

Nagle, Angela:

**KILL ALL NORMIES: ONLINE CULTURE WARS FROM 4CHAN AND TUMBLR TO TRUMP AND THE ALT-RIGHT.**

Winchester: Zero Books. 2017.  
136 pages.

DOI: 10.5817/PC2018-3-270

On the internet, fallacies, conspiracy theories and hoaxes are often used instead of verified information. Since the internet is a decentralized network, people have access this information, regardless of whether it was approved, fact checked or revised in any way. It gets even more scary when such information is propagated by opinion makers on social networks. These people can make up anything and make many people believe it. At this time, such people have even more influence over the youth than the press does. Just notice how popular social media influencers are – their popularity is also transmitted to the real world.

That is why we should pay more attention to the political movements that come from the depths of the internet. One well-known internet phenomenon is the alt-right – a movement whose name was coined by white nationalist Richard Spencer. The publication unorthodoxly titled *Kill All Normies: Online Culture Wars from 4chan and Tumblr to Trump and the Alt-Right* by Irish writer Angela Nagle is one of the first of its kind, and it attempts to show us how the internet community that formerly supported liberal Barack Obama started to lean towards conservative Donald Trump.

As the title of the publication suggests, it is a summary of the current online cultur-

al wars that overlap into politics. A website called 4chan mostly serves as a place for right-wing people, whilst Tumblr mostly serves as a place for left-wing people. Nagle focuses primarily on 4chan, which has built its own community of online nerds posting under the alias 'Anonymous'. Internet anonymity and poor regulation of cybercrimes have given its users the illusion of invincibility and have led to many unpleasant events, including cyberbullying. Nagle also describes how internet memes originating from the site have been used in political campaigns – e.g. Pepe the Frog, a formerly a harmless internet meme, who became a symbol for the alt-right and its opposition to 'political correctness'.

The author describes how feminist bloggers were harassed by the 4chan community just because they did not agree with the feminist point of view. For example, blogger Anita Sarkeesian received many rape threats, because she had successfully crowdfunded her feminist video project about stereotypes in video games.

Sarkeesian's videos were not very popular, as most viewers did not understand them. But honestly, it is naive to think that an average viewer, especially an adolescent, would understand the academic newspeak. The alt-right, therefore, has a tremendous advantage over 'Tumblr liberals' (as Nagle calls the left-wing youth on the internet) because it has the ability to impress people, and thus makes it easier for people to accept their required worldview. The online left fails in this respect and does not manage to convince many people who were not previously open to its ideas.

The book describes how the hatred towards women and feminism has grown and gives the example of Zoe Quinn, a video game developer who became subject to harassment all over the internet. This

controversy became known as Gamergate, and according to Nagle, it 'brought gamers, rightist chan culture, anti-feminism and the online far right closer to mainstream discussion and it also politicized a broad group of young people, mostly boys, who organized tactics around the idea of fighting back against the culture war being waged by the cultural left'. Nagle marks this culture war as a 'geeks vs feminists' battle. She sees one origin of this culture war in the internet 'pirate utopias' of the libertarian left. In the end, however, it has helped the right rather than the left, which is an interesting thing and it just shows how the political views on the internet have changed over time. It makes us realize that today's rebels are not on the left, like it used to be, but on the right, and that nowadays, the right has become the counter-culture.

In her book, Nagle dedicates space to Milo Yiannopoulos, one of the prominent figures of the 'alt-light' (a 'youthful bridge between the alt-right and mainstream Trumpism', as Nagle calls it). He gained fame in 2014, when he covered the Gamergate controversy and he describes conservatism as the 'new punk'. This sounds strange, since punk has traditionally been associated with left-wing movements. Nagle describes how transgression, which has been embraced as a virtue of social liberalism, became significant for an online anti-feminist movement that rejected traditional church-going conservatism.

Alt-light figures like Milo Yiannopoulos, Nagle says, influenced not only internet culture, but mainstream culture as well. He really is an extravagant figure, since he is openly gay and prefers black men, but still declares himself a conservative and fights against the LGBT community. But, according to Nagle, the rise of the alt-right does not imply a return to conservatism – it is more a non-conformism, self-expression, transgression and

irreverence. Young people just want to defy the liberal mainstream and all the issues promoted by it. Every opinion that does not fit into the alt-right worldview, they call 'propaganda', and this kind of conservatism is their way of revolting.

Nagle concludes that the left became a laughing stock for the whole new generation because of anti-free speech, anti-free thought and anti-intellectual online proponents of the left. She notes that when Milo Yiannopoulos challenged his opponents to argue with him, they did not know how. That is because in their 'intellectually shut-down world of Tumblr and trigger warnings', as Nagle calls it, they learned to recite jargon, not to argue. The videos of alt-right proponents being punched and shouted at do not really help the left either.

I must agree that feminism has become viewed as a men-hating, anti-free speech movement and it is hard to convince others of the contrary. A typical feminist is presented as a social justice warrior with arguments that no one really holds – a straw man fallacy is often used. That is because of controversial Tumblr bloggers and Twitter users, whose articles or tweets went viral. But I think that a few rare cases cannot justify the overall view on feminism by alt-right proponents and the constant bullying of those who have a different opinion. Angela Nagle is just blaming the victims. The real problem is that the internet is not a place for decent political debates. It is a place of fallacies, prejudice, hatred, demagoguery and hoaxes. The only solution is to develop critical thinking, so people can filter reasonable opinions from those less reasonable or even deceptive. However, it is clear to me that this task is unfeasible.

Nagle's book does not strive to be purely academic, but rather to be a book that is accessible to everyone. That is also its biggest

weakness. The absence of references raises doubts as to the accuracy of the information contained therein. Moreover, I noticed that in some parts, the author does not mention critical issues that have been discussed. One example of this is Zoe Quinn's alleged affair with a journalist. Even though the report was proven to be fake, it played a very important role in the Gamergate controversy, and was actually the reason why so many people began to criticize Zoe Quinn, which led to mass cyberbullying. This case illustrates how malicious the internet can be in violating the right to privacy.

Most of the Western world has access to the internet and its beauty is that everyone can write what they want and no one limits their expression. They do not have to be on TV to be seen or in a newsroom to be able to express their opinion. But that is also the biggest disadvantage. There are no regulations, so people can spread whatever they want and influence people without their content being revised. Over time, it is quite possible that such things will even enter the mainstream. And this is precisely what happened in the case of the alt-right in its various forms.

We can get information about this topic from various internet discussions, internet articles, and a very few peer-reviewed journals. Also, there are books by Milo Yianopoulos and Zoe Quinn, but they are more autobiographical. It is not quite possible to compare Nagle's book with other books because there are no similar books at the moment, making it particularly unique. *Kill All Normies: Online Culture Wars from 4chan and Tumblr to Trump and the Alt-Right* is the first general overview about this relatively new phenomenon and it can serve as the basis for future political science research of this topic. This, I think, is its biggest contribution. The topics included in the book will

become more and more relevant over time, and it will be necessary to understand them, since they essentially affect the political views of the present generation. Angela Nagle gives us a satisfying starting point.

Oldřich Florian  
Faculty of Law, Masaryk University

---

**Havelková, Barbara:**

**GENDER EQUALITY IN LAW:  
UNCOVERING THE LEGACIES  
OF CZECH STATE SOCIALISM.**

Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2017.  
358 pages.

DOI: 10.5817/PC2018-3-272

In her book *Gender Equality in Law: Uncovering the Legacies of Czech State Socialism*, Dr. Barbara Havelková contributes a nuanced argument to the broader discussion of gender equality within the Czech Republic. She does so by articulating the ways in which gender inequality is manifested within existing legal, political, and social frameworks. As such, Havelková's argument contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the specific context of the Czech Republic, which is valuable for further research and discussion of patriarchal oppression as experienced during and after Socialist state structures. This academic book is reflective of Havelková's research interests, which include but are not limited to feminist jurisprudence, equality and anti-discrimination law, and law in post-Socialist transitions. Her expertise in the field has led to her current positions as the Shaw Foundation Fellow in