

# **Hyperreality in Film: *The Skulls*, the *X-Files* and the Cognitive Dissonance of the Elite**

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This writer, removed from his position in academia due to his support for “conspiracy writers,” wrote in 2004:

America is a sick society. It is an oligarchy. The state and her “culture” is the property of private interests, and therefore, so is her foreign policy. She is attempting to lead the development of an a-cultural world order dominated by finance and commodity capital, and, therefore, all nationalists and separatists within her borders are mercilessly hounded and regularly assaulted. The extreme left and their neo-conservative hangers-on are funded exclusively by corporate capital . . . there is no feasible way for America to recover [from her debt] outside of the slow dismantling of the federal system, and a return to regional and state sovereignty. America’s fall from global power means that the world will be remade into a series of regional power centers, each developing the specific potential of her region.

Extremist? Yes. So what? Solzhenitsyn said much the same, as does Noam Chomsky. The use of these “extremist” labels serves, or so it seems, to justify the silencing of serious criticism of the present system. Terms like “conspiracy writers” are neo-Orwellian in the sense that they are emotional labels designed to silence, not all critics, just those critics who attack the “wrong” people.<sup>1</sup>

## I. Two Conspiracy Movies

Two films, the first *X-Files: Fight the Future* movie (1998) and *The Skulls* (2000), show the power and significance of “conspiracy” theories. The term itself is a pejorative, a pejorative it does not deserve. The “conspiracy” is little more than a realistic approach to power. These two films do as much to muddy the waters as to clarify what the nature of power in the modern world really is.

The summary of the *X-Files* movie follows on the history and development of the two main characters, Fox Mulder and Dana Scully, two agents at the FBI assigned to those cases that have no clear conclusion and contain elements not easily understood by the average agent. *The Skulls* is about secret societies on elite university campuses and how they ritualize power above and beyond not only the democratic process, but even beyond the normal vocabulary of political science.<sup>2</sup>

To a great extent, the arrogant elite dismissal of the “conspiracy” genre goes a long way in justifying some concern with the nature of elite power and how it operates. No one denies that there is a powerful elite operating in every country of the globe. No one denies

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<sup>1</sup>Also consult <http://www.conspiracymovies.org/>, which describes itself as a website that “provides a medium for alternative and suppressed viewpoints.

<sup>2</sup>Critical Film.com. 1998. *X-Files: Fight the Future*. [http://www.critical-film.com/reviews/X/X\\_Files/X\\_Files.html](http://www.critical-film.com/reviews/X/X_Files/X_Files.html)

that money and wealth is tightly concentrated in a few powerful families and groups. No one denies that the average citizen has precisely zero power over how the government, economy or academia work. The conclusion of all these affirmations is that conspiracies exist, since they are little more than how these powerful individuals, families and institutions work on a day to day basis.

The X files movie deals with the existence of an alien, that is, extraterrestrial attempt to colonize the planet. They use a black oil to penetrate the bodies of humans, forcing them to commit actions they normally would not. Aliens are working with a small cult of elites who are preparing themselves for the invasion by cooperation, I hopes they would save their own skin. Mulder especially is dedicated to exposing this double cross.

The Skulls centers around a young man going to an ivy league college in hopes of having a legal career. He is initiated into the Skulls, a variation in the well known elite Skull and Bones fraternity at Yale. A friend of his is murdered by, or so it is implied, another member of the Skulls.

These two movies are important not so much for the plot or the characters, but the underlying vision of society that they represent. Both visions here are identical. Only the context is changed.

## II. Concepts

Conspiracy movies and theories have many things in common. The X-Files and the Skulls envision a society based on the following basic propositions:

1. That society is made up of elites who rule and a non-elite who work.
2. The elite are not well known to the general population. They are basically secretive. Their secrecy implies that they have no real right to rule the population, only that they can and do.
3. The laws that apply to the elite are completely different than the laws that apply to the non-elite. The elite can murder at will, so long as the basic integrity of the group is unharmed.
4. The elite use rituals to both explain and justify their power.
5. The elite use politicians, religious leaders, academics and many other authority figures to convince the world that they, not the elite, rule. Politicians, in other words, are front men for a far more powerful elite.
6. The elite decide what issues are important and what positions are “acceptable” to hold.
7. People are not ruled, so much as manipulated. Creations of false “debates” and political “parties” that hold the same basic views, differing only in rhetoric and approach, is an important manner of control.
8. Those seeking to expose the elite are ritually condemned as “nuts,” “paranoid” and “ignorant.” The attempt is to make the anti-conspiracy writer or activist seem like a mentally ill fool.
9. The elite use violence to create a mass population that is suggestible. In other words, a stable society is only occasionally a good idea. Chaos creates suggestibility and gives the elite a chance to rule as the “saviors” of the population.
10. Going against the elite is a dangerous and thankless task. Your life will be perpetually in danger. It seems easier to just “let go” and accept one's lot.
11. Simply getting more cash is not the object. The elites are already quite wealthy. Elites seek a society totally dependent upon them. Massive amounts of power and influence are never enough.
12. The elite must, above all things, maintain an internal cohesion regardless of the invented “political debates” they help define.

The point of this is to show that power works in ways exclusively in its interest and no other. The elite are merely pursuing their own self-interest. If the society as a whole is organized around this kind of rational egotism, then it has no where to stand to condemn the elite. The elite are just successful at pursuing their egocentric motives; the masses are not.

Academic writers such as Martha Lee hold that this above approach is “harmful” to serious public debate. She condescends to “conspiracy theorists,” refusing to take even their more harmless arguments seriously. She might be representative of an academic elitist who would not be caught dead repeating the arguments and mentality of the “conspiracy writer” who she considers mentally ill. More ominously, she states in her introduction that “conspiracies” are “dangerous” because they “challenge the political legitimacy and therefore have a potentially serious impact on the health of democratic political regimes.”<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the thesis of her book is that conspiracy writing harms “democracy” and hence, should, at the very minimum, be rejected.<sup>4</sup>

### III. Theory

Significantly, “conspiracy” itself is not the problem. Those who believe, for example, that the government, or some other interested party, committed the 9-11 attacks are “conspiracy theorist” and quickly dismissed. The “acceptable” point of view, however, is that an Islamic group, attached to the Afghan Taliban, and, oddly, the secular government of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, hijacked planes and rammed them into the Twin Towers and the Pentagon. Of course, that is a conspiracy as well. Hence, it is the object of the conspiracy that gets one called a “conspiracy nut,” not the conspiracy itself.

Marxists, for example, hold that the entire modern world is a huge conspiracy of the upper classes to maintain their position. They hold, as a matter of course, that media, entertainment, “political science,” art and philosophy are all arranged conspiratorially so as to reflect the interests of the powerful. Yet even there, that is not a “conspiracy theory but a “respectable” approach to the political world.

So then what is a “conspiracy theorist? It is one who holds that power is secretly wielded by those groups that it is not socially acceptable to accuse. This includes the “federal government,” the “Jews,” the “Masons,” the “bankers,” the Jesuits, and other well known objects of scorn. To hold that “capitalists” are conspirators is not a problem.

Conspiracy writers come in all shapes and sizes. Many are on the far right of the political spectrum, others are on the far left. Michael Collins Piper, for example, is the author of the huge book on the JFK assassination *Final Judgment*. With over 1,000 footnotes, this book argues that Israel was beginning to distrust President Kennedy. Their reason was that JFK stated his opposition to Israel continuing its nuclear weapons research. Factions among the Mossad, CIA and generally “rightist” elements in the U.S. government needed to get JFK out of the way.<sup>5</sup>

Michael Collins Piper is a fierce debater, known for his ability to recall facts and figures with a machine-gun like ability. He is a political moderate with no especial concerns except what he believes is a powerful Jewish (or more specifically, Zionist) control over the American political process.

Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney, formerly representing Atlanta, is a black Democrat also distrustful of the Israeli lobby. She has most recently been a candidate for President on the Green party ticket. In an interview with The Black Agenda report, she stated,

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3 Martha F. Lee. *Conspiracy Rising: Conspiracy Thinking in American Public Life*. ABC-CLIO, 2011, ix

4 Lee's method is to not even take seriously the claims of the fairly arbitrary list of “conspiracy writers” she hates. She is just repeating some lines of theirs for the sake of letting the world know what “they” think. She takes it for granted that her public will reject their views a priori.

5 M.C. Piper. *Final Judgment*. American Free Press, 2004

when asked about the Jewish involvement in defeating her in the Atlanta primaries:<sup>6</sup>

**CM:** That's not an allegation—that's a fact! I was informed that I had been targeted by the pro-Israel lobby by the media. ... I read about it in the papers! ... and the evidence is readily available. ... So, the fact of being targeted by the number-one special interest lobby in the United States means that there is an engagement in every aspect of one's political life. ...

**GC:** Well, ah, let's tackle this head-on: Are you anti-Semitic?

**CM:** Well, I'm, ah... I'm no more anti-Semitic than than any of the anti-Zionist Jews who I work with on an almost-daily basis to correct US policy. And, I would suggest that the real Semites are the Palestinians. And, therefore, I would suggest that I'm not anti-Semitic, but that there are people who are anti-human rights, and there are some people who are anti-peace, and there are some people who are pro-war... and no matter who they are, I will always be against that.<sup>7</sup>

McKinney's basic position is that being targeted by the "Jews" is no different than being targeted by the oil lobby, the trial lawyers association or the national association of realtors. These are all well known pressure groups. The "Jews" are merely that organization that fights for the interests of Israel. Yet, to claim that one is "targeted" by the NRA is acceptable, that of the Zionists, is most certainly not.<sup>8</sup>

The basic point that Piper and McKinney have made is that it is artificial and unjust to have accusation against the Jews treated differently than allegations against the NRA. Both field strong pressure groups, but, in their view, Jews and Zionists claim "antisemitism" as to deflect all criticism in the volatile region of the Middle East.

Reading the materials from both writers, they agree on several significant points:

1. That foreign policy is formulated by a handful of insiders. The Middle East or Central Asia is a region only well known by a few specialists. CNN or Fox slogans do not educate the public, but instead argue for the basic pro-Zionist position, whether from the liberal or conservative point of view.
2. That the uncritical U.S. Backing of Israel has cost the American taxpayers trillions of dollars since 1948, leading to an Arab and Islamic population completely anti-American. The Muslims "hate us" because the State Department backs their Israeli oppressors.
3. That the rhetoric used in media debates and forums is designed to conceal more than it reveals. CNN and Fox disagree on much, but they also agree on much. The belief that "the Muslims" performed 9-11 and that Israel is the "only friend" of the U.S. In the middle east are two areas of agreement.

#### IV. The Movies

The two movies used in this paper speak volumes about the nature of power analyzed in section III above. From the point of view of political science, the plots of the two movies

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<sup>6</sup> McKinney was defeated in the Democratic primary by Hank Johnson in the 2008 primary election in Atlanta.

<sup>7</sup>*Black Agenda Report*. Cynthia McKinney Tells it Like it Is. February 2, 2012.

<<http://www.blackagendareport.com/content/cynthia-mckinney-tells-it-it>>

<sup>8</sup>Alexander, Edward.. August 9, 2004. The Democratic Party's Anti-Semitism problem, *The Seattle Times*

are unimportant. The political content, identical in both cases, is. In a review of the X-Files movie from a “rightist conspiracy” journal, the author states:

The highly popular TV series of the X-files contributed to the disbelief of the public concerning the reality of ET Aliens. The human brain that is under the delusion of the subconscious matrix fascinates itself through fantasy, but fails to grasp the context of possibilities. The Illuminati Hollywood fraternity drugs itself through releasing their sinister secret agenda through disinformation to the masses of the deluded that are impaired from comprehending the truth within the context of dialog.<sup>9</sup>

The author of this review is anonymous, but clearly not an “ignorant yahoo.” The quotation above implies that “conspiracies” are merely the product of TV producers, having no reality outside it. By the use of the term “matrix,” the author also suggests the concept of the creation of reality, an idea so significant to the Postmodern movement. Hollywood Illuminati, that is, the initiated, create a moral code through the manipulation of images. Images take the place of reality and create what is known as a “hyper-real” consciousness. All events in political or economic life are filtered through the matrix.

In his famed book on the Order of Skull and Bones, Professor Anthony Sutton of the Hoover Institution writes:

The Order is not just another campus Greek letter fraternal society with passwords and handgrips, common to most campuses. . . Chapter 322 is a secret society whose members are sworn to silence. It only exists on the Yale campus. It has rules. It has ceremonial rites. It is not at all happy with prying probing citizens known among initiates as outsiders or vandals. Its members always deny membership... Above all the Order is powerful, unbelievably powerful. If the reader will persist and examine the evidence to be presented which is overwhelming, there is no doubt his view of the world will suddenly come sharply into focus with almost frightening clarity.<sup>10</sup>

Clearly, the Skulls movie is about this order. Concerning the Skulls, the *Conspiracy Digest* writes:

The current world situation has been deliberately created by these elites who manipulate both the so-called "right" and the so-called "left." By controlling the resulting "synthesis" -- the end result of Hegelian "thesis" and "antithesis" -- a Globalist New World Order is produced. You can call it techno-fascism or techno-feudalism, but the result is the same -- a global consolidation and mega-corporate transnational centralization of power, capital and resources.

And how does it work? By using "managed conflict" or "crisis management." a crisis or problem is produced. Then the crisis is "managed" and the problem is "solved" with an outcome that is invariably favorable to

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<sup>9</sup>Advent of Deception. The X-Files: Fight the Future. <<http://adventofdeception.com/movie-review-x-files-fight-the-future/>>

<sup>10</sup>Sutton, Anthony. *America's Secret Establishment: An Introduction to the Order of Skull and Bones*. Liberty House Press.

the goals and agendas of the Global Power Elite.<sup>11</sup>

The basic approach here relative to both movies is to see the plot as radically secondary. The political notion is that secret societies exist that see it as their mission to bring order out of chaos. No one denies that Skull and Bones exist, and that both candidates of the 2008 presidential elections were members. No one denies that elites exist and, more importantly, that a technological apparatus exists that makes unleashing a colossal amount of power far easier than the Roman emperors.

Roman emperors did not have You Tube, mass production newspapers, movies seen by millions with shockingly realistic effects, party systems or tenured academics. The tsar of Russia did not have access to a massive, inhumanly fast and universal computer system attached to orbiting satellites to keep watch over his opponents. They did not even have social security numbers. He did not even have tear gas. Of course, these realities dis-empower and, as a result, continue to bring people to the critical approach of the “conspiracy” writers.

Like any other political writer, the conspiracy writer is worried about power. He is worried about that power which does not get treated in mainline news reports. These are sloppy and biased. The conspiracy writers hold that the poor quality and lack of detail in typical news reports hides the truth of political life, that Machiavelli was right, and one should not see a career destroyed because one says so. Machiavelli was merely the “nutty conspiracy theorist” of his day.

#### V. Conclusions

This paper has tried to situate two well known conspiracy movies into a political and social context that makes sense out of them. Tentatively, these movies show the mass of the population totally dis-empowered, clueless and completely dominated. Dealing with dissidents is easy, since media specializes in applying the “right label” to the writer in question. The use of the vocabulary of mental health, especially terms like “paranoid” are reminiscent of Nikita Khrushchev's use of the same to send his own opponents to the GULAG.<sup>12</sup>

Like the young wizards in Harry Potter, the elite live in a world about which the masses are totally ignorant. Rules are different, problems are different, but these elite worlds exist to justify, cover and ritualize power. This is a power that has no moral legitimacy, but exists due to the changing nature of power itself. Technology has made totalitarianism invisible, and most of all, for better or worse, this is the main thrust of “conspiracy writing.” Some of it is bad, some insightful, some a mixed bag. Yet, to cast them aside as “paranoid nuts” is dishonest and suspicious.

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<sup>11</sup>Dowbenko, Iuri, 2000. The Skulls: Insider Secrets on the New World Orderlies. Conspiracy Digest. <<http://www.conspiracydigest.com/filmskulls.html>>

<sup>12</sup> The Russian Orthodox Church in Exile. “The Psychiatric Treatment of Christians.” Orthodox America. <http://www.roca.org/OA/5/5e.htm>

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