

I Want My Country Back . . . and Also My Crown: Monarchists as a Yardstick for the Contemporary Right in Brazil

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Abstract: *The terrorist attack on Brazil's capitol on January 8, 2023, showcased the country's empowered, embittered extreme right, whose hallmarks will be familiar to students of conservatism further afield: anachronistic anticommunism; hostility to liberal democracy; a sense of embattlement, despite controlling key institutions and platforms; a tapestry of disinformation and conspiracy theory; vaguely Christian cultural sensibilities and militantly Christian chauvinisms; and increasing adherence across national and denominational frontiers to an amorphous, antiglobalist brand of antidemocratic and patriarchal autocracy. This article argues that this right represents the migration of formerly extreme iterations of conservatism—including, remarkably, monarchism—from the fringe to the center of reactionary and even national politics. Monarchism, while by no means controlling Brazil's fractious and unruly right (or series of rights), shows us what conservatism in Brazil looks like in the present moment—firstly, because it has gained acceptability and even celebration in Brazil's government and among its most exalted right-wing leaders; and secondly, because its historic and more recent tenets are now virtually indistinguishable from those of the broader right in Brazil. Monarchists, I contend, provide a prism, even a roadmap, for understanding the defiantly retrograde yearnings and (necessarily) vague and contradictory proposals of the current right.*

Keywords: conservatism, traditionalism, Catholicism, monarchism, Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro, authoritarianism

In the final days of June 2022, Brazil's then president, Jair Bolsonaro, continued to march in lockstep with other high-profile right-wing leaders, intensifying, for example, his attacks on the country's electoral system and making Trumpian claims of voter fraud and rigged machines. Given this synchronicity, Bolsonaro furnished less surprise than sheer spectacle when he sat down for an interview with Fox News host Tucker Carlson. After the interview—recorded amid international outcry over the assassinations in the Amazon of Indigenous rights champion Bruno Pereira and British journalist

Don Phillips—the two posed for a photo (see figure 1), in which Carlson laughs as Bolsonaro appears to crown him with an Indigenous headdress or a facsimile thereof. The incident led one Brazilian news magazine to admonish mildly, “[R]esearchers and scholars hold that the improper use of artifacts and vestments . . . is a form of cultural appropriation.” Some reports indicated that Carlson submitted somewhat unwillingly to this (in)dignity; what is certain is that both men subscribe to a political agenda that celebrates the history of colonization that brought the headdress into Bolsonaro’s hands. In fact, their agenda advocates the revival of several glorified pasts—including a past in which whiter men like Carlson and Bolsonaro could enjoy uncomplicated “fun” with the accoutrement of subjugated peoples.¹



Figure 1. Tucker Carlson and Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro. Source: Tucker Carlson (@TuckerCarlson), Twitter, June 29, 2022, 8:06 a.m., <https://twitter.com/TuckerCarlson/status/1542132511790317569?s=20>.

The interview itself proved unsurprising indeed, though it did map out the shared landscape of fantasy, nostalgia, defensiveness, and disinformation that Bolsonaro and Carlson inhabit and propagate. Carlson opened by contrasting Bolsonaro favorably with international representatives du jour of liberal democracy: Canadian prime minister

¹ Valmir Moratelli, “O constrangedor presente que Bolsonaro deu ao apresentador da Fox News,” *Veja*, June 29, 2022, <https://veja.abril.com.br/coluna/veja-gente/o-constrangedor-presente-que-bolsonaro-deu-ao-apresentador-da-fox-news/>.

Justin Trudeau (“a low-IQ fascist,” in Carlson’s estimation) and embattled Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky (“who,” according to Carlson, “shuts down television stations that dare to criticize him and outlaws opposition parties and arms Nazis”). Carlson further affirmed that Bolsonaro stands on the right side of the divide that viewers have come to expect from conservative media outlets. “We asked [Bolsonaro],” Carlson concluded, “about his faith, which is on display, something else that triggers them [i.e., his opponents].” Identifying Bolsonaro’s enemies, the Fox host employed the erstwhile dog whistles (now more appropriately just “whistles”) of the populist right, maintaining that the president is “opposed by a coalition of billionaires, college professors, and CNN.”² Carlson then doubled down on falsely casting himself and Bolsonaro as victims of a globalist media conspiracy, despite clear evidence that corporate media helped Bolsonaro win in 2018: “[The network] *Globo*, which dominates television here,” Carlson blandished, “are opposed to you. How did you win, how could you win, with the entire Brazilian media against you?” Bolsonaro, in turn, brandished what was already a great canard of the twentieth-century right and is even more so in the twenty-first: the specter of communism. Should ex-president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (known as Lula) defeat Bolsonaro at the polls in 2022, the latter warned, “all of South America will be colored red, and . . . the United States will become an isolated country.”³

The terrorist attack on Brazil’s capitol on January 8, 2023, mere months after this interview, would bring these views into sharp and violent focus. Foreshadowing that day of delirious rage, the Carlson interview epitomized the right today, in Brazil, in the United States, and—as I am sure many readers will attest—in various realms farther afield: it is a right that is anachronistically anticommunist; hostile to liberal democracy, yet using its language as justification and rationalization; holding power and championing rightist causes from powerful platforms, but presenting conservatives as underdogs; fully at home in an established tapestry of disinformation and conspiracy theory; vaguely Christian in its cultural sensibilities, and militantly Christian in its cultural chauvinisms; and increasingly united across national and denominational frontiers as a global antiglobalist force for antidemocratic and patriarchal autocracy. As I shall argue here, this right has seen formerly extreme iterations of conservatism—including, remarkably, monarchism—move from the fringe to the center of reactionary and even national politics. To put this another way, monarchism, while by no means controlling Brazil’s fractious and unruly right (or series of rights) shows us what conservatism in Brazil looks like in the present moment—firstly, because monarchism has gained acceptability and even celebration in the halls of power and among Brazil’s

2 Carlson’s description is an example of how both he and Bolsonaro construct their enemy as “the left,” when in fact the chimera they describe is ludicrous. The opposition to Bolsonaro is not that unified, not that left-wing, not that conceivable as a “them.” Indeed, no one is triggered in the way Carlson suggests.

3 “Tucker Carlson: Allowing Brazil to Become a Colony of China Would Be a Significant Blow to Us,” *Fox News*, June 30, 2022, <https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/tucker-carlson-allowing-brazil-become-a-colony-of-china-significant-blow>.

most exalted right-wing leaders; and secondly, because its historic and more recent tenets are now virtually indistinguishable from those of the broader right in Brazil.⁴ The facility with which Carlson and Bolsonaro identify with and reinforce each other makes it difficult to deny that, as one longtime scholar of Brazil noted in 2021, the nostalgic, embittered, empowered right described at the outset of this paragraph is no chimera: “I started to realize that [my] visits [to neomedievalist and traditionalist Catholic centers] were not an excursion into a parallel world but into a rather real Brazil, and that no time machine was needed.” The revanchism on display in the Carlson interview goes beyond a “rather real Brazil,” revealing an interconnected world of revived, flourishing, exclusionist reactionisms, a web in which Brazil and the United States are central.⁵

The role of Brazil and the United States as centers of the contemporary transnational right is not coincidental. While no single place, to my knowledge, was the point of origin for this right, Brazil indubitably served among several key repositories for its gestation, and it did so across a long and determinative history.⁶ If we need no time machine to witness the renovated right, at least two factors contribute to this: First, the very nostalgia of the right itself, which relies on mythologizing the past; in other words, no time machine could take us to the fantasy-rich places the right seeks to reconstruct. Second, and more germane to understanding the current moment, we might examine the reliance of the current right on *real* pasts that lie not in the Middle Ages or the fanciful imaginings of “great again” proponents, but in conservatism of old. In Brazil, as elsewhere, the ascendancy of present-day rights is founded upon continuities with and debts to nineteenth- and especially twentieth-century reactionaries.

In this short space I shall further argue for understanding the state of the right in Brazil in the 2010s and 2020s not only via its consistency with other iterations of right-wing populism currently drawing attention across the world, but also, and indispensably, via its continuity with deeper histories, previous iterations of Brazil’s right that help to explain this moment. I am by no means alone in reaching into the past for comprehension of this present. Indeed, where for years there was little will to historicize the right in Brazil (and elsewhere in the Americas), the last election cycle has seen an absolute explosion of interest. Recent critical scholarship increasingly, seemingly inescapably, illuminates right-wing continuities across the past century. Leandro Pereira Gonçalves

4 I use the pluralization of “the right” here not as a literal translation of *as direitas* (the rights) but as an acknowledgment of the complexity of, diversity within, and ongoing contestation over the prevailing nature of conservative movements in Brazil and elsewhere.

5 Georg Wink, *Brazil, Land of the Past: The Ideological Roots of the New Right* (Cuernavaca, Mexico: Bibliotópia, 2021), 5.

6 Rodolfo Costa Machado, “Por dentro da Liga Mundial Anticomunista: filonazismo, contrarrevolução asiática e o protótipo latino-americano da Operação Condor (1943–1976)” (PhD diss., Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, 2022), <https://repositorio.pucsp.br/jspui/handle/handle/26515>; Benjamin A. Cowan, *Moral Majorities across the Americas: Brazil, the United States, and the Creation of the Religious Right* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021).

and Odilon Neto Caldeira, leading experts on Integralism (Brazil's World War II-era fascism), have brilliantly connected the 1930s to the 2020s in their most recent study, whose preface pointedly asks, “[W]ho let out the characters from my history book?”⁷ Georg Wink, longtime student of Brazil, has illustrated the Catholic integrist heritage of Brazil's current antimodernisms.⁸ Rodrigo Patto Sá Motta, one of the most renowned historians of twentieth-century Brazil and the late military regime (1964–1985), puts perhaps the finest point on it with his latest title, *A Present Past*.⁹ Most sweepingly and ambitiously, Lilia Moritz Schwarcz's recently translated *Brazilian Authoritarianism* clarifies, “for those who, to this day, cannot understand why we are living through such an intolerant and violent period,” how such intolerance and violence are “intimately tied to the country's five hundred years of history.”¹⁰

As a nucleus of superb scholars have pointed out, then, the deeper histories of the rightist present in Brazil include fascism, integrism, Cold War military autocracy, and colonialism; furthermore, today's conservatism in Brazil and abroad grew out of the transnational, calculated efforts of a cadre of twentieth-century traditionalists.¹¹ Here, however, I wish to draw attention to the ways in which the deeper histories of the present right also include monarchism, a thread in Brazilian conservatism that has survived—with minor variations in its prominence—more than a century of constitutionally democratic rule. Monarchists, I contend, provide a prism, even a roadmap, for understanding the defiantly retrograde yearnings and (necessarily) vague and contradictory proposals of today's right in Brazil. Indeed, monarchists practically crow with ideological (if not practical) vindication—and they do so because they epitomize, and have epitomized, the qualities that have recently coalesced into the contemporary right in Brazil and elsewhere around the world. For context: Brazil first became a republic in 1889, dethroning the branch of the Portuguese Bragança dynasty that had ruled independent Brazil since 1822. In the aftermath of 1889, early restorationists sought to defeat liberal democracy from a vantage point that was expressly elitist and antipopular; but like the monarchists of today they looked for a broader appeal through an ethnonationalist, romanticized species of authoritarian populism—based fundamentally in the veneration of hierarchy. As one scholar of these decades has put it, early monarchists espoused “a rejection of popular participation, because inferior qualities were attributed to it, in favor of the aristocracy, chosen by tradition and by

7 Pereira Gonçalves and Odilon Caldeira Neto, *Fascism in Brazil: From Integralism to Bolsonaroism* (London: Routledge, 2022).

8 Wink, *Brazil*. I use “integrist” here for the ideological orientation in a European and global context to distinguish it from the Brazilian fascist movement formally called Integralism, which was founded in 1932.

9 Rodrigo Patto Sá Motta, *A Present Past: The Brazilian Military Dictatorship and the 1964 Coup* (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2022).

10 Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, *Brazilian Authoritarianism: Past and Present*, trans. Eric M. B. Becker (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 14–15.

11 Cowan, *Moral Majorities*.

heredity.”¹² They exalted a new nationalism while simultaneously extolling Portuguese colonialism; presented the Crusades and the Middle Ages as paradigmatic, ideal social forms; and rolled antisemitism, Catholic chauvinism, anticommunism, and flirtations with fascism into what historian Teresa Maria Malatian calls “an authoritarian proposal” designed to provide “an exit from what [royalists] considered national degeneration.”¹³

Monarchists have, perhaps patently, always resided among Brazil’s staunchest antidemocratic partisans; once relatively marginal or even laughable, this antidemocratic legacy has now spread to other more politically powerful and functional elements of the right, growing bolder in each moment. Present-day monarchists trumpet this legacy as proof that they have had the solutions (to the problems of modernity, real and imagined) all along. In a sense, therein lies the unique characteristic of monarchism across the decades: that it most boldly and brazenly cultivates the vague organicism that can knit together core conservative causes and sensibilities: settler colonialism, Eurocentrism, Catholicism and Christian chauvinism, capitalism (or at least yawning wealth gaps), and various other unequal social relations and cultural and political traditionalisms. This article will use monarchism in the current moment as a lens for assessing the nature, status, and stance of Brazil’s unwieldy—yet powerful—right, as well as for recognizing how intertwined are the nouveau conservatisms of 2023, and how determined by the aforementioned deeper, continuous and contiguous histories.

Restorationism, as descendants and supporters of Brazil’s ex-royal family would have it, is in vogue today, 123 years after the Orleans e Bragança family lost the throne by military proclamation. By 2018, this vogue reached not only into the darker and more esoteric corners of the internet but into the halls of government. Though no credible sources would expect any impending reestablishment of formal monarchy, its adherents have gained visibility in recent years, not least because of their closeness to the Bolsonaro government’s view of the world, which in turn reflects the views of the transnational right. On January 8, 2023, that visibility reached spectacular, violent heights, as insurrectionists brandished the banner of the defunct Brazilian Empire while storming the national government palaces. Even before this cataclysm, however, monarchists’ visibility and closeness to government had grown to levels that were recently unthinkable. One prominent descendant of the ex-royal family currently serves in Brazil’s legislature; others have regularly hobnobbed with government ministers, presidential advisors, and congressional leaders—up to and including a so-called Monarchist Caucus within the Chamber of Deputies. Even the mainstream journalistic establishment, previously dismissing the monarchy as a joke, now takes monarchists and

12 Felipe Cazetta, “Pátria-Nova e Integralismo Lusitano: propostas autoritárias em contato por meio de revistas luso-brasileiras,” *Tempo* 24, no. 1 (2018): 42.

13 Teresa Malatian, “O Tradicionalismo monarquista (1928–1945),” *Revista Brasileira de História das Religiões* 6, no. 16 (2013): 80.

their voices seriously.¹⁴ By early 2020, Luiz Gastão de Orleans e Bragança (hereafter Luiz Gastão), then head of the family branch that most vociferously agitates for a return, had grown concerned (or rather, confident) enough to remind his followers that despite his and his relatives' political leanings, royal duty required him to forbid his followers from engaging in party politics or in any way diminishing his own "national leadership of the monarchist movement." This proclamation appeared in the monarchist magazine *Herdeiros do Porvir* (Heirs to the future), whose ambitious headline for that issue was "Great Events Herald Monarchist Revival in Brazil."¹⁵

To monarchists within and outside of the former royal clan, Jair Bolsonaro and his effects on Brazil's political culture now incarnate the antidemocratic populism of old. Where the restorationists of early republican Brazil once chanted "For God, For Brazil, For the Emperor," Bolsonaro upcycled and shortened the formula in his own catchphrase "Brazil above Everything, God above Everyone."¹⁶ The similarity encapsulated therein prompted monarchists' dramatic adherence to Bolsonaro, reminiscent, among other historical episodes, of Portuguese monarchists' rallying around Antônio Salazar as an authoritarian and traditionalist stand-in for formal restoration. The ex-royal family's current leader, Bertrand de Orleans e Bragança, exemplifies this adherence, loudly proclaiming that Bolsonaro combines all the right stuff: nods to mythic pasts, hierarchicalism and respect for divine order, free enterprise and private property, sexual and cultural traditionalism, and Christian supremacy. Bolsonaro, the self-styled "Dom" Bertrand affirms, was "elected by the conservative Brazil, by the Brazil that asks for its authentic Brazil back, which is Christian, which is Catholic, and wants an order based on the natural order, on the good order put in place by God, which is based on the family, based on free enterprise, based on respect for the principle of private property and the principle of subsidiarity."¹⁷

To the average observer, Bertrand and his relatives may seem eccentric, delusional, even laughable. Yet his sentiments about Bolsonaro demonstrate the troubling and revealing truth this article seeks to highlight: the proposals, aspirations, and even aesthetics central to Brazilian monarchism—including the pretenders to the throne—epitomize the nature of today's right, both in Brazil and abroad. In fact, restorationists' platform,

14 See, for example, João Filho, "Carla Zambelli e sua turma de monarquistas se aliaram a Bolsonaro para revogar avanços do século 20," *The Intercept Brasil*, May 19, 2019, <https://theintercept.com/2019/05/19/o-casamento-de-monarquistas-e-bolsonaro-nao-e-acidente-ambos-querem-revogar-avancos-do-seculo-20/>.

15 "Atuação dos Príncipes," *Herdeiros do Porvir* 27, no. 60 (2020): 2.

16 Malatian, "Tradicionalismo," 84; "O Brasil acima de tudo. Deus acima de todos.' Frases marcantes dos 100 dias de Bolsonaro," *Diário de Notícias*, April 9, 2019, <https://www.dn.pt/mundo/principais-frases-do-presidente-brasileiro-nos-primeiros-100-dias-de-mandato-10776106.html>.

17 Pró Monarquia, "Pergunte ao Príncipe: Dom Bertrand (Parte 1)," Facebook, July 21, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/promonarquia/videos/992099554555643/>.

loosely speaking, consists of planks that will seem familiar (albeit with modifications) to readers in the United States, Great Britain, Hungary, India, the Philippines, and elsewhere. The core principles include devotion to an idealized, indeed mythic past (here including colonialism and pugnacious or even petulant white supremacism); hierarchy and authoritarianism, defined vaguely as “natural” or “divine” order, and characterized by a penchant for supernaturalism; capitalism premised upon glorified notions of free enterprise and private property (coterminous with a demonization of the welfare state); ferocious anticommunism, including support for Brazil’s Cold War military dictatorship (1964–1985) carried forward into the present day; family, sexual, and gender traditionalism; religious chauvinism, here encompassing Catholic and more vaguely Christian militancy; and a persecution complex, which positions conservative identity as antiestablishment, fighting from below, and oppressed by mainstream media, corporations, and social and cultural institutions. In the following pages, I will explore ways that monarchism has anticipated and exemplified these pillars of contemporary conservatism, making it a sort of urtext of the latter. Monarchists thus serve as a window into today’s right in Brazil, and, crucially, into how that right stitches together and attempts to naturalize a contradictory, unwieldy series of justifications for injustices and inequalities past and present.

Making “Us” Great Again—Mythic Pasts

Brazilian conservatives are certainly not alone in their invocations of mythic pasts. As scholars of the right in other contexts have pointed out, conservatives across oceans and borders have defined themselves as proponents of premodern pasts lost in the mists of time. They see the present epoch, by contrast, as the winter of their dispossession. For conservatives, to quote Corey Robin, “the Left has been in the driver’s seat since, depending on who’s counting, the French Revolution or the Reformation.”¹⁸ These mythic pasts tend necessarily toward vagueness and fictionalization, from Putin’s rewriting of Russia’s Soviet and imperial history to “Make America Great Again.”¹⁹

18 Corey Robin, *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 23.

19 Indeed, it is this very vagueness that provides for the broadened appeal of niche and/or fringe movements like monarchism, and makes for the seemingly improbable alliances across denominational and ideological lines. Though there are, of course, major fault lines among conservatives in Brazil, many of those fade into the background when it comes to the kinds of nostalgic yearnings epitomized by monarchists—hence macro- and microlevel disagreements among rightists can be papered over to the extent that all can support, say, Jair Bolsonaro. I have written about such alliances elsewhere, but the point here is that while, for example, Catholics and Protestants—or at an even more granular level, various extreme Catholic groups like Tradition, Family, Property (TFP) or the Society of Saint Pius X (SSPX)—might differ greatly among themselves, those differences lose meaning when these erstwhile antagonists join forces behind a political leader like Bolsonaro or an ideological one like Olavo de Carvalho (discussed below). See Cowan, *Moral Majorities*.

From a certain vantage point, monarchists merely render such mythmaking obvious, even spectacular, holistically promoting a utopia—as aesthetic as it is political—in which the Pandora’s boxes of the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the age of Atlantic revolutions can be reclosed. Prominent royalists, and the so-called royal family itself, hold up a version of the early modern and/or colonial past—by turns sanitized and contorted to suit present-day sensibilities—as the height of good governance, a time when strong authoritarian rulers imposed a prosperous order. In this, monarchists join a decades-long tradition on Brazil’s (formerly) extreme right.²⁰ They echo, for example, the long-expressed yearnings of Tradition, Family, and Property (TFP), a stalwart of authoritarian anticommunism in Brazil and supporter of the country’s 1964–1985 military dictatorship. Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira (1908–1995) founded TFP in 1960 as an organizational home for far-right Catholic militancy; his final book, *Nobility and Analogous Traditional Elites in the Allocutions of Pius XII*, argued for the reinstatement of a stylized medieval, hereditary ruling class, a “standard of excellence” to remedy “our society, poisoned by egalitarianism.”²¹ As the book’s promoters put it in a 2011 appeal to the putative descendants of that class, the future “common good” necessitates rule by “elites directly derived from the natural order—the result of inevitable inequalities.”²²

Oliveira’s book, not coincidentally, featured a preface by the late Luiz Gastão, writing as “head of the Brazilian branch of the House of Bragança” and reaffirming the “special mission of the nobility to act in defense of kings, [whether or not] they be in possession of power and the fullness of the respective prerogatives.”²³ Fittingly, it is from Luiz Gastão and his clan, as spokespersons of monarchism, that we have the most precise distillations of the present-day restorationist movement’s reconfiguration of aristocracy and a mythicized Middle Ages as an original version, for Brazil’s right, of what Erich Foner would dub an “imaginary golden age.”²⁴ In this version, making Brazil “great again” requires recuperating a hybrid golden age that interweaves medieval and colonial hierarchies and validates the implicit white supremacist patriarchy of settler colonialism,

20 Cowan, *Moral Majorities*; Rodrigo Coppe Caldeira, *Os baluartes da tradição: o conservadorismo católico brasileiro no concílio Vaticano II* (Curitiba: Editora CRV, 2011); Gizele Zanotto, “Tradição, Família e Propriedade (TFP): as idiosincrasias de um movimento católico (1960–1995)” (PhD diss., Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, 2007); Rodolfo Costa Machado, “Alfredo Buzaid e a contrarrevolução burguesa de 1964” (master’s thesis, Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, 2015).

21 Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira, *Nobreza e elites tradicionais análogas nas alocuções de Pio XII ao Patriciado e à Nobreza romana* (São Paulo: Civilização, 1993), 120. For the English translation, see *Nobility and Analogous Traditional Elites in the Allocutions of Pius XII: A Theme Illuminating American Social History* (York, PA: The American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family, and Property, 1993).

22 “Às elites cabe uma missão a favor do bem comum,” Nobreza (TFP website), April 28, 2011, <https://nobreza.org/apelo-as-elites/>.

23 Oliveira, *Nobreza*, 19–20.

24 Erich Foner, “Soviets Rewrite History Again,” *Tampa Bay Times*, December 17, 1990, <https://www.tampabay.com/archive/1990/12/17/soviets-rewrite-history-again/>.

or “harmonious hierarchy in all the dominions,” as Bragança’s 1993 preface would have it. The “prince” and his family glorify their forebears’ rule, advocating a return to it while making common cause with extremist (racist, xenophobic) groups of the twenty-first century. Thus, while restoration per se has not become the organizing principle of Brazil’s right, monarchism’s broader precepts, long espoused by the royals and their supporters, have become effectively identical to those of mainstream conservatives in Brazil.

Though less vocal than his elder brother, Luiz Gastão, Antônio de Orleans e Bragança has likewise epitomized the family’s propagation of the notion that their ancestors’ regnum constituted the “great again” past, not only desirable but actively desired by the renovated right of today. In an interview in 2013, the year Brazil erupted into nearly unprecedented public protest, Antônio declared that the turmoil in the streets proved that “the republic is in its last days” and that “to return to harmony, the only option is the return to Christian and Catholic monarchy.” Luiz Gastão, meanwhile, more directly claimed that the uprisings stemmed from popular yearning for an elusive, bygone, better Brazil. “A profound discontent,” he said, “manifested in . . . the street demonstrations” showed “a great desire for something different, something better, something which already existed and which we have lost.” Should anyone doubt that that something was restoration, Luiz Gastão made it explicit: “When that desire becomes majoritarian, the monarchy—time-worn political expression of Christian civilization—can be reestablished in Brazil, in a stable and beneficent way. When that will happen, only God Our Lord knows, but I believe it will be well before it might seem at first glance.”²⁵

Another scion of the ex-emperor, Luiz Philippe de Orleans e Bragança, likewise proposes monarchy as salvation and the ancient repository of civilization, albeit in ways slightly more oblique than the elder statesmen of the family. Perhaps this is because Luiz Philippe is more savvy than his uncles Luiz Gastão and Antônio; then again, perhaps it is because of his personal political ambitions. Styled “Prince and Deputy Luiz Philippe” by his fans, he currently serves in the national legislature, and was even briefly considered as a 2018 candidate for the vice presidency under Jair Bolsonaro.²⁶ Whatever his reasons, Luiz Philippe can exhibit more subtlety than his elders, making monarchism seem, by default, the “only viable option” to save Brazil. Nevertheless, he too glorifies a romanticized past in which his own ancestors, alongside other absolutists,

25 “Atividades dos Príncipes,” *Herdeiros do Porvir* 19, no. 35 (2013): 3; Yuri Al Hanati, “Foi uma emancipação dentro da mesma família,” *Gazeta do Povo*, September 6, 2013, <https://www.gazetadopovo.com.br/vida-publica/foi-uma-emancipacao-dentro-da-mesma-familia-bh07d1r6maggqlyb0qphahumm/>.

26 “Dom Bertrand e Dom Luiz Philippe participam de reunião com pré-candidatos ao legislativo,” *Pró Monarquia*, website of Imperial House of Brazil, February 1, 2022, <https://monarquia.org.br/agenda/dom-bertrand-e-dom-luiz-philippe-participam-de-reuniao-com-pre-candidatos-ao-legislativo/>; Estadão Contéudo, “Príncipe Luiz Philippe diz que dossiê íntimo o tirou da vice-presidência,” *Ex-ame*, November 14, 2019, <https://exame.com/brasil/principe-luiz-philippe-diz-que-dossie-intimo-o-tirou-da-vice-presidencia/>.

oversaw the pinnacle of human social organization. The prince-deputy's 2017 book—whose title translates as “Why is Brazil a backward country?”—opens by lionizing the Tudors, the Habsburgs, and the Bourbons as architects of a utopian early modern system of governance, strong enough to rule without the hated scourge of stifling, liberal democratic bureaucracy.²⁷ Luiz Philippe attempts to “rescue” the reputation of this fabled age of governance, limning an early modern paradise in which aristocracy truly represented “government by the best,” the “real value” of whose rule has been lost to popular knowledge.²⁸ Luiz Philippe's golden age extends, unsurprisingly, right up until the moment when his ancestors relinquished royal power. Before the republican coup of 1889, the book indicates, Brazil experienced a golden age similar to that of great societies from the early modern monarchies of Europe to ancient Rome: “When Dom Pedro I commissioned the first constitution, in 1824, he applied the same Spartan wisdom that inspired . . . the Roman Republic. The structure of power in Imperial Brazil [1822–1889] . . . proved extremely stable and created prosperity during the whole nineteenth century.”²⁹

An inherent, essential benefit of such “gold-washing” (so to speak) is its capacity to explain away—with inevitable contradictions—historic and present-day injustice as necessary, inevitable, or simply not unjust. As in other contexts where today's revanchists seek to make someone or something “great again,” whom that greatness has included or will include is a key part of the appeal and the discursive acrobatics. That is, when monarchists proclaim “I want my Brazil back” (*Quero meu Brasil de volta*) and offer a mythicized past as a blueprint for that erstwhile Brazil, their view of *whom* they wish to make “great again” relies on a blend of white supremacy and a truculent, sullen celebration of settler colonialism. Racist and/or patriarchal resentment will surely strike readers in other national and regional contexts as eerily familiar. In Brazil, the current right's version confusedly mixes pride in precontact Portuguese and Christian chauvinism (the Crusades, hazily) with romanticization of the colonial period (1500–1822) and nationalist pride in the post-independence empire (1822–1889), all while exalting and appealing to whiteness and Eurocentrism. While monarchists, like other Brazilian conservatives, evoke the time-tested mythology of Brazil's racial democracy (the fantasy of Brazil as a racism-free paradise), they do so in ways that, on the one hand, dovetail quite precisely with “post-racial” pushback against racial justice in other contexts; and on the other, proclaim Brazil's essential Europeanness while crediting the

27 Luiz Philippe de Orleans e Bragança, *Por que o Brasil é um país atrasado? O que fazer para entrarmos de vez no século XXI* (Ribeirão Preto, SP: Novo Conceito, 2017), 19.

28 Bragança, 134.

29 Bragança, 206.

imperial and early modern Luso-Brazilian past for the creation of a racial paradise that, to quote Bertrand, lacked “a racial problem.”³⁰

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Figure 2. Olavo de Carvalho, pictured shortly before his death in January 2022, wearing a Brazilianized version of a “MAGA” hat. Source: Olavo de Carvalho, Facebook, August 27, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10159351241707192&set=pb.698992191.-2207520000.&type=3>.

In other words, for monarchists, Brazil’s mythic past takes an extreme yet foundational form, granting the Bragança regnum (and by extension ongoing socioeconomic hierarchies) divine right or sanction according to the logic that racial inequalities—especially the oppression of Indigenous and Afro-descended Brazilians—can be historically and theologically *justified*. To take perhaps the most popular version of this among monarchists and other conservatives, such inequalities inhere in Brazil in a natural and positive way, uniting the “faith and entrepreneurial spirit of the Portuguese” with the “intuition of the Indian” and the “strength, goodness, warmth, and loyalty of the black race.”³¹ Monarchism does not supply these justifications alone—rather, monarchists have been articulating such rationalizations for white patriarchal hierarchy

30 Augusto Fernandes, “Príncipe imperial’ do Brasil diz que não há racismo no país,” *Correio Brasileiro*, June 16, 2020, <https://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/app/noticia/brasil/2020/06/16/interna-brasil,864363/principe-imperial-do-brasil-diz-que-nao-ha-racismo-no-pais.shtml>. The term “Luso-Brazilian” refers to the culturescape stretching between Portugal and colonial and postcolonial Brazil.

31 Fernandes, “Príncipe imperial.”

for decades upon decades, doing so from a traditionalist Catholic point of view to which, in its basic outlines, the contemporary right has now full-throatedly returned. After generations of liberal-democratic platitudes and lip service to the (deeply flawed) notion of Brazilian racial democracy, the right of today has sharpened its willingness to defend racist colonialism and especially antiblackness in ways that monarchists, to give them their due, never really shied away from. As one insightful commenter put it, monarchism's current acceptability is a "lagging indicator" of a far right whose defense of inequities has breached almost all of the norms that used to contain it.³² Bolsonaroist genocide against the Yanomami and racist imprecations against "quilombolas" (afro-descended peoples residing in the legacy communities of escaped enslaved people) bear witness to such shattered norms.

As head of the family and a consistent arbiter of monarchists' guiding precepts, Bertrand once again exemplifies this. The self-styled prince has repeatedly voiced the movement's lament for the loss of a glorified past of settler colonialism and white Christian conquest, going beyond defense of the genocides of Indigenous people and enslaved Africans. In the monarchist retelling of these histories, Catholic Portuguese and later Brazilian patriots (and their descendants) should be celebrated for creating and/or defending "civilization," from the Crusades to enslavement to the forced conversion of non-Christians. "The Catholic Church," writes Bertrand with his typical lack of varnish, "converted and civilized the barbarous peoples, teaching them to cultivate the soil and preserve nature, with wisdom and the desire for perfection."³³ Bertrand, joining contemporary rightists in Brazil and elsewhere, now openly articulates the ever-implicit racism that haunts settler colonial societies, and that appears in sharp relief when it comes to the defense of white "homelands" and battles against climate and ecological justice. (In this, right-wing proposals for land use in the Amazon mirror those for pipelines in the North American West.) Here, again, today's monarchists draw on Brazil's twentieth-century restorationists, including protofascists known as *patrianovistas* in the 1920s and 1930s, and especially TFP founder Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira, who across the course of the last century derided even potential deviations from Eurocentrism as misguided, communistic, and harbingers of collapse.³⁴ In 1992 Oliveira called the UN-sponsored Earth Summit an "act of the devil" that sought, absurdly, to emulate Indigenous social organization. "Scientists," Oliveira marveled in horror, "affirm that it is necessary to take the Indian as a model for human behavior," that Eurocentric

32 My thanks to the anonymous reader who contributed this insight.

33 Bertrand de Orleans e Bragança, *Psicose ambientalista: os bastidores do ecoterrorismo para implantar uma 'religião' ecológica, igualitária, e anticristã* (São Paulo: Instituto Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira, 2012), 16–17.

34 Today's monarchists certainly hearken back to the *patrianovistas*, for whom "nationality, formed in the colonial period, was founded on institutions transplanted from the 'mother country' and acclimated to . . . a land sparsely populated by ignorant, brutish heathens as yet untouched by redemptive grace." Malatian, "Tradicionalismo," 92.

“civilization is wrecking the earth, and that the tribe is the ideal toward which man should progress.” Anticipating Brazil’s empowered, evangelical right of recent years—which takes demonizing Afro-Brazilian religions as a point of departure—Oliveira published photos of Indigenous activists, African women, and the Dalai Lama as a visual aid for his denunciation of their religious and cultural practices (“fruits of a sick imagination or the devil’s business”). Bertrand, in turn, directly quotes Oliveira’s decades-old defense of Catholic chauvinism in the former’s ongoing justification of early modern white colonial Catholicism as a boon to “barbarous peoples.” Bertrand has warned that liberal democracies seek to compound the errors of abandoning Catholic absolutism, abolishing not only European theology itself but the very organization of white society. When “do[ing] away with theology,” he writes, “everything shall appear loosed, ungoverned, and unconnected, just like among the Indians.”³⁵

Implementing the time-tested strategy of foregrounding a minority-identified spokesperson, Bertrand and his allies appeared in 2019 alongside a right-wing Indigenous activist who crystallized these sentiments. Empaneled beside Bertrand, Jonas Marcolino accused environmentalists and Indigenous rights movements of promoting “hatred of white people.”³⁶ As Oliveira’s abovementioned photos of nonwhite people and practices indicate, however, it is not just “Indians” who threaten white civilization. Royalist appeals to white identitarian pride and prejudice are not new—early twentieth-century restorationists unsubtly touted the “blond hair and blue eyes” of essential Europeanness.³⁷ Decades later Corrêa de Oliveira fretted, as today monarchists fret, over perceived sundry challenges to white supremacy. Beginning in 1960, TFP and Oliveira fought what then seemed an unlikely battle against Afro-Brazilian religions, denouncing them as “witchcraft,” even as mainstream Brazilian culture prided itself on religious tolerance. Oliveira warned that these faiths, worshipping “apparitions and things like that,” constituted “the devil . . . projecting his shadow onto the earth.”³⁸ Accepted by and coincident with the empowered right, today’s monarchists carry forward this racist mantle in a much more welcoming milieu. Joining the Bolsonarist backlash against social justice initiatives, royalists limn the slaveocratic past as a haven that *helped* Africans and Afro-descended people, bringing them into a Brazil where, as Bertrand reaffirmed in March 2022, “there is no racism or racial discrimination.”³⁹ The manifesto

35 Bragança, *Psicose ambientalista*, 94; Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira, “Eco ’92: Aparência e realidade profunda,” *Catolicismo* 501 (1992): 18–19.

36 “Contrassinodo em Roma critica o Papa sobre Amazônia,” *Istoé Dinheiro*, October 5, 2019, <https://www.istoedinheiro.com.br/contrassinodo-em-roma-critica-o-papa-sobre-amazonia/>.

37 Malatian, “Tradicionalismo,” 84.

38 See, for example, Cunha Alvarenga, “Crendices Medievais?” *Catolicismo* 167 (1964): 2; Oliveira, “Eco ’92.”

39 Bruna Silva, “Pinda tem protesto após príncipe Dom Bertrand garantir que ‘não existe racismo no Brasil,’” *Jornal Atos*, March 22, 2022, <https://jornalatos.net/regiao/cidades/pindamonhangaba/pinda->

Cartilha Monárquica (Monarchist primer), published in 2015 and emblazoned with the slogan “I want my country back,” succinctly summed up this apologia for slavery. Monarchists’ have long held that they cannot be racist because Brazil’s Princess Isabel signed the law formalizing emancipation in 1889; the primer expressed the equally familiar corollary: “it’s also a fact that the blacks who came here were already slaves in their own countries . . . where they lived in subhuman conditions.”⁴⁰ To the monarchist rank and file, this appears to open the floodgates of white resentment and a sense of justified rage against antiracist activism. When, for example, Antônio de Orleans e Bragança commemorated the 2021 anniversary of emancipation by crediting his ancestor Princess Isabel, one monarchist Twitter user derided the Brazilian variation of Black Lives Matter: “Where are the Black Lives Matter [activists] now, in this moment made for honoring this princess?” Brazilian BLM activists, another monarchist cackled in response, “are stuck in the leftist slave quarters, licking the balls of Lula.”⁴¹ Similarly, roused by the critique that the Bragança dynasty oversaw enslavement and genocide, one monarchist leapt to fulminate against “reparations,” admonishing Bragança critics that “today you are here, enjoying all the evil that, according to your vision, they created. Demonstrating that you are just the continuation of the evil of all that they created. If you think that the *povos* (Indians, blacks) should receive reparations, you’d have to kill yourself . . . first.”⁴²

Deus Vult: Authoritarianism and the “Catholic City”

The “inevitable inequalities” cited above constitute a staple of Brazil’s formerly extreme (now mainstream) right, once again typified by monarchist positions—especially authoritarianism based in notions of organicist, divinely ordained natural order. Monarchists crystallize the right’s penchant for time-honored hierarchies, presenting as ideal a system in which inequalities guaranteed the prosperity of a past deemed by conservatives to be lost to the scourge of democratization. This formulation neatly packages hostility to democracy (familiar to any student of the rising tide of reaction in Brazil or elsewhere) with a longstanding tenet of Brazilian conservatism and especially of restorationists: the ethnocentric ideal of re-Christianization, or reconquest of *civilização cristã*—Christian civilization—in Brazil. This abiding demand of the Brazilian extreme

tem-protesto-apos-principe-dom-bertrand-garantir-que-nao-existe-racismo-no-brasil/.

40 *Cartilha Monárquica* (São Paulo: [Pró Monarquia?], [1993?]), 22.

41 Anderson Gabrielli (@Gabrielli64A), Twitter, May 13, 2021, 2:06 p.m., <https://twitter.com/Gabrielli64A/status/1392919137635155969?s=20&ct=DbTxFVirC8N2lnNavBFySA>; Socorro Mendes (@Socorro68750312), Twitter, May 13, 2021, 9:01 p.m., <https://twitter.com/Socorro68750312/status/1393023655681142790?s=20&ct=DbTxFVirC8N2lnNavBFySA>.

42 Bruno Torezan (@BruTorezani), Twitter, April 17, 2020, 12:04 a.m., <https://twitter.com/BruTorezani/status/1251375973695660033?s=20&ct=RKFyMkx3S6e1MaxuPnNZMw>.

right found a comfortable home in Bolsonaroist Brazil, a *país cristão* (Christian country) overseen by a Catholic president whose theatrically evangelical wife campaigned in 2022 on the phrase “Brazil is the Lord’s . . . and [Bolsonaro] is God’s Chosen One.”⁴³

In this, monarchists demonstrate the facility with which they translate their nineteenth-century agenda into the language of the twenty-first. They couch open opposition to democracy in the language of *saving* democratic polities from themselves, and doing so by recourse to ancient monarcho-Christian precedent—what the House of Bragança’s media outlet calls the “authentic democracy” of a simpler, better organicist past.⁴⁴ The younger faces of the former royal family demonstrate the strategy of undermining Brazil’s republic (and liberal democracy in general) as a tragically un-Christian failure wrought by discredited left-wing policies and structures. Luiz Philippe warns his readers of the “extreme precarity in which Western Civilization finds itself.” Eulogizing culturally conservative authoritarian regimes (including Augusto Pinochet’s Chile), the prince-deputy dismisses the victims of such regimes as a lamentable “cost,” but insists they remain superior to less absolutist systems, with their “tyranny of the majority.” Luiz Philippe assures his readers that “democracy has never managed to serve as the only political force,” and that modern democracies’ Enlightenment-based focus on social rights and welfare-state policies is deeply flawed. Mirroring the arguments of North Atlantic conservative think tanks, he argues that post-absolutist Western governance has erred principally in the adoption of “acquired rights”—like the right to health, to employment, to shelter, to food, to education, . . . to motherhood, to strike, to rest, to retirement benefits, to pleasure, to unionize.” Other family members and supporters reiterate that monarchy is the solution to these problems, restoring true democracy by abolishing democratic republicanism. “A democratic country,” Luiz Philippe’s cousin Rafael counseled in a 2014 speech, “gives voice to the people. . . . The truth is that democracy is much more present in a monarchy.”⁴⁵ As if rehearsing the claims of election-fraud conspiracists in the United States in 2020 and Brazil in 2022, the *Cartilha Monárquica* presents conservative autocracy as the *true* articulation of the national self, even if not chosen by a majority. In this view, restoration and interference with democratic processes are a heroic move to save an elite-led, quasi-spiritual democracy based in unexpressed—but presumably traditional—national

43 “Bolsonaro oficializa candidatura à reeleição e ataca STF,” *Deutsche Welle*, July 24, 2022, <https://www.dw.com/pt-br/bolsonaro-oficializa-candidatura-%C3%A0-reeleição-%C3%A7%C3%A3o-e-ataca-stf/a-62578853>.

44 Pró Monarquia (@ProMonarquia), Twitter, January 10, 2022, 8:50 a.m., <https://twitter.com/ProMonarquia/status/1480552585438367746?s=20&xt=yyzOHZyda5SV1alMN-MWDA>.

45 Rafael de Orleans e Bragança, Speech at the XXIV Encontro Monárquico do Rio de Janeiro, September 6, 2006, YouTube video, 3:17, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=muvGyIYIThE>.

virtues currently stymied by party politics. “Monarchy,” the document reads, “is the guardian of *true* democracy.”⁴⁶

Monarchists, like the core of the right in Brazil, insist—have long insisted—that such national virtues are based in an ethnocentrically determined Christian order. Ultra-traditionalist Brazilian Catholics set this tone early in the twentieth century, extolling mediaeval, organicist hierarchies as a lost expression of human submission to divine wisdom. Hence antiprogressive Brazilian activists at the Second Vatican Council execrated any deviation from pre-Reformation social organization as “the Revolution,” a disembodied and satanic force behind every innovation from Protestantism to communism and ecumenism. They agitated for a return to the perfect “Catholic society” they imagined in the Middle Ages, holding that democratic societies lack the precise, sanctified hierarchies of the romanticized past—the “beauty of inequality,” to use their words. Bertrand continued to repackage this in 2019, as he hobnobbed with the Bolsonaro administration and rejoiced that, after his years of wandering in the wilderness of a revanchist fringe, “it has become attractive be rightist and conservative.” Bertrand boiled down the meaning of “rightist and conservative” to precisely those sanctified hierarchies, by whose logic democracy must give way to righteous conservative autocracy: “The beauty of society,” he advised, “does not lie in equality but in differences that should be proportional, hierarchical, harmonic, and complementary. Exactly like a symphony.”⁴⁷

The restorationist credo takes this rejection of equality as a point of departure, one “firmly grounded in the Judeo-Christian tradition.” Humans are not equal among themselves, and neither are religions and ethnic identities—a contention that rejects both democratic egalitarianism and deviation from traditionalist Christianity. Monarchists continue their Cold War rejection of liberation theology and ecumenism as “viscerally anti-Christian revolutionary” blasphemy—just as they reject social justice and liberal democracy themselves as disastrous deformations of God’s order, not least because republics have lost the putatively selfless “influence of [absolutist monarchs and aristocrats] as a positive for the collective.”⁴⁸ This is constantly reiterated today, for example, by a polyglot web of organizations calling themselves “Nobility,” associated with the international chapters of TFP and set on globalizing the campaign for restorationist nobility begun by Oliveira himself. A transnational “Appeal to Today’s

46 *Cartilha Monárquica*, 18–19.

47 See Cowan, *Moral Majorities*; João Fellet, “Monarquistas ocupam cargos em Brasília e reabilitam grupo católico ultraconservador,” *BBC News Brasil*, April 4, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/brasil-47728267>.

48 Bertrand de Orleans e Bragança, “Quo vadis, Domine? Reverente e filial Mensagem a Sua Santidade o Papa Francisco do Príncipe Dom Bertrand de Orleans e Bragança,” TFP website, February 8, 2014, https://tfp.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/www.paznocampo.org.br_destaque_Reverente_e_Filial_Mensagem.pdf; Luiz Philippe de Orleans e Bragança, *Por que?*, 134, 222.

Elites” again advocates the abolition of liberal democracy in favor of rule by “families and individuals . . . especially endowed in nature and grace.” To monarchists, these hereditary elites “are the yeast, the others the dough,” a metaphor whereby the general population (the dough) should enjoy “seeing itself thus elevated” by aristocratic and monarchic noblesse oblige in a scheme of rulership “based on the teaching of the Divine Master.”⁴⁹

The belief that God, in fact, calls monarchists to a fuller “restoration of Christian civilization” is a longtime hallmark of restorationists and other extreme-right groups.⁵⁰ Their vision continues to include heralding the medieval Crusades as an aesthetic-cum-political model for regaining a lost authoritarian Christian ideal. TFP members have, (in)famously, been marching and congregating in dramatic organizational “habits” (designed by the founder and imagined as recreations of Crusader garb) for decades (figure 3).



Figure 3. TFP founder Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira wearing the organization’s trademark vestments. Source: “Dr. Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira,” Reconquista (website), accessed May 4, 2023, <https://reconquista.arautos.org/dr-plinio-correa-de-oliveira/>.

49 “Às elites cabe uma missão a favor do bem comum,” Nobreza (TFP website), April 28, 2011, <https://nobreza.org/apelo-as-elites/>.

50 The phrase *civilização cristã* is everywhere across the right. For two contemporary examples, see Dom Bertrand’s letter to Pope Francis (note 45) and the modern-day integralist movement’s hagiography of the Brazilian fascist Plínio Salgado: “Bandeira nova dos tempos novos: O Pensamento Revolucionário de Plínio Salgado,” Deus, Pátria, Família (website), April 21, 2020, <https://integralismo.org.br/sintese-doutrinaria/o-pensamento-revolucionario-de-plinio-salgado/bandeira-nova-dos-tempos-novos/>.

Today, monarchists present the ex-royal family as paragons of Christian culture and devotion, seamlessly blending claims of dynastic piety with calls for their return to rule. Interviewed about his certainty that God will occasion the “return to Christian and Catholic monarchy,” Antônio cited his own and his family’s devoutness, their adherence across generations to “Catholic training, the backbone of everything [our family] does.”⁵¹ In a 2014 open letter of protest to Pope Francis, Bertrand took on the air of a traditional spiritual authority, endowed with the piety and wisdom to chide the pontiff. The letter (*Quo Vadis, Domine?*⁵²) implied that the current pope’s relative openness to social justice impeded “restoration of Christian civilization” and fallaciously sanctioned “current society, of lay inspiration.” Secular modernity, Bertrand declared, had “penetrated the West like a poison after the rejection of the austere and sacral order that reigned in Christendom when . . . ‘states were governed by the philosophy of the Gospel.’” Here Bertrand quoted two extremely conservative papal encyclicals: Pius X’s *Notre Charge Apostolique*, which in 1910 rejected labor-oriented Catholicism, insisting on a traditionalist, counterrevolutionary faith that would keep society “the Catholic City . . . as God has built it”; and Leo XIII’s 1885 *Immortale Dei*. Bertrand’s “austere and sacral order” refers specifically to the time when, according to that encyclical, “Christian Europe . . . subdued barbarous nations, changed them from a savage to a civilized condition,” “victoriously rolled back the tide of Mohammedan conquest,” and “retained the headship of civilization.”⁵³ In late 2019, members of the ex-royal family appeared at an event calling Brazil itself “the last Crusade.” The event was sponsored by Brasil Paralelo, an extremely successful extreme-right media outlet associated with the Bolsonaro government.⁵⁴ The organization’s glitzy productions (available for streaming via subscription service) trace Brazilianness back to a glorified medieval Christendom, “linking the future of the nation with the legacy of the European Middle Ages.” The 2019 event accordingly advertised Bertrand himself as “the Imperial Prince, bona fide crusader in the fight for the restoration of the true Brazil.”⁵⁵

51 “Entrevista com o Príncipe D. Antônio de Orleans e Bragança,” *Herdeiros do Porvir* 19, no. 35 (2013): 4.

52 See note 45. The phrase is Latin for “Whither goest thou, my lord?”

53 Bertrand de Orleans e Bragança, “Quo vadis”; Leo XIII, *Immortale Dei*, November 1, 1885, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_01111885_immortale-dei.html.

54 Alexandre Bazzan, “‘Netflix’ dos bolsonaristas gastou R\$328 mil em anúncios de Facebook e Instagram,” *O Estado de São Paulo*, September 28, 2020, <https://politica.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral,netflix-dos-bolsonaristas-gastou-r-328-mil-em-anuncios-de-facebook-e-instagram,70003455670>. On Brasil Paralelo’s profile and reach, see Wink, *Brazil*, 248.

55 Pró Monarquia, “Fórum ‘Brasil: A Última Cruzada,’” Facebook, September 5, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/promonarquia/posts/2550248258545082/>.

Brasil Paralelo, with its unsubtle glorifications of the medieval, colonial, and imperial pasts and its alignment with the Bolsonaro regime, exemplifies the ways that this worldview, long championed by monarchists and like-minded fringe groups, has moved into the mainstream. Brazil's restorationists have consistently fabricated ideological and cultural genealogies, weaving fictive histories that sought to link their movements with romanticized epochs of militant Christian theocracy. Often this has bound racism and religious chauvinism together in one ethnocentric bundle—certainly this was the case for the “re-Catholicization” envisioned by early restorationists. “[L]acking an epic narrative, confronted with a national populace of Indigenous people and [formerly] enslaved blacks,” one historian observes, “the *patrianovistas* found their greatest models in Christian Europe of old and in the heroes of medieval knighthood.”⁵⁶ Today, this nostalgic ethnocentrism based on “Christian civilization” surfaces not just in esoteric monarchist circles but in the most influential and visible echelons of Brazilian political culture, from social media celebrities to top-level advisors and even Olavo de Carvalho, the sometime guru of the right and architect of its current configuration. As others have observed, right-wing activists have created a media universe in which rehabilitating the Crusades as heroic and ancestral serves as a mark of antiestablishment wisdom.⁵⁷ The expression *Deus Vult!* (God wills it) now serves as a Bolsonarist *cri de coeur* because—as one right-wing podcast would have it—“there isn’t the least possibility of being conservative, or even pro-freedom, without saying the latest trend in Western tattoos: *Deus Vult!*”⁵⁸ The Latin phrase is a slogan attributed to participants in the First Crusade, and its usage constitutes another marker of how Brazil in the 2010s and 2020s has seen these ideas, historically championed by monarchists and other fringe groups, rise to new prominence. To quote historian Paulo Pachá, in “Bolsonaro’s Brazil, the . . . government and far-right groups are propagandizing a fictional version of the European Middle Ages, insisting that the period was uniformly white, patriarchal, and Christian.”⁵⁹ More than ever, monarchist attempts to restore the “Catholic City” of an imagined theocratic, white-, and male-dominated Middle Ages have found a home in the mainstream of Brazil’s right—so much so that Bolsonaro insider, Olavo de Carvalho student, and Tucker Carlson guest Filipe G. Martins celebrated Bolsonaro’s 2018 election by tweeting: “The new era has arrived. Everything is ours! Deus Vult!”⁶⁰

56 Malatian, “Tradicionalismo,” 92.

57 Ethel Rudnitzki and Rafael Oliveira, “Deus vult: uma velha expressão na boca da extrema direita,” *Pública*, April 30, 2019, <https://apublica.org/2019/04/deus-vult-uma-velha-expressao-na-boca-da-extrema-direita/>.

58 “Deus Vult: como as cruzadas salvaram o mundo,” *Guten Morgen* (podcast), April 5, 2019, <http://sensoincomum.org/2019/04/05/guten-morgen-74-deus-vult-cruzadas-salvaram-mundo/>.

59 Paulo Pachá, “Why the Brazilian Far Right Loves the European Middle Ages,” *Pacific Standard*, March 12, 2019, <https://psmag.com/ideas/why-the-brazilian-far-right-is-obsessed-with-the-crusades>.

60 Filipe G. Martins (@filgmartin), Twitter, December 31, 2018, 8:15 p.m., <https://twitter.com/filgmar>.

Free Enterprise and Private Property: Monarchism, Capitalism, and Anticommunism

92

Like their counterparts elsewhere, conservative podcasters in Brazil use terms like “pro-freedom” to dog-whistle several causes, free-market fantasies and destruction of the welfare state prominent among them. Drawing on their forebears and especially on conservative interpretations of the history of Catholic social doctrine, monarchists (and other traditionalist Catholics) anticipated, and now serve as ballast for, coterminous promotion of capitalism, demonization of the welfare state, and ferocious anticommunism. Heedless of the complex historical relationships of the Church and of European monarchies with capitalism and private property, monarchist leaders today trumpet the right’s approaches to economic theory, social programs, and the chimera of communism. In so doing, they reinvent monarchy as the eternal bulwark of unfettered capitalism.

Like reactionaries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Braganças and their supporters harken back to an imagined golden age of economic hierarchy and harmony governed by absolutists. Amid the chaos of 2013, *Herdeiros do Porvir* (Heirs to the future) quoted “Prince” Antônio mourning the illusory old days in which his family’s moral culture and indomitable Catholicism meant “there was no rivalry between boss and worker . . . there existed great harmony among everyone.” The monarchist magazine added that the republic, and especially the Workers’ Party governments of 2003–2016, had created an “insufferable tax burden” and, worse, “a Leviathan State.”⁶¹ Luiz Philippe’s book laments the passing of even older days, before the “weakening of absolutism” permitted liberal democracies’ stultifying “bureaucracy.” He follows this paean to the lost wisdom of Europe’s early modern royals with an anachronistic nostalgia for the economic heroes of the Anglo-American New Right: Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan, Friedrich Hayek, Ludwig von Mises, Milton Friedman, Murray Rothbard, and others. These politicians and “philosophers,” Luiz Philippe argues, rescued the dreamlike legacy of early modern capitalism and “privatization” from the depredations of social democracy, epitomized by the “statified” regime of the US New Deal. The self-styled prince jumbles Reagan-Thatcherism with sixteenth- to eighteenth-century dynastic rule to promote their conflated heritages as the answer to the world’s ills. In this version of history and contemporary policy, democracy and social programs have been an aberration; without them “the rich” will cause a rising tide to lift all boats. “In truth,” Luiz Philippe instructs an anonymous, socratically conjured worker, “what we’d need is more entrepreneurs and businessmen creating more and more jobs and

tin/status/1079923922760540160?s=19.

61 Interview with Antônio de Orleans e Bragança, *Herdeiros do Porvir* 19, no. 35 (2013): 8.

wealth. . . . All the improvement in Brazilians' quality of life would come from . . . entrepreneurs and not the government."⁶²

A quarter century before the publication of Luiz Philippe's book, the movement's "Propostas básicas com vistas à restauração da monarquia no Brasil" (Basic proposals for the goal of restoring the monarchy in Brazil) argued that Catholic monarchy must save Brazilians from a bloated and weak (if not downright evil) liberal democratic state, complete with its unions, social programs, and "hyper-regulated" protections. Under monarchy, the "basic proposals" asserted, "the institutions of free enterprise and private property will be guaranteed with especial rigor," including policies like so-called freedom to work and other impediments to enfranchised labor. The proposals warned that Brazil could not survive without "an effective and urgent diminution of the hypertrophied state machine and . . . correspondent privatization of state firms."⁶³ In the current climate, this commitment to dismantling the state both extends outward to other conservative causes célèbres and continues a pattern of claiming these principles as Catholic precepts. The Cold War chapter in this story saw reactionary Catholics painting social programs, land reform, and even democracy itself as immoral, anti-Catholic, and a death knell for private property—and eventually making common cause with free-market evangelists and neoliberals.⁶⁴ Like those Cold War precursors, Bertrand denounces environmentalism, Indigenous rights, and rural antipoverty efforts because they "gravely violate the right to property, undercut agricultural production, and impose limits on the legitimate economic progress of all layers of the population."⁶⁵

Though Catholic reactionaries innovated in many ways as they helped to create the New Right—not least by moving toward full-throated endorsement of economic liberalism—they have always clung to the Church's inveterate anticommunism. Thus while monarchists' embrace of mainstream right-wing neoliberalism may be relatively novel, their fear and loathing of communism replicate more than a century of traditionalist activism. Not by chance do the Braganças and others quote Pius X and Leo XIII; virulent, faith-based anticommunism lay at the heart of these popes' teachings, and it lies at the heart of monarchist thinking today. For monarchists in the 2010s and 2020s, as for their predecessors and for their allies on the contemporary Bolsonarist right, communist machinations—seen or unseen—lie behind nearly every foe. In other words, the anticommunism of the monarchist and Bolsonarist right in 2022 is an only slightly updated version of the anticommunism of the nineteenth-

62 Bragança, *Por que?*, 72, 166–67.

63 "Propostas básicas com vistas à restauração da monarquia no Brasil," *Pró Monarquia*, January 2009, <https://monarquia.org.br/monarquia-hoje/propostas-basicas/>.

64 Cowan, *Moral Majorities*.

65 Bragança, *Psicose*, 7.

and early twentieth-century Church. It appears across the spectrum of restorationist discourse, with an astonishing variety of targets. Luiz Philippe predictably dismisses the PT (Workers' Party) governments (2003–2016) as “Marxist,” their “Marxist narrative” of “statification”—a charge which ignores the PT’s adherence to privatization schemes—constituting “the pattern of ideology that leads to communism.” The prince-deputy even uses the language of Cold War-era anticommunism, comparing communism to fascism and accusing the “so-called left” of “seducing” Brazilians with “machinations to keep itself in command.”⁶⁶ The late Luiz Gastão, meanwhile, spent decades combating the Red Menace. Addressing the nation’s constitutional convention in a 1987 letter—repeatedly posted online by today’s monarchists—he complained that “communist propaganda” was gaining free reign in Brazil’s fledgling democracy.⁶⁷ In 2013, he heralded the arrival of medical doctors from Cuba as a communist conspiracy—“tools of unspoken designs” wrought by “agents of the socialist-communist ideology” that would lead to “slavery” in Brazil.⁶⁸

Like others in his family, the elderly Luiz took to social media to continue this work, teaching monarchist and other conservative followers that—to quote one observer—Brazil’s republican structure meant the country would “remain subject to communists, socialists, populists.”⁶⁹ Continuity between monarchists’ time-tested anticommunism and the configuration of the right in our time takes its most ferocious form in the pronouncements of Bertrand, however. In a series of arguments made on social media and in his book *Psicose Ambientalista* (Environmentalist psychosis), Bertrand argues that “green” has replaced “red”—that is, climate change and Indigenous rights activists in the 2010s and 2020s, in concert with the execrable scourge of liberation theology, “have substituted the ‘red’ of communism with the ‘green’ of environmentalism” and have “revealed their objectives: socialism, poverty, totalitarianism, communism.” His list of “notorious reds” includes Hugo Chávez and Evo Morales alongside Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., Jeffrey Sachs, Barack Obama, and Osama bin Laden. As if to clarify throughlines with older iterations of anticommunism, Bertrand, too, uses the language of the Cold War, even decrying “useful idiots,” lingo for the putative pawns in a Red conspiracy.⁷⁰

66 Bragança, *Por que?*, 73, 75, 115.

67 Pró Monarquia, “A carta aos constituintes de 1987,” Facebook, June 21, 2017, <https://de-de.facebook.com/promonarquia/posts/1965819716987942/>; “Carta aos Constituintes de 1987,” *Diário Oficial* (blog), February 8, 2017, <http://odiarioimperial.blogspot.com/2017/02/a-carta-aos-constituientes-de-1987.html>.

68 “Atividades dos Príncipes,” *Herdeiros do Porvir*, 3.

69 Rodrigo Polo Pires, untitled blog post, Notícias Agrícolas, January 22, 2017, <https://www.noticiasagricolas.com.br/fala-produtor/mensagem-87821/>

70 Bragança, *Psicose*, 86.

Sexual Counterrevolution

The “red meat” of right-wing culture wars—abortion, homosexuality, unconventional sexual and gender behavior—is well known in Brazil and elsewhere, and monarchists can again claim to have been fighting these battles longer than almost anyone else. Traditionalist Catholics in Brazil have historically incorporated sexual conservatism as a central plank of their proposals; they perceive a timeless conspiracy to undo the rightful order of the world, a satanic, capital-R “Revolution,” which they discern behind everything from the Reformation and the Renaissance to the French Revolution and the Soviet Union.⁷¹ Even before the Cold War, restorationists established their bona fides in this regard—as one historian of interwar monarchist corporatism writes, leaders took “the family and the monarchy” as “bases” in their attempt to “cure the supposed deterioration of the country, occasioned by the republic and liberal democracy.”⁷² In the twenty-first century, monarchists find themselves aligned precisely with the family and gender politics of a broader Christian (and lately, Bolsonarist) right that has caught up to the royalists in its vitriolic opposition to abortion, women’s rights, LGBTQIA rights, and other issues of sexual and gender freedom and expression.

This alignment stems from monarchists’ insistence that the Christian European social and cultural structure they have perennially sought to defend must be based in heteropatriarchal families. The “basic proposals” stated this unambiguously: “Let the family, mother cell of society and fundament of Christian civilization, be effectively protected.” Presaging Bolsonaro’s own exploitation of homophobia and antifeminism—for instance, his infamous demonization of the ersatz “kit gay” and “gender ideology,” both conspiracy theories about left-wing sexualized threats to the conventional family and to children—and the current right’s focus on abortion as a wedge issue, the monarchists’ Magna Carta likewise called for restricting the “mission of educating children” to “the family” and demanded “cultivation, in all households, of a conscience opposed to infanticide.”⁷³ Prominent monarchists repeat this on various platforms, cementing the notion of traditional sexuality and gender as the cornerstone of a presumed coherent right-wing platform that binds together authoritarianism, heteropatriarchy, and various social and cultural canards. Echoing right-wing moral panics past and present, conservative author Bruno Garschagen complained in 2017 that “it is easier today for a kid to tell his parents that he has twelve sexual identities . . . than to tout . . . the superiority of monarchism.”⁷⁴ At a 2012 meeting of monarchists in

71 Cowan, *Moral Majorities*; Coppe Caldeira, *Os baluartes*; Zanotto, *TFP*.

72 Cazetta, “Pátria-Nova,” 46.

73 “Propostas básicas,” *Pró Monarquia*.

74 Bruno Garschagen, “Monarquista, Graças a Deus,” *Gazeta do Povo*, October 16, 2016, <https://>

Florianópolis, the president of a local royalist chapter condemned the permissiveness of a proposal for a new penal code in terms that ranged from sexual to social to economic, arguing that it “completely unfetter[ed] abortion,” liberated “criminals,” and harmed free enterprise. During the same meeting, Bertrand waxed triumphant, insisting that ordinary Brazilians desired “the return of the monarchy” and rejected the combined scourges of left-wing government, sexual “revolution,” and republicanism: “Despite the government and the media insisting on promoting social revolution and a revolution of morality, the Brazilian populace is orderly and conservative.”⁷⁵

Once fringe, monarchists now find themselves in the gratifying position of seeing their politics of sexuality and gender move beyond political acceptability and into a terrain of empowered revanchism that stretches from social media to the top echelons of government. As late as 2017, Bertrand touched off a minor scandal when (as an aside, while dismissing Amazonian deforestation as a “myth”) he declared: “I see homosexuality as a defect . . . [as] Catholic doctrine sees it. And the majority also sees it.” Monarchists have also met the wider right on the broader field of antifeminism and renewed gender strictures for women, a trend that has been on the rise on the Brazilian right for years. Where putschist center-right Brazilian president Michel Temer (who helped oust democratically elected reformist Dilma Rousseff in 2014) can point to his young, manicured, and apparently submissive wife, monarchists offer their own royal examples as paragons of femininity—in both contexts, women are relegated to subordinate, largely ornamental positions in movements led and spoken for by men.⁷⁶ A 2016 interview with then First Lady Marcela Temer touched off a firestorm of reaction that epitomized conservative visions of proper womanhood and its place in the culture wars. The magazine that ran the interview, apparently following Marcela’s lead, described her as “bela, recatada, e do lar”—beautiful, demure, and domestic. When opposition voices criticized the restrictiveness of this as a model for women, the phrase quickly became a hashtag, with reactionaries on social media supporting the idea that Mrs. Temer embodied proper womanhood. “While Marcela Temer cares for the children of this country, the feminists,” one Twitter user mocked, “complain about her being beautiful, demure, and domestic.”⁷⁷

www.gazetadopovo.com.br/opiniao/colunistas/bruno-garschagen/monarquista-gracas-a-de-us-0iv6ae12s332qtwps2qfyrlg/?ref=link-interno-materia.

75 “IV Encontro Monárquico Sul Brasileiro,” *Herdeiros do Porvir* 19, no. 35 (2013): 7.

76 The exception that proves this rule is arguably Carla Zambelli, a federal deputy who has been outspoken about her own 2017 conversion to monarchism. Even among the younger circles of monarchists, whose meetings I have observed, membership and representation is overwhelmingly male, reflecting the unanimity with which conservatives, monarchists or not, tend to seek the reinstatement of patriarchal gender roles.

77 Antifeminismo (@feminazisnao), Twitter, October 5, 2016, 11:54 a.m., <https://twitter.com/feminazisnao/status/783711890635628544>.

If the Temers serve as republican icons of reformulated, traditional gender roles, monarchists chime in with the feminine icons they have perennially proposed: literal princesses, or would-be princesses. Bertrand and Luiz Gastão's niece, the self-styled princess Maria Gabriela de Orleans e Bragança, cultivates a public image that emphasizes her delicacy, conventional femininity, and attendance upon the needs of her family. The princess has posted many videos of herself singing classical music, and spoken in interviews of her desire for a “dynastic marriage” that attends both to needs “of the state and of the heart.”⁷⁸ While she, like her aunt, has had a professional career outside of homemaking, the public messaging of the ex-royal family and monarchist organizations emphasizes her respect for order, traditionally feminine pursuits, and subordination to the men of her family. “Raised according to the notion that the Imperial Family of Brazil has serious obligations to the *Pátria*,” reads the Pró Monarquia website, Maria Gabriela is “dedicated to Christian charity [and] regularly visits hospitals, where she sings, bringing relief to the sick.” She is, moreover, “vice president of the Monarchist Youth of Brazil, whose president is her brother Rafael.”⁷⁹ Over the course of the past generation, monarchists have watched these chauvinisms, from restricting acceptable womanhood to restricting queerness, gain further ascendancy in Brazil's ever-expanding protestant Churches as well as in the corridors of governance. As one writer put it, such reversals in the public square (and in accompanying policymaking) now form a “wave of . . . social retrocession” in which “women suffer restrictions in their rights, so hard won.”⁸⁰ Accordingly, little more than a year after Bertrand's dismissal of homosexuality as a “defect,” Jair Bolsonaro would be elected on a wave of electoral sympathy for his own nearly identical bigotry and untruths.⁸¹

International Underdogs: Monarchism, Perceived Persecution, and the Right beyond Brazil

Bruno Garschagen's claim, partially quoted above, that “few confessions cause more shock today than declaring oneself monarchist” indicates another characteristic of alignment between monarchists, paragons of the twentieth-century New Right (from

78 “Entrevista com a Princesa Dona Maria Gabriela,” *Herdeiros do Porvir* 67 (2021): 4.

79 “Dona Maria Gabriela,” Pró Monarquia, accessed May 4, 2023, <https://monarquia.org.br/a-familia-imperial/dona-maria-gabriela/>.

80 “Bela, recatada e do lar: por que a expressão gerou tanta polêmica nas redes sociais?,” *Donna*, April 20, 2016, <https://gauchazh.clicrbs.com.br/donna/noticia/2016/04/bela-recatada-e-do-lar-por-que-a-expressao-gerou-tanta-polemica-nas-redes-sociais-cjpl6oxcz009vwscnq3poc9v1.html>.

81 “Príncipe imperial destila homofobia e critica ambientalistas,” *Catraca Livre*, May 2, 2017, <https://catracalivre.com.br/cidadania/principe-imperial-destila-homofobia-e-critica-ambientalistas/>; Filho, “Carla Zambelli.”

the Heritage Foundation to the TFP), and the authoritarian conservatism newly resurgent in Brazil and beyond: a sort of persecution complex, in which rightists across ideological and national divides identify as antiestablishment and as victims of (and/or heroic resisters to) a conspiracy of leftists, globalists, sexual deviants, environmentalists, and communists. For restorationists, this sense of suffering dates back decades. Luiz Gastão, for example, complained to legislators in 1987 about the “ideological ‘apartheid’ against monarchists”—thus likening himself and his supporters to the victims of murderous segregation then regnant in South Africa.⁸² In this, typically, monarchists and other rightists style themselves as underdogs while simultaneously occupying positions of power and influence, and they align themselves with national power brokers and internationally celebrated right-wingers. When Tucker Carlson interviewed Bolsonaro in an international broadcast, the two agreed on their mutual marginalization by “the media.” Luiz Philippe’s book opens by positioning the author as David to the Goliath of the establishment intelligentsia, the “majority” of academics and journalists who are “politicians in disguise” and who “pollute and contaminate millions of minds with false truths, made-up statistics, . . . distortion of historical fact, . . . and attempts to create myths and new narratives to validate themselves as the representatives of ‘the people.’”⁸³ *Psicose Ambientalista*, echoing religious fundamentalists of the twentieth century, accuses the UN of trying “to transform humanity into a society hostile to and even persecutory toward Christian civilization.”⁸⁴ The “monarchist primer” sniffs that liberal governments (“republicans”) and “the media” have waged a campaign of defamation against the Brazilian Empire and restorationists. Echoing Trump, Bolsonaro, and their political kin elsewhere, the document presumes monarchism’s victimization by a grand, corporate media-borne conspiracy: “[S]chool textbooks, financed by the republican governments, when they spoke of the princes, always did so in a pejorative way, never recognizing what the monarchy had done for the country. Many outlets of the mainstream media do the same today, silencing . . . the glorious period in which Brazil was a monarchy, successful and well-respected throughout the whole world.”⁸⁵

The Brazilian right’s resonance internationally is no coincidence. Indeed, Brazilian restorationists and their close allies, including traditionalist Catholics and early twentieth-century fascist and protofascist movements such as the *patrianovistas* and Integralists, have long harbored an intoxicating blend of militant nationalism and sympathy with like-minded ideas and movements abroad. By the middle of the Cold War, that blend ripened beyond mere sympathy into direct collaboration between

82 “Carta aos constituintes de 1987.”

83 Bragança, *Por que?*, 13.

84 Bragança, *Psicose*, 89.

85 *Cartilha Monárquica*, 7.

far-right anticommunists in different countries.⁸⁶ Today, this is the rule rather than the exception—monarchists in Brazil, like their counterparts from other veins of conservatism, make no secret of their identification with foreign extremists, especially in the United States. These links are both personal and issue based. Luiz Philippe, for example, delights in the constitutional “originalism” of hard-right legal minds in the United States; denounces, across national and historical contexts, even minimally redistributive programs, from the Affordable Care Act to the New Deal; celebrates Brexit and defends it from charges of xenophobic racism; and, as of 2021, has served on the board of a corporation helping to finance Donald Trump’s Truth Social media platform. His uncle Bertrand, meanwhile, could not be clearer about his affinities with ascendant Bolsonarism and like-minded phenomena abroad. His pet issues include shielding business against regulation by the “religion of environmentalism.” He has also written extensively about how COVID-19 is a “Chinese business” designed to “destroy the fundamentals of Christian civilization.” In a spectacular turn, Bertrand recently took to fraternizing with partisans of another transnational right-wing issue—the arming of propertied white men. Bertrand proudly publicized his visits to the shooting range of the São Paulo-based *Clube de Tiro Redneck*—the Redneck Gun Club. The club’s website offers as inspiration the confession “I’m kind of a closet redneck,” attributed to Donald Trump, Jr.; the site goes on to explain that “redneck is the term used in the United States and Canada to refer to the stereotype of a man who lives in the interior of the country, is poor, of humble origins, and a traditionalist.”⁸⁷

Monarchists, then, do not *lead* Brazil’s fractious and evolving right—if anyone can be said to lead it—but they are *part of* its leadership, not only in the sense of the close relationships they enjoyed with the Bolsonaro government, but in terms of ideas and sensibilities that united Bolsonaro supporters across ideological and denominational lines. Olavo de Carvalho, the YouTubing Rasputin of Brazil’s far right, epitomized this nexus of monarchism, conservative power in Brazil, and transnational right-wing ascendancy. Monarchists and Catholic traditionalists claim Carvalho as one of their own. Indeed, royalist tributes to Carvalho can be found across social media, where he is revered as a pro-Bragança, anti-PT hero. Often his glamorized image accompanies vaguely attributed quotes like “If the royal house really wants to restore the monarchy, I will fight by their side” or “Our monarchy . . . was incomparably better than the republic.”⁸⁸ Two of his apostles number among the avowed royalists who were appointed

86 Cowan, *Moral Majorities*.

87 The club’s website is <http://clubedetiroredneck.com.br/oclube/> (accessed May 4, 2023); Pró Monarquia (@ProMonarquia), Twitter, September 12, 2021, 10:50 a.m., <https://twitter.com/promonarquia/status/1437081121502662656?lang=en>; Pró Monarquia (@ProMonarquia), Twitter, July 7, 2021, 9:50 a.m., <https://twitter.com/ProMonarquia/status/1545057577343414272?s=20&ct=tf4xCo8FZ6fOOMMg-Qln2g>.

88 Olavo de Carvalho (@OdeCarvalho), Twitter, September 19, 2016, 4:13 p.m., <https://twitter.com/odecarvalho/status/777979022512971776?lang=en>; Olavo de Carvalho, Facebook, March 14, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/carvalho.olavo/posts/estou-careca-de-saber-que-a-monarquia-parlamentar-seria-o-melhor-regime-para-o-b/462367680581978/>.

to positions of power in the Bolsonaro administration.⁸⁹ Carvalho sought to extend his influence beyond Brazil. According to some sources, he maintained contact with Hungary's Victor Orbán and Italy's Matteo Salvini.⁹⁰ He resided in Virginia and hobnobbed with the likes of Steve Bannon (arguably an American approximation of Carvalho), who called him “one of the greatest conservative intellectuals in the world.”⁹¹ These kinships appear to have endeared him even further to monarchists and to the ex-royal family, with whom Carvalho shared what one journalist called “Bolsonaro’s pro-gun, antiabortion, climate-change-skeptical . . . free-market” platform.⁹² When Carvalho died in January 2022, Bertrand tweeted a message of sympathy and grief for the self-styled “philosopher and professor,” noting that the latter “knew how to confront gallantly the ‘politically correct’ system.”⁹³

Bertrand models a monarchist (and wider conservative) penchant for adopting right-wing positioning and terminology from abroad, from opposing “political correctness” to “redneck” identity. When the US Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) came to Brazil in 2019, Pró Monarquia exulted in this summit of “expertise in defending liberty and family values” in “the two most important countries in America: Brazil and the United States.” Bertrand and Luiz Philippe each spoke from the CPAC podium, lauding their “friends” in the Bolsonaro regime, promoting gun rights (“legitimate defense”), attacking environmental protections, and gloating that CPAC exhibited the “new Brazil that is coming back.” Bertrand opened with a phrase that symbolizes right-wing unity across borders: “Quero meu Brasil de volta,” literally “I want my Brazil back.”⁹⁴ In part, this reflects the decades-old ultraright Brazilian strategy of seeing

89 “Doutrinação de Olavo de Carvalho, simpatizante da monarquia vai presidir a Fundação Biblioteca Nacional,” *Forum*, November 29, 2019, <https://revistaforum.com.br/politica/2019/11/29/doutrinado-de-olavo-de-carvalho-simpatizante-da-monarquia-vai-presidir-fundao-biblioteca-nacional-65130.html>.

90 Andrea Ribeiro Hoffmann and Bettina de Souza Guilherme, “The Fall of a Giant: Greed, Corruption and Abuse of Power Undermining Democracy in Brazil,” in *Financial Crisis Management and Democracy*, ed. Bettina de Souza Guilherme and Andrea Ribeiro Hoffmann (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2021), 201–11.

91 Jack Nicas, “Olavo de Carvalho, Bolsonaro’s Far-Right Guru, Dies at 74,” *New York Times*, January 26, 2022.

92 Andres Schipani, “Royalists Pine for Days of Empire in Bolsonaro’s Brazil,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 6, 2020.

93 Dom Bertrand de Orleans e Bragança (@SAIRDombertand), Twitter, January 25, 2022, 6:00 p.m., <https://twitter.com/SAIRDombertand/status/1486126827391397888?s=20&ct=qH6XqE-DbyjN-qmMFLascuw>.

94 CPAC has also held events in Japan, Mexico, South Korea, Australia, and—notably—Viktor Orbán’s Hungary, where a second conference took place in May 2023, with Orbán himself as invited keynote speaker. Bertrand’s speech is available at “CPAC Brasil—Dom Bertrand,” October 13, 2019, YouTube video, 29:06, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R6vCMw4GYWU>. See also Pró Monarquia,

every threat to hegemony as part of a global conspiracy. When Bertrand and other monarchists rhapsodize that the 2020s are their moment, that a “new Brazil is coming back,” they identify with rightists in the United States and elsewhere in presuming a common enemy animating right-wing struggles from Brazil to Hungary and Russia. A smaller monarchist group calling itself Movimento Brasil Monarquista takes to Twitter (and lately, to Telegram) to denounce left-wing governments across the region as part of a transnational conspiracy inherited from the Cold War—the capital-R “Revolution” of Oliveira’s mid-century writings. To these monarchists, Chile’s current president, Gabriel Boric, is “a friend of Lula and ultracommunist”; and the political fortunes of Argentina and Venezuela are linked with those of Brazil not by proximity but by their common battle against “the danger of communism.” Tellingly, “communism” here has been updated to include new progressive bogeymen—such as the false claim that leftists in Latin America seek to echo US calls to disarm conventional police forces.⁹⁵ On this issue, too, Bertrand and the Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira Institute have joined hands rhetorically with their counterparts in the United States. The “prince” weighed in on the debate over historical monuments to atrocity perpetrators as a transnational issue. As the “racial reckoning” intensified in the United States in the summer of 2020, Bertrand took the side of conservatives in a YouTube video entitled “Brazilian Prince Comments on the Criminal Toppling of Statues—Brazil and the United States on High Alert.” He specifically praised the American variant of the TFP for its defense of a statue of St. Louis, supporting counterprotests in that city that were organized by conspiracy theorist and Parkland (Florida) mass-shooting denier Jim Hoft.⁹⁶

Conclusions and Contradictions

Eminent historian Darren Dochuk has observed the tendency to dismiss contemporary conservatism as “a last-gasp attempt to recapture a mythical, pre-modern past.”⁹⁷ The critical error, perhaps, lies in the idea of a *last* gasp. Risible as the pretensions of monarchists in Brazil may seem, their ideas had gained (or retained) enough appeal

“A CPAC Brasil 2019,” Facebook, September 30, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/promonarquia/posts/2569023306667577/>.

95 Larissa Linder, “Monarquistas 2.0,” *Tab*, June 27, 2022, [https://tab.uol.com.br/edicao/monarquistas/Movimento Brasil Monarquista \(@_Monarquista\)](https://tab.uol.com.br/edicao/monarquistas/Movimento%20Brasil%20Monarquista%20(@_Monarquista)), Twitter, October 28, 2019, 12:53 p.m., https://twitter.com/_Monarquista/status/1188876567944011777?s=20&ct=AWVKjSx1cuvxoPtU6bL1CA.

96 Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira Institute, “Príncipe brasileiro comenta criminosa derrubada de estátuas—EUA e Brasil em alerta,” July 10, 2020, YouTube video, 8:36, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KET_i3ZeBFQ; Jim Hoft, “Calling All Catholic and Christian Men and Their Allies,” *Gateway Pundit*, June 24, 2020, <https://www.thegatewaypundit.com/2020/06/calling-catholic-christian-men-allies-please-join-us-saturday-public-prayer-save-historic-st-louis-statue-forest-park/>.

97 Darren Dochuk, “Revival on the Right,” *History Compass* 4/5 (2006): 991n5.

by 2018 that they could credibly walk the halls of power and identify with the ruling regime. Their positions on the culture, history, socioeconomic structure, and governance not only of Brazil but of what they would call “Christendom” now resonate with a broad swath of Brazilians keenly attuned to social media accounts that exalt anticommunism, Christian chauvinism, white supremacy, patriarchal and other traditionalisms, and various ethnocentric romanticizations of a past that lies just beyond reach, and which can only be regained by making society and culture “great again.” Last year in Brazil, monarchists once again showed themselves more than capable of synthesizing these motifs with the heedlessness of falsehood and contradiction that is the hallmark of today’s revanchist right. In July 2022, Pró Monarquia posted an image of Luiz Gastão commemorating his decades-long attempt to rehabilitate his ancestors’ role in the holocaust of Indigenous peoples. The image features the self-styled “prince” standing alongside Indigenous men in traditional dress, with a caption that recalls how Luiz magnanimously visited “Pataxó Indians, descendants of the tribe that received [Portuguese military commander] Pedro Álvares Cabral and his fleet when they arrived on our shores on April 22, 1500, bringing with them Catholic missionaries and Christian civilization’s blessings and promises of spiritual, cultural, and material riches.” Though this ethnic group, like so many others in Brazil and across the Americas, suffered expropriation and expulsion as late as the second half of the twentieth century, the Braganças and their supporters celebrate this history, consistent with their argument that medieval Catholicism, led by divinely ordained rulers, brought spiritual rectitude, cultural betterment, and “material riches” to Indigenous people “fortunate” enough to survive contact.⁹⁸ One month before, in June 2022, when local monarchists in the city of Caieiras, São Paulo, took aim at black activists who sought an accurate reckoning of the history misrepresented by the right, the monarchists blamed “a left that disseminates discord and upheaval, that promotes the destruction of the family, the end of private property and of free enterprise, and that maligns even the providential hour in which the ships with the Cross of Jesus Christ reached our shores, bringing with them the missionaries, the blessings, and promises of the spiritual and material riches of Christian civilization that would later gestate the Brazilian Monarchy.”⁹⁹ This then, is the monarchist right of the 2020s, nearly indistinguishable from the empowered and (in their minds) embattled Bolsonarist right, focused on capitalism, family-based sexual and gender traditionalism, Eurocentrism and, Christian ethnocentrism.

Two recent moments typify how the monarchists provide a microcosmic lens for comprehending conservatism in Brazil and beyond in 2023. Last year, as Brazil celebrated its two hundredth year of independence, authorities within the Bolsonaro

98 The photo and commentary are available at Pró Monarquia, Facebook post, July 29, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=193681173053163&set=pcb.193681413053139>.

99 Pró Monarquia (@promonarquia), “Nota de repúdio a propósito do cancelamento do I Encontro Monárquico de Caieiras,” Instagram, July 12, 2022, <https://www.instagram.com/p/Cf6ZOhDOQ-G/>.

regime arranged for the heart of the country's first emperor, Pedro I (1798–1834), to be brought from Portugal for a special ceremony. The event featured the attendance of living Braganças, including Luiz Phillippe, who used the moment to underscore the notion that the Bolsonaro government sought to restore the mythic past in which his royal family had guaranteed a desirable order: “Now, in the Brazilian context, all of that was unfortunately destroyed. We have lost a little bit of the sense of the founders of Brazil, what they represented, what they thought, what they craved for Brazil. And it is very important to be rescuing that. I imagine that today is the beginning of a beautiful and great redemption for the Brazilian population. . . . This was the demand of a portion of society that wishes to see this historical redemption.”¹⁰⁰ The second moment, more spectacular still, followed upon the October 2022 presidential election and featured, as international media looked on, Bolsonaro supporters and election denialists storming and defacing the central governmental palaces in Brasília. Many in the crowd declared their intent to foment a coup—an antidemocratic sentiment perfectly in keeping with the narratives of Brazil's right in general and of monarchists in particular, who share a decades-long history of defending and rationalizing Brazil's brutal military dictatorship.¹⁰¹ While some in the crowd wandered through the abandoned congressional, presidential, and judicial buildings draped in Brazil's current flag, a group of rioters hoisted the monarchical standard—the flag of the Brazilian Empire (1822–1889), which has for several years now made regular appearances at right-wing and anti-PT protests.¹⁰² Such symbolic gestures are, of course, a far cry from the Reichsbürger plot foiled just one month earlier in Germany—yet the ability of contemporary monarchisms on both sides of the Atlantic (both focused on nineteenth-century hereditary regimes and incorporating Christian chauvinisms, conspiracy theories, and cultural traditionalism) to rally to their banners violent partisans offers, to say the least, a striking parallel with implications for the transnational study of the right.

100 “Vinda de coração de Dom Pedro I ao Brasil não tem vínculo político, afirma descendente,” *Jovem Pan*, updated August 22, 2022, <https://jovempan.com.br/programas/jornal-da-manha/vinda-de-coracao-de-dom-pedro-i-ao-brasil-nao-tem-vinculo-politico-afirma-descendente.html>.

101 Monarchists, by definition, call for an end to the republic. More specifically, like Bolsonaro and the most vocal of Brazil's conservatives, Bertrand has long aligned himself with Brazil's military dictatorship of 1964–1985—perhaps as an antidemocratic alternative to full monarchism. Where Bolsonaro and his partisans openly seek to resuscitate the historical memory of the brutal dictatorship, royalist Twitter posts affirm Bertrand's role as an “anticommunist student leader” during the regime, when he also established his enduring ties to the extremist group TFP. See Pró Monarquia (@ProMonarquia), Twitter, May 18, 2022, 9:50 a.m., <https://twitter.com/ProMonarquia/status/1526938227294224384?s=20>.

102 Jack Nicas and André Spigariol, “Bolsonaro Supporters Lay Siege to Brazil's Capital,” *New York Times*, January 8, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2023/01/08/world/brazil-congress-protests-bolsonaro#309b8594-a2ff-5979-9d52-03f0dfa72734>; Luiza Garonce, “Com bandeiras do Brasil Império, grupo protesta no Congresso Nacional,” *G1*, August 27, 2017, <https://g1.globo.com/distrito-federal/noticia/com-bandeiras-do-brasil-imperio-grupo-protestou-em-frente-ao-congresso-nacional.ghtml>.



Figure 4. Rioters hoist the flag of imperial Brazil in Brasília on January 8, 2023. Source: André Spigariol for the *New York Times*, January 8, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2023/01/08/world/brazil-congress-protests-bolsonaro/309b8594-a2ff-5979-9d52-03f0dfa72734?smid=url-share>.

There is of course much more to be explored here—particularly when it comes to the paradoxes of monarchist and other elements of the right. In Brazil, as elsewhere, the marriage of populist social conservatism with elite economic liberalism remains a puzzling, contradictory, and unstable element—one that has troubled scholars for generations, myself included. The complex interactions of historical Catholic traditionalism, modern neoliberalism, and economic populism appear to have entered an even more inscrutable and unpredictable phase, with ongoing and new fractiousness between these perspectives.¹⁰³ This includes the seemingly paradoxical presence of social and racial minorities among monarchists. Like prominent black and brown Republicans in the United States, these Brazilian individuals likely do not represent a sizeable proportion of the royalist right—but they are visible and vocal. One young black monarchist in Brazil justifies his conservatism with the time-honored argument that black rights initiatives are not only wrong-headed but unpatriotic—that is, un-Brazilian.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, even as Bertrand dismissed “homosexuality as a defect,” a smattering of self-styled “Brazilian LGBTTT monarchists” published a letter arguing that

103 On the Catholic evolution from Thomism and sanctifying private property to something approximating neoliberalism, see Wink, *Brazil*. One example of this fractiousness is the difficult relationship between populists and neoliberals within the Bolsonaro camp.

104 Daniel Lisboa, “Evento de monarquistas tem erro no upload, briga e só 1 minuto de príncipe,” *Tab*, February 22, 2021, <https://tab.uol.com.br/noticias/redacao/2021/02/22/evento-de-monarquistas-tem-erro-no-upload-briga-e-so-1-minuto-de-principe.htm?cmpid=copiaecola>.

Bertrand does not in fact represent monarchism in Brazil, which—they contended—proudly honored same-gender-loving monarchs from Europe’s past.¹⁰⁵

As I have noted, no plausible analysis predicts the monarchy’s formal return to power in Brazil; even the conjecture continues to draw eyerolls. Indications, rather, are that monarchism has received a boost in visibility from its adaptation to social media. One journalist observes that “monarchist circles” on Telegram and other platforms unite hundreds of thousands of followers, while physical meetings languish with few attendees.¹⁰⁶ Yet there is reason to pay attention to restorationists, whose radical demands have become so consonant with those of today’s ascendant authoritarian conservatives. Hendrik Kraay, researching popular monarchism among Afro-Brazilian brotherhoods in the nineteenth century, provides a useful framework for understanding this when he contends that although such monarchism was never “representative” of Brazilian society as a whole, it did provide “an ideological structure for articulating popular political demands,” and as such shows us something about how visions of organicist autocracy might hold some broad appeal.¹⁰⁷ Within the shifting Venn diagrams of Brazilian and global right-wing populist ascendancy, monarchism may not represent the likeliest of futures—but both in terms of core issues and mobilization it highlights the ascendancy of ideas, people, and movements once considered fringe.

105 “Monarquistas rebatem declarações homofóbicas do ‘príncipe’ brasileiro,” *JC*, May 3, 2017, <https://jc.ne10.uol.com.br/canal/politica/pernambuco/noticia/2017/05/03/monarquistas-rebatem-declaracoes-homofobicas-do-principe-brasileiro-281439.php>.

106 Linder, “Monarquistas 2.0.”

107 Hendrik Kraay, “Black Kings, Cabanos, and the Guarda Negra Reflections on Popular Royalism in Nineteenth-Century Brazil,” *Varia Historia* 35, no. 67 (2019): 145.