Project Proposal:
Sublime Symbols: White Thymos in Alt-Right Corecore Edits

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1 Motivation

In the study of corecore, literary and media scholars have framed it as a reconstitution of the doomscroll. A repetition of algorithmic logic which evokes a catharsis or the sublime through a hyperaestheticized distillation of informational excess (Chen, 2023; Vujošević, 2024; Colquitt and Cobb, 2023). When considering the mobilization of corecore by political entities, this analysis falls short in its technodeterministic formulation. Algorithms undeniably shape people, but people also shape algorithms, often to political ends (Freelon et al., 2020).

Bharath Ganesh recognizes this targeted manipulation through what he defines as *white thymos*, or the "complex of pride, rage, resentment, and anger" towards the perceived loss of white culture and power (Ganesh, 2020). White thymos is purposefully manufactured on platforms, normalizing radical right politics through the production and reconfiguration of content. Content creates "affective circuits" which distributes white thymotic flows (Ganesh, 2020). Situating corecore's medium in this calls to mind Benjamin's famous claim that fascism is the aestheticization of politics, suspending rationality and making politics about feeling (Benjamin, 1969).

RQ: My hypothesis is that white thymotic flows are established in recurrent symbols distributed amongst alt-right corecore, t**hrough which the sublime AND a white thymotic affect are produced in a symbols** projection of white culture: an interminable lineage of superiority and esoteric mystery. I thus ask**: can we surface symbols of white thymos in corecore and use them symbols to distinguish between normative and alt-right instantiations of the genre?**

2 Methodology and Tasks

Carl is the only team member, and thus will perform all tasks. My data will be sourced from Tik-Tok, a combination comments, video frames, and audio description. We aim to sample 100 or so videos from hashtags or search terms associated with the alt-right, contrasted against a snapshot of popular results from general #corecore videos. For some iterations, I may mix both categories in my pipeline. All inputs will be vectorized via CLIP. Video frames will be split by OpenCV, and diverse and representative frames will be selected via the order centroids of frames clustered by k-means. This will require histogram evaluation or other exploratory techniques.

Audio and video will be seperated via MoviePy. Speech will be transcribed by Whisper Turbo, and I am considering mapping sonic characteristics of music generated by Librosa to labels like "fast-pased" or "rhytmic" for when whisper captures "background music playing". Following *Concept*, the combined embeddings will be projected down in dimensionality via UMAP, and then clustered with HDBScan (Groot, 2018). Given that I am clustering multimodal embeddings, I will need to customize Concept or design my own pipeline. Clusters will be represented by images chosen via maximal marginal relevance. **Through clustering, we aim to capture symbols of white thymos, and analyze their meanings.**

Evaluation

To ensure our approach is working, the first metric requires manually evaluating each conceptual cluster for their 1) semantic meaning and 2) diversity of sources. To illuminate our research question, videos will be represented as a matrix of all their embeddings. A similarity metric will be calculated over each vector towards the order centroid of a given conceptual cluster, and for each video, the closest vector will be visualized in relation to the order centroid. **This visualization will allow us to distinguish alt-right corecore genre and their intentional white thymotic imagery**.

References

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