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## "Through the swamps of God": Jon McNaughton's political paintings

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### Abstract

Jon McNaughton is an American artist with leanings toward the alt-right and could be considered a staunch supporter of Donald Trump. His work, which has been subject to criticism, has not been analyzed by any academic study. This article aims to examine nine of his paintings dating from 2018 to 2021, a period during which Donald Trump held the presidency of the country. Through the exegesis of these political paintings, the nationalist symbols that the author sought to promote will be decoded. Additionally, these symbols will help explain a political narrative centered around three thematic axes: British Israelism, white nationalism, and the importance of the mythology that was constructed around American Independence in the collective imaginary of that American territory. The methodology employed is purely hermeneutical as it will describe the content of his paintings. With this cultural studies-based approach, emphasis will be placed on the importance of metapolitics in the American far-right.

**Keywords:** Jon McNaughton, political paintings, alt-right, far-right, United States

## “A través de los pantanos de Dios”: la obra política de Jon McNaughton

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### Resumen

Jon McNaughton es un artista estadounidense proclive a la alt-right y podría considerarse un férreo defensor de Donald Trump. Su obra, que ha estado sujeta a la crítica, no ha sido analizada por ningún estudio académico. Este artículo tiene por objeto examinar nueve pinturas suyas que están datadas entre 2018 y 2021, periodo en el que Donald Trump ostentó la presidencia del país. Con la exégesis de estas pinturas políticas se decodificarán los símbolos nacionalistas que el autor quiso impulsar y que, además, servirán para explicar una narrativa política que se vertebra en torno a tres ejes temáticos; el israelismo británico, el nacionalismo blanco y la importancia que tiene en el colectivo imaginario de ese territorio americano la mitología que se confeccionó en torno a la Independencia Americana. La metodología empleada es netamente hermenéutica pues se describirá el contenido de sus cuadros. Con este enfoque, que parte de los estudios culturales, se hará hincapié en la importancia que tiene la metapolítica en la ultraderecha estadounidense.

**Palabras clave:** Jon McNaughton, pinturas políticas, derecha alternativa, ultraderecha, Estados Unidos

## 1. Introduction

The "echo chamber" or "resonance chamber" is a highly relevant phenomenon, which is not only current but also fosters ideological polarization through audiovisual and media outlets, nowadays dominated by social media (Rodríguez Cano, 2017). This is the direct result of the systematic selection of news by a specific ideological pattern, consequently excluding those of opposing views (Grömping, 2014). This process is not exclusive to any ideological spectrum and can occur within both the far-right<sup>1</sup> and the extreme left. It can be reinforced by the dissemination of fake news or conspiracy theories aimed at demonizing the political opponent.

These pages will analyze the paintings of the American artist Jon McNaughton (1965-), which he shares on his social media platforms and are popular among far-right voters. His works serve as a simple vehicle that promotes the radicalization of his counterparts through the "cultural war".

The image, broadly speaking, as a visual testimony or historical vestige, has not been without criticism from scholars in the humanities, as noted by Marc Ferro (1977: 26-30). Art and propaganda are two intertwined elements that have profoundly shaped public opinion with a mobilizing intent (Barthes, 1993). These forces have been expressed through a variety of mediums, including painting, music, film, and literature, each aiming to provide an aesthetic, emotional, intellectual, or social perspective (Gutiérrez-Rubí, 2021). Both art and propaganda can originate from any of these domains, functioning as potent political instruments (McLuhan, 1964).

Over the past two decades, social media has revolutionized political communication by enabling the creation, distribution, and consumption of art and propaganda on an unprecedented scale. In this digital landscape, memes and caricatures have emerged as significant conduits for both. Memes, which may take the form of images, videos, or text, often address serious issues with a humorous tone to elicit laughter. Their straightforward and accessible nature facilitates rapid dissemination (Shifman, 2013). Conversely, caricatures tend to tackle social, political, or economic topics with a more critical lens. Within

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<sup>1</sup> The far-right is a global term that encompasses both the extreme right and national populism. At times, these three concepts are interchangeably as synonyms. While the extreme right refers to all organizations, parties, or initiatives that are anti-democratic and legitimize the use of violence, national populism emphasizes those entities that participate in the democratic process but aim to reduce the guarantees of the liberal rule of law. It is difficult to categorize McNaughton as belonging to the extreme right or right-wing national populism because he does not promote any violent message.

this context, both memes and caricatures are frequently employed with the intent to misinform and manipulate their audience.

However, it is undeniable that political painting, due to their iconography and symbolism, constitute a useful tool for constructing a discourse and narrative that resonates in a digital society. This artistic method also serves as a common thread in public opinion, redirecting ideological, social, and political criticisms, either through satire or through the dichotomous structure that presents an enemy opposite a heroic character. Ultimately, artists have the capacity to engage with activists and social movements, enhancing their messages and advancing common objectives (Gutiérrez-Rubí, 2021). This collaboration not only promotes civic participation but also cultivates solidarity within communities. McNaughton reinforces the latter perspective. It is common for him to depict, on one side, a character he views as heroic—often former President Donald J. Trump or Jesus Christ—and, on the other side, the "national enemy," but this will be discussed further later. Donald Trump was portrayed as a messianic figure, and his works are dominated by three key themes: British Israelism, a decentralized community, and an anti-establishment ideology. The analysis of these paintings will address the following questions:

1. Is Christianity an inseparable pillar of the American extreme right?
2. What is the connection between Christianity and American nationalism?
3. To what extent was the development and mythology created around the American Revolution significant in understanding this ideological phenomenon?

Before delving into this object of study, it is important to clarify why the author has coined the expression on the title *Through the Swamps of God*. One of the most iconic paintings by this artist is *Crossing the Swamp* (Fig.1) from 2018, where the former president is delineated crossing a swamp. Swamps are natural spaces that have been a part of the country's social imaginary and are often associated, pejoratively, with impoverished white individuals who were responsible for draining them. Their task was arduous, and often, due to the unhealthy conditions they had to face; they would fall ill, breathe harmful substances, and even suffer joint dislocations. Trump would entrust a challenging task to navigate through the swamps—an allegory for the United States. As for the reference to God, it is due to the significance of Christianity in McNaughton's work.

**Figure 1. Crossing the Swamp.**



## **2. Jon McNaughton: A Fervent Advocate of Metapolitics**

The name Jon McNaughton is strongly associated with the alternative right, more commonly known as the alt-right, and Trumpism<sup>2</sup>.

In general terms, the alt-right emerged in 2008 with figures like Richard Spencer, though it had been brewing since the late nineties (Peytibi & Pérez Diánez, 2021). It is not a monolithic ideology, but it shares common characteristics:

First, it represents the latest manifestation of white nationalism, emphasizing ethnic and racial nationalism while rejecting racial diversity and multiculturalism. Second, one of the factors contributing to its rise was the collapse of the Soviet Union (Mulloy, 2023: 127-144). The eastern bloc had been the external enemy to combat for decades, so after its failure, a new enemy needed to be created that was the globalization<sup>3</sup>. The alt-right rejected economic internationalism in favor of old protectionist ideas that the Republican Party (RP) had

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that Trump is not a part of the alt-right, but he has benefited from its messages, just as the precursors of this movement have gained prestige from the use of their symbols by the president. From the author's perspective, Donald Trump is a figure who, while falling within the American far right, uses populism to rally against the Democratic elite, immigration, and globalization.

<sup>3</sup> It should be clarified that although the Cold War was the historical period during which anti-communist sentiment was most pronounced, this trend had been present since the early 20th century. In 1919, during the First Red Scare, the U.S. government raised concerns about a communist threat on a national level following the success of the October 1917 Russian Revolution.

articulated in the 1930s and 1940s—this core is known as the old conservatives or paleo cons. The paleo cons also revived the slogan "America First". Third, it is an anti-feminist and misogynistic strain that resorts to humor and dehumanization of women in online forums known as the manosphere. Fourth, it is anti-Semitic from a religious perspective and subscribes to various conspiracy theories that claim the Israeli state is gradually taking over the world by promoting multiculturalism, libertinism, and the genocide of the Aryan race. Finally, it has employed strategies of provocation, memes, and irreverent online humor to spread its ideas and gain followers, often through social media (Stern, 2023: 142-158). These cyber spaces function as "echo chambers" such as the forum 4Chan, which has propagated conspiracy theories related to the Pizza Gate, which would be a pedophilia trade orchestrated by the Democratic Party (DP) and progressive celebrities.

Social spaces have been a valuable resource for creating "echo chambers", and it is not surprising that McNaughton's paintings have been disseminated on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Telegram, or Twitter (now known as X). These applications do not censor derogatory content, often citing freedom of speech.

This activist has developed his workaround metapolitics, a concept that emerged with the French New Right (NDF) in 1968. Metapolitics involves a kind of "cultural war" in which street violence, which characterized neo-Nazi and far-right groups in the post-war period, is replaced in favor of forming a cultural front to convey a political message<sup>4</sup>. This is why his artworks embody specific semantic and iconographic codes.

## 2.1 "Skinny Kid with Funny Name"<sup>5</sup>: McNaughton's Ideology

This artist, despite his ties to the alt-right and Trumpism, gained prominence in the early 2000s when he started painting Christian and natural scenes, with Jesus Christ at the center of his works. In 2008, the electoral results gave victory to the Democratic Party candidate, Barack Obama, who famously referred to himself as "a skinny kid with a funny name", so McNaghton became the first non-white president in the history of the United States. This

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<sup>4</sup> While metapolitics emphasizes a cultural battle and the transmission of a political message through cultural means, it does not mean that violence is entirely excluded. In many cases, groups that adopt metapolitical strategies may still resort to or advocate for violence when they believe it serves their goals. Metapolitics can be seen as a way to shape the ideological and cultural landscape to make violence more acceptable or justifiable in the eyes of their followers. So, violence can still be part of the toolkit for some of these groups, even as they engage in cultural and ideological warfare.

<sup>5</sup> This phrase marked the debut of former President Barack Obama—a phrase that has been adopted by the Republican candidate Vivek Ramaswamy.

was perceived as a threat to white identity, and in 2009, a movement known as the Tea Party (TP) emerged from within the Republican Party, even though it is not a political party itself and enjoys widespread support. The artist and several alt-right figures sympathized with this movement, and he started an anti-establishment artistic line that called for a change of regime.

The Tea Party's nomenclature was entirely deliberate, as it played on the Boston Tea Party, which occurred on December 16, 1773. This event was a revolt against the high taxes imposed by the British Empire on American colonists for tea trade (Mudde, 2017:1-5). A group of colonists rebelled against the British government, and two years later, the members of the thirteen colonies rose in arms against the British crown. During those years, Christopher Gadsden created the Gadsden flag as a symbol of rebellion against governmental tyranny. It was yellow, with a coiled snake in the center and the motto "Don't Tread on Me" beneath it. This "patriotic" symbol has been appropriated by far-right groups and appears in some of the paintings.

In this context, it should be noted that the word "democracy" carries different semantic values in the various and diverse political cultures emanating from the United States, as well as differing connotations between the United States and Europe. While in Europe, democracy has been associated with liberalism, hence the term "liberal democracy" that upholds the rule of law, in the United States, it is different (Plattner, 2019). McNaughton's mentality cannot be understood without realizing that, for the far-right, the 1787 Constitution, established at the Philadelphia Convention, is a text that cannot be reformed, and neither can the ten amendments that make up the Bill of Rights. The preamble of the U.S. Constitution contains the expression "We the people of the United States," coined by Thomas Jefferson to emphasize that national sovereignty and democracy rested with the white citizenry above the central government (Mudde, 2017: 20-35). The interpretation of this maxim has led far-right groups to believe that the central government in Washington, D.C. cannot review any of the provisions of the Constitution. Otherwise, the government would have tyrannical components, and the people should revolt against it. In this sense, they are anarcho-capitalist in economic terms, advocating for the privatization of services, and against any modification of the Second Amendment, which is the right of citizens to bear arms.

## **2.2 "Martyrological Realism"**

The artistic movement in which his work falls is realism because its intention is to faithfully represent the political figures he wants to glorify or demonize. The author of these pages

has baptized his artistic style as "martyrological realism" because his artworks have a dual purpose. The first is to depict a hero with providential characteristics, presenting them as victims of an oppressive system. The second is to portray the national enemy, in this case, represented by politicians from the Democratic Party and progressivism.

In the next section, nine paintings he created between 2016—the year Donald Trump was elected president—and 2021—when his term ended—will be analyzed to decode the symbolism of his narrative. The selection of these political paintings corresponds to the period when Donald Trump was president because McNaughton's art serves his political interest. However, the only obstacle for the exegesis of their content is not possible to determinate the year of creation of most of his paintings, although they were created during the period under analysis.

The narrative of his paintings conveys a direct message filled with discursive metaphors, reinforced by a rich and carefully chosen color palette. Warm and earthy colors predominate because they create an atmosphere that appeals to the emotions and sensibilities of the audience to which these paintings are directed. He blends red, white, and blue tones because they connect with the national flag and, therefore, exalt the type of patriotism he professes, and because these colors lend realism to his subjects.

### 3. Analysis of the Content

#### 3.1 Description

In the following table, there are two columns. The first contains the title of the selected political painting, and the second provides a description of its content. This information will help extract the predominant themes that aid in decoding the ideological symbols depicted by the author.

Title	Description
<p><i>Crossing the swamp (Fig.1)</i></p>	<p>A boat is used to cross a swamp, and several political figures and military personnel are depicted. At the center of the scene is Donald Trump, who is leading his companions. The individuals surrounding Trump are members of his government, and they include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mike Pence - The Vice President.</li> <li>2. James Mattis - Secretary of Defense.</li> <li>3. Jeff Sessions - Attorney General.</li> <li>4. Nikki Haley - Ambassador to the United Nations.</li> <li>5. John Bolton - National Security Advisor.</li> </ol>



	<p>6. Sarah Sanders - White House Press Secretary.</p> <p>7. Ben Carson - Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.</p> <p>This painting portrays these individuals as part of Trump's team as they navigate through challenging political terrain, symbolized by the swamp.</p>
<i>Expose the truth (Fig.2)</i>	Symbolizes freedom of the press, with Trump holding Robert Mueller, a Republican who led a commission to find evidence against the former president.
<i>Freedom Rising (Fig.3)</i>	Shows a bald eagle, a symbol of providence for the United States, rising into the sky with a piece of the Constitution bearing the words "We the people."
<i>Politically Incorrect (Fig.4)</i>	Features an armed militiaman with Confederate symbolism and a "Make America Great Again" cap, emphasizing Trump's mantra.
<i>Trick or Treat (Fig.5)</i>	The use of the Halloween phrase suggests that it is portraying these politicians in a negative or sinister light, possibly associating them with the idea of tricks rather than treats, reflecting his political viewpoint. These individuals are Joe Biden, Kamala Harris, Chuck Schumer, Nancy Pelosi, Hillary Clinton, Jeffrey Epstein, Bill Clinton, Barack Obama, and Jerry Nadler
<i>You are not forgotten (Fig.6)</i>	Trump honors war veterans from different historical periods while crushing a snake underfoot.
<i>You are fake news (Fig.7)</i>	Criticizes the media, portraying them as jesters who distort Trump's words.
<i>Solitary Confinement (Fig.8)</i>	Pays tribute to the six hundred individuals involved in a 2021 coup attempt to halt the vote count that confirmed Trump's electoral defeat.
<i>National Emergency (Fig.9)</i>	Depicts prominent Democrats, Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, Alexandria Ocasio Cortez, Rashida Tlaib, Ilhan Omar, Chuck Schumer, Adam Schiff, Nancy Pelosi, Maxine Waters, Hillary Clinton, and Barack Obama, stepping on the American flag while holding others, with Trump marginalized.

### 3.1 Themes

Unlike political cartoons, whose nature is to satirize events or political figures with the intention of making a socio-political critique, political paintings are visual texts created in image, illustration, or painting format to address an event with a political purpose. This

medium, somewhat different from the dominant one in the digital age, the meme, serves a propagandistic purpose (García Guirao & Jiménez, Pérez, 2023:197).

The thematic vectors that underlie Jon McNaughton's work are British Israelism—which supports his providential view of history— "democratic" communitarianism<sup>6</sup>, and the demonization of the political adversary or the "other".

### 3.2 British Israelism

British Israelism or Anglo-Israelism is a branch of Christian fundamentalism promoted by British ideologues who sought to explain the providential mission of the British Empire in the world. From this perspective, the Anglo-Saxons would be God's chosen people instead of the Jews. According to this premise, the Anglo-Saxons would be descendants of ten of the twelve tribes of Israel, who, due to the advance of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, were forced to settle in distinct parts of the world. The Israelites split into the Kingdom of Judah, i.e., the Jews, and the heirs of Joseph, or in other words, the British Israelites (Allen, 1917:12-34).

According to Abrahamic tradition, Joseph had two descendants, Ephraim, and Manasseh, who would be the British and American peoples, respectively. This would explain why both nations share language, customs, and the birthright. This historicist and propagandistic analysis of history was supported by a supposed racial layer that compared Hebrew linguistics with English and Gaelic.

This thought was manifested in the United States for two reasons: firstly, because after the American Revolution, the colonists defeated the British Crown; secondly, because, as Nancy Isenberg stated, despite the revolutionary triumph that replaced the British monarchy with a democratic republic, the new country maintained a social model that prevented social mobility and was fundamentally classist (Isenberg, 2017).

Jon McNaughton's political phase was preceded by a predominantly Christian stage with the most illustrative painting being *One Nation Under God* from 2009. In the center of this

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<sup>6</sup> The term democratic communitarianism is concocted by the author of this paper because some far-right groups advocate for direct democracy as a purer form of citizen representation. In countries with a republican form of government, such as the United States, they have a presidential democracy, where the head of state represents the highest authority. In this sense, extremist right-wing groups often argue that decision-making should originate from local communities, advocating for a decentralized system rather than one dependent on the political capital (e.g., Washington D.C.) or a centralized system. They believe in more localized decision-making processes to preserve what they see as traditional values and protect against what they perceive as overreach from the central government, aiming to promote a fairer and more equitable society.

composition is Jesus Christ with outstretched arms, symbolizing that Christianity is inseparable from the country's identity and formation. Jesus, surrounded by a holy halo, proudly holds the country's constitution.

Iconic phrases that allude to the importance of British Israelism can be found in *Expose the Truth* (Fig.2) with "In God We Trust" or the allegory of *Freedom Rising* (Fig. 3). The bald eagle has been an animalistic symbol used by imperialist powers or dictatorial governments, such as the Nazi *reichsadler* or the Francoist eagle. The imperialistic ambitions of the United States have been a constant since its emergence as a nation because they were justified by a theological-political matrix. So much so that the bald eagle that soars does so with a constitution, suggesting that the legal text was a divine inspiration. This theme is linked to the importance of communities and decentralized decision-making processes.

**Figure 2. *Expose the Truth*.**



**Figure 3. *Freedom Rising*.**



### 3.3 "Democratic communitarism"

Accordingly, the conception of militias is fundamental to understanding the importance that antifederalist thought had with communitarianism. The proliferation of these units took place a decade ago, but their genesis can be traced back to the 1980s with the spread of the literary genre known as survivalism, which portrayed an apocalyptic future where the international enemy of the moment, namely the Soviet Union, would exercise absolute control over Western countries (Gómez Fernández, 2021).

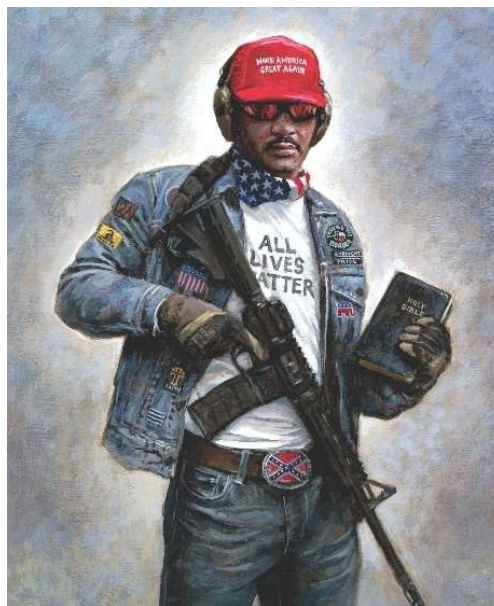
This literary category cannot be dissociated from the 1980s because at that time, rural areas suffered the consequences of the agricultural economic crisis, also known as the farmer's crisis, which led to the displacement of many families to urban peripheries. The citizens who remained on their properties had to face many difficulties, from alcohol problems and suicides to domestic violence. Simultaneously, with the social gains achieved by feminists and the LGBTQ+ movement, there was a crisis of masculinity as traditional values were questioned (Mulloy, 2008: 6).

Therefore, when this phenomenon resurfaced ten years ago, representing the white middle-class citizen, it emerged with a localist nature. This trait evokes anti-federalism because, among other things, they opposed the executive branch, determining the political and financial decisions of the rest of the states. These violent patrols are in favor of taking up arms against the government if it becomes corrupt, that is, if it violates the Constitution or the Second Amendment that protects the right to bear arms (Thomas, 2021). Therefore, when Trump considered controlling the circulation of these firearms, many voters withdrew their support (Mckelvey, 2023). In this sense, one of the reasons the American colonists rebelled against British rule in the 18th century was because the metropolis wanted to control the issuance of firearms and limit their use (Cornell, 2006:12-30). These violent groups are thus linked to localism and communal order.

The gun culture in the United States is intertwined with the most radical Republicans and Confederates because during the Reconstruction, a period that occurred after the abolition of slavery and before the institutionalization of apartheid, the figure of the Minuteman or "vigilante" emerged, committing abuses against the black population, Latinx immigrants, and European Catholics (Chip & Lyons, 2000:26). This rural icon, which tried to emulate the militia movement, was romanticized because it adopted the image of order and peace, although the reality was far from that utopian scenario since they were not only ignorant and violent but also corrupt.

Examples of this are political paintings with titles like *Crossing the Swamp* or *Politically Incorrect* (Fig.4). The latter has a peculiarity, and that is, even though the militiaman featured in the painting is black, it is done with the intention of demonstrating that immigration is always welcome as long as it is done legally because we can see that on the left side of his vest, there is the 2A pin, which alludes to the visa issued to migrants to work in the country, and as long as American patriotism is embraced. This approach supports the belief that the American dream truly exists.

**Figure 4. *Politically Incorrect*.**



To conclude, this dynamic in favor of the Second Amendment is closely intertwined with national imperialism and, more specifically, with the need to justify war, understood as patriotic "good" war.

From 1945 to 1949, the U.S. administration held a monopoly on the production of nuclear weapons, and from 1951 onwards, the arms industry became the economic engine of the country. The fight against communism extended beyond what the USSR represented and was extrapolated to other conflicts around the world. In some cases, it did so directly, such as its intervention in the Korean War (1950-1955) and the Vietnam War (1955-1975). In others, the administration deployed an indirect strategy, mainly in Latin America, to defeat communist insurgents who had taken inspiration from Fidel Castro's Cuba (Boggs & Pollard, 2016:24-44).

During those years, many Third World countries, inspired by the spirit of emancipation propagated by the USSR, rebelled against their respective metropolises. However, the role of the United States became crucial not only because it militarily supported European countries outside the Soviet orbit but also because it formulated an interventionist foreign

policy that laid the groundwork for the concept of the "good war." This is why, in the painting *You are not forgotten* (Fig.5), tribute is paid to fallen war veterans, and Trump, symbolizing the United States, crushes the serpent under his foot. The serpent, in this example, is linked to Judeo-Christian theology. This is why it represents evilness

**Figure 5. *You are not forgotten.***



### 3.4 The demonization of the political adversary or the 'Other'.

The demonization of political adversaries is not a new phenomenon. One can observe examples of this practice dating back to the Middle Ages when virtually all Jews were dehumanized, as they were portrayed with distorted features. During the anti-communist frenzy of the early 20th century in the United States, promotional posters for the 1919 film *Bolshevism on Trial* depicted communists with Jewish attributes to demonize them (Gómez Fernández, 2023:1-10).

Jon McNaughton employs a more subtle approach, using two dynamics. The first is to demonize the enemy to the point of caricaturing Trump's political opponents in the painting *Trick or Treat* (Fig.6), where he portrays Democratic politicians as witches and former President Obama as a demon. He even accuses the media of fabricating fake news and distorting Trump's words with the painting *You Are Fake News* (Fig.7). The second dynamic is to use this demonization to elevate his followers into a victim's role with *Solitary Confinement* (Fig.8) as same as Trump who is seen in *National Emergency* (Fig.9).

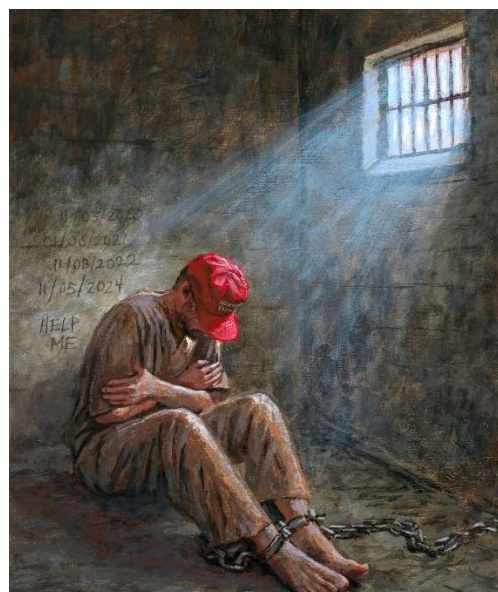
Figure 6. *Trick or Treat.*



Figure 7. *You Are Fake News.*



Figure 8. *Solitary Confinement.*



Among these examples, the most interesting one is *National Emergency* because it highlights the protectionism discussed in the second section of this paper. In this painting, Donald Trump appears marginalized by his counterparts who are standing on top of the American flag. This demeaning act suggests that they are proponents of globalization, multiculturalism, and communism. Bernie Sanders, a Democratic politician inclined towards socialism in economic terms but conservative in the social realm, strongly holds the flag of China (although that Asian titan has adapted to market capitalism). It is noteworthy that Maxine Waters firmly grasps the flag of Iran. This Islamic country was labeled by Republican President George W. Bush as one of the territories forming the Axis of Evil.

**Figure 9. *National Emergency*.**



The formation of a national and international enemy to replace the collapsed Soviet Bloc arises from the need to support a protectionist attitude that is rooted in American nativism. This nativism, a pillar of the American far-right, is reinforced by Christian fundamentalism, communitarianism, and ultimately, a gun culture. These four elements act as vectors of American patriotism advocated by groups and sympathizers within this ideological spectrum.

#### **4. Discussion and Final remarks**

Once the themes extracted from the content of his paintings have been presented, the three questions outlined in the introduction will be taken into account.

Firstly, it is evident that Christianity has been linked to the American far-right since the founding of the country. This is because the colonial settlements established in the American territory from the 17th century onwards were founded by Puritan pilgrims who, for practical



purposes, were religious separatists persecuted in England due to their religious differences with the crown. America was then presented as a place of opportunities where they could practice their Christian beliefs. By the late 18th century, after defeating the greatest thalassocrat power not only in Europe but also in the world, it was considered that God had intervened in that conflict. Since then, a providentialism patriotic message was broadcast, asserting that three percent of the population had defeated a great empire in the name of God. That minimal percentage has become a nationalist allegory, and today, there is a militia known as the Three Percenters, also styled 3 Percenters, 3%ers, and III%ers. This view of history fueled white ethnic patriotism that promoted a nativist political agenda, which is the ideological stance that supports natives over foreigners. It was a decisive electoral force in the country since the second half of the 19th century because it constituted the main pillar of the Native American Party (NAP), which later renamed itself the American Party (AP), and was involved in the persecution of non-Christian immigrants.

Secondly, this explanation is useful for understanding that American patriotism originates from a Christian matrix that serves to link the gun culture and localism, two factors that legitimize the fight against government tyranny, whether it was the British Crown in the past or, currently, political actors opposed to American nativism. This opposing ideal leads to the consideration of other progressive proclamations as unconstitutional and un-nationalistic. Furthermore, this stance views multiculturalism, globalization, and liberal and communist economic systems with skepticism because its archetype of an idyllic sociopolitical order is like that established after the process of independence.

Finally, the identity framework that was formed after the American Independence created a mythology that emphasized the revolution against foreign tyranny as a Christian method. The American Revolution—and all that it symbolizes in McNaughton's work—has been present in his artwork, from his painting *Modern-day Paul Revere*—who was a revolutionary during that period—to *Spirit of 2024*—where Donald Trump is presented as one of those patriots who fought against British tyranny<sup>7</sup>.

To conclude, Jon McNaughton's political paintings are not without criticism. For his staunch supporters, his cultural expressions exalt domestic patriotism, but for his detractors, they are works riddled with infantilism. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that these paintings articulate a nativist narrative that reinforces the connection between Christianity, the

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<sup>7</sup> It's not coincidental that the title of this political painting includes the year 2024 because the presidential elections will be held on November 5, 2024. Donald Trump is one of the One of the Republican candidates.

American far-right, patriotism, gun culture, and the mythology of American Independence. These themes combine to promote a particular view of history and national identity that influences ideology and politics in the United States. Three conclusive points can be established:

It is quite conspicuous that the American far-right has a strong connection with Christianity, from the early Puritan colonists seeking religious freedom in America to the present day. This relationship is based on a providential view of history, where divine intervention is seen in the nation's founding and in the struggle against oppression. Christianity becomes a central element in the construction of American patriotic identity, supporting nativist and anti-immigration political agendas.

American patriotism is rooted in a Christian matrix and is related to gun culture and localism. These elements are used to legitimize resistance against government tyranny, whether it was the British Crown in the past or political actors perceived as opposed to American nativism today.

The American Revolution and its symbols have been present in his work, highlighting the fight against foreign tyranny as a Christian act. This historical narrative is used to support political and patriotic agendas in his paintings.

The author's main motivation through these pages has been to emphasize the importance of political paintings in conveying codes, discussing an aspect of historiography that has not been addressed in the academic world, and ultimately offering a novel approach to the American far-right from the field of cultural studies.

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