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Long live the Liver King: right-wing carnivorism and the digital dissemination of primal rhetoric

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In this study, we link pertinent concepts from rhetorical studies of the alt-right, animality studies, and conspiracism to explicate the production and dissemination of “carnivore diets” through digital social networks. Taking the ideological and discursive interconnections of animality, hegemonic masculinity, and white nationalism seriously, we conceptualize *primal rhetorical networks*: a web of influencers and agitators who espouse an ahistorical, carnivorous *primal rhetoric* concerned with Modern Man's physical and spiritual downfall and his potential for resurrection by consuming nonhuman animals. We utilize a corpus of online texts and social media posts between 2020 and 2023 to perform an ideological rhetorical criticism of two interconnected, online Carnivore Diet gurus: the Liver King and the Raw Egg Nationalist. Drawing upon “conspiratorial” tropes and raced/gendered depictions of nonhuman animal consumption, we demonstrate how these networked rhetors “sell” their lifestyles to make a profit and “convert” their followers into an ever-growing network of white nationalist, cisheterosexist, carnivorous ideologues.

KEYWORDS

carnivore diet, primal, primal rhetoric, conspiratoriality, social media, alt-right

Introduction

Men's wellness influencers have long preached the gospel of consuming more protein to lower body fat and increase muscularity. To up someone's “gains,” they promote diets like Paleo, urging dieters to avoid foods unavailable to paleolithic humans, or Keto, discouraging the consumption of carbohydrates. Although the association between diet, fitness, muscularity, and masculinity is not novel, scholars have noted a peculiar shift in contemporary health and wellness discourse in the digital age. What was once a “New Age-y holistic” rhetorical genre is increasingly “about ideology-fueled manly optimization” (Caulfield, 2022, para 1). Right-wing political interests have increasingly tapped into this trend, warning that “leftists” want to remove citizens' access to essential animal products. At the 2019 Conservative Political Action Conference, Sebastian Gorka, then-adviser to Donald Trump, warned, “They want to take away your hamburgers!” (Whalen, 2020). In 2022, Fox News correspondent Tucker Carlson released *The End of Men*, a documentary exploring a crisis of contemporary manhood. Carlson blamed “soy globalism,” a global conspiracy to eradicate male vitality by denying access to rejuvenating animal products in favor of poisonous soy.

The political right's fascination with animal consumption is intimately tied to circulating cultural narratives about masculinity-in-crisis and, as we will argue, *white* masculinity in particular. Real men eat meat, and if something (or someone) threatens access to meat, then livelihoods of real men are under attack. Politicians and mainstream pundits have certainly introduced this discourse into cable news media. However, there are *more* important, albeit *less* centralized, avenues through which right-wing discourses of meat, masculinity, and whiteness manifest and coalesce: social media and online platforms. Our study tracks those carnivorous digital denizens who we discuss in the following text have made Twitter (X), TikTok, Instagram, Substack, and YouTube their rhetorical homes. We are specifically concerned with a dietary directive espoused by these flesh-centered gurus: the so-called "Carnivore Diet."

The Carnivore Diet is exactly what its name suggests: an alternative diet based entirely around the consumption of animal flesh. Favorite proteins include internal organs, bone marrow, and uncooked animal flesh and eggs. This diet is unusual but increasingly popular—largely owing to the right-wing voices promoting it through digital avenues. For example, in 2018, psychologist and right-wing influencer Jordan Peterson appeared on the Joe Rogan Podcast to promote the Carnivore Diet. Peterson described how the diet cured him of lifelong ailments and supposedly cured his daughter of medical issues ranging from juvenile rheumatoid arthritis to depression (Hamblin, 2018)¹. Joe Rogan also announced to his 11 million-strong audience that he would be adopting an all-meat diet for 30 days, which caused Google searches for the diet to spike (Webber, 2023). To date, the hashtag #Carnivorediet has over 475 million views on TikTok (Jones, 2022).

While celebrity influencers like Rogan may introduce unknowing audiences to the carnivore diet, we posit that it is the "alternative"—even "underground"—social media voices who keep the carnivore lifestyle afloat and simultaneously lay the ideological groundwork for online political radicalization around carnivorousness. Social media scholars have discussed how an "alt-right pipeline" gradually radicalizes Internet users through increased exposure to youth-oriented, far-right digital content (Woods and Hahner, 2019). There is some debate over defining the "alt-right," but broadly, the term describes communities that predominantly operate online (e.g., on 4chan) and who believe that "white" identity is under attack from multiculturalism. The term is inspired by white nationalist Richard Spencer's 2008 website, *The Alternative Right* (Lyons, 2017).

Hartzell (2018) has described the alt-right's function as a "rhetorical bridge" between mainstream conservative discourse and white nationalism (p. 8). Fittingly, members of the alt-right also "bridge" into the online "Manosphere," a "detached set of websites and social media groups united by the belief that men are oppressed victims of feminism" (Dickel and Evolvi, 2023, p. 1392). Given the

fragmentation endemic to contemporary media ecosystems, such digital content is designed to be shared across various platforms (Bennett and Pfetsch, 2018). Content thrives at the "bottom of the web," where creators craft content to ensure maximum online dissemination (Tuters and Burton, 2021). Our study centers on two lesser-known but massively important Carnivore Diet "gurus" from this online sphere who promote their iterations of carnivorousness almost entirely through social networking: the Liver King (shortened to LK) and the Raw Egg Nationalist (shortened to REN).

We take REN and LK as our case studies from a massive list of potential online carnivore figureheads—e.g., Bronze Age Pervert, Testicle King, or Shawn Baker—because these two figures represent distinct but connected poles of what we will call *primal rhetoric* (Wood, 2023). From a dialectical perspective (see Martin and Nakayama, 2013), while these rhetors' approaches to carnivorousness and self-promotion are very different and sometimes contradictory, the underlying raced and gendered components of their narratives are inextricably intertwined. They feed and build off of one another, so much so that some journalists have described LK's message as a more mainstream, "dumbed down version" of REN's far-right political philosophy (Bateman, 2022, para. 3). Videos and images of LK's highly muscular body consuming raw organ meat *are* the brand for his message—acting as visual evidence of his wellness tenets. In contrast, REN's primal rhetorical strategy functions through anonymity. He functions as a faceless thought leader advancing an extreme political-carnivorous worldview. Unlike many of their flesh-centered peers who emphasize health alone, LK and REN are centrally focused on spreading the message of the varied physical *and* spiritual benefits of consuming nonhuman animal bodies.

We propose "primal rhetoric" and "primal rhetorical networks" as tools to dissect the gendered, raced, and politicized implications of carnivore diets. They are necessary analytic lenses to assess how right-wing carnivorousness manifests and spreads through social media spaces. Primal rhetoric is, we posit, a rhetorical genre that ties the consumption of nonhuman animals to cisheterosexist and white nationalist ideals. It is premised upon reclaiming a spiritual "wild-ness." This discourse is particularly "primal" inasmuch as carnivore diets are meant to find some version of white men that has been "lost" through the cancer of modernity, often drawing on examples of contemporary tribal communities, romanticized indigenous spiritualism, and revisionist nutritional histories about ancient human carnivorousness.

Beyond general health and wellbeing, primal rhetorics outline a broader philosophy and politics centered around the consumption of nonhuman animals and their byproducts. Consuming more flesh leads to more spiritual, psychological, and physical rewards. Inherently suspicious of modern food systems, primal rhetorics also intertwine conspiratorial beliefs with suspicion of processed foods and industrialized society. The result is that primal rhetorics often locate veganism and soy-based products as centerpiece in elite attempts at population control, spiritual enslavement, gastronomic feminization, and in particular, an attempt to unsettle the power of white men in the United States and Europe.

¹ It is worth noting that Jordan Peterson has continued to experience health problems despite his meat intake. Most recently, he was placed into a medical coma in a Russian hospital to fight off a case of pneumonia (Gatehouse, 2020).

Ironically, while deriding the modern condition, primal rhetoric is largely disseminated through digital spaces and applied via modern marketing tools². A “primal rhetorical network,” therefore, refers to the literal and ideological linkages between carnivore diet practitioners and right-wing provocateurs online. Some “gurus” like LK are entry points to this world, while others, like REN, are the natural endpoints of this meat-to-nationalist pipeline. Although this emphasis on digital platforms unites primal rhetorical networks, practitioners take varied approaches. Some, like LK, rely heavily on public-facing platforms like Instagram. Others, like REN, insist on a strict code of digital anonymity. Their messaging, while consistent with the need for ancestral carnivorousness to reclaim masculinity, also diverges in emphasis. As a public-facing figure, LK’s reliance on tropes of indigeneity and primality might be considered a more mainstream, even “acceptable,” colonial logic. However, as a strictly anonymous figure, REN fashions primal rhetorical appeals that explicitly appeal to “extreme” white nationalist sentiments. Together, though, they operate within a primal rhetorical network that ties together carnivorousness with broader sociopolitical projects devoted to saving aggrieved white men from the stink of modernity.

Methodologically, our project deploys ideological rhetorical criticism: the critical analysis of selected texts to discern what is said and what is not, seeking to unearth allegiances to systems of domination and power. For McGee (1980), rhetoricians understand ideology as “a political language, preserved in rhetorical documents, with the capacity to dictate decision and control public belief and behavior” (p. 5). Ideological rhetorical criticism rejects appeals to detached academic objectivity, taking seriously the postmodern charge that scholars are invariably involved in value-laden constructions that shape their analysis. The ultimate test of ideological criticism is, therefore, not its objectivity but the consequences of adopting such an interpretation in light of systems of power (McKerrow, 1989, p. 92). We treat manifestations of ideology through Wander’s (2011) approach of *rhetorical contextualization*, which asks the researcher to reflect on who the “I” of the author is implicitly associated with and disassociated from, what was said and not said in a text, which audiences were addressed or ignored, how were problems and solutions defined and interpreted, and for whom (p. 422).

We collected our texts through *purposive sampling*—collecting discrete units that elicit a particular discursive profile worthy of exploration (Hasian and Muller, 2016). More specifically, we created a rhetorical corpus of social media posts by and about REN and LK dated from 2020 to 2023—from the beginning of each account to the present day. We created a corpus of over fifty rhetorical artifacts produced by or covering our chosen rhetors. These included self-published books, long-form articles, magazine issues, news coverage, and social media posts across Instagram, X, and YouTube. We also emphasized texts produced by and for economic consumption, such as LK’s interactive website, and texts designed for streamed media, such as LK’s video posts and

REN’s podcast, film, and documentary guest spots. We limited our analysis to English texts produced by or about these two figures.

In what follows, we link pertinent concepts from rhetorical studies of the alt-right, animality, and conspiracism to explicate the production and dissemination of the Carnivore Diets through digital social networks. We first examine broader discourses of animality and alt-wellness before diving into our analysis of LK and REN’s primal rhetorics. We identify how LK and REN “sell” their primal lifestyles for profit by appealing to a web-based discourse of suspicion, disillusionment, and alternative spiritualism, labeled *conspirituality*, to “convert” their followers into an ever-growing network of white nationalist, cisheterosexist, and carnivorous ideologues (Ward and Voas, 2011). Our case studies model primal rhetoric as a genre concerned with Modern Man’s physical and spiritual downfall and the potential for his resurrection through the consumption of nonhuman animal flesh. Primal rhetorical networks function as carnivorous radicalization pipelines that may begin with diet and wellness but ultimately end at cisheterosexist white nationalism. By naming primal rhetoric and its networked elements, we afford scholars an essential means to understand and critique how the consumption of nonhuman animals is inextricably intertwined with the development and dissemination of alt-right ideologies, texts, and bodily practices.

Rhetorical linkages: nonhuman animal consumption and/as human politics

Communication and media scholarship’s “animal turn” casts a critical eye on long-standing presumptions about the human/animal binary. It particularly assesses the consequences that those assumptions generate for humans’ and nonhuman animals’ material conditions (Parrish, 2018). One particularly important concept is “speciesism,” or the arbitrary privileging of one species’ desires and interests over others. “Speciesism” was coined by Ryder (1971) in an essay on animal experiments, followed by Singer’s (1975) *Animal Liberation*, which popularized the concept. Freeman (2010) argued that discourse plays a key role in naturalizing speciesist violence. Therefore, communication scholars have a specific responsibility to challenge the dominance of one species over another. Freeman notes that what is understood as “human” or “animal” is fractured by historical context, culture, and systems of oppression. As a result, part of this animal turn has included an intersectional approach to the connections between human and animal oppression. Scholars analyze how discourses of animality circulate alongside colonialism, racism, patriarchy, cis-normativity, ableism, and more—to constitute a matrix of oppression descending from an idealized white European male human subject (Almiron, 2019).

Much of this intersectional turn draws from Adams’ (1990) *The Sexual Politics of Meat*. This groundbreaking monograph explored how discourses about animals’ function in tandem with racist and cis-patriarchal constructions of certain groups as either consumable flesh or less developed. From advertisements of sexualized pigs to medical advice that white men should consume meat to elevate themselves above the lesser races, Adams shows how violence against animals and marginalized humans are mutually reinforcing.

² In addition to using digital media technologies, it is worth noting that Liver King, who had previously denied use of anabolic steroids, admitted in a December 2022 video that he had been taking about \$11,000 worth of steroids each month to maintain his muscular figure (Xie, 2023).

Thus, interrupting cycles of violence and abuse requires an inter-species approach. This anti-speciesist, intersectional, and decolonial framework is called “total liberation” (Nocella et al., 2015).

Rhetoricians have drawn upon human-animal rhetorical linkages to explore how identity categories like gender, race, and nationality are reproduced alongside species. Rogers (2008) analyzed television advertisements, arguing that advertisers used the presence of meat or tofu in actors’ shopping carts to assign a more masculine or feminine role, respectively. Gambert and Linné (2018) extended this analysis to the modern alt-right’s use of the term “soyboy.” The term, which refers to an effeminate male neutered by plant-based products, harkens to xenophobic tropes of Asian men as “effeminate rice eaters” and used to justify 19th-century European colonialism and 20th-century anti-immigrant sentiment. Stănescu (2018) similarly critiqued alt-right imagery featuring dairy products, suggesting that milk functions as a symbol of racial purity—as non-white people are more likely to be lactose intolerant. Consumption of meat and dairy thus can not only assert one’s masculinity, but also function as a “privilege of white citizenship,” symbolically elevating white workers and their diets (Stănescu, 2018, p. 106).

Scholars also underscore the rhetorical linkages between speciesist discourse and systems of race and colonialism. Ko and Ko (2017) argued the conceptual separation of “speciesism” and “racism” are so intertwined that they are almost indistinguishable. Belcourt (2020) asserted that speciesism should be considered a logic of white supremacy since the “loose signifier” of animality is a recurring feature when justifying violence against indigenous and Black populations (p. 21). Ideas about animal killability play a significant role in colonization, constructing indigenous populations as subhuman while also facilitating land theft, as speciesism “intersects with the logic of genocide to secure a capitalist project of animal agriculture that requires the disappearance of Indigenous peoples from the land” (Belcourt, 2020, p. 21). However, it is worth noting that critiques of applying racialized species-hierarchy to dispossessed humans do not always extend to moral concern for animals themselves, sometimes leaving the violent treatment of animals unquestioned or ignored (Kymlicka and Donaldson, 2014).

Given these connections between discourses about animals, meat, dairy, and broader systems of violence, it is unsurprising that US-based polling data suggests that white people, and white men in particular, reported a higher preference for meat-heavy diets than any other demographic (Mosier and Rimal, 2020, p. 905). Our analysis takes seriously these rhetorical linkages between animality, racism, colonialism, and gender. We are especially concerned with how these linkages align with digitally-networked rhetorics of white masculinity in crisis and the suggested resolution of this crisis through the consumption of animal products. As we will demonstrate, carnivore diet gurus rework negative tropes about indigenous peoples, finding spiritual and nutritional value in reclaiming an “ancestral” or “primitive” style of eating. All the while, they promote visions of white nationalism and cisheteropatriarchy through their primal rhetorical networks. However, first, we turn to alt-wellness rhetorics, which lay the groundwork for these primal rhetorical networks.

Buff conspiracism: conspirituality and alt-wellness rhetorics

Critical communication scholarship has become increasingly concerned with the rhetorics of health and wellness. Most pertinent to our study is that of Wagner (2017), who linked ideologies of hegemonic masculinity to “performances of the body”—e.g., bodybuilding, fitness, and dieting (p. 581). Industries geared toward male vitality and strength through regimented lifestyles (like a carnivore diet) invoke “identity elements” that “position male corporeality” (p. 581–582). The conflation of “masculinity” with “muscularity” demonstrates how many men’s identities are intricately linked to their bodies, yet the “body ideal” is “not as much about the body itself as the power that accompanies and infuses it” (p. 582). Thus, any rhetorical critique of carnivore diets must—whether focused on their dissemination via *online* platforms like TikTok or *offline* spaces like gyms—note the overlaps of identity work with “body work” (p. 583). The quest to maximize the male body through carnivore dieting represents how corporeal bodies are “strategically sculpted” to meet ideological ends—sexual prowess, dominance, and other “grounds that separates the *men* from the *real men*” (p. 283).

If the rhetoric of male health and wellness relies upon the designation of real vs. less-real men, then the carnivore diet’s linkages to the right-wing manosphere make more sense. Historian-turned-journalist Bateman (2022) identified a tie between alternative “manly” diets and men’s self-help cultures, which grew in the early 2000s and peaked with the presidency of Donald Trump to “attain a quasi-political, quasi-spiritual status” (para. 3). With participants as special “members of the elect,” discourses of “when men were men” erupt en masse—even if “they cannot agree when exactly that was” (para. 7–8). Regardless of who, exactly, their lifestyles replicate, one thing is certain: participants will differentiate themselves from a “fallen, failed, and low-testosterone state of existence” (para. 8).

Scholars of extreme right-wing storytelling practices offer “conspirituality” as a guiding analytic for which narrative structures dominate alt-right spaces and why. Conspirituality is “a rapidly growing web movement expressing an ideology fuelled by political disillusionment and the popularity of alternative worldviews” (Ward and Voas, 2011, p. 103). Ward and Voas (2011) suggest this phenomenon is a hybrid of traditionally female-dominated New Age cultures with the traditionally male-dominated conspiracy culture. However, more recent work on conspirituality has challenged this observation, noting a rise in “preacher men and bro scientists” mixing spiritual claims with issues such as gun rights and anti-vaccine beliefs (Beres et al., 2023, p. 15).

As a “politico-spiritual philosophy,” conspirituality has two core principles: first, that a “secret group” controls societal ordering, and second, that in opposition to this group, humanity is undergoing a spiritual paradigm shift. As this paradigm shift neatly overlaps with alternative wellness rhetorics, conspirituality is a pertinent framework to understand the carnivore diet’s role within primal rhetorical networks. Conspirituality’s linkage with alternative health and wellness discourse stems from the idea of “bio-conspiracy”—the “conspiracist belief surrounding

manipulation of the natural world” (Ward and Voas, 2011, p. 107). Take, for instance, fears about fluoride in water or of 5G radio towers. Much like the various diets proposed by fitness influencers, conspiratorial worldviews are part of a “chain” of online gurus within a competitive “spiritual supermarket” (p. 111). Upon settling on a conspiratorial worldview, participants awaken to the “truth,” and remember who they “really are.” This act of spiritual awakening is only compounded by the micro-celebrity cultures and misinformative virality endemic to social media.

Baker (2022) suggested wellness spaces are unregulated venues defined by anecdotal evidence and positive thinking. This narrative structure allows for “self-appointed” gurus not only to promote their health and wellness regimes without substantive evidence but also to combine nutritional discourse with broader tips for spiritual development. Baker notes how the mini-documentary *Plandemic* served as an online linkage between far-right conspiracy theories and alternative health influencers skeptical of vaccination. In this perspective, mainstream medicine is “domineering and compromised by vested interests” (p. 14). This idea circulates and further evolves within radical dieting circles into practices like the carnivore diet, which identifies mainstream nutritional advice as at odds with a natural way of being a man.

Recent work in conspiracy studies reveals that these online linkages are becoming more intense and wide-reaching, transcending traditional left-right dichotomies and capturing a range of disparate audiences into alt-spiritual paradigms. These paradigms, though, are increasingly conspiratorial and politically radical. Callison and Slobodian (2021) describe this change—especially as manifested during the COVID-19 pandemic—as “diagonalism,” wherein diagonalists “contest conventional monikers of left and right (while generally arcing toward far-right beliefs), to express ambivalence if not cynicism toward parliamentary politics, and to blend convictions about holism and even spirituality with a dogged discourse of individual liberties” (para. 2). New-Age wellness practitioners’ growing interest in conspiracy theories are often tied to fears of the “Great Reset,” a supposed plot by the elite to create a fake pandemic to gain power and rearrange society (Beres et al., 2023). Diagonalism, as a complement to conspiratoriality, explains how health-centered protests easily link “New Age health obsessives” with “neofascist parties,” ultimately cementing a pipeline between conspiratorial beliefs and right-wing radicalization (Klein, 2023, “A Global Diagonal Meridian” section).

We draw on conspiratoriality and diagonalism to make sense of how seemingly unrelated ideas—spirituality, meat consumption, masculinity, and race—as well as groups—alternative belief systems, white nationalists and health and diet influencers—can be closely linked within primal rhetorical networks. We follow two poles of this dialectical, diagonalist alliance among carnivore diet advocates. First, we examine the Liver King, who appeals largely to young men interested in fitness and health. Then we turn to the Raw Egg Nationalist, who markets the carnivore diet primarily to those interested in racial hierarchy, nationalism, and anti-migrant attitudes.

Liver king’s primal rhetoric: flesh, indigeneity and ancestral living

The Liver King (LK) is a useful entry point for white men to learn the basics of primal rhetoric and enter into an increasingly radicalizing primal rhetorical network. As a carnivore diet adherent and charismatic social media influencer, his TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube persona use the following rhetorical pattern: first, LK’s muscular body is presented as a “project” for “men to tinker with, an opportunity to work in the masculine toolshed in an effort to build something of value and return to the evolutionary roots of what it means to be a man” (Wagner, 2017, p. 583). Then, LK identifies the source of Modern Man’s crisis in masculinity. To salvage Man, LK offers his adherents a cure: “ancestral living” through becoming “Primals.” While not overtly nationalistic or white supremacist, LK relies almost entirely upon indigenous romanticization, appeals to nature, and the anti-indigenous trope of the Noble Savage. He flattens indigeneity to undeveloped, unrefined “primitiveness.” Nonetheless, for LK, the crisis of modernity—and subsequent crisis of white masculinity—is best solved through “ancestral” lifestyles heavy on the consumption of raw nonhuman animal flesh to reclaim one’s status as an apex predator.

Outside of his digital kingdom, the LK is Brian Johnson, a 45-year-old entrepreneur whose professional experience jumps from pharmaceutical sales to dentistry to his current role as a social media influencer. Asked about his decision to sell his and his wife’s dental practice and become social media royalty, Johnson said: “I used to say that I ate Brian Johnson... the corporate guy that didn’t live the ancestral life” [qtd. in Gutman et al. (2023), para 17]. He launched his LK “brand” in October 2021. As of the time of writing, LK has about 5 million TikTok followers and 2.2 million Instagram followers (much more mainstream than REN’s 186,000 Twitter followers and 14,000+ Substack subscribers). His website advertises LK’s goal of “reviving the primal patterns that progressed the sole surviving species of genus Homo” (Liver King, n.d.a, para. 1). By teaching, preaching, and modeling the “Ancestral message,” LK’s adherent—or “Primals”—“don’t have to suffer and struggle unnecessarily” (para. 2). Adding to his hyper-masculine ethos, fans, journalists, and scholars alike have marveled at the chiseled appearance, including his “granite pectorals, veiny biceps, and protruding abdominals” (p. 1).

In representing himself as a model man for the Modern Man, LK’s overnight success matches how conspiratoriality functions: “providers have credentials and appear credible to many, despite promoting beliefs that often seem bizarre to non-subscribers. They are trustworthy accomplices, having succeeded in acceptable ‘real world’ careers” (Ward and Voas, 2011, p. 114). As a biochemistry major, former pharmaceutical rep, and holder of an “ideal” male body, LK is ready-made for life in the carnistic guru sphere. Primals flock to LK’s homemade supplement products, which sell for up to \$65 a bottle, for capsules of grass-fed beef liver and other dietary items. His multiple supplement brands make over \$100 million per year in sales. In an interview for ABC News, LK informed Matt Gutman that his supplement line complemented his vision for an ancestral lifestyle: “we just happen to sell... nose-to-tail

nourishment in a convenient gelatin capsule” [qtd. in Gutman et al. (2023), para. 8].

As a wellness “guru,” LK derides contemporary food and pharmaceutical industries. This critique is based partially in fact and, according to Baker (2022), why alternative wellness communities are susceptible to alt-right networks: “their subject matter may vary, but the underlying logic of constructing an evil enemy and heroically seeking to restore Truth, Freedom and Justice is remarkably similar” (p. 15). Indeed, Klein (2023) argues that successful diagonalists blur together left-wing and right-wing critiques to present a movement that transcends the left-right binary (“A Global Diagonal Meridian” section). Pivoting from legitimate critiques of profit-driven medicine, LK expresses more controversial skepticism toward vaccines and technological innovations like electromagnetic frequencies. So, while digital gurus like him may not “share QAnon’s far-right extremism...both groups are bound by distrust of ... the pharmaceutical and vaccine industry—which they see as promoting obedience, compliance and surveillance” (Baker, 2022, p. 15). This suspicion naturally flows into LK’s credibility as a supplier of alternative medical supplements, which LK claims has netted him a \$310 million net worth (Liver King, n.d.c).

The second step of LK’s primal rhetorical process is identifying the hows and the whys of Modern Man’s spiritual downfall. Simply put, the issue is that Modern Men are “weak, submissive pussies” (qtd. in para. 3). Gibbs and Piatkowski (2023) described LK’s bombastic brand of “atavistic idealism” as a means of assuaging his and his primarily male audience’s sense of “masculinity in crisis” (p. 1). Indeed, LK initially named this as his rationale for promoting his brand: “Our young men are hurting the most, feeling lost, weak, and submissive” (p. 2). LK identifies a series of fatal flaws afflicting the modern male, including crises in physical health (e.g., infertility and obesity) but especially in mental health (e.g., depression and suicidality). In response, modern medicine prescribes pills to no avail. Men are “purpose-built for fighting” [qtd. In Wenger (2022), para. 3]. In other words, “masculinity is intricately linked to performances of the body that establish clear boundaries ... and position male corporeality in direct opposition to “feminine” performances/traits of compassion, dependence, and passivity” (Wagner, 2017, p. 581). For LK, modernity broadly threatens to unsettle these gendered roles, casting male identity into doubt.

Luckily, asserts LK, his lifestyle solves this insidious “modern-day manicured man problem” [qtd. in Wenger (2022), para. 3]. His primal rhetorical strategy involves a hard pivot into the role of spiritual guide for aggrieved white men. He alone has the “cure” to his customers’ physical, psychological, and spiritual woes. Conspirituality relies upon “stories of spiritual awakenings, some dramatic, others gradual or momentary, are commonplace. The awakening process...is ‘a time of transformation’” (Ward and Voas, 2011, p. 112). LK embodies a paternal role for his young viewers, instilling patriarchal lessons about becoming an autonomous, aggressive male. By embracing “ancestral living,” his “Young Primals” who were “quietly suffering” can reconnect with the world (Liver King, n.d.a, para. 12–13). LK described his persona as “an experiment to spread the message [and] bring awareness

to the 4,000 people who kill themselves” [qtd. in Hearing (2022), para. 11].

LK shares how, by following his all-natural, ancestral lifestyle, his son was cured of all his ailments. Ergo, his “nose-to-tail” diet and ancestral way of life can cure such ailments as autoimmune diseases, allergies, fatigue, and more. While tangential to our main discussion about Primal Rhetoric’s connection to nonhuman animal flesh, it is important to note that despite his main thesis, LK did *not* abide by a “natty” (all-natural) diet and exercise regimen when he launched his platform. He remains embroiled in conflict about his secret use of anabolic steroids (a definitively *modern* invention). LK has since apologized and vowed to do better in the future, but consumers have mounted class-action lawsuits against his supplement brand in response to this discovery (Hearing, 2022; Xie, 2023).

Finally, having recruited his aggrieved male audience, LK moves his primal rhetorical strategy into the realm of the alt-right. To be clear, LK does not *outwardly* advocate for white supremacy or other alt-right ideologies. However, as Rodrigues (2023) warned in a report on LK’s marketing, “modernity-rejection can be a red pill to far right ideologies that yearn for better—whiter—times” (para. 8). To wit, LK’s marketing is premised upon a popular fallacy: the appeal to nature. His specific appeal to nature relies on two components: a near fetish for animal flesh and a fantastical mythology of “ancestral” indigeneity. For GQ journalist Reiss (2023), LK’s “bloody and organic school of thought” is akin to an “old-time strongman”—that is to say, not “vegan in the least, but it’s farmer’s market-adjacent” (para. 1). LK promotes a “hunter-gatherer kind of diet” that is nonetheless steeped in pharmaceutical technology, or more “post paleo” than anything else (para. 2). But LK is not “paleo,” he is “ancestral.” And, by ancestral, he means attempting to mimic the rituals of non-Western “tribes,” “natives,” or other “primitive” groups supposedly untainted with the stink of modernity. This is not to suggest that the “West” or individuals of European descent do not have their own ancestral traditions or indigenous groups. However, LK commonly conflates “ancestral” and “primitive” with indigenous practices from specifically African, Asian, and Native American contexts—despite marketing his lifestyle to a largely white male following (Wenger, 2022).

Historically accurate or not, conspiritual narratives are premised upon a guru revealing “truth” (Ward and Voas, 2011). Since “providers and audiences ascribe power to truth” (p. 113). As such, LK centers his brand around “9 Ancestral Tenets.” Johnson sets out these nine pillars: sleep, eat, move, connect, cold, sun, fight, bond, and fun. These tenets are framed as essential to rebuilding one’s ancestral self. Primals must sleep “like our early ancestors did to build your biological resilience” and must exercise because “there is a mismatch between our physical activity we experience in the modern world and our ancestral environment” (Liver King, n.d.d, Move, para. 1). Primals need to fight because “our ancestors evolved fighting, hunting, protecting, struggling, persevering, and eventually winning” (para. 1). Although “in modernity, there are not a lot of natural opportunities” to fight like one’s ancestors, the ancestral lifestyle calls for adherents to “look for opportunities to scare the shit out of yourself! In this way, we can honor the legacy of our ancestors and our biology” (Liver King, n.d.d, Fight, para. 1).

Primals need to bond with others because “our ancestors’ purpose was guarding the perimeter from danger...there was purpose in teaching and tradition, and in play, that cultivate traditions and deepen social bonds” (Liver King, n.d.d, Bond, para. 1).

Most pertinent to our study is LK’s connection between indigeneity and animality in his second ancestral tenet: Eat. By eating an “ancestral” diet, LK proposes that his followers can regain their humanity: “we are the descendants of Homo, the baddest mammalian predators that ever lived” (Liver King, n.d.d, Eat, para. 3). LK frames this tenet in terms of evolution, wherein “we eat exactly like our early ancestors did” (para. 1). Those foods humans “evolved with more than 2 million years ago are the same foods that we still expect today to heal and be healthy” (para. 2). In contrast, modern iterations of foods like “processed foods, the seed oils, and liquid calories” should be dropped from one’s diet (para. 2). As is his namesake, LK primarily advises primals to consume raw liver. In addition, he sings the praises of bone marrow, heart, muscle meats, bull testicles, and other “whole food” fleshy items in line with his “nose-to-tail” philosophy of eating because “we” evolved “eating the whole animal” (para. 3). With no trace of irony, LK also advises that Young Primals hoping to “skip the line” can, instead of hunting animals themselves, eat a “Liver King Bar” as part of a well-balanced carnivore diet.

In this manner, LK consistently flattens, whitens, and romanticizes indigeneity as both a concept and lived reality. He “glorifies a fantasy” of a people who never really lived (Wenger, 2022, para. 11). For historian Conor Heffernan, LK is merely “co-opting ideas of ancestral-ness for a predominantly white audience” [qtd. in Wenger (2022)]. Rodrigues (2023) concurred: “if someone were to examine only the social media feeds of Liver King,” noted Rodrigues, “they might conclude that the ancestral diet was heaps of animal muscle and organs, and little else” (para. 12). Paleoanthropologist Briana Pobiner claims that, despite LK’s claims that raw meat sustained early humans, “we don’t know the proportion of raw vs. cooked meat in the diet of any early human species, really” [qtd. in Wenger (2022), para. 9].

Put simply, LK ahistorically leans upon a tired anti-indigenous trope: the noble savage. Noble savage mythology “binds Indigenous peoples to an impossible standard” wherein so-called “ancestral” populations are “in a suspended state of...elevated purity” (Gardner, 2016, para. 22–23). Noble savagery as a concept is said to begin with Jean Jacques Rousseau, who (although he did not use the term) wrote of the bifurcation of contemporary “Man” from his primordial ancestors, who, although brutal, were also noble (Rowland, 2004). His contemporaries, like explorer James Cook, took Rousseau’s thoughts to the New World, where they described indigenous populations as tranquil and far happier than Europeans. Like LK, they believed men were naturally good yet corrupted by civilization. “As society and its institutions evolved,” explained Rowland (2004), “primitive innocence and natural honesty were replaced by artificiality and falseness” (p. 5).

Even LK’s name is steeped in appeals to indigeneity, animality, and noble savagery. LK named himself the Liver King because “Liver is King” (Liver King, n.d.a, para. 4). To consume liver is to “genetically express our highest, most dominant form” (para. 5). “Our early ancestors,” LK explains, “always favored the Liver first” (para. 6). LK asserts that some indigenous tribes “even believed that

the strength and memories of our ancestors are stored in the Liver” and “many modern-day hunter/gatherer tribes still do—along with lions, great whites, and other wild alpha organisms” (para. 4). Indeed, “when one consumes the Liver, one inherits the strength of that animal” (para. 6). ABC News’ Matt Gutman admired how: “he raises and slaughters his own livestock” and “suffers through extreme workouts” all to show his “deeper connection with the outdoors and a connection with nature” (Gutman et al., 2023, para. 4).

LK defends his fascination for raw flesh with more appeals to noble indigeneity. The home page of his supplement store reads: “the baddest native warriors to ever walk the earth, The Cree, ate raw bison liver to gain the power of the bison.” He makes clear that the human condition demands meat first, plants last: “our ancestors grew robust valuing the animal foods above all else, consuming plant foods most as survival foods to get them between hunts” (Liver King, n.d.b, para. 2). This idea of meat-as-main-course tries upon a “major character trait associated with this expression of indigeneity...that of ‘toughness’” wherein “to survive, one either has to be as tough as this wild nature or, alternatively, develop smart skills” (Picard et al., 2014, p. 216).

Indeed, LK’s primal rhetoric harkens back to the conceptual reemergence of noble savagery in 20th and 21st-century New Age romanticism. Here, indigenous peoples were “credited with special powers, such as healing or enhanced spirituality” (para. 20). Although these depictions may *seem* harmless or complimentary at times, they are damaging. Rowland (2004) warns, “caricaturing peoples as ‘noble savages’ distances them from the adequate and equitable distribution of resources and power, a factor that must be considered a key cause of conflict in most societies” (p. 10). LK’s carnivorous version of history is undergirded with the generalized thesis that “human interventions are defined as destabilizing what is imagined as a prior ideal state, potentially creating instead forms of instability” (Picard et al., 2014, p. 216). Adherents to LK’s “ancestral” lifestyle clumsily attempt recreations of indigenous traditions, “often with little idea of their original meanings” (para. 20). Ecologist Marlene Zuk calls this ahistorical rhetorical trope a “paleofantasy” reliant upon dramatic oversimplifications of human evolution (Zuk, 2013).

But LK does not stop at verbal worship of blanket indigeneity. In keeping with his noble savage trope, LK uses still and moving images to “clearly illustrate the presentation of Indigenous spirituality for consumption by a public receptive to the identification of [non-White] people with the romance of nature” (Picard et al., 2014, p. 215). Because “Liver King doesn’t believe everything he reads,” he schedules trips to temporarily live with what he called “modern-day primitive tribes that still practice ancestral ways” (Liver King, n.d.e, para. 1). At the time of writing, the cover photo on LK’s website is him posing with a group of African women and men dressed in traditional garb. He has videos vacationing with various tribes, including indigenous communities in Mexico, Tanzania, and Mongolia. The videos have titles emphasizing the toughness and fortitude required to relinquish modern comforts, including “I survived ancestral living in MEXICO (duh, I’m Liver King).” On his trip to Mexico, the video included Mayan families in face paint, a shaman offering LK a “shamanic massage,” and excited dancing by an open fire. And of

course, never forgetting his adherence to carnivorousism, LK's bloody feeding frenzies during hunts with his hosts are interspersed with stereotypic cultural imagery (see: [Liver King, 2023](#)).

This appeal to traditional living lies in stark contrast to the beginning of his video package in Tanzania, where his story starts with him exiting his personal jet to meet with his tribal hosts. Ironic as this may seem, [Picard et al. \(2014\)](#) noted that “maintaining difference with and distance from nature while ceremonially appropriating its presumed essence is simultaneously a means to reaffirm and reconstitute a particular type of modern national self” (p. 217). Despite his love for luxury travel, LK makes a point to show how his tribal (or “primitive”) hosts have not been victimized by modernity. While in Tanzania, LK asks one tribesman if his people die young or get depression. The tribesman replies that, generally, they do not. This answer evidences LK's broader idea that ancestral living and “surviving” without modernity could eliminate the crisis of men's mental health. In this moment, LK demonstrates how the noble savage trope depicts non-white people as “socially distanced from the modern life embodied by tourist visitors, yet also the focus of a desire to be intimately close to the cultural values of nativeness and naturalness” ([Picard et al., 2014](#), p. 215). The traditions of such people—perhaps the purest forms of men—is for LK's crew “our duty” to share with the world, often through LK's health products and social media posts.

While LK's appeal to the manosphere can be partly derived from his cartoonish charisma, his role in the alt-right pipeline (through his primal rhetorical network) must not be overlooked. LK's pedagogic style eases audiences into the “socially corrosive” ideologies and discursive features of his right-wing digital contemporaries ([Wenger, 2022](#), para. 4). In addition to his tying of meat and indigeneity to white masculinity, conspiratorial principles are reflected in LK's Ancestral Tenets “Shield” and “Connect.” Whereas “our ancestors” avoided dangers like wild animals, “we run from seed oils, excessive wifi, EMFs, and man-made poisons” ([Liver King, n.d.d](#), Shield, para. 1). He advises Primals to turn off wifi at night and stop wearing perfume. Refusing could “end up compounding and with an additive effect” disrupt vital human functions like sleep, metabolism, and (perhaps most pertinently) hormones like testosterone (para. 2). “Connect” literally refers to physical contact with the Earth via the “negative charge which provides a grounding force in our electrophysiology.” Instead of sleeping in elevated beds and wearing shoes, “all you have to do is take your shoes off and put your bare feet directly on the earth” to improve blood pressure, prevent inflammation, and protect against electromagnetic frequencies ([Lyons, 2017](#), Connect, para. 2).

Importantly, outright conspiracy theorists with more overt far-right and racist ties name LK as their starting point. Take Pauly Long—better known on social media as the “Testicle King” (TK). Like LK, TK primarily posts on TikTok and Instagram. In an interview with *Rolling Stone*, TK revealed that upon watching LK on these platforms, politicized carnivore diets “began to make more and more sense” [qtd. in [Jones \(2022\)](#), para. 4]. For him, meatless diets like veganism are, quite literally, “poison.” Meatless lifestyles hinder proper gender roles, with the growth of meat alternatives showing how the world is stifling masculinity.

TK accuses world governmental orders of “programming” people to think that they can't eat carnivorously. “All the conspiracy

theories are true,” he says, because “the world is run by evil.” [qtd. in [Jones \(2022\)](#), para. 4]. These evil actors include “big conglomerates, Big Food, Big Pharma... it's a massive elitist program to keep us all indoctrinated and weak” (para. 4). Taking his cue directly from LK, TK encourages his followers to “get on an animal-based diet, like we were always meant to consume, and you start feeling better” (para. 4). Directly tying his love of LK to his conspiratorial framework, he links LK to influencer Andrew Tate as someone who is “trying to bring back masculinity as a positive thing” (para. 13). Tate, widely known as a misogynist and a racist, has also been credibly accused of sex trafficking and sexual assault ([Kwai, 2023](#)). TK thus further demonstrates the networked, carnivorous, white-centered manosphere of which LK is a key part (para. 13).

The online body-building communities that LK inserts himself into have always been “inherently right-leaning” ([Wenger, 2022](#), para. 4) inasmuch as its members are often dismissive of perceived physical weakness and value restrictive forms of masculinity. Because social mediascapes have blended this culture and multiple other cultural communities together, LK's primal rhetoric seamlessly blends together three subcultures—fitness, alternative medicine, and far-right extremism. As he ties together these communities, he facilitates connections along a carnivorous network toward more extreme figures, like REN.

Raw Egg Nationalism: race, animals, and power in “anon” networks

If LK is a common entry point for followers into primal rhetorical networks, REN may be an apex figure—a further evolution along the carnivore pipeline. REN advances a more explicitly white nationalist and far-right political philosophy centered around the consumption of animal products—although REN favors raw eggs to LK's raw liver. His project of “Raw Egg Nationalism,” which underlies the bulk of his writing and tweets, calls upon readers to strengthen their spiritual and physical attributes through the consumption of raw eggs and meat to be the best nationalists they can be. REN's primal rhetorical networks are more restrictive and coded than LK's image tailored for widespread observation, as REN's followers learn to speak in lingo like “slonking” for gulping down raw eggs, mask their far-right politics offline and behind anonymous accounts online, and embrace recruitment of other potential “anons” from figures like LK. Like other far-right communities, the circulation of such code words can smuggle controversial far-right ideas into more mainstream outlets and facilitate in-group bonding over humor ([Åkerlund, 2022](#)).

Rather than simply marketing carnivore supplements like LK (although he too has begun to sell “ancestral” health products), REN's primal rhetorical networks are principally motivated by a desire to transform carnivorousism into a broader far-right philosophy, sketching out the intellectual and metaphysical scaffolding behind the turn to paleo, keto, and carnivore diets. For REN, concern with health is secondary to a broader goal: a philosophy of race and spiritual nationalism that instructs the individual to embody a nationalist politic that can scale to defend (white) “Western civilization” against its corruption

by shadowy multiculturalist, plant-based forces—what he terms “soy globalism.” As a result of his role as a thought leader, REN embraces long-form essay writing, magazine production, and editing alongside the sort of media LK favors—podcasts, interviews, and memes. These materials are disseminated through REN’s digital networks—through ebooks, his open-source magazine *Man’s World*, podcasts, and his free-to-access *Substack* account.

In contrast to LK’s implicit connection to right-wing ideologies, REN outlines an explicitly far-right and nationalist project (hence his name). Indeed, [Raw Egg Nationalist \(2022a\)](#) draws a firm line between himself and LK, who he calls a “cuck” who is likely to “start endorsing cricket protein.” Best known for his anonymous Twitter personality and books published by the far-right (and Nazi-sympathizing) Antelope Hill Press, REN describes himself as the “figurehead” of the raw egg nationalism movement, which aligns with his place in far-right digital networks. After making his Twitter account (@babygravy9) in August 2019, REN became increasingly popular and has 186,000 followers at the time of writing—significantly less than LK’s 5 million TikTok followers and 2.2 million Instagram followers. He has been featured on *Infowars*, written articles for far-right outlets like *The Epoch Times*, and authored books on fitness, food, and nationalism. Most recently, REN has featured centrally in Tucker Carlson’s *End of Men* documentary.

REN’s conspiratorial rhetoric departs significantly from LK’s, directly tying his gastronomic theories to anti-immigration, anti-globalization, and white nationalism. For example, [Raw Egg Nationalist \(2023g\)](#) tweeted a meme referencing 14/88—a euphemism for Heil Hitler ([ADL, n.d.](#)), described “demographic replacement” by migrants ([Raw Egg Nationalist, 2023f](#)), and claimed that racial equality will result in subjugation of whites ([Raw Egg Nationalist, 2023j](#)). Whereas LK’s primal rhetorical influence relies on his previous career and current image as an influencer, REN relies on a strict code of anonymity. Although REN at times reveals more overtly far-right values, his writings, tweets, and interviews are often clouded in a veil of irony, abstraction, and distance. This is due to [Raw Egg Nationalist’s \(2023b\)](#) insistence that far-right “facephaging” (an intentional malapropism) is for “careerists” and that being too forthcoming with one’s views could pose a significant risk to one’s career and personal life (p. 161). The ever-anonymous REN outlines a political philosophy centered around egg and meat consumption but expands to include spirituality, self-help, fitness, nationalism, esoteric European thinkers, male friendship, and more. Whereas LK fetishizes a romantic view of tribal hunting and “ancestral life,” REN prefers *race* as a spiritual, almost metaphysical, quality of nationalist men powered by animal products.

To reiterate, [Ward and Voas \(2011\)](#) described conspiratorialism’s core convictions: (1) a secret group controls the political/social order, and (2) solutions to the former rely on changing one’s actions to reflect a spiritually enlightened worldview. For REN, the first conviction is represented through his fear of globalists’ attempts to “destroy nations and local communities... by isolating communities and sickening them through food and also through so-called medicine” ([Carlson, 2022](#)). Tucker Carlson’s *The End of Men* named a multitude of factors as evidence for men’s emasculation via falling testosterone counts, low sperm count, and

quality, increasing rates of obesity, and social encouragement of weakness. REN’s surprising central appearance in the documentary conceptualized soy globalism through the suggestive slogan “Own nothing, live in the pod, eat the soy” ([Carlson, 2022](#)).

However, for REN, increasing consumption of plant-based eggs and meats is *not* the result of ecological, economic, or political changes that have put masculinity in crisis, but a deeper, more foundational, spiritual rot. He writes, “we must also be morally, indeed spiritually, receptive... for this to happen...rotted our soul” ([Raw Egg Nationalist, 2022b](#), para. 22). REN’s answer to such a spiritual rot is “Raw Egg Nationalism,” a project that ties the power of Western nations to the spiritual and physical health of the individual. As he writes in his e-book *The Eggs Benedict Option*, “we, the raw egg nationalists, want you to be fit, healthy and free, because the nation needs you. And a nation is only as strong as the people it is composed of” ([Raw Egg Nationalist, 2022c](#), What is Raw Egg Nationalism section, para. 2). The *Eggs Benedict Option* is a play on Rod Dreher’s *Benedict Option*, which called for Christians to flee from secular society. REN encourages the reader to similarly reject our current food system in favor of a nostalgic vision of pre-industrial diets heavy in meat and dairy ([Whalen, 2023](#), para. 5). REN thus positions himself as a leader of a “minoritarian resistance” against soy globalism, a key element of diagonalist alliances that both widens one’s reach to new audiences and authorizes more aggressive actions in response to perceived subjugation ([Callison and Slobodian, 2021](#), para. 32).

Rejuvenated and reborn by their new diet, REN’s followers can join a growing network “standing our ground, like men, and fighting for our birthright—our sacred nations” ([Raw Egg Nationalist, 2022c](#), Chapter 3, para. 4). Raw Egg Nationalism thus fits within the second conviction ([Ward and Voas, 2011](#)) outline—a set of practices and actions that reflect an enlightened worldview. In particular, changing one’s diet reflects the conspiratorial belief that “the inner self must change before the outer world can”—often expressed through giving up television or consumerism, but here through a diet of predominantly animal products ([Ward and Voas, 2011](#), p. 112).

Like LK, REN’s writings are rife with fears that traditional masculinity is being corroded by modernity. Like many other diagonalist figures, he focuses on “the Great Reset,” a term used by the World Economic Forum in 2020 to describe the economic recovery plan after the COVID pandemic. However, REN insists that the Great Reset is primarily concerned with the social control of white men through *food*—the eradication of animal products and the forced consumption of soy and insects. The centrality of this point for REN cannot be overstated. For [Raw Egg Nationalist \(2022c\)](#), contemporary political issues that unite diagonalists across the political aisle, like transgender rights, US domestic and foreign policy, corporate dominance, declining individual liberties, and more, trace back to a central *homo sapien* misstep: the dietary shift from animal products to grain during the Neolithic Revolution. He calls this moment the “The Original Great Reset.” Indeed, REN suggests that he traces this far back in history to reveal to his readers “how intertwined dietary and social transformation can be” (The Original Great Reset section, para. 3). As such, the current Great Reset, a supposed global collaboration to criminalize consumption of animal products and weaken the public through soy, is merely

an *acceleration* of a long-standing historical trend toward a diet-instigated process of population control (Raw Egg Nationalist, 2023c).

In this sense, REN understands the consumption of animal products generally, but especially raw eggs and organ meat, as a gateway to a higher, transcendent order of existence increasingly foreclosed by the modern world (Raw Egg Nationalist, 2023d). In a 2021 interview, REN suggests that inherent to “a rejection of grains and, together with the big meat and dairy consumption, there’s definitely something political about this, now and in the past too,” identifying grains as “a food that goes hand-in-hand with unfreedom” (Raw Egg Nationalist, 2021, para. 12). When writing about the benefits of liver consumption, Raw Egg Nationalist (2023a) suggests that consuming liver taps into a “deep intuitive knowledge of nutrition” that stretches back to “the dawn of human history” (para. 9). Speculating that ancient humans were “hypercarnivores,” he argues that preferences for organ meat would have become codified into spiritual beliefs and practices that passed on a generational impression that organ meat ought to be heavily revered (Raw Egg Nationalist, 2023a, para. 9). In other words, REN doesn’t merely see the consumption of animal products as spiritually enlightening, but that this primal drive for a hypercarnivore diet precedes and forms the basis of *all* modern religion and spirituality. As a result, any movement to limit meat consumption is vastly more important than nutrition; it represents an attack in a spiritual war on human nature.

Also, like LK, REN’s spiritual tenets romanticize the consumption of animal products by appealing to long-standing traditions while critiquing industrialized factory farming. For example, he decries “monstrous factory warehouses where animals are housed and processed without a thought for their dignity as sentient creatures” (Raw Egg Nationalist, 2020, A Word or Two section, para. 5). One self-interested reason for this concern is that the quality of meat and eggs “depends on the quality of the animal” that produces them (Raw Egg Nationalist, 2020, Shakes section, para. 10). However, Raw Egg Nationalist (2020) suggested that raw egg nationalists adopt not just a nutritional goal, but an ethical one, insisting on “the best quality eggs, from happy, well-treated animals” while wishing that “the great evils of factory farming will be avenged, and the blood of the mass-murder profiteers will run through the streets...” (A Word or Two section, para. 20). REN encourages the consumption of vast amounts of meat, eggs, and dairy and reminds readers to find high-quality, well-treated sources of these animal products. Broad (2023) labeled this position as “carnivore traditionalism,” whose problem is not “the cow but the how” (p. 3). Despite vocal opposition to factory farming, carnivore traditionalists often default to factory-farmed meat anyway, as easy access to meat is seen as vital to one’s health.

In contrast to LK’s veneration of tribal consumption patterns, REN’s ethical opposition to *some* animal slaughter aligns with racialized tropes of non-white brutality toward animals. He quote-tweeted news that a Chinese man was arrested for killing six cats with an image of the character John Wick loading a gun, indicating his desire for violent revenge for this man’s animal cruelty (Raw Egg Nationalist, 2023l). A few days later, he quote-tweeted a video of a Chinese woman killing and cooking a rabbit with an image describing General MacArthur’s supposed plan

to drop nuclear weapons on China, suggesting that her actions warranted such violence (Raw Egg Nationalist, 2023k). When his followers defended the killing of rabbits for food, REN backtracked, admitting that he, too, had eaten rabbit. This demonstrates a distinction between REN and LK: REN emphasizes once popular animal foods, even if currently out of favor, in the West. Unlike LK’s penchant for wild and/or foreign game, REN balks at consuming the “wrong” animal flesh, particularly by non-white actors.

Thus, rather than calling for a broad return to ancestral diets like LK, REN distinguishes between types of ancient societies and peoples worth emulating. For example, Raw Egg Nationalist (2020) argues that the consumption of grain rather than animal products resulted in a type of “human domestication,” partitioning society between powerful humans and weak proto-animals. He pointed toward the nobles of “Mesopotamia,” who, as a result of their meat-rich diet, saw grain-consuming peasants as “more or less cattle” (Raw Egg Nationalist, 2020, Treats section, para. 9). Raw Egg Nationalist (2020) is also inspired by the Mongols, arguing that “grass-eating people” were seen by Mongols as animals like cows or goats, “rather than real humans who ate meat” (Treats section, para. 10). Elsewhere, Raw Egg Nationalist (2023m) decried “people of the corn” as weak, traditionally Mayans and Aztecs, but more recently citizens of the United States, who have a corn syrup-rich diet.

Mixing spiritual and human/animal hierarchy into a unified ranking system, REN distinguishes between human “men” and human “animals” in an essay on race for the far-right website *The Asylum*. Raw Egg Nationalist (2023n) argues that race reflects a “transcendental force” of will and courage that raises a person above their historical circumstance, separating “the man” and “the herd,” such that they are “not even really the same animal” (para. 9). Choosing food thus partly determines one’s ability to tap into “race.” REN’s reading of “race” is inspired by Oswald Spengler, a German philosopher who suggested that “race” was not biological but a divine expression of a culture’s historical impetus (Thurlow, 1981). Spengler suggested that an “inner spiritual difference” between Jews and Europeans thus inspired a natural hatred of Jews (Thurlow, 1981, p. 22). Spengler has been described by Dreher (1939) as someone who provided “skeletal Nazi ideas and gave them a respectable pedigree” (para. 2). Raw Egg Nationalist (2023n) is likely aware of these Nazi affiliations, as he slyly noted that his definition of “race” emerges from Spengler’s, “in addition to considering the conventional definition” (para. 5). REN applies this supposedly “race-neutral” understanding of “race” as spiritual ethos to the United States, arguing, for instance, that accused murderer Kyle Rittenhouse’s decision to shoot protestors reflected a commitment to “race” that others, like “BLM protesters” simply lacked. For REN, race will become more visible in the future, a “filter” for the aftermath of the American collapse that will determine which people are chosen to succeed and who will be too weak.

REN’s essay on race reveals an important distinction between himself and others in primal rhetorical networks, like LK. His inspiration from Spengler aligns with Asprey and Dyrendal’s (2015) critique of Ward and Voas’s (2011) argument that conspirituality necessarily requires a *break* from past spiritual forms, suggesting instead that much of modern conspiritual beliefs simply repackage long-present Western mysticism. While

LK searches for ancestral meaning by venturing to Mexico and Tanzania, REN's works feature extended reflections on Western writings on spirituality like Aristotle, Plato, Spengler, and Aleksandr Dugin.

Perhaps reflecting this inspiration, REN's overall project appeals more directly to the interests of white men in Europe and the United States than LK does. For example, [Raw Egg Nationalist \(2020\)](#) suggested the soy globalists aimed to turn the West into "the worst of present-day India." Thus, "nationalism is the only effective way to resist this" (A Word or Two section, para. 8). [Raw Egg Nationalist \(2022c\)](#) also notes that his proposed agricultural reforms would likely fail to feed a growing global population approaching ten billion. However, he suggests that this sacrifice should be considered "a strategic, but not a moral concern for the West" (What is Raw Egg Nationalism section, para. 11). For [Raw Egg Nationalist \(2022c\)](#), the concern ought not to be that others may starve, but rather that global hunger might cause mass migration from African nations—a "survival situation for the West" (What is Raw Egg Nationalism section, para. 11). He closes this thought experiment with a violent hypothesis: that the West treats the hypothetical African "invasion" as "the hostile act that it is... if Western nations wish to survive" (What is Raw Egg Nationalism section, para. 11).

REN sometimes hides references to white nationalist politics under a thin layer of plausible deniability. For example, [Raw Egg Nationalist \(2023f\)](#) wrote admiringly of Orban's policies aimed at increasing the Hungarian birth rate, suggesting that "the real test of conservatism in 2023 is whether or not you reject wholesale demographic replacement" by migrants (para. 5). Reposting a blogpost on climate migration from "fellow raw-egg slonker" Dan Lyman, [Raw Egg Nationalist \(2023e\)](#) defended political movements' rights to "totally reject" climate migrants "if we are to preserve our way of life for our children and all the generations to come" (para. 2). This is a nod to the "14 words" by white supremacist David Lane, which reads: "we must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children" (ADL, n.d.). In June, [Raw Egg Nationalist \(2023g\)](#) tweeted a "chad" meme captioned "Make mine a venti frappe with 14 pumps of vanilla syrup and 88 of white mocha"—a reference known as "14/88," combining the 14 words and the 8th letter of the alphabet (H), where 88 converts to HH (Heil Hitler). He also warned that Western universities will ban white people ([Raw Egg Nationalist, 2023i](#)), that white people will be placed on reservations in the West ([Raw Egg Nationalist, 2023j](#)) and that America will follow post-apartheid South Africa in "massive racial redistribution from whites to non-whites" ([Raw Egg Nationalist, 2023h](#), para. 16). Although these may seem like quite overt admissions, [Schwarzenegger and Wagner \(2018\)](#) note that far-right communities often rely on very thin claims to distance coded language from explicit racism, labeling posts as merely "offensive humor" or referencing similar beliefs held by more mainstream figures.

[Ward and Voas \(2011\)](#) suggested that conspiratoriality is a "web movement," as it is defined by the rapid dispersal of information across the internet (p. 116). However, conspiratoriality in primal rhetoric networks differs by one's level of anonymity. As [Beres et al. \(2023\)](#) describe in their analysis of conspiratorial/diagonalist figures who transitioned from alt-health into Qanon, increasingly extreme

content often accompanies a greater emphasis on anonymity, making use of online alter-egos, anonymous forums, and memes that offer some "plausible deniability" for controversial content (p. 47). Compared to LK, REN's role as a conspiratorial guru is defined primarily through his emphasis on online anonymity and the tension between appealing to a wider audience while being hesitant to be too open about his beliefs. Above all else, [Raw Egg Nationalist \(2023o\)](#) fears the possibility of being unmasked or "doxxed," tweeting that a central theme in his writing has been for similar anonymous posters to "understand the stakes of the game" as "there are people out there who want to ruin your life... they will ruin your life" (para. 6).

Indeed, REN's primal rhetorics have shifted due to his virality. In a recent issue of his "Man's World" magazine, REN penned an essay where he described how, as his popularity skyrocketed, he marked "certain topics of conversation" as "totally off-limits," as they "would have ended my Twitter career many months or even years ago if I'd decided to pursue them" ([Raw Egg Nationalist, 2023b](#), p. 158). Perhaps in response to these changes, REN defends the strategic use of satire and irony to push his carnivorous message. In an essay on memes, [Raw Egg Nationalist \(2023p\)](#) described his inspiration from acclaimed satirist Johnathan Swift: "only a person of sufficient intelligence, moral character and historical understanding can fully grasp what Swift was really trying to say..." (para. 6). With a nod toward Marshall McLuhan, REN further notes that such ironic humor "is itself an act of rebellion against the sclerotic world, the 'iron prison,' we inhabit. The medium is the message" (para. 10).

Despite his advice to mask one's true beliefs under satire, memes, or silence, [Raw Egg Nationalist \(2023b\)](#) views honesty among anonymous primal rhetors as essential to advancing his raw egg nationalist movement. After all, "at issue is the narrowing possibility of real political change" (p. 159). The value of anonymity for REN is that it allows posters to "say things the regime doesn't want us to say," although he mournfully notes that his popularity has restricted what he can say (p. 161). Rather than simply a "culture war," REN claims that anonymous posting of radical ideas is, therefore, necessary to shift the overall balance of power toward the right, functioning as "a key tool of political organization on the right, one that has the power to influence, and perhaps even sway, elections" (p. 159).

LK and REN function as distinct poles in primal rhetorical networks: the former is an entryway into digital carnivore communities and harmful tropes of indigeneity, while the latter tries to radicalize adherents into a broader white nationalist philosophy. LK is known for his charismatic personality and idiosyncrasies, shared on TikTok, Instagram, and his website—romanticizing tribal existence as an "escape" from dangerous medicines, processed foods, and mental health crises. REN's primal rhetorical networks, by contrast, advance white nationalist sentiments under a layer of satire, obfuscation, and coded lingo in online essays, e-books, and tweets, intellectualizing carnivore diets. What both share in common is a belief that modernity and plant-based foods pose an existential crisis for (white) masculinity, which can only be overcome by a return to an imagined past where men flourished by eating animals and forgoing grains, believing that raw

eggs and bloody meat can restore a primal vitality and sense of historical identity.

Concluding remarks

It would be a mistake to regard the carnivore diet as a fleeting fad. On the contrary, it is both a meat-centered diet and a gastronomic representation of right-wing political ideologies. These meat-, egg-, and organ-based lifestyles are spread far and wide through social media networks, often traversing what has been identified in previous literature as an alt-right pipeline. Even though carnivore diet influencers, gurus, and provocateurs do not always work together (and at times even insult one another), their audiences naturally flow amidst and between them. By watching the bombastic videos of someone like the manospheric LK, one could easily wander into the realm of his increasingly conspiratorial micro-influencer spinoffs (e.g., the Testicle King). Following either self-proclaimed meat monarch could naturally lead into the political realm of REN. All the while, linkages between meat, masculinity, whiteness, and nationality are bound together using flesh consumption as the ultimate signifier of white primal manhood. We identified the conspiratorial genre of these carnivore diet masters as “primal rhetoric” and rhetors’ digital networking capabilities as “primal rhetorical networks.”

Previous media and communication scholarship has examined the interconnections between speciesism and racism, as well as hegemonic masculinity (e.g., Adams, 1990; Gambert and Linné, 2018). Our analysis here suggests that carnivore influencers on digital platforms are increasingly intensifying and modifying these rhetorical linkages, pulling followers down a pipeline toward speciesist worldviews reliant on racist tropes about indigeneity and, eventually, overt white nationalism. For those interested in further study of primal rhetorical networks, there is no shortage of other carnivores to investigate. Take LK’s testicle-centered protege, the Testicle King, for one. Or, one could turn to the “Bronze Age Pervert,” the social media alias of Romanian influencer and Yale graduate Costin Alamari. Like LK, BAP celebrates masculinity because “embracing one’s authentic masculine virtue is the only way to conquer ‘lower types of mankind’ and root out the worst parts of democracy” (Gray, 2023, N.P.). And, like REN, he fuses his wellness advice with alt-right political commentary of current events—and occasionally satire. All the while, BAP actively shares content from LK and REN, further demonstrating the linkages between these individual social media gurus’ spheres of influence.

Ultimately, this work offers rhetoricians interested in right-wing rhetorics and digital radicalization a glimpse into how digital dieting cultures create and sustain cisheterosexist, white supremacist, and/or nationalist worldviews. We also demonstrate the necessity of examining nonhuman animal consumption not merely as a “natural” pastime of hungry humans but as a deeply political activity embedded in questions of power and dominance through animal slaughter and flesh/byproduct consumption. Our

work is an opportunity for scholars to engage with the political imperatives of critical animal studies meaningfully. If the personal is political, we must engage with the politics of labeling oneself a carnivore and consuming carnivorously. These engagements may lead to conclusions that are tough to swallow. Scholars may even identify the *non*-consumption of nonhuman animals as an essential form of political resistance in the face of fascism. At the very least, our work invites others’ to critically interrogate how the notion of Man as an “apex predator” and the fatal violence that results in nonhuman animals as food products neatly correspond to right-wing political ideologies premised upon achieving sociopolitical dominance over Others.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Author contributions

SM: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. DR: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. CC: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

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The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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