

**PROUD BOYS
AND THE WHITE
ETHNOSTATE**

**HOW THE ALT-RIGHT
IS WARPING THE
AMERICAN IMAGINATION**

ALEXANDRA MINNA STERN

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only serve as an imaginative cauldron for alt-right meme-making; they also enable the construction of a romanticized white tribal identity and of networks with flesh-and-blood counterparts that materialize in real-life nationalist meet-ups. Hannah Arendt cautioned in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* that “the unprecedented, once it has appeared, may become a precedent for the future.”⁴⁰ This book seeks to offer a lens through which to detect and disassemble precedents of the alt-right that have gained traction in discourse and culture, and are anathema to the values of equality, justice, and democracy.

CHAPTER I
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RED PILLS FOR THE MASSES

Metapolitical Awakenings

Europe Is Falling is the name of a British YouTube vlogger who posts short monologues about dystopia and decline in the West. He is one of many content producers on social media whose perspective is framed by ethnonationalism, and he labels himself and his growing gallery of videos as alt-right. Although Europe Is Falling is a minor avatar in the transatlantic movement, his ideas are representative of the larger alt-right world. Europe Is Falling melodramatically conveys the grave urgency evinced by many alt-righters about the desperate future of the West and white people. He also exemplifies a salient segment of the media landscape that encompasses not the big names of the movement, like Richard Spencer or Andrew Anglin of the Daily Stormer, but an ever-expanding ensemble of vloggers, podcasters, tweeters, and trolls. Several of his vlogs have been flagged by users as “inappropriate or offensive.” Europe Is Falling describes poignantly and in a resounding voice what it feels like to swallow the red pill, that “perfectly crystallizing moment when a person lets go of what was has been and what was and realizes, with a sense of pure clarity and calm, that the place they have known their entire life, the place their parents and grandparents inhabited, that place is gone. The world generations of Europeans have lived, loved, and lost in for hundreds if not thousands of years is leaving us, and it can’t ever return.”⁴¹

Europe Is Falling's description of red pill conversion was inspired by off-script remarks given by the Scottish ethnonationalist Millennium Woes at an alt-right conference held in Europe, when he expressed intermingled astonishment and remorse at the prospect of white Europeans being replaced irrevocably by brown and black interlopers. In this instance, red pill awareness came packaged as anxieties about the supposed slow grind toward white European extinction. For Europe Is Falling, this awakening was so emotionally intense that it generated "a deep, profound amount of cognitive dissonance and grieving," sensations common among many alt-righters who alternately bewail and boast about their status as heretics, dissidents, and victims in the multicultural era.²

Now a prevalent metaphor, the red pill made its debut in the cult science fiction film *The Matrix*. Toward the end of the movie, Morpheus holds out his hand and offers Neo, the (anti)hero, the choice between the red pill and the blue pill. Morpheus tells him, "After this there is no turning back. You take the blue pill, the story ends. You wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to. You take the red pill, you stay in Wonderland, and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes."³ Neo, famously, takes the red pill. This iconic moment, of choosing raw reality over the Matrix has become a ubiquitous meme and shorthand for alt-right conversion. To be red pillled is to accept the cold, hard truth about the foundations of individual and collective existence, and to radically shift one's parameters of reality in accordance with this newfound knowledge. It symbolizes a bold exit from mainstream society, corrupted as it is by liberals and conservatives alike, and an alternative approach to making distinctions between what is and what ought to be.

The red pill might lead to an epiphany about the rightness of white nationalism and/or the repudiation of feminism, multiculturalism, leftism, liberalism, and globalism, followed by the embrace of traditionalism, hierarchy, and inequality. There are thousands of red-pilling stories, each one slightly different, yet they all pivot around transformation. As conversation stories characterized by a near-religious fervor, they interweave information, feeling, exhibitionism, and solipsism, betraying the extent to which the internet is an affective mediascape that enables personal and cultural meaning-making.⁴ Sharing these testimonies, as Europe Is Falling does, with anonymous and vast online congregations makes red pilling a communal experience and helps construct a shared language of

social transformation. The alt-right pines for an interlinked transatlantic community of awakened whites who will reverse their impending minority status and reclaim the West before it is too late.

RED-PILLING STORIES

Ryan Lenz, who gathers information on hate groups for the Southern Poverty Law Center and edits its *Hatewatch* blog, claims that the red pill is "a new label for an old idea," namely one of white superiority, employed by white people trying to convince their kin that "we're better than others."⁵ Researchers at the Data & Society Research Institute in New York City found that the red pill has been instrumental in catalyzing online radicalization and illustrates how the "alt-right, white nationalists, and men's-rights activists manipulate the mainstream media to amplify their ideas and shape news narratives to their advantage."⁶ Even if it's a well-worn prejudice encased in new-fangled coating, how the red pill is swallowed matters. It is an internet drug with unique properties that can induce personal transformation and collective conversion. In the words of Jazzhands McFeels, host of the Daily Stormer's *Fish the Nation* podcast, "There is no going back once you go down that route." Once a libertarian and conventional conservative, McFeels was always searching for something more, and the red pill unlocked that possibility: "the red pill is in and of itself a quest for truth."⁷ The stark before-and-after is a Manichean worldview in which principles are unequivocal and there is no room for ambiguity. Even the latest rejoinders to the red pill/blue pill dyad, the black pill and the white pill, are but change supplements. The black pill represents the nihilism and defeat that some men experience when post-red pill life turns out to be drearily anticlimactic.⁸ The white pill symbolizes a peppy infusion of optimism, usually related to perceived personal and political achievements.⁹

The red pill metaphor first gained traction in the mansphere in the early 2010s, as men's rights activists Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW) and Pick Up Artists (PUA) sought out virtual communities where they could interpret their romantic, physical, and erotic lives without the irritating interference of feminism and gender egalitarianism.¹⁰ Blogs like *Return of Kings* and *Chateau Hermitic* emerged as forums for unfiltered discussions of sexual prowess, warrior culture, and female

conquest among straight men who “believe men should be masculine and women should be feminine” and that “testosterone is the biological cause for masculinity.”¹¹ These sites are bustling today, and posts and discussions frequently veer into pornographic and gruesome deparities about women’s bodies and their sexual objectification.¹²

In the manosphere, swallowing the red pill meant not only the crowning of masculinity but the erasure and evisceration of feminism and its beguiling companions of liberalism, leftism, and “cultural Marxism.” Rather than blindly accepting modern gender relations, which had turned men into winny betas or, worse yet, frustrated and despondent incels (involuntary celibates), the red piller turned to a version of “evolutionary psychology,” which posits that “men and women are genetically different, both physically and mentally.”¹³ The nasty, brutish, and short upshot was that men had evolved to dominate women and women had evolved to be dominated. Howard Dare, a MGTOW vlogger, assures his audience that after ingesting the red pill they will no longer let themselves be controlled by women or harmed by the distortions of a society held hostage by third-wave feminism.¹⁴ Comments to his posts bear out these eureka moments: “2017: The year of enlightenment. The year I woke up. The year I stopped being thirsty. The year I took the red pill. The year I stopped putting other people ahead of me and put myself first.”¹⁵ One user connects his self-actualization to the (re)imposition of a strict gender order: “A society must have a gender that is more dominant. It has always been Men just like the animal kingdom. Men has always been expected to hunt and woman to care for the family (cooking and cleaning).”

The premier chat room of the manosphere is subreddit *r/The Red Pill* (TRP), launched in 2012, when it broke away from sub-*r/reddit r/sexdiscussion* to concentrate more directly on “game,” or how to vanquish women and maintain traditional relationships. TRP advised its users that “the frame around public discourse is a feminist frame, and we’ve lost our identity because of it,” and that the “key to developing a good sexual strategy” was to adhere to sexist interpretations of evolutionary psychology.¹⁶ TRP became the go-to site for men to compare notes about dating and sex, discuss diet regimes and workout routines, and offer philosophical reflections on gender and sex differences.¹⁷

Subreddit *r/TRP* remains enormously popular, with over 280,000 subscribers and around 2,500 users online at any given moment.¹⁸ Mor-

pheus Manfred, whose handle was inspired by *The Matrix*, is one of the TRP’s head moderators and describes its mission as providing “a place where men could discuss masculine topics without facing the same public shaming outcry that happens on social media sites. . . . Feminists are quick on the trigger to try to take down anything they consider wrong.”¹⁹ At *r/TRP*, men learn self-reliance and how to solve their own problems, which “encourages strength” and diminishes dependency on others. They also learn that women are untrustworthy flirts who possess no insights about men or male-female relationships: “Having a vagina does not afford you words special weight or wisdom, or give you any inside understanding of how men should deal with women.”²⁰ Particular animosity is directed at feminists and assertive women in threads such as “Feminism is a Cancer that is Metastasizing everywhere,” “How feminism has fucked society,” and “Women are entitled, spoiled brats.”²¹ Advice for controlling undesirable female behavior, setting boundaries, and conveying male preferences abound in threads such as “Training Your Woman: Subliminal.”²² In fall 2018 Reddit placed TRP in quarantine status, advising visitors that this online community “is dedicated to shocking or highly offensive content,” a depiction that its moderators vehemently deny. They have appealed the quarantine and complain that Reddit never provided any reasoning for their action.²³

Appropriating the lingo of the Left, manospherers called their virtual forums “safe spaces,” constructed as exclusionary male sanctuaries freed from the tone and content policing of feminists. The masculinist origins of the red pill help to explain why it appealed to alt-righters, overwhelmingly white men, who felt aggrieved and victimized, and resented that their entitlement and privilege was no longer necessarily the default position in society. The Manichaean logic of the red pill migrated easily to the emerging alt-right, which bundled the ideas of innate gender roles into understandings of racial and ethnic differences as biological and fixed.²⁴

Red pilling often begins through exposure to the so-called alt-light. For example, social media personality Stefan Molyneux shies away from overt advocacy of white nationalism and thus is dubbed alt-light, but his ideas open up the side door of the alt-right. Molyneux’s YouTube channel, Freedomain Radio, which has over eight hundred thousand subscribers, is a superstar red piller, raising awareness of the putative destructiveness of feminism and incontrovertible genetic associations between race and

intelligence.²⁵ In one of his vlogs, Moynieux asks his viewers what red pillers them, recounting his experience of waking up to the hypocrisy of so-called feminists who supported President Bill Clinton during the Monica Lewinsky affair.²⁶ His users offer hundreds of responses. Alt-right female media personality Bre Fauchoux shares, “The biggest red pill for me was realizing that feminism had a connection to communism and that having a job and income wouldn’t fulfill me in the end.”²⁷ An anonymous user writes, “My biggest red pill moment was realizing White Europeans had distinctive qualities, and not just physically, and deserved protection and to keep their ethnic bastions.” Others mention being red pillled by the presidential campaigns of Ron Paul or Bernie Sanders, as well as by Brexit and by reading *The Bell Curve* by Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein.

If red pilling was happening on the DL (down low) and mainly in the manosphere in the early 2010s, it mushroomed after Donald Trump’s presidential victory in 2016. One recent study identifies Trump, whose Twitter megaphone is stamped with the imprimatur of the White House, as a red piller of colossal proportions.²⁸ In the days leading up to Thanksgiving 2016, the media was awash with warnings about the likelihood of irreconcilable political rifts erupting around turkey and apple pie. To prepare its readers, *Vice* published “How to Tell If Your Alt-Right Relative Is Trying to Redpill You at Thanksgiving.”²⁹ Part serious advice, part tongue-in-cheek, the piece warned that “things will really take a turn if your uncle ‘decides he wants to redpill you after you pass him the gravy.’” While *Vice* was trying to counter the red pill, alt-right websites were actively encouraging proselytizing. A sub-thread appeared in TRP on “Strategies to Redpill Your Family over the Holidays.” On Infowars, the now-banned conspiracy-laden site run by Alex Jones, guest host Matt Dubiel primed the “Resistance” on how to red pill skeptical relatives at Thanksgiving dinner without scaring them away. He paternalistically advised fathers to orate the poem “If” by Rudyard Kipling, the unabashed British racist and imperialist fawned over by alt-righters.³⁰ Rigidity composed, “If” celebrates obduracy in the face of uncertainty. One poetry scholar calls it “a classic of righteous certitude.”³¹ Dubiel assures his viewers that Kipling’s verse will allow fathers to “show”—not “tell”—family and friends the right way forward. Stanzas like “Yours is the Earth and everything that’s in it, And—which is more—you’ll be a Man, my son!” stress the necessity of fighting through adversity and will prompt relatives

to reflect on what they’ve endured as Americans and appreciate Trump for persevering despite being pilloried by the liberal media. Evidently, mansplaining poetry from the playbook of “The White Man’s Burden” can anchor core alt-right tenets while making the Resistance family-friendly.³²

In addition to serving as an accessible device for self-narration and a beacon for cultivating group identity, the red pill encapsulates the alt-right’s love affair with culture. The red pill was offered by a cinematic hand; its magnetic message has circulated far and wide. It signals the alt-right’s desire to become the hip counterculture of the twenty-first century. As a catchphrase, it has helped spawn an inventive glossary that includes “cuckservative/cuck,” “normie,” “fashy,” “snowflake,” and “Overton window.”³³ As the most colorful entry in the alt-right glossary, the “red pill” is also a metaphor that relies on and seeks to shape culture.³⁴ As a sign in a semiological hall of mirrors that careens from righteous militancy to misanthropic irony, it signifies how alt-right vocabulary has insinuated itself into the American imagination and helped create alternate myths.³⁵

Alt-righters expend a lot of energy reflecting on red-pilling strategies, particularly those that might turn someone. *Fash the Nation* offers a series of Red Pill 101 tutorials such as “Multiculturalism, Equality, and Race.”³⁶ Before her 27-Crows Radio YouTube videos disappeared from the internet in 2018, Bre Fauchoux devoted much time to red pilling, including “Alt Right 101: How to Red Pill Loved Ones,” which she coproduced with British nationalist Mark Collett. Tweeter Alba Rising expresses a common viewpoint, “Want to ‘redpill’ someone? Don’t say the edgiest shit you can say. Say the small thing that they’re thinking but don’t have the courage to say. You’ll have a disciple for life.”³⁷ In a podcast conversation, Richard Spencer and his former collaborator at the National Policy Institute, Gregory Conte, mull over the hope that alt-righters, presenting as “normies,” can infiltrate institutions, then start “implementing red pillled positions” and enact a stealth take-over of society.³⁸ In the ideal scenario, alt-righters will engineer a “mass seduction of society.” This fantasy of mass conversion, of thousands of Neos swallowing the red pill, connects the red pill metaphor directly to metapolitics, one of the alt-right’s core concepts.

If the red pill represents the individual conversion from darkness to light, then metapolitics is white nationalist consciousness-raising at the collective level. Unearthing the history and meaning of metapolitics illustrates the peculiar evolution of the alt-right at the fraught nexus of the

manosphere, paleoconservatism, white supremacism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia. However, tracing the genealogy of metapolitics leads not to white hoods carrying torches or swastika-filled rallies but instead to Western Europe in the mid-twentieth century.³⁹ Surprisingly, it also leads to the theories of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci and to a group of Jewish intellectuals and exiles that founded the Frankfurt School to critically study authoritarianism and capitalism in the aftermath of the Holocaust.⁴⁰

Metapolitics and the European New Right

At a press conference in September 2016, soon after Trump had won the Republican primary, Spencer offered a definition of the alt-right: “I don’t think the best way of understanding the alt-right is strictly in terms of policy. I think metapolitics is more important than politics. I think big ideas are more important than policies.”⁴¹ For the alt-right intellectuals who draw on theory and philosophy, the concept of metapolitics undergirds and guides their agendas. Privileging cultural intervention over institutional political change, metapolitics distinguishes the New Right from older conservatives, whether neocons, libertarians, or the Religious Right. Alt-righters view metapolitics as the intellectual key that can unlock massive social transformation, bewildering the Left and liberals along the way.

The hosts of the *Interregnum* podcast, produced by Arkos, encourage the conspicuous use of metapolitically coded language to reform the Right. Like most European identitarians, they want to jettison the clumsy nationalist rhetoric attached to Nazism.⁴² They attest that using a metapolitical vocabulary will make the New Right “unique and radical and revolutionary. . . . It’s fresh. . . . These are ideas that have never been put in practice into politics before. . . . These are metapolitical ideas.”⁴³ The Arkos brain trust claims that metapolitics is the “thing that they [the Left] don’t understand,” namely, that “we are reformulating the right, and we are doing that by altering what is the left/right paradigm. . . . By changing the political paradigm, we are bringing with us the ideas that will reformulate the right.”⁴⁴ For European and American white nationalists, metapolitics is interwoven into proposals for pervasive social change. Assessing the continued fallout from Charlottesville in late 2018, Conte was interviewed on *Interregnum* about the status of the alt-right. He interpreted setbacks in the legal and online realms as par for the course for

a dissident movement that is “playing for all the marbles,” clarifying that “you can’t expect to fight an asymmetrical metapolitical war if you are not able to take the blows as they come.” This transatlantic podcast conversation emphasized that the alt-right’s primary objective is the conversion of whites-in-waiting to their side, a prospect facilitated by the current “late stage of disintegration, of social disintegration,” which is dissolving bonds of “kith and kin.” In this maelstrom, ideas are the only glue that can build and unite white nationalist communities. Arkos’s editor in chief, John Bruce Leonard, reminded listeners “our ideas have to be stronger means of binding us than anything else in today’s world, because we don’t have anything else to fall back on.”⁴⁵

Metapolitics, however, was not formulated during the alt-right’s recent rise but has a much longer and more circuitous trajectory. Originally coined by German thinkers such as Gottlieb Hufeland, August Ludwig von Schlözer, and Carl von Rotteck in the nineteenth century, metapolitics initially referred to a philosophical exploration of principles of rights and of the state independent of politics. French thinkers picked up the term in the late 1800s, proposing that metapolitics was to politics as metaphysics was to physics—the “meta” implied an overarching supra-philosophical approach to the subject at hand. To study the “meta” required forays into the transcendental and religious dimensions of politics, which in turn often translated into a foregrounding of “sacred roots, mythic symbols, and eschatological values.”⁴⁶ Metapolitics was distinct from, if not antithetical to, materialism; it rejected classic Marxism or structuralism and was outside the epistemological margins of empirical disciplines such as sociology or history.

Since its initial coinage in the nineteenth century, metapolitics has taken many shapes, meaning different things to various intellectual and political coterries. For example, the French philosopher Alain Badiou published a book in 2012 titled *Metapolitics*, which seeks to reinvigorate militant politics through a theoretical rumination on the fiction, if not vacancy, of the modern state. Badiou employs the lenses of Marxism, reserving ample room for the revolutionary theories of Lenin and Mao. Politically, this approach contrasts to that of the alt-right. It does share, however, a focus on culture as the staging ground for political change. It aligns with the pithy adage articulated by *Breitbart News*: “Politics is downstream from culture.”⁴⁷

The American alt-right's foregrounding of metapolitics owes a large debt to the European New Right (ENR). Indeed, the rise of the alt-right is inextricably linked to the new nationalist movements that surged in Europe, especially France, in reaction to the political radicalization of the 1960s generation. Across the globe, a generation that had come of age in the aftermath of World War II and during the height of the Cold War began to question conventional power relations and rigid social structures and norms. From Buenos Aires to Prague, the New Left blossomed, seeking to change society through reform and revolution. In May 1968, French students protesting changes to the educational system (ironically associated with Americanization) took to the streets, and a brutal police response ensued.⁴⁸ Against this backdrop, the ENR was coalescing around an aversion to such radicalism and to liberalism, a rebuke of globalism, and angst about societal decay. The lettered intellectuals of the ENR were unnerved by what they witnessed unfolding around them as mores were broken and traditions ripped asunder. Yet this group averred that the answer was not the organization of another political party but the control of ideas and culture.

To formulate its intellectual program, the ENR eyed the Frankfurt School, a loose group of exiled—mainly Jewish—intellectuals who had established a school of critical thought starting in the 1930s. The Frankfurt School included thinkers such as Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Herbert Marcuse, who developed a cultural Marxist critique of authoritarian societies and the strictures of capitalism that distinguished it from economic analyses of capital and labor.⁴⁹ Its intellectual projects ranged from deconstructions of authoritarian personalities using sociological and psychoanalytic techniques to analyses of films and novels, often with close attention to aesthetics. For the Frankfurt School, form and style were as, if not more, important as function and content; the epiphenomena of culture merited a kaleidoscopic exploration that could unveil the deeper, bleaker dynamics at play in modern society, like those that allowed national socialism to take root in Germany. The ENR fashioned itself as the Frankfurt School of the new radical Right.

Elitist in make-up, the ENR distanced itself both from conservative establishment politicians and armed insurrectionary cells with neo-Nazi inclinations. Expressing its affection for socialist European thinkers, the French Right spearheaded the articulation of “metapolitics,” infusing

it with a heavy dose of Gramscian theory. The Italian Marxist Gramsci wrote his magnum opus, *The Prison Notebooks*, under the watchful eyes of prison guards in Italy, developing a vocabulary of political theory including terms such as “hegemony,” “war of position,” and “organic intellectuals.” He theorized political struggle as a long game that required significant engagement with culture, through which the Left could eventually reign by consent not force. This vision held great appeal to the ENR. During the tumultuous year of 1968 in Paris, the philosopher Alain de Benoist gravitated toward the Group for the Research and Study of European Civilization (GRECE), which had been formed by nationalist student organizations active in the 1950s and bestowed a name whose acronym nodded toward Hellenic mythology.

Benoist and the French New Right followed in the footsteps of the political non-conformism associated with the *Ordre Nouveau*, a group founded in France in the 1930s as an alternative to communism and capitalism, and which had provided an intellectual space for anti-egalitarian, patriarchal, and quasi-mystical ideas.⁵⁰ As the next incarnation of this variant of contrarian French politics, GRECE offered a home and a hub for the most radical Far Right intellectuals and for the exposition of right-leaning metapolitics. Benoist christened the date of “the birth of the New Right” as March 11, 1968, which marked the publication of the first issue of the magazine *Nouvelle École*.⁵¹ Tellingly, GRECE’s inaugural seminar was called “What Are Metapolitics?” and this “Gramscianism of the Right” cemented its commitment to culture and to fighting on the “battlefield of ideas.”⁵² As scholars of the New Right have noted, the *Manifesto per una rinascita europea* (Manifesto for a European Rebirth), edited by Benoist in 2000, implies that one of GRECE’s leading achievements was “without a doubt its metapolitical bent and the subsequent decision to abandon all militant or activist ambitions.”⁵³ GRECE devoted itself “exclusively to the vast and complex realm of culture, establishing, in the first decade, an ideological structure that was held up primarily by two fundamental themes: anti-egalitarianism and the definition of an authentically European identity.” As historian of fascism Roger Griffin has explained, GRECE didn’t want to “shoot politicians and seize power” but “take over book clubs.”⁵⁴

GRECE flourished, commanding the editorial page of the noted magazine *Le Figaro* in the 1970s and 1980s. Benoist received the Grand

Prize of the French Academy for his book *The Way of the Right*.⁵⁵ According to historian John Hellman, like its precursor Order Nouveau, by “focusing on the meta political and ignoring the democratic political processes” GRECE “infiltrated political parties, public administration, universities, and the mass media” and has had a lasting cultural influence in France.⁵⁶ Inspired by GRECE, metapolitics became a watchword of thinkers throughout Western Europe who gave “primacy to the struggle for cultural power over and above any concrete policy making, or politics as usual.”⁵⁷ A corollary of metapolitics was identitarianism, which also has a distinctly French flavor and gestated out of the intellectual milieu of the French New Right. Identitarianism was spearheaded by writer Guillaume Faye, who published in 2001 the “key work for Twenty-first century Identitarians,” *Why We Fight: Manifesto of the European Resistance*.⁵⁸

During the period from the genesis of GRECE to the advent of identitarianism, these European movements would not have mapped neatly on to white nationalism in America, which from the 1970s to 1990s was the province of neo-Nazi and right-wing Christian groups like Aryan Nations, National Alliance, and the World Church of the Creator.⁵⁹ American and European nationalists might have shared straitjacketed gender ideologies and loathing of liberalism and Jews, but the American movement in the late twentieth-century was dominated by white supremacists who conspired about race wars and were distant from bookish discussions of theories of culture.⁶⁰ They likely would have been perplexed and dismissive in the 1990s, when the French Right adapted the slogans of diversity and ethnopluralism, which sound eerily in sync with multiculturalism. Of course, this identitarian version means “diversity in isolation: all Frenchmen in one territory and all Moroccans in another.”⁶¹ And it was a forerunner of the alt-right’s euphemistic idea of human biodiversity, which postulates that cultures and racial groups maintain their integrity through a “separate but equal” policy that disallows interchange and mixing. In tandem with the rise of the alt-right, the theories of Benoist and his contemporary Faye have become the intellectual bedrock of ethnonationalists and identitarians across Europe and North America. Many of Benoist’s and Faye’s books have been translated into English and are distributed by both Counter-Currents and Arktos. Benoist and, to a lesser extent, Faye make regular appearances in alt-right webzines, podcasts, and on other online forums.

One of the myriad intellectual ironies of ethnonationalist and identitarian movements is that their desire to develop an edgy think tank prompted them to emulate the Frankfurt School, in which Jewish intellectuals played a crucial role. Today the alt-right at every turn excoincates so-called “cultural Marxism,” naming it as an enormous danger to Western civilization and linking it to Jewish conspiracies. In 2014 one alt-righter went so far as to venture that Herbert Marcuse, who was affiliated with the Frankfurt School, was the “father of the blue-pill.”⁶² This honor was due to Marcuse’s intellectual dismantling of America’s repressive sexual regime in the 1960s and his calls for upending the strictures of monogamy and patriarchy, which he dubbed the “great refusal.”⁶³ According to this alt-righter, postwar excessive sexual liberalization misled men with spurious enticements of libidinal freedom, only to find that the doors to gratification had been shut purposefully by women, who invariably were irrational and spiteful. The sexual counterculture of the 1960s was thus a great deception, obfuscating the truth of gender hierarchies: “True red-pillers know that all the betas marching around in berets were the first to lose out on the sexual bonanza promised by the ‘sexual revolution’ as they found out that, much to their horror, women’s unrestrained sexual nature is hypergamous.”⁶⁴

Metapolitics, American Style

In the early 2000s metapolitics began to cohere as a framework for the nascent alt-right in the United States, becoming a conceptual anchor for the webzine *Counter-Currents Publishing*, established in 2010 by Greg Johnson for an elite audience, which he believes is one whose members possess an IQ of 120 or higher. With its academic patina, *Counter-Currents* views metapolitics as pivotal to dislodging the Left’s control of culture, in all of its facets, fomenting white identity politics and installing the alt-right brand. In *Counter-Currents* Johnson explains that “our enemies have carefully laid the metapolitical foundations for the power they enjoy. They control academia, the school system, publishing, the arts, the news and entertainment media, and they have remade the American mind to their liking.” The aim of Counter-Currents, both the webzine and book publisher, is to “change people’s sense of what is politically desirable and right and their sense of what is politically conceivable and possible.”⁶⁵ As with the ENR, Gramsci’s theories of hegemony loom large. In Johnson’s words, “The concepts of

metapolitics and hegemony are the keys to understanding the differences between the Old Left and the New Left.⁶⁶ The alt-right's "war of position" will unfold on cultural terrain. As one comment posted to *Counter-Currents* stated: "The medium of metapolitics is culture."⁶⁷

However, the alt-right could not shake off good old American pragmatism. Whereas the French New Right was uninterested in political power, American white nationalists often see metapolitics as pre-political. Writes Johnson: "It is too soon for White Nationalist politics. So in the meantime, we need to focus on metapolitics, which will lay the foundations for the pursuit of political power."⁶⁸ Alt-righters espouse two prongs for building and expanding "soft power." The first is propaganda or "articulating and communicating our message"; the second is community organizing or "creating a community that lives according to our philosophy today and will serve as the nucleus of the new political order we seek to build tomorrow." Identified strategies for effective messaging and community building are negative and disruptive tactics like trolling; the creation of cultural spaces like publishing houses, websites, and musical bands; and the reclamation of "turf from the Left" such as unions, environmental organizations, and media. With this plan of engagement on various levels, the alt-right wants to build up a rivaling "soft power" exclusively for white people that will permeate all the contours of daily life.⁶⁹

Before Trump's win, the intellectual camp of the alt-right viewed its work occurring in the margins and focused on shaping belief systems about what was politically and ontologically possible.⁷⁰ A small cadre affiliated with *Counter-Currents*, *Take's Magazine*, *Occidental Quarterly*, and *Radix Journal* interpreted films, movies, and music through alt-right lenses, producing a constant output of books, articles, blog posts, vlogs, podcasts, and more. They commonly employed the analytical and expository tools they had learned at "leftist" universities: "Using what they taught me, I deconstructed the deconstructionists. I saw what a fighting politics could be: Left-wing techniques and social analysis mobilized for Right-wing ends."⁷¹

Around 2010, as alt-righters were evincing equal alienation from Republicans and Democrats, and flirting with paleoconservatism and libertarianism, metapolitical change solidified as the Holy Grail. Alt-righters were devising strategies to convert white minds, one at a time, to the allure of a racially homogeneous society guided by traditionalism and anti-

egalitarianism, whether by coaxing or willing it into being: "If White Nationalists attain complete hegemony in the metapolitical realm, that means that white interests will be sacrosanct, and anti-white ideas will be anathema."⁷² In keeping with an interest in reporting on and influencing culture, alt-right publications and blogs feature reviews of movies, books, music, even clothing. Topics have included the implicit white nationalist leanings of Taylor Swift, based on her phenotypic characteristics as a desirable white woman, and the fact that she never condemned her white nationalist fandom and appeared on Instagram once with a fanboy wearing a T-shirt with a spray-painted swastika.⁷³ She recently disappointed alt-right admirers by endorsing women's and LGBTQ rights and asking her fans to vote for Democrats in the 2018 midterm elections.⁷⁴ Blog posts have explored the world of Hogwarts, from the Harry Potter series, praising its whiteness, rituals, and occult dramas but criticizing Harry's boarding school for upholding tenets of meritocratic education.⁷⁵

Concern with slow metapolitical uptake prompted *Radix Journal* in 2014 to complain that "our friends in Europe seem to be having a bit more success than us in popularizing White advocacy" and attributed this to their more appealing aesthetics.⁷⁶ Alt-righters were urged to make hipper choices in clothing, photography, and design, fashioning themselves on their identitarian brothers in France and Germany. Dashing "fashy" apparel for men was recommended, including T-shirts ordered from the official Generation Identitaire website and Fascist Crew Love. Metapolitics extends to sports. A recent post on *Counter-Currents* contends there is a strong affinity between skateboarders and alt-righters given that the sport "is undeniably a White innovation," even as it undergoes "multiculturalization." As with many manifestations of American culture, this writer asserts that white boarders need to become "conscious of their sport as an expression of their ethnic heritage."⁷⁷ At the same time, the alt-right has claimed affinity with elite cultural and literary forms, including the poetry of imperialist Rudyard Kipling, neofascist modernist Ezra Pound, and even the socialist writer Jack London.

One arena that has received special attention in metapolitics is music, above all heavy metal, which offers a bridge from the neo-Nazism of the 1980s and 1990s to the alt-right counterculture of the 2000s. As one writer asserts in *Radix Journal*: "I can say with confidence that heavy metal music has done far more to advance authentic right wing aesthetics, values,

and yes, even philosophy, than all the failed institutions of the Beltway Right put together.⁷⁸ Metal is right wing because “it’s very un-Black in its rhythm and structure” and stresses “White masculinity and utilizes the mythology and history of Europe for lyrical inspiration” as well as highlighting themes of “conquest, self-overcoming, strength, and conflict.”⁷⁹ As Kirsten Dyck has shown, white-power music worked to create community and forge “interpersonal relationships among European-descended individuals.”⁸⁰ In the United States, it has a long lineage in white nationalism, dating back to Reb Rebel Records, founded in Louisiana in the late 1960s, which distributed racist country music that condemned racial integration and denounced black civil rights.⁸¹ In the 1980s white power skinhead groups appeared on the punk scene, and in the 1990s bands like RaHoWa (short for Racial Holy War) were promoted to “transcend national boundaries and reach out to our racial brothers and sisters around the globe.”⁸² Since the 2000s, there has been an increasing turn to neofolk music, which draws on paganistic themes, invokes Nordic and Greek iconography, and pays tribute to the metaphysical writings of the Italian neofascist Julius Evola. In Europe, metal and hardcore music is popular among many identitarians.⁸³ The Swedish group Ardit, for example, celebrates the warrior ethic and calls for a return to traditional white Europe.⁸⁴ Ardit writes that its “torch was set alight in 1997, inspired by the Italian Futurist Movement of the early 20th century.”⁸⁵ The band name is taken from a World War I Royal Italian Army elite special force known for being on the front lines of assault and for its interwar associations with nationalists and protofascists.

The biggest blessing, and to some extent curse, for alt-right metapolitics has been the advent of cyberspace. Metapolitics found its medium online, merging with digital culture. The digital engagement of white nationalists dates back to the Aryan Nations’ development of the Aryan Liberty Net, a computer-to-computer network created in the 1980s using first-generation Macs and PCs.⁸⁶ The advent of the World Wide Web took this to the next level, exemplified by the launch of the trendsetter message board Stormfront in 1995, followed by websites such as InfoWars (1999), Red Ice TV (2003), the Right Stuff (2012), Daily Stormer (2013), and a slew of webzines, such as *Occidental Quarterly* (2001), *Take! Magazine* (2008), the short-lived *AltmaineRight.com* (2010), *Counter-Currents* (2010), and the now-folded *Radix Journal* (2013). Since the mid-2000s,

white nationalists and misogynists have flocked to the internet, creating websites and blogs, and launching YouTube channels, which run the gambit from David Duke’s poisonously anti-Semitic website to the almost cult-like vlogs of Vox Day, VertigoPolitix, and Sargon of Akkad, to the misogynist blogs *Charisma Heuristics* and *Return of Kings*. Platforms like Facebook, utilizing plug-ins such as Google Chat, have birthed virtual communities, as have the nascent online arenas of 4chan and 8chan. Even in a context of deplatforming, there is a steady proliferation of alt-right and alt-right YouTube channels, Twitter accounts, websites, and blogs, of which that run by Europe Is Falling is but one recent example.

These sites are visited by thousands of users, many of whom offer comments or participate in live chats. For example, Stormfront counts over 800,000 monthly visits and close to 1,800 interlinked websites; the Daily Stormer nearly 600,000 monthly visits and over 1,000 interlinked websites; and the more academic American Renaissance gets 350,000 monthly visits with just under 1,500 interlinked websites. *Counter-Currents* reports that in its eighth year, ending in summer 2018, they received 150,000 unique visitors per month, uploaded 43 podcasts, and produced 18 interviews.⁸⁷ For the most part, the combination of a legal landscape characterized by stalwart support for free speech, limited precedents for regulating hate speech, and a virtual infrastructure characterized by decentralization, anonymity, and unaccountability has been conducive to the forging of an alt-right “wild west” that has grown dramatically over the past two decades. This extends to the microblogging platform Twitter, which, with its lax moderation, “unwittingly gave white supremacists an ideal venue for their hatred.”⁸⁸

Since Charlottesville, the alt-right’s internet presence has been tested. To give several examples: the Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube accounts of Jared Taylor (who is suing Twitter for First Amendment violations), Richard Spencer, Vox Day, Millennial Woes, and the Mormon nationalist Wife with a Purpose have been temporarily or permanently suspended.⁸⁹ Some alt-righters claim to have been shadow-banned on Twitter, meaning that their posted comments are not visible on others’ timelines. Facebook uploads have been removed, reported, and/or flagged as offensive. Most notably, InfoWars was deplatformed, with blanket removals of video content on YouTube, and absented from Facebook and Spotify.⁹⁰ On the eve of the first anniversary of the 2017 Unite the Right rally, Twitter

suspended the account of Gavin McInnes, founder of the Proud Boys, a fraternal organization sporting the motto “The West Is the Best.”⁹¹ In addition, PayPal stopped payment processing for Red Ice TV, Identity Evropa, and the Canadian nationalist Faith Goldy just as she launched her failed bid to be Toronto’s “Canada First” mayor, prompting one alt-right organization to tweet that “payment processor deplatforming is one of the most pressing issues we face.”⁹² Many on the alt-right are reduced to asking for handwritten checks sent to PO boxes or a growing roster of cryptocurrencies. Yet this wave of deplatforming has been inconsistent, and for the purposes of shutting down the alt-right, too little too late. The interventions have been done haphazardly and with scant transparency, so that it is not clear why one person is blocked and another person is not. Moreover, the feedback circuitry so instrumental to alt-right amplification is firmly in place, as tweets and retweets flash among alt-righters, alt-lighters, and right-wing pundits and politicians. As long as they can maintain online footholds, the alt-right will continue to propound its metapolitical messages, hoping to dispense red pills and transform American society from outside in.⁹³

Metapolitics has taken a nonlinear journey from its initial formulation by nineteenth-century European philosophers, to its espousal by the European New Right in the 1960s, to its consolidation as a staple intellectual concept of the alt-right in America today. It would be easy to shrug off “metapolitics” as just an opaque word of the alt-right lexicon—such as “incel” or “cuck”—but progressives do so at their own peril. Metapolitics is essential to understanding the ideological genealogy of revamped nationalism, as well as its discourse, approaches, and strategies. The cultural domain is the primary site for the alt-right’s Gramscian “war of position,” which revolves around an incessant quest to win the hearts and minds of the white majority. As Greg Johnson, founder and editor of Counter-Currents, puts it, “Actual politics comes later, once we have laid the metapolitical groundwork.”⁹⁴ Laying this groundwork through red pilling and raising white consciousness is a redoubtable project that began long before Trump’s election and certainly will outlast his presidency.

CHAPTER 2

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Reactionary Timescapes

In spring 2018, Identity Evropa held its inaugural conference, with the theme “Leading Our People Forward,” at a secluded venue in Tennessee.¹ The newest alt-right organization, Identity Evropa defines its mission as building European-style identitarianism and ethnonationalism in America. It links white identity politics to grandiloquent visions of Western history and heritage: “We are a group of patriotic American Identitarians who have realized that we are descended from the great traditions, history, and people that flowed from Europe.”² Identity Evropa specializes in actions such as banner drops, community service, and targeted protests, including a demonstration with flash cards spelling out “Build the Wall” in front of the Mexican consulate in New York City and “Make America Great Again” chants.³ Identity Evropa cultivates a clean-cut look and distances itself far from the “yahoo” stereotypes associated with twentieth-century neo-Nazis and white supremacists.⁴

Identity Evropa’s leader, Patrick Casey, who took over in 2017 from founder Nathan Damigo, opened the spring 2018 conference with an overview of the organization’s philosophy and objectives. He delivered predictable alt-right talking points about white identity and destiny, yet his talk was also a rumination on perceptions and interpretations of time. Casey implored the audience to “dispense with the dangerous linear view of history that defines liberal notions of progress. Instead we must view