

---

# ALT-RIGHT: CTRL+A; DEL

ANASTASIA SALTER AND BRIDGET BLODGETT

Built as a hypertext work of electronic literature, “Alt-Right: Ctrl+A; Del” explores the social media fatigue experienced by a woman operating in online spaces. The work takes place from November 9 2016 to January 20 2017, during the pivotal moments of transition prior to Donald Trump’s inauguration. It is heavily influenced by the ongoing challenges faced by participants in social media discourse who are identifiable (or labeled) as other than white, heterosexual, cisgender men (Marciano, 2014). The fictionalised narrative of the work is presented alongside a day-by-day evolving timeline of tweets drawn from real social media discourse. The reader-player experiences both the mundane and the politically momentous, the true and the “fake” news sensations, while navigating through the daily pressures of life which present their own source of exhaustion and challenges. Ultimately, the reader-player must decide to what extent it is worth engaging with the incendiary discourse, and these decisions shape the reputation of the character’s online persona. The choice to engage in political discourse will inevitably result in eventually catching the attention of a horde of procedurally-generated trolls (Phillips 2015), while refraining from participating will leave the character relatively invisible and disengaged from both the media platform and source of social connection. The reader-player must balance the demands of social media to present an active persona to their followers with the personal needs of a human who must cope with the results of harassment from a faceless flood.

This work serves both as fictional response and real collection of social media moments from a pivotal period in US political history, inviting the reader-player to think about the apparent “post-truth” state (Suiter 2016) and the ensuing challenges it presents to would-be participants who occupy activist personas in tense and dangerous networked spaces. As an archive, it attempts to capture something that is inherently ephemeral: the in-the-moment experience of the timeline (Zhao et al. 2013). Drawn from the authors’ own social networks, these juxtapositions are difficult to reconstruct with existing social media tools, as Twitter resists the backwards-seeking gaze directly and requires APIs and directed searches to observe past tweets (Burgess & Bruns 2012). The central mechanic of consequences for speech is directly inspired by targeted harassment campaigns in recent social media history. The misogynist, word-focused hunting of Gamergate, which demonstrated the effectiveness of hashtag-driven mobbing at silencing discourse, is the inspiration for the procedural trolling model encountered as endgame (Chess & Shaw 2015). These tactics have been on display across the political spectrum during the election, as demonstrated by the attacks of “Bernie Bros”, or automated chatbots labeled as such, on Hillary Clinton supporters (Wilz 2016). The game invites both active political participants online and those who refrain to consider their position and motivations, and particularly how the specter of online harassment haunts the decision-making process of constructing a social media persona.

## WORKS CITED

- Burgess, J & Bruns, A 2012, 'Twitter archives and the challenges of Big Social Data', *M/C Journal: A Journal of Media and Culture*, vol. 15, no. 5, retrieved [insert date here DD Month YYYY], <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/view/561Driscoll>.
- Chess, S & Shaw, A 2015, 'A conspiracy of fishes, or, how we learned to stop worrying about #GamerGate and embrace hegemonic masculinity', *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, vol. 59, no. 1, pp. 208-220.
- Marciano, A 2014, 'Living the VirtuReal: Negotiating transgender identity in cyberspace', *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, vol. 19, no. 4, pp. 824-838.
- Phillips, W 2015, *This is why we can't have nice things: Mapping the relationship between online trolling and mainstream culture*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Suiter, J 2016, 'Post-Truth Politics', *Political Insight*, vol. 7, no. 3, pp. 25-27.
- Wilz, K 2016, 'Bernie Bros and Woman Cards: Rhetorics of Sexism, Misogyny, and Constructed Masculinity in the 2016 Election', *Women's Studies in Communication*, vol. 39, no. 4, pp. 357-360.
- Zhao, X, Salehi, N, Naranjit, S & Cosley, D 2013, 'The many faces of Facebook: Experiencing social media as performance, exhibition, and personal archive', *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, SIGCHI, Paris, France, pp. 1-10.

## EDITORS' NOTE

To view 'Alt-Right: Ctrl+A; Del', download the HTML file from the link provided and open in your browser.

This creative work has been double-blind peer reviewed prior to acceptance for publication.