . . . except for all the facts."

The problems raised here are well known to anyone who has studied the genres of the biopic and the docudrama—labels that fit *My Son Hunter* in some parts. There is a debate to be had about whether *My Son Hunter* twists its factual

base into disinformation, but that aside, we can recognize that this film, similar to all docudrama, draws on an arsenal of techniques that implore viewers to think that what they see is not an unmediated view of reality, but reality much as it essentially happened (Lipkin 4–5). And as with all docudramas, it is important to pay attention to how the film works as an act of persuasion about its own status of veracity. References to previous texts are usually key. Indeed, *My Son Hunter* draws *implicitly* on the audience's awareness of previous accounts of the Hunter Biden laptop affair, both to warrant its own approximation of reality, and to motivate the choice of docudrama as a mode of representation. The implication is that these people exist, that these events happened, and that they are important enough for reportage, yet previous texts are not enough to get at the truth—we also need re-enactment in the form of a fictionalized drama (Lipkin 4–5). *My Son Hunter* also draws *explicitly* on archival footage, as a more straightforward way of convincing viewers that what we see in the film represents reality much as it happened. The clearest instance is the montage of images that appears alongside the end credits. We first see television news snippets that are meant to attest to the mainstream media's framing of the Hunter Biden laptop story as a "Russian disinformation campaign"—these are interspersed with textual inserts that further reinforce the movie's case for a media cover-up. This is followed by additional news segments, this time to verify a story about Hunter Biden's out-of-wedlock child. Finally, we see ("the real") Joe Biden recounting a Ukraine-related anecdote—a highly incriminating one, the movie suggests—during a panel discussion. We have seen this scene re-enacted in almost exact visual detail and with verbatim dialog earlier in the film (this is analogous to how the film combines actual news footage with faux news reportage). Throughout the film, then, there is an oscillation between archive and re-enactment, and a mixture of indexicality and

iconicity that is typical of docudrama (and documentaries proper, too).⁹

This form of doublespeak sets a trap for critics and scholars, who might be tempted to assess a docudramatic truth claim based on their own political sympathies. For example, one reading of *JFK* (Oliver Stone, 1991) concedes that this film is not “pure history” or an “actual documentary,” yet insists that its case regarding the Kennedy assassination is based on “meticulous research” (Pratt 227). It is not unlikely that the people behind *My Son Hunter* see their film in much the same way. And they might argue that critics apply a double standard in assessing its reality value simply because the movie’s politics make them uncomfortable. The problem, as documentary scholarship tells us, is that all representations of reality are ultimately performative (Bruzzi, *Approximation* 6; see also Bruzzi, *New Documentary*). Stella Bruzzi suggests that in documentary “approximations” of reality, fictionalizations are potentially an equally legitimate key to “unlocking reality” as the use of actual footage (*Approximation* 5, 8). But she also notes that there is only a small step between fictionalized higher truths and flat-out fake news (Bruzzi, *Approximation* 9). Usually, the same cinematic techniques are involved. This is the problem with these kinds of films, and this is why they are so interesting to study in the context of a so-called “post-truth” situation. And the question that *My Son Hunter* seems to pose is how and when the movie crosses the line from valid approximation to a fully-fledged fabricated reality, a paranoid construction of “systematized delusional structures” (Beckman 11). I have no conclusive answer, but my analysis suggests that the film is designed to make that assessment maximally difficult.¹⁰

I would also argue that whether the cinematic approximation of truth ultimately resonates is predicated more than anything else on its affective

force. *My Son Hunter*’s mid-section especially—the film’s exposé of the “Biden crime family”—is paced, edited, and soundtracked in ways that seem designed to produce an affective overpowering of rational discourse. It is a sequence that does not have to rely on the force of logic and argumentation if it can speak to audiences’ sense of confusion and powerlessness in the face of a complex reality. As Beckman notes, paranoia is inversely related to the messiness of the world (11–12). This is the point where we need to pay attention to the ways in which *My Son Hunter* works in the modality of melodrama as a way of ramping up the affective frequency. The character of Hunter Biden is the main conduit. In an early scene Hunter and Grace/Kitty drive to Los Angeles’s Skid Row to score drugs, which presents an opportunity to establish Hunter as a tragic, suffering figure. “I am a royal fuckup,” he explains. “No one can fuck up the way that I fuck up.” Moreover: “I don’t deserve help.” The scenes that immediately follow show Hunter talk about the tragic death of his mother and sister in a car accident and the special bond hereby forged between Hunter, his brother Beau, and their father Joe. Beau’s illness and premature death sends Hunter off on a downward spiral of substance abuse and ill-advised sexual escapades. Later, Hunter breaks down in tears, crying out that he should have been the one to go, not Beau. This takes place in front of Joe Biden, indicative of how the movie places a strong emphasis on the ambivalent father-son relationship. “I love my dad,” says Hunter, and he expresses guilt about his reckless behavior, which runs the risk of destroying everything his father has built. Grace/Kitty is not convinced. In a pseudo-Freudian take, she suggests that Hunter has (unconsciously?) misplaced the laptops in order to take down his dad: “you don’t love him, Hunter, you hate him.” The movie also includes an underdeveloped doubling of the motif of problematic fathers: Grace/Kitty, too, has a troubled relationship with

her dad. We learn little about their story but cannot fail to notice that the resolution for Grace's/Kitty's character includes the discovery of truth and doing the right thing (in the context of the movie's moral universe), but also—and coincidentally—the reconciliation with her father, which completely lacks narrative significance and logic, but which further emphasizes the movie's investment in the mode of family melodrama. A similar doubling and division in the melodramatic register is the attachment of suffering to Hunter and virtue to Grace/Kitty—two attributes that might otherwise conventionally be combined in one melodramatic main character.

Beckman notes that melodrama and paranoia are corresponding modes—both rely on a simplified moral universe, in which everything and everyone is easily slotted into good or evil (173). Elisabeth Anker makes a similar point in her definition of melodrama as a mode that

portrays dramatic events through moral polarities of good and evil, overwhelmed victims, heightened affects of pain and suffering, grand gestures, astonishing feats of heroism, and the redemption of virtue. Melodramas convey stories about the suffering of virtuous people overcome by nefarious forces, and they examine political and social conflict through outsized representations of unjust persecution. (2)

The last sentence points to another shared feature of melodrama and paranoia: the narrativization of the world as a life-and-death struggle between individuals and larger social forces. The same narrative is vital in the populist universe, with its notion of a virtuous people under constant threat—either from outside others such as immigrants, or from enemies within, such as the woke mafia. The key context here is a perceived lack or loss of individual agency and autonomy that informs cultural forms and formations and

political discourse alike. Beckman talks about the tendency in paranoid postmodern fiction to construct a troubled relationship between the self and the chronotope in which he/she searches for his/her agency and identity, and she suggests that paranoid fiction speaks to the desire of "retaining a subject position endowed with knowledge and agency" (14, 44). Similarly, Pratt's book about conspiracy movies identifies the larger cultural and social phenomenon of "agency panic" as an important context for the genre (1). And Anker's discussion about melodramatic political language suggests that the form of melodrama in that domain resonates with people's daily experience of powerlessness and "devitalized agency" (15). Against this background, it should follow that much of the appeal of the paranoid, melodramatic, and populist modes rests in the ability to imagine convincingly and compellingly a restoration of order—moral, social, and epistemological. And this is the larger context for making sense of the promise of truth that *My Son Hunter* extends.

Conclusion

This article has tried to make sense of why *My Son Hunter* exists and what kind of film it is. The first part discussed how the movie fits into the larger context of right-wing media, arguing that we can think of *My Son Hunter* as a piece of right-wing counter-cinema that tries to simultaneously tap into the cultural prestige associated with feature filmmaking and provide niche audiences with paracinematic pleasures. I also suggested that this film feeds a right-wing political mindset not by telling a new story, but by endowing a familiar story with the affective force and rhetorical flexibility that a certain type of hybrid, incoherent cinema can offer. Specifically, my analysis of the cinematic form of *My Son Hunter* suggested that the movie forwards a promise of truth via an affective bombardment that draws on melodrama as well as the flexible

filmmaking techniques of docudramatic approximation, and that makes logic and argumentation superfluous. The analysis indicates that my initial idea about the destabilization of the concept of truth needs to be slightly revised: this is a movie that simultaneously plays fast and loose with the truth *and* extends a promise of truth; it is a movie that is simultaneously wildly incoherent *and* designed to appease the longing for simplicity that lies at the core of the paranoid as well as the melodramatic imagination.

A flaw in my line of reasoning is that it does not take audience reception into account. Arguably, *My Son Hunter* is exactly the kind of movie that will only work properly for audiences who are already hell-bent on making it work. This is a fair point. We should not overestimate this movie's impact. But neither should we—all too conveniently, in my view—discard it as an attempted “red-pilling” that no person of a sane mind can take seriously. As Arnold suggests in his survey of the conspiracy theme in American cinema, conspiracy theories are in the mainstream not because a majority of people actually believe in all the details, but because such theories are an “emblem of a stance” vis-a-vis the world (4). Facts are ultimately immaterial. What matters is the increasingly widespread sense of powerlessness in the face of larger social forces—sometimes seen, but more often unseen and non-agentive; a nebulous, non-knowable, globalized totality (Anker 15–16).¹¹ This feeds what Beckman refers to as the “paranoid mindset,” the “sense that everyday existence is shadowed by something menacing,” and that a powerful enemy is lurking somewhere out there in the darkness (3). There is a case to be made that the American white male is presently the social and political agent most acutely attuned to this affective frequency, or most tightly wrapped up in this structure of feeling (Beckman 166–77). Even so, and to reconnect with the case of *My Son Hunter*, the problems raised by this movie go some way beyond a few right-wing blowhards

who want to take down the Bidens. Otherwise, scholars and critics who would most certainly reject *My Son Hunter* as right-wing propaganda might not so readily embrace the projection of paranoia in other cases—as, for example, in Pratt's suggestion that the “visionary paranoia” of certain conspiracy theory films offers a “radical critique” of politics and society (2–5, 8–9, 28). The challenge is where to draw the line between legitimate critique and delusional conspiracy theorizing; between well-founded critical thinking and “critiquiness”; between “reasonable doubt and downright paranoia” (Beckman 3). *My Son Hunter* mobilizes an incoherent mixture of filmmaking techniques for the purpose of blurring this line. In this way, as I have argued, this movie is expressive of our so-called “post-truth” condition, and as such, it is an object—however irredeemably bad—that we should want to try to make sense of.

Notes

1. Beckman, drawing on Timothy Melley, connects the narrativization of politics to the institutionalization of public deception in the form of the CIA, and the rise of the “covert sphere” in postwar-era America, a sphere that can only be partly known via facts, leaving it to popular imagination to fill in the gaps (42–44).

2. Kuypers offers plenty of evidence of a liberal bias of much news reporting. Yet the force of his argument is tempered by occasional disingenuous use of sources and rhetorical slippages. For example, the intimation in his introduction that Fox News is the “most ideologically balanced of the major news outlets” (6) is not supported by the source referenced (12n. 15), unless it is deliberately misinterpreted. Also, while Kuypers’s point about the value of a multiplicity of viewpoints in the media is well taken, his book tends to imply (or state outright) that conservative viewpoints are not merely “alternative,” but also somehow more accurate, which is a much more debatable point.

3. When House Republicans launched impeachment inquiries in September 2023, the label for Breitbart’s Hunter Biden-related content changed to “Biden Impeachment.”

4. I have been unable to trace an exact moment of coining of the phrase. In 2011 Breitbart himself noted that “it is getting to be a cliché that I’d say in my speeches . . . that ‘politics is downstream from culture’” (“Righteous Indignation”).

5. The notion of “paracinematic” taste that I am drawing on is from Sconce.

6. *Tu quoque* refers to a logical fallacy rather than an argument.

7. We could also think of Grace/Kitty as a non-intellectual version of Jameson’s “social detective,” a protagonist in conspiracy films who serves the purpose of discovering hidden truths about society (39).

8. I use the notion of “propaganda” with caution. As the editors of *The Oxford Handbook of Propaganda Studies* note, propaganda is often used as a “dismissive term, especially by one enemy against another,” serving political rather than analytical purposes (Auerbach and Castronovo 2). Also, while scholars are in the process of rethinking propaganda for a diverse media landscape, the term may still connote communicative modalities linked to State-based

governmental control or deployed by powerful corporate interests to “manufacture consent” (Boler and Nemorin). None of these ideas seem useful for an understanding of a film such as *My Son Hunter*. However, loosely understood as a form of persuasion that aims to shape cognition and manipulate opinions and behaviors through a one-sided presentation that serves the propagandist’s intentions, the term may still capture some aspects of the rhetoric of *My Son Hunter* (Elsaesser 239).

9. The notion of an interplay between archive and re-enactment draws on Bruzzi (*Approximation* 1–11). The point about a mixture of indexicality and iconicity draws on Lipkin (4).

10. In this sense, *My Son Hunter* can indeed be considered “propaganda,” if broadly understood as a mode of strategic communication that can include a range of techniques of manipulation and disinformation, including the “[deliberate] blending [of] true and false information” (see Ekman and Widholm 117).

11. See also Jameson’s discussion about conspiracy films as symptomatic of late capitalism—an unrepresentable and “unimaginable decentered global network” (13).

Works Cited

- Amiri, Farnoush. "GOP Releases Testimony of Whistleblowers Claiming Interference in Hunter Biden's Case." *AP News*, 22 June 2023. <https://apnews.com/article/hunter-biden-irs-justice-department-irs-congress-d242a84d4d6d8e90db68febab168fef7>. Accessed 22 Sept. 2023.
- Anker, Elisabeth R. *Orgies of Feeling: Melodrama of the Politics of Freedom*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822376545>.
- Arnold, Gordon B. *Conspiracy Theory in Film, Television, and Politics*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9798400630897>.
- Auerbach, Jonathan, and Russ Castronovo. "Introduction: Thirteen Propositions About Propaganda." *The Oxford Handbook of Propaganda Studies*, edited by Jonathan Auerbach and Russ Castronovo, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199764419.001.0001>.
- Beckman, Frida. *The Paranoid Chronotope: Power, Truth, Identity*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781503631618>.
- Boler, Megan, and Selena Nemorin. "Dissent, Truthiness, and Skepticism in the Global Media Landscape: Twenty-First Century Propaganda in Times of War." *The Oxford Handbook of Propaganda Studies*, edited by Jonathan Auerbach and Russ Castronovo, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013, 395–417. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199764419.013.022>.
- Bramescio, Charles. "My Son Hunter: The Rightwing Hunter Biden Movie Is for Fringe Lunatics." *The Guardian*, 6 Sept. 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2022/sep/06/my-son-hunter-review-rightwing-biden-movie>. Accessed 25 Apr. 2024.
- Breitbart, Andrew. *Righteous Indignation: Excuse Me While I Save the World!* New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2011.
- Breitbart, Andrew, and Mark C. Ebner. *Hollywood, Interrupted: Insanity Chic in Babylon—The Case Against Celebrity*. New York: Wiley, 2004.
- Bruzzi, Stella. *Approximation: Documentary, History and Staging of Reality*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203129487>.
- . *New Documentary*. 2nd ed., New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Carney, Jordain. "The House GOP Is Starting Its Many Investigations this Week. Here's What to Know." *Politico*, 30 Jan. 2023. <https://www.politico.com/news/2023/01/30/house-gop-investigations-biden-mccarthy-00079695>. Accessed 19 Sept. 2023.
- Chadwick, Andrew. *The Hybrid Media System: Politics and Power*. 2nd ed., New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190696726.001.0001>.
- Chilton, Louis. "Laurence Fox's Embarrassing Hunter Biden Movie Is a Fate Worse Than 'Cancellation.'" *The Independent*, 7 Sept. 2022. <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/hunter-biden-movie-breitbart-laurence-fox-gina-carano-b2160240.html>. Accessed 19 Sept. 2023.

- Clayton, Wickham. "The Big Short's Incoherence, Documentary Aesthetics, and Use of Direct Address." *Journal of Popular Culture* 55.5 (2022): 1037–61.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jpcu.13105>.
- Committee on Oversight and Accountability. "Biden Family Investigation." United States House of Representatives.
<https://oversight.house.gov/landing/biden-family-investigation/>. Accessed 25 Apr. 2024.
- Courrielche, Patrick. "Conservatives' Next Frontier." *The Daily Wire*, 1 Nov. 2018.
<https://www.dailywire.com/news/courrielche-conservatives-next-frontier-patrick-courrielche>. Accessed 25 Apr. 2024.
- Critchlow, Donald T. *When Hollywood Was Right: How Movie Stars, Studio Moguls, and Big Business Remade American Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139027106>
- Critchlow, Donald T., and Emilie Raymond. *Hollywood Politics: A Sourcebook*. New York: Routledge, 2009.
- Ekman, Mattias, and Andreas Widholm. "Media Criticism as a Propaganda Strategy in Political Communication." *Nordic Journal of Media Studies* 5.1 (2023): 115–33.
<https://doi.org/10.2478/njms-2023-0007>.
- Elsaesser, Thomas. "Propagating Modernity: German Documentaries from the 1930s: Information, Instruction, and Indoctrination." *The Oxford Handbook of Propaganda Studies*, edited by Jonathan Auerbach and Russ Castronovo, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013, 237–60.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199764419.013.013>.
- Fairfax, Daniel. *The Red Years of Cahiers du Cinéma (1968–1973)*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021.
<https://doi.org/10.5117/9789463728508>.
- Farley, Robert. "GOP Misleading Claims in Biden Impeachment Investigation." *FactCheck.org*, 14 Dec. 2023.
<https://www.factcheck.org/2023/12/gop-misleading-claims-in-biden-impeachment-investigation/>. Accessed 30 Mar. 2024.
- Fry, Naomi. "'My Son Hunter' Is Not the Hunter Biden Movie We Need, or the One We Deserve." *The New Yorker*, 15 Sept. 2022.
<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/my-son-hunter-is-not-the-hunter-biden-movie-we-need-or-the-one-we-deserve>. Accessed 19 Sept. 2023.
- Grieverson, Lee. *Cinema and the Wealth of Nations: Media, Capital, and the Liberal World System*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018.
<https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520965348>.
- Hedman, Freja, et al. "News and Political Information Consumption in Sweden: Mapping the 2018 Swedish General Election on Twitter." *Data Memo 2018.3*. Oxford, UK: Project on Computational Propaganda, 2018.
<https://demtech.oii.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2018/09/Hedman-et-al-2018.pdf>. Accessed 25 Apr. 2023.
- Heft, Annett, et al. "Beyond Breitbart: Comparing Right-Wing Digital News Infrastructures in Six Western Democracies." *Policy and Internet* 12.1 (2020): 20–45.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/poi3.219>.
- Herkman, Juha, and Janne Matikainen. "Right-Wing Populism, Media and Political Scandal." *The Routledge Companion to Media and Scandal*, edited by Howard Tumber and Silvio R.

- Waisbord, Abingdon: Routledge, 2019, 147–55.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351173001-15>.
- Holt, Kristoffer. *Right-Wing Alternative Media*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2020.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429454691>.
- Hoover Institution. “The Politics of Hollywood with Andrew Breitbart.” *YouTube*, “Uncommon Knowledge” web series, 28 May 2009.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0mTxp-Flw-3g>. Accessed 25 Apr. 2023.
- Horkheimer, Max, and Theodor W. Adorno. “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception.” *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, edited by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, translated by Edmund Jephcott, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002, 94–136. Original German version published 1944.
- “Hunter’s Laptop: The Movie.” *The Gist: A Podcast with Mike Pesca* from Peach Fish Productions, 30 Sept. 2022.
<https://www.mikepesca.com/thegist/episode/1a3f569c/hunters-laptop-the-movie>.
- Jameson, Fredric. *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992.
- Jamieson, Kathleen Hall, and Joseph N. Cappella. *Echo Chamber: Rush Limbaugh and the Conservative Media Establishment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- JFK*. Directed by Oliver Stone, Warner Bros., 1991.
- Kleinhans, Chuck. “Marxism and Film.” *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, edited by John Hill and Pamela Church-Gibson, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, 106–13.
- Kuypers, Jim A. *Partisan Journalism: A History of Media Bias in the United States*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.
- Ladd, Jonathan M. *Why Americans Hate the Media and How It Matters*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt7spr6>.
- Lauer, Claudia, et al. “Hunter Biden’s Plea Deal on Hold after Federal Judge Raises Concerns over the Terms of the Agreement.” *AP News*, 26 July 2023.
<https://apnews.com/article/hunter-biden-plea-deal-taxes-gun-drugs-690d38f1ffae4dfce2c171d21e7d3594>. Accessed 22 Sept. 2023.
- Lipkin, Steven N. *Real Emotional Logic: Film and Television Docudrama as Persuasive Practice*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002.
- Martin, Christopher R. *No Longer Newsworthy: How the Mainstream Media Abandoned the Working Class*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019.
<https://doi.org/10.7591/cornell/9781501735257.001.0001>.
- Mascaro, Lisa. “Republicans Make Last-Ditch Request for Biden to Testify as Impeachment Inquiry Winds Down.” *AP News*, 21 Mar. 2024.
<https://apnews.com/article/biden-impeachment-hunter-biden-comer-f09ba1ae3b7bda703a5a84530f56d70f>. Accessed 30 Mar. 2024.
- Miller, Toby, et al. *Global Hollywood 2*. London: BFI, 2005.
- My Son Hunter*. Directed by Robert Davi, The Unreported Story Society and Breitbart News, 2022.

- Parker, Ryan, and Aaron Crouch. "The Mandalorian' Star Gina Carano Fired Amid Social Media Controversy." *The Hollywood Reporter*, 10 Feb. 2021.
<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/tv/tv-news/the-mandalorian-star-gina-carano-fired-amid-social-media-controversy-4131168/>. Accessed 16 Sept. 2023.
- Pratt, Ray. *Projecting Paranoia: Conspiratorial Visions in American Film*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2001.
- Ramirez, Nikki McCann. "25 Gut Reactions to 'My Son Hunter,' the Very MAGA—and Wildly Boring—Biden Family Biopic." *Rolling Stone*, 7 Sept. 2022.
<https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/political-commentary/my-son-hunter-maga-joe-biden-family-biopic-breitbart-drugs-laptop-1234588296/>. Accessed 19 Sept. 2023.
- Richer, Alanna Durkin, and Eric Tucker. "Jan. 6 Charges against Trump Would Add to His Mounting Legal Peril as He Campaigns for 2024." *AP News*, 19 July 2023.
<https://apnews.com/article/donald-trump-criminal-investigations-jack-smith-b8836e28a7ad1c1ae5fad4645f6a363>. Accessed 19 Sept. 2023.
- "Righteous Indignation." *C-Span, Washington Journal*, 6 May 2011.
<https://www.c-span.org/video/?299376-5/righteous-indignation>. Accessed 23 Sept. 2023.
- Rosen, Philip. "Screen and 1970s Film Theory." *Inventing Film Studies*, edited by Lee Grieveson and Haidee Wasson, London: Duke University Press, 2008, 264–97.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1131921.14>.
- Rosenwald, Brian. *Talk Radio's America: How an Industry Took over a Political Party that Took over the United States*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019.
<https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674243224>.
- Ross, Steven J. *Hollywood Left and Right: How Movie Stars Shaped American Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Schroeder, Ralph. "Digital Media and the Entrenchment of Right-Wing Populist Agendas." *Social Media + Society* 5.4 (2019): 1–11.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305119885328>.
- Sconce, Jeffrey. "'Trashing' the Academy: Taste, Excess, and an Emerging Politics of Cinematic Style." *Screen* 36.4 (1995): 371–93.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/36.4.371>.
- Shaviro, Steven. *Post-Cinematic Affect*. Ropley: Zero, 2010.
- Stevens, Dana. "I Watched the Hunter Biden Movie So You Don't Have To." *Slate*, 9 Sept. 2022. <https://slate.com/culture/2022/09/my-son-hunter-biden-laptop-movie-breitbart-review.html>. Accessed 19 Sept. 2023.
- The Big Short*. Directed by Adam McKay, Paramount Pictures, 2015.
- "Trump Indicted in Georgia Election Probe." *AP News*, 15 Aug. 2023.
<https://apnews.com/video/georgia-united-states-government-2024-united-states-presidential-election-juries-donald-trump-fe0f10a901374162b3f7ef7d9d7f7f4a>. Accessed 19 Sept. 2023.
- Tucker, Eric, et al. "Trump Charged over Classified Documents in 1st Federal Indictment of an Ex-President." *AP News*, 9 June 2023.
<https://apnews.com/article/trump-justice-department-indictment-classified-documents-miami-182ac44fde89767bc0c3e634f61686bd>. Accessed 19 Sept. 2023.

"What We Know about Trump's Jan. 6 Indictment." *AP News*, 2 Aug. 2023.

<https://apnews.com/video/2020-united-states-presidential-election-district-of-columbia-2021-united-states-capitol-riot-indictments-united-states-government-02ce669f8fce4858abf0eadb6635e466>.

Accessed 19 Sept. 2023.

York, Byron. "In Politics Fight, Breitbart Knew Culture Is Key." *Washington Examiner*, 1 Mar. 2012.

<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/in-politics-fight-breitbart-knew-culture-is-key>.

Accessed 23 Sept. 2023.

