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**Editorial – “The  
Perfect Storm”**

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e-flux journal #76 — october 2016 Sven Lütticken, Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, Stephen Squibb, and Anton Vidokle  
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“How Much Fascism?” asked the curatorial collective WHW. Quite a bit, it would appear. As always, the prefix “neo-” can stand for many differences in the repetition, yet the noun asserts itself with all the subtle grace of an elephant in the room. Historical fascism, too, was a many-headed hydra, and scholarly struggles over exact definitions are ongoing, and will continue, for there is no Platonic Idea, but rather a set of historically grown family resemblances – revolving around tropes such as a cult of strong male leadership that will reverse a country’s decline, the identification of the cause of that country’s decline as the work of some “other,” the need to purify and unite the *Volkskörper*, and an ensuing taboo regarding class conflict. Not to mention dependency on extralegal violence even while extolling Law and Order, and so on, and so on ... complete, delete, bicker, and argue at will.

In January 2011, *e-flux journal* published a special issue entitled “Idiot Wind,” which attempted to take stock of right-wing populist movements in Europe and the US. In recent months, with Trump ascendant and Le Pen, Wilders, Pegida, Putin, UKIP, Orbán, and Erdoğan holding Europe hostage, the editors have repeatedly been complimented on the “prescience” of “Idiot Wind.” While “Idiot Wind” was more reactive than prophetic, it nonetheless identified tendencies that have continued to shape the political landscape.

Back then, the issue’s title was at times attacked as evidence of lefty-liberal arrogance, and as a failure to engage with the underlying economic and social logic of political developments; recasting Benjamin’s storm of history in a Dylanesque idiom, the title was intended as a caustic reference to the fundamental destructiveness of movements that claim to speak and act for the “populous” – defined in ethnically homogenous and often socially conservative terms – yet may harm their core voters as much as the “others” they vilify (immigrants, etc.). Now that the idiot wind has become a perfect storm, terms such as “right-wing populism” increasingly seem like euphemisms for what are varieties of neofascism.

These are marked by strong continuities as well as by disruptive innovations. One innovation may be precisely that today’s neofascisms are rarely contained within the pathological and pathetic body of various postwar fascists or neo-Nazi parties; this is viral fascism for the networked age. Clearly, the penchant for Busby Berkeley-style military spectacles is also no longer what it once was – at least in Western Europe. There are other ways of showing the *Volkskörper*’s strength and ability to repel alien

parasites, for instance by making Muslim women take off their clothes on the beach.

How can neofascist ideologies and policies of exclusion and fortification be countered now that growing surplus populations and migration movements put pressure on old social structures? Can we take pointers from the classics – Wilhelm Reich, Benjamin, Adorno? What are the new conceptual weapons, and what are the alternative political, social, and cultural projects? And can art be anything other than part of the problem – part of an international, urban-cosmopolitan elite that has for too long been factually complicit in the extreme inequality that fuels the fascist success? Fascism may have aestheticized politics (*dixit* Benjamin), but what interventions are possible in the aesthetic-political economy of twenty-first century fascism?

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