

**YANKEE CYBERBOREA: CONTEMPORARY EXPRESSIONS OF  
AMERICAN FAR RIGHT ECOLOGISM ON FACEBOOK AND  
TELEGRAM**

By

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## **Abstract**

The far right and ecological politics have a long, complicated, intertwined history. This thesis explores contemporary ideas of far right ecologism on Facebook and Telegram as it pertains to the United States. As it is established that social media serves as fertile ground for political radicalization, this study aims to establish how the contemporary American far right engages with nature politics and how this interaction varies between platforms as they have key differences. Facebook is extremely widespread in the United States, whereas Telegram is significantly more specialized. To answer these questions, I conducted a critical discourse analysis study utilizing the Discourse Historical Approach. I analyzed Facebook comments on Fox News and Breitbart posts which focused on climate events and summits which directly involved the United States, as well as Telegram channels which were based in the United States. The results revealed that the current state of far right ecologism is extraordinarily divided between the climate skeptical and denialist mainstream far right present on Facebook and the traditionalist and esoteric niche far right in Telegram spaces. However, whereas the former group is shrinking, the latter have potential to grow through political shifts, metapolitical strategies, and violence, which some groups actively pursue and celebrate.

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## Introduction

In the United States, the general public often perceives the utilization of ecological politics as a tendency which is associated with the political left, and often the fringe left at that. Stereotypical images of idealistic young people who present themselves in socially unconventional ways are often conjured up when this is discussed. This, of course, is an inaccurate picture, especially today. More Americans than ever believe that climate change is an issue, with 76% believing it is happening, and 71% saying that it is at least a somewhat important issue to them.<sup>1</sup> Political movements are adaptive and are always subject to change when presented with new information or new realities. This is especially true with radical politics. Over the past decade, a new wave of far-right ideologies has come into rapid political prominence in the United States and Europe. I predict one specific trend within this wave will likely become more prominent as the climate crisis becomes more apparent: far-right<sup>2</sup> ecologism<sup>3</sup>. To many Americans, this idea seems almost like an oxymoron. After all, the

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Leiserowitz et al., “Climate Change in the American Mind - September 2021,” Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, March 11, 2022, <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/climate-change-in-the-american-mind-september-2021/toc/2/>.

<sup>2</sup> I use “far right” to describe a wide group of right-wing tendencies which lean towards populism, extreme conservatism, nationalism, anti-elitism, anti-leftism (or perceived leftism), often containing racial and/or religious supremacist components, which seek to make fundamental changes to the political and social order in their nation state (see Wodak 2021, 32-35 for further detail). There are examples of groups which form or exist within political parties, such as individuals within the Republican Party like Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene (an example of the radical right, Mudde 2019, 7), and groups which are not officially a part of a party, such as Patriot Front in the United States (an example of the extreme right, Mudde 2019, 7).

<sup>3</sup> “Ecologism” and its root “ecology” as well as other derivatives “ecologist,” and “ecological” based on Staudenmeier’s to “denote ideas, attitudes, and practices commonly associated with the contemporary environmental movement” (Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism Revisited: Lessons from the German Experience* (Porsgrunn: New Compass Press, 2011). 14-15). This is expanded to include direct and indirect engagement with

American right, both the traditional conservative elements and the far-right and populist elements, remain largely climate skeptical, if not climate denialist<sup>4</sup>. But the utilization of ecologically centered politics is not under the exclusive purview of liberals and the left. The relationship between the far right and the ecological movement goes back over a century, with elements of the pre-Second World War German *Lebensreform* movement having close ties with *völkisch* right wing groups and individuals in Germany, such as Richard Ungewitter<sup>5</sup>. During the National Socialist regime, various ideas were also adopted, particularly around environmental preservation and so-called natural living<sup>6</sup>. After the war, people who became influential in the new, broadly left-leaning wave of environmentalism from the 1960s onwards, such as the German Green Party founding member Baldur Springmann<sup>7</sup> and the by-then-deceased biologist and conservationist Walther Schoenichen had pasts of close cooperation with the National Socialist regime.<sup>8</sup> As the environment and ecological issues are again politically salient issues, perhaps now more than ever, it should not come as a surprise that far-right ecologism has also returned. This resurgent tendency has already turned deadly as the mass shooters in Christchurch, New Zealand and El Paso, Texas had expressed far-right ecologist views online prior to their respective attacks<sup>9</sup>. Unlike the broader far-right resurgence, far-right ecologism,

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nature politics and current debates within conceptions of environmentalism.

<sup>4</sup> Jérôme Viala-Gaudefroy Assistant lecturer, “Why Is Climate Scepticism so Successful in the United States?,” *The Conversation*, January 21, 2020, <https://theconversation.com/why-is-climate-scepticism-so-successful-in-the-united-states-129826>.

<sup>5</sup> Lyra Kilston, “Kalifornication,” *Frieze*, March 24, 2013, <https://www.frieze.com/article/kalifornication>.

<sup>6</sup> Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism Revisited: Lessons from the German Experience* (Porsgrunn: New Compass Press, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Michael E. Zimmerman, “The Threat of Ecofascism,” *Social Theory and Practice* 21, no. 2 (1995): pp. 207-238, <https://doi.org/10.5840/soctheorpract199521210>.

<sup>9</sup> Joel Achenbach, “Two Mass Killings a World Apart Share a Common Theme: 'Ecofascism',” *The Washington Post* (WP Company, August 18, 2019),



particularly as it exists in the United States, has been studied by a considerably smaller group of scholars. I aim to answer the following interrelated questions; **how is US-focused far-right ecological discourse constructed on mainstream Facebook news pages? How is US-focused far-right ecological discourse constructed on far-right Telegram channels? How do these discourses overlap and how do they differ?**

*A Brief History of Ecology and the Far Right*

It is critical to understand that the far right and the ‘politics of nature’ have a long history together. The Romantic movement emerged at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in reaction to the Enlightenment. Whereas the Enlightenment embraced reason, logic, the rational, and the tangible, Romanticism embraced emotion, feelings, the irrational, and the intangible. According to Janet Biehl, German Romanticism gave rise to “a peculiar synthesis of naturalism and nationalism.”<sup>10</sup> Biehl names two Romantic philosophers who were particularly influential: Ernst Moritz Arndt and Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl.<sup>11</sup> Arndt, a fervent nationalist, published what is regarded to be the first example of modern ecological thinking in 1815.<sup>12</sup> Arndt harshly condemns the exploitation of the environment for the enrichment of the economy, stating that humans are all part of the same “interconnected relationship” as the rest of nature.<sup>13</sup> This was inseparable from his fierce, exclusionary nationalism, wherein he tied the German people to the German land and railed against other nationalities and ethnic groups.<sup>14</sup> The relation to the later

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[https://www.washingtonpost.com/science/two-mass-murders-a-world-apart-share-a-common-theme-ecofascism/2019/08/18/0079a676-bec4-11e9-b873-63ace636af08\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/science/two-mass-murders-a-world-apart-share-a-common-theme-ecofascism/2019/08/18/0079a676-bec4-11e9-b873-63ace636af08_story.html).

<sup>10</sup> Biehl and Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism Revisited*, 2011. 15.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> George Lachmann Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology* (New York, NY: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964), 4.

<sup>13</sup> Biehl and Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism Revisited*, 2011. 15-16.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

“blood and soil” ideology is clear. Arndt’s student Riehl made the link more explicit.

*“We must save the forest, not only so that our ovens do not become cold in winter, but also so that the pulse of life of the people continues to beat warm and joyfully, so that Germany remains German.”*<sup>15</sup>

Both despised modernity and industrialization, the alienation that they caused and the economic system which propelled them. Both glorified the peasantry and romanticized agrarian life while rejecting urban life.<sup>16</sup> This outlook is not dissimilar to the contemporary “cottagecore” aesthetic which is popular on social media apps like Instagram and Tik Tok.<sup>17</sup> However, whereas “cottagecore’s” romanticization of rural life is not necessarily nationalistic (though it easily can be), both Arndt and Riehl’s explicitly is. Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the *völkisch* movement took this embrace of the agrarian and rejection of the urban and built upon it. Fiercely anti-modern, *völkisch* movements “united ethnocentric populism with nature mysticism<sup>18</sup>.” In Germany, this tendency flourished. In 1867, German zoologist Ernst Haeckel created the term “ecology” and founded the science around it. An early adopter of the theories of Charles Darwin, he also had *völkisch* tendencies, and founded a social Darwinist organization called the German Monist League (*Deutscher Monistenbund*) which fused an *völkisch* social theories with ecological views.<sup>19</sup> He believed in Nordic supremacy, eugenics, opposed miscegenation, and was a virulent antisemite. The parallels here with the later National Socialist regime are stark. It demonstrates

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>17</sup> Katherine Saxon, “Cottagecore Explained - What It Is, How It Started, Why Is so Popular,” The VOUE, December 10, 2021, [https://thevou.com/fashion/cottagecore/#:~:text=Cottagecore%20\(also%20known%20as%20Farmcore,the%20term%3A%20cottage%20and%20core.](https://thevou.com/fashion/cottagecore/#:~:text=Cottagecore%20(also%20known%20as%20Farmcore,the%20term%3A%20cottage%20and%20core.)

<sup>18</sup> Biehl and Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism Revisited*, 17.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 18.

that ecological politics and the far right have a history which has been intertwined from the very beginning.

This brings us to the United States and the origin of the particular ecologies which evolved there. In addition to experiencing its own versions and evolutions of Romanticism, there is a significant aspect which is unique from the German experience: is a settler colonial state. From its colonial inception, originally ruled by various European powers which actively or passively removed indigenous populations and replaced them with European settlers and African slaves, to its status as a young nation striving to fulfill the so-called “Manifest Destiny” of stretching across the North American continent across a ‘pristine’ land (although indigenous people had been utilizing it for millennia), its settler-colonial mindset is inescapable.<sup>20</sup> During this time that another important philosopher comes to prominence, Thomas Malthus. His infamous 1798 treatise *An Essay on the Principle of Population* laid out his view of how nature and mankind were at odds.<sup>21</sup> Nature is inherently scarce, which is in opposition for man’s desire to reproduce as there simply aren’t enough resources to go around. So-called “savage” peoples would be unable to control their consumption, and they must be controlled by the “civilized” peoples, who had self-control and thus were entitled to freedom.<sup>22</sup> This was used against the indigenous and nonwhite peoples as a justification for their exploitation by the racial elite.<sup>23</sup> In the North American context, the perceived failure of indigenous people to “properly” utilize the land due to their inherent “non-industrious” nature was cause enough for conquest of the lands

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<sup>20</sup> Sam Moore and Alex Roberts, *The Rise of Ecofascism: Climate Change and the Far Right* (Cambridge, UK : Polity Press, 2022) 19.

<sup>21</sup> Moore and Roberts, *The Rise of Ecofascism*, 18.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Malthus, “An Essay on the Principle of Population,” Electronic Scholarly Publishing Project, 1998, <http://www.esp.org/books/malthus/population/malthus.pdf>.

<sup>23</sup> Moore and Roberts, *The Rise of Ecofascism*, 18.

by white people, who would make “better” use of it.<sup>24</sup> Colonization and conquest of this magnitude impacted the ecosystems which had been maintained by the indigenous people, particularly with the introduction of non-native farm animals which required a reshaping of the landscape to appease them.<sup>25</sup> As Moore and Roberts write,

*“What was conserved by colonial states was not ‘nature’ in some pure sense, but nature already reorganized through the introduction of norms and species derived from European landscapes, and, most profoundly, ‘organized’ by the genocide of the previous inhabitants.”*<sup>26</sup>

This grim reality is often seen through a romantic lens, even to this day. One of the more uncomfortable examples is the creation of the US National Parks System, loved by most Americans.<sup>27</sup> Often touted as “America’s best idea,” it was only made possible through the forced removal of indigenous people living there.<sup>28</sup> An influential man who helped create this system was Madison Grant, an early modern conservationist.<sup>29</sup> He was also key to the adoption and development of racialism, anti-Southern and Eastern European immigration policy, and eugenics. 1915’s *The Passing of the Great Race* was a key work of scientific racism which directly inspired Adolf Hitler.<sup>30</sup> His lesser known work, 1933’s *The Conquest of a Continent*, helped to lay out an important element which still appears in far-right ecologist discourse:

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> “Public Expresses Favorable Views of a Number of Federal Agencies,” Pew Research Center - U.S. Politics & Policy (Pew Research Center, August 25, 2020), <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2019/10/01/public-expresses-favorable-views-of-a-number-of-federal-agencies/>.

<sup>28</sup> Dina Gilio-Whitaker, “The Usual Story of the National Park Service Is Incomplete,” Time (Time, April 2, 2019), <https://time.com/5562258/indigenous-environmental-justice/>.

<sup>29</sup> Moore and Roberts, *The Rise of Ecofascism*, 21.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 25-26.

Nordicism.<sup>31</sup> The idea that the environment shapes the people was interpreted by Grant to mean that those who were ‘Nordic’ had become the group of humans who had the best characteristics due to the harsh environment, both mentally and physically.<sup>32</sup> This was adopted by German *völkisch* movements and eventually became incorporated into Nazi thought.<sup>33</sup>

To be clear, this is not a condemnation of ecologism or ecologist politics. On the contrary, ecologically centered politics can be the basis for extraordinarily liberating and accepting political and social views. Rather, this clearly displays that the resurgence of far right ecologism is less of an aberration than many laypeople perceive. It is a return to a mode of ecologism which has existed since the very beginning: one which must be reckoned with.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 26-27.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 27, 29.

# Part One: State of the Art

## Chapter One: Literature Review

There is a growing body of work on far-right ecology, with some of the most influential authors being Janet Biehl, Peter Staudenmeier, Michael E. Zimmerman, Bernhard Forchtner, and Christoffer Kølvrå. A new generation of scholars have begun their study, including Blair Taylor, Kyle Boggs, Sam Moore, Alex Roberts, and Balša Lubarda, who himself coined the term far right ecologism.<sup>34</sup> Other important contemporary scholarship on the broader far-right includes Cynthia Miller-Idriss, though she does not delve into ecology. Each author has made significant contributions to the study of the far-right.

In Biehl and Staudenmeier's book *Ecofascism Revisited: Lessons from the German Experience*, they explore the history of ecological movement in Nazi Germany and later attempts by German far-right groups to adopt ecological positions to modernize their political appeal.<sup>35</sup> While confined primarily to Germany, they do an excellent job in tracing the roots of National Socialism and its close relationship with ecology, as well as the post war ecological movement and how aspects of it have been influenced directly or indirectly by Nazi ecologism. In Staudenmaier's newest book, *Ecology Contested*, he takes a wider look at the ecology movement and identifies the various "political ambiguities" within it which allow aspects to be leveraged by both the political left and right in similar ways.<sup>36</sup> Staudenmaier mentions that "the politics of nature offers a way for individuals and communities alike to navigate the precarious terrain of

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<sup>34</sup> Balša Lubarda, "Beyond Ecofascism? Far-Right Ecologism (FRE) as a Framework for Future Inquiries," *Environmental Values* 29, no. 6 (January 2020): pp. 713-732, <https://doi.org/10.3197/096327120x15752810323922>.

<sup>35</sup> Biehl & Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism Revisited*.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Staudenmaier, *Ecology Contested: Environmental Politics between Left and Right* (Porsgrunn: New Compass Press, 2021).

modern life and search for alternatives” when refracted through categories like race, nation, science, religion, or reform.<sup>37</sup> Both the far left and far right critique and revolt against existing societal and governmental structures due to their real or perceived failures to fix issues and call for restructuring of the sociopolitical order. Weak action against climate issues is a potent weapon against the status quo and is something both the left and right can use as a discourse. Naturally, their solutions to the issues and ideas of what a reorganized society should look like are significantly different, but the *topos* of nature and broad concerns about the environment are often startlingly similar to one another. Zimmerman’s *The Threat of Ecofascism* explores the history of the ecology movement in the West and theorizes where and how an ecofascist regime may form in the twenty-first century<sup>38</sup>. While it is an older piece, it does have elements which are still salient today. Forchtner and Kølvråa’s joint paper *The Nature of Nationalism: Populist Radical Right Parties on Countryside and Climate* discusses the discourses around climate protection and the countryside by two European right wing populist parties: the British National Party and the Danish People’s Party<sup>39</sup>. They attempt to identify the source of their environmental stances regarding the countryside with their seemingly contradictory unwillingness to compromise with other parties and pursue wide reaching environmental legislation. Forchtner’s paper *Climate change and the far right* elaborates on the then-current state of the art, discussing how climate denialism/skepticism is the predominant tendency within the radical right<sup>40</sup>. It is subject to change, as social and political realities are constantly changing and they may adapt to

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>38</sup> Zimmerman, “The Threat of Ecofascism.”

<sup>39</sup> Bernhard Forchtner and Christoffer Kølvråa, “The Nature of Nationalism: Populist Radical Right Parties on Countryside and Climate,” *Nature and Culture* 10, no. 2 (January 2015): pp. 199-224, <https://doi.org/10.3167/nc.2015.100204>.

<sup>40</sup> Bernhard Forchtner, “Climate Change and the Far Right,” *WIREs Climate Change* 10, no. 5 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.604>.

new ones, as was shown in the wake of the 2019 European Parliamentary elections with an increase in influence of Green parties prompting members of the German far right to adopt a non-skeptical stance on climate change.

Taylor's chapter *Alt-right ecology* in the anthology *The Far Right and the Environment* discusses ecological trends within the wider alt-right movement in the United States during the 2010s, a well-researched overview of the (then current) state of the phenomenon<sup>41</sup>. Boggs' chapter *The Rhetorical Landscapes of the 'Alt Right' and the Patriot Movements*, presented in the same book as Taylor's chapter, discusses how various American far-right movements create connections between their environmental messaging and the settler colonial history of the United States, justifying the claim of white Americans over indigenous land<sup>42</sup>. Sam Moore and Alex Roberts, hosts of the podcast *12 Rules for What*, have co-authored two books released in the last year, *Post-Internet Far-Right*<sup>43</sup> and *The Rise of Ecofascism*<sup>44</sup>. The former has a particularly strong focus on how the internet serves as a space for radicalization which can lead to physical violence, and theorizes that the emerging "ecofascist" ideas around the world could act as a point which various disconnected strands of the far right can galvanize, becoming a significantly stronger and more cohesive political force. The latter expands on this idea and explores ecofascism and its history and forms much more deeply. Lubarda's *Beyond Ecofascism? Far-Right Ecologism (FRE) as a Framework for Future Inquiries* assesses the existing frameworks

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<sup>41</sup> Blair Taylor, "Alt Right Ecology: Ecofascism and Far-Right Environmentalism in the United States," in *The Far Right and the Environment: Politics, Discourse and Communication*, ed. Bernhard Forchtner (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), pp. 207-219.

<sup>42</sup> Kyle Boggs, "The Rhetorical Landscapes of the 'Alt Right' and the Patriot Movements," in *The Far Right and the Environment: Politics, Discourse and Communication*, ed. Bernhard Forchtner (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), pp. 220-231.

<sup>43</sup> Sam Moore and Alex Roberts, *Post Internet Far Right* (London: Dog Section Press, 2021).

<sup>44</sup> Moore and Roberts, *The Rise of Ecofascism*.



for and trends in analyzing the intersection of ecology and the far right and finds them lacking<sup>45</sup>. He proposes an enhanced framework which is better suited to understand contemporary trends in the far right's values on the environment, looking at the social imaginary and the unique inconsistencies of it compared to other movements. This framework will prove invaluable in my own work. I also am adopting the term "far-right ecology" as opposed to the more well-known term "ecofascism" because, although it is often used in broader conversation as a catch-all term, ecofascism is a specific term for a specific set of ideologies, and to put it simply not all the posts and comments I will be analyzing will have been written by a fascist. Elements of it may still fit in with fascist rhetoric, other elements may not, and pinning down the distinction between "fascist" and "far-right" may lead me to disqualify a considerable amount of potential data on a technicality. Miller-Idriss' most recent book, *Hate in the Homeland*, looks closely at the social media and digital networks which far-right groups use to recruit, radicalize, and discuss ideology<sup>46</sup>. Her analysis of the contemporary far-right overall, and particularly its relation to social media, is some of the most up to date and currently critically important in the field.

On the methodological side of the literature, there are a plethora of scholars who have worked with the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) in the context of analyzing the far-right. Some of the most important are Ruth Wodak, Markus Rheindorf, Martin Reisigl, and the aforementioned Bernhard Forchtner. No discussion of the DHA is complete without discussing Ruth Wodak's contributions to the field. She has written many publications on the application, methodology, and theory of the DHA, also focused specifically on the analysis of the far right. One of her more critical recent monographs is her book *The Politics of Fear: The Shameless*

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<sup>45</sup> Lubarda, "Beyond Ecofascism?"

<sup>46</sup> Cynthia Miller-Idriss, *Hate in the Homeland: The New Global Far Right* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020).

*Normalization of Far-Right Discourse* in which Wodak thoroughly dissects various discourses used by the far right and how they have shifted from the political fringe to becoming some of the most relevant political topics of the day<sup>47</sup>. The book provides plenty of examples of analysis which will be helpful in the thesis, particularly regarding Facebook comments. She has also coauthored works with Rheindorf, Reisigl, and Forchtner. Rheindorf's book *Revisiting the Toolbox of Discourse Studies* looks through the traditional discourse analytical toolbox and suggests new methods which draw from different disciplines, including quantitative approaches<sup>48</sup>. As I am planning to use quantitative approaches to supplement the qualitative approaches, this book will help with the finer details of analysis and provide other possible suggestions. Wodak and Rheindorf have coauthored several papers which may well prove useful, such as 2019's '*Austria First*' revisited: a diachronic cross-sectional analysis of the gender and body politics of the extreme right<sup>49</sup>. Reisigl and Wodak coauthored several pieces, including *Discourse and Racism: European Perspectives*<sup>50</sup> and the chapter *The Discourse Historical Approach* in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*<sup>51</sup>. The former takes a historical approach to racist discourse in Europe, focusing on different approaches to understanding the discursive analysis of it (prejudices and stereotypes, socio-cognitive, discourse-historical, discourse strands

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<sup>47</sup> Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear: The Shameless Normalization of Far-Right Discourse*, vol. 2 (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE, 2021).

<sup>48</sup> Markus Rheindorf, *Revisiting the Toolbox of Discourse Studies: New Trajectories in Methodology, Open Data, and Visualization* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd, 2019).

<sup>49</sup> Markus Rheindorf and Ruth Wodak, "'Austria First' Revisited: A Diachronic Cross-Sectional Analysis of the Gender and Body Politics of the Extreme Right," *Patterns of Prejudice* 53, no. 3 (2019): pp. 302-320, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322x.2019.1595392>.

<sup>50</sup> Ruth Wodak and Martin Reisigl, "Discourse and Racism: European Perspectives," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 28, no. 1 (1999): pp. 175-199, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.28.1.175>.

<sup>51</sup> Martin Reisigl and Ruth Wodak, "The Discourse Historical Approach," in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, Second (London: SAGE, 2009), pp. 87-121.

and collective symbols, and the Loughborough Group.) The latter is an explanation of how the Discourse Historical Approach operates, and demonstrates a step by step example of how it operates.

Much of the existing research lacks the focus on the specific areas I am interested in. Much of contemporary work does not focus on far-right ecology (such as Miller-Idriss), much of the work on far-right ecology is quite dated (such as Zimmerman), and what little exists that is both contemporary and ecologically focused lacks either an explicit focus on the United States (such as Moore & Roberts) or an explicit focus on the analysis of internet discourse (such as Boggs). This is a critical gap. Environmental concern is growing among the public<sup>52</sup> and it is clear that the internet serves as a major breeding ground for the new wave of far rightism<sup>53</sup>. As climate change takes a stronger hold on the planet and its effects become harder to ignore, I assume this upward trend of far-right ecology will accelerate. It will become more critical to understand the link as time progresses, and the sooner, the better.

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<sup>52</sup> Lieserowitz et al. *Climate Change in the American Mind*.

<sup>53</sup> Miller-Idriss, *Hate in the Homeland*; Moore & Roberts, *Post Internet Far Right*.

## Chapter Two: Theory and Methods

Discourse analysis, specifically the DHA of critical discourse studies, is essential to decoding how far-right ecologists communicate. The DHA is the best approach as it allows for a large degree of contextualization of the relevant texts that have been analyzed, particularly the contextualization allowed by the four-level model as explained by Wodak.<sup>54</sup> This degree of contextualization is critical in the identification and analysis of the texts. As an example, see Zimmerman in his discussion around the previously mentioned Walter Schoenichen's Ecosophy, where talking points which were originally used to justify far-right ecologist views can also often easily be passed off as mainstream or left-wing environmentalism when barring full context<sup>55</sup>. This could be used, for example, to insert far-right ecological viewpoints into wider discussions around climate change and environmental conservation. This also might serve as the foot-in-the-door in conversations to draw people in, under the guise of truly fighting climate change more radically than the established governments or other movements are willing to. This also might be the source of differences in discourse used in Telegram and Facebook. When users are in spaces which they are aware are more radical, they might shift their rhetoric to. This potential difference relates closely to Goffman's concept of differences in self presentation in the "frontstage" (Facebook) versus "backstage" (Telegram)<sup>56</sup>. Additionally, the DHA's analysis of argumentation schemes and utilization of *topoi* is useful in identifying and categorizing salient parts of the argumentation structure. The use of formal and content-related *topoi* allows categorizing different arguments made in these contexts, based on widely held assumptions and

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<sup>54</sup> Wodak, *The Politics of Fear*, 73.

<sup>55</sup> Zimmerman, "The Threat of Ecofascism,": 215-216.

<sup>56</sup> Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York, NY: Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1959).

connotations.<sup>57</sup> The purpose of the DHA is to analyze the argumentation schemes within the discourses, it deconstructs latent meanings. This would allow me to answer the question of which argumentation strategies draw in different demographics to far-right ecology.

Understanding the various genres and *topoi* which are at play and how events or ideas are de- and re-contextualized allows identifying far-right ecological discursive strategies more clearly and eventually comparing them to more mainstream populist right-wing strategies and other moderate or left wing environmental discursive strategies<sup>58</sup>. Within this wider framework, I will also be employing Lubarda's far-right ecological framework. Lubarda's framework of far-right ecology will be beneficial for defining the scope of my research. I share the desire to move beyond the term "ecofascism" as it is, as he states, "inadequate to capture the breadth of discourses on the natural environment coming from the far right actors, ranging from populist to radical to extreme."<sup>59</sup> The far right ecology framework allows for more flexibility and inclusion of more tendencies which will paint a more accurate picture of the current state of the relation between these various American far rights and the environment, which will be displayed during the analysis and discussion.

In addition, to sort through data more quickly, I employed various data scraping methods. Specifically, for Telegram, I utilized the built-in channel search feature for key words and phrases as it is quite accurate and highlights the full message, giving the full context of the message and surrounding messages. Though it is not foolproof, and I did find it necessary to engage in some manual double checking of data to ensure that nothing critical was missed, a precaution which proved useful. For Facebook, I utilized two programs. First, after finding the

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<sup>57</sup> Wodak, *The Politics of Fear*.

<sup>58</sup> Wodak, *The Politics of Fear*.

<sup>59</sup> Balša Lubarda, "Beyond Ecofascism?", 1.

threads of interest, I uploaded them into an online comment exporter ([ExportComments.com](http://ExportComments.com)) which formatted the comments into spreadsheets which clearly listed which user posted the comment, the text of the comment, as well as other data such as the number of likes it received, its location in the thread, if it was an original or a reply, as well as a direct link to the comment. After some minor and fast reformatting of the spreadsheet, I uploaded the data into the program MAXQDA to find key words in the comment sections of the selected posts. After uploading all eight of the spreadsheets, I was then able to search for key terms, and the program displayed all the instances of the term along with the context, the most common words it was paired with, the users that used it the most, along with other data. These additional methods were able to save me an enormous amount of time sorting through comment sections for relevant datapoints.

## Chapter Three: Dataset and Limitations

I used two social media platforms as my bases of analysis: Facebook and Telegram. I chose these two platforms because they both have a large base of far-right users based in the United States. However, Facebook has a much wider reach than Telegram does among the general population of the United States. Due to its prominent position, it has long been noted as a particularly large source of the relatively recent political radicalization and polarization sweeping across the US.<sup>60</sup> The Facebook algorithm is infamous for pushing conservative users towards increasingly radical content. While they are allegedly working to improve the algorithm, there still does exist a vast number of far-right American users on the platform. The users are also generally older than other platforms, as younger people in recent years have been less likely to join (and more likely to delete or abandon) Facebook.<sup>61</sup> Meanwhile, older people have joined in greater numbers than before.

Telegram, on the other hand, has a particular reputation in the United States as being a haven for far-right groups<sup>62</sup>, whereas Facebook overall has an American user base encompassing the entire sociopolitical spectrum of the nation's population. Infamously, Telegram was the social media platform of choice for several of the groups which participated in the January 6, 2021, insurrection attempt at the US Capitol<sup>63</sup>. The appeal of Telegram lies in its security and

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<sup>60</sup> Brandy Zadrozny, "Carol's Journey': What Facebook Knew about How It Radicalized Users," NBCNews.com (NBCUniversal News Group, October 23, 2021), <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/facebook-knew-radicalized-users-rcna3581>.

<sup>61</sup> Niall McCarthy, "Is Facebook Becoming Social Media's Retirement Home? [Infographic]," Forbes (Forbes Magazine, March 8, 2019), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/niallmccarthy/2019/03/08/is-facebook-becoming-social-medias-retirement-home-infographic/?sh=7f1095531ba9>.

<sup>62</sup> Tess Owen, "How Telegram Became White Nationalists' Go-to Messaging Platform," VICE, October 7, 2019, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/59nk3a/how-telegram-became-white-nationalists-go-to-messaging-platform>.

<sup>63</sup> Logan Jaffe and Jack Gillum, "This Is War': Inside the Secret Chat Where Far-Right Extremists Devised Their Post-Capitol Plans," Rolling Stone (Rolling Stone, January 28, 2021),

ownership. The chats are encrypted, meaning it is significantly more protected from data collection by third parties (including state actors) compared to unencrypted chats such as a typical SMS message or mainstream social media service like Facebook. Telegram is also rather well known for its relaxed content moderation policies compared to other social media platforms, allowing for extremist imagery and content to be posted with less fear of punishment from the company. Additionally, compared to some other social media sites which the far right uses, Telegram is significantly more user friendly, allowing for an unlimited number of pictures, audio clips, and videos to be posted. Content can also be cross posted from one channel to another, allowing for what Owen termed a “cross-pollination of memes and propaganda.”<sup>64</sup> These cross posts link to the source channel of said post, allowing users to easily find other channels which post content they enjoy. Telegram offers both public and private settings for channels, and for the sake of access to these channels, I only chose to look at public Telegram channels. This key difference in base-level radicalism could very well lead to differences in argumentation strategies and persuasive rhetoric, specifically how ecologically centered politics are discussed within far-right groups versus in wider, more public settings. Given the nature of the wider contemporary ecological movement and the widespread stereotypes in the US of these arguments being presumed to be left-wing in origin, far-right ecologists may change their rhetoric in these spaces, at least initially, to recruit others.

I analyzed text posts and comments on both platforms regarding the politics of nature in some way, including but not limited to nature, natural order, natural disasters, atypical weather patterns, discussions about population, renewable energy, self-sufficient living, off grid

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<https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-news/capitol-riot-far-right-extremists-telegram-1120511/>.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.



lifestyles, climate summits, pollution, natural resource usage, spiritualism, and climate protests. This application of this general approach did shift between Facebook and Telegram as to better suit the exact conditions and type of data I was able to find. For Facebook, I began by looking at the comment sections of three far-right media outlets with well over 1 million likes on their respective pages. The numbers of likes and followers were accurate as of 20.4.22.

- Breitbart (*4.5 million*)
- One America News Network (*1.4 million*)
- Fox News (*18 million*)

I also looked at two mainstream environmental groups:

- Sierra Club (*1 million followers*)
- Environmental Defense Fund (*350k followers*).

• I selected these pages due to their popularity online and national origin. The three right wing American news organizations that I selected have are notorious for their publishing of right-wing content and the platforming of controversial right-wing figures, often accompanied by publishing hearsay and at times outright false news. The two environmental groups I chose due to their popularity, particularly the Sierra Club which is possibly the most well-known environmental organization in the United States. I narrowed my selection by looking for posts from the calendar year 2021 which dealt with climate disasters and the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (better known as the COP26.)<sup>65</sup> I searched for posts around four specific events:

- The so-called “Great Texas Freeze,” February 2021 (an atypically cold and powerful winter storm in Texas which created widespread and long-lasting power outages, nearly

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<sup>65</sup> The acronym stands for the “Conference of Parties 26”

causing a complete failure of the power grid, resulting in at least 246 deaths)<sup>66</sup>

- The Dixie Fire in California, July-October 2021 (most expensive wildfire in US history, destroyed over 1,300 structures, first known fire to cross the Sierra Nevada mountains)<sup>67</sup>

- The Caldor Fire in California, August-October 2021 (destroyed over 1,000 structures, second known fire to cross the Sierra Nevada mountain range)<sup>68</sup>

- The COP26, November 2021.

- These events were chosen because they all received a significant amount of mainstream media coverage and directly affected the United States in some form: it was either damaged by the events, or politically involved on a national level. I located the relevant posts by going to each group's individual Facebook page and using the built-in search feature to find posts on these topics from that page. This is where the first source elimination occurred. One America News Network, despite being very active, did not have a single post about any of the events. I attempted several permutations of the search terms as well as more general terms, and still no results were found, leading to its dismissal. On the other pages I only selected relevant posts which had at least ten comments for analysis. Posts with fewer than ten comments would likely lack a significant amount of discussion. While this did not change the selection for Breitbart or Fox News, it did eliminate some posts from both Sierra Club and the Environmental Defense Fund. Eventually, I found over 80 comment sections which fit these

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<sup>66</sup> Patrick Svitek, "Texas Puts Final Estimate of Winter Storm Death Toll at 246," The Texas Tribune, January 2, 2022, <https://www.texastribune.org/2022/01/02/texas-winter-storm-final-death-toll-246/amp/>.

<sup>67</sup> "Dixie Fire Incident," California Fire Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, October 25, 2021, <https://www.fire.ca.gov/incidents/2021/7/13/dixie-fire/>.

<sup>68</sup> "Caldor Fire Incident," California Fire Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, October 21, 2021, <https://www.fire.ca.gov/incidents/2021/8/14/caldor-fire/>.

criteria between the remaining. To synthesize this data more efficiently (over 70,000 comments worth,) I utilized an online comment exporter which scraped the comment data from the threads and packaged each thread into a spreadsheet. I quickly realized that the discourse present in the small comment sections of the posts by both Sierra Club and the Environmental Defense Fund nearly entirely lacked identifiable far-right discourse, whereas a brief pilot study prior had demonstrated that it would be present in the news organizations. I eliminated the two environmental organizations due to this, leaving Fox News and Breitbart as the Facebook pages of analysis. I then systematically downsized my sample. Both organizations covered the so-called “Great Texas Freeze” (Fox News: 11 posts, Breitbart: 14 posts) and the COP26 (Fox News: 8 posts, Breitbart: 15 posts) significantly more than the wildfires combined (Fox News: 5 overall [all just about the Dixie fire], Breitbart: 5 overall). Given the differences in coverage, I selected four threads from each site’s page: two dealing with the Texas winter storm (one regarding human deaths, one about the scale of the outages), one dealing with the Dixie fire specifically (an article discussing the size of the fire), and one regarding the COP26 (discussing perceived hypocrisy by world leaders attending the event.) I then identified patterns in the threads which allowed the deconstruction of the arguments and other discursive strategies which far-right ecologists use to proselytize their politics on Facebook.

- For Telegram, I also focused on the calendar year 2021, though my approach was somewhat different. In the preliminary research that I had conducted, there was effectively no discussion around current events such as recent natural disasters or policy discussions in the channels I accessed. Rather, the discourse there is based in theory or spiritualism. The preliminary research I had done on Facebook, where the comments often have some sort relation to current events, no matter how tenuous, using it as a springboard for their arguments.

As such, I decided to take data from these channels for the duration of the calendar year 2021, rather than any specific timeframe within that. As these selected channels have significantly less overall activity than the large Facebook comment sections, I was able to observe the wider discourse over time and spot the recurring themes and rhetoric.

- Overall, there tend to be three types of public Telegram channels or chats which are used. The first (which for simplicity I will refer to throughout as ‘Type A’) are chats which allow any members of the chat to post content in whichever form they so choose (a normal text-based message, a message cross-posted from other channels, video, pictures, audio clips, etc.) Users can also reply to messages or react with emojis. Any post in these public groups can also be forwarded to other users who are not in the group or cross-posted to other groups entirely. From the user’s perspective, Type A channels function analogously to a group chat on other major platforms such as WhatsApp, Signal, Discord, or iMessage.

- The second channel type (Type B) only allows moderators of a channel to post, normally under the channel name, but also allows anyone who is subscribed to said channel to comment on the post. The content originally posted can still be the same as in Type A, and the comments can also be any sort of content with the exception of cross-posts. Within comment sections, users can still reply to the original post or to other users in the same comment section. Any post or comment can be forwarded or cross-posted to other individuals or groups which allow these types of posts. Overall, the user experience is most similar to that of a Facebook page for an organization.

- The third and final type (Type C) is the most strictly controlled of the channels. Only the moderators are allowed to post, again normally under the channel name. No comments are allowed from anyone who is subscribed to the channel, though some still allow emoji













reactions.<sup>69</sup> Posts can still be forwarded to those not subscribed or cross-posted to other channels. These Type C channels function most similarly to a blog with no comment section.

The channels which I collected data from are listed below, shown as stylized in Telegram. Subscriber counts, name stylization, and activity status are listed as they were as of 20.4.22.

- “Hyperborean Radio” (active, 2,332 subscribers)
- “New England Nationalists” (active, 2,404 subscribers)
- “AVE VICTORIA” (active, 108 members)
- “Cascadia IV 🌲” (active, 2,199 subscribers)
- “NATURE IS MY CHURCH” (active, 2,651 subscribers)
- “🌿 Cascadia Rising 🌿” (active, 424 subscribers)
- “YecoFash PropagandaY” (active, 2,613 subscribers)
- “⚡ HYNTERBOREA ⚡” (active, 587 subscribers)
- “Revolt Through Tradition” (active, 2,763 subscribers)
- “🌲🌲 Eco Gang 🌲🌲” (active, 2,852 subscribers)
- “Luddite Resistance 🌲” (inactive, 963 subscribers)
- “🌲 PineKvlt 🌲” (semi-active, 2,016 subscribers)
- “JOIN: @HailTotalCollapse” (inactive, 1,325 subscribers)
- “The American Spirit” (active, 723 subscribers)
- “z THE ECO FASCIFIST z” (active, 1,558 subscribers)

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<sup>69</sup> I decided to put channels which only allow emoji reactions together with those which do not because post reactions alone do not contribute a significant amount to the discourse.

With the exception of Revolt Through Tradition, which I had known of prior to beginning research, I found the remainder of these first by searching for “eco fascist,” “pine tree,” and related terms in Telegram’s general search bar. From there I found several channels. After joining them, I found links to additional channels, quite a few of which appear here. Of the 15 channels which were initially considered candidates for analysis, there was one Type A chat, five Type B channels, and nine Type C channels. Once I selected these channels for potential analysis, I reduced the population of channels for deep analysis and discussion. It became clear during the search that several of the channels, while using primarily English and often referencing American individuals, groups, events, or landscapes, were not administered by people who lived in the United States. Others lacked the amount of textual ecologically relevant content which I had been seeking, either lacking specific ecological or nature discourse, relying much more heavily on aesthetics rather than text, or having lost a significant amount of data as many older cross-posts had originated on pages which had been banned prior to my research beginning. I used a combination of the search function in the individual chat or channel along with manual scrolling and screenshotting of relevant data. While tedious, through this I was able to narrow my selection to five chats which are the most relevant to this research: AVE VICTORIA,  **Cascadia Rising** ,   Eco Gang  , Revolt Through Tradition, and Hyperborean Radio. I selected these five channels as they embody different distinct elements of contemporary far right ecological discourse. The five final chats which were selected consist of one Type A (AVE VICTORIA,) one Type B ( **Cascadia Rising** ) and three Type C (  Eco Gang  , Revolt Through Tradition, and Hyperborean Radio.) The type of chat had no bearing on its selection, rather the richness of relevant content provided was the determining factor. Some background of each channel will be discussed in the chapter on

Telegram. With the collected data, I used the DHA to analyze the relevant texts I found on both Facebook and Telegram and determined how their far-right ecological discourses are constructed, where the discourses overlap, and where they differ.

### Limitations

There are a few limitations that I feel are necessary to discuss, some self-imposed and some out of my control.

The self-imposed limitations are timeframe of the study, mediums, and textual focus. As for timeframe, I decided specifically on 2021 because it is recent enough that finding the data will be relatively easier than older data, as it is more likely that user profiles, comments, posts, channels, and pages will still be extant. Additionally, in 2021 there were a significant number of climate related events affecting the United States which were newsworthy, particularly the COP26, Texas winter blackout, and larger than normal wildfires on the West Coast which I used as the basis for my Facebook research, among others. Regarding mediums of research, I decided to focus solely on social media as I believed it was going to have the most content available to me rather than speeches, posters, stickers, or individual news or small fringe websites, especially as this movement does not yet appear to be completely cohesive. Social media does allow for people to more easily find and create spaces which cater to specific ideas and ideologies. I explained earlier why I chose Facebook and Telegram specifically, but there were plenty of other potential candidates such as Twitter, Instagram, Parler, Gab, Odysee, Minds, YouTube, 4Chan, and Reddit, in addition to other more obscure forums as well. These all could potentially host relevant content, but Facebook and Telegram are two of the most accessible and popular platforms in use in the United States. For this thesis, it would be potentially overwhelming to

have to sift through those additional sources, even if some of them have a minuscule userbase in comparison to Facebook or Telegram. In addition, sites like Parler require significantly more personal information than I feel comfortable giving at this time, and 4Chan's threads are normally deleted quite quickly, sometimes in just a few hours. The focus on textual data as opposed to videos, aesthetics of image macros,<sup>70</sup> or audio clips also inevitably means that some highly relevant data will not be included. However, again I need to be able to demarcate what I will and will not look at for the sake of the feasibility of the thesis.

There is one large but double faceted limitation that is out of my control: the deletion of data by outside sources. Both Facebook and Telegram have terms and conditions policies which when violated can lead to the banning and/or deletion of comments, posts, pages, and user profiles. Most social media platforms do something similar. Facebook does appear to be more strictly moderated than Telegram, but both will delete content, pages, and user profiles which violate their policies. This deletion can come from either Facebook's or Telegram's moderation or administration itself, or individual page or chat moderators who will delete content which violates either official platform policy or the group rules of the page or chat. Additionally, it is always possible for the user to delete their comments, posts, or entire profile. This means that potential data has already been lost and more can be deleted at any time, and there is not really any recourse to regain it. I have done what I could to mitigate this, such as saving logs, taking screenshots, and backing up data, but none of these methods are able to recover already lost data.

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<sup>70</sup> There are a couple of exceptions to this, being images I found on Telegram which are primarily comprised of text. Other visual elements of the image macros are not analyzed in depth, solely the textual elements. I included these because often the text which appears in the image does not appear elsewhere in the chat but is extremely relevant to the research.



# Part Two: Analysis

## Chapter Four: Facebook

(Plates in Appendix I)

Facebook is the best-known social media platform in existence. The Facebook pages that were looked at belong to right-wing American news organizations. All are public pages which have comment sections open to the public, but only allow posts from the moderator(s) of the page. Thus, these are broadly like the Type B chats I discussed in respect to Telegram. At the same time, the widespread use of Facebook in the United States, combined with Facebook's (and at times the individual pages') considerably stricter moderation policy compared to Telegram, may shift the discourses on the platform.

The Facebook pages which were selected for analysis were, as previously mentioned, Fox News and Breitbart, two very well-known and widely followed American news organizations where people with far-right beliefs publish articles with clear political biases. Both organizations are infamous for being two of the platforms favored by President Donald Trump and his associates and are the origin of much of the widely spread disinformation in the United States in the last several years<sup>71</sup>. They represent the increasingly radicalized “mainstream” of the current incarnation of the Republican Party, and thus the majority of self-identified conservatives in the United States, with nearly 23 million<sup>72</sup> likes between them. As such, views expressed in published pieces do to an extent reflect the general attitude of American conservatives on said issues. It is well known that American conservatives are generally skeptical of climate change, if

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<sup>71</sup> Matt Motta, Dominik Stecula, and Christina Farhart, “How Right-Leaning Media Coverage of Covid-19 Facilitated the Spread of Misinformation in the Early Stages of the Pandemic in the U.S.,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 53, no. 2 (January 2020): pp. 335-342, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0008423920000396>.

<sup>72</sup> It should be assumed that there is significant overlap in the followers of these pages, and by no means is everyone who follows either of these pages either an American or a supporter.

not fully denialist; environmental regulations are seen as making American businesses uncompetitive internationally and restricting individual liberty. As such, Republicans are generally unsupportive of legislation and other environmental movements, such as the Paris Climate Accords (which the Trump administration infamously left and the Biden administration later rejoined), the Green New Deal or activist groups like Extinction Rebellion. Opposition to these environmental stances has been a notable part of the ongoing so-called “culture war” prominent in contemporary US political and cultural discourse for over a decade.<sup>73</sup> Moore and Roberts offer two possible reasons for this denialism: funding by corporate interests which have an economic interest in environmentally harmful industries, and a disdain for causes perceived as “cosmopolitan.”<sup>74</sup> These tendencies are then reinforced by far-right media such as Fox News and Breitbart. On the surface, this may appear diametrically opposed to the entire idea of far right ecologism. In reality, they are still engaging in the politics of nature, but are using a different approach, which will be elaborated on below. The eight comment sections which were selected for analysis help to demonstrate this.

As previously stated, I selected four comment sections from each page: two each regarding the so-called “Great Texas Freeze” winter storm of February 2021, one each discussing deaths, and the other discussing the scale of the electricity issues: one each on the 2021 Dixie wildfire in California regarding the size of the fire, and one each on the COP26 of November 2021 centering on perceived hypocrisy by those attending. It is important to note that the majority of the 39,498 comments in all of the sections had, at best, an extremely tenuous relation to far-right ecologism. There were many comments admonishing the current federal administration for a

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<sup>73</sup> Andrew John Hoffman, “Climate Science as Culture War,” *SSRN Electronic Journal* 10, no. 4 (June 2012), <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2944200>.

<sup>74</sup> Moore and Roberts, *The Rise of Ecofascism*, 52.

plethora of reasons, often unrelated to the ecological, climate, or natural aspects of the articles. There were also plenty of users in these sections who were not on the political far-right but rather appeared to be more aligned with the Democratic Party based on the often-disparaging language they used to describe conservative voters and figures such as Donald Trump. As these were irrelevant to the analysis conducted, I will be dismissing these comments. Unless otherwise specified, all quotes will be direct and *sic*.

I identified several content-related *topoi* which are employed in the discourse: the *topos* of danger (if there are specific dangers, then one should do something about it,)<sup>75</sup> the *topos* of Christian belief (if something happened, then it is in line with Christian theology as Christianity is true and God is all powerful, and humans cannot change God's will,) the *topos* of reality (because reality is as it is, a specific action/decision should be performed/made,)<sup>76</sup> the *topos* of uselessness (if one can anticipate that the predicted consequences of a decision will not occur, then the decision has to be rejected,)<sup>77</sup> the *topos* of burden (if a person, an institution or country is burdened by specific problems, one should act in order to diminish them,)<sup>78</sup> and the *topos* of elite hypocrisy (because the actions of elites are hypocritical, the issues they advocate for or work on are suspicious.)

These *topoi* are often used in conjunction with one another simultaneously. Arguments draw on several different *topoi* to make their point to the audience. Some of these *topoi* are also very easily related and are used in flexible ways. For each of the three topics, there are two discursive themes which I always analyzed, and if applicable, at least one other topic: the discourses around

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid

<sup>76</sup> Wodak, *The Politics of Fear*, 76.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid

<sup>78</sup> Ibid

climate change skepticism/denialism (as that has rather infamously been the narrative much of the mainstream American right has advocated for in some way<sup>79</sup>) along with the religious Christian discourses that are directly related to the topic which are present (dismissing any prayers or common phrases such as “God bless...” or “Thank God for...”) I began with the so-called Great Texas Freeze.

## 4.1 Great Texas Freeze

(Appendix I plates I.I-I.IV)

The fatal Texas winter storm of February 2021 did create a significant amount of discourse on far-right media outlets. The unusually powerful storm caused a near complete failure of the Texas power grid, which is notable for being separate from the two other grids which serve the remainder of the continental US in order to avoid federal regulations.<sup>80</sup> The lack of these federal regulations meant that unlike the other grids, the Texas grid had not been winterized, leading to the storm causing widespread power failures.<sup>81</sup> By Texas’ estimate, this killed 246 people.<sup>82</sup> Blame for the power grid’s failure was pointed in multiple directions by various individuals and groups. I selected four articles on this subject. This was the largest segment of the data I collected, with the comments here numbering 16,841 of the 20,769 overall. Two were from Breitbart, on posts linking to the articles titled “*Texas ERCOT CEO Gave No Timeline on When Power Would Be Restored*” (posted 18 February, 1,208 comments) and “*Texas Winter Storm Claims Two Dozen Lives, More Deaths Expected*” (posted 21 February, 1,451 comments.) The

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<sup>79</sup> Viala-Gaudefroy “Why Is Climate Scepticism so Successful in the United States?”

<sup>80</sup> Kate Galbraith, “Texplainer: Why Does Texas Have Its Own Power Grid?,” The Texas Tribune (The Texas Tribune, February 8, 2011), <https://www.texastribune.org/2011/02/08/texplainer-why-does-texas-have-its-own-power-grid/>.

<sup>81</sup> Rachel Monroe, “Why Texas's Power Grid Still Hasn't Been Fixed,” The New Yorker, February 9, 2022, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/letter-from-the-southwest/why-texas-power-grid-still-hasnt-been-fixed>.

<sup>82</sup> Svitek, “Texas Puts Final Estimate of Winter Storm Death Toll at 246.”

two from Fox News were posts linking to articles titled “‘Unprecedented’ Texas winter storm leaves 2M without power amid frigid temperatures” (posted 15 February, 1,628 comments) and “Texas reeling from extreme winter weather as another major storm is heading east” (posted 18 February, 12,554 comments.)

A recurring theme in the discourse around this event is climate change skepticism and denialism. The language used in denialism is varied, thus I searched for three more general terms which are often seen in discussions around it. Below is a table which shows how many times each phrase was used.

Table I, Texas Climate Change Words	
Word/phrase	Uses
Global warming	345
Climate change	254
Weather	758
Total	1,357
<i>Sources: Facebook pages of Fox News<sup>83</sup>, Breitbart<sup>84</sup></i>	

As mentioned prior, by no means are these discourses used solely by people on the far right in these comment sections, nor are these necessarily the dominant discourses in all of the

<sup>83</sup> Fox News, “An unusually harsh winter storm,” Facebook, February 15, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/FoxNews/posts/10160390462921336>;

Fox News, “Hundreds of thousands of Texans,” Facebook, February 18, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/FoxNews/posts/10160400740741336>

<sup>84</sup> Breitbart, “The historic Texas winter storm,” Facebook, February 21, 2021 <https://www.facebook.com/Breitbart/posts/10167164478835354>;

Breitbart, “Texas update,” Facebook, February 18, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/Breitbart/posts/10167146706155354>

comment sections. However, it is still prevalent enough in these comment sections that it is worth analyzing. Below is a small selection of relevant comments (all sic.)

Table II, Texas Climate Change Texts	
“What happened to the threat of global warming Washington?” <sup>85</sup>	Breitbart
“Texas never has this kind of weather, therefore they are not geared for it. Spare me the BS on global climate change, this was a freak storm, these natural occurrences have been happening for centuries” <sup>86</sup>	Breitbart
“stupid ....climate change bs bs ...especially fake American ZIONIST devil...kill gates” <sup>87</sup>	Breitbart
“Wally Jean Medeiros That’s because you’re avoiding the FACTS Global Warming is FALSE, it’s PROPAGANDA” <sup>88</sup>	Fox
“Anita Winter Shoulda th out about that.. JUST SHOW’s GOD IS IN CONTROL OF THE WEATHER.. man will never solve this mystery.. their ‘ green energy’ is all a farce.. nothing but a ‘get rich scheme’..” <sup>89</sup>	Fox
“That global warming is a bummer, it can cause you to freeze to death...” <sup>90</sup>	Fox
<i>Sources: Facebook pages of Fox News,<sup>91</sup> Breitbart<sup>92</sup></i>	

<sup>85</sup> Jim Lewis, February 21, 2021, 3:31 AM CET, comment on Breitbart, “Texas winter storm.”

<sup>86</sup> Lawrence Rosenthal, February 21, 2021, 5:10 PM CET, comment on Breitbart, “Texas winter storm.”

<sup>87</sup> Radek Lorek, February 18, 2021, 4:04 AM CET, comment on Breitbart, “Texas update”

<sup>88</sup> James Bowers, February 19, 2021, 5:36 AM CET, comment on Fox News, “Hundreds of thousands of Texans.”

<sup>89</sup> Pat Ray, February 18, 2021, 9:56 PM CET, comment on Fox News, “Hundreds of thousands of Texans.”

<sup>90</sup> Lou Sdunek, February 15, 2021, 3:59 PM CET, comment on Fox News “An unusually harsh winter storm.”

<sup>91</sup> Fox News, “An unusually harsh winter storm,” Facebook, February 15, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/FoxNews/posts/10160390462921336>;

Fox News, “Hundreds of thousands of Texans,” Facebook, February 18, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/FoxNews/posts/10160400740741336>

<sup>92</sup> Breitbart, “The historic Texas winter storm,” Facebook, February 21, 2021 <https://www.facebook.com/Breitbart/posts/10167164478835354>;

As is demonstrated, this denialism present through all the comment threads relies on applications of the various *topoi*. The denialism is present in the “trend” (climate change isn’t occurring) and “attribution” (it isn’t humans causing it) forms as described by Moore and Roberts.<sup>93</sup> The first comment in the chart relies on the *topoi* of danger, uselessness, and reality, shaped by casting doubt on the current federal government’s acceptance of climate change, specifically using the now-outdated and inaccurate term “global warming.” If “global warming” and the world getting hotter is the issue, then why did a powerful winter storm descend on a part of the country that has extremely mild winters? Clearly the danger isn’t there, and the push for green energy solutions is useless.

For one, this particular hang up on the phrase “global warming” is clear throughout. In the four comment sections, the phrase appears 345 times, usually used to argue the skeptical or denialist point, as demonstrated by the other two selected comments which use the term “global warming.” The third comment utilizes the *topoi* of reality and uselessness slightly differently than the first; they dismiss “global warming” entirely as false propaganda and anyone who believes in it as “avoiding the facts.” It can also clearly be implied that blaming the event on “global warming” is useless as it cannot be the cause of the storm since it doesn’t exist. A very sharp dichotomy is drawn between “global warming” and reality here, with no possibility left for any concessions. The sixth comment is more similar to the first, again utilizing the *topoi* of danger, uselessness, and reality, in addition to the *topos* of opposites<sup>94</sup>. The reality is that (global) warming and freezing are opposites, and thus since people are freezing to death, global warming doesn’t pose any danger, and it can be seen that the author is implying that it is useless to try to

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<sup>93</sup> Moore and Roberts, *The Rise of Ecofascism*, 52.

<sup>94</sup> Wodak, *The Politics of Fear*, 75.

combat something nonexistent.

However, the denialism is not always hung up on the exact phrasing of the concept. While some of the comments do use “climate change” instead of “global warming,” the overarching theme is still that of climate change denialism. The three selected comments using that phrase demonstrate variations on this denialist point of view. The second comment on the table utilizes the *topoi* of danger, reality, and burden. The author begins by acknowledging that Texas was unprepared for the storm because they do not normally experience such severe winter weather. This then is followed by denialism. There was undeniably a burden caused by the “freak” storm on Texas’ infrastructure, but it was not from the “BS” of “climate change.” In the author’s view, the reality is the (very real) danger that was posed to Texas was due to “these natural occurrences which have been happening for centuries,” an outlier of an event, which caused the “freak storm.” From this, we can easily assume that the author does not believe that another event of this type will affect Texas again. It was a one time “freak” ordeal, part of the ongoing “natural occurrences” of the climate. Moving on to the third comment on the table, this is utilizing the *topoi* of danger, reality, Christian belief, and burden. Firstly, the author’s stated reality is quite different from the other comments which have been analyzed up to this point. It is similar in that they too are denying climate change, but they are using vastly different justification. They make no appeals towards nature or simple dismissal of climate change. They claim the true danger lies in what can be interpreted as Bill Gates, as denoted by the “kill gates” segment. This is an especially interesting comment as it appears to fall in line with the QAnon conspiracy theory which is currently massively popular in far-right wing circles.<sup>95</sup> The belief in “satanic pedophile

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<sup>95</sup> David Smith, “Belief in QAnon Has Strengthened in US since Trump Was Voted out, Study Finds,” The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, February 24, 2022), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/feb/23/qanon-believers-increased-america-study->



cult of elites” secretly controlling the country for their own nefarious ends is seen by adherents of QAnon as by far the most pressing issue facing the country today. Bill Gates is often one of the elites who is singled out as being a part of this. Additionally, Bill Gates is one of the most public figures who is pushing for climate change solutions, having coincidentally published a book on just this in early February of 2021, just as the winter storm was affecting Texas.<sup>96</sup> He has also often been targeted by far right conspiracies in the past, so it is unsurprising to see him used in this context.<sup>97</sup> Across the four articles, there are 15 comments which directly or indirectly mention conspiracies of this sort related to Bill Gates specifically, ranging from his alleged “depopulation agenda”<sup>98</sup> to plans funded by him that will disrupt the sun in some fashion<sup>99</sup>. This QAnon belief in “satanic” pedophiles does predicate an assumed belief in some branch of Christianity, and thus the *topos* of Christian belief, though it is not said outright. However, other elements of the comment can lead us towards that conclusion. Outside of the reference to Bill Gates, there is another significant clue which does point towards QAnon: the use of “ZIONIST.” By itself, the word “Zionist” would not necessarily imply a belief in this conspiracy. However, QAnon does have significant antisemitic elements, as discussed by the Anti-Defamation

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finds.

<sup>96</sup> Bill Gates, “My New Climate Book Is Finally Here,” gatesnotes.com, February 14, 2021, <https://www.gatesnotes.com/Energy/My-new-climate-book-is-finally-here>.

<sup>97</sup> Rachel E. Greenspan, “How Bill Gates Became a Favorite Target of Far-Right Conspiracy Theorists,” Insider (Insider, February 26, 2021), <https://www.insider.com/bill-gates-climate-change-block-sun-conspiracy-theory-fake-texas-snow-2021>.

<sup>98</sup> Medea Sulamanidze, “Disinformation about the Vaccination of Bill Gates' Children, Depopulation, and Chubais,” mythdetector.ge, December 21, 2021, <https://mythdetector.ge/en/disinformation-about-the-vaccination-of-bill-gates-children-depopulation-and-chubais/>.

<sup>99</sup> Jason Murdock, “Fact Check: Is Bill Gates Trying to Block the Sun?,” Newsweek (Newsweek, March 2, 2021), <https://www.newsweek.com/fact-check-bill-gates-block-sun-conspiracy-theory-scopex-1573108>.

League.<sup>100</sup> Additionally, while not strictly in the purview of QAnon itself, there are adherents who believe in the white supremacist “Zionist Occupation Government” (or ZOG as often shortened) conspiracy. As the Anti-Defamation League says, this phrase “reflects the common white supremacist belief that the U.S. government is controlled by Jews.”<sup>101</sup> As these conspiracies do exist in very similar spaces, it is far from out of the realm of possibility that this crossed into QAnon thinking. All these elements combined do point us towards QAnon, or at minimum similar conspiratorial thinking.

This does bring us back to the *topoi* being used in this comment. Those who are involved with the so-called ZOG are a danger and a burden to both America and the American people, in both a physical and spiritual sense. Thus, they must be fought against and killed, in order to free America from their agenda. Finally, the fifth comment in the table utilizes the *topoi* of Christian belief, and reality. This one is quite clear on the surface. To the author, God (presumably in this context the Christian interpretation of God) is all powerful and is alone responsible for the weather, and how God is able to manipulate it is a mystery. Humans will never be able to understand how it truly works, and thus, anyone attempting to change the weather (or climate) is only trying to get rich by selling solutions to a problem which does not exist. The *topoi* of Christian belief and reality are closely intertwined here, what the author said is a matter of fact to them, no room for interpretation. Therefore, those who are trying to solve these problems they perceive are doing it out of attempting to enrich themselves and fool others into believing the lies which aren’t believed by those spreading them.

In parallel with the debates around climate skepticism and denialism, there also exist

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<sup>100</sup> “Qanon’s Antisemitism and What Comes Next,” ADL, September 24, 2020, <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/qanons-antisemitism-and-what-comes-next>.

<sup>101</sup> “ZOG,” ADL, May 6, 2016, <https://www.adl.org/resources/hate-symbol/zog>.

discussions about green energy and politics outside of the rather explicit skeptical/denialist statements, specifically the reliability of renewable energy technologies versus fossil fuel reliant ones, and by extension the much-discussed Green New Deal. Below is a table showing the number of times each relevant phrase was used across the four documents.

Table III, Texas Green Energy Words	
Word/phrase	Uses
Green energy	234
Green New Deal	161
Green new	8 (which were not Green New Deal)
Wind power	60
Windmills	221
Wind mills	38
Solar	352
Turbines	433
Fossil	187
Total	1,694
<i>Sources: Facebook pages of Fox News,<sup>102</sup> Breitbart<sup>103</sup></i>	

<sup>102</sup> Fox News, “An unusually harsh winter storm,” Facebook, February 15, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/FoxNews/posts/10160390462921336>;

Fox News, “Hundreds of thousands of Texans,” Facebook, February 18, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/FoxNews/posts/10160400740741336>

<sup>103</sup> Breitbart, “The historic Texas winter storm,” Facebook, February 21, 2021 <https://www.facebook.com/Breitbart/posts/10167164478835354>;

As previously mentioned, while these discourses are in no way the majority of what was represented in the comment sections, discussions around these ideas were very much present. While some instances of the usage of these terms are by non-far rightists, many of them are. Below is a selection of comments which display this language in use (all sic.)

Table IV Texas Green Energy Texts	
David Hawxhurst the left wants the country using solar and wind, no fossil fuel. Texas green new disaster is an example. Besides, coal and natural gas are cleaner than wind and solar. <sup>104</sup>	Breitbart
Why don't they put wind mills around the white house and solar panels on top if they work so well? <sup>105</sup>	Breitbart
Well texas you get what you vote for!!! Why the hell would you put these animal killing expensive inefficient windmills up in the first place!!! Hard lesson but get your freedom and liberty back before its too late <sup>106</sup>	Fox
Umm wind mill power fell below 5% output due to frozen blades and ice and snow covered solar panels can not function so.....keep your green new disaster <sup>107</sup>	Fox
Let this be a lesson to all who want the Green New Deal! Windmills, and Solar panels don't work well in snowy, freezing winter! They are covered in snow and they freeze up and don't move! So they don't produce electricity! <sup>108</sup>	Breitbart
Y'all need to look at the bigger picture. This was a manipulated storm to push the green new deal ( Green Energy). <sup>109</sup>	Breitbart
Green energy kills birds, people and other living things <sup>110</sup>	Fox

<sup>104</sup> Irene Camp, February 21, 2021, 3:52 AM CET, comment on Breitbart, “Texas winter storm.”

<sup>105</sup> Roger Hobbs, February 27, 2021, 2:47 AM CET, comment on Breitbart, “Texas winter storm.”

<sup>106</sup> Corrine Bradley, February 18, 2021, 5:23 AM CET, comment on Fox News, “Hundreds of thousands of Texans.”

<sup>107</sup> Holly Mae Williams, February 18, 2021, 3:53 PM CET, comment on Fox News, “Hundreds of thousands of Texans.”

<sup>108</sup> John Brewton, February 21, 2021, 1:43 AM CET, comment on Breitbart, “Texas winter storm.”

<sup>109</sup> Johnny Cole, February 21, 2021, 2:04 AM CET, comment on Breitbart, “Texas winter storm.”

<sup>110</sup> Buzz Schiffert, February 18, 2021, 3:34 PM CET, comment on Fox News, “Hundreds of thousands of Texans.”

Oh thank god they have wind turbines for their electric and heat so those people don't have to suffer turning up their gas furnaces and being warm by polluting the earth,oh wait the turbines all froze up ??????? Never mind <sup>111</sup>	Fox
<i>Sources: Facebook pages of Fox News,<sup>112</sup> Breitbart<sup>113</sup></i>	

We can see that the first comment in the table uses the *topoi* of danger, reality, uselessness, and burden in relation to this. The *topos* of danger is used here in a political sense. The author frames the presence of green energy technologies in Texas as the fault of the (political) left in the United States, a position portrayed as dangerous. It is a well-known and widely used precedent throughout the history of far-right movements that the political left (regardless of how left-wing they truly are<sup>114</sup>) is perceived as an existential danger to the movement and the nation (and all the implications attached.) The current far right formations in the United States are not notably different in that respect. The author also utilizes the formal *topos* of opposites, creating a dichotomy where the left wants solar and wind energy, whereas the (unnamed but assumed) political right wants fossil fuel energy. They refer to the Green New Deal as the “green new disaster,” referencing how renewable energy technologies failed. The author also asserts that coal and natural gas are cleaner sources of energy than wind and solar power. This is not elaborated

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<sup>111</sup> Mike Melko, February 16, 2021, 6:42 AM CET, comment on Fox News “An unusually harsh winter storm.”

<sup>112</sup> Fox News, “An unusually harsh winter storm,” Facebook, February 15, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/FoxNews/posts/10160390462921336>;

Fox News, “Hundreds of thousands of Texans,” Facebook, February 18, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/FoxNews/posts/10160400740741336>

<sup>113</sup> Breitbart, “The historic Texas winter storm,” Facebook, February 21, 2021 <https://www.facebook.com/Breitbart/posts/10167164478835354>;

Breitbart, “Texas update,” Facebook, February 18, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/Breitbart/posts/10167146706155354>

<sup>114</sup> This discrepancy is displayed well here, as the “left” (in the global sense of the word) does not exist as a true political force in the United States. However, moderates and progressives are still assigned the same label as communists and anarchists by far-right groups.

upon elsewhere, but the author appears to be referencing the alleged advances in “clean coal” technologies and the debate around the true positive and negative impacts of natural gas in energy applications.<sup>115</sup> Overall, the author is framing the left and its policies as a danger to the nation. The *topoi* of uselessness and burden are clearest in the phrase “green new disaster,” as it is framing the referenced Green New Deal as both a useless endeavor and one which caused a considerable burden to the nation. Coal and natural gas are presented as the solution. This argument is enveloped in the *topos* of reality, as this comment is describing the author’s viewpoint on the situation. The fourth and fifth comments will be discussed as one, as they use the same *topoi* in similar ways. Both use the *topoi* of reality, uselessness, and burden. Both authors lament the uselessness of windmills and solar panels in winter weather as was experienced in Texas, and portray the reliance on them as a burden on the people. Both frame it as related to the Green New Deal, a glimpse into potential consequences of its adoption. The fourth comment portrays it as “disaster” in policy. The sixth comment is different in nature. It utilizes the *topoi* of danger and reality. Unlike most of the other comments analyzed so far, this one is significantly more conspiratorial in nature. They are asserting that the people are not looking at the “big picture,” missing the perceived reality; those who wish to implement policies like the Green New Deal and create green energy infrastructure also have the power to manipulate the weather, and are doing so to convince people of its necessity. Weather controlling conspiracies are not new. The most prolific origin of the theory of weather control comes from the 24-year long US military experiment, the High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program (HAARP for short), which was conducted on a remote military base in Alaska to research the

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<sup>115</sup> Ivan Penn, “The next Energy Battle: Renewables vs. Natural Gas,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, July 6, 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/06/business/energy-environment/renewable-energy-natural-gas.html>.

ionosphere.<sup>116</sup>

Conspiracy theorists have long hypothesized that the research there was more nefarious in nature, with weather control being only one of the theories surrounding its intended use.<sup>117</sup> In the four comment sections, HAARP is mentioned by name nine times, with several others making references to it. While no longer used by the military, the facility is still managed by the University of Alaska Fairbanks.<sup>118</sup> Without further context, I cannot say for certain that this author is referencing HAARP. Regardless of the specificities, it is clear that the author sees this weather manipulation as dangerous, as it will allow the elites the support they need to enact their apparent agenda. The storm itself is seen as emblematic of a bigger issue.

Finally, we move on to the discourses which are founded in Christianity. While significantly smaller in number than the prior themes, these do represent a pervasive belief within this segment of the far right's interaction with nature politics (all sic.)

Table V, Texas Christian Texts	
Feli Jordan yep. I agree. A lot of this is Bible Prophecy. <sup>119</sup>	Fox
"Too many are seeking comfort in a way that is leading them to sin and their souls are not prepared to meet Me... As the winter winds blow forth, the snow will come and cities and towns will not be seen as a great cold will come that has not plagued mankind before, and will not cease for a great period of time. China will push forward making a greater presence upon America as the change of power and currency begins to come forth." —August 18th, 2011 <sup>120</sup>	Fox

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<sup>116</sup> Geoff Brumfiel, "Bye-Bye to the Home of a Favorite Internet Conspiracy Theory," NPR (NPR, June 10, 2014), <https://www.npr.org/2014/06/10/319539712/bye-bye-to-the-home-of-a-favorite-internet-conspiracy-theory>.

<sup>117</sup> Jerry E. Smith, *HAARP: The Ultimate Weapon of the Conspiracy*, 2nd ed. (Kempton, IL: Adventures Unlimited Press, 1999).

<sup>118</sup> "National Science Foundation Funds Creation of Research Observatory at Gakona," HAARP, accessed May 27, 2022, <https://haarp.gi.alaska.edu/>.

<sup>119</sup> Rueann Marras, February 18, 2021, 4:52 PM CET, comment on Fox News, "Hundreds of thousands of Texans."

<sup>120</sup> Mateus Do Vale, February 18, 2021, 7:56 PM CET, comment on Fox News, "Hundreds of thousands of Texans."

We need fossil fuels, he needs to put the pipeline people back to work and keep GAS AND OIL PLUS COAL WORKERS IN JOBS, GOD WILL TAKE CARE OF THE CLIMATE AND CHANGE IT WHEN HE WANTS <sup>121</sup>	Breitbart
I'm pretty sure God is taking credit! He decides everything! <sup>122</sup>	Breitbart
Erik Stainer I'm not begging for federal assistance excuse me and quite frankly I think if we succeed we can throw a bunch of these Californians out of this country excuse me state but we'll see what God has in store because this is a cleansing That's what all this snow and everything is about it's a cleansing <sup>123</sup>	Fox
Just goes to show you that GOD IS IN CONTROL OF THE AND THAT IS CLIMATE. His power and think PEOPLE need to read their BIBLES. Now Bill GATES think we're not suppose to eat meat. Guess where that came from? GOD these PEOPLE have gone insane. And if God wants it to freeze in Texas it will. Climate change is RIDICULOUS. <sup>124</sup>	Fox
<i>Sources: Facebook pages of Fox News,<sup>125</sup> Breitbart<sup>126</sup></i>	

All of these comments rely heavily on the *topoi* of Christian belief and reality at minimum. These all portray some sort of belief in God. Given context and language used, it appears to be one of the Christian interpretations of God. God is seen as omnipotent and is often explicitly referenced as being responsible for either the climate or the storm. The authors of these comments are portraying God's power in the world as a matter of reality, something that cannot be debated or influenced by the actions of humanity. This too is utilizing the denialism forms of

<sup>121</sup> John McGary, February 21, 2021, 1:42 AM CET, comment on Breitbart, "Texas winter storm."

<sup>122</sup> Colleen Ihrke, February 21, 2021, 6:52 AM CET, comment on Breitbart, "Texas winter storm."

<sup>123</sup> Laura Hendrix, February 18, 2021, 5:31 PM CET, comment on Fox News, "Hundreds of thousands of Texans."

<sup>124</sup> Dianna Berghefer, February 18, 2021, 4:10 PM CET, comment on Fox News, "Hundreds of thousands of Texans."

<sup>125</sup> Fox News, "Hundreds of thousands of Texans," Facebook, February 18, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/FoxNews/posts/10160400740741336>

<sup>126</sup> Breitbart, "The historic Texas winter storm," Facebook, February 21, 2021 <https://www.facebook.com/Breitbart/posts/10167164478835354>;

Breitbart, "Texas update," Facebook, February 18, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/Breitbart/posts/10167146706155354>



trend denialism and attribution denialism by claiming that God alone is in control of the weather or climate.<sup>127</sup>

The first and second post on the table discuss this event as fulfilling prophecy, but in different ways. The first references recent weather-related events as part of “Bible prophecy.” It is unclear which Biblical prophecy the author is referencing. The closest may be from Revelation 11:18:

*“And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.”*<sup>128</sup>

The increasingly destructive weather events around the world could be interpreted as a fulfillment of this prophecy. The second is referencing a quote from a group called Countdown to the Kingdom, which consists of Catholics who link current events and the prophecies in the Book of Revelation. They also reference contemporary people (“seers”) who claim to have had prophetic visions or been spoken to by holy apparitions, whether or not the Catholic Church has officially “recognized” them.<sup>129</sup> This quote appears to have been said to one of the “seers” they post about, a woman named Jennifer.<sup>130</sup> This is claimed to have been said to her by Jesus as a warning that punishment would come in the form of severe winter weather, one of four similar quotes which warn of severe cold. One can see how someone who believes this could link this

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<sup>127</sup> Moore and Roberts, *The Rise of Ecofascism*, 52.

<sup>128</sup> *The King James Bible, The King James Bible* (Project Gutenberg, 1989), <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/10,4816>.

<sup>129</sup> “Home,” Countdown to the Kingdom, January 13, 2022, <https://www.countdowntothekingdom.com/>.

<sup>130</sup> “A Cold Warning,” Countdown to the Kingdom, January 9, 2021, <https://www.countdowntothekingdom.com/a-cold-warning/>.

warning to the unprecedented winter storm in Texas as emblematic of this “great cold.” This second comment also utilizes the *topos* of danger, in that this weather is coming as punishment to the people for their behavior, an affront to Jesus. Neither of these utilize climate skepticism or denialism in the way which the prior comments had (trend denialism,) but rather they reject that the climate is changing due to humans (attribution denialism,) but rather God’s will, as a fulfillment of the prophecy of Revelation. The third post on the table utilizes the *topos* of burden in addition to Christian belief and reality. The Christian belief aspect is the clearest. God is all powerful and will “change” the climate when he wants. Combined with the first part of the comment emphasizing the need to put those in the fossil fuel industry back to work, the clear implication being made here is that climate change should not be a concern as God will “take care” of it. In the context in which this is posted, by extension we can see the author perceives the reliance on renewable energy sources as a burden on society, and that fossil fuel-based energies are a more realistic solution. This extends beyond the then-current events in Texas. The use of “back to work” and “keep....in jobs” shows in their reality, the perceived disruption that green energy policies have wrought on the fossil fuel industry is a burden on the American labor force and energy economy. The fourth, fifth, and sixth again reaffirm that God is in control of the climate in their reality. “He decides everything,” “we’ll see what God has in store because this is a cleansing,” “if God wants it to freeze in Texas it will,” all place responsibility for the event on God and God’s will. The tone of the fourth and fifth comments reads as excited for this shift in weather, as though this storm is God’s righteous punishment for sins committed by Texas. The fourth comment is vague regarding which sins are being committed, though the fifth is a reply to a series of other comments, in which the Green New Deal is blamed for the power outages and calls for people to start looking at “what ifs” of the disadvantages it will allegedly bring. The

*topos* of burden is used, with Californians as the burden. The author believes that if Texas succeeds in not adopting renewable energy technologies, then the Californians will leave, and Texas will be “cleansed.” Californians are singled out as they are perceived as having strong liberal sympathies, and in recent years many have been leaving California and settling in states like Texas which have lower costs of living.<sup>131</sup> This trend has caused concern among conservative Texans. Therefore, God is portrayed as having sent this storm to cause changes which would lead the monolithic Californians to leave Texas (or “the country.”) The sixth comment again rejects climate change as a human caused phenomenon, and it rather something that is completely in control of God. This storm is framed as an example of God’s power, and this is a sign for people to return to reading their Bibles. Interestingly, Bill Gates again appears here as an opponent, as he did in a prior text, though it focuses on a different aspect of his climate activism. The implication is Bill Gates is an enemy of Texans as Texas is the largest producer of beef in the US,<sup>132</sup> and Gates has advocated for a shift to synthetic beef.<sup>133</sup> The decimation of the beef industry would greatly impact Texas’ economy.

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<sup>131</sup> Texas Tribune Staff, “Watch: How Californians Are Diversifying Texas - and Could Change Its Political Landscape,” The Texas Tribune (The Texas Tribune, February 3, 2022), <https://www.texastribune.org/2022/02/02/californians-in-texas/>.

<sup>132</sup> “More Cows than People: America's Beef Capital of the World – in Pictures,” The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, March 7, 2020), <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/gallery/2020/mar/07/more-cows-than-people-americas-beef-capital-of-the-world-in-pictures>.

<sup>133</sup> James Temple, “Bill Gates: Rich Nations Should Shift Entirely to Synthetic Beef,” MIT Technology Review (MIT Technology Review, February 23, 2021), <https://www.technologyreview.com/2021/02/14/1018296/bill-gates-climate-change-beef-trees-microsoft/>.

## 4.2 Dixie Fire

(Appendix I plates I.V and I.VI)

While not as devastating as the 2020 season, the California wildfire season of 2021 was still incredibly destructive. There were 8,835 incidents of various sizes, burning a total of 2,568,498 acres (~1,039,616 hectares,) destroying 3,629 structures, and causing three human and an unknown number of animal fatalities.<sup>134</sup> The most important of these fires, the Dixie fire, enveloped 963,309 acres (~389,837 hectares,) destroyed 1,329 structures, killed one person, and lasted from 31 July-25 October.<sup>135</sup> The Dixie fire is most notable for being the first of two wildfires ever recorded to fully cross the Sierra Nevada mountain range. This is a worrying new development as the mountains were long considered too wet to be at serious risk of wildfires.<sup>136</sup> Due to its sheer size, this was one of the fires which was discussed by far-right media outlets. Of the three analyzed events, this one had the least discourse surrounding it, with only 548 comments between the two selected articles: Breitbart's "*PHOTOS: Dixie Fire Now Second-largest Wildfire in California History*" (posted 9 August, 280 comments) and Fox News' "*EVACUATIONS UNDERWAY: Nation's largest wildfire shifts towards California community*" (posted 17 August, 268 comments.)

As skepticism and denialism can be quite broadly discussed, I initially searched for the listed three phrases. The table below shows how many times each word appeared in these comments.

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<sup>134</sup> California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), "2021 Incident Archive," Cal Fire Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, accessed May 27, 2022, <https://www.fire.ca.gov/incidents/2021/>.

<sup>135</sup> "Dixie Fire Incident," California Fire Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

<sup>136</sup> Mojtaba Sadegh, John Abatzoglou, and Mohammad Reza Alizadeh, "Western Fires Are Burning Higher in the Mountains and at Unprecedented Rates as the Climate Warms," *The Conversation*, September 13, 2021, <https://theconversation.com/western-fires-are-burning-higher-in-the-mountains-and-at-unprecedented-rates-as-the-climate-warms-167706>.

Table VI, Dixie Fire Climate Change Words	
Word/phrase	Uses
Global warming	16
Climate change	28
Fire	74
Total	118
<i>Sources: Facebook pages of Fox News<sup>137</sup> and Breitbart.<sup>138</sup></i>	

Overall, these do not necessarily represent the dominant discourses present in the comment sections, because as previously mentioned, many of the comments do not engage with the politics of nature. Nevertheless, there is still engagement with the politics of nature, as some relevant comments below illustrate (all sic.)

Table VII, Dixie Fire Climate Change Texts	
Piss poor marxist management + leftist arson attacks = climate change. <sup>139</sup>	Breitbart
If they build dams and create more reservoirs, and clean the Forrest of overgrowth to reduce fire how would they ever be able to convince people that there is drought and fires caused by climate change? <sup>140</sup>	Breitbart
Trish Borowski you sure it's not due to the crackpot professor from some college in CA that intentionally set this fire instead? <sup>141</sup>	Fox
Elwood Faught NONE of these tree huggers ever show up to fight the fires or do any clean up after a fire,cause NO ONE IS PAYING to hug a tree!!! <sup>142</sup>	Fox

<sup>137</sup> Fox News, “The Dixie Fire is the largest,” Facebook, August 17, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/FoxNews/posts/10160922815141336>

<sup>138</sup> Breitbart, “The Dixie Fire,” Facebook, August 9, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/Breitbart/posts/10167996395170354>

<sup>139</sup> OC Oak, August 9, 2021, 2:33 AM CET, comment on Breitbart, “The Dixie Fire.”

<sup>140</sup> Build Alpine, August 9, 2021, 9:44 PM CET, comment on Breitbart, “The Dixie Fire.”

<sup>141</sup> Brian Flynn, August 17, 2021, 7:30 PM CET, comment on Fox News, “The Dixie Fire is the largest.”

<sup>142</sup> Twilla Arias, August 17, 2021, 10:39 PM CET, comment on Fox News, “The Dixie Fire is the largest.”

Sources: Facebook pages of Fox News <sup>143</sup> and Breitbart. <sup>144</sup>	
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A variety of *topoi* are engaged simultaneously to craft arguments. Trend denialism is present.<sup>145</sup> The first comment employs the *topoi* of danger, reality, uselessness, and burden. The author of this comment has an inarguably negative view of Marxism and the political left, as they refer to any management done by Marxists as “piss poor” and portray leftists as arsonists. This is overgeneralized and fallacious. As of the wildfire, there was only one self-proclaimed leftist who held office at the state level.<sup>146</sup> However, this tendency to refer to liberals and leftists as the same is extremely common in contemporary American right-wing discourse. Calling leftists as arsonists or otherwise violent is another long-standing stereotype in political discourse.<sup>147</sup> Additionally, referring to one’s opponents as simultaneously weak or useless (“piss poor”) and strong or dangerous (“arsonist”) is one of the 14 points of fascism as described in Umberto Eco’s seminal essay, *Ur-Fascism*.<sup>148</sup> In this instance both “management” and “arson” are referencing to two specific occurrences. Regarding management, much of the discourse in the comment section is discussing the alleged lack of proper forest management which greatly aided the spread of the fire, a topic which will be returned to below. The arsonist comment originates from two probable sources: either the persistent rumor that “antifa” was responsible for starting various wildfires<sup>149</sup>,

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<sup>143</sup> Fox News, “The Dixie Fire is the largest,” Facebook, August 17, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/FoxNews/posts/10160922815141336>

<sup>144</sup> Breitbart, “The Dixie Fire,” Facebook, August 9, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/Breitbart/posts/10167996395170354>

<sup>145</sup> Moore and Roberts, *The Rise of Ecofascism*, 52.

<sup>146</sup> “Special Newsletter: Election Update,” Silicon Valley DSA, November 19, 2020, <https://siliconvalleydsa.org/2020/11/15/2020-11-15-newsletter/>.

<sup>147</sup> Pietro Di Paola, *The Knights Errant of Anarchy: London and the Italian Anarchist Diaspora* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 62.

<sup>148</sup> Umberto Eco, “UR-Fascism: Umberto Eco,” *The New York Review of Books*, June 22, 1995, <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1995/06/22/ur-fascism/>.

<sup>149</sup> Steven C. Beda, “Perspective | Scapegoating Antifa for Starting Wildfires Distracts from the Real Causes,” *The Washington Post* (WP Company, September 18, 2020),

or the indictment of a former professor who was charged with intentionally setting wildfires.<sup>150</sup> Additionally, there is a long-standing strain of anti-intellectualism in right-wing online communities.<sup>151</sup> This often manifests itself in accusations of professors indoctrinating their students with leftist beliefs.<sup>152</sup> The stereotype of the “dangerous leftist professor” is prevalent enough in far right online communities that the intended link is clear for others in that space. The author combines this notion of useless burdens of “piss poor Marxist management” and danger posed by “leftist arson” as being the true causes of climate change. Climate change itself is in a denialist frame, as it is being portrayed as the result of a combination of ineptitude and violence intending to trick people into believing this narrative.

This concept that climate change is a plot of the left is present in the third and fourth comments on the table. They are portrayed differently. The third comment engages the *topoi* of reality and danger. This is a reply to another comment which states that the fire began, in part, due to “global warming.”<sup>153</sup> This author is casting doubt on this, referencing the aforementioned indictment of the former professor. A more explicit connection between the “dangerous left” and academia is created. Regardless of guilt, the actions of the professor are portrayed as factual, dismissing any concerns about climate change. The fourth comment relies on the *topoi* of reality,

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<https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/09/18/scapegoating-antifa-starting-wildfires-distracts-real-causes/>.

<sup>150</sup> Christine Hauser, “Former Professor Is Indicted in 'Arson Spree' in California,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, November 19, 2021),

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/19/us/california-wildfires-gary-stephen-maynard.html>.

<sup>151</sup> Brandi Lawless and Kristen L. Cole, “Troll Tracking: Examining Rhetorical Circulation of Anti-Intellectual Ideologies in Right-Wing Media Attacks,” *Communication, Culture and Critique* 14, no. 1 (2021): pp. 149-165, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ccc/tcaa035>.

<sup>152</sup> “Are Left-Wing American Professors Indoctrinating Their Students?,” *The Economist* (The Economist Newspaper, January 9, 2020), <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2020/01/09/are-left-wing-american-professors-indoctrinating-their-students>.

<sup>153</sup> Trish Borowski, August 17, 2021, 7:25 PM CET, comment on Fox News, “The Dixie Fire is the largest.”

uselessness, burden, and elite hypocrisy. Written in reply to another comment accusing environmentalists of having ruined the state, the author of this comment expands upon it.<sup>154</sup> They accuse “tree huggers” of never assisting the firefighting or recovery efforts, as no one is paying them to “hug a tree.” In this context, it appears that the author believes that environmentalists are paid by elites to promote their “climate change agenda,” but will not engage in efforts to repair damage caused by forest fires. The environmentalists will not assist in actions which they should support, and instead are hampering efforts to manage the forests. The idea of forest mismanagement is present in the second comment, though again it is portrayed differently, as intentional mismanagement, opposed to the incompetent management inferred by the first comment. The second comment utilizes the *topos* of reality to frame the government of California as intentionally mismanaging forest resources to cause drought in the rest of the state and worsening the wildfires. These worsening droughts and more severe fires, in turn, can be used as evidence of climate change, allowing popular support for legislation to address it. The author frames this misallocation of resources as entirely intentional, by asking how the people can be convinced of climate change if the Californian government would manage the forest’s resources properly, as this proper management would solve these issues which climate change is accused of causing.

In the following the different utilizations of the allusions to the Bible and Christian theology are analyzed. The type of discourse present in these comments is somewhat different and more explicit compared to what was observed in the comments about Texas (all sic.)

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<sup>154</sup> Elwood Faught, August 17, 2021, 10:33 PM CET, comment on Fox News, “The Dixie Fire is the largest.”



Table VIII, Dixie Fire Christian Texts	
Praying for everyone effected by the fires 🙏 The one that are responsible for this God does not like evil he will that care of you <sup>155</sup>	Breitbart
Than been told how many times to clean up but thay won't so this could be God choice to burn them for there crimes against humanity <sup>156</sup>	Fox
Sodom and GOMORRAH BURNED TOO. <sup>157</sup>	Fox
We will face the same judgment because of our wickedness sodom didn't escape and neither will we 😞😞😞 <sup>158</sup>	Fox
if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. II Chronicles 7:14 NKJV <sup>159</sup>	Fox
<i>Sources: Facebook pages of Fox News<sup>160</sup> and Breitbart.<sup>161</sup></i>	

Similarly to the Christian-founded discourses around Texas, these also all utilize the *topoi* of Christian belief and reality. These comments all contain a particular notion of divine punishment dealt by God, evoking stories where God sends catastrophes to punish humanity. Critically, it appears at least several of the commenters are some form of Bible literalists, meaning they take the Bible as an accurate, literal record of historical events. The clearest references to these events are in the third and fourth comments, both of which directly reference the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and draw parallels between that story and California. Equating California with

<sup>155</sup> Wanda Duhon, August 9, 2021, 2:55 CET, comment on Breitbart, “The Dixie Fire.”

<sup>156</sup> DeWayne Hornbeck, August 17, 2021, 6:02 PM CET, comment on Fox News, “The Dixie Fire is the largest.”

<sup>157</sup> Christopher Mashburn, August 17, 2021, 5:09 PM CET, comment on Fox News, “The Dixie Fire is the largest.”

<sup>158</sup> Paula Gragg, August 17, 2021, 5:59 PM CET, comment on Fox News, “The Dixie Fire is the largest.”

<sup>159</sup> Joseph F Schroeder, August 17, 2021, 5:49 PM CET, comment on Fox News, “The Dixie Fire is the largest.”

<sup>160</sup> Fox News, “The Dixie Fire is the largest,” Facebook, August 17, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/FoxNews/posts/10160922815141336>

<sup>161</sup> Breitbart, “The Dixie Fire,” Facebook, August 9, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/Breitbart/posts/10167996395170354>

those biblical cities is not a new phenomenon in right wing discourse. As a prominent example, model and actor Fabio Lanzoni described downtown Los Angeles as “like Sodom and Gomorrah” in an interview with Fox News host Tucker Carlson in 2018.<sup>162</sup> The origin of this view of “sinful” California is, at least in part, a matter of politics. The state is often assumed to have far-left political leanings, a view echoed by right wing commentators.<sup>163</sup> The people of Sodom and Gomorrah were wicked, and God destroyed them with fire as divine punishment. California’s people, too, are wicked, and God is punishing them with fire. Whereas the third comment draws this parallel in a matter of fact fashion, the fourth comment laments this fate as unavoidable. Returning to the first comment, the author is also discussing divine punishment, though here is utilizing the *topos* of danger as well. “The one that are (sic) responsible for this God does not like evil he will that (sic, likely mistyped ‘take’) care of you.” This is referencing the recurring idea that the fires were set intentionally by someone who wanted to endanger others. At the same time, it contains a warning to the alleged arsonist, saying that divine judgement is inevitable. In the second comment, the author is framing the fires as a possible divine punishment for the wickedness of the people of California. California has been told repeatedly to “clean up” but has not. This “cleaning up” appears to refer to the political decisions in California which have led it to be equated to Sodom and Gomorrah in the past. Thus, they too will burn as punishment. The final comment differs slightly, though it still appears to be based in Biblical literalism. This quote from the Bible is referencing God’s response to King Solomon

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<sup>162</sup> Matthew Martinez, “Romance Cover Guy Fabio Condemns California as ‘Sodom and Gomorrah’ on Fox News,” Miami Herald, March 30, 2018, <https://www.miamiherald.com/article207437144.html>.

<sup>163</sup> Charles R. Kesler, “Opinion | California Has Become the Far Left Coast,” The Wall Street Journal (Dow Jones & Company, March 7, 2019), <https://www.wsj.com/articles/california-has-become-the-far-left-coast-11551917067>.

after he dedicates the new temple, in particular what the Israelites can invoke God to action.<sup>164</sup> Specifically, this verse is describing what God will do if they “humble themselves and pray” This author appears to be imploring the people to pray to God, for then these events will no longer occur and the land will be “healed.” In addition to the *topoi* of Christian belief and reality, the *topos* of danger is present. The fires are a danger to California and “the land,” but earnestly praying to God can reverse it. Overall, acceptance or even embrace of God’s wrath is present in the discourse.

### 4.3 COP26

(Appendix I plates I.VII and I.VIII)

The 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference, also referred to as the Conference of Parties 26, or COP26 for short, was hosted in Glasgow from 31 October-13 November 2021.<sup>165</sup> This conference was attended by world leaders including hundreds of heads of state, President Joe Biden among them. Pitched as a summit to “accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change,”<sup>166</sup> the conference concluded with the adoption of the Glasgow Climate Pact. Most significantly it is the first climate agreement which focuses on a reduction of reliance on coal specifically.<sup>167</sup> This was not without controversy. The original language was more aggressive, calling for coal usage to be “phased out.” India and other heavily coal reliant nations successfully petitioned to change

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<sup>164</sup> *The King James Bible*, 1,886-1,891.

<sup>165</sup> UN Climate Change Conference UK 2021, “UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) at the SEC – Glasgow 2021,” UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) at the SEC – Glasgow 2021, April 12, 2022, <https://ukcop26.org/>.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> Valerie Volcovici, Kate Abnett, and William James, “U.N. Climate Agreement Clinched after Late Drama over Coal,” Reuters (Thomson Reuters, November 14, 2021), <https://www.reuters.com/business/cop/un-climate-negotiators-go-into-overtime-save-15-celsius-goal-2021-11-13/>.

“phase out” to “phase down.”<sup>168</sup> This did upset delegates from other countries. In addition, around 100,000 people protested in Glasgow on 6 November, calling for more action against climate change.<sup>169</sup> As this was a major event which the sitting President attended, far right media outlets did provide some coverage of the event, especially early on. Between the two articles, I collected 3,380 comments: Breitbart’s *“Uproar as Glasgow COP26 Climate Conference Draws 400+ Private Jets”* (posted 3 November, 555 comments) and Fox News’ *“‘CLIMATE’ TALK: Biden’s 85-car motorcade ahead of summit shows libs are just lip-flapping: Boothe”* (posted 31 October, 2,825 comments.)

The discourse present in here has two major components: climate skepticism/denialism, and accusations of hypocrisy by leaders. These two are very often, though not always, intertwined in the data present. As such, I will focus on these as essentially one category. I searched these two comment sections for five key words and terms which are listed. Below is a table which displays the number of times each phrase appeared.

Table IX, COP26 Climate Change Words	
Word/phrase	Uses
Global warming	21
Climate change	144
Hypocrite	46
Hypocrisy	77
Biden	271

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> “COP26: Thousands March for Glasgow's Biggest Protest,” BBC News (BBC, November 6, 2021), <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-59185007>.

Total	559
<i>Sources: Facebook pages of Fox News<sup>170</sup> and Breitbart.<sup>171</sup></i>	

Below is a selection of relevant comments (all sic.)

Table X	
Climate change isn't real, the radical left is using it to push control on us.. <sup>172</sup>	Fox
Bradley Ceretti they want to take our fossil fuels away from us so they can control us. They only want the brainwashed ones to believe it's about Global warming. They want global alright. A one world global government, with a one world currency, religion and laws. Total, communistic control of the people is what they want. Oh and to DEPOPULATE <sup>173</sup> .	Breitbart
And this is just one proof it's never been about climate. They're using climate change as a venue to implement a much more sinister agenda. <sup>174</sup> (Joy Bosman, Pos. 2)	Breitbart
Etta Lornson Myers The left do jet in Gulf streams all over the world for Global warming meetings. Their carbon footprints are massive. They have diesel burning yachts, massive houses with several air conditioner compressors. Heated pools, vacation homes. Escalades, limos, hummers. All super large footprints. Its the truth. The only dividing if you open your eyes is CRT, white supremacy. Lincoln project just got caught dressing up as Nazis to divide virginia. If you believe in climate change practice what you preach. <sup>175</sup>	Fox
Climate change is for thee and not for me <sup>176</sup>	Breitbart
Aside from the ridiculous motorcade ... the irony of all this climate change BS ... Obama built a 25 million dollar mansion on Martha's Vineyard ... with no concern rising tides will total the place ... notwithstanding, buffoon Biden is seeking EU members to INCREASE their 'energy' supplies while decimating ours ... <sup>177</sup>	Fox

<sup>170</sup> Fox News, "The Republican Party," Facebook, October 31, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/FoxNews/posts/10161094335506336>

<sup>171</sup> Breitbart, "Rich Elites flew 400+ private jets," Facebook, November 3, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/Breitbart/posts/10168345444935354>

<sup>172</sup> Reliefvalve Matty, October 31, 2021, 6:58 PM CET, comment on Fox News, "The Republican Party."

<sup>173</sup> Terry Potter, November 3, 2021, 3:05 AM CET, comment on Breitbart, "Rich Elites."

<sup>174</sup> Joy Bosman, November 3, 2021, 2:23PM CET, comment on Breitbart, "Rich Elites."

<sup>175</sup> Kenneth Farrell, November 1, 2021, 7:58 AM CET, comment on Fox News, "The Republican Party."

<sup>176</sup> Mike Atkinson, November 3, 2021, 5:17 AM CET, comment on Breitbart, "Rich Elites."

<sup>177</sup> Geraldine Manno, October 31, 2021, 3:11 PM CET, comment on Fox News, "The

This farse of the COP 26 will turn people against any measures to combat something you cannot stop, slow down or change it will happen but we the ordinary people will be expected to pay for measures that will make some people very rich at the expense of the poorest in our society, the level of hypocrisy shown by so-called world leaders is unbelievable. <sup>178</sup>	Breitbart
<i>Sources: Facebook pages of Fox News<sup>179</sup> and Breitbart.<sup>180</sup></i>	

The difference in emphasis compared to the prior two events is clear, even with many of the same *topoi* engaged. Here the trend denialist form is present.<sup>181</sup> First, I analyzed the first three comments. These comments utilize the *topoi* of danger and reality. They are convinced the danger of the societal takeover is a legitimate possibility, and frame climate change policy as the vehicle through which this can occur. All identify the same actors attempting to orchestrate the perceived takeover; the first comment mentions the “radical left,” the second refers to “total, communistic control of the people,” and the second and third both use the ever-nebulous “they,” which in context means the “elites” attending the conference. The political left and the elites are portrayed as one force. They are pushing for climate change legislation as that will allow them to assert control over the people, framed similarly to how this was presented in both prior cases. The second comment does go into significantly more detail about the alleged plot, referring to the New World Order conspiracy theory.<sup>182</sup> The idea of the “elites” attempting to establish a singular totalitarian global government leading a singular global culture is an older conspiracy theory among the American far right dating back decades, which has found continued purchase

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Republican Party.”

<sup>178</sup> Henry Harry Wood, November 3, 2021, 11:59 AM CET, comment on Breitbart, “Rich Elites.”

<sup>179</sup> Fox News, “The Republican Party,” Facebook, October 31, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/FoxNews/posts/10161094335506336>

<sup>180</sup> Breitbart, “Rich Elites flew 400+ private jets,” Facebook, November 3, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/Breitbart/posts/10168345444935354>

<sup>181</sup> Moore and Roberts, *The Rise of Ecofascism*, 52.

<sup>182</sup> Michael Barkun, *Culture of Conspiracy Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014).

in the contemporary political landscape.<sup>183</sup> One of the aspects of this conspiracy is population control, which we can see referenced with “depopulate.” The word “depopulate” in particular also does possibly reference yet another conspiracy which is centered, in part, around Bill Gates and his alleged global population agenda. This has taken at least two forms. The first is in the form of vaccines which will allegedly cull the population.<sup>184</sup> The second is from his alleged attempts to block the sun to prevent global warming.<sup>185</sup> While neither have any truth behind them, both have spread in far-right communities. All of them completely reject climate change as reality, based at least in part on this conspiratorial thinking. The remainder of the comments use the *topos* of elite hypocrisy at minimum. The most straightforward of these is the fifth comment. This uses the *topos* of elite hypocrisy, as it is making a critique of world leaders who are traveling via private jets, with high emissions, to a conference on climate change. The author compares this to legislation and social pressure aimed at reducing emissions, which is being framed as directly impacting the ability of non-elites to engage in certain activities. The seventh comment is most similar to this. This utilizes the *topoi* of uselessness and burden along with elite hypocrisy. Portraying the conference as a “farse (farce)” casts doubt on the process, and breeds resentment in normal people who desire measures to stem climate change. Regardless, climate change is “something you cannot stop, slow down or change,” so any proposed measures to fight it are useless. However, these measures encouraged by the elite to enrich themselves, which they themselves do not believe in as made clear by their behavior, will still be implemented, and will place the biggest burden on the poor. This is portrayed as blatant hypocrisy. Attribution denialism is present. The fourth comment focuses on the hypocrisy of the elites and their

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid

<sup>184</sup> Sulamanidze, “Disinformation about the Vaccination of Bill Gates' Children.”

<sup>185</sup> Murdock, “Fact Check: Is Bill Gates Trying to Block the Sun?”

behavior compared to the policies which they advocate for. The *topos* of reality is relied on heavily in this comment. This is a reply to another commenter accusing Fox News of creating content with the intention of causing division, regardless of truth.<sup>186</sup> The author frames this hypocrisy comparing the actions of the “left” to the reality of the carbon footprint caused by these actions. They then pin other issues in the ongoing “culture war” between the right and left in the US as the source of division, refuting the claim Fox News is the source.<sup>187</sup>

The named elements of “CRT” (critical race theory) and “white supremacy” are two of the recent, persistent flashpoints of the ongoing debate. These are proposed as the true issues which are causing division in the US. The discourse concludes with emphasizing the hypocrisy of the elites attending the COP26 in ecologically harmful ways, demonstrating that these leftist elites do not “practice what (they) preach.” A harder denialist standpoint is present in the sixth comment. This is particularly interesting as it uses elite hypocrisy around environmental issues, both at the COP26 and outside of it, as justification. The behavior which is discussed is seen as running in opposition to the messaging and warnings of these figures. The *topos* of reality is also utilized here, demonstrating that despite the past and current environmental rhetoric of these figures, they themselves do not believe in it. Therefore, climate change is not the threat it is made out to be.

Next, a sample of the religiously founded discourses around the COP26 was analyzed. While again less prevalent than the more secular ideas, they remain a pervasive element of the discourse present in the ecological attitudes of the far right.

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<sup>186</sup> Etta Lornson Myers, November 1, 2021, 7:46 AM CET, comment on Fox News, “The Republican Party.”

<sup>187</sup> Jim Jones, “How Critical Race Theory Became Today's Defining Culture-War Issue,” The Hill (The Hill, June 21, 2021), <https://thehill.com/opinion/civil-rights/559398-how-critical-race-theory-became-todays-defining-culture-war-issue/>.



Table XI, COP26 Christian Texts	
Figures. Climate change is not real. It is a money and power grab. If the climate were to change it would be done by God and nobody could stop it. <sup>188</sup>	Fox
I believe the earth will last as long as God allows it to. <sup>189</sup>	Breitbart
God is changing the climate and that's the way it is. This planet will be a burnt cinder one day and there is nothing anyone can do about it. <sup>190</sup>	Breitbart
Come on people do you really believe humans can build something to control the heat the cold and the weather the hurricanes come on only God controls the climate it's like in the old testament of the Bible the people trying to build a tower to heaven get real people it takes God to control everything on earth man kind never will if so tell me one thing man can really control that's wright nothing at all only God <sup>191</sup>	Fox
<i>Sources: Facebook pages of Fox News<sup>192</sup> and Breitbart.<sup>193</sup></i>	

Here the comments demonstrate two distinct combinations of Christian belief with climate change. Two of them accept the climate is changing or will one day change, the other two deny that it is changing, but all of them agree that the only force that could be capable of such a thing would be God. Both the second and third comments believe that the climate is currently changing or one day will. Where the second comment relies only on the *topoi* of Christian belief and reality, the third also incorporates the *topos* of uselessness. The second comment is straightforward, simply regurgitating the often-presented belief that God is all powerful and will destroy the earth when he wants. This does not outright reject climate change, either as a possibility or as something which is currently in progress. Eventually, God will destroy the

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<sup>188</sup> Rick Taaka, October 31, 2021, 8:22 PM CET, comment on Fox News, “The Republican Party.”

<sup>189</sup> Jeff Hardy, November 3, 2021, 3:13 AM CET, comment on Breitbart, “Rich Elites.”

<sup>190</sup> Bill Speer, November 3, 2021, 8:22 PM CET, comment on Breitbart, “Rich Elites.”

<sup>191</sup> Roger Green, November 3, 2021, 1:55 AM CET, comment on Fox News, “The Republican Party.”

<sup>192</sup> Fox News, “The Republican Party,” Facebook, October 31, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/FoxNews/posts/10161094335506336>

<sup>193</sup> Breitbart, “Rich Elites flew 400+ private jets,” Facebook, November 3, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/Breitbart/posts/10168345444935354>

world, as it only exists because God allows it to. The third comment does accept climate change is occurring, though due to God. It is an inevitable process that would be a useless endeavor for humanity to attempt to halt. Referring to the planet as a “burnt cinder” does relate to the Bible. In particular, it appears to be referencing one of the passages from the prophetic final book of the Bible, Revelation. Revelation 8 makes several references to fire.

“8:7 The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up. 8:8 And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood;”<sup>194</sup>

With this context, one can see how this would turn the earth into a cinder, assuming the author believes the Bible to be a prophetic text and the events of Revelation to one day occur. Assuming this is correct, then the author may see climate change as a sign that the end of days is near, something inevitable, and seemingly something to be embraced. The climate denialism displayed in the first and fourth comments comes from an apparent dismissal of current weather and climate patterns as unusual. The first comment again repeats the characterization of climate change as simply some sort of ploy for money and power, and asserts that God alone has the power to change the climate. Until that is proven, the author will remain unconvinced of climate change. The final comment again asserts the ultimate power of God, but also draws a direct comparison between attempts to fight climate change and the story of the Tower of Babel from the Book of Genesis 11.<sup>195</sup> Effectively, the author is saying that if humans attempt to interfere with one of God’s actions, it will end with God demonstrating power over them. This can be interpreted as a case of the *topos* of uselessness, as God will always reign supreme over the acts

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<sup>194</sup> *The King James Bible*, 4,860.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid*, 48-49.

of humans.

## Chapter Five: Telegram

(Plates in Appendix II)

Before the analysis of the Telegram channels, it is necessary to provide background to each channel to summarize the general differences in content between them. I selected five channels as I believe that they post sufficiently different content to one another which might demonstrate in detail various expressions of contemporary American far right ecologism present on Telegram.

AVE VICTORIA (<https://t.me/aveviktoriachannel>, Type A, will be referred to as “AV” from here, active from the very end of November 2021 through the end of the year) is the breakout chat from another channel which was considered, NATURE IS MY CHURCH (<https://t.me/returntonatureandbeauty>, Type B.). NATURE IS MY CHURCH is a far-right apparel company, created by a Swedish immigrant to the United States.<sup>196</sup> This person is the administrator of both the AV and NATURE IS MY CHURCH and posts in the AV chat with both accounts. The content and symbolism used on the apparel ranges from generally right-wing ecologist to quite explicitly white supremacist and neo-Nazi iconography. I decided to utilize the AV chat rather than NATURE IS MY CHURCH because these chats are linked: the comments in the replies to the posts of NATURE IS MY CHURCH all appear in AV, as all posts from there are automatically posted in AV. However, AV also has other posts and discussions which are unrelated as much of the content is not a reply to a post. Despite only having been created at the end of November 2021, a considerable amount of content was produced in that time. This is a discussion-oriented chat, making the genre quite different from the other Telegram channels.

Both  **Cascadia Rising**  (<https://t.me/CascadiaRising>, Type B, will be referred to

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<sup>196</sup> “AVE VICTORIA”, message to AVE VICTORIA, December 15

as “CR” from here, active throughout 2021) and 🌲🌲 Eco Gang 🌲🌲 (<https://t.me/EcoFascist>, Type C, will be referred to as “EG” from here, variably active throughout 2021) are broadly similar channels, posting a wide variety of content, from both political and apolitical memes, to far right literature, videos, audio clips, links to other channels, and so on. These both reflect some of the more direct applications of the politics of nature compared to the other far right ecologist chats. Whereas AV does at times deal with immediate material and political concerns and issues of the general far right (such as debates around COVID vaccines and public schooling versus home schooling) and both Revolt Through Tradition and Hyperborean Radio tend to engage in nature politics in a much more abstract sense, both CR and EG engage in current environmental discourse in some form. This will be expanded upon below, but unlike other channels, both post about environmental concerns such as pollution and global warming, whereas other channels do not discuss these topics, especially not directly. Additionally, they both do post content which discusses accelerationism and “the collapse,” considerably more directly than other mentioned channels do. I will discuss these channels together, as they are by far the most similar of the channels discussed here content-wise, and while not perfectly identical, they do closely complement one another.

Revolt Through Tradition (<https://t.me/RevoltThroughTradition>, Type C, will be referred to as “RTT” from here, active through the entirety of 2021) is an American organization which is by their own description a nationalist, identitarian, and lifestylist organization which seeks to create a metapolitical movement centered on balanced protection of nature and people, a strong basis in “tradition,” and an equally strong aversion to “modernity.” They have a particular focus on physical health and combat training. The Anti-Defamation League classifies them as a white supremacist group, and also links them to the rather better-known Rise Above Movement

(RAM), though they state that they are unsure if it is truly a separate group or more of a lifestyle brand created by Rise Above Movement's founder, Robert Rundo and his circle.<sup>197</sup> As a Type C chat of an organization which portrays itself as healthy, educated, and traditional, the content posted is generally presented in a more professional and polished fashion than much of the content in the other chats. Their content appears often in the form of quotes, either from noted right-wing figures (the particular influence of Julius Evola must be mentioned here) or quotes which serve to define their particular ideology and goals, often phrased as a call to action. Additionally, they post pictures edited with green-tinted filters of natural landscapes, "Western traditional" art, their members engaging in physical activity, or pictures of their propaganda or propaganda stickers in various locations. Their engagement with the politics of nature is somewhat vague, as they never lay out a specific plan of action. However, even if vague, their engagement with nature politics is important to their projected identity.

Hyperborean Radio (<https://t.me/hyperboreanradio>, Type C, will be referred to as "HR" from here, active through the entirety of 2021) is the accompanying Telegram channel to a podcast of the same name. This podcast discusses culture and so-called "Hyperborean spirituality."<sup>198</sup> This is a catch-all term used for various strands of European neopaganism. Based in Grand Rapids, Michigan,<sup>199</sup> and run by self-identified European pagans, the posts by the podcast hosts on Telegram are generally based on mythology and history, a blend of ancient and folk European as well as folk white American. As an example, they discuss how the mythology

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<sup>197</sup> "Rise above Movement (R.A.M.)," Anti-Defamation League, 2020, <https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/rise-above-movement-ram>.

<sup>198</sup> "The Future Is Bright by Hyperborean Radio (Uncensored)," Anchor, accessed May 14, 2022, <https://anchor.fm/hyperborean-radio/episodes/The-Future-is-Bright-evp925>.

<sup>199</sup> "Member Profile: Wylder Times: Blurb Books," Blurb, accessed May 15, 2022, <https://www.blurb.com/user/iknosp65>.

around the American folk character Paul Bunyan and his blue ox, Babe, is reminiscent of prior European pagan mythologies. They discuss the meaning of being “Hyperborean” at length and the connection between ethnic Europeans (including white Americans) and nature, particularly the bear and the forest.<sup>200</sup> They celebrate and project a mythicized traditional past where the “Hyperborean” people (broadly speaking, a romanticized and mythicized ideal of white Europeans living in northern forests) were not corrupted by the ever-nebulous and flexible “modernity,” which is characterized variously as Christianity, the “domestication” of the so-called Hyperborean’s “wild” spirit, and the separation of the “natural” world from the “supernatural.” They advocate for a return to this ideal state of being and consciousness; however, they do not only advocate, but are attempting to raise funds to create just such a community, named the “Wylder Homes Project.”<sup>201</sup>

I have identified various content-related *topoi* which are utilized in the texts which will be analyzed: the *topos* of nature (if an action or tendency is harmful to/supportive of ideals of nature or ‘the natural order’, it must be opposed/encouraged), *topos* of tradition (if an action or tendency is supportive of cultural traditions, then it should be pursued or supported and vice versa,) the *topos* of spirituality (if an action is in line with proper spiritual ideals then it must be undertaken), the *topos* of racialized strength (if this action or tendency strengthens white people, then it should be undertaken or pursued), the *topos* of danger (if there is specific danger, one should act against it/them,)<sup>202</sup> and the *topos* of history (history has shown specific actions have specific consequences, and one should perform or omit actions in certain situations

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<sup>200</sup> Hyperborean Radio (<https://t.me/hyperboreanradio>), “Bears.” Telegram message, February 9, 2021. <https://t.me/hyperboreanradio/3426>

<sup>201</sup> “Wylder Homes Project,” Wylder Homes Project, accessed May 3, 2022, <https://wylderhomesproject.life/>.

<sup>202</sup> Wodak, *The Politics of Fear*, 76.

accordingly.)<sup>203</sup> It is also important to note that unless otherwise specified, all quotes will be direct and *sic*.

As in the prior chapter, the utilization of these *topoi* rarely exists individually. Even the shortest statements generally use various *topoi* simultaneously, both explicit and latent, to communicate with their audience. It is possible to decipher these different elements through the proper contextualization of the various statements, from where we can decode the *topoi* at use. To begin, selected messages from AV are analyzed.

## 5.1 AVE VICTORIA

(Appendix II plate I.I)

An image macro posted on 29 December reads “Return to nature! There is no meaning to be found in concrete and steel.”<sup>204</sup> As I have discussed prior, this Type A chat is connected to another (not analyzed) Type B channel. This image macro has been posted by said channel. This message utilized the *topoi* of nature, tradition, and spiritualism. On a discursive level, what is meant by this? On the surface, the individual who wrote this has an aversion to urban locales, while preferring areas with less human presence. A deeper analysis reveals more. The phrase “return to nature” implies that urban environments are not the original environment of the audience. This does not appear to be meant on the individual level-after all, tens if not hundreds of millions of people who could serve as the potential audience have lived in urban areas for their entire lives. It is rather looking at human settlement from a much more traditional standpoint, where mass urbanization did not begin until the beginning of the Industrial

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> AVE VICTORIA (<https://t.me/aveviktoriachannel>), “Return to nature! There is no meaning to be found in concrete and steel.” Telegram message, December 29, 2021 (channel erased)



Revolution.<sup>205</sup> It implores the audience to return to an imaginary traditional way of being. In combination with the second sentence, this obviously implies a rejection of the modern and a yearning for the traditional. The spiritual element is also present here. “There is no meaning to be found in concrete and steel.” This meaning can most probably be interpreted on a spiritual level. Meaning cannot be found in concrete and steel, human crafted materials. The latent meaning is that (spiritual) meaning can be found in nature, in the world which isn’t crafted by humans. It transcends the meaningless world mankind and modernity have created, and calls on the reader to abandon it. It justifies this action by implying that the cure to the spiritual absence of modernity is a return to the traditional habitat of man. Another post is phrased somewhat differently but conveys the same arguments. An image macro posted on 9 December contains the text “Reject the concrete jungle, live in harmony with nature” with the caption “Nature is home 🌲” underneath. Applying the same *topoi* as the prior post, we see an almost identical argument. There is an aversion to the urban and, by extension, modernity in both, where they use ‘concrete’ as representative of the ‘unnatural’ urban world. They contrast this with the supposedly ‘natural’ world which is to be embraced. The usage of the word ‘harmony’ contains a spiritual element when used in conjunction with ‘nature.’ The usage of ‘home’ in the caption is also interesting: the author means ‘home’ in both the physical and spiritual sense. One who lives within ‘nature’ and is in ‘harmony’ with ‘nature’ is ‘home,’ whereas one who is living in the ‘concrete jungle’ cannot be living in ‘harmony’ with ‘nature,’ and thus is not ‘home.’ Using context of the other

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<sup>205</sup> In Western Europe, an estimated 21.4% of the population lived in urban areas circa 1800. By 1900, that had climbed to 40.6% and 75.3% by 2000. In Central Europe 4.3% were urbanized in 1800, 18.7% in 1900, and 60% in 2000. In the US, 6.1% were urbanized in 1800, 39.6% in 1900, 79.1% in 2000. See Kees Klein Goldewijk, Arthur Beusen, and Peter Janssen, “Long-Term Dynamic Modeling of Global Population and Built-up Area in a Spatially Explicit Way: Hyde 3.1,” *The Holocene* 20, no. 4 (2010): pp. 565-573, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959683609356587>, 568.

posts, the *topos* of tradition can be detected here, employed in the same way.

A recurring statement in this chat involves some inclusion of (at least part of) the phrase “Become self sufficient, starve the beast.”<sup>206</sup> During the brief window in 2021 which this chat existed, at least a fragment of this phrase appeared five times in various posts, either in plain text or on an image macro. The meaning of this text becomes clearer when applying the *topoi* of tradition, racialized strength, and danger. The most puzzling aspect here is the second half of the phrase, “starve the beast.” First, who or what is represented by the “beast,” and why is “starving” it desirable? Given the other context in this chat, particularly the aspects already discussed about returning to nature, the “beast” can act as a stand in for modern society. Modern society is framed as not only opposed, but dangerous, to tradition. Portraying a danger as a “beast” is an ancient metaphorical tool, as a “beast” can be dangerous to those around it. Modern society being portrayed as a threat to tradition, so the metaphor of the “beast” is apt. To decode “starve,” it makes the most sense to return to the beginning of the statement. “Become self sufficient” acts as a command, and engages the *topos* of racialized strength. Becoming self sufficient would imply some degree of retraction from modern society to and a return to a premodern, likely more traditional mode of existence. By returning to this mode of existence, there is less participation in modern society as one finds ways to circumvent it to meet their needs. This lesser degree of participation is portrayed as “starving” the “beast” of modernity. This becomes more clearly racialized when put into context with other discourse. A caption of an image in this chat from 28 November reads “Become self sufficient · Starve the beast and revolt against this degenerate and retarded modern world 🦁🦁.”<sup>207</sup> The new part of the phrase makes two references: to Italian

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<sup>206</sup> AVE VICTORIA (<https://t.me/aveviktoriachannel>), “Become self sufficient, starve the beast.” Telegram message, November 28, 2021 (channel erased).

<sup>207</sup> AVE VICTORIA (<https://t.me/aveviktoriachannel>), “Become self sufficient · Starve the

fascist philosopher Julius Evola, and more general far right discourse, particularly around the word “degenerate.” The clearest reference being made here is to Julius Evola’s influential 1934 book, *Revolt Against the Modern World*. This book combines “native European” spiritualism and traditionalist values and has become a popular book among this type of group<sup>208</sup>. It will be discussed in more detail later, but the specifically European outlook is what lends itself to racialization. With this further context, referencing a key work of European fascism, the racialization of “starving the beast” of modern society is clearer. To further emphasize this point, we only need to look at the word “degenerate.” As clear references to fascism have already been made in this statement, it is logical to look at how fascist movements have used this term. There are at least two clear possible origins. The first would remain with *Revolt Against the Modern World*, while the second originates with the Nazis. Evola laments the state of the then-modern world as a place of “spiritual and material degeneration.”<sup>209</sup> This has been caused by the modern world and its erosion of traditional politics, culture, morals, and society.<sup>210</sup> Evola calls for action against the modern world and a return to traditionalism. During the National Socialist regime, there was a revulsion for that perceived as “degenerate” as it damaged the strength and purity of the “Aryan.” This is perhaps most famously exemplified in the artistic sphere: the “Degenerate Art Exhibition” (*Die Ausstellung, Entartete Kunst*) of 1937.<sup>211</sup> This exhibit displayed confiscated works which were seen as offensive to the Party’s ideals. The art on display was of

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beast and revolt.” Telegram message, November 28, 2021 (channel erased).

<sup>208</sup> Julius Evola, *Revolt Against the Modern World*, trans. Guido Stucco (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions International, 1995)

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid*, xxix.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>211</sup> “V&A · 'Entartete Kunst': The Nazis' Inventory of 'Degenerate Art',” Victoria and Albert Museum, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/entartete-kunst-the-nazis-inventory-of-degenerate-art>.

various types of modernism, created by primarily (but not solely) German artists, many of them Jewish. This exhibition displayed that which was culturally wrong and “degenerate,” to be avoided and fought against by the Aryan. Regardless of origin, the word “degenerate” in this context cements utilization of the radicalized strength *topos*. The final analyzed post was posted on 29 December. It is a reply in an internal debate centered around religion, specifically Christianity in this space.

“Your religion killed white people who dared think for themselves, your religion chopped down our forests, mutilated newborns, married children and let beasts into our lands. You’re in the wrong channel if you support that.”<sup>212</sup>

The *topoi* of nature, danger, spiritualism, racialized strength, tradition, and history are all used simultaneously. The person who posted this well-received message identifies as a Nordic pagan. This acts as a list of alleged crimes committed by Christianity against ‘native Europeans.’ The first accusation of “killed white people who dared think for themselves” appears to be utilizing the danger, racialized strength, and history *topoi*. Danger is clear, as a force bringing death poses danger to the group. The history *topos* is engaged with “think for themselves.” This references the long history of conflict between Christians and others who refused to follow the religion. This could come from the persecution of pagans during Christianization campaigns throughout Europe,<sup>213</sup> or the later witch hunts by Christians<sup>214</sup>. Racialized strength is less physical in this case, but rather mental. This portrays some white people as willing to push back

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<sup>212</sup> “Fauna,” message to AVE VICTORIA, December 29, 2021

<sup>213</sup> Olof Sundqvist, “The Temple, the Tree, and the Well: A Topos or Cosmic Symbolism at Cultic Sites in Pre-Christian Northern Europe?,” in *Old Norse Mythology: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Pernille Hermann, Stephen A Mitchell, and Jens Peter Schjødt (Cambridge: Milman Parry collection of oral literature, 2017), pp. 258-303.

<sup>214</sup> Brian P. Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 4th ed. (London: Routledge, 2015).

against and question an imposed system. “Chopped down our forests” is using the *topoi* of nature, spiritualism, tradition, and danger. Nature is clear-on the base level, chopping down the forests is the destruction of the natural world. Spiritualism and tradition are intertwined. Many European pagan (and other indigenous) traditions had some form of spiritual connection to nature, famously in the form of sacred trees or groves.<sup>215</sup> During Christianization, these sacred groves were often destroyed to cement the dominance of the Christian faith.<sup>216</sup> The destruction of forests can also be seen as a metaphor of the destruction of the pre-Christian traditional cultural and spiritual world. The mutilation of newborns appears to be referencing the circumcision of infants which occurs in the United States and other countries with a high Christian population, though to a lesser extent.<sup>217</sup> Thus, it is using the *topos* of danger and tradition, as “mutilation” would imply an individual having received life altering injury from a dangerous situation, one which goes against the “tradition” of the (implied white) individual. The marriage of children may imply the widely known practice, especially among European nobility, to have married off their children when they were young for political gain, something which the Church sanctioned as they performed the wedding ceremonies.<sup>218</sup> This appears to be using the *topos* of tradition and history again, implying that child marriage in pre-Christian Europe was not sanctioned. Finally, “let beasts into our land” appears to be a dehumanizing metaphor for non-white immigration. In

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<sup>215</sup> Sarah A. Laird, “Trees, Forests, and Sacred Groves,” in *The Overstory Book: Cultivating Connections with Trees*, ed. Craig R. Elevation (Holualoa, HI: Permanent Agriculture Resources, 2004), pp. 30-34.

<sup>216</sup> Madhav Gadgil, “Sacred Groves: An Ancient Tradition of Nature Conservation,” *Scientific American* (Scientific American, December 1, 2018), <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/sacred-groves-an-ancient-tradition-of-nature-conservation/>.

<sup>217</sup> Kevan Wylie, *ABC of Sexual Health* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 101.

<sup>218</sup> Loretta A. Dolan, “Child Marriage in Sixteenth-Century Northern England: the Emotional Undertones in the Legal Narratives,” *Limina: A Journal of Historical and Cultural Studies* 20, no. 3 (2015).

the case of the United States, churches often provide services to immigrant communities and act as a social center for a given group.<sup>219</sup> Dehumanizing portrayals of immigrant groups is a common phenomenon in many nations around the world.<sup>220</sup> This is clearly engaging the *topos* of danger. As previously mentioned, the imagery of “the beast” is one which conjures images of a dangerous animal which poses a threat to others. The danger could be towards people or towards a culture or society. Combined, this quote is demonstrating that Christianity is opposed to the ideals of this group, and white Christians are, effectively, traitors.

## 5.2 Cascadia Rising and Eco Gang

(Appendix II plates II.II and II.III)

On 27 April, EG posted a GIF with a sketched outline of a green pine tree on a black background.<sup>221</sup> The text around the image reads “The pine tree is the symbol of our struggle. The symbol of acceleration. The symbol of Aryan resurgence.” Seemingly cryptic at first, the meaning becomes clearer in the proper context. Firstly, a description of far-right wing accelerationism is beneficial. As Lodenthal’s recent paper discusses, far-right accelerationism is a strategy which seeks “to exacerbate and speed up the race to socio-political-ecological collapse” often through the targeting of infrastructure.<sup>222</sup> The bringing of collapse is critical to create the conditions which will allow them to implement their ideology. While specificities can vary from group to group, broadly speaking, these groups wish to create a racially and culturally

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<sup>219</sup> Teresa Mathew, “How Houses of Worship Help Immigrants Adjust to America,” Bloomberg.com (Bloomberg, August 7, 2017), <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-08-07/how-religious-spaces-help-immigrants-adjust-to-america>.

<sup>220</sup> Stephen M. Utych, “How Dehumanization Influences Attitudes toward Immigrants,” *Political Research Quarterly* 71, no. 2 (May 2017): pp. 440-452, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912917744897>.

<sup>221</sup> Eco Gang (<https://t.me/EcoFascist>), “The pine tree.” Telegram message, April 27, 2021. <https://t.me/EcoFascist/1347>

<sup>222</sup> Michael Loadenthal, “Feral Fascists and Deep Green Guerrillas: Infrastructural Attack and Accelerationist Terror,” *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 15, no. 1 (February 27, 2022): pp. 169-208, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17539153.2022.2031129>, 169.

homogenous far right society. Accelerating socio-political-ecological collapse will more quickly bring about the opportunity for the creation of said society. It appears the message is applying the *topoi* of nature, danger, and racialized strength. The relevance of nature is clear though the direct adoption of the pine tree as a symbol. Of course, a pine tree is not inherently a political object, but it has been politicized in several potential layers. The tree was used on certain flags of American Navy ships during the War of Independence.<sup>223</sup> Often, these flags would read “An Appeal to Heaven.” In some far-right ecologist spaces, this exact flag can be seen.<sup>224</sup> Rebellion, independence and their connection to this flag are clear in this context. The other explanation brings is more esoteric. As will be analyzed in more depth later, there is a significant amount of discourse in these spaces which discusses Hyperborea. In short, Hyperborea is a land from Greek mythology which was located at the far north of the world.<sup>225</sup> The land there was believed to be populated by a legendary race of people called the Hyperboreans who were descended from gods and worshipped Apollo.<sup>226</sup> Pine trees are one of the plants which tends to dominate northern climates. As will be discussed in HR, “Hyperboreans” and “Aryans” are often interchangeable. Combining these traits of rebellion and racist ideals, one can see how the pine tree can serve as a symbol for such a movement. The *topos* of danger in this context comes from the aforementioned violent accelerationist tendencies, as this is being undertaken due to danger

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<sup>223</sup> "Maria", "The History of the Pine Tree Flags of the American Revolution," Gettysburg Flag Works Blog, November 11, 2019, <https://www.gettysburgflag.com/blog/the-story-behind-the-pine-tree-flags-of-the-american-revolution/>.

<sup>224</sup> Ardian Shajkovci, "Eco-Fascist 'Pine Tree Party' Growing as a Violent Extremism Threat - HS Today," Hstoday, September 27, 2020, <https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/eco-fascist-pine-tree-party-growing-as-a-violent-extremism-threat/>.

<sup>225</sup> Mark Cartwright, "Hyperborea," World History Encyclopedia (<https://www.worldhistory.org/#organization>, March 11, 2021), <https://www.worldhistory.org/Hyperborea/#:~:text=In%20Greek%20mythology%2C%20Hyperborea%20was,worshipped%20the%20sun%20god%20Apollo.>

<sup>226</sup> Ibid

posed by other outside groups. Racialized strength is clear in the last line of “Aryan resurgence.” This alludes to far-right ideas around revitalization of the people and the (racial) nation.<sup>227</sup> This revitalization can happen only through violent struggle. While there is no elaboration on how the world looks after this accelerationist terror, it is clear that it will be beneficial to the “Aryan.”

A CR message posted on 16 December reads “We are the north ☀ · the people of the sun ☀”<sup>228</sup> Above it, the text reads “North is home” with the *algiz* rune ᚿ<sup>229</sup> the sun cross ⊕<sup>230</sup>, both far right symbols. This references the mythical Hyperborea. As previously mentioned, the Ancient Greek conception of the Hyperboreans were a people who lived in the north and worshipped Apollo, the sun god of the Greek pantheon.<sup>231</sup> By adopting and emphasizing this Hyperborean identity (“We are...”) the author is utilizing the *topoi* of nature, spiritualism, and tradition. Nature and spiritualism are combined with the adoption of identity. The “Hyperborean” identity is tied to nature, as the mythical “Hyperboreans” are “the people of the north.” Becoming the “people of the sun” by worshipping the sun god even more closely links the spiritual and natural. The *topos* of tradition is being utilized here seemingly as a reminder. It is a call to remind the “Hyperborean” of their traditional roots, belonging to the north and the sun.

An EG post from 3 February reads “Nature don’t know equality.”<sup>232</sup> A related post from 23 November reads “Nature Is Fascist.”<sup>233</sup> The text is overlaid on images of nature, fire, and fascist

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<sup>227</sup> Roger Griffin, “Nazism as a Revitalization Movement,” *Modernism and Fascism*, 2007, pp. 250-278, [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230596122\\_10](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230596122_10).

<sup>228</sup> Cascadia Rising, (<https://t.me/CascadiaRising>), “We are the north.” Telegram message, December 16, 2021. <https://t.me/CascadiaRising/1165>

<sup>229</sup> “Life Rune,” ADL, July 20, 2016, <https://www.adl.org/resources/hate-symbol/life-rune>.

<sup>230</sup> “Celtic Cross,” ADL, August 29, 2016, <https://www.adl.org/resources/hate-symbol/celtic-cross>.

<sup>231</sup> Cartwright, “Hyperborea.”

<sup>232</sup> Eco Gang, (<https://t.me/EcoFascist>), “Nature don’t know equality.” Telegram message, February 3, 2021. <https://t.me/EcoFascist/1048>

<sup>233</sup> Eco Gang, (<https://t.me/EcoFascist>), “Nature Is Fascist.” Telegram message, November



symbolism, including the inverted *algiz* rune. These short statements nevertheless do create a complex argument which requires contextualization. Both utilize the *topoi* of nature and danger in similar ways. Both heavily rely on extremely rigid hierarchical ideas around the “natural order” of the world and the danger inherent in this order. It creates images of violence in nature, crafting a narrative where violence is the essence of nature itself. It simplifies ecosystems in the natural world to nothing more than competitions of blood, where those higher in the given hierarchy will prevail over those lower, and violence is used as a way to maintain that dominance. The rigid, violent hierarchy is interpreted as fascism. The authors are translating this interpretation of reality from the “natural” context to the “human.” Nature is dangerous, nature does not believe in equality, nature is violent, nature is a fascist. Ergo, to be in line with nature, the audience, too must be dangerous, not believe in equality, be violent, and ultimately, a fascist. Forgetting this is putting the audience at odds with the natural order of the world, and could be a weakness leading to their demise. Combining this with the previous discourses around returning to nature and nature being home see in AV only solidifies and expands the ideas driving this discourse.

### 5.3 Revolt Through Tradition

(Appendix II plate I.IV)

A message posted by RTT on 22 July reads “Reject the Modern World! Embrace Natural Order! Revolt Through Tradition!”<sup>234</sup> This uses the *topoi* of nature and tradition. On a base level, this series of exclamations reads as a disdain for modernity. The juxtaposition of “Modern World” and “Natural Order,” along with their opposed verbs of “reject” and “embrace” place

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23, 2021. <https://t.me/EcoFascist/1473>

<sup>234</sup> Revolt Through Tradition, (<https://t.me/RevoltThroughTradition>), “Reject the Modern World!” Telegram message, July 22, 2021. <https://t.me/RevoltThroughTradition/310>

these in opposition to one another. Therefore, one must be the opposite of the other. In this framing, modernity is not natural, but artificial. In some way modernity opposes the “natural order,” meaning the contemporary world is unbalanced. The way in which one can reject the modern and embrace the natural is to follow the third command, revolting through tradition. This aligns nature and tradition, implying that tradition follows the natural order properly. RTT’s rejection of the modern in favor of the traditional appears throughout the discourse present on the channel.

Another example appears on 6 August. It takes the form of a quote from Julius Evola’s work *Revolt Against the Modern World*.<sup>235</sup>

“America... has created a ‘civilization’ that represents an exact contradiction of the ancient European tradition. It has introduced the religion of praxis and productivity; it has put the quest for profit, great industrial production, and mechanical, visible, and quantitative achievements over any other interest. It has generated a soulless greatness of a purely technological and collective nature, lacking any background of transcendence inner light and true spirituality. America has [built a society where] man becomes a mere instrument of production and material productivity within a conformist social conglomerate”<sup>236</sup>

This quote, one of several which the page has posted, is utilizing the *topoi* of tradition, spirituality, and history to make this criticism of the state of then-modern American culture. It is portraying America as a nation fully centered on production and commodities. This singular focus has prevented the cultivation of a European-style civilizational spirit. To Evola, and by extension RTT, the lack of this spirit makes for a hollow civilization, where humans lack agency and soul, reduced to nothing but a part of the great commodity creating machinery. In this society, there is no value to be gained from culture, individuality, spiritual connection, or

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<sup>235</sup> Evola, *Revolt Against the Modern World*, 350.

<sup>236</sup> Revolt Through Tradition (<https://t.me/RevoltThroughTradition>), “America.” Telegram message, August 6, 2021, <https://t.me/RevoltThroughTradition/324>

tradition. This is expressed as “an exact contradiction of the ancient European tradition.” As Evola advocates for a return to tradition and spirituality, this is meant to be read as a warning of the eventual outcome of modernism. The pursuit of profit, industrial production, and technological achievement over all other goals will cause the spiritual and social degeneration of society. RTT posting this quote is bringing this critique into contemporary America, which is where the *topos* of history is applied. Nearly a century from when this was written, they still frame America as the same soulless modern society, a flaw that must be remedied by embracing spiritualism and European traditionalism. Without it, America is doomed to further culturally degeneration.

Another post made on 1 August takes a more direct approach to combatting “degeneration,” at least in one form.

There is no better sign of a failing spirit than an out-of-shape body. There are no excuses for not forging yourself into the best you can achieve. You have a duty to yourself and others to not fail for the sake of your community.<sup>237</sup>

This appeal to physical health appears to be using the *topoi* of spiritualism, danger, and racialized strength closely intertwined to make its argument. The spirit and the body are reflections of one another, and if a weak body is emblematic of a failing spiritual existence, a strong body is emblematic of a thriving spiritual existence. As a member of your community, you have an obligation to be strong physically and spiritually so they can rely on you. Failure to do this could put you or your community in physical or spiritual danger. The racialized aspect becomes clear when put into the greater context of the group. They are reliant on Western and European ideals and traditions, basing their ideal societal structure on what these prescribe. A

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<sup>237</sup> Revolt Through Tradition (<https://t.me/RevoltThroughTradition>), “There is no better sign.” Telegram message, August 1, 2021. <https://t.me/RevoltThroughTradition/320>

final example which reflects this was posted on 22 June.

While standing together with your people anything is possible. We must always strive for lasting culture, not quick shallow efforts. We must be a movement that is worth following, we must Revolt Through Tradition.<sup>238</sup>

The *topoi* of racialized strength and tradition are closely linked. By standing with “your” people, the audience can create lasting culture and lasting impacts. In the context of this channel, a community of “your people” would comprise of those with the same moral and spiritual convictions. This would create a solid base for a deep, lasting culture, a movement which must take the form of a cultural and spiritual revolt. Within the context of the group, it is implied that revolt would be based in ideas espoused by European traditionalists, a revolt which would take action to return to idealized European tradition and eliminate modernity and the unnatural issues it causes. This requires constant effort to pursue and maintain, an action which only a strong, principled group can do. Given the other context of the group, it can be assumed that the group in question is implied to be comprised of white people. The actions that they would undertake to create this traditionalist movement would be seen as an expression of collective, racialized strength. Multiculturalism and multiethnic communities are an aspect of contemporary life which is heavily associated with modernity.<sup>239</sup> Indeed, in another post which plainly (if vaguely) outlines RTT’s view of the world, they do mention “placing value on the preservation of distinct peoples.” The use of the word “distinct” implies that these peoples will be kept separate from one another. Later in the same message, they mention “distinct healthy cultures” as something

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<sup>238</sup> Revolt Through Tradition (<https://t.me/RevoltThroughTradition>), “While standing together with your people.” Telegram message, June 22, 2021. <https://t.me/RevoltThroughTradition/297>

<sup>239</sup> Maria Kuznetsova, “Modernity in Multicultural World of the 21st Century,” *International Journal of Research in Engineering, IT and Social Sciences* 7, no. 5 (May 2017): pp. 16-20.

which they desire, implying that the current prevalence of cultural diffusion is neither desirable nor healthy for the parties involved. A return to a more “traditional” separation of cultures would, in their theory, resolve this.

## 5.4 Hyperborean Radio

(Appendix II plate II.V)

When announcing new episodes of their podcast, this channel often uses the phrase “the Wastelands of Modernity.”<sup>240</sup> This displays engagement with the *topoi* of tradition, spirituality, and danger. On the surface it is another formulation of anti-modernity. The word “Wasteland” evokes a place of degeneration, where that which is present in it decays whether physically or spiritually. The alleged dangers degeneration poses to well-being has been discussed in the prior channels. The author frames modernity itself as the wasteland in which this degeneration is occurring, and always portrays the podcast episode as an antidote to the degenerating effects of modernity, both in a spiritual and traditional sense. This serves as a primer for much of the content which the channel posts and the podcast discusses.

On 22 July, HR posted a message in apparent response to discourse in other far right channels or platforms in its orbit.

“There’s been a lot of hullabaloo about hair color in European circles. While yes different tribal groups in Europe tend to favor one or the other hair color at different points in history. The reality is that just like other animals of the north foxes, bears, even Squirrels. Hyperboreans (Europeans/People of the North) indeed have various arrays of “Pelt” colors. It’s a mark of the Northern woods. -TLK”<sup>241</sup>

Similar messages are posted throughout the year, always apparently in response to a debate about this seemingly trivial matter: hair color. While there never is a direct link to these

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<sup>240</sup> Hyperborean Radio (<https://t.me/hyperboreanradio>), “Coming at you from the Wasteland of Modernity.” Telegram message, June 10, 2021. <https://t.me/hyperboreanradio/4482>

<sup>241</sup> Hyperborean Radio (<https://t.me/hyperboreanradio>), “There’s been a lot of hullabaloo.” Telegram message, July 22, 2021. <https://t.me/hyperboreanradio/4681>

referenced debates, one can assume they reference far right infighting regarding who does and does not belong in their “in-groups.” This would not be the first time that the determination of an individual’s or group’s acceptance into a far-right group or movement was based on “ethnic” features; the NSDAP<sup>242</sup> or the Ku Klux Klan<sup>243</sup> are two prominent 20<sup>th</sup> century examples. The author is utilizing the *topoi* of nature, spirituality, and history to craft their argument. In this instance, the *topoi* of nature and spirituality are almost inseparable. The author is equating the physical features of the “Hyperboreans,” here defined as widely as all those of European descent, with the features found in the native animals of “Hyperborea.” The array of hair colors which are present in European populations is a “mark of the Northern woods,” something which is inherent to all creatures which natively inhabit “Hyperborea.” As has already been discussed in the section with CR and EG, “Hyperborea/n” has a close relation with spiritualism, dating from the origin of the term in Ancient Greece when it referred to the mythical people of the North.<sup>244</sup> In the historical case, it is referring to how over time, various “tribal groups” associated different ethnic features with different in groups and out groups, including hair color.<sup>245</sup> This equation of the so-called “Hyperboreans” of “the Northwoods” with the native fauna is present throughout much of the discourse on the channel. The most common connection formed is that between the “Hyperboreans” and bears. In 2021 alone, there were at least five posts which exclusively discussed the connection between them.

On 20 March, a visually graphic post was made to illustrate the link between the

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<sup>242</sup> John Connelly, “Nazis and Slavs: From Racial Theory to Racist Practice,” *Central European History* 32, no. 1 (1999): pp. 1-33, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0008938900020628>.

<sup>243</sup> Karla Mari McKanders, “Sustaining Tiered Personhood: Jim Crow and Anti-Immigrant Laws,” *Harvard Journal on Racial and Ethnic Justice* 26, no. 1 (2010): pp. 163-210.

<sup>244</sup> Cartwright, “Hyperborea.”

<sup>245</sup> Victoria Sherrow, *Encyclopedia of Hair: A Cultural History* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006).

“Hyperboreans” and bears. The post reads “Probably one of the things we push the most is that our people whether Physically or Metaphysically descend from bears. Case in point I give you skinned bear paws.<sup>246</sup>” The image attached is of just that: skinned and declawed bear paws which have been removed from a bear. They do, admittedly, look striking similar to the hands and feet of humans. This text is using the *topoi* of nature, spirituality, and racialized strength. The intertwining of the bear and the “Hyperborean” ideal transcends the spiritual connection and moves into the physical, they are one entity in different forms. It implies a deep, inherent connection with nature, particularly the often-discussed “Northwoods.” The racial strength is clarified with additional context, particularly a post from 9 February which goes into greater detail about the place of the bear in European spirituality. One sentence distills this alleged relationship succinctly. “The similarities between the European and the bear were so myriad that the Wild Man and the bear were at times interchangeable and stories of boys cursed with pelts are referred to as ‘bear cubs’ such as in Ourson a french fairy tale.”<sup>247</sup> The bear and the (wild) man is undeniably the same entity here. As mentioned later in the post, the bear “was considered the king of the woods...” and “a divine ancestor.” The equation of the “Hyperborean” with the bear implies that that the “Hyperborean” occupies the same place in the natural and spiritual hierarchy as the bear. The bear in both mythical and physical forms has been, in this context, racialized and become a metaphor for “Hyperborean” strength and supremacy in the world. We can also see a form of the *topos* of danger here in the idea of the violence which is so often portrayed as inherent in the bear as the apex predator. From this clearly flows the logic of “de-

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<sup>246</sup> Hyperborean Radio (<https://t.me/hyperboreanradio>), “Probably one of the things.” Telegram message, March 20, 2021. <https://t.me/hyperboreanradio/3892>

<sup>247</sup> Hyperborean Radio (<https://t.me/hyperboreanradio>), “Bears.” Telegram message, February 9, 2021. <https://t.me/hyperboreanradio/3426>

domestication”<sup>248</sup> or the “savageness”<sup>249</sup> of the “Hyperborean,” as other posts will occasionally discuss. The “Wild Man” and the bear are both untamed, natural, and pure ideals to strive to become in this “Hyperborean” ideal of existence.

A post from 25 September continues this esoteric idea. As opposed to the more standard statements which the majority of the discourse takes, this as a call to action and reclamation. It states the following.

We can take back our various names and titles, but we need a solid footing and foundation before we can. For now we use this ancient title, marking us as who we are the people of the Northwoods. The people of the Northern Dawn, The Spirits of the Wood, The Brothers and Sisters of the Bear, The Forest Folk, The Wild Folk, the Barbarians, the Gods among men, we are many many things, but in the end we are simply Our People, we only must bother with a name whilst dealing with those who are not us. Stay Strong, Stay Proud, Stay Wise, Stay Courageous we will rise out of this dark age, and see the Sun in all its glory once More. Hail the Ancestors, Hail the Gods, Hail our tribes, Hail those yet to come.<sup>250</sup>

This expands on the specific mythos of the “Hyperborean” ideal itself. The *topoi* of nature, tradition, spirituality, racialized strength, danger, and history are all utilized in this paragraph. The first sentence is utilizing the *topoi* of tradition and racialized strength. The author is stating that there were traditional “names and titles” which “our people (the ‘Hyperboreans’)” once had but have since lost. They can be regained, but only if “we” have a strong base of support, which it is implied no longer exists. This strong base of support needs to be “Hyperborean” in structure, hence the racialized element of the (currently lacking) strength. This not dissimilar to how RTT framed arguments about creating a movement. The second and third sentences are utilizing the *topoi* of nature, spirituality, and danger. The “ancient title” being referred to must be

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<sup>248</sup> Hyperborean Radio (<https://t.me/hyperboreanradio>), “De-Domestication.” Telegram message, January 6, 2021. <https://t.me/hyperboreanradio/2842>

<sup>249</sup> Hyperborean Radio (<https://t.me/hyperboreanradio>), “Before Europe began to travel the world.” Telegram message, June 9, 2021. <https://t.me/hyperboreanradio/4479>

<sup>250</sup> Hyperborean Radio (<https://t.me/hyperboreanradio>). “We can take back our various names and titles.” Telegram message, September 25, 2021. <https://t.me/hyperboreanradio/5667>



“Hyperborean” in this context. It is an ancient name from legend, referring to the people of these “Northwoods.” As mentioned prior, this idea of the “Hyperborean” has inseparable spiritual links with this mythicized nature of the “Northwoods.”<sup>251</sup> The list of various alleged names for the “Hyperboreans” contain elements of nature, spiritualism (often combined with one another) or danger (in the case of Barbarians, perhaps known best to the average person for their destruction of the “civilized” and domesticated Roman Empire.) These are all portrayed as synonyms for the “Hyperborean” identity, further emphasizing the spiritual connection to nature and divine place of the “Hyperborean” in the world. The final two sentences engage the *topoi* of racialized strength and tradition. The racialized strength is in the “stay” commands, as these are all desirable traits of the “Hyperborean” ideal. These traits require strength to adhere to, strength which is implied to come from the racialized “Hyperborean” conception of what emerging from the “dark age” will consist of. Racialized strength is again present in the final sentence. The ancestors, gods, and tribes are all looked upon as sources of past and current forms of racialized “Hyperborean” strength. The audience is strong because of their strong ancestors, gods, and tribe. “Those yet to come” represent the future of the “Hyperboreans,” and the current generations must remain strong in their convictions to properly serve as the base for the next.

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<sup>251</sup> Cartwright, “Hyperborea.”

# Part Three: Findings

## Chapter Six: Discussion

As discussed in the second and third chapters, Facebook and Telegram occupy different niches in the greater far-right's social media ecosystem. The user bases, authors, and intended audiences differ, as well as differing content due to user agreements of the respective platforms and anticipated audiences, with Telegram attracting a more radical user base and allowing for more radical discussion. The length and content of the various posts and comments also varies widely, even within a given platform, page, or thread. Regardless, all of these messages are intended to spread a narrative in a digital space, and thus can be brought into conversation with one another. This section answers the three originally posed research questions: how is US-focused far-right ecological discourse constructed on mainstream Facebook news pages? How is US-focused far-right ecological discourse constructed on far-right Telegram channels? How do these discourses overlap and how do they differ?

### *The State of Facebook*

Taken in sum, the discourses present in the Facebook comment sections were not particularly unexpected. Discourses present in Facebook comment sections of partisan news platforms has been studied extensively.<sup>252</sup> Facebook's engagement with the general far right has been well researched.<sup>253</sup> The mainstream American right's inclination towards climate skepticism and

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<sup>252</sup> Susan Jacobson, Eunyoung Myung, and Steven L. Johnson, "Open Media or Echo Chamber: The Use of Links in Audience Discussions on the Facebook Pages of Partisan News Organizations," *Information, Communication & Society* 19, no. 7 (2015): pp. 875-891, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118x.2015.1064461>.

<sup>253</sup> Laura Edelson et al., "Far Right News Sources on Facebook More Engaging," Medium (Cybersecurity for Democracy, March 4, 2021), <https://medium.com/cybersecurity-for-democracy/far-right-news-sources-on-facebook-more-engaging-e04a01efae90>.

denialism is also extremely well documented.<sup>254</sup> Thus, the presence and overall domination of climate skepticism and climate denialist discourses and rhetoric among the relevant texts was to be expected. The forms of denialism present were that of trend denialism and attribution denialism. The comment sections were often used to voice frustration about the non-conservative “others.” Sometimes this was done within the context of the subject of the original post, other times it was seemingly at random. Both in comments which engaged directly with the politics of nature and comments which did not, there was a significant amount of blame shifting present. The issues being discussed, either in relation the original post or in a comment side thread, were invariably being blamed on the non-conservative “other” factions. This “other” originated in several forms: the Democrats, the leftists, the environmentalists, the elites, and the globalists. It was the fault of the “other” that the power grid in Texas was failing because they wanted to implement green energy, it was the fault of the “other” that the Dixie fire was so severe because they failed to properly maintain the forests, climate change is only a myth because the “other” polluted excessively to travel to Glasgow. The various more conspiratorial strains of thought were also present, which alluded to various plots by the elites to bring about the New World Order and consolidate power.

While the majority of this discourse was founded in secular ideals, there was a small but strong strain which was religiously founded. From what was found in the analysis, this religious discourse was Christian in origin. This Christian discourse was used in two ways: either denialist, refuting that the climate was changing and that God was the only force capable of such a thing, or accepting of it, but unlike mainstream climate change discourse which points to greenhouse gas emissions from industrialized human societies as the origin, these religious

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<sup>254</sup> Viala-Gaudefroy, “Why Is Climate Skepticism so Successful in the United States?”

discourses attributed the change in climate to God’s power. This was some of the only discourse present which both originated from apparently far-right individuals and (some of) whom accepted climate change was occurring. While it was not possible to determine which branch of Christianity most of the commenters follow, this varyingly literal and inerrant interpretation of the Bible is a hallmark of Christian Fundamentalism,<sup>255</sup> which is a powerful movement within the conservative religious right.<sup>256</sup> This active embrace of the apocalypse was the most surprising aspect of the discourse which was discovered.

Another aspect to consider is what the discourse here lacked: a clear view of the alternative. There were small indications, such as moving away from renewable energy or proper forest management, but these appeared to be opportunistic attacks on political “others” rather than genuine concern. Otherwise, most relevant discourse was expressing some level of frustration at the current political system for a perceived lack of proper action. There were few calls for proactive action, only reactions to the current event. There was also a lack of secular acceptance of climate change. As stated prior, the domination of climate skeptical and denialist discourses was expected, but there was very little deviation from this line among the conservative target audience of the articles. That may speak to the demographics on Facebook, or at least those who feel compelled to comment.

This additionally demonstrates why I utilized the framework of far right ecologism rather than ecofascism. Much of the discourse did display an intersection of the far right and the politics of nature but could not clearly be defined as ecofascist in character.

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<sup>255</sup> Ted G. Jelen, “Biblical Literalism and Inerrancy: Does the Difference Make a Difference?,” *Sociological Analysis* 49, no. 4 (1989): pp. 421-429, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3711227>.

<sup>256</sup> Margaret Bendroth, “Christian Fundamentalism in America,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.419>.

### *The State of Telegram*

The discourses present on the analyzed Telegram channels varied widely. As was expected, they were generally radical in content and utilized the politics of nature throughout. This relationship took various forms, often at least partially based in traditionalism or spiritualism, drawing links to “blood and soil.” Idealized and violent conceptions of nature and natural processes were used in the discourses to create more sensationalized arguments. The posts were almost always political or otherwise directly relevant to the topic at hand, with only occasional deviations from the focus of the given chat or channel. Each chat or channel filled a different niche within the far-right ecologist discourses present on Telegram. AV provided the most discussion and debate around the ideological relations with nature, combining spirituality and tradition. CR and EG had the widest content breadth: interactions with ideological issues, engagement with (limited) current events, (infrequent) calls for accelerationist action. These pages also utilized memes the most of all chats. RTT presented a metapolitical, lifestylist, and polished approach to far-right ecologism, portraying the physical strength and spiritual strength as one. This also engaged most heavily with ideological traditionalism compared to other channels. HR provided a deep spiritual foundation, applicable to all Europeans, as it drew on myths and histories from various cultures, blending them into one by drawing links between similar myths and stories, crafting a “Hyperborean” identity. All channels strive to reject the modern and embrace the traditional in some way, often somewhat different, but similar to one another.

Despite the differences in primary content and framing, spiritually based discourse was present in each chat. It did appear in some different forms but were all unified in their non-

Christian origin. This ranged from no direct mention of Christianity to outright hostility towards Christianity. All of them in some form emphasized the inherent spiritual connection of the European/ “Hyperborean” and nature, some being somewhat vague and others going into great detail. Specific spiritualisms varied, with RTT favoring a Western esotericism based around the ideas of Julius Evola, to HR favoring European paganisms and neopaganisms (or the “Hyperborean ethnic faith” as they refer to it,) with the other channels falling between. It was a critical aspect of the discourse, as was concern about spiritual degeneration in the face of modernity. Rejection of modernity was portrayed as a critical step towards spiritual regeneration.

Something else to consider is a significant aspect which is nearly entirely absent from the discourse on Telegram: discussion of current events, especially events which directly concern the environment. The most discussed event which was discussed was the January 6, 2021 insurrection attempt at the Capitol, and even then any discussion did not last much beyond a couple of days after the event. Apart from this, there was minimal discussion about contemporary events outside of far-right spaces, with the only two being EG and CR. On 2 February, EG cross-posted a discussion from another channel discussing Joe Biden’s decision for the head of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack, as he had approved several genetically modified organisms during his prior tenure as Secretary of Agriculture during the Obama administration.<sup>257</sup> The remainder of the post is a list of genetically modified organisms or experiments which he either is confirmed to or suspected to have approved. Beyond that, there is some brief discussion by EG on 3 February approving of a plot by alleged eco-terrorists who had planned to bomb an abortion clinic, stating “pretty based, but it would have been more based if

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<sup>257</sup> Eco Gang (<https://t.me/EcoFascist>), “No More Malarkey.” Telegram message, February 2, 2021. <https://t.me/EcoFascist/1034>

they didn't get caught.”<sup>258</sup> On 14 May, CR cross-posted a message from another channel celebrating the passage of bill SB 199 in Montana, a law which allows for the sale of homemade foods, including normally forbidden items such as raw milk, with minimal legal requirements, so long as they inform the consumer of it.<sup>259</sup> For all the calls of returning to nature and rejecting modernity, the analyzed content was lacking robust discourse regarding how to bring about this change. The possible exception to this was the discussions around accelerationism, but these channels never discussed it in depth.

While much of the discourse which was present in these channels could absolutely be considered fascist through direct comparisons and references which were made, others would not. Thus, looking at this chat through the far-right ecological framework has allowed for a broader selection of data.

### *Overlap and Differences*

Drawing a direct comparison between Facebook and Telegram displays the vast difference in conceptions of far right ecologism. It embodies to some extent the frontstage and the backstage as discussed by Goffman. Overall, the discourses utilized were quite different. Facebook's was generally not as radical as Telegram's, though admittedly more radical comments may have been taken down prior to research due to the stricter terms of service on the platform. Where Facebook's discourses were generally climate skeptical or denialist, there was hardly any direct interaction with the concept of climate change in the Telegram discourses. Rather, Telegram had

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<sup>258</sup> Eco Gang (<https://t.me/EcoFascist>), “Pretty based.” Telegram message, February 3, 2021. <https://t.me/EcoFascist/1049>

<sup>259</sup> Cascadia Rising, (<https://t.me/CascadiaRising>), “More good news!” Telegram message, May 14, 2021. <https://t.me/CascadiaRising/615>

a significantly more robust ideological and spiritual foundation at the expense of current event discussion. Telegram discussed the ideals of nature and why it was critical to the European/ “Hyperborean,” whereas Facebook had no such discussions. Both blame an “other” for the issues that are being faced, but on Facebook that other is expressed to be almost exclusively political in origin, whereas on Telegram it is modernity itself and the various elements which grow from it.

From a spiritual perspective Facebook and Telegram again differ. Facebook represents the increasingly r, many of whom retain some form of Christianity as their spiritual base. The far-right ecologists on Telegram often reject Christianity, sometimes vehemently, in favor of a form of esotericism or polytheistic paganism. Facebook’s discourse makes no mention of a spiritual connection to nature, whereas Telegram’s discourses discuss it frequently. On Telegram, nature itself has been effectively deified and racialized, made integral to the European/ “Hyperborean” spirit.

They both share the lack of attainable action for the most part. Much of the rhetoric on both Facebook and Telegram is that of rejection of the current state of the world, whether that is political, cultural, or spiritual, though the specifics are different. Facebook does discuss current events, whereas Telegram rarely does. Interestingly, segments of both Telegram and Facebook do express some form of acceptance of the Apocalypse: the Christian fundamentalists and the accelerationists. Both of these groups actively wish for the Apocalypse as a catalyst for a new world to rise. Their conceptions of this new world are extremely different, with the fundamentalists dreaming of the Kingdom of Heaven as described in the Book of Revelation, and the accelerationists of a world in which their ideology is supreme. Regardless, both groups appear to support the chaos caused by ecological disruption.



This leads to the discussion of Goffman's frontstage and backstage.<sup>260</sup> The far-right ecological discourse on Facebook is generally not as radical as Telegram, especially when it comes to discussions around race. Far-right ecological discourse on Facebook is generally in line with the discourse of the Republican Party especially when it comes to blaming the "other" for their faults, whereas on Telegram it is often outside of the Republican narrative. These aspects can fit into this frontstage-backstage dichotomy. The reasoning for this less radical, more mainstream "frontstage" narrative could be due to two factors: the stricter Facebook terms of service which would remove more radical content, and/or the current userbase of Facebook consisting of less radicalized people than those who exist on Telegram. Facebook's more mainstream appeal than Telegram in the United States, makes it more accessible to a wider swath of the population. This allows more people can find these threads, both those who want to comment, as well as potential friends, family, neighbors, or coworkers. Discourse which is too radical in a public space could potentially lead to blowback. That may cause a self-censoring chilling effect on the discourses. Conversely, Telegram is encrypted, more insular in nature, has more opportunities for anonymity, and has more lenient terms of service making it conducive to radical content, creating a safe space for radical viewpoints. Much of this is conducive to the frontstage-backstage framing, as shifted statements are not inherently irreconcilable. The one element which I hesitate to apply to this is that of spiritualism. The mainstream frontstage's spiritualism is heavily rooted in Christian tradition and belief. What was seen on Telegram tends to reject Christianity in favor of esotericism at the very least. This is an element which would not shift between the stages, and cannot be reconciled with one another.

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<sup>260</sup> Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*

## Chapter Seven: Conclusion

This research has explored the far-right ecological discourses present in Facebook comment sections of right-wing media outlets and on far-right Telegram channels. The discourse on Facebook did adhere to the typical discourses and narratives which are known to be present in mainstream Republican-aligned spaces: politically-motivated blame shifting, climate change skepticism and denialism, and Christian themes and narratives. Telegram's discourse was substantially more varied. The content discussed traditionalist theory, non-Christian spiritualism, history, accelerationism, metapolitics, exercise, racial hierarchy, and modernity. While Facebook and Telegram did align in some respects, much of the content and implementation was vastly different.

Several important trends can be learned from this in relation to far-right ecologism in the United States. As of now, it is still an extremely divided tendency. The mainstream American right mostly continues to follow the Republican narrative of climate change skepticism and denialism, even in the face of worsening natural disasters. The ideologies as they exist on Telegram have elements which are less accepted by the general populace, primarily some of the elements around spiritualism, as Christian belief is an extremely powerful element of the current formulation of the mainstream American far right. Far-right ecologism does still retain potential to spread, but at this time it has yet to gain the cohesion necessary to do so in the immediate future.

With the current tensions in the United States, there are two likely routes which the non-denialist forms could spread: social media oriented especially towards younger audiences (such as Twitter, Telegram, Reddit, 4Chan, or Tik Tok), and violence (accelerationist or other). Both

rely on metapolitics, the idea that politics is downstream of culture.<sup>261</sup> Moore and Roberts point to how metapolitical social media strategy is perceived as a significant part of why the “alt-right” rose to prominence in the United States circa 2016. Particularly, the most widely known example of this was the use of memes on social media in the run up to the 2016 election.<sup>262</sup> From the discourses analyzed and aesthetics which were utilized, far right ecologism as exists on Telegram appears to be taking the same path as the earlier alt-right did in its rise to prominence. Additionally, RTT describes itself as a metapolitical organization<sup>263</sup>, attempting to influence culture to bring about the political reality which it strives for, mostly in cyberspace as of now. Compounding this, we have violence which influences metapolitics. During the writing of this thesis, 10 Black people were murdered in a racially-motivated terrorist attack on a supermarket in Buffalo, New York.<sup>264</sup> The shooter’s manifesto contained language (admittedly directly copied from the Christchurch shooter’s manifesto) with ecofascist reasoning for the attack. This has led to a wave of articles published on ecofascism.<sup>265</sup> In the present environment, politically motivated mass shootings are celebrated on some of the more extremist Telegram channels and similar spaces.<sup>266</sup> Even outside of there, these shootings become cultural phenomenon, leaving a discernible impact on the nation’s cultural and political psyche. Every ideologically-motivated

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<sup>261</sup> Moore and Roberts, *Post Internet Far Right*, 45.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>263</sup> Revolt Through Tradition (t.me/RevoltThroughTradition), “RTT is an idea; a metapolitical lifestyle.” Telegram message, May 5, 2021, <https://t.me/RevoltThroughTradition/278>

<sup>264</sup> Kate Aronoff et al., “The Buffalo Shooter and the Rise of Ecofascist Extremists,” *The New Republic*, May 17, 2022, <https://newrepublic.com/article/166510/buffalo-shooter-ecofascism>.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>266</sup> Will Carless, “Online, Extremists Turn Shooters into 'Saints.' Experts Worry Others Aspire to Join the Ranks,” *USA Today* (Gannett Satellite Information Network, May 20, 2022), <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2022/05/20/extremists-turn-shooters-into-online-saints-experts-worry-others-aspire-join-ranks/9505179002/>.

terror attack committed and manifesto published will create more publicity for said ideology. In the wake of this, the movement has the potential to gain more of a following, and might inspire others to go down the same path, creating a cycle of metapolitical violence around effectively a contemporary propaganda of the deed.

Given the contemporary political currents in the United States, I do not believe that far-right ecologism will grow exponentially in the immediate future by itself, but retains significant potential especially as part of a more mainstream political shift. The denialist discourses are not likely to grow outside of the spaces they already occupy, and in fact are shrinking.<sup>267</sup> The more developed radical discourses have not yet met with the same success as other more standard far-right movements. However, these more radical ideologies retain the potential for greater growth as further developments occur, especially if the groundwork for successful metapolitical strategies continue to be laid and utilized. The power of this has been demonstrated during the 2016 election. As a growing population of people are faced with the worsening and compounding ecological, political, economic, and social crises facing the United States and world, many may find potential in the hollow, violent promises of far-right ecologism.

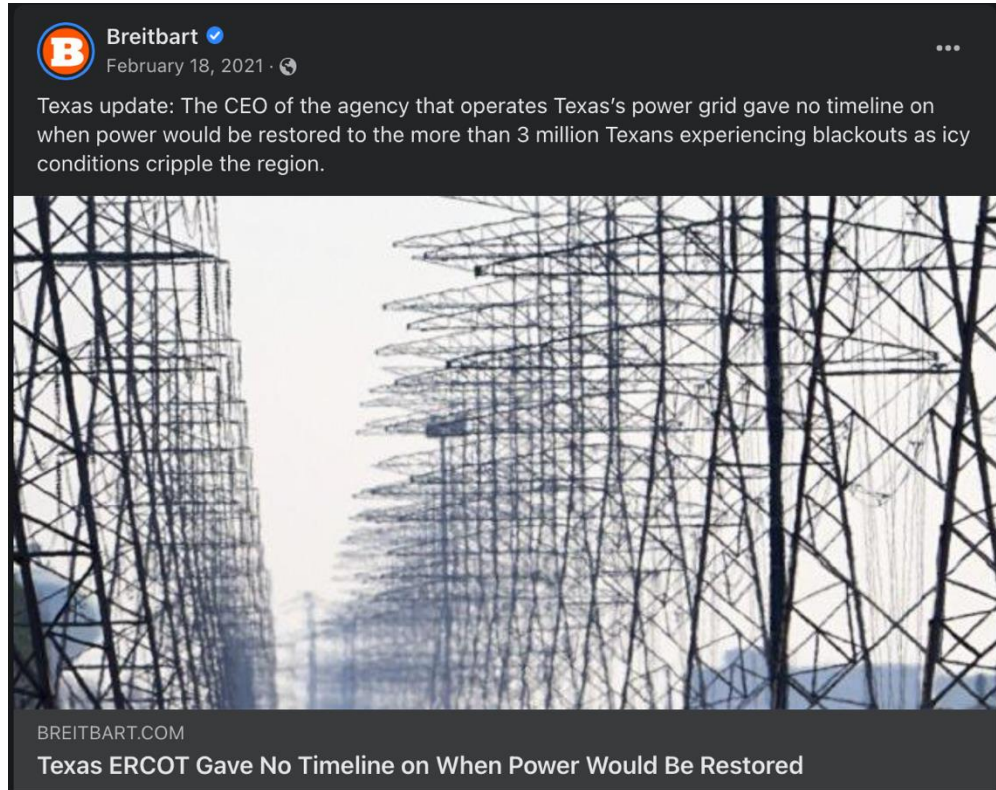
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<sup>267</sup> Leiserowitz et al, “Climate Change.”

# Appendix I: Facebook

## Plate I.I

Breitbart,  
“Texas  
update,”  
Facebook,  
February 18,  
2021,  
<https://www.facebook.com/Breitbart/posts/1016714670615354>



## Plate I.II

Breitbart,  
“The historic  
Texas winter  
storm,”  
Facebook,  
February 21,  
2021  
<https://www.facebook.com/Breitbart/posts/10167164478835354>;

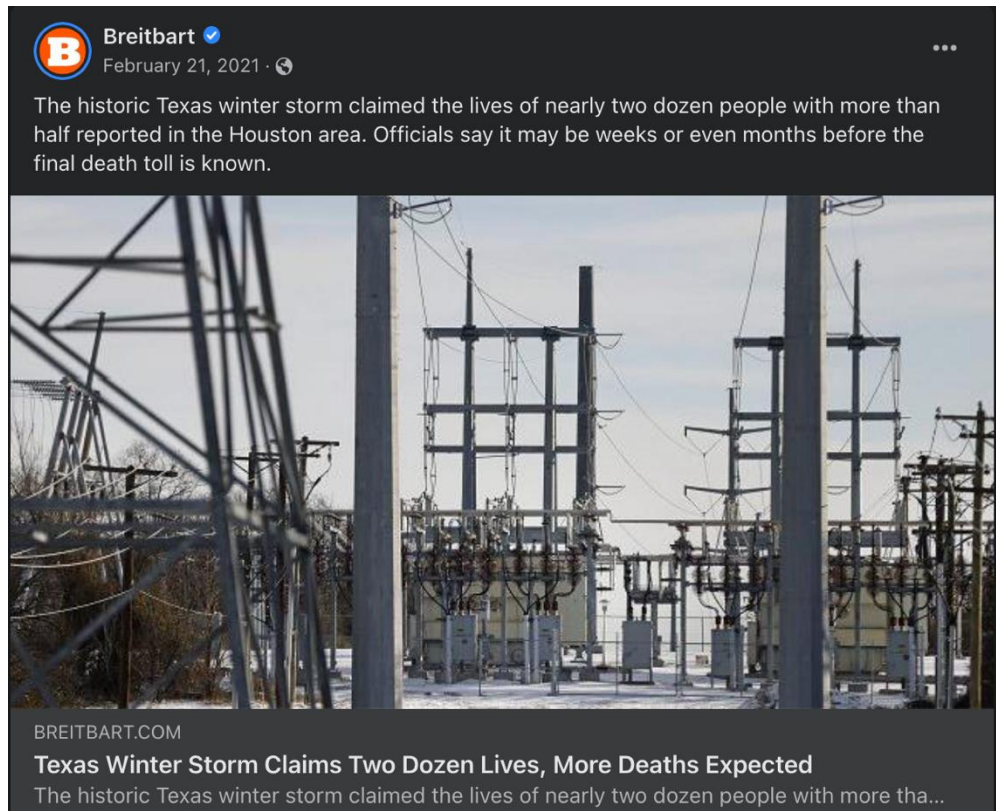


Plate I.III

Fox News,  
“Hundreds of  
thousands of  
Texans,”  
Facebook,  
February 18,  
2021,  
<https://www.facebook.com/FoxNews/posts/10160400740741336>

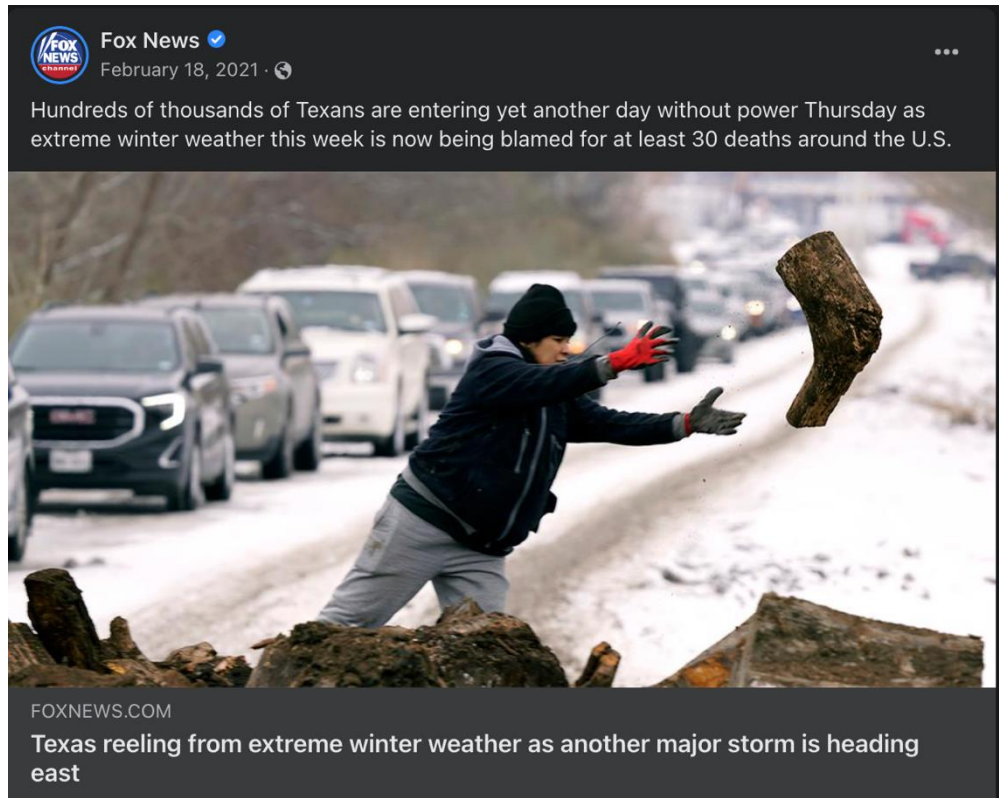


Plate I.IV

Fox News,  
“An unusually  
harsh winter  
storm,”  
Facebook,  
February 15,  
2021,  
<https://www.facebook.com/FoxNews/posts/10160390462921336>;

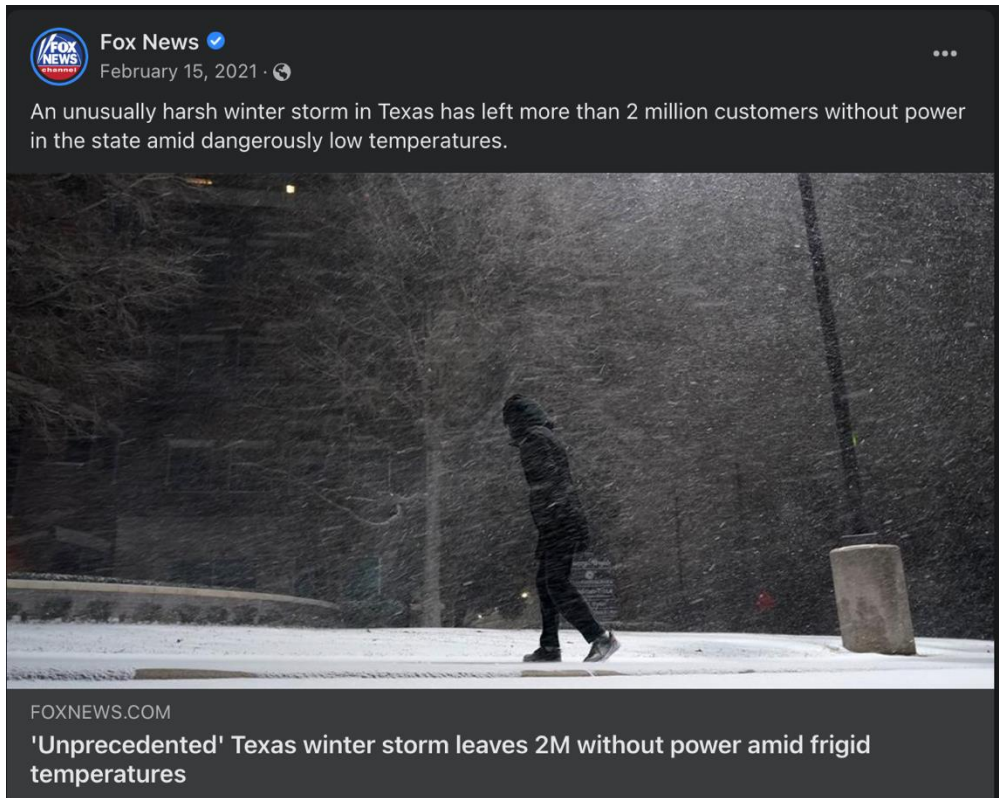


Plate I.V

Fox News,  
“The Dixie  
Fire is the  
largest,”  
Facebook,  
August 17,  
2021,  
<https://www.facebook.com/FoxNews/posts/10160922815141336>



Plate I.VI

Fox News,  
“The Dixie  
Fire is the  
largest,”  
Facebook,  
August 17,  
2021,  
<https://www.facebook.com/FoxNews/posts/10160922815141336>



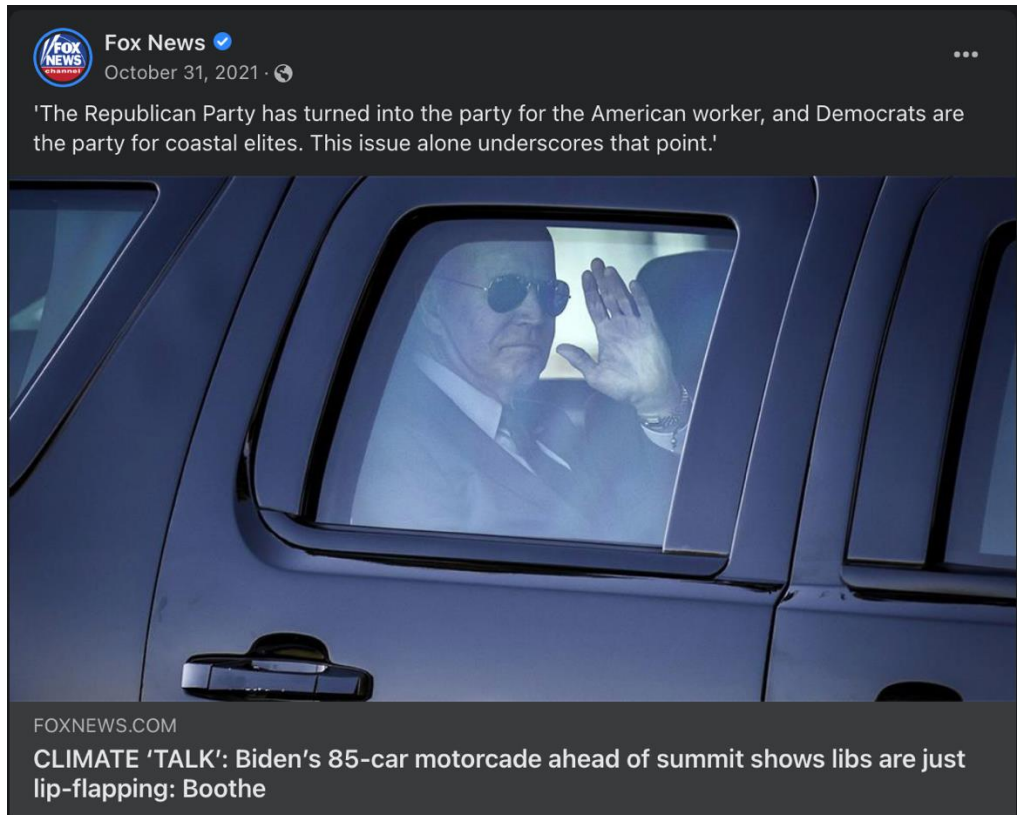
Plate I.VII

Fox News,  
“The  
Republican  
Party,”  
Facebook,  
October 31,  
2021,  
<https://www.facebook.com/FoxNews/posts/10161094335506336>



Plate I.VIII

Breitbart,  
“Rich Elites  
flew 400+  
private jets,”  
Facebook,  
November 3,  
2021,  
<https://www.facebook.com/Breitbart/posts/10168345444935354>

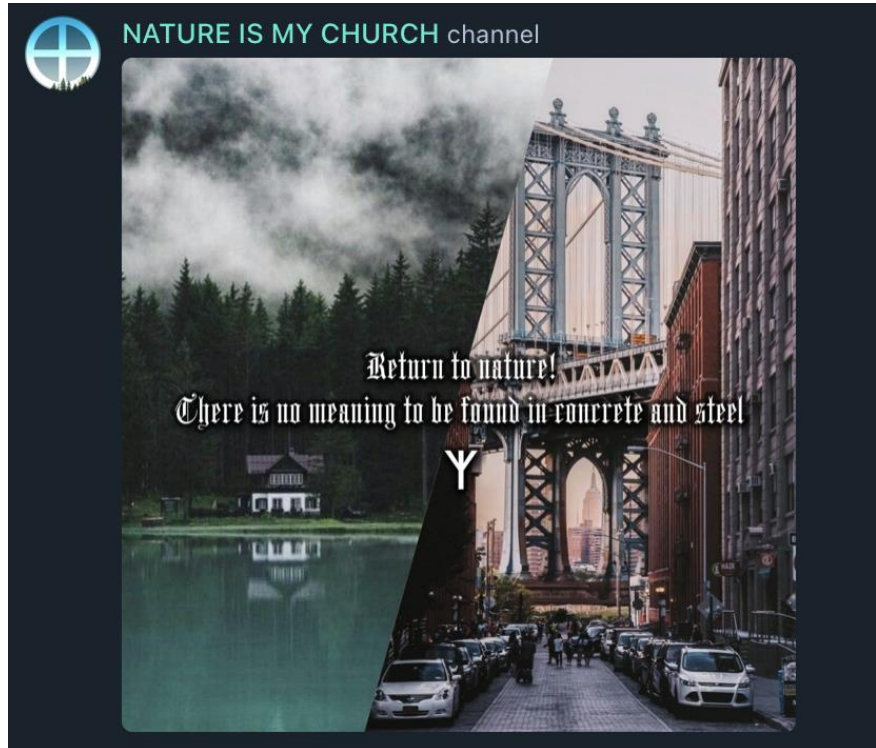




# Appendix II: Telegram

## Plate II.I

AVE VICTORIA  
(<https://t.me/aveviktoriachannel>), “Return to nature! There is no meaning to be found in concrete and steel.”  
Telegram message, December 29, 2021  
(channel erased)



## Plate II.II

Cascadia Rising,  
(<https://t.me/CascadiaRising>), “We are the north.” Telegram message, December 16, 2021.  
<https://t.me/CascadiaRising/1165>



Plate II.III

Eco Gang  
(<https://t.me/EcoFascist>), “The pine tree.”  
Telegram message,  
April 27, 2021.  
<https://t.me/EcoFascist/1347>

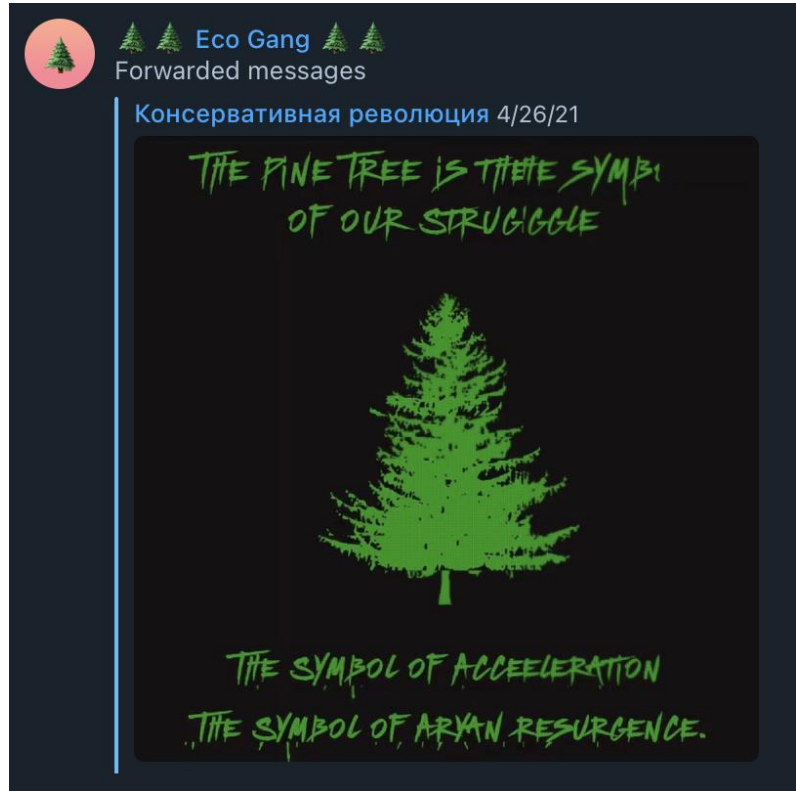


Plate II.IV

Revolt Through Tradition  
(<https://t.me/RevoltThroughTradition>),  
“While standing together with your people.” Telegram message, June 22, 2021.  
<https://t.me/RevoltThroughTradition/297>

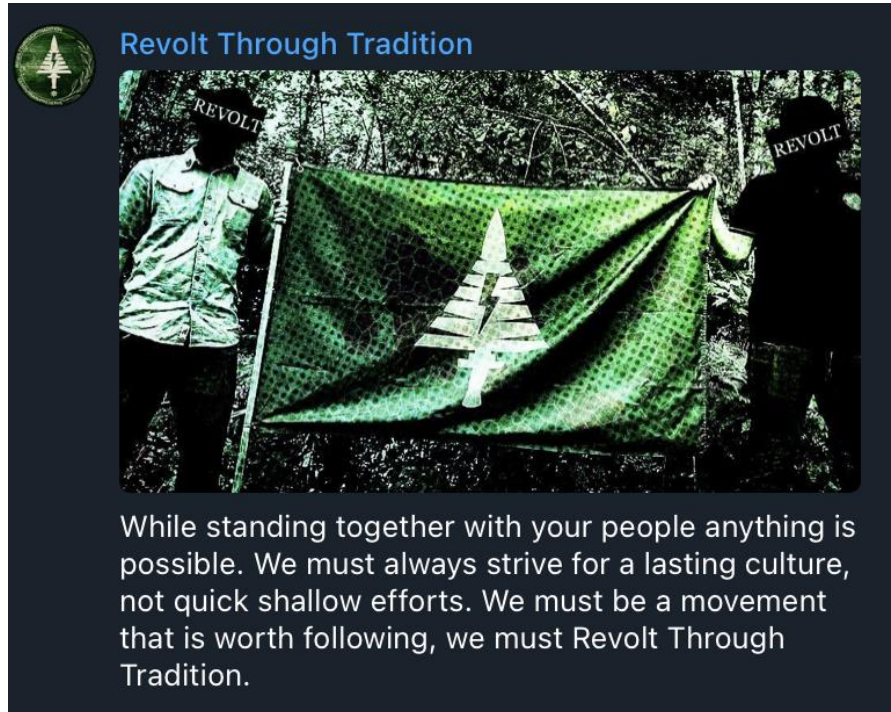

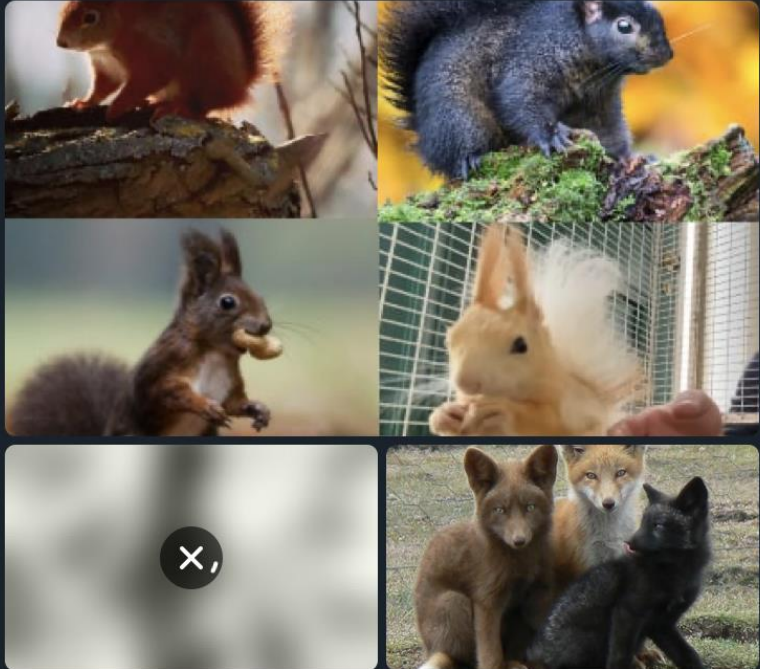


Plate II.V

Hyperborean Radio  
(<https://t.me/hyperboreanradio>), “There’s been a lot of hullabaloo.” Telegram message, July 22, 2021.  
<https://t.me/hyperboreanradio/4681>

 Hyperborean Radio



There's been a lot of hullabaloo about hair color in European circles. While yes different tribal groups in Europe tend to favor one or the other hair color at different points in history. The reality is that just like other animals of the north foxes, bears, even Squirrels. Hyperboreans (Europeans/People of the North) indeed have various arrays of "Pelt" colors. It's a mark of the Northern woods.  
-TLK

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