

THEORETICAL TIMES

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THEORETICAL TIMES

BY

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*This book is dedicated to the memory of
my grandfathers.*

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CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi
Introduction: Theory the Day after Tomorrow	1
1. Time for Theory	23
2. Lust for Theory	77
3. Undead Theory	111
4. The Dialectical Game	139
5. The Resistible Rise of Donald Trump	187
6. Theory will Tear Us Apart	213
Conclusion: Theory Complete, Complete Theory	245
<i>References</i>	253
<i>Index</i>	279

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*I really think we are living in very dangerous,
interesting times ... Today is the time for
theory ... There is hard work to be done.
It is a unique task.*

– Slavoj Žižek

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INTRODUCTION: THEORY THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW

This book is a mash up. It mixes and remixes high theory and raw realism, post-TV popular culture and contemporary global politics. ‘Raw realism and high theory’ was how my previous book (Redhead, 2017) was described by a reviewer for Routledge, the eminent ultra-realist criminologist Steve Hall, and the phrase stands as an emblem for what we should aim at in critical theory work in the twentieth-first century landscape. Join me in this book on the roller coaster that is theoretical times — adventures in theory, and the politics of theory, today. Remember, however bleak our contemporary world is looking at any one time, theory is able to trump it. As we shall see, one of the theorists featured in this book, the late Jean Baudrillard, places great store by theory being set against reality, turning it on and against the Real. Theoretical times denotes theory as an arena of struggle. Theory is a war zone. Theory will tear you apart.

This book began as a Theoretical Times blog on my personal website and it then expanded to myriad vodcasts

and podcasts which recorded its progress, and its lack, as it went along. The main podcasts and vodcasts are listed at the back of the book, but there are many more being produced as part of an expanding social media project on theoretical times with many hundreds of thousands of downloads. The book was written from deep inside South Australia, staring out across the Ocean looking in vain for the next stop to Antarctica, generating the feeling, as the text was uploaded, of falling off the edge of the planet. The idea was followed up by my concept of claustropolitanism much discussed in this book. In the middle of the writing of the book the whole of the state of South Australia was plunged into darkness for many hours as a result of widespread power failure, reminiscent of the kind of ‘accident’ which Paul Virilio conjures up and which I have written about (Redhead, 2005) as an inevitable part of our accelerated capitalist culture. Furthermore, a potential nuclear conflict, accidental or otherwise, between the United States and a ‘foreign’ power, as portrayed in *The Day After*, an American-made TV movie first broadcast in 1983, seems closer than at any time since the early 1980s and the last gasps of the Cold War. Stop the world, I want to get off.

I begin this introduction with the themes and tropes related to theoretical times. The book as a whole depends on a setting of the global scene in terms of neoliberalism, globalisation and digitisation, and a recognition of the widespread rise of the right (Winlow, Hall, & Treadwell, 2016) as a backdrop to the need for new post-disciplinary theory and a new politics of theory. This rise of the right has been developing for decades, more or less since the late 1960s and early 1970s when a similar, parallel

process of the 'decline of the left' began. *Theoretical Times* is a book to counter the frequently anti-intellectual and populist times of today where, otherwise disengaged from new media and social media, and any kind of book learning, a President of the United States rules by issuing demagogic tweets over the heads of the media, Congress and the judiciary and fails to make the transition from Reality TV to reality. 'Post-truth' becomes, in 2016 and 2017, a description of Orwellian proportions as lying, denying and inventing stories seems, once again recalling the Watergate era, a daily occurrence in government. The far right US website *Breitbart News* (formerly run by Trump adviser in the White House Steve Bannon) openly celebrates Donald Trump's ascension to the US Presidency as a 'revolution' from the right and, moreover, 'the revolution that no one expected' (Pollak & Schweikart, 2017), inserting an 'accidental dictator' into the Presidency without a shot being fired. Since Donald Trump's inauguration in January 2017 the sales of George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, originally written in 1948, increased by a previously unheard of number. Globalisation, digitisation and neo-liberalism have dominated our world for decades, but the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States along with elements of a far right administration inside the White House (Pollak & Schweikart, 2017) with access to the world's largest military and huge nuclear arsenal, and the Brexit referendum decision in the United Kingdom to leave the European Union (Ashcroft & Culwick, 2016; Oliver, 2016, Shipman, 2016), have combined to become a new mini watershed for our times. The millions protesting round the world at every twist and turn in opposition,

horror, frustration, paranoia and hatred in what Pankaj Mishra (2017) calls an ‘age of anger’ have heralded an era of different priorities, full of fear and danger, but also possibility and promise for a renewal of the global left. Make no mistake, the rise of the right has been accompanied by, even caused by, the decline of the left. There is now visible across the globe a phenomenon that the pioneer of cultural studies Stuart Hall (2016, 2017b) once called ‘the great moving right show’ (Hall, 1988, 2017a, pp. 172–186), a moniker which was misguided at the time proclaiming an authoritarian populism that never really existed but today has a far more far-reaching global resonance. In some senses all we are left with is what Slavoj Žižek (2017b) labels as a ‘hopelessness’ from which it will take real and organised ‘courage’ to escape. Refugee and migrant crises, a new world order of global jihad and security services false flags, a hugely weakened left — all add up to overwhelming odds for a reconstruction of the left. We all now face ‘new dark ages’ and globalised ‘trouble in paradise’ claims Žižek (2014a) as his friend and colleague in philosophy and political economy Alain Badiou (2017a, pp. 31–60) glimpses contradictory darkness in these times of the ‘dialectics of black’. As we shall see in this book dialectics are back, and we are in the dialectics of black. Badiou, now in his eighties, and Žižek, now in his late sixties, are pivotal figures in this book which follows the contours of the transcendental materialism their followers believe to be the mature and lasting result of their theoretical and political work over the last few decades. These contemporary currents in the wake of the still evolving global financial crisis of 2007 and 2008 and unforeseen earth moving events like

the UK referendum and the coup d'état of Trumpism in the White House (Johnson, 2016; Pollak & Schweikart, 2017) are troubling, perplexing and 'very, very frightening' for the masses of the populations all around the world already suffering from a de-industrialising global poverty and seemingly endless war.

'Only connect' as E. M. Forster wrote in *Howard's End*. As ultra-realist criminologists Simon Winlow, Steve Hall and James Treadwell argue in a postscript on Brexit and working class politics to their book *The Rise of The Right*, these phenomena which I have outlined above are integrally connected:

We wrote the majority of this book in 2015. Our project was at end by the time the nation went to the polls in June 2016 to vote on Britain's continued membership of the European Union. Roughly 52% of those who voted wanted to bring Britain's membership to an end. More than 33.5 million voted in the referendum, and almost 17.5 million voted to leave [...] The silent majority had momentarily stirred, asserted its will, and then returned immediately to its slumber, and the liberal commentariat has to respond quickly to the unexpected result. Optimism was at a premium. All indication suggested things would get worse for everybody. Someone or something needed to be identified, blamed and then thoroughly castigated. The white working class — who, generally speaking, had not benefited from a higher education and who still appeared to be attached to a range of regressive attitudes and

beliefs — were the obvious culprit. (Winlow, Hall, & Treadwell, 2016, pp. 197–200)

These ultra-realist criminology authors, whose book has been widely cited as the best explanation of Trump and Brexit as unforeseen and unforgettable global events in 2016, do not deny that ‘racism among the white working class is growing’. But from the research they conducted into the English Defence League (EDL) and the transformation of working class politics alongside English nationalism in general they conclude that:

The racism of today is a post-imperial racism rooted in global political economy and the absolute decline of traditional white working class work, security and status in the west. This is not simply the traditional racism that was primarily a product of imperialist colonial ideology. Where that was a racism of imaginary superiority, this is a racism of imagined inferiority that each day passes an affirming reality test [...] It doesn't help at all when these processes are dismissed as irrelevant by academics and commentators who tell the working class to get over themselves, catch up with the rest of us, accept the cold and ahistorical world of western consumer culture and eke out a new position of safety in the unforgiving global economy. More and more people today feel lost, rootless and set apart from the world. We know this. It's part of the way we live today. The solidity, security and continuity of traditional cultural life has disappeared. More and more people feel

history leaving them behind. (Winlow, Hall, & Treadwell, 2016, p. 206)

Winlow, Hall and Treadwell are right about the rise of the right. They are right too about people feeling that history is leaving them behind. Why should these disconnected and disengaged moments be referred to as theoretical times? Truly these seem to many in our culture like anti-intellectual times as never before. But as Žižek, one of the main theorists featured in this book, says, today is also the time for theory. Global theorists like Žižek himself and his friend Alain Badiou are among intellectuals for whom there is standing room only at live events and whose every word is followed avidly by millions, especially through social media which has massively expanded their audience in the last few years. The ideas are complex, the theory and politics challenging. But there is a thirst for theory on a major global scale. Hence, our trope and title — theoretical times. What we require for our survival and future prospects is essentially a new theory of political economy for a world still in the shadow of the global financial crisis, or twenty-first century crash, and in hock to ideas of the right which bring danger to the whole globe.

This book is a part of long-term work on social, cultural and political theory, and the history of theory, in the post-crash global condition and the narrow theoretical ledge we now inhabit in its wake. It argues that we live, interestingly, in theoretical times. Previously we lived, I would argue, in ‘interesting times’ of the modernity of the twentieth century, named by the historian and theorist Eric Hobsbawm, born in the year of the Russian

revolution of 1917 (Hobsbawm, 2003). Study has attached itself to theory and theorists as never before — and high theory at that. But there has also been a delving into ‘the popular’ of culture as never before, too — both high and low popular culture. This book draws on my research log into the refraction of contemporary popular culture through low and high modernism in a series of episodes and reports from the new front of theory and popular culture. The new celebrity intellectual culture, alongside the global celebrity culture of Reality TV (which produced among other contemporary figures unprecedented President Donald Trump), that has developed over the past few years has produced open access online journals devoted to theorists featured in this book such as Jean Baudrillard, Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek. The *International Journal of Baudrillard Studies* began in 2004, the *International Journal of Žižek Studies* began in 2007 and *Badiou Studies* began in 2012. The European Graduate School features people featured in the pages of this book like Virilio, Badiou and Žižek as star professors whose lectures are then posted on YouTube. Baudrillard, who died in 2007, is still featured prominently after his own death, which itself was steeped in reversibility and symbolic exchange as we shall see in this book. YouTube promotes hour plus long presentations by these theorists as if they were rock stars like Bruce Springsteen, Prince or Lady Gaga giving extended shows, an essential part of ‘showbiz’ academia, indistinguishable from all other performers. A Reality TV star President of the United States emanates from the same ‘star’ culture, which he says openly allows him to grope women with impunity according to the 10-year-old *Access Hollywood* video

watched by billions around the world in the year of his election. Marcel Gauchet in conversation with Badiou has rather cynically suggested that this intellectual celebrity movement, especially that variant around the Badiouian notion of the ‘communist hypothesis’ (Badiou, 2010a), is ‘typically imbued with the values of capitalism, of the media-mercantile climate we’re steeped in [...] an attractive brand name, a company label’ (Badiou & Gauchet, 2016, p. 57). This is the contradiction of theory in our times. Theory is often powerful in its critique but it is caught up in the trivia and detritus of celebrity culture which in turn promotes its wares globally and instantly — the city of the instant or the futurism of the moment as Virilio labels it (Redhead, 2004a). Žižek becomes more well known for his nervous ticks (his constant stroking of his nose while talking) or his telling of dirty jokes than his complex and ground breaking transcendental materialism, the mature theoretical perspective generated out of Žižek and Badiou’s work. It is also easy for the cynics to dismiss theory as merely fashionable, pretentious and impotent. Gauchet suggests to Badiou that:

[...] the pose of radicalism in no way destabilises what it purports to challenge. It’s fashionable and you can show off in public discussions and lecture to overflow audiences on elite campuses, but it’s useless. Nothing concrete can be expected from it. (Badiou & Gauchet, 2016, pp. 56–57)

These featured theorists are also hailed as some classic throwback to earlier times, even earlier centuries. Žižek has indeed reminded us of this in a modern consideration of Lenin (Žižek, 2017) 100 years on from the Russian

Revolution of 1917. Prominent Badiou and Žižek scholar Frank Ruda has recently noted that Badiou stated that ‘Lacan is our Hegel’. Badiou himself has been seen by Ruda as ‘our Lenin or Marx’ and Žižek has said of his friend Badiou that ‘a figure like Plato or Hegel walks here among us’. Devotees of Žižek have called him ‘our man of steel’ and ‘the Elvis of Cultural Theory’. He has also been described less affectionately as ‘that big hairy Marxist’. Theorists today are sitting astride the globe like giants whilst whole disciplines wither on the vine. In some senses disciplines have been superseded. All disciplines, too. We have become post-disciplinary in our trans or interdisciplinarity and devoted in our studies to the life and work of singular theorists. Dictionaries have been produced concentrating on theorists such as Žižek and Badiou, and others, including Virilio and Baudrillard, in the intellectual space where whole disciplines would have featured in the past. Although there has been a cult of the theorist in the past century, Žižek and Badiou, Virilio and Baudrillard provide critical contemporary examples of long-term mature thought which can be applied across numerous disciplines and sub-disciplines from the humanities to the sciences. The collective theory of Badiou, Žižek and myriad colleagues, augmented by Baudrillard and Virilio, christened by Adrian Johnston (2014) as transcendental materialism, is the most mature global theory we have today. It is continuously being generated out of the work of Žižek and Badiou (and forbears like Karl Marx, G. W. F Hegel and Jacques Lacan) and embellished by the enigmatic singular work of Baudrillard and Virilio. Virilio and Baudrillard in my view have themselves been swallowed up in the

misleading labels of the postmodern, postmodernity, postmodern economy, postmodern culture, postmodern society and postmodernism for far too long and are to some extent rehabilitated from that roadblock in this book. Transcendental materialism is explored in this book in terms of the urgent political requirement for theoretical times to counter the resistible rise of the right, and the concomitant decline of the left, as globalisation and neo-liberalism (Brown, 2015; Davies, 2017) have ravaged, and hollowed out, the globe over the last four or five decades.

Although couched in general terms for much of the time, *Theoretical Times* concentrates on the work of Slavoj Žižek and Alain Badiou, dangerously supplemented by Jean Baudrillard and Paul Virilio, both in terms of taking seriously their transcendental materialist theoretical analyses for our sometimes profoundly untheoretical times and their participation in the hyperreal world of 'theory' today. The 'dangerous supplements' (Fitzpatrick, 1991) of the work of Baudrillard and Virilio have been prominent in my previous books. *Theoretical Times* is part of a trilogy of books on theory. It is the follow-up book to my 'post-theory' book *We Have Never Been Postmodern: Theory at the Speed of Light* (2011). *Theoretical Times* is also the follow-up book to my criminology and physical cultural studies book *Football and Accelerated Culture: This Modern Sporting Life* (2017) recently published in a paperback edition by Routledge. *Theoretical Times*, although a stand-alone book, is the third book in this trilogy. But it moves the arguments on apace and elevates the work of Badiou and Žižek, the transcendental materialist perspective, to a position it did

not previously enjoy. The previous books argued for the development of a claustropolitan sociology and a bunker anthropology to capture the growing claustropolitanism of our world. Claustropolitanism, accelerated culture, foreclosure and repletarianisation and other conceptual parts of the apparatus allow a window on our world which, as the years of the twenty-first century have gone by, is widening by the day. As this book's episodes of reporting from the new frontier of contemporary popular culture show very clearly, and indeed evocatively, in modernism and modernity claustropolitanism is the most obvious structure of feeling, as Raymond Williams (2015) puts it pervading today's globe. Claustropolitanism in popular culture in particular has been seen to a feature of our age, especially its capture of the particular nature of the structure of feeling, as Williams developed the concept, that leads to the desire to get off the planet which other thinkers such as Badiou and Rowland Atkinson have contextualised. Claustropolitanism as a concept has caught on. As ultra-realist criminologists Hall and Winlow have formulated it:

Redhead's notion of claustropolitanism — based on Virilio's claim that humanity increasingly wishes to get off the planet and leave behind the depleting, overcrowded, gridlocked and corrupt world of neo-liberal mega-cities, resource wars, clamorous markets and petty consumerised struggles for social status — contextualises Atkinson's notion of the 'metropolitan cloud' as the first actual step, both metaphorically, and in some ways literally, in this process. In the vortices, the

retreat of younger generations into subjectivity and fantasy is the pallid substitute for what the rich are beginning to do in reality. (Hall & Winlow, 2015, pp. 128–129)

Hall and Winlow also see this perspective as connected to that of Badiou in particular:

Alain Badiou said something similar — at the moment judging by the way we think and what we desire, as disembodied subjects running away from reality we all, as Redhead implies, want to be ‘out of this world’. (Hall & Winlow, 2015, pp. 128–129)

Transcendental materialism, claustropolitanism, claustropolitan sociology and bunker anthropology. These perspectives and related ideas have been taken up by scholars across a range of disciplines and much new work is in the pipeline. There are relatively few specific texts in this area, but they are burgeoning fast and I want to introduce the audience of this book to some of this pioneering exploration.

There is a lust for theory in the present much like Iggy Pop and the Stooges proclaimed a ‘lust for life’ and it is manifestly on the new new left. I make no apology for being partisan here. This book is written in opposition to a text like new right philosopher Roger Scruton’s (2015) revised edition of *Fools, Frauds and Firebrands: Thinkers of the New Left* which specifically features new left theorists like Žižek only to denigrate them. But it is also nuanced and contextualised by another book like Razmig Keucheyan’s *The Left Hemisphere: Mapping Critical*

Theory Today (2013), now available in a paperback edition which will boost its audience globally, which comprehensively maps globally our progress, and our lack, in the world of contemporary critical theory today. Keucheyan's magisterial survey offers a global cartography of the expanding intellectual field of critical contemporary thought. It also provides a general overview of theorists such as Badiou and Žižek (and others like Jacques Rancière and Lucio Colletti) who feature prominently in this book and are stars of the new formation of theoretical times (Keucheyan, 2013, pp. 169–188). This book though, paying homage to developments in critical theory but going beyond it to the new radicalism of theoretical times, moves beyond a general cartography and specifically concentrates on transcendental materialism and claustropolitanism as a significant part of new adventures in theory in the globe today. Various disciplines and sub-disciplines have utilised the original perspectives of transcendental materialism (Hall, 2012, chapter 8; Johnston, 2014) referred to and further developed in this book and many published articles and chapters in books. For instance, witness the set of game-changing powerful ultra-realist criminology books and essays such as Steve Hall's *Theorising Crime and Deviance: A New Perspective* (2012), Steve Hall and Simon Winlow's *Revitalising Criminological Theory: Towards a New Ultra Realism* (2015), and Simon Winlow, Steve Hall and James Treadwell's *The Rise of the Right: English Nationalism and the Transformation of Working Class Politics* (2016). Highlighting the debilitating 'pseudo-pacification process' we as individuals face everyday in global capitalism Hall and Winlow note, in promoting

new directions in an ultra-realist criminology which they originally and provocatively pioneered, that:

In the absence of an alternative political vision and a project of truth and solidarity, the ‘crimes of the powerful’ and the mentality behind them, albeit on widely differing scales of operation between the oligarchic top and precarious bottom of the socio-economic order, are becoming the model for the ‘crimes of everyone’. The sheer scale of neo-liberalism’s social divisions, the intensity of its obscene drives as they fuel competitive individualism, and the precariousness of its means of livelihood, are combining to place significant strain on the pseudo-pacification process’s ability to sublimate the energy of anxious individuals and orientate it towards legal and socially acceptable activities in economy, culture and politics. This is the basis of the criminological reality of advanced capitalism in the twenty-first century. (Hall & Winlow, 2015, p. 120)

Further work in this field has strengthened the theoretical tendency in new directions in criminological theory (Hall & Winlow, 2012) and crime and deviance (Winlow & Atkinson, 2013) which make ‘it OK to talk about capitalism again’ and to develop a theory which unpacks crime, social harm and violence in the ever more precarious age of global neo-liberalism. This perspective has spread across disciplinary boundaries in and around sociology and criminology. For example, Anthony Ellis’ (2016) deeply ethnographic portrait of contemporary white masculinity *Men, Masculinities and Violence* has

been described in publicity for the book as ‘the first to analyse data from groups of violent working class males in a transcendental materialist framework to produce a crisp, clear and credible explanation of persistent male violence’. Similarly in Mark Horsley’s (2015) *The Dark Side of Prosperity: Late Capitalism’s Culture of Indebtedness* the author has written an indispensable critical analysis of the consumer credit market and the burgeoning debt industry today utilising theorists such as Badiou, Žižek and Rancière, all featured prominently in this book. Furthermore, the deviant leisure tendency developed in the multiplicity of texts of Oliver Smith and Thomas Raymen and colleagues also adapts and develops aspects of this perspective for criminology and leisure studies, and also physical cultural studies, the relabelling of sociology of sport and leisure (Redhead, 2017; Smith & Raymen, 2016, 2017). For Smith and Raymen it is essential to study crime and its links to consumer culture (Hall, Winlow & Ancrum, 2012) but as this pervades everything, everywhere, all at the same time, deviant leisure as a sub-subject area becomes ever more complicated and prescient. Accelerated culture for example has given birth to what Raymen has called ‘accelerated gambling’. Smith and Raymen have argued from a criminological point of view that for deviant leisure, the perspective they have originated and developed across disciplines:

The study of ‘leisure’ is perhaps one of the central preoccupations of the social sciences. The expansion of consumer culture, the increasing precarity of work and growing numbers of ‘active retired people’ has emphasised the role of leisure within

contemporary western cultures. For the most part, however, criminology has tended to gravitate towards the non-work practices of the young and marginalised. Whether scrutinising drug use, joyriding, graffiti, skateboarding or smoking, much research in this area focuses on the activities of young people engaging in behaviours that, if not always illegal, appear close enough to the boundary between deviance and illegality to invoke discussion around police responses, policy initiatives, antisocial behaviour and crime prevention [...] cultural criminologists in particular have a rich tradition of some of the most visible forms of ‘deviant leisure’ such as graffiti writing, street racing, BASE jumping and innumerable exemplars of edgework. (Smith & Raymen, 2016, pp. 1–2)

But these are the forms of more spectacular deviance and deviant leisure as a new perspective, drawing from advances in both cultural criminology and ultra-realist criminology, is committed also to exploring:

[...] the potential for harm associated with culturally accepted and embedded forms of leisure, which for the most part reflect an unquestioning commitment to consumer capitalism. (Smith & Raymen, 2016, p. 2)

Harm, and its reconceptualisation in the neo-liberal and globalised world, is a vital concept in deviant leisure which connects this perspective to the wider theory of transcendental materialism discussed in this book.

The work influenced by transcendental materialism, claustropolitan sociology, bunker anthropology and claustropolitanism, as this book demonstrates, is globally significant. It is becoming essentially a new political economy for the globe. I have only space to indicate some of this literature, but it is growing apace and becoming influential in postgraduate studies in various disciplines across the disciplines of the world academy. In addition to the instances I have already given, criminological work on pharmaceuticals like Alexander Hall and Georgios Antonopoulos' (2016) *Fake Meds Online* is another pertinent example of working from within the perspective of political economy and new political economy at that. Further, the outstanding rich ethnographic work of Daniel Briggs in books like *Crack Cocaine Users* (2012) and *Deviance and Risk on Holiday* (2013) is couched in terms of a new theoretical political economy for explaining the effects on the street (in London, Ibiza or Madrid), of the post-crash condition we live in today. This is best exemplified in Briggs' book with Winlow, Hall and Treadwell (2015) entitled *Riots and Political Protest: Notes on the Post-Political Present*. Ranging across the contemporary left political scene of Syriza in Greece (Badiou, 2017b), Podemos in Spain, the Occupy movement in the United States, and the far right wing English Defence League (EDL) in England, the authors collectively analyse significant events like the English riots of 2011. Such events though are seen not as forms of 'resistance' as they have commonly been in the past, but more of an example of contemporary hyper-conformity in consumer society. These authors proclaim that their research shows that:

In liberal democratic Europe and North America, we are once again seeing mass unemployment and underemployment. Young people appear to be bearing the brunt of this political and economic failure. There is nothing, absolutely nothing, on the political and economic horizon that might suggest the imminent return of the secure and stable forms of employment that would offer working class and marginalised populations a reasonable standard of living and a sense of inclusion and satisfaction. At the other end of our radically changed class system, we have seen the establishment of an incredibly wealthy elite that appears to have transcended what remains of the rules, laws and obligations of Western modernity to attain a position of historically unprecedented special liberty. (Winlow, Hall, Treadwell, & Briggs, 2015, pp. 9–10)

This present book draws on material across disciplines and is an interdisciplinary monograph designed to provide an overview of the theoretical times which provide the context for these innovative new texts currently shaking up their fields with many more waiting in the wings. The central subject areas of the book are contemporary Theory with a capital T and the politics of Theory as the geo-political globe threatens to go under in the explosion of crises — economic, environmental, military and refugee — but it ranges right across our often very conservative academic borders. The audiences for these topics are global, and this book incorporates many different fields from neuroscience to popular music studies to

art history, and methodologies from speculative realism through critical realism and ultra-realism (DeLanda, 2016; Harman, 2015; Johnston, 2014; Meillassoux, 2008). There is enormous global interest in the media in the newsworthiness of these topics because of events like the global financial crisis of 2007 and 2008 and its delayed effects such as Brexit in the United Kingdom and Donald Trump's election victory in the US Presidential race. These events are now on everyone's lips. The neo-right populism seemingly on the march everywhere exemplified by Pauline Hanson's One Nation party in Australia calling for the banning of the burqa (alongside Senator Jacqui Lambie), disengagement from the United Nations, the treating of Islam as a disease in need of vaccination and, even, a Royal Commission on Islam. Also in Australia there is the rise of the far right Q Society, begun in 2010, flushed with Islamophobia and anti-homosexuality, and its fundamentalist Christian political party the Australian Liberty Alliance started in 2015, alongside the Australian Conservatives party started in 2016 by Liberal Senator Cory Bernardi and a host of would-be Donald Trumps led by ex-Australian Labor Party leader Mark Latham. The 'so-called' 'post-truth' world of fake news, alt. right and alternative facts ushered in by all the US president's men and women demands an academic response and action from the new new left. This book provides a reasoned and rational response and shows 'what is to be done' 100 years on from Lenin's Russian revolution (Žižek, 2017a). Academia globally has been caught unawares for years by the accelerating mood of the global far right and its new economic nationalism (after globalisation), authoritarian

responses to refugee and migration crises, and dismissal of catastrophic planetary climate change. Already Trump Studies, Brexit Criminology and Brexit Studies (with a Centre for Brexit Studies already established at Birmingham City University) have entered the academic lexicon as scholars seek to link what I have elsewhere called the ‘dangerous modernity’ (2004a) of the modern world to the dismantling of the new world order and globalised international relations. The main theoretical figures referred to in this book are now often very well-known stellar international academics with a global following, especially on social media. However, their own academic connections today are as tortuous as they have ever been, and seem even looser in the precarious (Standing, 2016) contemporary academic world of zero and temporary contracts. It is significant that Badiou, Žižek and Virilio (and Baudrillard before his untimely death in 2007) have become integral parts of celebrity intellectual culture since their disengagement from everyday professorial culture in international academia. Baudrillard for instance left the conventional university system as long ago as 1986. His memory was celebrated in Paris in 2017, ten years after his death, with Jean Baudrillard: Street One, a festival more akin to a celebration of a famous artist than an academic. Academic knowledge in university settings is indeed part of their critique of contemporary knowledge production in the global education factory. Acutely conscious of this fragmentation of theory and its conditions and social relations of production, this book therefore cuts critically across many different disciplines and areas, including political economy, critical theory, physical cultural studies, criminology,

sociology, cultural studies, socio-legal studies, jurisprudence, leisure studies, popular culture, cultural studies, architecture, philosophy and media studies. This book is about an important part of today's theory, and the politics of that theory, in the hyperreality of theoretical times.