

The Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław

Doctoral School

**Curated Hatred:
Emotion and Ideology as Conditions for Constrained
Writing**

Doctoral thesis in the field of arts in the discipline of fine arts and art conservation

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Wrocław 2024

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor Przemysław Pintal for his help and guidance throughout this process.

I would like to thank my parents for their continued love and for nurturing my creative and intellectual spirit from an early age.

Finally, I would like to thank my partner Zuzanna Jakubanis. Her immense love was much needed when facing such a bleak topic and I could not have finished this without her.

Abstract

This paper investigates discourse on the social media platform X, specifically comments on posts from British newspapers which were critical of the far-right political ideology. The author will attempt to reframe constrained writing not as an emancipatory experimental writing technique, but as something practiced by the far-right on X through the constraints of emotion and ideology. Discussed are the psychological, social and technological constraints applicable to this ideological group. The paper also documents the artist's novel adaptation of erasure poetry which employs the creation of fonts to depict the obliteration of oppositional ideas. These fonts are animated in order to enact the 'cognitive erasure' that occurs when an adherent encounters identity-threatening information online. This is paired with a series of comments online which hold anti-media sentiment expressed in strong language, indicating that ideology and emotion constrain the diversity of opinion and quality of discourse among the far-right on social media.

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Artistic Rationale

The main purpose of this doctoral project was to examine the emotionally-driven discourse which is commonplace on social media. I particularly wanted to focus on the far-right political ideology since this is a major driving force behind the febrile manner of communication on social media in recent times. Although internet discourse has often been coarse, it was during the 2016 Brexit referendum when I noticed the poisonous language of ultra-nationalism start to seep into mainstream culture and spread wide across social media.

As an artist who primarily produces text-based works, I wanted to focus specifically on the language used by adherents of the far-right online. This language has an extreme and intense flavour to it and runs contrary to my own mode of expression. As a result I am both horrified and fascinated by this kind of language and I wanted to explore it artistically.

When I started looking for far-right content in early 2022, social media platforms had significantly tightened their moderation protocols around extreme content and misinformation. This was mainly as a response to the events of 2016 where far-right misinformation on social media had played a role in delivering Brexit and Donald Trump's first presidency, as well as the conspiracy theories related to COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021. There were alternative ways of finding far-right content away from the major social media platforms which included 4chan, 8chan, Parler and Bitchute but I was wary of these platforms. They had unsavoury reputations and felt too illicit and unsafe.

In April 2022 Elon Musk acquired Twitter. He began his reign by reinstated a number of controversial far-right figures to the platform. In addition to this there was a massive relaxation of Twitter's moderation protocols executed under the guise of promoting and protecting free speech.

Far-right activity spiked as a result of these decisions and also led to left-leaning users abandoning the platform, a trend which has continued as Elon Musk has become more ideologically extreme. Due to these changes in policy I now had a mainstream social media platform from which I could examine and extract language from the far-right.

My initial forays into Elon Musk's Twitter (now known as X) were emotionally draining. I was trying to get a broad view of the far-right ideology and how it operated online, but I found the amount of hatred, especially targeted towards immigrants, to be utterly dispiriting. In addition to the forcefulness of the language I noticed there was not a great deal of diversity in the sentiments expressed. I found a lot of far-right content to be extremely tautological and uninspiring as the basis for artworks.

In concert with my probe into social media discourse, I was also examining experimental writing techniques which I could utilize or adapt to the issue of the far-right and their style of communication. I came across constrained writing in my second year of study. This is an umbrella term for any form of writing in which rules, conditions or restrictions govern the writing process. The consensus on this method of writing is that constraints actually help the writing process and are emancipatory compared to writing with manifold possibilities. This view is shared by numerous internet articles extolling its virtues, with one arguing that constrained writing can: "help you narrow your creative choices so that instead of many choices, you only have a few. This technique can help you overcome fears and doubts, and spark your creativity."¹ The fact that there is such a positive consensus about constrained writing is a result of its origins in the writing movement of OuLiPo (Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle/Potential Literature Workshop). This network of writers

¹ Graham Strong, "How Constrained Writing Can Help You Creatively," October 3, 2023, <https://www.towritewithwildabandon.com/p/how-constrained-writing-can-help-you-creatively>.

and mathematicians set about inventing practical rules which could be applied to the writing process in order to produce new and innovative works: “At the heart of the Oulipo’s procedural poetics are several key insights and precepts. First, the Oulipo is animated by a fundamental paradox: literary constraints, which would seem to limit and inhibit a writer’s freedom, can actually be powerfully generative and liberating.”²

From the tautological discourse I had observed on X among the far-right and their sympathisers I came to the realization that ideology itself was a constraint on how people communicate online, and this manner of writing was constrained by ideology. The online far-right and their communication style is a far cry from how constrained writing is defined within the canon of art history and literature. I like to have a strong conceptual axis between the topic I am covering in an artwork and the technique I am applying to it. By bridging the technique of constrained writing with the constrained nature of communication among the online far-right I could use the technique as a metatextual tool to signal constrained writing not only as a niche literary device, but also as an everyday practice used by the far-right on social media.

With this in mind I had to develop some core strands of research. Firstly I had to explore what constraints ideology imposes on its adherents, and how language can become constrained as a result. I also had to conduct research into the specifics of constrained writing in order to find a new and novel method which I could use to react to these conceptual constraints. Furthermore, I had to identify a key aspect of the far-right ideology around which to focus my artwork. The far-right spans many sprawling ideas and sub-communities so it was important to limit, or rather constrain, the scope of my artistic work.

² Andrew Epstein, “The Oulipo, Language Poetry, and Proceduralism,” *The Cambridge History of Postmodern Literature*, January 31, 2016, 328.

Theoretical Constraints

Any fervent participant of a partisan ideology will naturally be prone to biases, and this can affect the type of thinking they engage in. This applies across the political spectrum, but I noticed it most keenly among the far-right within social media. There is evidence which suggests that: “individuals on the far left may also be characterized by psychological rigidity. However, it has been argued that the rigidity of the left is less common than rigidity of the right.”³ Due to this tendency it seems that the right are more constrained in terms of their political outlook. This tendency of psychological rigidity, along with the political extremism inherent in the far-right, is emblematic of dogmatism.

Put simply, dogmatism is: “an unwillingness to engage (seriously) with relevant alternatives to a belief one already holds, or in the rare case where one is willing to engage seriously with alternatives, it is a subsequent unwillingness to revise a belief one already holds.”⁴ This was something which was abundantly evident on X regarding any content critical of the far-right, and definitely points towards a cognitive constraint. It has been shown that the study of dogmatism in recent history has revolved around: “ideological inflexibility, and [...] decades of research on rightwing authoritarianism, fascism, and social dominance...”⁵ This suggests that dogmatism has historically been a feature of right-wing groups as well as extremist ideologies. The constraints of ideology and dogmatism produce a broad explanation of why an ideology can take hold of an individual or group in the online space, and that it is often more prominent on the right. But there are also several psychological conditions which can be applied to far-right users on X.

³ Milan Obaidi, “What Are the Psychological Characteristics of People Holding Far-Right Beliefs?,” September 7, 2020, https://www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/english/groups/compendium/what-are-the-psychological-characteristics-of-people-holding-far-right-beliefs.html#_ftnref13.

⁴ Heather Battaly, “Closed-Mindedness and Dogmatism,” *Episteme* 15, no. 3 (June 26, 2018): 280.

⁵ Kaitlin Toner et al., “Feeling Superior Is a Bipartisan Issue,” *Psychological Science* 24, no. 12 (October 4, 2013): 2455.

As mentioned earlier, Elon Musk's acquisition of Twitter led to a rise in far-right content, as well as a decrease of left-leaning users and content. This ideological shift in the user base meant that the platform lacked political diversity. This was certainly the case when I first started to examine discourse on the platform. I found little in the way of left-leaning content, and anything critical of the far-right or issues associated with this ideology were rejected en masse. With this in mind, an argument could be put forward that groupthink is a factor which perpetuates the far-right ideology on X.

Groupthink is defined as: "a psychological phenomenon in which people strive to maintain cohesion and reach consensus within a group. This can mean that consensus is achieved without critical thinking or an evaluation of the possible consequences or alternatives."⁶ The comments on posts which were critical of the far-right on X certainly evoked a consensus that the material was lies and/or propaganda, usually articulated with obscene or abusive language. Moreover, the majority of comments were supportive or sympathetic to the far-right as an ideology and/or dismissive of the critique posited. This group dynamic within online communities can fuse ideological leanings with the concept of identity, especially in identifying an enemy or antagonist: "Perceived threats can reinforce social identity, while a strong social identity can shape how individuals perceive other groups. This dynamic is evident across various contexts globally."⁷

⁶ Sekoul Krastev and Dan Pilat, "Groupthink," May 07, 2021, <https://thedecisionlab.com/reference-guide/management/groupthink>.

⁷ Karel J Leyva, "The Political Psychology of Nativism," October 22, 2024, <https://politicsrights.com/the-political-psychology-of-nativism/>.

This means that ideology can take hold of a person's identity and selfhood, and a need for belonging to a group which is consistent with your identity can constrain the capacity for seeking or expressing alternate viewpoints, “forming beliefs contrary to the ones that prevail in one’s group risks estrangement from others on whom one depends for support, material and emotional.”⁸

This concept of identity and ideology is an important factor when it comes to the reception of information and how it is processed. Identity-protective cognition is a psychological phenomenon where information which aligns with a person's beliefs and ideology is accepted, whereas information which runs counter to these beliefs is rejected. When processing information, a lack of critical thinking can be present; and a desire to affirm their identity can sway a person’s reasoning capabilities: “When individuals apprehend—largely unconsciously—that holding one or another position is critical to conveying who they are and whose side they are on, they engage information in a manner geared to generating identity-consistent rather than factually accurate beliefs.”⁹ Once someone has given in to dogmatism, this identity-protective cognition will further furnish their beliefs and make the act of perceiving alternatives extremely difficult, if not impossible.

Ideology was a major constraint within the far-right communication I had witnessed, but another facet of this discourse was the language employed, which was often emotional in nature. Emotion has a key role within identity-protective cognition: “If a task holds identity-threatening potential, negative emotions such as anger or anxiety amplify this threat, leading to either avoidance or rejection of the given information.”¹⁰ This explains why any critique of the far-right is met with thunderous discontent and abusive or dismissive language. Anger is also a prominent part of

⁸ Dan M. Kahan, “Misconceptions, Misinformation, and the Logic of Identity-Protective Cognition,” May 24, 2017. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2973067.

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ Magdalena Wischnewski and Nicole Krämer, “The Role of Emotions and Identity-Protection Cognition When Processing (Mis)Information.” June 8, 2021. <https://tmb.apaopen.org/pub/osng2517/release/2>.

discourse on the far-right, and is usually directed towards their enemies, whether that be political elites, the media or immigrants: “Anger arises in response to aversive stimuli in the environment and in order to deal with this anger, people may become defensive, dismiss attitude-challenging information, seek information that supports their position, or rely more heavily on prior dispositions in their evaluations.”¹¹

There are more specific forms of constraint to take into account when it comes to social media. X has been very successful at incubating a right to far-right user base. This could be in part due to algorithmic constraints. Algorithms on social media have a tendency to view material that one has consumed, and then feed you more material of a similar nature. This is especially the case with political content: “...if an internet user tends to interact with content that has a conservative agenda, they will be increasingly influenced by publications of this type, i.e., that reinforce their beliefs and values. Meanwhile, the progressive agenda is no longer visible...”¹² When a social media algorithm is designed in this manner it is performing a task similar to identity-protective cognition, but oppositional viewpoints are rejected without the user being cognitively involved in the process.

Social media algorithms have been known to prefer ‘high arousal’ content, which is likely to elicit extreme emotions: “Social media algorithms reward and amplify attacks precisely because they’re engaging. Studies show this makes outrage more potent and visible, giving users a warped view of what the public believes.”¹³ Social media algorithms are again curating the cadence of content which a user can see, while neutral and reasoned content and language is not given the same reach,

¹¹ Brian E. Weeks, “Emotions, Partisanship, and Misperceptions: How Anger and Anxiety Moderate the Effect of Partisan Bias on Susceptibility to Political Misinformation,” *Journal of Communication* 65, no. 4 (June 19, 2015): 703.

¹² Helena Junqueira, “Digital Extremism: How Algorithms Feed the Politics Polarisation,” October 17, 2023, <https://www.ipsos.com/en/flair-collection/digital-extremism-how-algorithms-feed-politics-polarisation>.

¹³ Brian Weeks, “Political Rage on Social Media Is Making Us Cynical | Center for Political Studies,” March 13, 2024, <https://cps.isr.umich.edu/2024/03/11/politicalrage/>.

leading to a coarsening of debate and civility and allowing emotion instead of reason to dominate the discourse.

Elon Musk as owner of the platform has not only made public overtures to various far-right leaders and political parties, but also has engineered the X algorithm to boost his own posts. This adds another dimension of constraint: “Musk has tweaked the platform’s algorithm to ensure that his posts reach its users regardless of whether they are among his more than 200 million followers. During the [US presidential] campaign, he turned his account, and by extension the entire platform, into a relentless pro-Trump megaphone.”¹⁴ I witnessed this first hand as a post from Elon Musk was nearly always at the top of my news feed every time I logged in or refreshed the page. Because his posts are often of a far-right nature, it means that his own ideological beliefs become enmeshed with the platform: “When tech CEOs encode their political beliefs into the design of platforms, it’s a form of technofascism, where technology is used for political suppression of speech and to repress the organization of resistance to the state or capitalism.”¹⁵

The constraints outlined here are different in nature - social, psychological, political, technological; but they all converge to produce writing and communication which is limited in terms of sentiment and cadence. I feel that I can justify branding this communication as constrained writing, subverting the idea of constrained writing as an emancipatory and experimental style of writing. Instead I can now frame it as a rigid style of communication practiced among the ideologically entrenched.

¹⁴ Nick Robins-Early, “How Elon Musk Became Donald Trump’s Shadow Vice-President,” November 9, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2024/nov/09/elon-musk-trump-administration>.

¹⁵ Joan Donovan, “First Came the Bots, Then Came the Bosses - We’re Entering Musk and Zuck’s New Era of Disinformation,” November 11, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/nov/12/elon-musk-mark-zuckerberg-disinformation>.

Practice-Based Constraints

Now that I had a conceptual framework in which to categorise the far-right's language as constrained writing, I needed to come up with an original method of presenting this as an artwork. My research was not only about the language of the far-right, and the extremity of this language, but it was also about information processing and its relationship to ideology. I had to find a way to depict contrary information being processed by far-right adherents to embody how there is a 'cognitive curation' between information which is accepted and rejected through the social and psychological constraints outlined in the previous section. I wanted to also frame this rejection through the medium of constrained writing which led me to a subset of constrained writing called erasure poetry.

Erasure poetry is a form of visual art and writing: "concerning itself with the deliberate removal (or covering over) of words on the page rather than their traditionally direct application thereto."¹⁶ As well as the impressions on the page which create these erasures, there is also an inherent curatorial aspect to this practice in the selection of the source text, and what text is erased and what remains within the page. This appealed to me artistically as it could be applied to the notion of information which threatens the identity of the far-right believer and its dismissal within the far-right on social media. I wanted to show the language being not only rejected but also forcefully destroyed: "By creating new work through the partial effacement of prior texts, erasure poetry literally puts processes of obliteration on display..."¹⁷ This word obliteration really chimed with me in terms of how oppositional viewpoints were treated by the far-right. Any critique of the far-right ideology

¹⁶ Travis Macdonald, "A Brief History of Erasure Poetics," late 2009, <http://jacketmagazine.com/38/macdonald-erasure.shtml>.

¹⁷ Heike Schaefer, "Un/Published: Presence and Absence in Contemporary Erasure Poetry," *American Literary History* 36, no. 2 (May 1, 2024): 463.

was in many cases symbolically obliterated by the massive amount of dismissive comments from far-right users and the use of extreme language.

I wanted to use the erasure technique to depict words being erased from posts on X which were critical of the far-right, and also show the destruction of these critiques which highlighted oppositional information as fragile when faced with an onslaught of negative and dismissive comments. To achieve this I set about printing separate letters on several pages and took photographs of these letters. After each photo I would crumple and tear the paper, to signify that the letter, and by extension the idea or concept it would later spell out, being rubbished and obliterated. As this process was repeated the letters became increasingly degraded, and, depending on the level of obliteration, unrecognisable as letters. They lost not only their visual fidelity, but also their solidity and meaning. This was particularly the case where I had contorted the letters into new shapes and figures, far removed from their original state. As such there is a constraint placed not only on readability but also meaning. These images were then inputted into a programme called FontForge, which converted these images into working fonts. A total of 140 fonts were generated during this project, gradually refined down to 19 which were used in the final project to properly capture the visual sensibilities of erasure and destruction.

A prominent artist who has used erasure and text is Jenny Holzer. Her series “Redaction Paintings” took US government documents which had been made public, and recreated them as silkscreen paintings. Much of the text in these documents was redacted, and so as an artwork the absence of language is as important as the language shown, and the amount of redaction also signifies how much information, and by extension how much the truth, is hidden. With my artwork I intended to show an erasure of language which is constantly happening, making each word cycle through a

series of fonts, so that the whole text is never readable at the same time. Instead of a redaction within a still image which invites contemplation and scrutiny, I would use animation in order to depict a dynamic cognitive process which implies a multitude of erasures among a multitude of users.

This animation process is particularly important as it makes the depictions of oppositional text and their rejection fit more closely with the extremity of the language used: “Perhaps it [erasure] is always inherently a violent act, the removal of language as either defacing or disremembering.”¹⁸ The majority of content on X which was critical of the far-right came from news outlets, in particular newspapers. One of the biggest preoccupations of the far-right is the mainstream media and their reporting of far-right or nationalist movements. From this perspective these fonts now represent a destruction of physical letters on the page as a way of displaying violence being committed against the printed word. The printed word is used in this project as a representation of an older form of media which was subject to a greater number of regulatory and ethical constraints compared to social media where misinformation and hatred is allowed to spread often without consequence.

An artist who works with newspaper and erasure is Austin Kleon. He uses newspaper pages and black marker in order to create new pieces of writing, but his work is often apolitical, and he does not use newspapers in order to comment on print media at large, but rather as a source of creativity and possibility in keeping with the traditional approach of constrained writing. The use of fonts means that this destruction of the printed word has also been rendered digitally, and it is important to note that printed media as a whole has seen a decline in revenue since the advent of the internet

¹⁸ Jennifer S. Cheng, “Erasure Poetry: A Revealing (I),” September 1, 2016, <https://jacket2.org/commentary/erasure-poetry-revealing-i>.

and in particular social media. The fact that this destruction of language is mediated digitally creates a tension between the old means of disseminating information and the new means which has subsumed it.

Artwork

At this stage of my doctoral project I thought it would be appropriate to constrain the scope of far-right activity online and focus on a particular facet of the ideology. The far-right is a nebulous coalition of communities and ideas encompassing fascists, nationalists, conspiracy theorists and yoga enthusiasts to name a few. Similarly the issues pursued by the far-right can have a wide scope ranging from anti-immigrant sentiment, the bemoaning of woke ideology, the threat of cancel culture, the suspicion of wealthy elites, the assertion that there is a secretive deep state as well the perceived bias of the mainstream media against the far-right.

Given that the focus of my theoretical research focused on ideology as the first constraint which governs a number of further constraints, I decided to focus on something which was explicitly political. Initially I was examining content and comments related to the MAGA (Make America Great Again) movement and the run-up to the 2024 US Presidential primaries, for which Donald Trump was seeking the candidacy of the Republican party. The more I researched this movement the more I felt it was inappropriate to comment on, mainly because I am not American and I do not have direct and personal experience of the political or media landscape in the US. While I recognised a lot of content as inflammatory in terms of language, and closed-minded in terms of its content, it did not feel authentic to base on artwork around this movement.

As an English citizen I decided to look at the far-right in my own country, since this was something I was more attuned to, and the attitudes of the British far-right is something I feel more viscerally opposed to. On July 29th 2024 a horrific knife attack occurred in Southport, England which targeted children, leaving three dead and many others injured. It was a truly harrowing instance of senseless violence that shook the entire country. Through social media misinformation the assertion was

shared that the perpetrator was an illegal immigrant. This resulted in mass riots, as well as far-right demonstrations and marches across the country. It exposed a lot of ugliness within English society and brought violence and destruction to the streets, as well as open hostility towards asylum seekers, immigrants and muslims.

This anti-immigrant and islamophobic sentiment has been pervasive in English culture for a while, but it skyrocketed in the wake of the 2016 Brexit referendum. Anti-immigrant sentiment is a staple of far-right populism. It can be found within the American far-right, as well as pretty much every developed European country. This sentiment can be linked to an ideological position of the far-right called nativism which correlates with some of the psychological and social constraints based on identity and ideology: “Nativism provides a cohesive identity that promises to protect the group’s cultural or national integrity. These groups also foster an “us versus them” mentality, where the in-group sees itself as superior and views outsiders as a threat.”¹⁹

When I was looking at posts on X by British media outlets which condemned the riots, the reactions were full of anger and hatred towards immigrants, asylum seekers and muslims. The views expressed were extreme and quite frankly made me depressed and ashamed to be English. The language used to vilify immigrants, asylum seekers and muslims was so abhorrent that I did not want to make this the basis for an artwork. This was not only because by presenting this text I would be platforming ideas which I find reprehensible, but also because as a white person I do not understand the impact of experiencing this invective on a regular basis.

¹⁹ Leyva, “Psychology Nativism”.

There was also another variety of comments on these posts which I had observed throughout my time on X which was openly hostile towards the mainstream media, also termed as ‘MSM’ or ‘legacy media’ by users on X. These comments expressed a displeasure that these newspapers were critical of the far-right, and shared the same raw emotional language that was targeted towards immigrants, muslims and asylum seekers. This evoked something personal in that I myself had an unfavourable view of the news media. This was mainly due to the anxiety that reading the news often provokes, and a feeling that they had an agenda around inciting high arousal emotions such as anxiety.

However, since these British newspapers were universal in their condemnation of the far-right and the rioting, I found myself more amenable to them, even The Daily Mail which I had previously thought of as utterly loathsome. This was interesting as my favourable attitude towards the news media increased as the specific posts and articles aligned with my own views, and I implicitly regarded them to be truthful because of this. Although I was not aware of it at the time, identity-protective cognition allowed me to reframe my feelings towards news media as positive, because I myself am against the far-right. The decision to move towards news media as the object of the far-right’s rage made more sense given the nature of the fonts I had created, but it was an aspect which made me feel less anxious as the basis for an artwork compared with anti-immigrant sentiment.

In order to execute my artwork I had to establish some constraints on how I collected comments and posts, as I still wanted the method of collection to align with constrained writing. I collected 60 posts on X from five of the biggest British newspapers ranging from 31/07/2024-12/08/2024. These dates covered the period of unrest as well as the protests and counter protests. There were a few

posts which went beyond the date range, as I wanted to grasp the sentiments expressed by the far-right after the initial turmoil. As a further constraint these posts were selected by using an advanced search on X and looking for posts which mentioned either 'far-right', 'riots', 'Tommy Robinson' or 'Elon Musk'. Tommy Robinson is a far-right influencer who contributed to promoting the chaos seen in the United Kingdom through social media, and similarly Elon Musk had weighed in on social media with posts which were sympathetic to the far-right in Britain. Both have large support among the far-right on X.

An important thing to note about British newspapers is that they have well established ideological preferences, and their reporting can be partisan in nature. This means that a further constraint is added to the dynamic, that of 'editorial constraint'. There is also a distinction in the type of newspaper available in the United Kingdom. There are broadsheets, which tend to have a more sophisticated audience and have more complex writing, and there are tabloids which are more accessible, but also have a tendency to be low-brow and sensationalist.

I collected the following:

- 23 posts from The Guardian which is a broadsheet and has a left-wing bias.
- 18 posts from The Daily Mail which is a tabloid and has a right-wing bias.
- 7 posts from The Telegraph which is a broadsheet and has a right-wing bias.
- 6 posts from The Daily Mirror which is a tabloid and has a left-wing bias.
- 6 posts from The Sun which is a tabloid and has a right-wing bias.

A condition for selecting a post on X to be included in my artwork was to have a number of negative comments within the post which were critical of the newspaper in question, or the mainstream media in general. This is why there are more posts from The Guardian and The Daily Mail, as these publications received the largest amount of engagement on X and the worst of the vitriol. The other newspapers are included to show that the anti-media sentiment was widespread on X, but posts for The Daily Mirror, The Sun and The Telegraph received substantially less engagement. The comments I collected from the posts all expressed anti-media sentiment and used some form of emotive language ranging from mild to extreme.

In the video artwork the 60 posts from these newspapers are presented across two screens. Using the fonts which were designed to signify the destruction and rejection of language I created animations which cycled randomly between these fonts, and arranged each word so it was on a different animation cycle. The result is a representation of posts from these newspapers where they are in a constant state of being destroyed and torn apart. When viewing the pieces, although you can identify individual words, you can never see the whole piece of writing. This is done to reflect the systematic rejection and erasure of opinions or information expressed by the mainstream media on X, particularly posts which oppose the far-right. It also shows how the cognitive constraints do not allow for a nuanced reading of critical or identity-threatening information.

This video is intercut with an animated series of comments all of which contain anti-media sentiments and emotional language. This represents the reframing of partisan social media discourse as constrained writing, while the erased posts from the UK newspapers represent constrained cognition. As the video progresses, footage of the comments increases in duration, while footage of the posts themselves reduces in duration and also becomes visually degraded. The centre piece of

this 3-screen installation shows a constant stream of these comments. This is done to indicate that the far-right is the dominant ideology on X, and that mainstream media which is critical of the far-right lie on the peripheries, relegated in importance due to the current media landscape, and also by X's algorithm and Elon Musk's own ideological agenda. By the end of the installation, all three videos are showing these comments to evoke the idea that the far-right ideology has taken over the whole of the platform.

In addition to the videos there are artworks whose images depict text from the newspaper articles which were included as links on the posts collected. As well as these newspaper articles, the headlines to these articles have also been included as separate pieces. The words for both were inputted into a text randomizer. This randomized text was then rendered with the most illegible fonts. These fonts were created by randomly swapping letters to different inputs on the keyboard. As a result, the fonts become not only visually difficult to decipher, but also would not make sense even if the letters were rendered in a readable manner. When printed out, these pieces reflect the fact that the content of these articles becomes completely abstract to a person of far-right ideology, and the context and nuance become inaccessible as a result. This is indicative of the fact that many far-right users will not click on these critical articles and read them, preferring to comment on them with furious language instead.

The artworks as a whole are designed to reflect the rejection of information originating from the mainstream media by those on the far-right, and puts the viewer in the position of a person with a far-right ideology, employing visual extrapolations to reflect oppositional views as something to be destroyed or as something completely abstract. The only text that is legible is that which aligns with far-right and anti-media sentiments. This effectively achieves the concept of showing ideology as

the basis of ‘cognitive curation’, as only emotional and oppositional language is readable and contrary information is ‘cognitively erased’.

Conclusion

I feel that I was successful in reframing constrained writing as an everyday practice of the far-right. I also believe I have managed to identify several constraints based on social and psychological features of extremist ideology to support this concept. From a visual standpoint I managed to depict how contrary information is not only dismissed, but also violently rejected. This was especially the case as the erasure process was animated, and so it inclined more towards a dynamic representation of erasure, rather than traditional erasure poetry which focuses on still images and the alterations which are applied to it. I also believe that the creation of fonts which depict language being destroyed was innovative, as the purpose of most fonts is to be legible, even those with a high degree of visual flourish. I am happy that these fonts were employed to demonstrate the concept of media distrust within the far-right as it added another dimension within the project where technique and concept were interlinked, alongside the broader idea of using constrained writing to comment on constraint.

The title of this project is “Curated Hatred: Emotion and Ideology as Conditions for Constrained Writing”. This title was chosen to indicate how the facets of ideology and emotion create a ‘cognitive curation’ between what is accepted and what is rejected among far-right X users. It was also chosen to indicate my own role in the project, and to acknowledge the biggest constraint in this process, which is myself. When these far-right riots were happening I knew that it would be an ideal topic to explore for my artwork, but I just could not bring myself to go on X and witness it. My time looking at the far-right and nationalist movements was emotionally exhausting. I could not relate to the vast majority of content on X, and since I was researching the far-right, its content was ever-present on my news feed. I could not go on X during the riots because I felt too emotional about it, as these people were ideologically the opposite of who I feel I am. In all honesty the

discourse from the British far-right I witnessed online brought back the shellshock of Brexit and the emboldening of racism and xenophobia I saw creep into public life. I hated these people, and this is a big constraint on how I view their ideology.

I created this project by collecting the worst comments from the far-right and presenting them as an artwork. By doing this I omitted more reasoned critiques of the mainstream media or government policy. These comments were in the minority, but because of my own ideological leanings I had rejected them within the curatorial process, instead amplifying those showing raw anger and hatred. I had 'otherised' the far-right ideology as a whole and this guided the collection of comments. Through this curatorial process I depicted the far-right as simple, irrational and vulgar through their language choice. I used erasure as a means of depicting how context and nuance was missing when the far-right encountered opposing information, but by omitting certain comments I had also erased nuance from my own portrayal of an oppositional ideology.

I have not changed my mind about the far-right, but I acknowledged that this artwork was unable to provide a fully rounded critique because of my own ideological bias. I had realised this fairly early on in the creative process, and decided that if I was using constrained writing as a metatextual tool to marry concept and content, I could also explore constraint as a metatextual critique to demonstrate the limitations which ideology has in the authorship of an artwork about another ideology.

A lot of discussions about divisiveness and polarization have taken place since the far-right's significant rise in popularity, and social media has not helped in cooling down this phenomenon globally. If we start to acknowledge our own constraints, maybe discourse will improve as a result.

This artwork has a repulsive quality to it, mainly because of the language used. I hope visitors will come away from this exhibition with a desire to avoid this style of communication, and to be wary of interactions online where balance and decency are absent.

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Appendix A: Links to News Articles Used in the Artworks

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—https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-13711259/A-town-mourning-Whilst-far-right-riots-wreak-havoc-England-grieving-Southport-families-lay-flowers-blow-bubbles-week-heartbreaking-attack-left-three-little-girls-dead.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=social-twitter_mailonline.

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Appendix B: Links to Social Media Posts Used in the Artwork

—<https://x.com/MailOnline/status/1821591951604387873>.
—<https://x.com/MailOnline/status/1821962710117945432>.
—<https://x.com/MailOnline/status/1821558141365912013>.
—<https://x.com/MailOnline/status/1820515931396641053>.
—<https://x.com/MailOnline/status/1820793715813741053>.
—<https://x.com/MailOnline/status/1820855643474968747>.
—<https://x.com/MailOnline/status/1820497301686616469>.
—<https://x.com/MailOnline/status/1820413980327788677>.
—<https://x.com/MailOnline/status/1820270776429281779>.
—<https://x.com/MailOnline/status/1820045633996091431>.
—<https://x.com/MailOnline/status/1820398431132651687>.
—<https://x.com/MailOnline/status/1821139213510721925>.
—<https://x.com/MailOnline/status/1820709085366354060>.
—<https://x.com/MailOnline/status/1820478048241701294>.
—<https://x.com/MailOnline/status/1818612351651705116>.
—<https://x.com/MailOnline/status/1819454103832904040>.
—<https://x.com/MailOnline/status/1820543421913665624>.
—<https://x.com/MailOnline/status/1820977165623509241>.
—<https://x.com/DailyMirror/status/1819290878738866352>.
—<https://x.com/DailyMirror/status/1820032933236711718>.
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—<https://x.com/guardian/status/1822070793859174719>.
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—<https://x.com/guardian/status/1820627621081698501>.
—<https://x.com/guardian/status/1820715109150245035>.
—<https://x.com/guardian/status/1819292870504804743>.
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—<https://x.com/guardian/status/1820869955971113180>.
—<https://x.com/guardian/status/1820895725078692307>.
—<https://x.com/guardian/status/1820794622404125143>.
—<https://x.com/guardian/status/1821548841721593928>.
—<https://x.com/guardian/status/1823033918825676915>.
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—<https://x.com/guardian/status/1825089374473564635>.
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