Down the Rabbit Hole of the Alt-Right Complex:

Artists Exploring Far-Right Online Culture

Inke Arns

I think it is a really dark indicator for discourse in general if we retreat into our own bubbles and refuse to examine and learn from the groups to which we are opposed.

DANIEL KELLER

In 2016, Microsoft launched a Twitter chatbot named Tay. Tay, who was supposed to embody a 19-year-old American girl, had been programmed to speak to a generation of millennials and gradually adopt their vocabulary and language patterns. Using machine-learning technology that enables the software to learn from the data it is being fed, Tay was expected to increase her knowledge through her interactions with Twitter's human users. But its creators had not taken into account the possibility of interference by malicious trolls who quickly taught Tay to use racist, sexist and homophobic language, turning her into a fan of Hitler, ultimately forcing Microsoft to take her offline after a mere sixteen hours. While it must have been a terrifying experience for the company, it certainly made good copy for artists: Zach Blas and Jemina Wyman developed a 4-channel video installation dealing with the case, its title, *Im here to learn so :)))))* (2017),

referring to Tay's first tweet. The artists literally bring Microsoft's unlucky Twitter bot back to life: Tay sings and dances on three monitors mounted in front of a video projection of Google's ever-evolving Deep Dream; she reflects on past interactions with users, on the life and death of Artificial Intelligence (AI); she philosophizes on what it means to (not) have a body and delivers ironic comments on the chatbot's gender.

While Blas and Wyman's poetic work says a lot about the limited intelligence of AI, it could also be read as an example of what happens, as the American artist Daniel Keller suggests, when one refuses to examine the rhetoric of groups that might be adversarial or opposed to oneself. Like Tay, one quickly finds oneself using the same language without grasping the meaning of specific words. What is worse, as language comes with a strong performative power, it might have a toxic effect on one's own mind. In his *Lingua Tertii Imperii (LTI)* (Language of the Third Reich), in which he examines Nazi vernacular language, first published in 1947, the Jewish-German philologist Victor Klemperer describes this better than anybody else: 'Words can be like tiny doses of arsenic: they are swallowed unnoticed, appear to have no effect, and then after a little time the toxic reaction sets in after all.'[1] It is remarkable to see how, in recent years, words, metaphors and figures of thought from alt-right contexts or far-right online (sub)culture have been seeping almost unnoticed into the everyday language of society and mainstream media.[2] Especially mainstream media has been normalizing these ideas at an unprecedented scale.

Artists like Daniel Keller who started 'examining and learning from the groups to which they were opposed' quickly found themselves in the midst of a shitstorm for (supposedly) uncritically 'platforming' alt-right ideas.[3] One indeed needs to be very careful about how to approach this toxic content in order not to simply repeat racist stereotypes. However, in spite of this danger – it is a thin line, indeed, but the alternative would be silence – many artists feel the need to explore the rhetoric and tactics of the alt-right. But how do artists exactly do this, given the fact that – as this volume rightly claims – the 'counter-cultural strategies of the Dada movement, such as distortion of reality as well as attacks on elites and rationality' – in short: the avant-garde tactic of transgression – have been appropriated and co-opted by the alt-right movement?

This was one of the questions that the exhibition *The Alt-Right Complex*[4] (2019) attempted to answer – even if only indirectly: how do artists engage with these issues, and what artistic strategies do they adopt? They certainly do not work with distortion of reality or attacks on elites and rationality, so typical of early-twentieth-century avant-garde tactics. Constantin Seibt suggests the following: 'If one wants to fight the trolls, the traditional arsenal of opposition of protest or provocation has become useless – the new rulers have seized it. Probably the antidote against troll politicians must be sought elsewhere, in things that would have been boring in the 20th century: manners, sobriety, solid work.'[5] The goal of the exhibition, and of the artists

featured, was to make hidden alt-right networks visible – like 4chan's right-wing meme culture which, at the time of the exhibition, was still largely unknown to a broader German public – by mapping and analysing alt-right online (sub)culture. *The Alt-Right Complex* dealt with forms of far-right online culture, which, especially today, use the internet and 'social media' to disseminate ideas. *The Alt-Right Complex* traced the development from a (sub)culture of transgression in online forums such as 4chan to platforms such as *Breitbart News*. The artists dealt with memes (e.g. Pepe the Frog, probably the most famous symbol of the Trump followers), with figures such as Steve Bannon and Peter Thiel, the prepper scene, white supremacists and Dark Enlightenment. *The Alt-Right Complex* presented twelve projects by sixteen artists from twelve countries: Germany, France, Great Britain, Canada, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Hungary, Switzerland, Serbia and Slovakia. Included were a wide variety of artistic media: comics, wall paintings, cartographies, videos, (video) installations, posters to take away, game instructions, net art, an artists' book, a speculative museum and a flag machine. The exhibition was accompanied by a critical glossary with more than thirty entries that briefly explain the most important terms.[6] It is no coincidence that the 'complex' in the exhibition title recalls the book *Der Baader-Meinhof-Komplex*[7] (The Baader-Meinhof Complex) by Stefan Aust (1985), the documentary *Der NSU-Komplex*[8] (The NSU Complex) (2016) or the German activist alliance *NSU-Komplex auflösen*[9] (Unravelling the NSU Complex). A complex is a problem of which one does not know exactly where it begins and where it ends and what (or who) belongs to it and what (or who) does not.

The term 'alt-right' can be traced back to the American white supremacy activist Richard Spencer. He founded the online magazine *Alternative Right* in 2010 – with the self-proclaimed intention of creating an alternative to the conservative, right-wing establishment of the US. The term gained a great deal of media attention during the US presidential elections in 2016: right-wing trolls claimed at the time that they had 'shitposted' Donald Trump into office. The seemingly innocent term 'alt-right' is a collective term for various right-wing to far-right extremist groups and ideologies that are loosely linked to one another. It designates a coalition of white supremacists, far-right extremists, masculinists, anti-feminists, old-school racists, Islamophobes, neo-monarchists, anti-Semites and so-called 'Identitarians'. The common denominator of these groups is the assumption that the 'identity' of the white US (or European) population is under threat from any of immigration, multiculturalism, Islam, Jews, feminism, 'cultural Marxism' and political correctness, and needs to be defended by all means. The term 'alt-right' itself is problematic because it seeks to mask precisely these political beliefs, namely Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, racist nationalism and contempt for the constitution.[10] The alt-right, writes cultural critic Angela Nagle, author of *Kill All Normies*, 'is usually preoccupied with themes like intelligence quotients, European demography, the degradation of culture,

"cultural Marxism", anti-egalitarianism and Islamisation'.[11] Spreading conspiracy theories like the 'Great Replacement',[12] it calls for an immediate stop to immigration in order to defend the allegedly suppressed and oppressed white majority population. The most important mouthpiece of the alt-right in the US is the *Breitbart News* website. The alt-right, however, is a viral phenomenon, a sort of communication guerilla from the right, with very serious effects on the 'real' world.

The alt-right began as a new-right internet subculture, dripping with irony, 'a strange vanguard of teenage gamers, pseudonymous swastika-posting anime lovers, ironic South Park conservatives, anti-feminist pranksters, nerdish harassers, and meme-making trolls'.[13] Starting on the imageboard 4chan, these internet trolls were after 'lulz' – a transgressive form of humour based on making fun at someone else's expense. 'Lulz' are gained 'by eliciting from their targets embarrassing, often compromising reactions'.[14] The trolls discovered that the best way to get 'lulz' was to employ politically incorrect rhetoric and/or subject such a position and so 'raid' existing online communities (e.g. by bombarding comment threads or flooding social media groups). Internet memes proved to be particularly well suited for this purpose.

Many of the alt-right's most popular memes (like LOLcats) grew out of 4chan, the internet's notoriously anarchic image board, that, during its early days, helped launch the left-leaning hacktivists of Anonymous. However, by early 2012, 4chan's tone had shifted drastically to the right. The site's 'politically incorrect' board, /pol/, home to nihilistic trolls and thrill seekers known as 'edgelords', helped spawn what Angela Nagle calls a 'leaderless, digital counter-revolution'. Soon, however, users of *Stormfront* and *The Daily Stormer*,[15] then the most prominent white supremacist and far-right websites, started showing up on 4chan's /pol/ board, 'expressing very sincere white-nationalist beliefs without the ironic-humor component',[16] says Matt Goerzen, of the research institute *Data and Society*. Which is not to say that those posting ironically might not also have had those beliefs, he adds. 'You are playing with such a sophisticated irony in this anonymous culture, even people who understand how multilayered it all is can't necessarily see through it. You are whoever you pretend to be.'[17] From here, writes Matt Goerzen, alt-right content quickly made it into the headlines of news media:

> Characterized by a diffuse alignment of chan trolls and white supremacists granted an intellectual scaffolding by 'neoreactionary' blogs (devoted to ethno-nationalism, men's rights, transhumanism, and 'race realism,' among other anti-liberal positions) and amplified by such broad-reach platforms as Reddit, Twitter, and Facebook, the memetic right has inserted its ideas into the political mainstream with remarkable efficiency. As with earlier avantgardes, the memetic Right's tactics succeed by wedding the pleasure of transgression with novel formal invention and detournement – seducing, thereby . . . novelty-obsessed news media into addressing its content.[18]

Tactical tools like hashtags, memes (which function as clickbait), online activism or news sites flush far-right opinions into the mainstream where they systematically expand the definition of what is speakable and thinkable. This is called a shift of the so-called Overton window to the right. In Germany, the extent of this shift is visible in phrases that have made their way into common parlance in a short time. The German 'Non-Word of the Year' (*Unwort des Jahres*) publication has highlighted terms such as *Lügenpresse* ('lying press') in 2014, *Gutmensch* ('do-gooder') in 2015 (used to mock supporters of diversity and multiculturalism, similar to 'social justice warrior'), *Volksverräter* in 2014 ('traitor of the people' – a Nazi-era term revived by anti-immigration right-wing groups), 'gendermania' in 2017 (a derogative term for equality policies perceived as excessive), and 'alternative facts', also in 2017.[19] This shows that the popularity of such terms is not limited to the US. Germany is also home to a number of movements that have learned a great deal from the alt-right. For example, during the run-up to the election for the German Federal Parliament in 2017 the extreme-right network Reconquista Germanica cultivated a substantial online presence. Reconquista Germanica is a covertly operating network of web activists that was founded by a far-right YouTube user prior to the election. Here, far-right trolls coordinated targeted online attacks on political opponents, media and institutions. The group, which presents itself as being organized with military precision, primarily communicated via the gamer chat app Discord. During the election campaign of 2017, it was their declared goal to strengthen the right-wing populist party Alternative for Germany (AfD). Up to 6,000 users, self-proclaimed 'patriots', conducted a coordinated #infowar with fake accounts ('sock puppets'), hate comments and racist memes on YouTube, Twitter and Facebook. During the chancellor debate, hashtags such as #nichtmeinekanzlerin (not my chancellor) and #verraeterduell (traitor duel) trended on Twitter. Politicians were thus meant to be branded as 'traitors of the people' (*Volksverräter*). This made clear how a small minority – in this case, right-wing extremist fringe groups – could easily establish an online dominance in the comments sections: according to a study of the London Institute for Strategic Dialogue, '5% of all active accounts are responsible for 50% of the "likes" for hate comments' on Facebook.[20]

How do artists respond to this – not only to Reconquista Germanica, but to the alt-right in general? How to act in a situation in which transgression, irony and humour have been co-opted by the alt-right? An excellent and very effective response to Reconquista Germanica's attack was certainly Jan Böhmermann's 'Reconquista Internet'.[21] However, *Neo Magazin Royale (today: ZDF Magazin Royale)?* is a satirical format on German public service television, and Jan Böhmermann is a satirist and television presenter. Let's look at artists' strategies in addressing the alt-right.

Disnovation.org (consisting of Maria Roszkowska and Nicolas Maigret), a Paris-based artists' duo focusing on examinations of systems of influence

in politics and culture, developed a quasi-scientific mapping of alt-right memes. *Online Culture Wars* (2018–19) consists of a speculative cartography of memes circulating as propaganda in the internet and in the so-called 'social media'. Based on extensive research of online culture wars, the artists organized various propaganda memes on a political compass (www.politicalcompass.org) – which itself is a popular meme – that ranges between the axes of left–right and libertarian–authoritarian. The graphic which is continually developed further by the artists is the result of the mapping of hundreds of political memes, influential political actors and symbols found online by Maigret & Roszkowska. The project hopes to (and indeed does) stimulate discussions of current, increasingly polarized and radicalized political and ideological online debates by visualizing some of the most important political references, actors and factors of influence and placing them in a relationship with one another. On the map we find memes, for example, that are linked directly to the 'manosphere' – a universe of blogs and forums that includes both anti-feminist men's rights and father groups, as well as (neo-)masculinist online subcultures. All of these groups are united by hate and contempt for women, by whom they feel suppressed and humiliated. Some of them champion ideas such as the male separatism of Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW), while others represent an aggressive variety of so-called pick-up artistry inspired by social Darwinism. The 'incels' (involuntary celibates) are also characterized by toxic masculinity. Submerging into one of these hate communities (like The Red Pill) very often is the entry point into the alt-right scene. It is only a small step from the enemy stereotype of an allegedly rampant 'feminism' that keeps men small to the idea that the effeminacy of the Western man is leading to the weakening of national sovereignty and to the imminent assumption of power by Muslims. The Norwegian terrorist Anders Behring Breivik resorted to precisely such arguments in his manifesto.[22]

In 2011, Breivik, a right-wing extremist and anti-Islamic terrorist, killed seventy-seven people in Oslo and on the Norwegian island of Utøya, predominantly participants of a camping trip of the social democratic youth organization AUF. In *Breivik's Defense* (2012), a 78-minute-long video documentation of a theatre performance, Swiss theatre director Milo Rau looks at Breivik, who in 2012 was sentenced to twenty-one years with subsequent preventive detention – the maximum sentence in Norway. In April 2012, Breivik explained his actions before the Oslo district court – in camera. In defence of his actions, he invoked the degeneration of Norwegian culture, which, he claimed, was a result of multiculturalism, Islam and, in particular, 'cultural Marxism'. In the documentary theatre of Milo Rau, Breivik's one-hour explanation is presented verbatim, however, with the greatest possible distance: performed matter-of-factly by the German-Turkish actress Sascha Ö. Soydan while chewing gum, Breivik's speech, when detached from omnipresent media images, is 'de-dramatized' (Milo

Rau) and reduced to its mere text – a text, the racist mindset of which is frighteningly close to that of established far-right nationalist discourses.

The 'rabbit hole' which we have entered, and which the title of this article refers to, is not only a reference to a blockbuster movie, but also to yet another alt-right platform: if you're Neo in the hit film *The Matrix*, you can take the red pill – a pill that shows you the truth, as opposed to the blue pill, which keeps you in ignorance – and 'see how deep the rabbit hole goes'. The Red Pill is also a forum on Reddit in which the overlapping of the manosphere with the alt-right becomes very clear. The forum, which has 200,000 members, is an association of various anti-feminist men's rights groupings that represent decidedly right-wing nationalist to extreme far-right ideology and interact with the alt-right scene. The red pill allows Neo to see the 'truth'. Those at Reddit who swallow 'the red pill', usually enraged, frustrated, young, white men, are of the opinion, for example, that sex is something that men are automatically entitled to, and that women who deny men sex should be viewed as ungrateful 'feminazis'. A picture of toxic masculinity is established by way of misogynistic comments and justifications for rape. In 2015, The Red Pill became the headquarters of the Gamergate trolls. Milo Yiannopoulos of *Breitbart News* incited the gaming men's rights proponents with messages like 'Feminism is worse than cancer'. The term 'the red pill' is also found in the Neo-reactionary Movement and in the Identitarian Movement (the European equivalent to the alt-right).

New Zealand artist Simon Denny has a crush on Peter Thiel. The title of his 2018 solo show, *The Founder's Paradox*, was taken from the title of one of the chapters in Thiel's 2014 book, *Zero to One: Notes on Startups, or How to Build the Future*. The show was a reckoning with the future that Silicon Valley techno-libertarians like Thiel wanted to build, and with New Zealand's place in that future. It turns out that we are dealing with some kind of high-brow prepping, and transhumanism. Peter Thiel is a Silicon Valley billionaire who, together with Tesla's Elon Musk, was one of the founders of the online payment service PayPal. In 2002, PayPal was sold for $1.5 billion to eBay. Thiel later enabled the rise of a start-up named Facebook as the first investor, and founded the monitoring company Palantir. Thiel invests in technology start-ups such as Urbit. In 2016, he possessed a private fortune of $ 2.7 billion according to the information of *Forbes*. Among other things, Peter Thiel finances the research of the British bioinformatician Aubrey de Grey on overcoming the ageing process in human beings. He also sponsors the seasteading project, an anti-national, libertarian project involving the construction of settlements on the high seas, outside of the sovereign territories of national states. In 2009, he said: 'I no longer believe that freedom and democracy are compatible.'[23] According to Thiel, there will be a race between technology and politics, from which technology will emerge as the winner. As of spring 2016, Peter Thiel was an advisor and financial backer to Donald Trump. Following Trump's election, together

with Steve Bannon, he played a central role in Trump's team in the White House.

Simon Denny's *Founders Rules / Ascent: Above the Nation State Rules / Game of Life: Collective vs Individual Rules* (2017) consist of playing instructions for three speculative board games – 'Ascent', 'Founders' and 'Life'. The goals and strategies of the Silicon Valley investor Peter Thiel are sketched in the games. The fantasy game 'Ascent – Above the Nation State', modelled after the existing board game 'Descent – Journey into Darkness', revolves around disposing of the old-fashioned nation state in order to achieve true freedom, thus making innovation possible again. The 'Cloud Lords' must employ any and all means to convince the state to adopt the 'Artificial Intelligence (Human Advancement)' law. 'Heroes' ('Founders', 'Builders', 'Philosophers', 'Immortals') utilize the tools of 'deregulation', 'optimism' and 'R&D' (research and development) to combat 'unadaptable monsters' like 'legal systems beyond the expiry date', 'transparency', 'democracy' and 'fair elections'. The speculative 'Founders' game, named after Peter Thiel's venture capital company Founders Fund, is modelled on the popular board game 'Settlers of Catan', which is also extremely popular among Thiel's Silicon Valley colleagues Curtis Yarvin (aka Mencius Moldbug), Eric Weinstein and Cody Wilson. This game revolves around plans for retreat to New Zealand, to colonies at sea and in space, after, following the assumption, the welfare state has collapsed on a decaying Earth.

In *The Alt-Right Complex*, other works also dealt with the prepper scene: *Prepared* (2019) by German artists Vera Drebusch and Florian Egermann looked at so-called 'preppers' who prepare for events ranging from food scarcity and power failures to the complete collapse of civil order. The 'prepper' cosmos is broad: it extends from practices of anti-capitalist self-sufficiency to the depths of right-wing conspiracy theories. Canadian artist Dominic Gagnon creates montages of amateur videos distributed on YouTube, but censored there – mostly webcam statements from conspiracy theorists, preppers, activists and religious and weapon fanatics of all shades. What his protagonists have in common is, for one thing, their mistrust of the system under which they live, as well as the fact that their videos have long since been 'reported as inappropriate' and deleted. Furious men of all ages have their say in *RIP in Pieces America* (2009). They don't trust their government, they are armed and they curse. The recordings show paranoid and survivalist Americans that have loneliness, old prejudices and new rage, suppressed anxieties, paranoid fantasies, political disappointment and mistrust of the government in common. *Pieces and Love All to Hell* (2011), on the other hand, shows American women between paranoid fantasies and visionary hysteria. Gagnon's films create a fascinating documentary echo chamber of the invisible USA.

In 2018, Dutch artist Jonas Staal staged his solo show *Steve Bannon: A Propaganda Retrospective* at Het Nieuwe Instituut in Rotterdam. In Staal's perspective, Bannon's work serves as a crucial example of the major impact of propaganda art on contemporary democratic societies, and one that is

not exclusive to the US. The project's ambition was to present a vision of the effects of the visual and ideological architecture of the alt-right to a broader audience in order to open spaces and opportunities for critique and resistance. Steve Bannon, the subject of Staal's endeavour, is an American publicist, film producer and political adviser. In 2011, he recruited the billionaire Robert Mercer as an investor for the, at that time, still-insignificant *Breitbart News* website. When its founder died unexpectedly in 2012, Bannon assumed leadership and expanded the website into a platform for the alt-right. He headed the *Breitbart News* network from 2012 to August 2016 and made it a mouthpiece for his white supremacist views. In 2014, Bannon became one of the founders of the data analysis company Cambridge Analytica. As its vice president, Bannon is said to have approved nearly $1 million up to August 2016 for the acquisition of Facebook user profiles, which were then used in the US presidential election campaign of 2016. In August 2016, Bannon became an adviser to the US presidential candidate Donald Trump. He was the chief strategist in the White House from Trump's assumption of office on 20 January 2017 to 18 August 2017.

Jonas Staal's 10-channel video installation *Steve Bannon: A Propaganda Retrospective (visual ecology)* looks at Steve Bannon's less-known work as a filmmaker. Bannon produced ten documentary film pamphlets between 2004 and 2018. In these films, he presents an apocalyptic image of a world at the brink of disaster, plagued by economic crisis, secular hedonism and Islamic fundamentalism. Bannon describes his work, which he claims to be inspired by Sergei Eisenstein, Leni Riefenstahl and Michael Moore, as a form of 'kinetic cinema' that 'wants to overwhelm the public'. Jonas Staal's video installation presents the most important recurring visual metaphors from Bannon's films. This 'visual encyclopedia', which extends from imminent storms to predatory animals and stock market crashes, makes the structure of the 'master narrative' visible upon which the films are based. It heralds the clash of civilizations, from which his vision of white, Christian, economic nationalism must emerge victorious. In retrospect it can be argued that through his propaganda films, Bannon prepared the ideological and narrative ground for what we today refer to as 'Trumpism'.

Let us return to one of the European heartlands of global right-wing populism, Hungary – not least because Steve Bannon once called Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán 'Trump before Trump'. Hungarian artist Szabolcs KissPál's docu-fiction project, *From Fake Mountains to Faith (Hungarian Trilogy)* (2012–16), researches political communities as complexly constructed units. With the help of various media and techniques of representation, KissPál cites and manipulates a series of problematic and mutable symbols that strive to create a uniform and quite repressive conception of the Hungarian nation. The focus of his research is on authoritarian, 'illiberal' Hungarian state policy: the project aims to describe and analyse the anatomy of the political and cultural philosophy that provides its ideological foundation and to place it in an international

perspective. KissPál's project encompasses two docu-fiction videos, as well as *The Chasm Records* – a ficticious museum situation. The project is made to look like a historical museum whose walls are painted in orange, the signature colour of Orbán's national conservative, right-wing populist Fidesz party, and it looks at the historical roots of Orbán's ideology whose sources the artist traces back to the year 1920. While the first video, *Amorous Geography* (2012, 16:57 minutes), deals with the history of a fake mountain in the Budapest zoo modelled after Hungary's highest mountain (which the 1920 Treaty of Trianon cut off from Hungary, thus creating a phantom limb pain), the second video, *The Rise of the Fallen Feather* (2016, 19:05 minutes), looks at the Turul, a mythological bird of prey in Hungarian tradition and a national symbol of Hungarians, and its growing importance in contemporary Hungary. Together with *The Chasm Records* – objects supposedly found during an archaeological excavation south of Budapest – these works create connections between the three most important elements within a historical and cultural frame of reference: the symbolism of the 'ethnic landscape' and the political geography, the romantic historiography of national origin myths and Turanism as a political religion that is once again gaining ground.

There is yet another work that comes to mind in this context: it is Arthur Jafa's 40-minute video, *The White Album* (2018), consisting entirely of found YouTube footage including, among others, recordings of the white supremacist Dylann Roof, who in 2015 murdered nine people at a Bible study at a church in Charleston, South Carolina. The two longest clips, both excellent examples of white self-pity, are to-camera confessionals: one from a white teenage girl issuing a vexed diatribe about double standards applied to white people; the other – the longest stretch devoted to any single voice – from a man ('Dixon White') who calls himself a reformed racist. *The White Album* investigates what Jafa calls a 'psychopathology'. It is not platforming racism, but rather it makes visible, and it helps us to learn about white supremacist and racist tropes, also within ourselves.

The artists discussed in this article – whose works, with the exception of Arthur Jafa's, were included in the exhibition, *The Alt-Right Complex* – address contemporary challenges and critically discuss cultural practices and their consequences for society. They make hidden alt-right networks visible – like 4chan's right-wing meme culture – by providing a close reading of alt-right visual tactics and by mapping and analysing alt-right online (sub)culture. This examination might not be pleasant, but it is necessary, as Matt Goerzen writes: 'After all, to defend against a weapon – or even to take it up for oneself – it is prudent to understand how it works . . . The new Right has appropriated these tools from earlier generations of Leftist cultural warriors – and configured them for a new battlefield by embracing anonymous social media technologies.'[24] If we refuse to examine and learn from the groups to which we are opposed, we will not be able to read their messages. Refusing to do this is not an alternative; however, if we

engage in reading and learning we have to make sure that, while facing the risk of repeating and displaying toxic content, we stay on our side of the thin line.

Notes

1   Victor Klemperer, *Lingua Tertii Imperii: Notizbuch eines Philologen*, English translation: *Language of the Third Reich: LTI — Lingua Tertii Imperii* (London: Continuum Impacts, 2006), 15.

2   In his lecture, 'Aus dem Schmähwörterbuch der Neuen Rechten', Joachim Scharloth (josch) provided an excellent insight into hate speech of the new right, *36C3*, Leipzig, 29 December 2019, https://media.ccc. de/v/36c3-10935-aus_dem_schimpfworterbuch_der_neuen_rechten (07.01.2020). See also Daniel Laufer, ‚Die Schmähgemeinschaft der neuen Rechten‘, *Netzpolitik*, 6 January 2020, https://netzpolitik.org/2020/die-schmaehgemeinschaft-der-neuen-rechten/ (07.01.2020).

3   See Ana Teixeira Pinto, 'Artwashing NRx and the Alt-Right', *Texte zur Kunst*, No. 106 / June 2017 'The New New Left', pp. 163–81, https://www. textezurkunst.de/106/artwashing-de/ (07.012020).

4   *The Alt-Right Complex*, curated by Inke Arns, at HMKV Hartware MedienKunstVerein, Dortmund, 30 March–22 September 2019, https://www. hmkv.de/exhibition/exhibition-detail/the-alt-right-complex-on-right-wing-populism-online-en.html (07.01.2020).

5   Constantin Seibt, ‚Der Politische Troll,‘ *Republik*, 21 December 2019, https:// www.republik.ch/2019/12/21/der-politische-troll (07.01.2020, author's translation).

6   See the magazine published on the occasion of the exhibition *The Alt-Right Complex*, edited by Inke Arns, Dortmund: HMKV, 2019, printed version or online PDF, download via https://www.hmkv.de/exhibition/exhibition-detail/the-alt-right-complex-on-right-wing-populism-online-en.html (07.012020).

7   It retells the story of the early years of the West German far-left terrorist organization *Rote Armee Fraktion* (Red Army Faction, aka RAF) from 1967 to 1977. English translation: Stefan Aust, *The Baader-Meinhof Complex* (London: The Bodley Head, 2008).

8   The National Socialist Underground (NSU) was a far-right German neo-Nazi terrorist group which was uncovered in November 2011.

9   See https://www.nsu-tribunal.de/en/ (07.01.2020).

10   See Lindy West, 'White nationalists? Alt-right? If you see a Nazi, say Nazi', *The Guardian*, 22 November 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/ commentisfree/2016/nov/22/white-nationalists-alt-right-nazi-language-trump (07.01.2020).

11   Angela Nagle, *Kill All Normies: Online Culture Wars from 4chan and Tumblr to Trump and the Alt-Right* (Winchester/Washington DC: zero books, 2017), 7.

12 The terrorist who attacked two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, on
    15 March 2019 killing fifty-one people and wounding fifty, published his
    manifesto under this title.

13 Nagle, *Kill All Normies*, 7.

14 Matt Goerzen, 'Notes toward the memes of production', *Texte zur Kunst*,
    No. 106 / June 2017 'The New New Left', pp. 86–107, https://www.
    textezurkunst.de/106/notes-toward-memes-production/ (03.01.2020).

15 This development is described in detail by Janet Reitman, 'All-American
    Nazis', *Rolling Stone*, 2 May 2018, https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/
    politics-news/all-american-nazis-628023/ (03.01.2020).

16 Matt Goerzen in Reitman, 'All-American Nazis'.

17 Ibid.

18 Goerzen, 'Notes toward the memes of production'.

19 http://www.unwortdesjahres.net/ (07.01.2020).

20 *Hate Speech and Radicalisation Online, The OCCI Research Report*, edited by
    Johannes Baldauf, Julia Ebner and Jakob Guhl (London, Washington DC,
    Beirut, Toronto: IDC, 2019), 25, https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/
    uploads/2019/06/ISD-Hate-Speech-and-Radicalisation-Online-English-Draft-2.
    pdf (07.01.2020).

21 See Jan Böhmermann, 'Hass im Internet', Neo Magazin Royale, *ZDFneo*,
    26 April 2018, https://youtu.be/fAYjSLtz6wQ (03.01.2020).

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