



Reading and education programs of the New Right in France and Germany: A comparative appraisal of the current situation in both countries

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Abstract

This article examines the educational and reading programs developed by the New Right in Germany and France as part of a broader far-right meta-political strategy aimed at reshaping cultural and ideological hegemony. Focusing on non-party actors such as think tanks, publishing houses, and educational initiatives, the study compares the German *Neue Rechte* and the French *Nouvelle Droite* with particular attention to their institutional frameworks and their shared emphasis on literature and reading practices. The analysis reconstructs how these movements contest the legitimacy of public education while establishing alternative pedagogical infrastructures that target audiences from early childhood to adulthood. By curating reading lists, anthologies, and educational formats, the New Right seeks to appropriate canonical literature and reframe it within an ethno-nationalist worldview. The article highlights transnational parallels and points to the strategic role of guided reading in far-right cultural politics.

Keywords

canon formation, far-right literary politics, Germany–France comparison, metapolitics, New Right, reading practices

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For several years now, the New Right¹ in Germany and France, respectively, called *Neue Rechte* or *Nouvelle Droite* have been stepping up their efforts to normalize their positions and shift political discourse to the right. In doing so, they are pursuing a meta-political project: the “far-right cultural revolution” (de Benoist, 2017 [1985]). That was how Alain de Benoist, the founder of the French *Nouvelle Droite*, summarized it in his program in the 1980s. Around 30 years later, Götz Kubitschek (2014: 33), one of the central figures of the German *Neue Rechte*, summed it up when he said: “Whoever defines concepts, leads and wins debates, popularizes slogans, and canonizes culture at an ideological level will become a force that politics must reckon with in the long run.”

Direct action by a political party, then, is preceded by gaining ideological hegemony as “a precondition for political victory” (Camus, 2019: 74).² To achieve this goal and first secure a spot in the “pre-political space” (Bruns et al., 2018: 82), it is insufficient to merely inform and educate current supporters more effectively. The ultimate goal is to win over tomorrow’s potential voters and plant the seeds of far-right ideas as early as possible, ensuring they take root in the minds of (very) young people.

This work is already being carried out by a network of publishing houses, magazines, associations, and think tanks for which the far-right author Benedikt Kaiser (2019) coined the term *Vorfeld* (run-up). While for a long time the New Right networks were an elitist project, especially in France, there is now a greater interest within the movement in reaching the broader population at stages nearly everyone goes through: preschool, education, and vocational training (see Baader, 2020: 129). The New Right in Germany and France, which maintain close political and personal ties (see Bruns et al., 2018; Weiß, 2017), are thus developing education programs based on far-right ideology to serve as alternatives to public education programs.

In the following, we provide a comparative appraisal of this work in the field of education, as there is currently a striking research gap when it comes to the German–French cross-border “cultural transfer” of the New Right. And while initial fundamental and comparative studies on far-right parties and education policy are now available,³ there is still a lack of research on the ideological foundations of this policy and on “transnational policy learning” (Giudici et al., 2025: 11). This is precisely where our contribution comes in, building on existing research and supplementing it by examining the non-party-related educational engagement of the New Right. Parties do play an important role here, too, because of personal connections with the *Vorfeld* network mentioned above. However, central to the creation of ideological foundations in the field of education are the New Right’s own institutions, self-proclaimed “think tanks,” self-declared “thought leaders” who develop the concepts and strategies with which politics is to be conducted (not only by parties). Our article focuses specifically on the engagement of these institutions in education and the importance of literature and reading in this context. We will first reconstruct the institutionalization efforts of the New Right in the field of education in Germany and France as well as the programs and formats that have been developed (I.). In a second step, we will look more closely at reading as a fundamental practice of the New Right (II.), including reading in all age groups from reading aloud to children (III.) up to anthologies of suggested reading for young adults and grown-ups (IV.). Finally, we will draw conclusions from our arguments (VI.).

Rather than aiming to achieve a political coup, the New Right seeks to slowly and gradually establish a hegemonic discourse that permeates society. Educational activities are absolutely key to achieving this goal. The ideological and structural foundation is located in the intellectualization with which the New Right is attempting to distance itself from older far-right movements. Since the turn of the millennium, this intellectualization has found its home in institutions such as the *Institut für Staatspolitik* (Institute for State Policy, *I/S*), founded in 2000, located in Schnellroda, then disbanded, or rather, re-named to “Menschenpark” and restructured in 2024.⁴ In France, the *I/S/Menschenpark* equivalent is the *Institut Iliade pour la longue mémoire européenne* (Iliad Institute for Long European Memory), which is dedicated to the memory of Dominique Venner, former member of the terrorist group *Organisation Armée Secrète* (Secret Army Organization, OAS), who—like Alain de Benoist—was a founding member of the far-right *Groupement de recherche et d'études pour la civilisation européenne* (Research and Study Group for European Civilization, *GRECE*) in 1968. Both institutes play a pivotal role in developing (education) strategies for the New Right movements.⁵

It is no coincidence that the name of the Iliad Institut, like that of the far-right think tank *GRECE*, invokes classical Greece and its culture. The institute has made it its primary task to unite “all lovers of French and European civilization” in order to advance the project of “morally and intellectually re-founding” that civilization (as stated on Institut Iliade, n.d.-a). This “re-founding” is claimed to be necessary due to both European and national policies in recent decades that have ‘criminally neglected’ the transmission of traditions. The New Right in Germany and France are united in their criticism of this dominance of the contemporary.⁶ The Iliad Institut claims that this neglect will lead to the end of “European memory” and thus the entire civilization, and it therefore aims to counteract this trend with its various educational programs.

To do so, the institute draws on the “promotions” model that replicates the programs of French *grandes écoles*: A group of around 20 young people are “educated” together over a period of 15–18 months. According to the institute’s homepage, they target

young Europeans, who are often the victims of devastation by the educational system and mainstream media, but are still searching for effective reading materials and want to deepen their knowledge about their identity as a way to react to a crisis-ridden world. (Institut Iliade, n.d.-c)

Its participants are to “find their way back to their roots and prepare for the new beginning” (Institut Iliade, n.d.-c) that will align with the ideas of the New Right. The marketing video for the Formation, the institute’s main educational program, includes appearances by Jean-Yves Le Gallou and numerous other prominent representatives of the *Nouvelle Droite*. The video’s content can be clearly traced back to its political sponsor; it focuses on “identity-related terms” and aims to use the educational program to create “activists who are committed to working on life in their cities” and who are given “battle weapons” in the courses (Institut Iliade, 2022).⁷ The video clearly states why this is necessary: “In light of the population exchange and the large-scale obliteration of

culture, it is time for Europe's youth to wake up" (Institut Iliade, 2022). While other publications often promote a type of communication whose aggressive nature can only be read between the lines, this video is very explicit, allowing for conclusions to be drawn about the content of the advertised educational program.

The imitation of the academic calendar as well as university customs and forms of work is intended to make the Iliad Institut's activities appear legitimate and worthy. Similarly, the "promotions" are named after authors (almost exclusively male authors; female authors are few and far between) consisting of a clever mix of those who are accepted by the canon and not suspected of having far-right sympathies like Albert Camus with names such as Dominique Venner, Ernst Jünger, and Jean Raspail whose ideological sympathies are more dubious.⁸

Since 2021, the Iliad Institut has also been proposing a "Formation jeunes (18-23 ans)" that targets adolescents and young adults. Presumably, this program also aims to find people who will later go on to attend the "promotions." During weekend seminars, participants gather in various cities in France and are taught "educational content that allows for truly passing on knowledge" (Institut Iliade, n.d.-b). The focus is both on confirming their "own identity" and "heritage" as well as French history (for which they claim it is important to know that Algeria "as such did not exist before the Europeans arrived"), and the fight against Islam (which they claim is "not compatible with our civilization," Institut Iliade, n.d.-b), against the European Union, and against gender diversity. They make no secret about the goals and ideas they are trying to teach the young participants, ideas that largely align with those of the Rassemblement National or are even farther to the right.

On the one hand, completing a "promotion" at the Iliad Institut is the logical consequence of an education influenced by the publications that will be discussed below. On the other hand, being designed for a maximum of only 60 young people per year, the program targets the general public indirectly, by educating young people who can actively spread the message at various levels thanks to the workshops on topics such as "public speaking" or "organizing viral campaigns" (Institut Iliade, n.d.-e).

The *IfS/Menschenpark* pursues similar goals in Germany. It too aims to link itself with intellectual and academic traditions, thus elevating its own status by association. These traditions do not stretch back to ancient Greece, however, but rather to Frankfurt in the 1930s. The abbreviation "IfS," incorporated into a logo and prominently presented on publications and the institute's homepage, is "shared" with the famous Frankfurt Institute for Social Research. Under Max Horkheimer's leadership, the Frankfurt Institute was instrumental in developing critical theory. After being re-founded in 1951, it significantly influenced West German political discourse. Presumably, the Institut für Staatspolitik hopes to have a similar impact when it uses this plagiarized abbreviation to present itself as a far-right alternative to the Frankfurt Institute.⁹

Significantly, beyond the abbreviation, the *IfS/Menschenpark* seeks to present itself as similar to university institutions by imitating academic projects and formats. This includes editing reference works and handbooks, which focus on defining terms and concepts considered key for national policy, publishing journals (like the *Sezession*) with essays on politics, culture and history, as well as organizing annual summer academies. These focus on a single topic—for instance "Cultural criticism" (2014), "Feasibility"

(2015), “Resistance” (2016), “Readings” (2019), or “State and order” (2020)—over the course of a weekend in Schnellroda, Saxony-Anhalt, where *IfS/Menschenpark* is based, with lectures on its social, political, and cultural relevance. Calling these events “summer academies” suggests that they are similar to university events like summer schools or established formats from talent promotion institutions such as the *Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes* (German National Academic Foundation). The New Right shares a target audience with universities, postgraduate programs, and talent promotion institutions in that the summer academies at the *IfS/Menschenpark* address a young audience: Participation is only open to individuals under the age of 35. Besides lectures and discussions, the program includes time slots for sports, shared meals, or movie nights: again, this is similar to the programs of talent promotion organizations. This fits with the New Right’s broader self-image as an “intellectual elite” (Sezession, n.d.), as with the *Nouvelle Droite*, the aim is to indirectly reach broader sections of society: The participant of the summer academies should actively spread the message, for example, in schools and universities.

This summer academy format has an ambiguous focus and approach to its target audience. On the one hand, it relies on scarcity and exclusivity, emphasizing on-site participation and the multitude of activities offered: Between 90 and 130 participants are admitted, and according to the institute, the spots are filled on a first-come, first-served basis and are always quickly taken. While the overarching topic is announced in advance, the detailed program and some of the speakers are only revealed once the academy has started. This underscores the importance of being present, as the participants become “initiates.” On the other hand, the goal is also to ensure that the impact of the summer academy is not limited to the small number of participants. Some of the lectures can be found on the institute’s YouTube channel, and a special issue of *Sezession* is published every year on the topic of the summer academy. The issue includes an introduction, a report about the academy, and printed versions of the lectures—once again bringing to mind the annual conferences of academic societies. In this way, those who do not participate can still partake of the ideas presented at the summer academy. By presenting the summer academy in its media, the *IfS/Menschenpark* thus aims to provide easy access to the material rather than maintaining the exclusivity it strives for at the event itself.

II

Alain de Benoist and Götz Kubitschek are the most prominent members of the organizations of which they are also important leaders. They present themselves as right-wing intellectuals. Benoist, the “homme-bibliothèque,” prides himself on owning the largest private library in France (Éléments, 2023). In Kubitschek’s circle, similar statements can be heard about his “library shelves as a part of his personality” (Kaiser et al., 2020: 56). Naming the Iliad Institut’s “promotions” after authors stresses the key role literature plays in the New Right’s education project. In France, they are of the opinion that the “political downfall [of the country] is inextricably linked with its literary downfall” (Giroux, 2016). The self-diagnosed downfall applies not only to the respective country but also to all of Europe. It can purportedly only be stopped by better literary education, which will inevitably lead to the correct political leanings. This is why the New Right in

Germany and France promote reading as a way to preserve culture and identity.¹⁰ However, the reading materials are by no means to be selected randomly. Only those who have learned from early childhood to select the “right” literature and read it in the “right” way will also achieve the “right” education and position. Reading is viewed as essential, and in France even as an education in how to think (de Benoist and Travers, 2020). Both the *Neue Rechte* and the *Nouvelle Droite* are convinced that literature can change one’s view of the world.

That is why curating literature, that is, selecting, compiling, and commenting literary texts for readers from kindergarten to adulthood, is such an important task for New Right in Germany and France, for the Iliad Institut and the *IfS/Menschenpark* and the publishing houses and authors connected with the institutes. They aim to protect the public—and especially children—from “harmful texts” in light of the “mountains of horrible, sordid, subversive books,” as Kositzka and Sommerfeld (2019: 16) explain in the introduction to their reading recommendations for children and adolescents.¹¹ The “temple of literature” (Salvi, 2016: 116) must be preserved but also restructured through the far-right appropriation of canonical texts. Just as New Right publishing houses’ program policies select “good” texts on a large scale for their own milieu (also, for example, by translating French or English texts into German and adding commentary), the editors of the volumes examined in the following also curate the reading material for their audience on a smaller scale, referring to quantitative and qualitative challenges in the literature. There is a consensus among the New Right in both countries that readers of all ages need guidance.¹²

III

The “battle for the minds” (Bruns et al., 2018: 82)—that is, New Right cultural education—needs to start as early as possible if this goal is to be achieved. First, this is necessary so that the children and adolescents internalize the values taught to them through bedtime stories. Second, if the children are reached before they start school, this can minimize the “damage” that the New Right claims public schools in Germany and France inevitably do to students (if the parents do not place their children in private schools to prevent this).

In terms of content, many of the texts cannot easily be recognized as problematic, particularly those that include programmatic prefaces in addition to specific reading recommendations. Examples include *Vorlesen* by Ellen Kositzka and Caroline Sommerfeld (2019) or *Une Bibliothèque idéale. Que lire de 5 à 11 ans?* by Anne-Laure Blanc (2010) as well as the new edition of the latter from 2018, published together with Valérie D’Aubigny and Hélène Fruchard. The prefaces claim to offer orientation among the large number of new publications that they describe as a “jungle without orientation or guidance” (Blanc et al., 2018: 29), and they recommend reading for oneself and reading to others as enjoyable but also as an activity that brings the family together in “moments of bonding and tenderness” (Blanc et al., 2018: 51). No educational scientists would seriously contradict that. However, it still becomes quite clear that reading is “not understood as having a specific purpose,” but instead is meant to promote “creativity, vocabulary, intelligence, capacity for empathy and—not least—a spirit of dissent”

(Kositza and Sommerfeld, 2019: 10). This “spirit of dissent” or “non-conformity” (a term used in Germany and France to describe the position of the New Right protagonists) is directed against anything perceived as being mainstream and thus rejected.

In this context, it is worth noting that in both countries the authors of the anthologies directed at parents are exclusively women. This aligns with traditional ideas of the family in which women are responsible for raising the children. Consequently, the authors do not mention their degrees in philosophy, German studies, or history to prove their expertise. Instead, they emphasize the number of children they have: Kositza’s and Sommerfeld’s “total of ten children” (Kositza and Sommerfeld, 2019: 7), or Anne-Laure Blanc’s four and Valérie D’Aubigny’s six (Zélie, 2016). In this context, it is noteworthy that the networks within the New Right movement often arise from family structures: Kositza is the wife of Götz Kubitschek, and her works are printed in his Antaios publishing house. Anne-Laure Blanc is married to Jean-Yves Le Gallou, an early member of *GRECE* who moved into active political life for far-right parties in 1985 and founded the “re-information” platform *Polémia* in 2003. Anne-Laure Blanc is the treasurer in the Ile-de-France region for the far-right boy scout group Europe Jeunesse, founded by the *GRECE* members for their children (Lamy, 2016: 124). In 2012, Blanc also initiated the blog *Chouette un livre. Une bibliothèque enfantine idéale*, which was the basis for her book *Bibliothèque idéale*.¹³ Valérie D’Aubigny writes for the Catholic platform *Aleteia*, which is present in several countries and belongs to the Foundation for Evangelization through the Media. She also hosts a radio program about books for young people on the far-right radio station Radio Courtoisie. Since 2000, she has operated the platform *123loisirs*, also dedicated to offering guidance on the market for children’s and young adult books:

The committee is aware that children’s and young adult literature places the best and the worst works next to one another, which is why it reads the numerous new publications submitted by publishers, discusses their relevance, and decides whether they should be listed online or rejected. (123loisirs, n.d.)

Not all of these websites and platforms can be recognized as “meta-political,” biased organizations at first glance. Unlike their male partners, for example, Anne-Laure Blanc and Valérie D’Aubigny do not have Wikipedia entries that would make it easier to associate them and their activities with right-wing extremism. The available information about the women operating the blogs, radio shows, and Internet platforms tends to be sparse and limited to information about their private life. This means that their intention to disseminate far-right cultural ideals including racist, anti-Semitic, or anti-Muslim sentiments and myths such as that of population exchange can often go unnoticed.

The volumes each include a preface of approximately 50 pages. Like the previous edition from 2010, the volume by Blanc et al. (2018) includes three prefaces in varying orders: “A brief history of children’s and young adult literature” (9–32), “Why literature?” (33–46), and “How you should read this guide” (47–49), while Kositza and Sommerfeld (2019: 7–49) include only one preface that covers all these aspects: “How to read; what to read; why read?” In terms of content, there are numerous similarities: The expressed goal of the reading guide is not only to provide orientation among the

mass of new publications, but also to identify books for children and young adults that uphold the “fundamental values of our civilization” (Blanc et al., 2018: 9). Neither the values nor the civilization are specified in more detail, so that you have to read between the lines. They claim that the “didactic [. . .] coups of the period beginning in 1968” led to the negation of the existence of “universally valid norms and processes” (Kositza and Sommerfeld, 2019: 31) and to children “not being taught answers through their reading materials, but instead being provoked into posing questions about the world in which they live” (Blanc et al., 2018: 25). It should be noted here that the authors clearly view this as a negative development. They also believe that the “mainstream-compliant” media is under “ideological” control“ (Kositza and Sommerfeld, 2019: 16f.), preferring characters who “show up in the bland colors of trendy ideologies” (Blanc et al., 2018: 29), who are sometimes “gender-sensitive [. . .] and migrant-friendly,” or who have fathers who “can’t even set up a Christmas tree or pitch a tent” (Kositza and Sommerfeld, 2019: 27).

In short, with the help of the book recommendations in both anthologies, you can raise children and young adults who respect authority figures and unquestioningly fulfill traditional gender roles. They will reject foreign people or things while clearly distinguishing between the national and the foreign, and they will value “their own” cultural heritage. The authors claim that the “‘official’ lists” of the ministries and schools endanger all of this. Parents must therefore take responsibility for “selecting and monitoring what their children read without feeling guilty,” to ensure that “our [cultural] memory is transmitted” to the next generation (Blanc et al., 2018: 29, 35, 38).¹⁴

What makes it difficult to clearly reject the volumes, aside from the debatable ideas about authority, is that of course there is nothing wrong with children and young adults reading classic literature. However, the selection should perhaps be made less according to ethno-nationalist ideas of “our heritage” (Blanc et al., 2018: *passim*) and should not be justified by saying that these books tell “stories with wonderfully traditional gender roles” (Kositza and Sommerfeld, 2019: 88) “that align with our moral values and traditions” for “our darling little blonde children” (Blanc et al., 2018: 46, 106).

Kositza and Sommerfeld argue that once young adults’ convictions have been strengthened by these readings, they can then be permitted to choose their own reading material:

We raise our children so that, by a certain age, no drastic interventions are needed. We can therefore see that children who go through taste training by their parents at an early age will naturally avoid kitsch, trash, and obscenities. (Kositza and Sommerfeld, 2019: 16)

However, the criteria applied to the criticism are formulated in much more detail by Kositza and Sommerfeld than they are in the French volume; moreover, they are not always the same, an aspect that might be related to the more conservative approach to child-rearing in France. For example, Kositza and Sommerfeld (2019: 64–65) include *Where the Wild Things Are*, the “global classic” by Maurice Sendak from 1963, in the list of recommended picture books. In contrast, the French authors place the book among those that are “also disapproved of by teachers because they are worried about their reputation and the questioning of their authority.”¹⁵

In both the German and French volumes, there is a consensus that questioning authority figures—apart from state authorities—or challenging the authority figures' decisions is wrong and must be nipped in the bud with the right reading material (Giudici et al., 2025: 8).

Other works recommended for reading are also noteworthy. For instance, the French volume (Blanc et al., 2018: 61) lists Jean de Brunhoff's illustrated children's book series *Babar the Little Elephant*, but adds the somewhat enigmatic note that "old [antiquarian] editions should be preferred" because they are "beautifully complete." The meaning behind this statement becomes clear when you know that some of the earlier editions included racist depictions of African people, which the author's son Laurent de Brunhoff, who continued the series, removed in later editions.

In the same vein, *Vorlesen* (Kositza and Sommerfeld, 2019: 30) recommends the *Lurchi* series, but advises against the newer editions because "Lurchi's encounters with 'the wild people' and the 'cannibals' have been removed, [. . . and] a 'little negro boy' [. . .] has also been changed to a 'little chimney sweep.'" The volume also voices similar criticism of the newer editions of Michael Ende's *Jim Knopf*, which use the term "black baby," quoted by Kositza and Sommerfeld, instead of keeping the term "negro baby" (without quotation marks in Kositza's and Sommerfeld's volume) that the editors also choose to use in their commentary (Kositza and Sommerfeld, 2019: 120).¹⁶ These comments touch on recent debates about revising texts in children's and young adult literature, an issue which has been discussed as an example of "cancel culture"—including by people who are not part of the New Right.

Kositza and Sommerfeld mention the Nazi background of authors such as Marie Hamsun and Hans Baumann several times, yet they still warmly recommend their books. They also recommend much more overtly biased books, such as Karl Aloys Schenzinger's *Hitler Youth Quex*, to young readers under the guise of showing how the 1930s and 1940s might be portrayed "from a 'far-right' perspective" (Kositza and Sommerfeld, 2019: 154). Even though the book is regarded as "no longer appropriate for educational settings," it is nevertheless praised as being "very nuanced" (Kositza and Sommerfeld, 2019: 154). In addition, the authors Kositza and Sommerfeld (2019: 208) recommend "a history book that incidentally helps children learn to be proud of Germany," that is, *Deutsche Geschichte für junge Leser*, written by Karlheinz Weißmann, Kubitschek's former colleague at the Institut für Staatspolitik.

For children aged 14 and older, the French volume recommends the works of Jean Raspail, author of *The Camp of the Saints*, a book highly regarded by the entire European far-right scene. Books by Ernst Jünger, and by Pierre Schoendoerffer and Geneviève de Galard, who have a positive view of French colonialism, are also recommended (Blanc et al., 2018: 202, 228, 206, 218, 223).

IV

Even young adults who have left their parents' home are still provided with recommendations from the New Right. In *Literarische Musterung*,¹⁷ for example, Günter Scholdt (2017) discusses canonical texts in world literature to demonstrate their "suitability" from a far-right perspective. Scholdt holds a doctorate and postdoctoral qualification in

German studies, and his academic achievements are detailed in the volume's "About the Author" section (2017: 2).¹⁸ He clearly differentiates his approach to canonical texts from that of "schools and universities of the Federal Republic." According to Scholdt (2017: 9), anyone who attends these institutions "is ideologically trained simply from the reading materials in the curriculum." It is probably no coincidence that he refers to schools and universities of the "Federal Republic" and not "Germany," as this distinction between the "state" and the "people" is of great importance to the New Right. Scholdt, who was part of the educational system for many years as head of the literature archive in Saar-Lor-Lux-Alsace, is presented to the readers as both a literature expert and an "insider" in academia, giving his assessment considerable weight.

Scholdt (2017: 8, 6) discusses literary texts with a purpose, understanding them as "timeless social and political models," that can serve as a "warning or an appeal." His focus on canonical texts, particularly the contemporary relevance of the classics, reflects a popular trend in literary studies, criticism, and education. Therefore, it is likely to meet with approval in the relevant circles (typically among educated individuals). Who would argue that "classic" texts may not be relevant today? Starting from this widely supported position, Scholdt subjects the texts to a biased reading, reducing them to the opposition between the individual and society, or more precisely, glorifying outsider status. It is precisely in this negotiation of an outsider position that Scholdt sees the relevance of the texts, and thus their "potential to provide guidance" since he sees the New Right, too, in the social position of the "upstanding outsider." Scholdt combines his brief reading vignettes with pages of discussion on what he believes are the sham trials against AfD members and illegitimate bans on Pegida protests. Reading the canonical texts alongside Scholdt's work can teach the far-right reader how to cope with having an outsider position and how to exercise resistance. Literature thus offers "cover fire" for the New Right (Scholdt, 2017: 9; on this, also see Wortmann, 2023).

In 2021, Alain de Benoist and Guillaume Travers edited an anthological volume in France called *La Bibliothèque littéraire du jeune Européen* that presents 418 essential works of fiction. The goal is to establish a far-right counter-canon and, like Scholdt's project, to functionalize traditionally canonical texts (those by Ernst Jünger, but also Bertolt Brecht and Gabriel García Márquez) (see Ruhe, 2024). The project explicitly avoids establishing a purely French canon in favor of a European or Indo-European one. This is done with the aim of aiding the "common culture of all Europeans" (Institut Iliade, n.d.-f)—allegedly nearly forgotten—to regain its rightful place. However, the project's actual intention is to invent this very specific version of a "common culture of all Europeans" in the first place. Of course, its expressly far-right character is not made explicit but can be found by reading between the lines. The introduction skillfully draws on cultural pessimism, which has also become established in educated, politically uncontroversial circles, using it to make their version of a European "common culture" more palatable.

It is therefore worth taking a look at the selected texts. In their introduction, the editors explain that they only included dead authors, in keeping with their assumption that contemporary literature does not deserve to be called "literature." It also confirms that the status of (the only true) literature is endangered by the oft-cited "forgetting of the past" (de Benoist and Travers, 2021: 9); therefore, it must be saved through publications such as this one. In addition, one could presume that since these authors are dead, they

cannot object to their works being appropriated by the anthology and its ideology. The “young Europeans” in the title, for whom the reading guide was compiled, are to be intellectually fed solely with the texts of other Europeans or “Europeans who have crossed the Atlantic” (Institut Iliade, n.d.-d)—the latter being a remarkable category that would puzzle many of the US authors who are placed in it. Benoist and Travers acknowledge that these decisions exclude authors they admire such as Yukio Mishima. However, they (de Benoist and Travers, 2021: 10) state that they do not want any intrusion from regions of the world that have no “importance for European cultural history.”

Women play only a marginal role. Eighteen of the 418 texts are by female authors, though it seems likely that even these few were added as an afterthought since the title page and foreword consistently refer to 400 texts. The selection mostly opts for canonical authors, but not always for their best-known texts, especially not in the case of far-right authors. In the introduction, the editors (de Benoist and Travers, 2021: 10) note that the 210 French-speaking authors mean that there is “a relative overrepresentation of Francophone authors.” This choice of words is interesting because the term “Francophone” seems to be interpreted quite narrowly. Authors from Swiss Romandy or Belgium are included, but readers will search in vain for authors from the former colonies or French overseas regions and departments, regardless of how famous they might be. Francophone is thus limited to a “Francophonie du Nord.” The anthology includes no authors of color, with one notable exception: Alexandre Dumas père, who is also the only author of color whose work can be found in the prestigious *Collection de la Pléiade* by the renowned Gallimard publishing house. The vast majority of the texts that are intended to enrich the intellects of young Europeans were thus written by dead white men who were Europeans at least in spirit. Uncontroversial canonical authors rub shoulders in the anthology with the Nazi collaborator Robert Brasillach, the anti-Semitic publicist Léon Daudet, and the previously mentioned Jean Raspail.

The entries follow the pattern of handbooks: a section on the author is followed by a summary of the text and an “analysis.” A bibliography concludes each entry. The analysis highlights aspects of canonical texts that align with New Right ideology, but these interpretations often do not do justice to the texts. For instance, the analysis of William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* suggests that the novel is solely based on the “problem” of the “intermingling of races” (de Benoist and Travers, 2021: 240). In other cases, the analysis uses the texts to justify positions held by the New Right. For example, the analysis of Jules Verne’s *In Search of the Castaways* states,

Jules Verne’s novels pay tribute to the Europeans who set out to explore Africa, the southern islands, or the Arctic regions for the glory of their countries, and they remind us that many people paid for their daring discoveries with their lives. Even though it is no longer considered fashionable to commemorate the martyrdom of the many officers, sailors, and doctors who perished in the midst of the jungles or desert, Verne’s era was still influenced by the discovery of ritual cannibalism. (de Benoist and Travers, 2021: 684–685)

This open justification of colonialism is exacerbated by the fact that the same paragraph states that such remarks are “no longer considered fashionable” (de Benoist and Travers, 2021: 684), reducing criticism of colonial practices to a mere fad.

In the context of these interpretations, which can be described as idiosyncratic at best, the articles elicit statements from the texts that are problematic from an academic perspective. Unlike Scholdt's counterpart in the German context, this seems to be less about "ambiguity between the object and meta-levels" (Wortmann, 2023: 92): The French authors, at least those of this article, skillfully pretend to discuss the content of the texts, while in reality, they focus on aspects that lend themselves to ideological appropriation, even if they are sometimes merely marginal. While Torsten Hoffmann (2021: 230) argues in the German context that "the discussion combines aesthetic and ideological arguments in a symptomatic way," ideology retains the upper hand in the French volume.

V


The educational activities outlined here can be understood as a consistent continuation of efforts on the part of the *Neue Rechte* and the *Nouvelle Droite* to intellectualize their movement. The basis for this intellectualization is the institutionalization of educational endeavors in and through the Iliad Institut and the *IJS/Menschenpark*. They rely on an established infrastructure, including publishing houses, YouTube channels, educational formats. Their work is based on skepticism toward state institutions responsible for education and child-rearing. Interestingly, the Iliad Institut and the *Institut für Staatspolitik/Menschenpark* imitate precisely those state institutions in their names and event formats.

The goal is to help people achieve a New Right "maturity," characterized by the programmatic term "resistance." This ideal is to be taught to children from an early stage through reading aloud. The learning process continues throughout school, adolescence, and adulthood, teaching traditional family ideals and gender roles. The framework for this lifelong learning process is created by curating, selecting, teaching, and annotating literature. The aim is to present historical and literary texts to readers of all ages in order to preserve a cultural heritage that they claim is endangered because it is no longer taught in public educational institutions. The goal is not (or at least not primarily) to establish a far-right counter-canon, but rather to appropriate the entire canon.

New Right ways of thinking are based on a New Right "library" of literary, sociological, and philosophical texts. Anthology projects lay the groundwork for this library, and essays and lectures guide readers through the texts. The anthologies published in Germany and France resemble a portable library that you can continue to read. However, this then also develops into a cross-border "library," as evidenced by shared references to theories, for example. What the New Right in Germany and France have in common is that they only present literature to readers after making a selection and providing the correct framing—even though their programmatic texts promote independent, unbiased reading. In other words, they preach the virtues of independent reading, but in practice, the reading they actually promote is guided and carefully controlled.

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Notes

1. Previous secondary literature on this topic refers to “far-right,” “New Right,” or even “Alt-Right” without it always being completely clear where the differences lie. We have opted for the term “New Right” to designate the meta-political movements in France and Germany, as it is used, for example, in Seauve (2026).
2. All quotes originally in another language have been translated by the authors.
3. For a research overview, see Giudici et al. (2025).
4. It can be assumed that the name refers to Peter Sloterdijk’s much-discussed speech “Rules for the Human Park: A Reply to the Letter on Humanism” (later published in *Die Zeit*, 16 September 1999 and as a book with the title *Regeln für den Menschenpark. Ein Antwortschreiben zu Heideggers Brief über den Humanismus*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1999), in which Sloterdijk, among other things, proposed resorting to “‘Anthropotechniken’—in plain terms, eugenics—[. . .] to eliminate civilisation’s potential for barbarism” (de Berg, 2002: 78).—According to Kubitschek’s announcement, the *IfS/Menschenpark* will continue to hold the institute’s conferences and academies in the future (see *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 2024).
5. These activities are flanked by a “shift to the right” in the media that can be observed in new magazines such as *L’Incorrect* (since 2022), *CATO* (since 2017), *Compact* (since 2010), and *Tumult* (since 2013) or the nomination of right-wing journalist Geoffroy Lejeune to the head of the French Sunday newspaper *Le Journal du Dimanche* (which, as is the case with much of the other media in France, is part of the media group owned by Vincent Bolloré).
6. In the German discourse, see on this, for example, texts by Ellen Kositzka (2020: 2f.) and Günther Scholdt (2017: 7 and elsewhere).
7. These metaphors of battle and war as well as the positioning “in the existential situation of a pre-civil war situation” is another commonality between the meta-political deliberations of the New Right in Germany and France. We can also see parallels with current developments in the United States (see Meurer, 2021: 206).
8. This work is supported by the magazines *Nouvelle École* (founded in 1968), *Éléments* (founded in 1973), and *Krisis* (founded in 1988).
9. Generally speaking, “learning from the left” is recommended by the New Right scene and especially by Benedikt Kaiser (2019).
10. In his foundational essay, Hoffmann (2021: 226) put it concisely: “No other contemporary political movement takes literature as seriously as the *Neue Rechte*.” This can also be applied to the *Nouvelle Droite*.
11. On this text and the (literary) pedagogical concepts of the German-language *Neue Rechte* activists, also see Nicola Gess (2024).
12. The New Right’s cultural and literature policies and the associated educational programs were long ignored by literary and cultural studies. The most comprehensive literary studies

- analysis of New Right literary policies so far is that by Torsten Hoffmann (2021). In France, the New Right has thus far only been examined from a sociological perspective (on this, see the works of Stéphane François 2023 with the most recent example). Literary studies in France have not yet distinguished itself, as summarized by Étienne Achille (2018: 370): “critical interest in the literary dimension of neo-reactionary discourse remains very superficial.”
13. In addition, Anne-Laure Blanc is the daughter of Robert Blanc, who was a French volunteer in the *Waffen-SS* from 1944 until the end of the war; more precisely, he was part of the Division Charlemagne and belonged to the neo-fascist Jeune Nation movement after the war. See, for example, Schir (2024).
 14. Kositzka (2020) presents similar arguments in her contribution to the special issue “Readings” that is based on the summer academy with the same title.
 15. Kositzka (2020: 64).
 16. Kositzka (2020: 120).
 17. “Literarische Musterung” has a double meaning that might be significant in our context: it can both be a close inspection (in general) and an examination for military service (medical, etc.).
 18. In his case, his academic background and qualifications as a scholar of German Studies are viewed positively.

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