True Heroes, False Hoaxes, and Nietzsche's Will to Power: Bludgeoning the Truth of Coronavirus with a Narrative of Perversion; or how the Beaches Were Kept Open in Stephen Spielberg's Jaws

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Abstract: The fictional chaos of Thebes in *Oedipus Rex* metaphorizes the real-world upheaval which began in the US when the CDC confirmed the first case of COVID-19 in Washington State. Since that initial scientific apprehension, however, the status of the virus in the United States has become contested terrain which not only hosts the denial of is its own lethal potential to cause quantifiable death, but, furthermore, destabilizes how truth itself is ascertained and secured. If *Oedipus Rex* is exemplary of a *narrative of revelation* which results in the surfacing of truth, namely, that Oedipus himself is the defilement causing chaos in Thebes; the truth of the coronavirus has been subject, instead, to a *narrative of perversion* which mobilizes rhetorical strategies unique to the narrative of revelation for a purpose contrary to its form – namely, to inculcate verifiable truths as falsehoods and entrench unsupported lies as the truth. Drawing on Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* and Stephen Spielberg's *Jaws*, this article will track how the rhetorical strategies of the narrative of revelation can be used as a tool to upend truth in favor of a lie in order to reify traditional hierarchies in all forms – i.e. the Will to Power.

Keywords: Coronavirus - COVID-19 - Will to powe - Oedipus the King- Jaws- Joke - Donald Trump - Donald Trump Jr.- Will to Truth- Narrative of the Apocalypse

[Abstracts in spanish and portuguese on the pages 158-159]

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In the *Hero with a Thousand Faces* Campbell states in the chapter called "Supernatural Aid" that "the first encounter of the hero-journey is with a protective figure (often a little old crone or old man) who provides the adventurer with amulets against the dragon forces he is about to pass" (Campbell, 57). He goes on to describe this archetype of narrative as "a benign, protecting power of destiny. The fantasy is a reassurance –a promise that the peace of Paradise, which was known first within the mother womb, is not to be lost" (Campbell, 59). Earlier in the text, however, during his discussion of the Oedipus Complex quoting Géza Róheim's *The Origin and Function of Culture,* Campbell presents a more complex view of the womb-Paradise: "the first object of the child's hostility is identical with the first object of its love, and its first ideal (which thereafter is retained as the unconscious basis of all images of bliss, truth, beauty, and perfection) is that of the dual unity of the Madonna and Bambino" (Campbell, 4). Following a discussion of the fundamental psychodynamics of the Oedipus Complex Campbell cites Freud on Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex*, "'King Oedipus, who slew his father Laius and married his mother Jocasta, merely shows us the fulfilment of our own childhood wishes. But, more fortunate than he, we have meanwhile succeeded, in so far as we have not become psychoneurotics, in detaching our sexual impulses from our mothers and in forgetting our jealousy of our fathers.' …'Every pathological disorder of sexual life is rightly to be regarded as an inhibition in development'" (Campbell, 4). It is fascinating to note that Campbell's articulation of the hero's journey is presented as a pathway which enables the hero to circumvent the fate of Oedipus described in *Oedipus Rex* as "…the net of incest, mingling fathers, brothers, sons, with brides, wives, mothers: the last evil that can be known by men: no tongue can say how evil!" (Sophocles, 75). What Campbell fails to mention in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* is that the narrative of Oedipus in *Oedipus Rex* exposing him as his father's murderer and his mother's husband is methodically excavated as a secondary and latent narrative stratum from a prior and primary adventure which aligns Oedipus seamlessly with Campbell's hero; in this story Oedipus solves the riddle of the Sphinx and delivers Thebes from her dominion. Indeed, Choragos (leader of the Chorus) reaffirms the same at the end of *Oedipus Rex*:

> CHORAGOS. Men of Thebes: look upon Oedipus. This is the king who solved the famous riddle and towered up, most powerful of men. (Sophocles, 80-81)

Oedipus, it turns out, is exemplary: he represents quintessentially the adventurer who has already completed the hero-path; he is, "the redeeming hero, the carrier of the shining

blade, whose blow, whose touch, whose existence, will liberate the land" (Campbell, 11). The prologue of *Oedipus Rex* finds Thebes in distress once again requiring Oedipus as king to deliver the city for a second time.

That every iteration of the hero's journey has potentially obscured within it the catastrophe of the revelation discovered by Oedipus in *Oedipus Rex* is interesting because it gestures to the phenomenology of narrative – that 1) the facts of an event can be ascertained by direct experience and that 2) facts exist independent of interpretation. In *Oedipus Rex*, for example, the fact that Laïos, Thebe's former king, is dead and that he was murdered is undisputed and is established in a conversation between Oedipus and his brother-in-law and advisor, Creon:

> CREON. My lord: long ago Laïos was our king, before you came to govern us.
> OEDIPUS. I know; I learned of him from others; I never saw him.
> CREON. He was murdered; and Apollo commands us now to take revenge upon whoever killed him. (Sophocles, 8)
> Oedipus does not dispute that Laïos was murdered:
> OEDIPUS. Tell me: Was Laïos murdered in his house, or in the fields, or in some foreign country? (Sophocles, 8)

A contestation about the identity of Laïos's murderer, however, does arise later when Oedipus compels the blind seer, Teiresius, to state what he knows:

> OEDIPUS. Rage? Why not! And, I'll tell you what I think: you planned it, you had it done, you all but killed him with your own hands: if you had eyes, I'd say the crime was yours and yours alone.
> TEIRISIUS. So? I charge you, then. Abide by the proclamation you have made: From this day forth never speak again to those men or to me; you yourself are the pollution of this country. (Sophocles, 38)

In this exchange, Oedipus levies an accusation at Teirisius without evidence and the seer responds by telling Oedipus also without any proof that Oedipus himself is the murderer whom he seeks. It is with this exchange that Sophocles discharges the narrative which ultimately discloses Oedipus's true identity. The revelation is engineered through a series of displacements which indicate both physical movement of character from one location to another in the narrative space as well as rhetorical displacements of terms. That is, as character journeys are rendered visible in *Oedipus Rex* with the unfolding of the narrative, these effect recognitions (defined by Aristotle as a character's "change from ignorance to knowledge" (Aristotle, 20)) which instantiate a series of substitutions of terms – where murderer, for instance, substitutes for king and son eventually substitutes for husband. A comprehensive set of substitutions results in a narrative of revelation in which a false networking of facts yields to their true arrangement and thus the truth.

The first of these fateful and fatal recognitions takes place when Iocaste tells the story of Laïos's death to Oedipus in Scene II:

> OCASTE: Now, you remember the story: Laïos was killed by marauding strangers where three highways meet. (Sophocles, 38)

Iocaste situates Laïos murder in a specific location, namely, where "three highways meet" and this triggers a recollection in Oedipus:

> OEDIPUS: How strange, a shadowy memory, crossed my mind, just now. While you were speaking: it chilled my heart.
> IOCASTE: What do you mean? What memory do you speak of?
> OEDIPUS: If I understand you, Laïos was killed at a place where three roads meet. (Sophocles, 39)
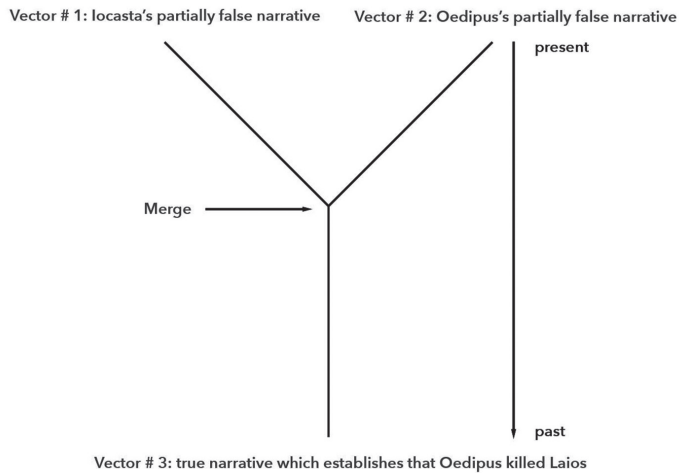
Later in the scene Oedipus's recollection becomes recognition when he tells Iocaste of his displacement towards Thebes:

> OEDIPUS: There were three highways coming together at a place I passed; And there a herald came towards me, and a chariot drawn by horses, with a man such as you describe seated in it. (Sophocles, 43)

Oedipus then reports to Iocaste that the "man such as you describe" was an "old man" and "I killed them all." (Sophocles, 42) He continues his inquiry:

> OEDIPUS: Now if that stranger and Laïos were–kin. Where is the man more miserable than I? (Sophocles, 43)

Oedipus understands in an instant that the "a stranger" he kills and Laïos were more than kin–they are, in fact, the same person. Oedipus's recognition that he murdered Laïos is the result of a merging of two narrative vectors: vector # 1 represents Iocaste's account which describes the location of Laïos death as a place where "three highways meet;" vector # 2 indicates Oedipus's personal recollection that "there were three highways coming together at a place I passed" which he describes as the location of his assault against a band of men. The partial falsehood of Ioacasta's story – that Laïos was killed by "marauding strangers" – and the partial falsehood of Oedipus's story – that the man he murdered was an "old man" – upon conjoining at "where three roads meet" produce a true narrative which is effected by the following rhetorical substitutions: "Oedipus" substitutes for "marauding strangers" and "Laïos" substitutes for "old man." That is, vector # 1 which is partly false merges with vector # 2 also partly false and results in vector # 3 which is true. What is interesting to note here is that the narrative advance in which vector # 1 and vector # 2 merge to form vector # 3 is represented by "three roads" meeting. It can be represented thus:

Vector # 1: Iocasta's partially false narrative   Vector # 2: Oedipus's partially false narrative

present

Merge →

past

Vector # 3: true narrative which establishes that Oedipus killed Laïos

That is, the physical topography mobilized in *Oedipus Rex,* namely, where "thee roads meet" represents the very structure of Aristotelian recognition which functions as an essential component of the narrative of revelation.

Though Oedipus is distraught to learn that he is Laïos's murderer at the end of Scene II, all is not lost for the worst of the prophecy – that Oedipus "should lie with [his] own mother, breed children from whom all men would turns their eyes; and that [he] should be [his] father's murderer" (Sophocles, 42) – has not come to pass. Oedipus takes solace in the fact that upon learning of the prophet's auguries he fled Corinth where his father, Polybos, and his mother, Merope, remained. Thus, Oedipus identifies a trajectory based on his direct experience which he undertook from Corinth to Thebes with the intention of creating distance between himself and his parents whom he was predicted to violate. What could be more rational? Indeed, later in Scene III after the Messenger from Corinth arrives in Thebes to tell Oedipus of Polybos's death from old age, Oedipus states:

> OEDIPUS. And so, for all these years I have kept clear of Corinth, and no harm has come – though it would have been sweet to see my parents again. (Sophocles, 52)

Once again, Sophocles sets in motion a narrative of revelation which sees the rhetorical displacements of essential terms mirror the topography of movements taken by the characters. The Messenger responds to Oedipus's attempt to reassure himself ("…I have kept clear of Corinth and no harm has come" (Sophocles, 52)) by revealing to him that Polybos was not his father and that long ago Polybos had Oedipus as a gift from the Messenger's own hands. When Oedipus asks where the Messenger found him, the Messenger answers,

"in the crooked pass of Kithairon" (Sophocles, 54); the Messenger goes on to say that there was another man, a Shepherd, who gave Oedipus to him. That the Messenger informs Oedipus that Polybos is not his father is important because 1) it makes clear that Oedipus does not originate from Corinth; and, 2) initiates a cycle of inquiry which will ultimately effect the substitution of the term Polybos, the false father, with Oedipus's real father, Laïos. It is for this reason, then, that the Shepherd is summoned in Scene IV. At this point I will observe that the Messenger's narrative functions in precisely the same way as Ioacasta's story about Laïos; that is, it constitutes one vector (# 4) as a partial narrative (as opposed to partly false) establishing Oedipus as an adopted child of Polybos and not his biological son. Vector # 5 which also constitutes a partial narrative is provided by the Shepherd and confirms for Oedipus the identity of his father. In order to materialize the conjoining of the partial vectors to produce a narrative of revelation, Sophocles mobilizes a location as the necessary linchpin of recognition:

> SHEPHERD. I was a shepherd of his [referring to Laïos], most of my life.
> OEDIPUS. Where mainly did you go for pasturage?
> SHEPHERD. Sometimes Kithairon, sometimes the hills near-by. (Sophocles, 60)

At Kithairon, as at where "the three highways" meet, a consequential encounter takes place which the Messenger presses the Shepherd to admit his role in:

> MESSENGER. Well, then: do you remember, back in those days, that you gave me a baby boy to bring up as my own? (Sophocles, 61)

Though the Shepherd resists sharing his part of the story he ultimately relents. About the baby, he gave to the Messenger, the Shepherd states:

> SHEPHERD. If you must be told, then…they said it was Laïos' child; But it is your wife who can tell you about that.
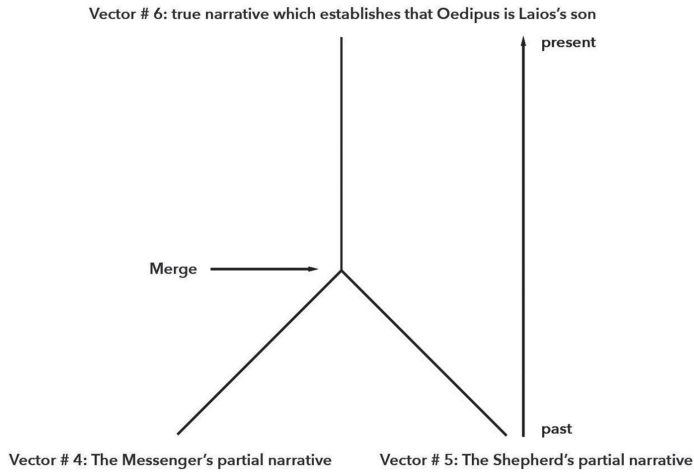> OEDIPUS. My wife!–Did she give it to you?
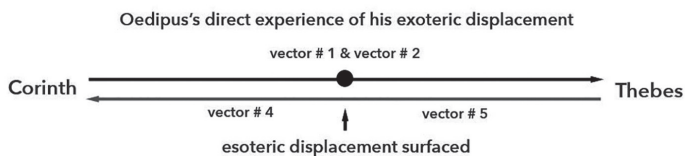> SHEPHERD. My lord, she did.
> OEDIPUS. Do you know why?
> SHEPHERD. I was told to get rid of it. (Sophocles, 63)

The merging of vector # 4 (the story of the Messenger) and vector # 5 (the story of the Shepherd) yields vector # 6, the true narrative of Oedipus's status as Laïos's and Iocasta's son. The narrative of revelation is represented thus:

Vector # 6: true narrative which establishes that Oedipus is Laios's son

present

Merge →

past

Vector # 4: The Messenger's partial narrative   Vector # 5: The Shepherd's partial narrative

Most importantly, the merging of vectors # 4 and # 5 surfacing Oedipus's journey as a baby from Thebes to Corinth functions to establish Oedipus's adult trajectory from Corinth to Thebes as a reversal of an original displacement. The entire conceit of Oedipus's misrecognition of himself depends on him not knowing about his original and esoteric move from Thebes to Corinth which is necessary to effectuate the displacement of his real identity as the son of Laïos with his false identification as the son of Polybos. Together vectors # 1 and # 2 illuminate a fact of the Oedipus's exoteric journey – that he killed Laïos on his way from Corinth to Thebes. Vector # 4 makes visible half of Oedipus's esoteric journey – namely, from Kithairon to Corinth; while vector # 5 surfaces the other half – from Thebes to Kithairon.

Oedipus's direct experience of his exoteric displacement

vector # 1 & vector # 2

Corinth ←————————————●————————————→ Thebes

vector # 4   vector # 5

esoteric displacement surfaced

In the narrative of revelation received truths which are contingent upon false terms are displaced by or substituted with true terms which in *Oedipus Rex* results in Oedipus being reduced from a king to a criminal, from a husband to an incestuous son. It is interesting to consider that while Oedipus was king, his status was dependent upon a false narrative. It is only when Thebes is "tossed on a murdering sea and can not lift her head from the death surge" that Oedipus is forced to confront the truth of his own defilement which I would argue is expressed in the afflictions of the city and the body politic. Choragos's final speech resolves the story of Oedipus with powerful and prophetic distinction:

> CHORAGOS. No mortal eyes but looked on him with envy, yet in the end ruin swept over him. Let every man in mankind's frailty consider his last day; and let none presume on his good fortune until he find life, at his death, a memory without pain. (Sophocles, 81)

Though literature is littered with stories of powerful men who suffer bad outcomes and grisly resolutions, the poignancy of *Oedipus Rex* as a narrative of revelation derives precisely from the fact that Oedipus plummets from his soaring status as hero and king through no fault of his own.

The fictional chaos of Thebes in *Oedipus Rex* functions as a powerful metaphor for the real-world upheaval which began in the US on January 20, 2020, when the CDC confirmed the first case of COVID-19 in Washington State. In the earliest stages of the pandemic during the spring of 2020 it is not hyperbole to state that the US like Thebes was "tossed on a murdering sea and [could not] lift her head from the death surge" (Sophocles, 4). A New York Times article published on March 25, 2020 reporting on the virus in New York states "At least two city hospitals have filled up their morgues, and city officials anticipated the rest would reach capacity by the end of this week... The state requested 85 refrigerated trailers from FEMA for mortuary services along with staff..." (Rothfeld, Michael et al.). An opinion piece by Jennifer Senior, a New York Times Op-Ed Columnist, published the day before, reports that the then governor of New York, Andrew Cuomo, claimed a need for 30,000 ventilators and the only way to acquire these would be through federal intervention. Senior goes on to state that Trump "refuses to use the Defense production Act, fearing it'll put an undue burden on business, and he's keeping his federal stash under tight lock and key" (Senior). Senior correctly queries, "What is the president waiting for, and why is he hoarding – or let's be charitable and say *husbanding* – his resources? Must the death toll in New York prove so calamitous he needs no further proof?" (Senior). In other words, how many people *actually* have to die of coronavirus in order to *prove* that the pandemic is real? On January 22, 2020 the day after the first case of coronavirus was reported, Trump made his first public comments on the virus. To CNBC, Trump stated, "We have it totally under control. It's one person coming in from China, and we have it under control. It's – going to be just fine" (Peters) and to CBS, "To CBS: We do have a plan and we think it's going to be handled very well. We've already handled it very well...We're in very good shape and I think China's in very good shape also" (Peters). A month later on February 28th, 2020 Trump speaking to supporters at a rally in South Carolina continues to be optimistic about the numbers:

> Now the Democrats are politicizing the coronavirus. You know that, right?... And, this is their new hoax... We will do everything in our power to keep the infection and those carrying the infection from entering our country. We have no choice. Whether it's the virus that we're talking about or many other public health threats, the Democrat policy of open borders is a direct threat to the health and well-being of all Americans. And, now you see it with the coronavirus... So, far we have lost nobody to coronavirus in the United States. Nobody... And, we've lost nobody and the press is in hysteria mode. (The Telegraph, 00:00:02 – 00:01:51)

Trump's dubious gift for prognostication notwithstanding, it is uncanny that the next day, February 29th 2020, the CDC put out a press release which confirmed the first death from coronavirus of a man in his 50s in Washington State:

> The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and public health officials in the state of Washington have reported three hospitalized patients who have tested presumptive-positive for the virus that causes COVID-19, including one patient who died. (CDC, Washington State)

Trump's speech is remarkable for two reasons: on the one hand, Trump claims that "the Democrats are politicizing the coronavirus" and that it is "their new hoax." It's important to note that "their new hoax," implies that the virus is a) a deception and b) that the attribution of the deception belongs to the Democrats. Trump is engaged here in a narrative of revelation, insofar as he is exposing a false narrative concocted by his political opponents about the coronavirus. The true story is that coronavirus is not real. It's a hoax. At this point in the material history of the virus, Trump can make this claim because as of February 28th, 2020, nobody had died of COVID-19. That said, the rhetorical sleight-of-hand that occurs later in the speech is more alarming in its internal logic or, more precisely, alogic: when Trump states that "…the Democrat policy of open borders is a direct threat to the health and well-being of all Americans" it is clear that *he himself* is politicizing the coronavirus by linking it to one of the most divisive political issues of Trump's presidency, namely, immigration. For Trump to state that "we will do everything in our power to keep the infection and those carrying the infection from entering our country" is to circle back to the earliest days of his presidency when on January 27th, 2017 Trump signed an executive order which:

> locked out all travelers from seven predominantly Muslim nations: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. It indefinitely suspended the admission of Syrian refugees and temporarily halted the entrance of all other refugees. The order indicated that Christian refugees would get priority over Muslims. (President Trump's)

Indeed, Trump's statement on the ban issued at the time of its execution that "we are not admitting into our country the very threats our soldiers are fighting overseas" mobilizes the word "threat" in exactly the same way that the February 28th, 2020 speech does where "public health threat" in no way refers to COVID-19 which in hindsight is immanently upon the US having already migrated across the border by means of airborne droplets; but, rather, it's clear that the term "those carrying infection" on February 28th, 2020 rhetorically displaces the term "travelers" coming into the United States from either 1) one of the named countries above; or 2) from the southern border with Mexico[1]. Needless to say, not even 6 weeks after Trump's February 28th, 2020 speech, the lethality of the virus in the absence of any therapeutics had become evident and so did the threat which was *not* according to Trump's narrative of revelation the Democratic policy of open borders repeated ad nauseum since the inception of Trump's presidency; but, rather,

Trump's *narrative of perversion* which sought to characterize coronavirus in two separate yet contradictory ways depending on Trump's political agenda. If, on the one hand, coronavirus was real, then, the "hoax" was that Trump wasn't doing anything about it. Indeed, on March 17, 2020 Trump told reporters from the White House lectern that "I felt it was a pandemic long before it was called a pandemic" (Rogers). On the other hand, if coronavirus was actually a "hoax" perpetrated by the Democrats, then Trump's failure to respond was rational because since it was a deception no federal action was required and the Democratic urgency for a response was nothing more than hyperbole and a reason to make him look bad. Together these two rhetorical modalities constituting Trump's narrative of perversion contributed essentially to the catastrophe that would become the pandemic in the US which was already manifesting by the end of March 2020 when the CDC confirmed 3,170 deaths and 164,620 confirmed cases.

To a rational person in the Nietzschean sense (where Nietzsche defines "rationality" in *Beyond Good and Evil* as that "which wants to appreciate and act according to motives, according to a 'Why,' that is to say, in conformity to purpose and utility" (Nietzsche, 84)), Trump's response to the pandemic which resulted in destabilizing its reality by alternately referring to it as a "hoax" and then not makes no sense since it caused a significant number of fatalities and consequential infections in the American populace; and, so it seems important to ask why Trump engaged in a narrative of perversion of the virus when the stakes were so high, including his expulsion from office by the American electorate in the 2020 election. That Nietzsche provides the appropriate framework for culling insight into Trump's behavior lies in his unabashed contempt for representative political systems which he admits to in *Beyond Good and Evil*; to wit, Nietzsche states, "We, who hold a different belief – we, who regard the democratic movement, not only as a degenerating form of political organization, but as equivalent to a degenerate, a waning type of man, as involving his mediocrising and depreciation: where have *we* to fix our hopes?" (Nietzsche, 98). The ever-thoughtful Nietzsche answers his own question:

> In new *philosophers* – there is no other alternative: in minds strong and original enough to initiate opposite estimates of value, to transvalue and invert "eternal valuations"; in forerunners, in men of the future, who in the present shall fix the constraints and fasten the knots which will compel millenniums to take *new* paths...."…in order thereby to put an end to the frightful rule of folly and chance which has hitherto gone by the name of 'history'…for that purpose a new type of…commander will be some time or other be needed. (Nietzsche, 98)

Shall I suggest here that when Nietzsche imagines a "new type of…commander," that his vision is materialized in the form of Trump; and, that there is no clearer articulation of the process by which democratic forms of government can and must be subverted according to Nietzsche than to "initiate opposite estimates of value, to transvalue and invert 'eternal valuations'" which is precisely what the narrative of perversion seeks to do? No doubt Nietzsche believes that such inversions of a genteel and bourgeois morality which holds "good" to be an ideal to be dispensed with are necessary for the progress of man.

In a political system where people hold power by virtue of their individual vote, it makes sense that they would elect to office people who believe in the system which empowers them. But, what if, as Nietzsche suggests, that this is wrong for the future of mankind, for the progress of humanity, and for the aspirations of civilization, which Nietzsche believes, are only possible in a strictly hierarchical power structure where the "stupid" people, including women, have none? Ah, the catastrophe that will ensue following the leveling of master and slave to the same plane of bland and mediocre purpose as a result of revolution and the democratic institutions which an uprising of the people can engender. The narrative of perversion, then, becomes a tool to stay the tide of equality and equalization; it becomes a means by which the powerful can with intent beyond good and evil rationalize the inequalities characteristic of the status quo and maintain them through, as Nietzsche so brazenly asserts, "the unconditioned *Will to Power*" (Nietzsche, 47) which holds "that severity, violence, slavery, danger in the street and in the heart, secrecy, stoicism, tempter's art and devilry of every kind, –...everything wicked, terrible, tyrannical, predatory, and serpentine in man, serves as well for the elevation of the human species as its opposite" (Nietzsche, 47) – except that Trump himself contracted coronavirus and though did not die, could have. In an oddly amusing application of the narrative of perversion, it was widely reported that Trump sought to reveal a superman t-shirt under his button-down dress shirt which he would rip off upon his return to the White House from Walter Reed Medical Center. Wouldn't a more truthful act be the inversion of Trump's farcical plan: to rip off a superman t-shirt in order to expose a button-down dress shirt underneath? For, what does the virus care for rhetoric, narrative, or the perversions of Trump? What does the virus care for the priorities of Nietzsche or the men of power he seeks to elevate in the history of humankind? Nothing. As Blake says of the Sphinx in *The Second Coming* who is the inheritor of the iteration defeated by Oedipus, her gaze is "blank and pitiless as the sun." Coronavirus is not a metaphor for the certainty of death but the shark in Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* is; Nietzsche is once again helpful; he states, "A living thing seeks above all to *discharge* its strength – life itself is will to power; self-preservation is only one of the direct and most frequent *results* thereof" (Nietzsche, 16). What is fascinating to consider here is precisely where in the hierarchy of power within a given social formation, a virus, or a shark, for that matter, exists. Or, better yet, to ask the question whether or not "everything wicked, terrible, tyrannical, predatory, and serpentine *in a virus*, or *in a shark*, serves as well for the elevation of the human species as its opposite." Like the virus in the US, the shark in *Jaws* is indifferent to its role in the narratives perpetrated by the "empowered" class in Amity. Both the virus and the shark discharge their strength as an expression of the will to power, the result of which is illness and/or death for their human targets. *Jaws* is perfect in its scope as a cinematic text to examine the consequences of the narrative of perversion for the residents of Amity which are not good, to say the least. After the initial shark attack at the beginning of *Jaws*, Brody, the film's protagonist, and hero, sets about doing what heroes are supposed to do: he seeks to protect the people of Amity from being eaten while on vacation. (I am wondering now if Nietzsche would disagree that this is a good thing to do? It seems like he might.) Larry Vaughn, the island's mayor, has a different agenda that prioritizes *protecting revenue streams* for property owners on the island. Early in the film Vaughn confronts Brody on a ferry flanked by the town's leaders including the

Medical Examiner who has previously told Vaughn on the phone that the girl's death was due to a shark attack. (We see this in a close up of a typewriter punching "Shark Attack" onto a form in a box labeled "Probable Cause of Death"). On the ferry Vaughn begins by stating, "I'm only trying to say that Amity is a summer town. We need summer dollars" ("Jaws" 00:13:12-17). Brody is skeptical and asks the Medical Examiner, "Well what else could have done that to that girl?" ("Jaws" 00:13:29-32). Vaughn responds, "Boat propeller" ("Jaws" 00:13:32-32) and then the Medical Examiner says, "Well, I think possibly, yes, a boating accident" ("Jaws" 00:13:33-37). Brody turns to the Medical Examiner and avers, "That's not what you told me over the phone" ("Jaws" 00:13:37-38). The Medical Examiner replies, "I was wrong. We'll have to amend our reports" ("Jaws" 00:13:38-41) which, thus, initiates the narrative of perversion where the false term "boating accident" displaces the true term "shark attack." What's interesting to note is that at this point in the film, no one in the diegetic space of *Jaws* has seen the shark, including Brody; only the audience has been privy to it as a material threat in the first scene. During the period of the film when the facts are still subject to interpretation, i.e., they exist as the effect of an event (the girl's remains), rather than its cause (the shark), Vaughn's narrative of perversion grafts itself onto the evidence with the intent of serving his will to power, namely, to keep the beaches open. Indeed, even after a second shark attack and the capture of a "false" shark as ascertained by the expert, Hooper, Vaughn, nevertheless, tells a reporter at the midpoint of *Jaws* that "I'm pleased and happy to repeat the news that we have, in fact, caught and killed a large predator that supposedly injured some bathers" ("Jaws" 00:59:42-49). The narrative of perversion perpetuated by Vaughn is then dramatized in the next scene when two kids swim a fake shark fin through the water creating chaos on the beach: the fin represents as a hyperbole the narrative of perversion precisely because it underscores Vaughn's disavowal of the danger presented by the real shark. Hooper, who is on the scene, tells Brody on the radio, "Martin, it's just a hoax. There are two kids with a cardboard fin" ("Jaws" 01:02:07-11). Moments later, the real shark swims into the pond where Brody's older son, Michael, is present. Though Brody still does not see the shark, its effect on Michael, namely, making him go into shock, finally provides him with the motivation to push back against Vaughn's narrative of perversion. The final image in the scene where the shark endangers Michael cuts to Brody's point of view of the ocean: Brody will ultimately engage in a reversal of Vaughn's narrative of perversion which dominates the first half of the film. The narrative of revelation which, thus, ensues literally involves compelling the shark to the ocean's surface, much in the same way that the truth is surfaced in *Oedipus* Rex, such that the true term "shark attack" displaces the false term "boating accident" and Brody, with a shot gun and an air canister, is able to make the beaches safe again in a way that aligns with reality. The bitter and difficult process of challenging Trump's narrative of perversion about coronavirus succumbed to surreal failures, like when Trump at a White House briefing "encouraged his top health officials to study the injection of bleach into the human body as a means of fighting Covid" (McGraw & Stein); and, it encountered welcome triumphs in the form of vaccines. Trump's reckless and haphazard response to the virus in terms of his rhetoric did cause death in the United States. The narrative of perversion which included opposing stay-at-home orders (Trump's "Liberate" tweets in April 2020 are uncannily reminiscent of "keep the beaches open" in *Jaws*) created danger for the real heroes of the

pandemic, namely, the first line responders who worked tirelessly in our hospitals and for our public services to ensure the safety of our communities. That Trump undermined the efforts of these good people working for truth and against his narrative of perversion about coronavirus ultimately resulted in Trump's own unraveling and ouster from office; for, the rest of us, and we are not a monolith, the multiplicity of narratives, both of revelation and of perversion, which we still navigate daily to manage the presence of the virus in our lives – we take satisfaction in the fact that with the truth revealed, and reality mobilized to align with that truth, for us, there is no going back to the false and deadly networking of facts in the narrative of perversion. In other words, the future does not belong to Nietzsche.

Notes

1. For reporting on Trump's border wall: https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/22/us/trump-mexico-wall.html

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Resumen: El caos ficticio de Tebas en Edipo Rey metaforiza la agitación del mundo real que comenzó en los EE UU, cuando los CDC confirmaron el primer caso de COVID-19 en el estado de Washington. Sin embargo, desde esa aprensión científica inicial, el estatus del virus en los Estados Unidos se ha convertido en un terreno en disputa, que no solo alberga la negación de su propio potencial letal para causar una muerte cuantificable, sino que, además, desestabiliza la forma en que se determina y asegura la verdad. Si Edipo Rey es un ejemplo de una narración de revelación que da como resultado la salida a la superficie de la verdad, a saber, que Edipo mismo es la corrupción que causa el caos en Tebas; la verdad del coronavirus ha estado sujeta, en cambio, a una narrativa de perversión que moviliza estrategias retóricas propias de la narrativa de la revelación con un propósito contrario a su forma, es decir, inculcar verdades verificables como falsedades y afianzar mentiras sin fundamento, como verdad. Basándose en "Más allá del bien y del mal" de Nietzsche y Tiburón de Stephen Spielberg, este artículo rastreará cómo las estrategias retóricas de la narrativa de la revelación pueden usarse como una herramienta para cambiar la verdad a favor de una mentira con el fin de cosificar las jerarquías tradicionales en todas sus formas, es decir, la Voluntad de Poder.

Palabras clave: Coronavirus - COVID-19 - Voluntad de poder - Edipo Rey - Mandíbulas - Broma - Donald Trump - Donald Trump hijo - Voluntad de Verdad - Narrativa del Apocalipsis

Resumo: O caos ficcional de Tebas em Oedipus Rex metaforiza a turbulência do mundo real que começou nos EUA, quando o CDC confirmou o primeiro caso de COVID-19 no estado de Washington. No entanto, desde aquela apreensão científica inicial, o status do vírus nos Estados Unidos tornou-se um terreno contestado, abrigando não apenas a negação de seu próprio potencial letal de causar morte mensurável, mas também desestabilizando a maneira como a verdade é determinada e assegurada . Se Édipo Rei é um exemplo de narrativa de revelação que resulta no surgimento da verdade, a saber, que o próprio Édipo é a corrupção que causa o caos em Tebas; a verdade do coronavírus tem sido submetida, em vez disso, a uma narrativa de perversão que mobiliza estratégias retóricas típicas da narrativa de revelação com um propósito contrário à sua forma, ou seja, incutir verdades verificáveis como falsidades e entrincheirar mentiras infundadas, como verdadeiro. Com base em "Além do bem e do mal" de Nietzsche e em Jaws de Stephen Spielberg, este artigo traçará como as estratégias retóricas da narrativa da revelação podem ser usadas como

ferramenta para mudar a verdade em favor da mentira, a fim de reificar as hierarquias tradicionais em todas as suas formas, isto é, a Vontade de Poder.

Palavras chave: Coronavírus - COVID-19 - Vontade de poder - Édipo Rei -Tubarão -Piada - Donald Trump - Donald Trump Jr. - Vontade de Verdade - Narrativa do Apocalipse

[Las traducciones de los abstracts fueron supervisadas por el autor de cada artículo]