

The Science of Desire

Beauty, Masculinity, and Ideology on the Far Right

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Abstract: *Scores of male right-wing influencers offer advice to young men online on fitness, diet, and bodybuilding. Representations of the “right” kind of man draw attention to rippling muscles, square jaws, and beautifully symmetrical faces as evidence of racial superiority. This contemporary resurgence of “body fascism” in the hypersemiotized online spaces of the far right, however, remains underexamined. In this article, we analyze Man’s World magazine, a digital publication edited by the neofascist lifestyle influencer “Raw Egg Nationalist.” Through gendered semiotic and linguistic anthropological analysis of the text, we argue that hardness, understood in myriad ways, is the moral flavor of a far-right masculinist speech register that combines elements of mental fortitude, muscular strength, sexual potency, and physical beauty at the individual level with racial renewal and national invulnerability at the political level. We show how readiness for violence and the “return” to traditional masculine violence are legitimated through graftings onto scientific and academic registers, and how neofascist influencers ultimately operate within boundaries delimited by neoliberal modernity. We argue that the production of a “dissident” right-wing male subjectivity is intimately interwoven with the dissemination and use of this register.*

Keywords: register, rhematization, masculinism, weightlifting, diet, health, media

The readers of the far-right *Man’s World* magazine find in its glossy pages minute instructions for transforming themselves into living Greek statues: how to build rippling muscles, what to eat to become rock-jawed, how to stare with stony-eyed stoicism at women’s manipulative charms. Whether in preppy popped collars and crisp button-downs, or nothing more than a neon speedo, they become alpha males who dominate soy boys and other betas living the “yeast life.” In the fight against “wokeism,” they join together with like-minded masculine comrades in a *Männerbund*: a tribe of fearless

male warriors who pound their chests naked in the forest, go gaming on a quest to rescue maidens from orcs, or perhaps sail the seven seas as masters and commanders.

Man's World is a quarterly edited by “Raw Egg Nationalist,” whose fourteen pseudonymously published digital issues feature contributors from the world of far-right bodybuilding, masculinity, and health. Claiming physical strength builds national strength, the magazine aligns discourses on white male dominance with discourses on health and nutrition. The opposition of (dominant) alpha males and (weak) betas becomes the raw egg nationalist versus the soy boy. To build dominance, the magazine offers pseudoscientific advice on health, fitness, and nutrition for building a muscular physique, and it contains real and parody advertisements, borderline homoerotic fashion and fitness photo spreads, and short historical and fantasy fiction focused mostly on manly heroics. In the magazine’s detailed instructions for the correct performance of manhood, the desiring gaze on the muscular male body is transmogrified into a science of desirability. This (race) science of desirability instructs man in the renewal of his masculinity, and with it the renewal of the nation and the race. In this fascist mythology of renewal, male beauty is a kind of expertise, a charismatic power articulated around physical and intellectual hardness—anything but the object of same-sex desire. The hot, rippling, hard physiques that appear in the pages of *Man's World* are instead muscular avatars of the white nation.

In this article, we explore the *enregisterment* of the hot, hard man in this far-right lifestyle magazine. As we discuss below, to *enregister* a figure is to compose a type of person from a variety of linguistic and semiotic elements that are constructed as somehow *belonging* together. Drawing on an explanatory framework for gendered semiotics (Tebaldi 2024), we explore the ideological utility of far-right masculine aesthetics. This framing allows us to ask what hot, hard men are made to *mean*. What does their hardness signify, and for whom? Which kinds of desires are foregrounded, and which are elided? We address these diverse imaginings of hardness and white nationalist desire with humor—a statement on our part against the far-right bathos that uses “hardness” to elevate diet culture to civilizational renewal.

We theorize the “hardness” of the men in *Man's World* as what Susan Gal (2013) calls “moral flavor.” Moral flavor is the aligning of distinct physical and psychical qualia (i.e., attributes) into a single term. Hardness is thus both physical strength and intellectual determination, bringing together the sensory and ideological into an icon of idealized male dominance. This link between the ideological and the sensory is enregistered through a series of instructions for the practice of manhood that we, drawing on Silverstein (1993), term a metapragmatics of masculinity. *Man's World* tutors its readers in how to appropriately perform masculine hardness in a series of detailed instructions and in illustrations of an idealized masculine aesthetic.

In our analysis, we argue that hardness engenders desirable manhood as a physical characteristic of strength—a well-muscled “hard body” as well as the personal discipline needed to achieve such a physique—and an intellectual quality (“mental fortitude”) linked to the way far-right actors imagine intellectual strength as impassivity (see Ging

2019), often with a white marble statue as iconic of stoicism. Renewing one's own hard masculinity in this way is linked to the renewal of the (white) nation, in both highly dramatic discourses and minute instructions. Manhood as this ideologically weighted hardness is produced through a cluster of practices from speech down to the kind of extra-hard chewing gum a hard man chews. These instructions are framed as a kind of far-right expertise established as objective through a pseudoscientific discourse that indexes white supremacist racial and nationalist ideologies, belief in which is constructed as smart and rational. We then show how these beauty discourses depend on borrowings from the social and natural sciences for their authorization, becoming a race science of desire. Finally, we show how these instructions connect to a broader social vision, a pseudoanthropology that valorizes the recovery of a lean, strong body as part of a return to tradition, health, and racial purpose, while guarding against potential accusations of homosexual desire. By becoming strong, hard, and hot, you can embody male beauty as the meaning and power that have been lost due to modern degeneracy.

In the first section of the article, we offer historical and discursive context for *Man's World* magazine, first reviewing research on "body fascism" (Gottlieb 2011) and far-right sexual and gender politics, and then on the current digital far right. In the second part, we first describe our approach to analyzing the magazine and then explain our theoretical framework, outlining the way hardness functions as a moral and physical phenomenon. In the analytical sections we focus on the "scientific" authorization of a white and male supremacist discourse of beauty. In the conclusion, we look at the effects of this mythos, offering some thoughts on how this understanding of male beauty as science is meaningful—telling us about charisma, domination, and power on the right—and on how it elides unwieldy desires in the framing of beauty as myth, science, and power.

***Man's World*, Youthful Virility, and "Body Fascism"**

Man's World's images of marbled muscles have long aesthetic and ideological roots in historical Italian Fascism, which saw classical statues of well-muscled young men as icons not only of youthful virility but of the "regenerative effect" of fascism on society (Antliff 2001, 59, 61). This virility aligns bodily practices conflating youth, health, and physical strength with the renewal of the nation. As Spackman (1996, 2001) has argued, youthful, energetic men are called on to clear away all that is decrepit and effeminate in national life. In her study of the interwar fascist movement in the United Kingdom, Gottlieb (2011) shows how this was realized in "body fascism," which constructed the athletic male body as an object of admiration, and as a desirable social goal. A man's ideally muscled body was a symbol of national glory—a winning athlete at the Olympics, or the strapping blonde men in a Leni Riefenstahl propaganda film—demonstrating the superiority of the Aryan "race." Body fascism links the individual and the social body through a series of everyday practices that promote investment in and preparation

for fascist violence. For the fascist body politic to be powerful and resilient it must be made up of individual bodies that are themselves healthy and strong.

These embodied practices and aesthetic ideals suggest the centrality of gender and sexuality to the fascist concept of the nation. From German Nazism and the Vichy regime in France to postwar British and other neofascist movements in Europe, a nation's strength in fascist imaginaries has been equated with its virility, and the feminization of its men or masculinization of its women are imagined as the main symptoms of degeneration (Burnett and Richardson 2021). Theleweit (1987, 1989) noted the psychosexual roots of fascist thinking in gendered divisions between hard men and always potentially dissolute women. Women are the soft places in the nation where enemies can get in. As the Italian fascist Filippo Tommaso Marinetti declared in 1933, fascism demands "ardent" men and "inseminated" women (quoted in Spackman 1996, 12). Affirming gendered difference in meaning-making practices requires returning to a "correct" gendered, national, and indexical order where women are in their traditional place (Inoue 2003). Fascist ideology thus seeks a renewed social order, opening the possibility for a true, masculine, and strong modernity in opposition to a feminine and decadent present (Tebaldi 2023b). Enemies both internal and external are constantly luring women into feminism and men into socialism and homosexuality, softening and emasculating the state, in order to supplant the native (white, Aryan) population. Racial purity is central to fascism to the extent that it depends on women's loyalty to reproducing the nation. The fascist imaginary is thus articulated around an "imagined zero-sum contest for ethnic or racial dominance in which a regressive vision of the gender binary is both arsenal and battlefield" (Burnett and Richardson 2021, 11). Only a martial state that is unapologetically masculine and a domestic sphere that is passionate about procreation and the wombs of its women can protect the eternal values of the people from degradation and secure the reproductive future of the nation.

There are echoes of this fascist imaginary today, as both idealized forms of masculinity and healthy bodies are central to current far-right cultures. Bjork James (2020) shows that sexual politics are central to US far-right and right-wing Christian political cultures. In the United States, the development of a highly mediatized white supremacist social order is parsed, maintained, and policed in sexual terms (Tebaldi 2023a). Kelly (2017), for example, notes that the resurgence of white nationalism after 9/11 was deeply gendered as a project of masculine renewal, part of a long revival of imperial masculinity as muscular Christianity during the lead-up to the second Iraq war (Du Mez 2020). In the European context, Goetz (2021) has shown how Muslims are constructed as enemies of white heterosexuality in the "Great Replacement" theory, which proposes that shadowy elites are replacing white people with diverse immigrants to create a rootless, replaceable society. Brotherton (2023) argues that right-wing homonationalism—a sexual politics that characterizes Muslims as both asexual fanatics and hypersexual predators—uses sexual norms to legitimate racial social exclusion, producing Muslims as monstrously other (for more on the notion of Muslims as inherently predatory, see Frydenlund and Leidig 2022 on "love jihad").

Health is the second element of these politics. A persistent link between contemporary far-right politics and “alternative” health and wellness has been identified (see Baker 2022; Burnett, forthcoming). Many of these wellness contemporaries have clear links to historical body fascism, mainstreaming explicitly fascist ideals and building far-right community through lifestyle and health practices (Miller-Idriss 2020). Examples include Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) fight clubs, which harken back to boxing clubs in early British fascism (Collins 1999); and Andrew Tate, the former MMA fighter turned male supremacist influencer recently arrested for sexual assault and sex trafficking. The mainstreaming of fascist ideals in these groups is made possible by the longstanding links of fitness and “physical culture” to the cultivation of “superiority” as a socially dominant form of masculinity (Petrezela 2022), while fatness has long been linked to blackness and social othering (Strings 2015).

Muscular white masculinity is imagined both as preparation for actual battle and as a kind of spiritual battle for racial or civilizational health, a type of “white wellness” (Tebaldi 2024). This nexus of body, health, and masculinity has been linked to eco-fascism (Farrell-Molloy 2022; Lubarda 2024). As has been pointed out by a number of scholars including Ruth Wodak (2021), a vaguely defined “retrotopia” is the animating myth of many far-right movements. These highly mediatized discourses of producing and protecting “pure” unspoiled natural beauty also produce idealized gendered personae that are linked to the ideal of a return to tradition and nature (Tebaldi 2023a). As Baker (2022) adds, these discourses frequently link fascist politics to alternative health and wellness sites that challenge medical and scientific discourses. In this article we deepen the analysis of this juncture, linking far-right masculinity to the production of both “expert” discourses on health and mystical discourses of a return to the natural. These discourses of return to tradition are produced and marketed in the highly modern online world of the “manosphere” and the “dissident right.”

The Manosphere and the Men of the Dissident Right

Retrotopia discourses are circulated in, and target members of, the online “manosphere” (Ging 2019). This is a (counter)public of websites and social media platforms populated by a variety of masculinist ideologues including PUAs (pick-up artists), who offer advice for achieving status with men by dominating women; adherents of “red pill” philosophy; promoters of countertruths such as that modernity is a female-dominated “gynocracy” (Van Valkenburgh 2021); and incels who claim to be “involuntarily celibate” as a cover for misogyny (Kelly, DiBranco, and DeCook 2021) and who are frequently engaged in aesthetic masculinization called “looksmaxxing” (Usborne 2024) in order to achieve domination over women. This ragtag group of highly online young men frequently combines a personal desire for success in dating to a political desire for male domination, making them easy targets for the dissident right’s discourse of white male supremacism.

This dissident right is a loose coalition of self-described “cultured thugs” (Burnett and Tebaldi, forthcoming), including technofascists, monarchists, traditionalists, far-right

hipsters, bodybuilders, and far-right intellectuals (Maly 2023). They frame themselves as mentally and physically strong, linking stereotyped forms of desirable masculinity embodied in a particular hyper-masculine aesthetic to an imagined countercultural resistance to groupthink; they are self-styled soldiers for Western civilization and brilliant scholars fighting leftist propaganda. The utility of these external and internal enemies is that they allow for the (re)production of white masculinity as a desirable physical and national characteristic. These discourses emphasize strong white manhood as losing ground to Islam, and call for female submission as necessary to the West with what they term “white sharia” (Laryš 2023). A focus on the hard white male body as the defender of the West against invading others capitalizes on social atomization and alienated young men anxious about their self-actualization in neoliberal capitalist societies.

A dominant theme in the health and lifestyle discourses mobilized in these spaces is self-help and personal development (Elley 2021; Trancoso and Burnett, forthcoming). Focusing on financial and fitness goals, as well as abstaining from pornography and masturbation, becomes a crucial technology of the self for right-wing masculine subjects (Burnett 2022). Developing the masculine qualities of strength, discipline, and control, whether in MMA fight clubs or at the gym, these self-described “lifters” found new audiences for their alt-health and fitness advice in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Suspicion of government intervention, “globalist” pharmaceutical companies, and the mainstream media combines with the idealization of a return to the land and traditional cures to provide a fertile substrate for transforming racist, antifeminist, and alternative health discourses into a heterodox consensus about what is wrong with Western societies (Baker 2022). The pseudonymous “manfluencers” that have emerged to lead the charge by embodying the ideal strong, hard masculinity we analyze here include major contributors to *Man’s World* such as Carnivore Aurelius (351K Twitter/X followers), Sol Brah (216K), Bronze Age Pervert (148.6K), The Golden One (45K), Spinach Brah (24K), and Raw Egg Nationalist himself (216K). At the intersection of diet and dictatorship, these ideological entrepreneurs (Finlayson 2021) dispense weightlifting and dietary advice while endorsing novel forms of provocative nationalism, from the pronatalist “breast milk nationalism” to the wryly retrotopian “long ass nationalism,” which refers to the 1980s women’s fashion for high-cut swimsuits and jeans, or the more recent “Abercrombie nationalism,” which recalls advertising for a clothing company featuring young, virile men. While many of these ideas are closer to viral memes than well-developed political philosophies, they are clearly calculated to entertain, even as they recruit their audiences to misogynist and racist politics.

Raw Egg Nationalist (REN) is a British fitness and diet influencer who brings together health and bodybuilding with far-right ethnonationalism. His books, including *The Raw Egg Trilogy*, focus on recipes for high-protein foods, vintage bodybuilding exercises, the lives and practices of “golden age” bodybuilders, and the idea that eating specific kinds of locally grown raw foods builds personal and national health. In his latest book, the *Eggs Benedict Option* (a play on Rod Dreher’s *The Benedict Option*), he

links this advocacy to explicitly far-right conspiracy theories about the “Great Reset,” a COVID-era update of the “Great Replacement” theory, which suggests that “soy globalists” aim to destroy white manhood and white nations with unhealthy food. Raw egg nationalism may seem fringe, but it has a surprisingly large reach. REN appears in the “mainstream” in former Fox News anchor Tucker Carlson’s documentary, *The End of Men*. The magazine we analyze here brings together the major manfluencers of the digital right; some of these contributors, such as Bronze Age Pervert, have written influential far-right manifestos read by staffers of the first Trump White House (Schreckinger 2019).

Language, Visuality, and Fascist Ideology

In this section, we present sociocultural linguistic analysis of the first six editions of *Man’s World*, published between 2021 and 2022 and available online and from far-right booksellers, focusing particularly on depictions of, and prescriptions for, male health and beauty. We contextualize this data with reference to all four books published by Raw Egg Nationalist, three of which he made freely available on Academia.edu, suggesting he views these as scientific texts.¹ To understand how the nexus of bodybuilding and far-right politics is discursively formed, we also refer to Scott Burnett’s longstanding digital ethnographic research on the social media of his major contributors. This latter group includes Herculean Strength, Bronze Age Pervert, Sol Brah, Orwell N Goode, The Golden One, and other leading manfluencers. These ideological entrepreneurs personify the use of this “hard man” register and demonstrate its effects. Their livelihoods depend on it through selling training advice, supplements, and branded clothing to their followers. In analyzing the discourses presented in these magazines, we unpack how text and image combine to link male beauty to far-right ideology with a framework drawn from three intersecting ideas in linguistic anthropology: register, rhematization, and moral flavor. This framework has already been theorized to understand the use of femininity manuals in far-right discourse (Tebaldi 2024), and we now mobilize these concepts to analyze prescriptions for masculinity. Specifically, we consider how *Man’s World* creates an idealized, politicized male persona, and then in the ensuing discussion show how this is created through borrowing authority from existing scientific registers.

We analyze how gender is prescribed, performed, and given political meaning with work on *register*. Register (Agha 2003), simply put, is the way language “makes people up” (Gal 2019). That is, using Eckert’s (2016, 76) examples, register involves how specific words or speech styles are linked to “some widely recognized character type such as Posh Brit or Surfer Dude.” Registers can borrow elements from popular culture, lifestyle, and social media but also authoritative discourses, such as science, history, or mythology. Recent research has explored how these personae are morally marked, expressing ideals

1 No money was spent on getting these materials nor given to right-wing causes.

of masculinity, such as being the ideal worker (Del Percio 2022) or marrying a perfectly feminine “tradwife” (Tebaldi 2024) who never works. Here we analyze the register of the “hot hard hero,” which we have elsewhere called the “cultured thug” (Burnett and Tebaldi, forthcoming).

The “hot hard hero” is one such idealized persona constructed by a register, his virile manhood established through the frequent repetition of signs and social practices, much as a bodybuilder’s reps increase muscle mass. Gal (2019) shows how, for a register to form, links need to be articulated and repeated, over and over, to become socially established as clusters of indexical relationships in a process she terms “rhematization.” Through rhematization, different elements come to seem to “belong together.” It may best be shown in the popular meme format of the “starter pack,”² which shows multiple elements linked to a particular character type. For example, a follower of raw egg nationalism might be represented by eggs, ice cream, a speedo, weights, and a copy of *Mein Kampf*. While raw egg nationalism, or a variant like Abercrombie nationalism, may seem quite niche, rhematization links acceptable forms of manhood (and ice cream) to unacceptable politics.

This linking happens through *cycles of rhematization* (Tebaldi 2024). When this relation is so frequently repeated that elements seem not only to belong together through convention but to be essentially linked as parts of a natural whole, it is termed an icon (Gal and Irvine 2019). Tebaldi (2024) argues that far-right constructions of gender in particular become iconic through these frequent repetitions. This apparent link allows gender to be naturalized through multiple cycles of rhematization that connect the physical presentation of gender to morally marked personal qualities. In the data we present below, manhood or virility is expressed as physical “hardness,” which also indexes mental hardness. Mental hardness is expressed as mental fortitude or strength (conveniently measured by one’s commitment to racist and misogynist ideology), but also expressed through a strong body, which in turn indexes mental discipline, and so on in endless cycles that work to tie symbolic and material hardness. The repetition of this link then allows these qualities to be naturalized as innate to masculinity, and iconic of manliness itself. This process works to naturalize far-right gender ideology as essential to “real” manhood.

2 For more examples, see “The Alt-Right Starter Pack,” Know Your Meme (website), accessed December 31, 2024, <https://knowyourmeme.com/photos/1193692-starter-packs>.

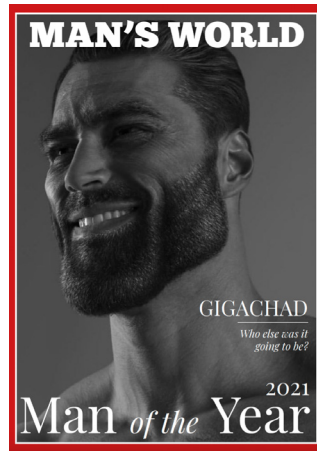


Figure 1. A *Time*-style mock cover from *Man's World* celebrating the Russian model and bodybuilder Ernest Khalimov (a.k.a., Gigachad) as 2021 man of the year.³

These qualities are apparent in figure 1, in which the unusually square jaw, prominent deltoid muscles, dark beard, and slicked-back dark hair of the model suggest toughness. His confident smile and middle-distance gaze speak to a mental invulnerability that matches his muscular strength. As it is culturally known that maintaining such an appearance requires discipline, we may assume that his physical hardness relies on his mental hardness, while his bodily toughness contributes to his confident attitude, and so on in cycles. This specific masculine icon is Gigachad, *Man's World's* man of the year for 2021. Gigachad is the title given to the Russian model Ernest Khalimov, whose exaggeratedly angular features make him the ideal embodiment of so-called “Chad” masculinity. The figure of Chad, or Chad Thundercock,⁴ is emblematic of the man who is athletic, attractive, and sexually successful. As much a target of ridicule and derision as of admiration, especially on incel forums where he is the focus of resentment (see Heritage and Koller 2020), Chad is problematized as the embodiment of the kind of man that “hypergamous” and feminist women desire in a globalized world. The Gigachad icon exceeds the virility of Chad by being more virile, more angular, and more “alpha.” Khalimov’s impossibly angular jawline introduces an element of hyperreality to the Gigachad icon, thereby exceeding the interpretive frame of “chad versus normie” masculinity.

Cycles of rhematization are always ideological processes. They are the repeated linking of sensuous qualities (hard jaws) to personal ones and attitudes toward them (masculinity). Thus the muscled body becomes linked to the quality of hardness, which is in turn linked to the mental quality of argumentativeness, which is in turn expressed in a thick-set jaw that looks “determined,” and so on. These cycles join multiple disparate

3 *Man's World*, no. 5 (Spring 2022): 17.

4 See “Chad,” Know Your Meme, accessed July 25, 2023, <https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/chad>.

sensory and physical qualities as being like each other and make them appear naturally linked. Judgments about qualities, sameness, or difference are always morally marked—this is what Gal (2013) calls “moral flavor.” This moral flavor is produced via cycles of rhematization: for example, hardness as mental toughness and hardness as physical toughness are conflated and indexed in social interaction by semiotic material that itself comes to be seen as expressive of the quality of “hardness.” Moral flavor theorizes the link between a sensory quality (the “flavor”) and an ideological judgement (its “moral” dimension)—as when visible/tangible bodily hardness is seen as the expression of personal discipline and therefore valuable and morally good. Moral flavor allows us to closely analyze the links between the physical process (of, for example, devoting one’s time and energy to weightlifting) and its insertion into ideals of masculinity, which also reflect fascist myths of national renewal.

We are interested in the sensuous qualities of “hardness” in the analysis that follows, and the ways these are entangled with ideology to produce an ideal man who is made to seem authoritative and dominant. We show how this happens through “grafting” (Gal 2018, 2019) far-right masculinism onto more authoritative discourses. The sources for this authority are a “hard” scientific register drawing on racial pseudoscience, and a social science register drawing on evolutionary psychology. This analysis explores the embodied semiotic practice of fascist masculinity that creates particular physical and social types, and embeds physical practices with metapolitical meaning.

Hard Men, Hard Science

Building the Hard Man

Hardness has numerous associations in relation to masculinity. The manly man has a thousand-yard stony stare, a rock-hard erection,⁵ and a tough, muscled body. All of these distinct sensuous qualities are ideologically linked as expressions of the same “hardness.” Hardness is always poised for violence (see also the discussion of the “hard man” stereotype of the Scottish criminal in Lawson 2023, chap. 4). The sensory-ideological complex of hardness is not only visible on the surface: it is also internal fortitude and an ongoing mental and physical commitment to staying hard, impervious, invulnerable. Hardness is a *practice*: of healthy eating and exercise, of abstention from masturbation (Burnett 2022), of stoic resistance in the face of temptation from women and attacks from enemies. The sensuous and the ideological characteristics of hardness are intertwined in how we think about the kind of strength one needs for this practice. Hardness also describes the things that a real man must do.

In *Man’s World*, even eating requires mental fortitude. A frequently endorsed food is organ meat, which is said to be

5 See REN, “Health,” *Man’s World*, no. 10 (April 2023): 204.

masculinity incarnated as a food. It is the ultimate representation of what it means to be a man. Beef liver wouldn't be beef liver if it were just an easy pill. Beef liver is special because it's hard. It's hard to find. It's hard to prepare. It's hard to eat. And frankly, it tastes like bloody socks.⁶

The hardness of finding, preparing, and eating beef liver is contrasted to an “easy pill”—a reference to manospheric red pill / blue pill lore (Van Valkenburgh 2021). Eating beef liver is the “hard” pill as it is understood to be full of necessary nutrients but wholly unappetizing, especially when eaten raw (for more see the Liver King, an influencer who grew famous for eating raw liver to gain huge muscles). It therefore provides nutrition and serves as evidence of one's masculinity because *hard men do things that are hard to do*. The unpleasantness of its flavor is confirmed in how difficult it is to chew (the liver in question is dried in bite-sized chunks and sold in unappetizingly labelled plastic bags).

The difficulty experienced in consuming organ meat metaphorically reflects, just as the food itself biologically shapes, the physical hardness of male virility. While sold as a highly modern packaged food supplement, organ meat is also made to align with historical hunting cultures:

After the animal is trapped and killed, the tribesmen begin quartering and dividing the edibles amongst themselves, starting with the heart, the liver, and other organs—the “honor cuts,” given out of respect to the superior hunters because they are the most valuable parts of an animal to have.⁷

This feature story on organ meat goes on to explain that it is the nutrient content of the “honor cut” that makes it desirable: the best hunters need plentiful sources of vitamins A and B12, iron, selenium, and cholate to keep on top of their game. The idea that beef liver is “masculinity incarnated as food” can thus be interpreted as a cyclical claim: the best hunters get the most nutrient-dense parts of the animal, which are also the least pleasant to eat; eating these parts gives them what they need to maintain their status as the best hunters and deserving of the “honor cuts” in the first place. In a manner that confirms the conflation of hardness, masculinity, and eating hard food, “easy” food is associated with softness, femininity (and thus emasculation), and “estrogenizing” substances, as we will discuss below.

Man's World features a brand of mastic gum that is so hard to chew it is marketed as a way to build the muscles of readers' jaws, making them more “attractively” square

6 Carnivore Aurelius “Beef Liver Will Make Men Men Again,” *Man's World*, no. 3 (July 2021): 124.

7 Lars Debrus, “The Heart: Why You Need to Eat Organ Meat,” *Man's World*, no. 6 (April 2022): 269.

and closer to the Gigachad icon. The model in figure 2 (most images in *Man's World* come from stock photography libraries) is pictured staring into the middle distance, his hand grasped firmly around an oar. Rowing has an established association with prestigious, old-money universities, and the blonde hair and tanned skin of this man connect his image to the “overwhelmingly white and upper middle class” (McBride 2005, 65) aesthetic of Abercrombie & Fitch and similar fashion brands. Looking “like money” in this sense is 1) to be white, blonde, and tanned; 2) to row; and 3) to be the kind of person whose jaw is set and whose gaze is fixed on the horizon.

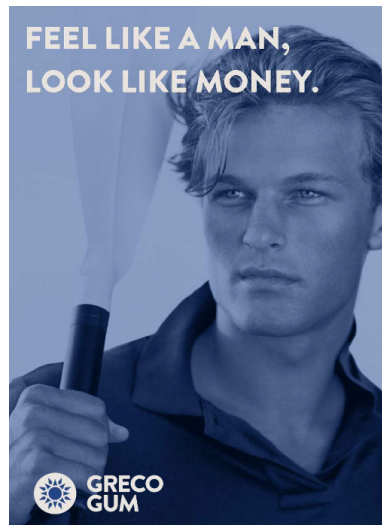


Figure 2. Greco Gum advertisement in *Man's World* magazine.⁸

A feature advertorial by Greco Gum in the second issue is entitled “Hard Times Create Strong Men”—with the word “Times” crossed out in red and replaced with the word “Gum.” The first paragraph of the article reads as follows:

Small mouths, cavities, crooked teeth, obstructed airways; these are all modern-day problems. Analysis of hunter-gatherer skulls show nearly perfect dental health, superior facial development, teeth alignment and jaw size compared to skulls from the last few hundred years. Despite advancements in technology, medicine and hygiene, modern man grows uglier and sicker each year. How can this phenomenon be explained? Soft foods create soft jaws, and soft-jawed men create hard times.⁹

8 Greco Gum, “Feel Like a Man, Look Like Money,” advertisement, *Man's World*, no. 2 (May 2021): 93.

9 Greco Gum, “Hard Times Gum Creates Strong Men,” *Man's World*, no. 2 (August 2021): 94.

This passage assumes an authoritative stance (“Analysis of hunger-gatherer skulls show . . .”) that presents itself as irrefutable and scientific. Important indexical work is done in problematizing a particular cluster of phenomena: modernity, ugliness, poor dental health, and sickness. The broader ideological scaffolding for this cluster is revealed in the final sentence, which riffs on a favorite manospheric maxim from the 2016 science fiction novel *Those Who Remain*: “Hard times create strong men, strong men create good times, good times create weak men, and weak men create hard times” (Hopf 2016 n.p.). The advertorial goes on to explain that it is the softness of modern diets, including fitness supplements (especially the Soylent brand of fitness milkshakes), that have caused the modern degeneration of the facial muscles. The conclusion is simple: “We have to go back.”¹⁰

While there is much evidence in *Man’s World* of retrotopian longing for various “golden ages”—of Hollywood, of weightlifting, of car racing, or of imperialism (discussed in Burnett, forthcoming)—the appeal to a vaguely defined ancient human (hunter-gatherers, Bronze Age warriors, Ancient Greeks, Romans, Celts, even “barbarians”) is also common. Again, a cyclical theorization of masculinity is at work: easy lives and soft foods allow weak men to take charge of the world, and it is their substandard leadership that creates the hard times from which only strong men who have rejected that which is easy can save the world. This idea is repeated in various formats throughout the *Man’s World* corpus.

The “softness” of a diet inheres not only in whether or not you have to work hard to chew and stomach it, but also (as was the case with beef liver) in whether or not it contains the right substances to maximize your manliness. A hard man is full of testosterone, and he must avoid all “estrogenizing” and emasculating substances in his food. *Man’s World* is filled with recipes and dietary advice on how to maximize testosterone. Soy, beer, and other products associated with modernity are identified as sources of feminizing “phytoestrogens” and must therefore be cut out. Maximizing testosterone on the other hand requires eating cruciferous vegetables, spinach, certain fruits, garlic and—of course—plenty of raw eggs.¹¹ Low testosterone is associated with low libido, fertility problems, and the worst kind of softness: erectile dysfunction. It is also associated with a list of moral and physical shortcomings: “ill-discipline,” “low trustworthiness,” “bitchiness/gossiping,” “mental/physical frailness,” “excuse-making/inaction,” “lower energy levels,” “self-image issues,” and “obedience.”¹²

This is a fairly comprehensive list of the range of general masculine insecurities that the ideological entrepreneurs of the manosphere seek to capitalize on. Given that most people will at points in their lives have low energy, self-image issues, or ill-discipline,

10 Greco Gum, 94.

11 Herculean Strength, “Eat These Five Foods and Boost Your Testosterone Levels,” *Man’s World*, no. 3 (July 2021): 109–10.

12 Orwell N Goode, “A Brief Introduction to the Metapolitics of Lifting,” *Man’s World*, no. 3 (July 2021): 19.

diagnosing this general malaise in young men as attributable to low testosterone turns every reader into a potential client: for dried beef liver, fitness supplements by Herculean Strength, or the “Legio Gloria” gymwear sold by Swedish neo-Nazi Marcus Follin (Trancoso and Burnett, forthcoming). A lack of testosterone attributed to modern lifestyles explains to young men that they lack self-discipline or positive self-esteem not due to ontogenic factors emanating from their genetic makeup but to sociogenic factors imposed on them by a decadent, soft, feminized, degenerate society. The only solution to the self-defeating cycle of eating food that prevents you from being strong enough to break out of “normal” society is to follow the teachings of *Man’s World*: change your diet, maximize your protein intake from raw eggs, increase your testosterone levels and your virility, and in so doing see through the lies of society.

This awakening from normie slumber is claimed to lead inexorably to an ideological shift. As argued by frequent contributor “Orwell N Goode” in his essay on the “metapolitics” of weightlifting, high testosterone and weightlifting are presented as part of a virtuous circle, where higher testosterone enables more manly lifting, and lifting increases levels of testosterone. These biological processes, however, have clear moral and ideological dimensions. A “high-T” man rejects egalitarian politics and “fuzzy feel-good buzzfeeds in favor of the pursuit of something greater than oneself.” He protects his family and rejects feminism as this entails critique of the patriarchy, and “it’s rarely strong men who despise their own identity.” Lifting weights is thus a “revolutionary act,” which builds a dominant masculinity that attacks both egalitarianism and feminism. Starting to lift weights “almost without exception guarantees the lifter will reject the prevailing feminized order, becoming ‘right wing’ in the process.” Those who do not reject what is deemed a “feminized” or egalitarian social order are leftists, called “bugmen,” who “sabotage” their masculinity “with estrogenic foods/drinks, avoid sunlight,” and “eschew physical activities.”¹³

Describing rejection of traditional gender hierarchies as equating to unhealthiness and ugliness, Orwell N Goode argues that because only right-wing men uphold traditional gender norms and social hierarchy, only right-wing men fit traditional beauty standards. Right-wing belief can be literally read off their muscular physiques as “high T bodybuilders,” who do not “fanatically demand equality” or have “preferred pronouns in their bio” because they reject “estrogenized iterations of masculinity as the norm.” Basically, it is the old argument that conservatives are hotter—shaped into a defense of hierarchy itself. To do otherwise is to be a bugman who “vocally embraces obesity, ugliness, redefining beauty, destroying traditional standards, and physical apathy.”¹⁴

13 Goode, 18–19.

14 Goode, 18–19. That conservatives are more attractive is a well-worn trope both on the far right (see Tebaldi 2024 for the tradwife-versus-modern-woman contrast) and in the mainstream, as illustrated by Ana Swanson’s reporting in “Conservatives Really Are Better Looking, Research Says,” *Washington Post*, January 10, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2017/01/10/conservatives-really-are-better-looking-research-says/>.

The Science of Desire

Man's World writers conflate male beauty with earned dominance in a hierarchical and violent political imaginary constructed as fact. Their embrace of the “hard sciences of the hard man” refers to a borrowing of concepts and visual and lexical items, frequently from math and medicine, whose implementation echoes evolutionary psychology, eugenics, and phrenology. Beauty is not subjective here, but an aesthetics grounded in “objective truths.” The aim of this discourse is to appear objective, technical, authoritative, warrior-like—a masculine discourse of male beauty. Theories of physical attractiveness and beauty are formalized as obeying eternal mathematical laws, a “harmony of the spheres” that also regulates social and personal practices described in the language of economy.

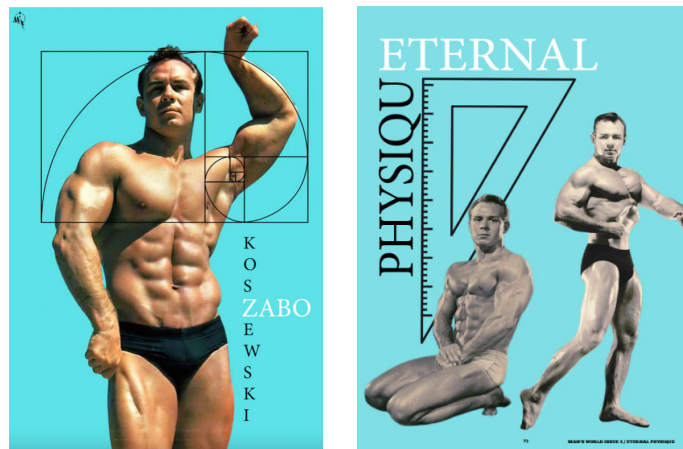


Figure 3. Geometric proportions of the “eternal physique” as displayed by the US bodybuilder Irvin “Zabo” Koszewski.¹⁵

Possessing the correct proportions as a male bodybuilder is expressed as a geometric ideal (figure 3). The model’s glistening pectoral muscles and rippling biceps conform perfectly to the golden ratio, an ideal of Platonic perfection. As REN states:

Beauty is not subjective. From the dawn of time, we’ve had men like Plato, Pythagoras and Leonardo da Vinci who have studied the ideal proportions of the human body. There is clearly a science (or mathematics to be precise) behind what we see to be beautiful or ugly. You’ve probably heard of the Fibonacci Ratio, or Phi, which is commonly referred to as the “Golden Ratio.” This ratio (1:1.618)

15 *Man's World*, no. 5 (Spring 2022): 72–73.

represents perfect harmony not just in our bodies but across the entire spectrum of nature and design.¹⁶

34

For REN, beauty is a geometric ideal inflected with social meaning. The golden ratio is observable in the most beautiful faces, where it is described as “nature’s geometry” or a perfect sign of objective beauty across all ages and cultures. The article goes on to say that beauty, as symmetry, is a sign of eugenic fitness. It is also evidenced by medicine, of a sort, the plastic surgeon’s “Marquardt Mask,” which has been implemented in a computer program for facial mapping.¹⁷ On the app, beauty is “objectively” characterized with mathematical values measuring symmetries, angles, shapes, and minute differences in distance between facial features. These results are given medicalized jargon like “canthal tilt,” referring to the position of the eyes, or “orthotropics” to refer to the jaw. The measurements are also evaluated with respect to forms of masculinity, so that the eye shape called “predator eyes” is seen as expressing desirable masculinity, while Marilyn Monroe below (figure 4) has large, round “prey eyes,” expressing desirable femininity.



Figure 4. The “Marquardt Mask” as described by Raw Egg Nationalist.

The possession of the ideal ratios for face and body does not merely reflect an objective standard for physical beauty but, following the old race science of physiognomy ratios, expresses personal traits such as health, fitness, dominance, and strength. Achieving the golden ratio in your facial and bodily proportions requires a number of steps outlined in the pages of *Man’s World*: cut out seed oils and phytoestrogens, increase your testosterone, stop masturbating to porn, and work out regularly. Some preexisting natural beauty,

16 REN, “Seed Oils: Ugly In a Bottle,” *Man’s World*, no. 4 (Autumn 2021): 138.

17 REN, 139. REN’s valorization of the “Marquardt Mask” is accompanied by an illustration (figure 4).

which is obscured by the soft life of modernity, is thus theorized as potentially revealed through exercise and diet.

The potential for improvement is asserted to be guaranteed by DNA, as a “perfectly symmetrical face proportioned according to the golden ratio is the epitome of genetic wealth.” “Genetic wealth” here is a discursive interlinking of economy and biology, or as Raw Egg Nationalist explains, “Beauty is health. Beauty is wealth.”¹⁸ This echoes many other circulating discourses that adapt the often questionable science of evolutionary psychology, which has been frequently taken up to evidence right wing ideology as Rothermel (2023) explains. Theories of evolution are imagined to clearly explain and justify all human hierarchy; *Man’s World’s* vision of predatory masculinity draws heavily on Jordan Peterson’s famous discussion of equality as resulting in depressed lobsters.¹⁹ Here, however, it is explicitly stated that hierarchy makes ideal men: strong males with good posture, hard muscles, and happy lives. In the pseudoscientific register of *Man’s World*, high dopamine means high testosterone.

“Genetic wealth” aligns circulating biological and economic discourses with this project. Discourses about “traditional food” and “pure food” (Eberhardt 2024) operate as a kind of eugenic radicalization of the paleo diet, where just-so stories about our tribal ancestors give meaning to cutting out carbs. This is frequently described in *Man’s World* (for example, in issue 10) as maximizing testosterone, referred to as “t-boosting” or “tmaxxing,” through practices ranging from eating traditional food to getting sunlight (and even contracting toxoplasmosis). These are couched in scientific terms, such as “Magnesium lowers sex-hormone-binding globulin’s affinity to testosterone,” while masturbation makes you “suffer from low basal dopamine and high prolactin.”²⁰ Testosterone in this quasi-medical discourse stands in for vitality, beauty, and manliness itself.

In the world of economy, *Man’s World* links physical strength and health with success in “dominance structures,” including the market. The dissident right is an upper-class phenomenon, engaging in practices from the purchase of land to the celebration of boating to spare time at the gym. You are encouraged to “look like money,” as in figure 1 above, and to “accumulate as much genetic wealth as possible” in order to have increased “sexual market value”—and eating healthy is equated to passing down “generational wealth.”²¹ Here the dissident right borrows from manosphere discourses around

18 REN, 139–40.

19 Peterson argued that dominance hierarchies were necessary to human society through analogy to lobsters, which he stated grew in strength and increased their serotonin as they moved up a dominance hierarchy. The lobster became a symbol of the naturalness and desirability of inequality. For more, see Leonor Gonçalves, “Psychologist Jordan Petersen Says Lobsters Help to Explain Why Human Hierarchies Exist—Do They?,” *The Conversation*, January 24, 2018, <https://theconversation.com/psychologist-jordan-peterson-says-lobsters-help-to-explain-why-human-hierarchies-exist-do-they-90489>.

20 REN, “Health,” 204.

21 REN, “Seed Oils,” 139.

“hypergamy,” the “marriage market,” and the “sexual market,” where mathematical facial regularities are also believed to govern social and sexual success because women, following “genetics and the natural laws of attraction” (Kelly and Aunspruch 2020), respond mechanically to male beauty and status. Bringing medicine and economics together, REN goes beyond marriage markets to eugenics, seeing his practice as the fight against the “soy empire,” which wants to tax his genetic wealth. The food we eat is designed to “biochemically engineer modern men into homunculi. Either deliberately or by omission they’ve demolished testosterone levels.” Echoing far-right eugenic discussions of racial decline, man is now a “shadow of [his] ancestors” and should “instead embrace sun and steel . . . to build muscle and lose fat, or just have a raging boner again.” Manliness in this discussion is “wounded” and constantly under threat from the state, unhealthy food, and social others.²² Male eugenic fitness is expressed in testosterone levels, where fitness is a preparation for, and proven through, the eugenic and spiritual battle for personal, racial and civilizational health.

This register is similar to what Rothermel (2023, 2) terms “evidence-based misogyny,” that is, the manosphere’s embrace of authoritative, often academic, language to elucidate claims about female inferiority. We can see the uptake of a scientific lexicon clearly in figure 5. Here Carnivore Aurelius, a meat-based health influencer and right-wing bodybuilder who also owns a collagen company, uses a box-plot graph to prove the effectiveness of his workout—transforming this from a feminized “advice” register to a masculine “science.” With this he includes medical jargon: endotoxin, blood stream, intestinal permeability, LPS (lipopolysaccharide). Next, frequent contributor Sol Brah suggests Saran Wrap is poison, with origins in industrial chemistry, and, again, laces his argument with jargon: dioxin, polyethylene, endocrine disruptor. The final tweet reminds us again that this “scientific” discourse is always linked back to a violent political imaginary, where oil is not merely undesirable but a weapon against the white race.

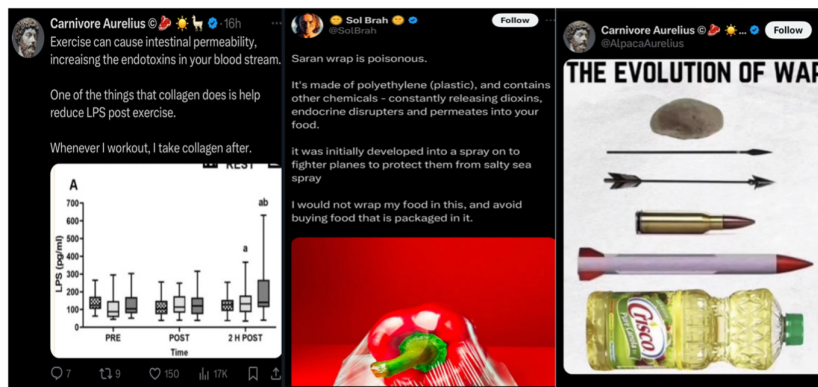


Figure 5. Tweets from two *Man’s World* contributors and health influencers.

22 REN, “Health,” 204.

This represents a register graft, which, as Gal (2019) explains, is when a register (here that of the right-wing bodybuilders) draws authority from a more powerful one, such as geometry or economics, much like when a smaller plant is grafted onto a larger and more powerful trunk. Here the language of the market, the laboratory, or the mathematical harmony of the spheres is used to give authority to theories of masculinity in lifestyle magazines. This register graft means these images of hot men are, far from being gay pornography or “girly” guides to beauty, guides for real, hard men who are building their bodies to fight the “yeast life” of soy, softness, and beer, and the cultural decadence they symbolize. The science is there to invest these practices with authority, to distinguish them both from more feminine “influencer” and lifestyle branding, and also from homoeroticism. Those rippling abs are symbolic of a better and deeply heteronormative future, despite whatever unruly desires the viewer might feel.

Rejecting the Yeast Life

Masculinity is essentialized not only as testosterone and a muscled body but through opposition to an antonymic other: normies, betas, and blue-pilled leftist cucks. The metaphorical battle between modernity and tradition is transmogrified into a culinary battle between consumers of bread, beer, sugar, soy, and seed oils, and those who eat hunted meat, devour the “honor cuts” of organs, or “slonk” raw eggs. A “civilized” and sedentary modern society, with processed food and plenty of soy, is what contributors to the magazine refer to as the “yeast life.” This also refers, of course, to beer and the weight gain known as a “beer gut,” but also to hops, which are said to contain feminizing “phytoestrogens,” the converse of the testosterone-boosting egg.

Another enemy is seed oils—the corn, soy, and sesame oils commonly used in fried and processed food. *Man’s World* again grafts its claims onto scientific registers: soybean oil is said to “inhibit” the release of “oxytocin” and thereby to disrupt “empathy and social bonding.”²³ The men who eat these goods develop physically soft bodies and mental degeneration, which allow the Other to enter the national body. In figure 6 we see the deployment of a pseudoscientific discourse that includes terms such as “researchers,” “neuroendocrine,” and “neurochemical function,” as well as the suggestion that soy is bad for insulin levels and linked to obesity. In this discourse soybean oil is made characteristic not only of modern food but of modern social isolation. The discourse is also gendered and racialized. Fatness is linked to softness and femininity, as in the term “soyboy” for an effeminate man. Then, in a play on the food soy and the first-person conjugation (soy) of the Spanish verb *ser* (to be), fatness and femininity become indexically linked to immigrant status, further confirmed in ironic deployment of American flags alongside the man’s claim, “Soy americano” (I’m American). The

23 REN, “Be Proud to Say: Soy Americano,” no. 6 (April 2022): 176. This micro-article is reproduced in figure 6.

In this image, eating food with soy, yeast, or seed oil is shown as sabotaging your own attractiveness, ushering in a world populated by faces unkindly described as “ugly,” “undifferentiated,” and “a train of flesh,” expressing “life at the lowest level.” As Tebaldi (2023b) shows, right-wing politics are frequently glossed as natural beauty, and leftism is represented as its opposite. For the right ugliness means unnatural hair colors, asymmetrical or injured faces, glasses, and piercings. “Undifferentiated” here refers to the idea of similarity among all the faces, the opposite of right-wing individualism, as well as to the lack of visual differentiation between men and women, also key to far-right aesthetics. In this gender binary-affirming (and by extension transphobic) discourse, the right locates beauty in hard and manly men and their perfect complement, “soft” tradwives. The androgyny of the faces, the blue-haired woman as iconic of modern feminism, are furthermore contextualized within an antisemitic frame. The fascism of beauty standard discourses (Gottlieb 2011) is confirmed in this image by the small logos visible to the bottom right of the faces, consisting of seven-pointed stars around what appears to be a planet. This combination evokes a connection between the “globe” of the globalists, and a (six-pointed) Star of David, here expanded for plausible deniability of any indexical relation to Jewishness.

This is not just a metaphorical battle. The language of war used to describe dieting (as in a “battle of the bulge”) here becomes a “path of cleansing fire.” For REN, *Man’s World* is metapolitical battle in preparation for actual war. Citing anthropologist James C. Scott, REN argues that carbohydrate consumption was the basis for not only sedentary bodies but sedentary civilization, and with it state control. Carbs are not merely fattening but stultifying, pushed upon us by our urban elite overlords. The figures who benefit from this culture are described in conspiratorial terms as “globalists” and a “secret society” invested in effecting a “Great Reset” of society—elites bent on dispossessing white men of their manliness to create a weak and governable society.²⁵

The opposite of this governed society is a return to the tribe, where a sedentary life is rejected by nomadic warrior bands. Idealized homosocial male groups, what the Nazis and some *Man’s World* contributors refer to as *Männerbänder*, are described as the protean force within Western civilization, which went on to conquer the world. *Männerbänder* are small groups of warriors who form a close-knit tribe through engaging in battle and ritual homosocial tasks. Across the Asian steppe and eventually on the seas, these warlike men have only lately been domesticated by modernity and emasculated by globalists: the point now is to resuscitate their virility and their aggression in a new age of conquest and heroism.

The term *Männerbänder* recalls the Freikorps analyzed by Klaus Theweleit (1987, 1989), which went on to become such Nazi homosocial groups as the SA (Sturmabteilung). *Männerbänder* have a variety of sources across history and popular

25 Stone Age Herbalist, interview with Raw Egg Nationalist, “Drugs ‘n Roll,” *Man’s World*, no. 3 (July 2021): 73.

culture, from the fantasy world of *The Lord of the Rings* to the pseudohistorical television show *Vikings*. However, the original and key *Männerbund*, according to *Man's World*, is the Yamnaya, imagined as a heroic ancient Aryan tribe that conquered the Eurasian continent from Russia to England. In illustrating this, *Man's World* contributors often draw on pseudoanthropological and Nazi-era race-science discourses, frequently imagined as the “true” knowledge, which has been displaced by current “woke” discourses. For example, in a line blending 9/11 references, *The Lord of the Rings*, and racial pseudoscience, a contributor called Stone Age Herbalist refers to these as “the two towers: the woke and the steppe,” in which older “bioarcheological” accounts of “history-culture” that looked at the origins and superiority of the Aryan race are replaced by “woke” and feminized studies insisting on gender parity, queerness, and egalitarianism. Against this, Stone Age Herbalist and others call for a history done with “the absolute precision of genetics” to reconstruct the mythical prehistory and culture of whiteness.²⁶

Mythmaking

While white male dominance is characterized through discourses of hard science, it is also legitimated through mythopoetic discourses drawing from anthropology and poetry. Contemporary alt-health and far-right movements often refer to such writers as heroic “warrior poets” with physical and mental hardness, and sometimes with shamanic powers, who will renew the culture. This is both an aesthetically and socially desirable figure: the beautiful man who embodies the strength of the nation or the white race.

Fascism has long been said to rely on poetry (Hutton 1999) and mythology, in particular myths of national rebirth or palingenetic ultranationalism (Griffin 2013). Here we see how this physical and cultural renewal, rebirth, and recovery is effected through a specific aesthetic vision. Weight loss and muscle building are not merely about looking good but the recovery of masculinity—your own, and the nation’s. This moves from a social Darwinism of desire to a retrotopian desire, in which masculinity and male beauty represent the lost meaning, tradition, and vitality of the past.

This is shown clearly in the longer manifestos of REN, which point to a return to the land, farming, and a traditional way of life that is part Nazi propaganda film and part *Little House on the Prairie*—but in a Russian twist he calls this a return to the dacha. (Confusingly, he also critiques settler culture at times, linking sedentary cultures to sedentary lifestyles, and referring to the dacha as the feminized “longhouse.”) His manifestos link recovery of the male body—often with minute prescriptions for lifting and high-protein shakes, which will lead to a happy and virile life—to recovery of a golden age characterized by strong, virile male leadership. This mythology is always

26 Stone Age Herbalist, “Broken Open: War Bands and the Woke in Modern Archaeology,” *Man's World*, no. 4 (Autumn 2021): 153–58.

about linking of individual practices of bodily health and strength to broader fascist understandings of the nation and national vitality.

This, however, is not just an image of the past but an aestheticized representation of a desired future with instructions for how to bring about a new golden age. Here Wodak's (2021) vague far-right retrotopia becomes a retrotopian desire expressed through remasculinization and the aesthetics of golden, muscular men who represent not sexual desire (they swear) but the desired recuperation of a past. These highly aestheticized, glamorously posed pictures of men, as in the cover image in figure 8, portray a sexualized male body—an object of desire. But they shape what that desire is meant to mean.



Figure 8. The cover of *Man's World*, issue 2 (May 2021).

This suspiciously sexy sailor, a reminder of “the great age of reconnaissance” and the “aristocrats of the sea,” is made to stand for the sea as a site for the performance of heroic ancient masculinity rather than as a site for suspect desire. He is an object to be possessed, not sexually but through imitation of “classical nautical style,” body training exercises, and instruction in far-right thought. He becomes the icon not of sexual desire but of a retrotopian desire.

Retrotopia is achieved personally and socially through remasculinization. Remasculinization, as Kelly (2017) explains in her analysis of post-9/11 America, is a response to the perceived hypermasculinity of Islamism and the supposed submissiveness of multicultural and left-wing elements within “white” societies. It is tied to the theories of the Great Replacement and the idea that because of the supposed internal weakness represented by egalitarianism, feminism, and gay rights, white Western populations are being outproduced and replaced by immigrants. This internal weakness must be fought by teaching white men to see through the lies of feminism, globalism, and antiracism so they can perceive the threat they face—beginning first by building their own manly musculature.

Developing manly musculature is referred to as “golden age bodybuilding” and is meant to invoke a golden age of masculinity and therefore of all of society. In *Man’s World*, there are a number of golden ages: early to mid-twentieth-century bodybuilding culture, 1960s French cinema, and prehistoric and ancient warrior cultures. The bodybuilders of the 1950s represent male strength and postwar Anglo-American affluence, as REN describes in his book *Three Lives of Golden Age Bodybuilders* (2020). These men are heroic figures aesthetically and personally. These do not exhaust the heroic figures represented in REN’s oeuvre but represent multiple images that can be combined in novel ways to create different masculinities. They also share a key element: each had a desirable aesthetic that represented an era defined by hierarchy, male strength, and domination.

These magazines represent a metapolitical fight over the indexicality of the beautiful, naked male body. We might see this as a shift from sexual hardness to a martial one. First, hardness no longer indexes a possibly gay desire to possess this ideal male body but a fight against a feminized and feminizing elite. The naked male body, often a symbol of vulnerability, is thus made into a symbol of invulnerability: of purity, virility, power, and heroism. It is the soft, weak man made hard. Similarly, male friendship is too closely associated with homosexual desire, with romantic love. *Man’s World* resignifies these into a warlike energy to reclaim the West for whiteness. This resignification makes the ideal white male body not an object of sexual desire but of retrotopian desire.

Conclusion

In this analysis we showed how male beauty was grafted onto scientific registers and imagined as relying on minute practices: what to eat, how to lift, how to dress, which gum to chew. These indexical relationships were rhematized in the figure of the handsome nationalist, the “cultured thug” whose beauty is strength and whose strength is beauty. These practices link inner and outer masculinity, physical and personal, into different kinds of hardness—the moral flavor of fascist masculinity. In so doing it also shifts the indexicalities away from personal desire for beauty, or other’s beauty, toward a political ideal.

This contributes to the special issue’s overall focus on using new forms of sociocultural linguistic analysis to highlight the nexus of gender, sexuality, and (white) nationalism. It highlights underexplored aspects of gender, sexuality, and right-wing politics, exploring and problematizing discourses that are frequently considered normative forms of heterosexual masculinity. Our article shows how desire for male bodies was made politically and socially normative, and the discursive moves used to distance this from nonnormative forms of desire. Our work is in conversation with Burnett, Hiramoto, and Borba’s article in this special issue on the construction of a biologically essentialized version of masculinity in online “NoFap” groups, extending this discourse within a broader investigation of right-wing ideologies of the body, with their focus on muscle and testosterone. Our discussion of mythmaking and heroic *Männerbänder* is also in

dialogue with Schmidt's article on post-heroism, both its discussion of ludic heroics and of the simultaneous desire and disgust masculinity evokes on the far right.

This is not just an exploration of rhematization and iconicity to demonstrate our own mental fortitude but to understand how far-right "meanings" are constructed, what they do, and how they make bad politics into hot, hard, desirable ones. By recuperating lost masculinity, fighting the yeasty ones and his own beer gut, the reader transforms himself and his own desires. He becomes not just hot abs and big jaws but a personification of scientific truth, a vision of health and genetic fitness, a voice of mythological desire, and a harbinger of a recovered golden past. Ideal male beauty is proof of the rightness of far-right ideas. No less importantly, our analysis shows the limits of the still too common "left behind" or victimhood narratives of the far-right. As we have shown, far-right registers create highly desirable subject positions—at the top of the social hierarchy as hot hard men, embodying the cultural renewal of the West.

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