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Reflections on Scott Hill's 'A Revised Defence of *Le Monde* Group': 'Never Again'

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While I was reading Scott Hill's (2022a) 'A Revised Defense of the *Le Monde* Group' a number of questions sprang to mind. Not least, what do conspiracy theorists and those academics that support, defend or simply present these in their writing want to achieve? This question arose again after one comment in particular was posted on my last article for [SERRC](#). That comment came from Brian Martin who said his point was about the censorship of The Great Barrington Declaration,¹ it was not to endorse it.

Alternative Realities

I understand the arguments on how the blanket technological censorship of anything questioning the official position on for example, the pandemic and vaccines needs to be addressed. However, I still feel uncomfortable reading some material in particular, for example, conspiracy theories which surround violent acts, and which are at odds with my own understanding of science, medicine, and indeed, politics and history. Therefore, and as a sociologist, not a conspiracy theory specialist, I write this essay with history and its lessons very much in mind. My fundamental arguments (made perhaps as a generalist), is that contrary to Hagen (2022), conspiracy theories are epistemologically flawed; they are in fact, problematic, and historical analysis of three examples in particular demonstrates this.

In writing this essay I have been pondering how my own political stance, which feels conservative in the company of conspiracy theory specialists, affects my positioning on conspiracy theories and I'll return to these thoughts in my conclusion. I feel even more uncomfortable reading material which is clearly full of lies and abhorrent in content (Ramon 2022), for example the conspiracy theories which surrounded the *Charlie Hebdo* attack, which implicated the Jewish community and the French State and which Hill's article focuses on. However, as Dentith's reply to Hill (2022a) makes clear, these were never part of the now contentious *Le Monde* missive, which chided the French Education Ministry for not being assertive enough in its approach in allegedly attempting to expunge conspiracy theories from the public consciousness.

So in this essay, and without addressing Hill directly, whose article has now been well rehearsed (Hill 2022a;b) I want to think about how the simple presentation of publications (including some on SERRC) which are clearly inaccurate, might affect public beliefs and affect our well-being, as a society, because although Basham and Dentith (2016) make a great deal of their argument that social scientists shouldn't aid and abet governments in pathologizing populations in their project to counter conspiracy theories, the research evidence to date suggests conspiracy theories are detrimental to our health (Leonard and Frederick 2021). In pondering Hill's (2022a) revised article I wonder if there is in fact symmetry between his writing and that of Basham and Dentith (2016), in that all want conspiracy theories addressed. I see this more now in Dentith's (2022) reply to Hill, and indeed, Hill's (2022b) reply to Dentith (2022).

¹ Although not a conspiracy theory per se, The Great Barrington Declaration presents a theory of SARS-CoV-2 which is wholly unsupported by the medical evidence: the virus kills people of all ages, not just the elderly as the Declaration states.

It seems to me that Hill wants social scientists to address conspiracy theories because the stereotypes contained in them are in fact unhealthy for us (Hill 2022a) and our loved ones, whereas Basham and Dentith (2016) do so because these theories might indicate dangerous state conspiracies and so philosophers need to empirically evaluate these to safeguard our democracies from more ‘criminal errors’.² The confusion for me in Basham and Dentith’s (2016) writing is this: I am confused as to whether we are to accept that ‘stereotypical’ conspiracy theories for example, those that do focus on the Jewish community and are so ridiculous so as not to warrant the sort of pathologizing attention of the *Le Monde* Group of social scientists, while in principal we take seriously a theory the French State were involved in the *Charlie Hebdo* atrocity because democracies sometimes plan and carry out conspiracies. Although in reading the Dentith’s reply (2022) to Hill, I am now of the understanding that it is the anti-conspiracy theory through which a State denies a conspiracy, and instead accuses the public of constructing a conspiracy theory about the State which is the problem the philosophers want to address and, or counter. Confusing?

Not really, it’s quite straight forward. Take the example of the invasion of Iraq in 2002. Dentith (2022) now argues that the US and UK etc.,³ accused the public of undermining the allies ‘glorious’ (author’s emphasis) mission of liberating that country by accusing the US and UK of using the invasion to gain access to rich oil reserves. This approach by the allies had the effect of negating the public conspiracy theory the invasion was for oil. If I understand the philosopher’s argument correctly, this is a form of gas lighting. The State accuses the public of a panic over something (a call to war for example) which politicians deny, when there is in fact evidence to support this, psychologically undermining not only the public’s argument but also undermining society, and negating any power the public may have. In fact then, and through this linguistic maneuvering, the State pathologizes its own citizens.

Incidentally, Dentith (2022) now seems to argue WMD were not as Hill (2022a) argued in his reply to these philosophers, the rationale or conspiracy that enabled the war; it was the notion of Western liberal intervention, the idea something had to be done to free the people of Iraq from the tyranny of Saddam Hussein. That is how I now understand Dentith’s (2022) argument on Iraq. Regardless of which aspect of that conflict is actually being argued to be a Conspiracy, the fundamental purpose of this essay is to present historical analyses to explore the notion of State conspiracy through three brief examples: The Iraq War; Vietnam, and the Holocaust which Basham and Dentith cite in their original (2016) article and Dentith (2019, 2022). Basham and Dentith state in their article (2016, 15) that:

There is nothing unusual or inherently defective about conspiracy explanations. We should always, without exception, adopt a case-by-case, evidential evaluation of all allegations of politically momentous conspiracy. These should never be simply dismissed and silenced. The anti-conspiracy theory panic, and the automatic dismissal it reveals, rests at the foundation of

² Hill’s latest reply (2022b) to Dentith (2022) makes clear that both want social scientists to work on all aspects of conspiracy theories.

³ It seemed clear to me that in Dentith’s (2019) article their argument was in fact that WMD was the motive for the invasion of Iraq. It does seem the goalposts have been moved somewhat in Dentith’s (2022) article.

the declaration by these social scientists. It is not only anti-rational and non-historical it is unethical and foolish. This panic can only help repeat the many criminal errors of our democracies.

I want to attempt to test this statement as much as one can within the limitations of a short essay. Moreover, in seeking clarity, and in also thinking about the notion of free speech, which Basham and Dentith seem concerned about, I wondered what the consequences of all conspiracy theories are when they increasingly seem to command attention on SERRC, and online, and what many of us (or at least I) thought of as our established academic history is seemingly rewritten through the distortion of our reality conspiracy theories arguably bring about. The latter point came to mind while I was researching Lyotard's concept of the Differend (Leventhal 1997).⁴ I wanted to research this as the invocation of the Holocaust, and indeed, (9/11) by Basham and Dentith (2016) in their article 'Social Science's Conspiracy-Theory Panic: Now They Want to Cure Everyone', which Scott Hill (2022a) critiqued, reminded me of a lecture on the Differend I received as a second-year politics and sociology undergraduate some years ago. It also highlighted to me what I will argue are inaccuracies in Basham and Dentith's (2016) article.

The Differend: All our Stories Burnt

My former politics lecturer explained the Differend simply, as the way in which the fracturing of the traditional grand narratives of modernity, that is, the legitimating narratives of knowledge into myriad discourses, had allowed conspiracy like theories to perform categorical statements, that is, to make announcements, definitive statements, about history, negating previously accepted historical accounts. For example, by denying or refusing to recognise the language of the Holocaust and that very name,⁵ and also for example, the statement 'Auschwitz was a concentration camp where Jews were murdered as an integral part of National Socialism', the survivors and victims of the concentration camps are denied their experience and made victims again (Jeffries 2011).

Leventhal (1997, 93-110) quotes Lyotard (1991) who explains it like this. "I would like to call a differend the case where the plaintiff is divested of the means to argue and becomes for that reason a victim." Leventhal goes on to state:

In this sense, the Jewish witness of the Holocaust has been divested of the means to argue, for if they attempt to prove the above statement as an empirical fact, the moral garvity (*sic*) is lost; if they attempt to demonstrate the personal effect of Auschwitz, the general, universal is lost etc. The radical revisionist denies not merely the referent, but the sense, the addressee and the interlocutor as well. How, in a postmodern world, can we speak about

⁴ <http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/holocaust/lyotarddiff.html>.

⁵ The term Holocaust means sacrifice or burnt offering on an altar. The term Shoah is a Hebrew word which is preferred by many in the Jewish community and means wastefulness and desolation.
<https://www.jewishqld.com/about-the-jewish-community/shoah-holocaust/>.

Auschwitz? If there are no grand legitimating meta-narratives, how can we meaningfully speak about and listen to the stories of Auschwitz?

This essay considers the implications of the notion of the negation of argument with regard to contemporary conspiracy theories in a digitized world. For example, presenting alternative ‘theories’, so-called ‘facts’ on the pandemic which don’t simply question whether the vaccine program was the right strategy, but begin to erase the [pandemic](#) through implication that vaccines weren’t necessary. In this new linguistic-digital context, how do we speak meaningfully about our world if conspiracy theorists work in effect represents a radical revision of our past,⁶ and indeed, our present. After all, isn’t this revisionism also a form of gas lighting? All around us is the evidence of our lives, past and present, but we are told we are imagining this or have invented it. Isn’t this exactly what conspiracy theorist specialists complain of? An irony, if ever there was one.

Take for example, those examples Basham and Dentith (2016) discuss surrounding 9/11, and the conflation of these by the philosophers with political conspiracies, specifically, the Nazi’s ‘secret’ (author’s emphasis) conspiracy’ to murder European Jewry,⁷ bizarrely juxtaposed with the incongruous and factually incorrect argument that ‘The Gulf of Tonkin Incident’ was a conspiracy by the North Vietnamese government (Basham and Dentith state the attack on US ships was denied). I’m quite sure the North Vietnamese did, as Basham and Dentith argue, deny the attack on US ships, however, the Incident is known so well because at the time it was assumed, incorrectly, that the US government was lying about the attack. And contrary to Basham and Dentith’s argument, it was as I will argue later below, far from clear to political actors involved in the immediacy of the event what had actually happened in the Gulf of Tonkin.

Taking Issue with Iraq as a Conspiracy

At this point, I take issue with Hill as well as Basham and Dentith (2016) and Dentith (2019; 2020), as all discuss the disaster that was the invasion of Iraq. In a review I wrote last year for SERRC called ‘The Deadly Consequences of Wish Fulfilment’ ([Hewitt 2021](#)), I argued the reasons for going to war then were far more complex than simply a belief (or conspiracy) that weapons of mass destruction existed in Iraq because a sexed-up, dodgy dossier said so, or because the allies were after oil. The excessive hubris and paranoia of Bush and Blair all arguably played a part in the decision to go to war. The Axis of Evil terrorist discourse,⁸ the messianic belief in Western liberal intervention following the invasion of Afghanistan post-9/11, Bush’s immediate belief in the aftermath of that attack that Saddam Hussein was attempting an assassination of him in a similar way to the failed attempt on his father in Gulf

⁶ I am also reminded of this song by Bauhaus. ‘Who Killed Mr Moonlight’, which is an expression of the sadness in the postmodern condition. It includes the lyrics: ‘All our stories burnt, our films lost in the rushes’. Hence the title of the section above on the Differend. ‘All our Stories Burnt.’ <https://youtu.be/dVpyKxpsadg>

⁷⁷ This essay will argue that the anti-Semitism of Hitler was an integral and overt aspect of National Socialism.

⁸ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/onpolitics/transcripts/sou012902.htm>.

War One,⁹ and moreover, ignorance about the political-Islamic world of the Middle-East all played a part and culminated in the disaster which is still unfolding there; the allies didn't simply invade Iraq because they believed they were righting a great wrong in removing Saddam Hussein. Thus Given Basham and Dentith's argument (2016) on the need for meticulous research to detect real conspiracy theories, I present an alternative interpretation of the Gulf of Tonkin Incident and the Holocaust to demonstrate again that history isn't simply a series of conspiracies; it is much more complex than that.

Misreading the Signals in Vietnam and Lying to Everyone: A Metaphor for our Time?

Vietnam is, without argument, one of the most contentious conflicts of the 20th century. This is because of the way the US entered the Vietnam conflict: the way the conflict was conducted; the misleading of the American public by government; public revulsion leading to protest at the war; the way the war ended, and the very rationale for the war in the first place. A superpower asserting its seemingly overwhelming military might over a people seeking liberation,¹⁰ in what was ostensibly, an ideological struggle against communism. It is therefore still surrounded in controversy and acrimony and, it was mired in conspiracy at the time.

However, the historiography of the event known as the Gulf of Tonkin Incident is well-documented and clear: we still do not know whether in the immediacy of events the 'incident', the attack on the USS Maddox and C. Turner Joy by a North Vietnamese torpedo boat in 1964 was real or imagined to the political actors involved—in fact this is seemingly unclear. Galeotti (2018, 150-189) states that an over enthusiastic American radio operator misheard and/or mistranslated a North Vietnamese transmission. However, it is also argued the attacks did take place (Patterson 2008). What is clear is that at first President Johnson and the Secretary of State Robert McNamara knew that the situation was unclear, but were however, aware that covert US and South Vietnamese Commando operations were taking place in the Gulf and aware of the possibility that this could have led to a retaliatory attack by the North Vietnamese and so used the attack,^{11,12} real or not, as a pretext to attack North Vietnam.

This indisputably led to the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution which was a Bill passed by Congress which effectively allowed the US to take whatever military action against North Vietnam it deemed necessary. This marked the inexorable escalation of the conflict in South East Asia

⁹ Galeotti (2018, 1) defines political self-deception as 'the distortion of reality against the available evidence and according to one's wishes', hence the title of my review of her book: "The Deadly Consequences of Wish Fulfillment'.

¹⁰ Galeotti using the theory of self-deception presents an alternative interpretation in which she surmises that the US believed in the face of American military might the North Vietnamese would simply run away, surrender and give up their arms and their country. Through this, Galeotti (2019) incorporates the concept of naivety into self-deception.

¹¹ <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/tonkin-gulf-resolution>.

¹² <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/educational-resources/tonkin-gulf>.

which ended in tragedy and a humiliating defeat for the US. In fact, because of declassified documents we now know that the attack on the Turner Joy and Maddox was real.¹³ The point is that Johnson and McNamara didn't know immediately but nevertheless decided to use the incident to escalate the war.¹⁴ The declassified papers presented by the National Security Agency suggest that by the time the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was delivered, Johnson and McNamara knew the Gulf of Tonkin Incident was real. Therefore, the Gulf of Tonkin Incident and subsequent Resolution themselves really do not represent a conspiracy. If there was a conspiracy over the Vietnam War then it had begun many years before. Indeed, Herman and Chomsky's *Manufacturing Consent* (1988) and propaganda model provide us with a way of understanding Vietnam. Herman and Chomsky view the conflict as a deliberate misleading of the American public through partial information, by a complicit press and media in league with the US government. This of course suggests we can't necessarily trust our press, our media but I really can't find a parallel between Vietnam and the *Charlie Hebdo* atrocity and the *Le Monde* Group try as I might.

However, if we look at Hannah Arendt's 'Lying in Politics' and the "Pentagon Papers" which fuelled Arendt's writing, we can find a symmetry between theorising and what is now accepted as empirical data: the ideologically fuelled Cold-War conflict against Vietnam had begun many years before 1964 and, in secret. Johnson, McNamara and indeed Kennedy had been lying for years. If there was a conspiracy it was as Chomsky and Herman argued, a conspiracy to withhold, hide what the US government was and had been doing for years. Indeed, Nixon,¹⁵ to who the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was neither here nor there, started as he meant to go on in 1969, escalating the war with the secret bombing campaign of Cambodia.

The Holocaust: A Conspiracy or Open Secret? Interpretations

Basham and Dentith (2016) make reference to National Socialism and the Holocaust with which this essay began. I cannot agree the Holocaust, the murder of Jews, gypsies, gay people, 'criminal's (author's emphasis) and communists was a secret conspiracy and began only after the Wannsee Conference in 1942 and secret meetings prior to this in Nazi councils. For whether we follow the intentionalist or functionalist positions as representing the inevitable path of Nazi ideology,¹⁶ anti-Semitism was, without doubt, an integral, overt, indeed, it was the leading policy of National Socialism from 1933. From the anti-Jewish legislation, to the boycott of Jewish Shops, the establishment of the first concentration camps (Dachau 1933) to Kristallnacht, the Nazi's intent was clear and explicitly stated. The functionalist argument that mass killings across Europe came about because of the polycratic structure of the Reich, the petty (or otherwise)¹⁷ squabbles between for example, the

¹³ https://media.defense.gov/2021/Jul/14/2002762863/-1/-1/0/REL1_HERRICK.PDF.

¹⁴ In fact McNamara misled Congress about a second attack. <https://www.usni.org/magazines/naval-history-magazine/2008/february/truth-about-tonkin>.

¹⁵ <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/ending-vietnam>.

¹⁶ <https://www.holocaustcentre.org.nz/uploads/1/1/5/2/115245341/interpretations-of-the-holocaust.pdf>.

¹⁷ The Night of the Long Knives in 1934, the murder of Ernst Rohm, many members of the SA and more of Hitler's enemies and an example of Hitler's ruthlessness and not what one would call a petty squabble.

competing fiefdoms of the SS, the SD and Gestapo, and so the Holocaust just happened because of these factors, comes perilously close to arguing Hitler didn't know anything about mass murder and didn't order it, and thus the radical revisionist arguments which deny the Holocaust.¹⁸ Ironically, the functionalist position also negates the idea of a conspiracy because it maintains there was no organised strategy to murder European Jewry.

However, in returning to my own intentionalist argument, in the first six years of National Socialist rule there were 400 hundred decrees and regulations restricting Jewish life and freedoms From *Mein Kampf*, published in the mid 1920s to an infamous speech in 1939, Hitler made it clear what his intention was toward European Jewry. In fact research shows that immediately after the end of World War One Hitler made his intentions to the Jews explicit (Yad Vashem - The World Holocaust Memorial Centre). In 1939, Hitler said that the outbreak of war would mean the end of European Jewry (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum). By the time of the 'secret' and infamous Wannsee Conference in 1942 (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum) the mass murder of Jews and civilians had already begun across Eastern Europe. The campaign of murder involved hundreds of thousands of people. I am not saying it wasn't a conspiracy in the literal sense, obviously the National Socialists conspired from the start to murder European Jewry, it was literally however, an intentional and overt policy. The word conspiracy usually conveys secrecy.¹⁹

Thus the idea that any of this was secret as Basham and Dentith (2016) imply is really not sustainable, especially when we consider that the mass killings began in 1939 as the Einsatzgruppen advanced with the Wehrmacht into Poland.²⁰ Indeed, it is argued by historians such as Lucy Dawidowicz the historical evidence of anti-Semitism and the intent to eradicate Jews from German,²¹ European life was overwhelming before National Socialism and indeed during it. It is also argued that the allied powers were aware of the atrocities unfolding as the Nazis advanced eastwards into Europe.²² The idea that the Nazi's 'relocation plan' was a serious attempt to cover for a conspiracy to murder is really rather ludicrous if we take the above arguments seriously. The term 'relocation' is arguably nothing more than a mocking and public euphemism, and typical of the Nazi's cruel and vengeful propaganda machine, as were the postcards prisoners were forced to write from concentration camps. It is perhaps worth pointing out here, that historical research has the potential, even the power, to pre-empt (Langer 2000) that is, reappropriate the Holocaust and negate the Differend's historical revisionism. What concerns me however, is that we even need to do this in order to redress the imbalance in historical discourse.

Conclusion: Drawing the Line

¹⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/guardianweekly/story/0,,1715580,00.html>.

¹⁹ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/conspiracy>.

²⁰ http://ww2history.com/key_moments/Holocaust/Einsatzgruppen_operate_in_Poland.

²¹ <https://www.commentary.org/articles/robert-alter-2/the-war-against-the-jews-1933-1945-by-lucy-s-dawidowicz/>.

²² <https://www.yadvashem.org/podcast/and-the-world-remained-silent-part-i.html>.

In concluding, perhaps the famous imagery of Coleridge, which compares our journey to a ship at sea at night whose lantern illuminates only the waves behind us is useful to us in understanding how history can deceive us if we look for conspiracies where there were none; rather perhaps, we see history for what it is, the age old revealing of power play and political machinations. Also, perhaps arguably, we cannot anyway know in the immediacy of events like the *Charlie Hebdo* atrocity what has happened, and so we need to practice a circumspection and patience in our analyses of events. What we do know is that conspiracy theories centred on Jews have existed for years (Mole 2003) and were used as the justification for their near annihilation under National Socialism. In fact they still do, and perhaps the most infamous, “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion”²³ is still in circulation now and continues its damage. So I would agree in this context that vigilance of these stereotypical conspiracy theories is essential to safeguard our so-called democracies. Why Basham and Dentith (2016) seemingly refer to this despicable document and yet fail to realise the damage the anti-Semitic conspiracy theory surrounding the *Charlie Hebdo* atrocity, and whether in the *Le Monde* missive (Golo 2015) or not, these existed,²⁴ has the potential to do is beyond my comprehension. The consequences of racist babbling (Basham and Dentith 2016, 13) are clear. But how do we differentiate between these and those ‘sensible questions’ (13) that for example accuse the French State of the same complicity. These are, as Hill (2022a) states, just stupid. Moreover, as Hill again argues, the implication in Basham and Dentith’s (2016) article that the anti-Semitic conspiracy theories surrounding the *Charlie Hebdo* attack are given validity by arguing the Final Solution was a conspiracy is quite simply obtuse.

This is my issue with these conspiracy theories. I don’t want to erase them, I want to see them deconstructed and revealed for what they are. If this is what Basham and Dentith are arguing for when they talk of meticulous research and being historically and politically literate, then all well and good. However, we need to get this right in the first place and I’m not sure Basham and Dentith (2016) have. There is no historical argument in either the Gulf of Tonkin Incident or in the Holocaust which suggests a methodology with which to explore contemporary conspiracy theories. If we cannot accurately contextualise our research and take into account of different historical interpretations, then where is the open mindedness Basham and Dentith’s argument implies? Moreover, if we take the Iraq War, the Gulf of Tonkin Incident and the Holocaust as examples of conspiracy theories I think these are in fact, and contrary to Basham and Dentith’s statement which I represented above, inherently defective.

In returning to my opening remarks, in which I said I felt more conservative with age, I wonder if my positioning on conspiracy theories in actual fact reflects my own biases. After all, I was brought up by *Guardian* reading left-wing parents during the 1960s and 70s when the Second World War and its horrors were just beginning to be fictionalised in film.²⁵ I

²³ <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/protocols-of-the-elders-of-zion>.

²⁴ <https://chicago.adl.org/anti-semitic-conspiracies-continue-aftermath-paris-attacks/>.

²⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/gnm-archive/2002/jun/06/1>.

joined the Anti-Nazi League (Harris 2019) while still at school in 1979 and became a very left leaning punk rocker who listened to the Clash.

This is why I balk at these anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. This is my confirmation bias. Perhaps I'm not as conservative as I thought. Finally, I'd like to take issue with the writer Salman Rushdie who was savagely attacked very recently.²⁶ He said during the furore over the publication of the *Satanic Verses* that if free speech conforms only to our own moral framework then this equates to censorship. Does that mean if we find ourselves in the same position as Europe did in the 1930s we'd simply allow hate speech to continue without question? I don't think so unless we wish to revisit the criminal errors committed by the fascists.

The other side of the coin, so to speak, and this is also something we discussed in that politics and sociology lecture long ago but at the height of the controversy over the wearing of the veil, and the anti-Moslem discourse in Western Europe: we discussed our responsibility not to offend others, without imperilling free speech. There is no particular implication intended with regard to Salman Rushdie, or indeed, the *Charlie Hebdo* attack, this point has occurred to me during writing. I guess I'm just wondering where we draw the line, (Zavadski 2015) and in contradiction to Basham and Dentith's (2016) argument, whether we should be holding ourselves to account, not just our governments. Dare I suggest that the proponents of conspiracy theories are guilty of committing criminal errors too, and our failure to combat them in the past is in part responsible for the violence we've witnessed in the past? Perhaps we need to panic over conspiracy theories after all, and take a public health approach to them.

In sum, and in a slightly paradoxical way, and in an inversion of the Differend, Hill (2022a) says he is happy that the *Le Monde* Group are studying those who believe in the most outlandish of conspiracy theories, (perhaps harmless or harmful ones), because otherwise how will we talk to and try and understand our loved ones who are under the spell of these theories. Given the way this essay began, is this not the greatest of ironies? I wanted to think about how we could keep our histories intact given the revision of our past and our reality, because of the intrusion of conspiracy theories. I suppose there is some sort of symmetry between my position and the way Hill (2022a) wants social scientists to explore why reality is distorted for some members of society by conspiracy theories.

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²⁶ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-62528689>.

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