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The End of Men

THE DOCUMENTARY BEGINS WITH footage of President John F. Kennedy's remarks at the fiftieth anniversary of the creation of the Children's Bureau, an administrative unit within the federal Department of Health and Human Resources, in 1962: "I welcome this opportunity to speak to the American people about a subject which I believe to be most important, and that is the subject of physical fitness."¹

The camera cuts to an image of a very muscular man, at dawn, throwing a spear. That shot splices to a space rocket, and then we have a scene of young men exercising outside together, hard, perhaps sometime in the 1950s. Superimposed across these images, we get some grandiose words:

IN AGES PAST
A CYCLE BEGAN
HARD TIMES MADE
STRONG MEN.

The president continues: "A country is, in a way, as strong as its citizens and I think that mental and physical health go hand in hand."

Again, the grandiose overlay:

STRONG MEN
MADE GOOD TIMES.

Here, the tenor of the images starts to shift. There is a clip of President Biden stumbling on an airplane stairway on the tarmac. We see an irrigation wheel dispensing what look like chemical fertilizers. President Kennedy continues: "There is nothing, I think, more unfortunate than to have soft, chubby, fat looking children. . . . I hope that all of you

will join the United States to make sure that our children participate fully in a vigorous and adventurous life, which is possible for them in this very rich country of ours.”

Now we are shown stock footage of a shirtless heavyset Black man; and then of a heavyset white man. We see an image of polluted wastewater, a sea of garbage, and a wash of dead fish.

GOOD TIMES

MADE WEAK MEN.

Then we see a photo of a group of Democratic senators, masked and kneeling. It is of Senators Tim Kaine, Chris Van Hollen, Martin Heinrich, and Michael Bennet, taken on June 4, 2020, in Emancipation Hall of the United States Capitol, during a moment of silence held by Senate Democrats in honor of George Floyd.²

WEAK MEN

MADE HARD TIMES.

The final image of the sequence is of a mangled (white, male) body lying, possibly dead, on the pavement, during a protest.

The montage lasts about a minute. It marks the beginning of a thirty-four-minute-long feature for the Fox News series *Tucker Carlson Originals* called “The End of Men.”

The tagline for the episode was “Testosterone levels in American men are collapsing. Fertility is in decline. Is this the end of men?” And it came with a trigger warning: “This program contains high levels of toxic masculinity, high levels of testosterone, bro science and testicle tanning, which may be triggering to some viewers. Discretion is advised.”

Once it aired, on October 5, 2022, “The End of Men” was roundly mocked in the mainstream media. In fact, it was mocked even before it aired. There was much ado, in particular, about a scene in which a man stood on a hill at dawn, in front of some kind of machine, doing, as *Rolling Stone* magazine put it, “infrared ball tanning.”³

But there was more to that documentary than indiscreet red-light therapy. Carlson’s video offered a snapshot of a moment in American

history where several dramatic developments converged, and the New Right reached a tipping point.

What we saw in the video was an overt embrace of various forms of extremism, which signaled an extraordinary hardening of parts of the movement beyond the former parameters of respectable politics. The more extremist, illiberal elements of the New Right had become more mainstream and dominant among GOP leadership. These included elements of the so-called Manosphere, as well as conspiratorial elements like the Great Replacement theory and 2020 election denialism. New alliances had been formed between Hard Right extremists and the hard left. This convergence also included the dramatic growth of overt Christian nationalism, discussed in chapter 12, and best evidenced by the ascension of Mike Johnson to the role of Speaker of the House.

In this chapter, I survey the hard edges of the New Right movement as they materialized during the final years of the Biden administration, from Tucker Carlson's embrace of the Manosphere to the nomination of Donald Trump as the 2024 presidential nominee for the GOP. Due to Trump's innumerable personal liabilities and ninety-one criminal indictments, he was not necessarily the New Right's first choice for 2024. But after failing in various efforts to raise Ron DeSantis to preeminence—a sign, it seemed, of the limits of their strange movement—they rallied. By this point, the New Right was all-in with some of the most brazenly destructive and delusional forces in the country.

“The End of Men”

I had low expectations for “The End of Men,” since Tucker Carlson had, over the course of the first Trump administration, descended into racism, conspiracism, and mania. Those expectations were thwarted somewhat by the documentary. To be sure, it did contain absurdities like ball tanning and raw egg chugging, scenes that were apparently filmed on one of Alex Jones's properties just outside of Austin, Texas, and featured a group of weight-lifting “bros.”⁴ But it also had some substance. It featured, for example, clips from a well-regarded environmental scientist, who clearly explained the problem of endocrine inhibitors and other

toxins in the environment. Dr. Linda Birnbaum, a microbiologist and former director of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, is not a quack or a conspiracist. She has long been concerned about the harmful effects of toxins in the environment, and of regulatory failures to contain them. She has faced pushback from Republicans for her work.⁵ She is not someone I would have expected to see on Carlson's show.

But there she was, talking about "chemicals in the environment that had the potential to harm human health," how statutes are structured such that "the chemical is regarded as innocent until it's proven guilty," and how huge agrochemical corporations like Monsanto played "whack-a-mole" to kill newly proposed studies that might put limits on pollutants. This was not quackery or conspiracism; these were ideas that thoughtful leftists, environmentalists, and sociologists had been concerned about since Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*.⁶ It is true that Tucker Carlson hyped up and manipulated Birnbaum's message, emphasizing testosterone and sperm counts, at one point concluding, "So the end of men has a chemical cause!" But it was still surprising—and, if I'm honest, refreshing—to hear a message like hers get airplay on Fox News.

And there were other things to like about "The End of Men." The line from President Kennedy about "soft, chubby, fat-looking children" is rude, but his and the rest of the documentary's focus on physical fitness and strength in men—as well as our society's failure to support physical fitness and activity in young people more generally—are well-taken. (Needless to say, Carlson doesn't mention Michelle Obama's "Let's Move!" campaign, or President Obama's Task Force on Childhood Obesity.) Carlson gave some airtime to Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who, in addition to much quackery, expressed more reasonable concerns about microplastics. There was a lot in the show about something called "bro science," which sounds absurd—but it was also tongue-in-cheek and just involved extreme fitness regimens and strange experimental diets.

The serious upshot of what Carlson presented was a critique of the pharmaceutical industry and the medical establishment—for being almost entirely focused on profit and out of touch with what makes for

actual health and well-being. A few subjects in the show discussed how they have transformed and saved themselves from extreme unhappiness or depression through rigorous diets and exercise regimens. “Bro science” may not be scientific, but it’s probably not the worst “wellness” regime out there. If you squinted a little (maybe a lot), this didn’t sound so different from the idea of “Medicine 3.0,” a popular concept whereby the medical industry takes a more holistic and preventative approach to health.⁷ Especially considering Carlson’s promotional material, some of what he presented in “The End of Men” was surprisingly reasonable.

The problem was all the other stuff that Carlson included that was inconsistent, lopsided, unreasonable, deeply misleading, outright loopy, or openly fascistic. A small example: In the original JFK speech used in the opening, the president praised the invention of vaccines and noted the need to make them more fully available. In the rest of their program, RFK Jr. and Carlson spouted antivax conspiracies. Or consider how Carlson used Birnbaum’s findings in ways that were completely inconsistent with his other programming choices. He had two other “Originals” devoted to the problems with wind farms and green energy, which might as well have been sponsored content from the oil and plastics industries. There is no reason to believe that Carlson would have been talking about endocrine disruptors had it not allowed him to use that science to stir up a panic about testosterone levels, declining manliness, and the end of human civilization. And stir up a panic he did.

The best way to get a sense of the extremism that “The End of Men” peddled is to consider one of its star characters, a man who goes by the pseudonym “Raw Egg Nationalist” (REN).

When I first saw “The End of Men,” Raw Egg Nationalist was not new to me. But it was astonishing to see him platformed on Fox News. I had written about him for *The Bulwark* in April 2022, after he had published an article called “The Decline Is Real” in the Claremont Institute’s *American Mind*. That article made many of the same arguments about testosterone levels that Carlson would make in his show.⁸

Carlson introduced Raw Egg Nationalist as the “spiritual leader” of the “bro scientists.” Then he cut to a long segment where REN expounded on his message with a monologue. First, he described the enemy. The words “The Great Reset” flash over shots of masked people, people isolated during the pandemic, factory belts covered in Covid-19 tests, and so forth. The music is ominous. Then REN speaks:

The enemy today is what I like to call soy globalism. The globalist aim is to destroy nations and local communities. And they do this by isolating communities and sickening them through food, and also through so-called medicine, and all the dreadful chemicals we’re exposed to on a daily basis. The globalists want you to be fat, sick, depressed and isolated, the better to control you and to milk you for as much economic value as they can before they kill you. That’s soy globalism in a nutshell. Own nothing, live in the pod, eat the soy.

Succinct and simple, and funny. At the same time, the message here, flagged by “The Great Reset” tagline, is conspiratorial and fantastical. “The Great Reset” was the name of an initiative launched by Klaus Schwab, the chief executive of the World Economic Forum, which sought to articulate an ambitious economic recovery plan in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. As Raw Egg Nationalist illustrates, the Great Reset plan immediately became fodder for bizarre conspiracies.

The idea that the hellscape that REN describes is the result of secret plots and projects on the part of a globalist cabal determined to weaken and destroy the populace, rather than the predictable outcomes of human greed, capitalism, technology, and even some good intentions, is deranged. In its desperation to find something—someone!—to blame for human suffering, it wildly overestimates the power of individual human actors in the world and seriously misunderstands ordinary human motivation. There is something slightly pathetic about this. (Ironically, the sort of thinking that Carlson and REN engage in is precisely the kind of thinking that Nietzsche attributes to slave morality—i.e., to the morality of the naturally weak who suffer from life. Like the weak types in Nietzsche’s

analysis, REN and other conspiracists see dark forces operating where ordinary motivations make more sense.)⁹

After this brief introduction to “the enemy,” the music turns cheerful, and the camera shows beautiful young men “slonking” their eggs in the morning light. Raw Egg Nationalist continues, declaring that “The best response to this is a strong politics of nationalism. The nation is only as strong as the individuals who make it up, and that’s where all the eggs come in.” REN proceeds to explain the superfood status of eggs, and how they are the “absolute opposite of the disgusting rubbish that the globalists want you to eat.” They are cheap, he says, and can’t be patented. “By making the individual strong you make the nation strong,” he proclaims, and the segment culminates with a theatrical affirmation of self: “I’m Raw Egg Nationalist. I’m an anon right-wing bodybuilder and I dispense Red Pill fitness and health information to the masses. Why should somebody believe me? Well, I’m just channeling the wisdom of the ancients really. I’m a vessel.” REN keeps making the case for eating a lot of raw eggs, as the soundtrack shifts to Richard Strauss’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (aka the main theme track to *2001: A Space Odyssey*).

Though it did not make it into Carlson’s documentary, one of REN’s favorite topics from the alternative lifestyle zone is “Russian household gardening.” In 2022 he published a book called the *Eggs Benedict Option*—a play on Rod Dreher’s *The Benedict Option*—in which he explains how Russian household plots (the countryside gardens near the famous dacha cottages/summer homes) play a central role in food production, combatting all the problems that come with corporate food production, including dependence on global supply chains.¹⁰ He also wrote about it for the *American Mind*.¹¹ Over 50 percent of food production happens at this very localized level, according to REN, citing an unconventional dissertation passed in May 2008 at the University of Missouri.¹² If you have any taste for community gardening, this will all sound very nice. If you dig into REN’s figures, though, you will find that they are a myth.¹³ You shouldn’t believe everything you read in people’s dissertations.

From here it gets much, much worse. If you glance at the *Eggs Benedict Option*, you will discover that REN not only believes in the “Great

Reset” conspiracy but also subscribes to the thinking of Aleksandr Dugin. In the book, dacha gardening is largely presented as a countermeasure to the “Planetary Health Diet” promoted by “our globalist overlords.”¹⁴ If you look still further, you will discover that REN is tightly ensconced in the world of white supremacy, ethnic nationalism, and neo-fascism.¹⁵

What Tucker Carlson’s program fails to tell you, and Raw Egg Nationalist’s *American Mind* byline doesn’t mention either (but which I included in my article about REN and the Claremont Institute) is that REN published some of his work with a group called Antelope Hill Publishing. Antelope Hill is a small fascist publishing house in Allentown, Pennsylvania (the town where Billy Joel set his blue-collar lament and anthem of the same name in 1982).¹⁶ It publishes books like Dr. Joseph Goebbels’s novel *Michael*, as well as titles like *Testament of a Russian Fascist* and Richard Walther Darré’s *A New Nobility of Blood and Soil*, which is described on the Antelope Hill website as follows: “Richard Walther Darré, an Obergruppenführer in the SS, was the leading ‘Blood and Soil’ ideologist of Germany and served his people as Reich Minister of Food and Agriculture. This book, *A New Nobility of Blood and Soil*, was massively popular in the Third Reich and led to a strengthening of the agrarian and agriculturalist movements. Highly influential on Hitler, the principles in this book are foundational to the National Socialist worldview.”¹⁷

A *Daily Beast* article from January 2022 referred to Antelope Hill as “openly fascist”; a blog that tracks reactionary racism labeled it “a white supremacist publishing company.” To celebrate Hitler’s birthday on April 20, 2022, it offered a discount on all its books, and an even bigger discount on a collection of Hitler’s speeches, with the cutesy discount code “birthday boy.”¹⁸

That is who Tucker Carlson featured in “The End of Men.” Toward the end of the video, Carlson warns that “no one in Washington seems interested at all in why testosterone levels are dropping, it’s a joke to them.” He notes that Stephen Colbert and Joy-Ann Reid responded to the trailer for his show by laughing at its “homoeeroticism” and “pretty blatant fascist posturing.” He concludes: “So if men

want to stay male, they must be fascists, and also gay. That's what the media tells you. If you care about your health, if you want to stay fit, you must be a right-wing extremist because good people are fat and passive." It took some real cojones on Carlson's part to dismiss these critiques while at the same time failing to disclose Raw Egg Nationalist's connections to actual fascists and Nazis, presuming he is not one himself (and I have no reason to suppose that).¹⁹ This is the easygoing sort of context collapse and selective disclosure that makes "plausible deniability" so easy for the far right, and the normalization of genuine extremism difficult to expose.

Around when "The End of Men" was being advertised—in the summer of 2022—Raw Egg Nationalist was a guest on Bronze Age Pervert's podcast, "Caribbean Rhythms."²⁰ They were both very excited about "The End of Men," and the fact that REN had been brought on as a guest for the documentary. (BAP: "It's very exciting." REN: "This is a big deal. This is a really big deal.")

It is evident from the episode that BAP appreciates REN's work—especially his *Man's World* magazine—and that Raw Egg Nationalist is slightly in awe of BAP. At one point BAP conceded, not for the first time, that he considers himself a fascist. They also briefly discussed the so-called hit piece that I wrote against REN and the Claremont Institute for *The Bulwark*—but, like Carlson, they did not mention Antelope Hill. Maybe they understood that consorting with, or being, actual Nazis and pro-Hitlerites could still hurt them in the public eye. The mainstreaming hadn't gone quite that far yet.²¹

Mainstreaming BAPism

About a year after "The End of Men" aired, Bronze Age Pervert made his own big splash, a demonstration of his rising clout. In August 2023 he was the subject of an extended profile in *The Atlantic* magazine. The staff writer Graeme Wood had known BAP personally for a long time, and his profile named and identified BAP as Costin Alamariu. It was a detailed exposé of BAP's intellectual lineage and included comments from Alamariu's advisors at Yale, Bryan Garsten and Steven B. Smith.²²

Smith, who was the head of Alamariu's dissertation committee, explained that he was enraged by Alamariu's work, which in his mind clearly undermined the principles of liberal democracy. He told Wood that he was "shocked that his family would escape Ceaușescu's Romania only for Costin to undermine the principles of [American] democracy. I view that as a shameful act of betrayal." (Ceaușescu was the Communist dictator of Romania from 1965 to 1989.) Smith further said that he "made his disgust known" but ultimately signed off on Alamariu's work in 2015 because he "was his dissertation adviser, not his censor." This is, in many respects, admirable. In any case, it is difficult to think of a more perfect demonstration of the natural vulnerabilities (and nobility) of liberalism than the willingness of BAP's committee to sign off on his dissertation. Other forms of political order imprison, exile, or kill their ideological opponents; the liberal "regime" gives them tassels, velvet robes, and profiles in *The Atlantic* magazine.

Alamariu had already gained a lot of attention as BAP at this point. In 2022 Nate Hochman, a rising star on the New Right, told the writer Elisabeth Zerofsky that every junior staffer in the Trump administration had read *Bronze Age Mindset*.²³ Alamariu also had a crystal-clear understanding of the power of his Yale doctorate, and of his new status as elite magazine curio. A month or so after the *Atlantic* article came out and his real identity was brought to light, he cashed in. On September 15, 2023, after a good deal of self-promotion on X (formerly Twitter; the site was purchased by Elon Musk in 2022, and the name was changed in July 2023), Alamariu self-published his dissertation as a book, now with a new preface and an offensive title: *Selective Breeding and the Birth of Philosophy*. (The dissertation was called "The Problem of Tyranny and Philosophy in the Thought of Plato and Nietzsche.") *Selective Breeding* enjoyed a brief stint on the Amazon top 100 list.²⁴

In his book, Alamariu argued that the birth of philosophy was intimately connected to the idea of "breeding," which he said was coeval with the discovery of the concept of nature (*physis* in the Greek). He bundled the concepts of nature and "breeding" to aristocracy and contrasted these with convention, "taming," and "fundamental democracy"

or “totalitarian democracy” (reminiscent of the Longhouse).²⁵ He contended that philosophy and tyranny are indelibly connected—not as antagonists as is commonly supposed, or as sharing some ironic similarities, but as truly kindred. And he asserted that virtue is straightforwardly hereditary—this being the claim that probably mattered the most for him in his role as white supremacist agitator. As Dustin Sebell, a Straussian scholar, pointed out in a harrowing review of the book, Alamariu was not consistent on this last point.²⁶ The book was full of muddled concepts and categories and relied overmuch on what Sebell called “Straussian lullabies” (that is to say, unquestioned dogmas).²⁷

The thing I found silliest about Alamariu’s dissertation was how he manipulated what he came across in the old books he was interpreting. Some of the insights he makes so much of in his effort to spook people are not as esoteric or shocking as he supposes. The kind of “breeding” programming that forms the crux of his argument is not exactly secret or esoteric: Eugenics is a key policy plank in the “best regime” in Book V of Plato’s *Republic* (see 459a–460a). Alamariu repeatedly fell prey to a particularly juvenile form of cognitive bias: the supposition that every “insight” that is titillating or cruel must also be secretly true and important.²⁸

Alamariu also infused some raw “race science” into the self-published version of *Selective Breeding*. A choice sample from page 45 suggests that, contrary to popular teachings, there are massive genetic differences between different “historical population groups.” He said that Luigi Luca Cavalli-Sforza disproved Richard Lewontin’s argument that most genetic variation was within human populations and not between them. Alamariu then singles out “Black Africans, in particular,” for being “so divergent from the rest of humanity that they exceed the threshold commonly used in other species to draw sub-species boundaries. A revelation as shocking as it is by now indisputable.” On this lying point, the sources that Alamariu uses do not even say what he says they do.²⁹

Two days after *Selective Breeding*’s publication, someone brought renewed attention to the support that Alamariu had gleaned from his doctoral committee for his work. Someone with the X handle “TheognisOMegara” posted the records of the committee’s official dissertation

commentary (from 2015) on the site, including grades, for all the world to see. These sorts of records are typically kept confidential in a student's university file, so it is hard to imagine that Alamariu did not leak them to "Theognis" himself. Alamariu retweeted that post with the comments, "Quite weird, odd . . . and maybe interesting?!"³⁰ The commentaries left Alamariu's committee—which also included Harvard's Harvey Mansfield—exposed, because each faculty member praised Alamariu's work. To be sure, the reports also contained clear criticisms and rebuttals, but those do not resonate as much as one might like, knowing what we know now.³¹

In any case, Alamariu seems to have understood the power that those reports would have to anyone on the outside. Posting the doctoral commentaries was, in its own tiny Twitterverse way, an astonishing stunt.

More astonishing were all the people suddenly eager to openly celebrate BAPism. The online bros of the Hard Right were clearly bedazzled by Alamariu's work—as were, perhaps more surprisingly, slices of the American far left. It was reviewed on several Hard Right sites, and on some more mainstream ones.³² Christopher Rufo congratulated Alamariu on his new book on X. Rising right-wing star Richard Hanania expressed support for it, too.³³ And so did Dasha Nekrasova. Nekrasova, who had a recurring role on *Succession* (as "Comfrey"), is, along with Anna Khachiyan, cohost of the *Red Scare* podcast, one of several left-wing podcasts that were originally inspired by the 2016 Bernie Sanders campaign (the main one being *Chapo Trap House*). Dasha celebrated Alamariu's new publication on X, and Alamariu responded in turn.³⁴

If *The End of Men* revealed the spiritual overlap between the far right and the New Age, antivax left, *Selective Breeding's* publication shone new light on the growing relationship between the Hard Right and the so-called dirtbag left.

Red Scare and the Dimes Square Scene

Political commentators sometimes use the phrase "horseshoe theory" to explain the connections between the far right and the far left, the idea being that at a certain point the extreme ideological ends of the political

spectrum come together. We have already seen how some of the environmental and homeopathic sensibilities of the left came to appeal to Raw Egg Nationalist. In 2024, Naomi Klein chronicled her own uncanny experience with this phenomenon in *Doppelganger*—which tracks the transformation of Naomi Wolfe (the strident formerly left feminist who Klein affectionately refers to as “Other Naomi”) into a conspiratorial crossover star of the far right.

Since so much of the New Right is at least rhetorically devoted to rejecting neoliberal economics, it is not surprising that new alliances with the left would emerge, and there is also a strong contingent on the left that is stridently opposed to left identity politics (which they see as elite posturing). Sohrab Ahmari’s journal *Compact* was dedicated to this crossover crowd. In any case, the more extreme the right became, the more appealing it became to the far left—to people like Glenn Greenwald, who is friendly with the *Red Scare* duo, or the European philosopher Slavoj Žižek. As the New Right grew more mainstream and came to dominate right-wing politics, Democrats and Never-Trumpers were increasingly locked-in as the mainstream establishment, and so became even less attractive to the left.

The *Red Scare* podcasters’ flirtations with Hard Right figures, and with BAP, seemed at the time like a high-water mark of the left-to-right pipeline.

Khachiyani and Nekrasova’s affection for BAP became evident when they reviewed *Bronze Age Mindset* on their podcast in 2022.³⁵ (Christopher Rufo had been on just a few episodes prior, and Glenn Greenwald was on just before that.) They were both clearly taken with the book—with its aesthetics, humor, and transgressiveness—and Khachiyani admitted to being jealous of BAP because she wanted what he had as a writer: “When somebody’s art is pure and good, you cannot help but be truly appreciative of them and celebrate their existence”—while fully acknowledging its latent fascism and hard-core racism.

Around a year later they had BAP on their show for a three-hour interview. They were excited. As one Patreon member said in the comments section for that episode, “The girls are really in turbo pick-me mode rn.”³⁶ BAP seemed to like them, too:

You guys should know you have a gigantic audience. I talk to people from all walks of life who will listen to you at so called highest levels of American society and they love you. For example, private counsel for X company. . . . And not just one . . . love, loves you. And so your audience is you know, maybe we don't have an audience as big as Tucker, but people who listen to us are, you know, "important" so-called people, right?³⁷

The heart of America's avant-garde "horseshoe" world came to be known as the Dimes Square scene in Lower Manhattan. In 2020 the area gained notoriety for its edgy countercultural writers bucking pandemic restrictions to hang out. There was a transgressive ("antiwoke") film festival in October 2021, New People's Cinema Club, that was funded by Peter Thiel and featured a *Red Scare* interview of the filmmaker John Waters.³⁸ Thiel's good friend Curtis Yarvin (aka Mencius Moldbug) was supposedly a fixture in this new scene, which included writers, artists, filmmakers, and podcasters—most of whom, like the *Red Scare* duo, delighted in flouting progressive cultural norms and constraints. There was room here for MAGA Republicans and for cynical left-wing aesthetes, for "canceled" heterodox thinkers, and even for radical Catholics. In August 2022 *The New York Times* published an opinion piece by *First Things* editor Julia Yost under the headline "New York's Hottest Club Is the Catholic Church," detailing the various Catholic strains in Dimes Square.³⁹ She included Nekrasova, who has described herself as ironically Catholic or "Catholic like Andy Warhol."⁴⁰ Honor Levy, an up-and-coming writer and recent Catholic convert, was also mentioned in this vein. On August 17, 2023, Ahmari hosted the book launch for his new book, *Tyranny Inc.*, at Sovereign House, an underground venue in Dimes Square. Bhaskar Sunkara, president of *The Nation* and founding editor of *Jacobin* magazine, cohosted the event.⁴¹

Like other parts of the New Right, the Dimes Square scene was soaked in contrarian irony and "wink-wink" camaraderie. The general mood seemed to be one of cool nonchalance—but there was also a taste for titillating spectacle, and even LARPing, proto-fascistic nastiness. One observer of Dimes Square became the target for a piece of

performance art where he was publicly humiliated on camera, apparently in retribution for his having written critically about the scene.⁴² Reading his account reminded me of Thomas Mann's short story about fascism in Italy, *Mario and the Magician*—minus the murder, and minus the hoi polloi. Curtis Yarvin was one of the key participants in this, as was Dasha Nekrasova.

The Rufo Manifesto

During his interview with *Red Scare*, Costin Alamariu disclaimed any interest in serious fascist politics, saying that it was totally unrealistic and had no future. He insisted that his project was strictly cultural: He was interested in filmmakers, artists, and other literary phenomena, not in political candidates. He also expressed disagreement with others on the New Right—like Richard Hanania and Steve Sailer—for their Podunk, shopkeeper-like interest in race science; Alamariu's racism is much more visceral and brutal.⁴³

This line—this idea of caring only for culture, and not for politics—has been a favorite of elite fascist intellectuals since the 1930s. It is reminiscent of Heidegger's efforts to forge a distinction between “vulgar National Socialism” and “spiritual National Socialism,” or of Alain de Benoist's “metapolitical” ideas for “total ideological saturation” and a “Gramscism of the Right” in the *Nouvelle Droite* of the 1960s through the 1980s.⁴⁴ It was also a line taken by fascist intellectuals in Alamariu's Romania.

The famous University of Chicago professor Mircea Eliade's commitment to the fascist Legionary Movement was fully exposed only after his death, thanks in large part to precisely that sort of dissembling. Throughout his life he would say that he had only ever been interested in the cultural and religious dimensions of the movement. But for Eliade, as for many others, fascism involved mystical vitality, and, in particular, the myth of a “new man.”⁴⁵ Here is a sample of such rhetoric, from 1934:

Revolution? Why not? Everyone who wants to endow his life with meaning is born through revolution. But let us remember that a true revolution (not a politicianized pseudorevolution, a change of nobles

and rulers) begins with a very full soul, with a sacred, biological fury against lies and hypocrisy, with a pagan thirst for a new life, a new man, a new world. The man who prepares himself for revolution is a man of mystery. He goes shouting the new spirit in the streets only after he has accomplished the revolution himself, after he has seen and tasted it. A new man! But, by God, this new man is our salvation, he is the sense of our existence! The new man is made, not awaited. Above all, the new man means a complete break with the hypocrisy and cowardice of the society in which we live. A young man unattached to anything, without fear and without stain, with eyes on the future, not the practices of the past.⁴⁶

By 1937, Eliade was tying the myth of the “new man” inseparably to the fascist (and ruthlessly violent) Legionaries in fascist publications.⁴⁷

Eliade’s fascism was mystical and Eastern Orthodox, whereas BAP’s is more pagan (though Alamariu himself is Jewish), but both rely on a mythical presentation of male vitality, and both men dissemble about the relationship between their vitalistic myth-making and hard politics. The feigned distinction between politics and culture-warring is just a mask for totalizing politics.

Others on the New Right, of course, do not share BAP’s faux skepticism about political action. Shortly after BAP did his part to humiliate the Yale and Harvard faculty who constituted his dissertation committee, the New Right, with Christopher Rufo at the helm, found a way to call into question the legitimacy of the entire Ivy League.

It began with an embarrassing session in Congress in which the presidents of Harvard, Penn, and MIT were questioned by Representative Elise Stefanik (R) about antisemitism and failed to articulate and defend university principles and guidelines surrounding free speech and student safety. This happened in the wake of campus turmoil following the gruesome terrorist attacks against Israel of October 7, 2023, and then the brutal—critics called it genocidal—response on the part of Israel in

Gaza. The line of questioning pursued by Stefanik was clearly a setup, but the three presidents walked right in. Within weeks, Penn president Liz Magill had resigned, and recently appointed Harvard president Claudine Gay became a new target for aggressive right-wing activism. Christopher Rufo was very open about his campaign against Gay, which involved, crucially, the discovery of plagiarism in her published scholarship. Rufo posted about the allegations in coordination with others at the *Washington Free Beacon*, and additional evidence soon materialized.⁴⁸

This was a tenuous time in campus politics. Though it is always hard to get a synoptic picture, it was rich to see some American conservatives so deeply concerned about “student safety” after years of ridiculing woke liberal snowflakes and campus safe spaces; it was jarring to see some people on college campus dismiss Jewish students’ safety concerns after years of safetyism on college campuses, and after their recent, more proactive support of Black students following George Floyd’s murder (“silence is violence,” we were told, but not so “From the River to the Sea”); it was truly sickening to see college administrations that for many years had celebrated (and marketed) activism and diversity react so forcefully against pro-Palestine student protesters and critics of Israel’s gruesome war on Gaza.⁴⁹ It was also excruciating to watch liberal and progressive academics make excuses for Claudine Gay just because the accusations against her were made in bad faith.

Gay resigned from the Harvard presidency on January 2, 2024.⁵⁰ Rufo took his victory laps.⁵¹ And on January 4, 2024, he published his own set guidelines for the new movement, called “The New Right Activism: A Manifesto for the Counterrevolution,” in a *Hard Right* magazine called *IM-1776*.⁵² It reads as a blend of Eliade’s fascism, Vermeule and Deneen’s “integration from within,” and the Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025.

Rufo’s manifesto recommended a new activism “with the courage and resolve to win back the language, recapture institutions, and reorient the state towards rightful ends.” He made the case that the ends justify the means in plain, militant language, à la Claremont, arguing that today’s “regime” consists of an “opaque and coercive set of psychological, cultural, and institutional patterns that has largely replaced the

old constitutional way of life,” and that today’s status quo “requires not conservation, but reform, and even revolt.”

Rufo’s case for revolt borrowed justification from the Postliberal and Schmittian idea that high principles outweigh “procedural values.” For Rufo, modern liberalism is clearly dissatisfying, and he wants to renew the “great political tradition of the West.” He described the latter in nice Aristotelian terms of “republican self-government, shared moral standards, and the pursuit of eudaimonia or human flourishing.” Like Vermeule, Rufo disavowed the idea of liberal institutional neutrality, and of liberal public reason (“political life moves on narrative, emotion, scandal, anger, hope, and faith—on irrational, or at least subrational feelings that can be channeled, but never destroyed by reason,” he wrote). For Rufo—since neutrality is an illusion—the government is ultimately always in charge of cultural formation, and this should be made explicit: “The chief vectors for the transmission of values—the public school, the public university, and the state—are not market-places at all. They are government-run monopolies. In truth, the hand that moves culture is not an ‘invisible hand,’ but an iron clad in velvet—that is, political force.” To be effective, the right must harness these state forces and seize the cultural levers of power, too.

Much of Rufo’s manifesto consisted of a cloying faux-pious account of how the New Right must perform a reenactment of the Gospel of John. “In the beginning was the Word,” he wrote, and “this is true also in politics.” As such, the New Right should engage in wordy “agitprop,” to control the political discourse, which will eventually result in the “elevation of . . . discourse into law.” Rufo asserted that “institutions are where the word becomes flesh.” This insight forces the activist to recognize the importance of subterfuge and impurity. Sometimes, “he must conceal his radicalism in the mask of respectability.” Ultimately, though, all that matters is who is in charge: “The only question is who will lead [today’s institutions] and by which set of values. The New Right must summon the self-confidence to say, ‘We will, and by our values.’” He then recommends a path that by now should sound familiar: “We must recruit, recapture, and replace existing leadership.”

Rufo concludes with the thought that all this must be done for the sake of higher-order principles, for “a telos.” Here, I think, he says something interesting:

The language of ends has almost vanished from American life, and this disappearance supplies the greatest opportunity for the New Right. Because of its religious adherence, the Right still has access to the language of ends—the language of God, or, in its more contemporary form, “Nature and Nature’s God.” My conviction is that ends will ultimately triumph over means; men will die for truth, liberty, and happiness, but will not die for efficiency, diversity, and inclusion.

The best way to counter the degradations of American institutional life is to remind the public of the fundamental purpose of those institutions, and to communicate that purpose. What is the purpose of the university? What is the purpose of a school? What system of government will guide us toward human happiness? These questions provoke doubt and anxiety in the current regime. And no wonder. The idea of happiness, properly understood, can be revolutionary.

The rest of Rufo’s essay consists of a further attack on the “regime,” and one final declaration that “the fight is here.”

For all his fascist buffoonery, Rufo’s comments about the ends of politics and political institutions strike me as correct, at least to a degree. He exaggerates when he says that the language of ends and purposes has “almost vanished” from American public life, but he is right that the liberal American mainstream is anxious and squirrely when it comes to questions about purpose and meaning, and that these anxieties supply “the greatest opportunity for the New Right.” Where Rufo and the New Right go wrong is in their understanding of the relationship between liberalism and “the language of ends,” or the role of human meaning, values, and morality in the context of liberal democracy. The basic theoretical confusion is as follows: The New Right mistakes academic liberalism for the real thing. They assume that liberalism’s embrace of political neutrality means a simple rejection and disavowal of all particular conceptions of the good life, and of values like “truth, liberty, and happiness” (or “the Good, the True, and the Beautiful”), in favor of an empty commitment to

equality and relativism. But that is absurd. Liberalism tries to be procedurally neutral with respect to whole traditions and ways of life, but it is not neutral all the way down. It cares about happiness and liberty and truth—and it certainly does not reject “the good life,” or even the fascist “new man.” Rather, it is morally pluralistic. And it actively makes room for divergent accounts of what is good, which people and communities are then, within negotiated, political limits, free to make their own.

But liberalism is not intuitive, and it can be hard to understand, articulate, and appreciate. And it does not include any single, totalizing, wholesale cultural program. These are major vulnerabilities that the New Right exploits, ruthlessly. Just like fascism does.

NETTR

IM-1776 magazine, where Rufo published his manifesto, was founded in 2020. It pitches itself as more concerned with literary excellence than with politics, but its first ever post was a sparkling review of *Bronze Age Mindset* by the Dugin popularizer and Toronto PhD Michael Millerman. The chief editor of the magazine is Mike Granza, an Italian who moved to Hungary in 2022.⁵³ In addition to their online site, and somewhat like Raw Egg Nationalist’s *Man’s World* magazine, *IM-1776* publishes high-end print editions, in keeping with the Hard Right’s antimodern aesthetic. Everything about *Man’s World* and *IM-1776* screams fascism.

In their mission statement from September 2020, the *IM-1776* editors wrote “welcome to the end of modernity.”⁵⁴ They claimed to be operating against liberalism and progress because they cared so much about education and the “necessary education for civilization—conversation, friendship, and insight.” They concluded with an uplifting thought: “We will encourage friendship among our writers and readers. Love of nobility and love of wisdom will be our answers to these trying times.” In 2023 the editors announced an effort to fund more writers. There they insisted: “Transgression for the sake of transgression isn’t our principle. What’s needed is a real vision for a better future with Truth and Beauty at its core.”⁵⁵

IM-1776 regularly publishes Millerman’s work, as well as a good number of the most extreme Claremont Institute affiliates like Michael

Anton, Glenn Ellmers, and Scott Yenor.⁵⁶ It is part of a growing network of Hard Right media outlets that includes websites like *American Greatness*, *The American Mind*, *Revolver News*, and *TheBlaze*, as well as a seemingly limitless proliferation of podcasts.

The political militancy of *IM-1776* came to view in an interview that the magazine editor Daniel Miller conducted with a man named Charles Haywood in December 2022. Haywood is a lawyer and former personal care product manufacturer who turned to far-right blogging and Christian activism after he sold his company in 2020. He has close connections to the Claremont Institute and helped to found a secret Christian nationalist men's society in 2020 called the Society for American Civic Renewal (SACR).⁵⁷ Others leaders at the Claremont Institute, like Ryan Williams and Scott Yenor, and former Lincoln Fellow and venture capitalist Nathan Fischer, were also involved in SACR—a fact disclosed in 2024, when various journalists obtained Yenor's emails via public record requests through his employer, Boise State University. Later, when Williams and others from this crowd decided to “resettle across America” and form small, “aligned” right-wing enclaves, they got their own glossy write-up in *The New York Times*.⁵⁸

The *IM-1776* interview had to do with an argument that had erupted between Haywood and the writer Rod Dreher over the subject of right-wing loyalty and the slogan “No Enemies to the Right” (or NETTR, a policy that, in effect, advocated for the complete abandonment of the old cordon sanitaire). Haywood was a hardened proponent of the tactic, whereas Dreher found it unhinged and morally corrupt. The dispute had been provoked by the discovery that Thomas Achord, who at the time was also the principal of a private Christian school in Louisiana, was a rabid white nationalist. This happened in late November 2022 and caused a minor uproar on the right, in part because Achord's podcasting partner, Stephen Wolfe, had just published his book *The Case for Christian Nationalism* earlier that month (Wolfe figures prominently in the next chapter). Rod Dreher does not think of himself as someone who likes racists, and he was aghast at the discovery about Achord, who had been operating a pseudonymous account under an alias for years, where he posted anti-Black and misogynist comments online.⁵⁹ Dreher's children had also attended the school that Achord led, so it was personal for him. He took a principled stance.

In response, Charles Haywood vented a good deal of spleen, offering a vivid glimpse, once more, of the atmosphere of this Hard Right universe. Here is an excerpt from the interview:

What is our end? That is easy—winning. What is the winning condition? It is the total, permanent defeat of the Left, of the ideology at the heart of the Enlightenment, with its two core principles of total emancipation from all bonds not continuously chosen, and of total forced equality of all people. When this defeat is accomplished, Right principles, those based in reality and recognizing the nature of man, his limitations, and his capabilities, can again become ascendant.

Winning does not mean electoral victory such that Right principles may be voted into law, and then nullified or voted out again. *It means the total, permanent elimination of all Left power, and, even more importantly, the total discrediting, both on a moral and practical basis, of all Left ideology.* What is Left should be seen for what it is, evil, and it should be seen as not only destructive in practice, but laughable, the ideology of losers and idiots, or at most something from the discredited past, viewed with vague curiosity, as the cult of Mithras is today.⁶⁰

Later in the interview, Haywood explained, in hyper-paleoconservative, anti-Enlightenment form, how William F. Buckley was a “Judas” who “in hindsight we can see deliberately led the American Right into a box canyon, swiftly spiking any gun that seemed as if it might be effective in the war waged by the Left on decent America for over a hundred years.” He was presumably referring to Buckley’s efforts to purge extremists from conservative movement politics.

A year or so after *IM-1776* published that interview, on September 26, 2023, Christopher Rufo hosted a debate on Twitter Spaces on the subject of “No Enemies to the Right,” which was sponsored by *IM-1776* and featured Charles Haywood and Nathan Fischer on the “pro” side, and Neil Shenvi and Michael Young (“Wokal Distance”) arguing against.⁶¹ By this point the matter had become more urgent because prominent New Right figures just kept being revealed as white supremacists or Nazi sympathizers.

In June 2023 Pedro Gonzalez, a former Claremont Institute fellow, editor for Paul Gottfried's *Chronicles*, and a pro-DeSantis influencer, was exposed by Breitbart News for antisemitic and racist text messaging. Breitbart was acting against DeSantis for the Trump campaign; DeSantis's choice to run a hyper-online, Trumpier-than-Trump campaign had not necessarily paid off.⁶² (In addition to Gonzalez, the DeSantis campaign also enjoyed boosts from other former Claremonter fellows, including Josh Hammer, David Reaboi, and Jack Murphy.)⁶³

In July 2023 Nate Hochman, a communications staffer on the campaign (and a 2021 Publius Fellow with Claremont), was exposed for having secretly created and shared a promotional video for DeSantis that included the Nazi sonnenrad symbol. He had previously gotten into trouble for a Twitter Spaces conversation he had with Nick Fuentes.⁶⁴ But Hochman did not seem to be that radical or fringe. As David French explained at the time, in an opinion piece called "The Lost Boys of the American Right," Hochman was once a staff writer at *National Review*.⁶⁵

(As an aside: Nick Fuentes is a Catholic influencer and reactionary, rabid misogynist, white supremacist, and antisemite; he and BAP sometimes spar and troll each other over BAP's Jewishness. Trump had dinner with Ye/Kanye West and Fuentes at Mar-a-Lago in November 2022. The Israel-Palestine conflict that began in 2023 led to schisms within the Hard Right, with people like Fuentes and Candace Owens lining up against Israel, and BAP and many others siding with the Israeli ultranationalists.)

In August 2023 Richard Hanania, at the time a fellow at a new Salem Center for Public Policy at the University of Texas and an up-and-coming right-wing commentator, was exposed by the *Huffington Post* for having posted for years as the white supremacist "Richard Hoste," who argued for eugenics and the forcible sterilization of people with low IQ.⁶⁶

The Twitter Spaces discussion organized by Rufo about "No Enemies to the Right" was interesting primarily because it brought some key tensions in the movement to light, and not just among fanatics like Charles Haywood and the others, but also among various Christian constituencies on the right. All five participants in the discussion were professing Christians, and so inevitably the question of the relative

importance of politics versus religion came into play. Didn't faithfulness and spiritual ends matter more than political action and efficacy? Was it Christian to ally with sin and darkness? Shenvi and Young spoke eloquently, quoting scripture, about both the practical and spiritual costs of "No Enemies to the Right." Haywood and Fischer were unmoved.

On the X platform, while this conversation was streaming, beneath Rufo's tweet announcing the discussion, a man named Clifford Humphrey piped in. Humphrey has a PhD in American history from Hillsdale, was then the director of Religious Coalitions at Yoram Hazony's Edmund Burke Foundation, and in May 2023 was appointed executive vice chancellor of the Florida College System. Beneath Rufo's tweet on X, Humphrey said, presumably referring to one of the moderates (so Shenvi or Young), "Someone get this guy a watch. He has no idea what time it is."⁶⁷

Hazony had for a time followed Buckley's lead, keeping the worst extremists out of National Conservatism. But here was his director of religious coalitions publicly declaring that nothing extremists on the right could do or say was beyond the pale. The Dimes Square scene showed how the Hard Right seduced the far left. The *IM-1776* X discussion offered a glimpse of how the Hard Right moves around in, divides, and conquers the Christian right. Contemporary far-right Christianity is the subject of chapter 12.