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ARTICLE

Pearl Nationalism: Tradwives and the Chronotopes of Femininity

Catherine Tebaldi (iD)

Humanities, University of Luxembourg, Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg
Email: catherine.tebaldi@uni.lu

Abstract

This article looks at how gendered chronotopes of tradition are created in the work of four tradwives, or digital influencers who describe themselves as "feminine not feminist." It first shows how each tradwie animates a distinct, highly mediatized, chronotope of tradition ranging, from the 1850s homestead to the 1950s suburban wife in pearls. Each uses submissive gender roles to create a unique vision of a past as domestic idyll embodied by a desirable woman: glowing, warm, beautiful, white. In a second step, it looks at how each of these individual chronotopes of tradition are aligned in a higher chronotope of absolute femininity. Like a string of pearls, femininity becomes a thread on which each individual chronotope becomes coeval, tokens of a type of absolute womanhood, atavistic tradition, "pearl nationalism." In the third section, I explore how a chronotope of femininity is shaped through contrast to chronotope of feminist modernity. Rather than evoking a particular place, tradition means a woman returned to hers. The paper concludes with what a study of tradwives' feminine chronotopes can contribute to understanding of chronotopes in mass media, and in particular to the growing appeal of the far right.

Keywords: chronotopes; digital linguistic anthropology; far-right; gender; nationalism; tradwives

Introduction

As if opening the door to a midcentury suburban home, with pearls and a warm smile, social media influencers known as "tradwives" invite viewers into a gendered chronotope. On the mass media spaces of Instagram and YouTube they share images and videos of themselves baking sourdough bread, serving pies in aprons, or vacuuming in heels. Their retrotopia (Bauman 2018) is indexed by a pastiche of elements: black and white television shows starring patriarchal families; pioneer homesteads; midcentury art and advertisements; and pastoral, Protestant 19th century designs. Each open door or warm oven becomes a call for a return to a simpler, softer time when women were at home—and they let men be men.

Tradwives invoke preexisting chronotopes through video and photographic media which blends, circulating media indexing a past, tropic discursive elements, artifacts as indexical emblems, and above all their enactment of typified feminine activities and self-styling, using the lexicon of hair and makeup (Mendoza-Denton 1996). Many tradwives, in pearls and heels, call for a return to 1964, the white suburb before the Civil Rights Act and the end of racial quotas for immigration. For a few, in side ponytails and Barbie pink, tradition is the 1980s—Reagan's "morning in America." For some, in braids and prairie dresses, it is the pioneer homestead in 1860, before emancipation and women's suffrage. Yet others long for 1600s castles or 600s Celtic tribes. It may seem that tradwives cannot agree on the timing of the Golden Age, one of a series of contradictions in the metapolitical project of professional influencers who argue against women's public participation and advocate for tradition on modern mass media. However, this article shows how from these multiple chronotopic femininities a single they construct, naturalize and sacralize a single chronotopic narrative of the return to archetypal femininity.

This article analyzes how chronotopes of femininity and sacred tradition are constructed by analyzing four tradwives. Introducing what Gal (2013) calls chronotopic labels (types of persons, key activities and locations), they are: Lacey Lynn, a 1950s housewife from Texas; Alena Petit, a wife in a midcentury English cottage; Ayla Stewart, an 1850s homesteading mom; and Philosophicat, a medieval lady of the manor. The analysis proceeds in three steps. First, I show each tradwives mediatized performances of a singular chronotope. Next, I argue how at a higher indexical order, these different performances are resignified through gendered technologies of commensuration (Chandras and Babcock 2025) as tokens of an (arche) type; the archetype of womanhood and a sacred chronotope of tradition expressed by the act of female submission. In the third analytic section, I explore how this assimilation at a higher indexical order is made possible only through modernity: influencers contrast the traditionalist chronotope with images of degraded modernity, and they do so through the modern affordances of digital media. Finally, in the discussion I ask what this contributes to our understandings of chronotopes, and in conclusion point to what this can offer to researchers of far-right and reactionary discourses of gender.

The article then argues through gender roles individual chronotopes are made commensurate and contrasted to shape a chronotopic narrative of feminine return which restores the nation—aligning each glowing chronotopic feminine identity in a single gendered thread, in a movement they term "pearl nationalism." Pearl nationalism means national revival through submissive women who are like pearls: old-fashioned, affluent, and white. This article then contributes to an understanding of how gender, as commensuration and infrastructure of reactionary meaning, shapes chronotopes and their links to social value projects. Furthermore, looking at digital influencer shows how a return to tradition is made possible through modern mass-mediated spacetime (Agha 2007); through the lens of gender we can see how chronotopic contrasts can produce not a recombinant, hybridized, or fragmented self but a me tale of recovery of an imagined, messianic tradition outside time, and eternal self. The deep meanings created through gendered chronotopes are semiotic resources in naturalizing far-right discourse, demonstrating how Peircean semiotics is used for far-right metapolitics, or the (digital) cultural battle for political power (Maly 2023).

Gendered chronotopes of tradition

This article builds on existing work on chronotopes, particularly cultural chronotopes in mass mediated spacetime (Agha 2007). Agha argues that mass media shapes new chronotopic constructions characterized by: relationality, comparison, or distinction between chronotopes; recombination, or the multiplicity of semiotic encounters and links between a kaleidoscopic set of mass representations with complex links to everyday life; and ideological saturation, or how indexicalities become stereotypic when many viewers construct them similarly.

Analysis of tradition further draws on theorizations of chronotopes as spacetimes which shape a set of personae, relations between these personae, and socially shared value projects (Agha 2015). Tradwives evoke chronotopes such as "American tradition" or "1950s suburbia," drawing on voices of tradition (Lempert 2006), which construct particular selves and relations as "traditional" relations of marriage, intimacy and domestic life shaping or belonging to an idealized past. This is what Wirtz (2016) termed the *semiosis of the historical imagination* or how the "subjective *feel* for history and place emerge through semiotic processes …. producing contrasting structures of morality, affect, belonging, and truth" (344). McIntosh (2015) links these structures to the state and state power. While they often appear in lifestyle stories or social media, gendered tradition is a chronotope of the political (Graan 2013), a representation of state power and individual agency that aims to shape political consciousness and to remasculinize the polticial sphere.

This article theorizes the construction of tradition as a kind of ideological saturation and operation of scale-making (Gal 2016), using work on chronotopic framing, or how semiosis is made through the "dialogue across chronotopes" (Wirtz 2016). This dialogue can be one of contrast, as Agha (2015) notes in his comparison of Darwinist and creationist chronotopes, and these contrasts are made starker when voiced as socio-institutional conflict. Here conflict is also highlighted through gender, as a chronotopic contrast between tradition and modernity is voiced as a conflict between femininity and feminism, between models of family and intimate life distinguished by gendered personae, roles, and morals. However, chonotopic framing is not only distinction but adequation: as Wirtz (2016) reading Silverstein (2003) notes, chronotopic formulations can freeze independent events in structures of likeness, which can constitute relationships of indexicality that naturalize the social relations and moral orders these chronotopes express.

To this work, the present article contributes an analysis of the central role of gender within these mediatized chronotopic processes, favoring ideological saturation or naturalization of chronotopes of tradition and with them gender hierarchies as chronotopic operations of scale making. While Agha (2015) explored how mass-mediatized spacetime created recombinant selves, this article looks instead at (1) how the multiplicity of mediatized discourses creates a renewed vision of messianic time, here a kind of meta chronotope of sacred tradition beyond time, and (2) how this is accomplished through "traditional" gender which aligns mass-mediatized performances in a single archetype of femininity that naturalizes and sacralizes gendered hierarchy. This is further shaped through chronotopic contrasts into a narrative where women rescue femininity and tradition from feminist modernity.

Tradwives

Tradwives (Love 2020; Leidig 2023; Tebaldi 2023; Tebaldi and Percio 2024) are a group of digital content creators who first rose to prominence in 2015, during Trump's first Presidential campaign, by blending far-right politics with feminine lifestyle content. The first iteration was sponsored by now banned fascist conspiracy channel Red Ice Media co-founder Lana Lokteff. Lokteff, who was recently banned from Youtube but has over 110k followers on Twitter, is a self-described "fashy femme"—a fascist woman—who described her work as that of a "Viking shield maiden" who picks up a sword only in this degraded world to defend the home and the white race, recruiting other women to do the same (Mattheis 2018). The influencers she spawned such as Brittany Pettibone (169k followers on YouTube) Blonde in the Belly of the Beast (126k), state they have largely male audiences (Tebaldi 2024) and can be understood as aiming to attract male supremacists (e.g., the manosphere, Kelly, Rothermel, and Jasser 2022) to white supremacy. The term has since experienced a second resurgence, with less overtly racist tradwife influencers such as Ballerina Farm (10.3 million followers on Instagram) reaching a much larger audience on image focused platforms such as Instagram and Tiktok by focusing mainly on aestheticized ideologies of the coziness of reactionary gender politics and the beauty and ease of becoming a stay-at-home wife.

Tradwives are what Maly (2023) calls *metapolitical influencers*; they use the tools of digital lifestyle influencers, which already link upper-middle-class lifestyles to preferred morality (Baker and Rojek 2020) but redirect them toward reactionary metapolitics. The new digital far right's metapolitics 2.0 (Maly 2023) sees everyday digital media—fashion TikTok, health Instagram, video games—as sites for the production of cultural hegemony and the seizure of political power. Across platforms such as YouTube and Instagram (those studied here) as well as TikTok and Twitter, tradwives use mediatized (Agha 2011), mass-mediated and profitable images of intimate everyday life for anti-feminist political messaging. Mediatized everyday portrayals of tradwives shape everyday political discourses of femininity and family, tying them to the importance of white birthrates. They also endorse a return to coverture laws under which only men are legal persons with rights, a metapolitical discourse around the exclusion of women from the political sphere (Tebaldi 2024). Here metapolitics can be understood both as cultural war (Bures 2023; Maly 2023) and as a battle to define the sphere of the political and a fight between equality and hierarchy (Badiou 2005)

Despite this insistence on women's removal from the political and economic spheres, this is a highly mediatized, profitable and politicized discourse. Influencers seek out distinct personae, as this article explores, with the goal of drawing in paying audiences (Tebaldi and Percio 2024). They frequently share this message as a kind of subversive submission (Tebaldi 2023), framing working in the home and obedience to their husband as ultimately subversive of liberal feminist and late capitalist values. Shaping anti-capitalist sentiment into anti-feminist messaging (Tebaldi 2021), they portray affluence, ease and comfort in a difficult time. In this way, perhaps they can help answer Agha's question of how many chronotopes are needed "to create well-lit aspirational homes" (2015, 404).

Multiple, metapolitical, mediatized chronotopes

This first analytic section analyzes tradwives chronotopic identity work (Blommaert and Fina 2015). As Agha (2015) explains, people use chronotopes to shape relations that make them particular social types. Tradwives portray themselves as ideal women by representing themselves as devoted and perfect helpmeets, while simultaneously characterizing this role as belonging to a past social order and system of moral values. The creation of this chronotope is a highly mediatized production, borrowing from digitally circulating images from television, advertising, and other media to construct the image of a past which may never have existed yet to which we should return. Each user distinguishes themselves by how well they can create these chronotopes and spread these reactionary politics, and those who succeed are rewarded with monetary and metapolitical influence in the in the contemporary "manosphere" and white nationalist media.

The chronotopic performances begin with Lacey Lynn known in the community as the original "bad ass trad wife," as she celebrates the 1950s style that has come to index the tradwife movement. Lynn calls herself "June Cleaver with a gun," in reference to the 1950s television show celebrating a patriarchal family and is a Texan Christian who wears pearls and bakes pies from anti-feminist activist Phylis Schlafly's cookbook. Her public YouTube Channel (banner below in Figure 1a) announces that her videos are for "strong family, strong community, strong society," suggesting the conservative scaling of society on the model of the family. She has since been removed from YouTube and retains only a small following (1k on Instagram) but features in key videos such as "Tradlife Explained." Lynn's videos seem to address women but appeal to men (Tebaldi 2023, 2024). They make clear that strength is male leadership; in pearls and lipstick, she celebrates male power and declares that yes, all feminism is bad, even the right to vote (Figure 1b). Everything from divorce laws to cake mix, she argues, are part of a Communist conspiracy to take women out of our natural roles to weaken the family and therefore the white race. In her video "The 1965 red pill" she specifically puts a year to this moment, framing 1965 as a "red pill" a term for a fact that opens one's eyes to the truth that modernity is biased against white men. Here 1965 represents the fall of civilization through second-wave feminist political victories, the Civil Rights Act and the end of racial restrictions on immigration. 1964 becomes the time to which we should return.

Lynn creates desire for a return to this time and these politics, through videos in which she celebrates cooking and serving a husband, constructing a gendered chronotope of the 1950s through a shared media repertoire of vintage advertisements and television shows (as shown in Figure 2 below), tropic actions such as vacuuming in heels, and wearing chronotopic emblems such as pearls. She does not merely oppose feminism or integration but performs life in the segregated suburbs, with videos of homemaking tasks, interspersing her own videos with clips from media such as *It's a Wonderful Life* to communicate that it is, as one of her titles suggests, "a wonderful life when you are a tradwife."

In the photo array in Figure 2, four thumbnails from videos on her YouTube channel are shown to demonstrate the social indexicals with which Lynn constructs her 1950s suburban chronotope: the home, the woman at the gate, her pearls, and her pie.
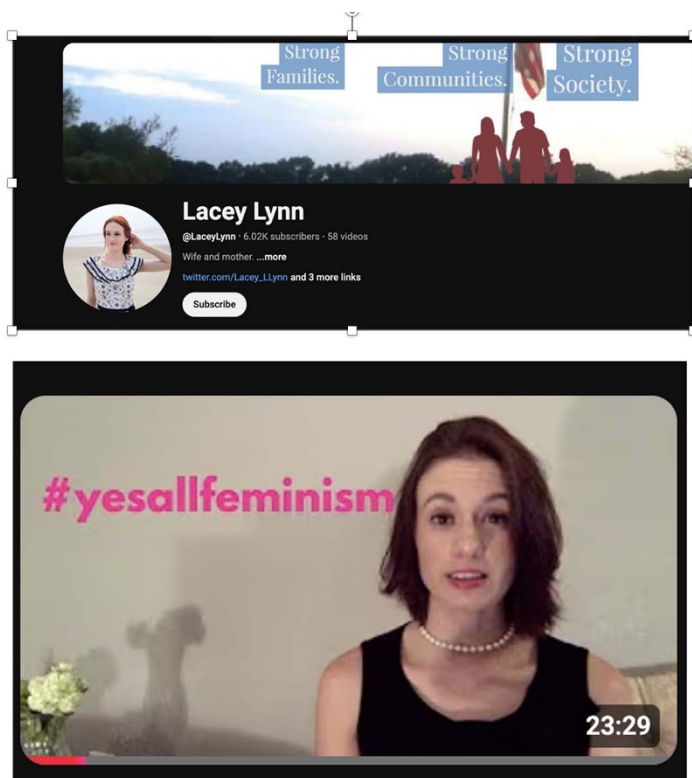
Figure 1. Lynn's youtube channel and a video still from "yes all feminism" where she advocates for the return of coverture laws.

On the top left, the "white picket fence" is an indexical emblem of white suburbia and nostalgic American pastness. A Texan, Lynn uses large yellow house with a porch and roses to index the warm affluence of the US South, where porch life is a typified social practice indexing ideal community. A vintage television and picture of June Cleaver indexes the 1950s. In her polka dot dress and red lipstick, she sits in front of this gate, the woman waiting to welcome you into this nostalgic chronotope. Below this, another 1950s-style illustration centers again the image of making a warm home in the past, as a call to make women traditional again. On the right, the image of pearls, an enregis-tered emblem of 1950s femininity, which also indexes glowing whiteness, affluence, desirability and beauty, has become an emblem of her identity and her movement, such that Lynn refers to her own politics as "pearl nationalism." In Lynn's videos of cooking and caring, you are invited into a midcentury American suburban idyll of glowing ease—one, as she puts it succinctly in the bottom right, of Pies, Pearls, and Patriarchy.

Second, English Alena Pettit (8.8k YouTube followers, 530k Instagram), R has reached a wider mainstream audience with appearances in the BBC, the Guardian,
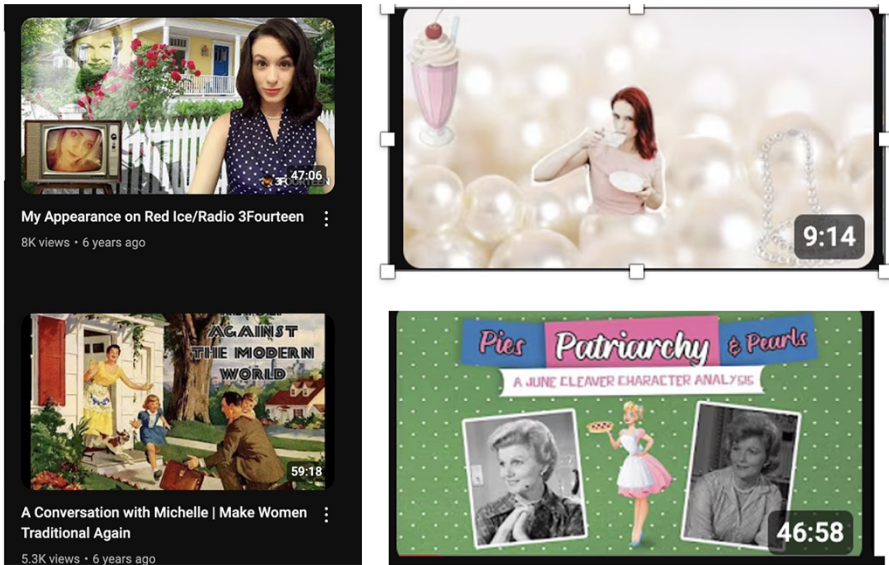
Figure 2. Photo array of thumbnails from Lynn's Youtube channel.

and the New Yorker[1] an etiquette and housekeeping school called "Darling Academy," creates videos that invite the viewer to return to a simpler time. They are situated in an affluent midcentury England, and in particular the affluent home counties and the cottages of the Cotswolds. She celebrates English "national values" and invokes the chronotope of soft affluence we could call "BBC1 England" through media and mediatized indexes—vintage cooking or etiquette books, images styled like BBC dramas or cottagecore—and household items, with her vintage tea sets acting as emblems of English cottage life. Her videos engage typified English activities such as baking, gardening, tea and garden parties. There is much Pimm's and bunting.

She attracts an audience interested in "cottagecore": images of ease and rural affluence, handicrafts and feminine labor. Her media also reflects dominant framings of tradwife life as one of ease and pleasure and escape from the world of work (Tebaldi 2021). Figure 3 shows her YouTube presence and representative video thumbnails. Petitt describes herself as simple and wholesome, and pictures herself pouring you a cup of tea, inviting you into a warm, homey space. Her videos emphasize temporality not only as pastness, but as genteel leisure: videos about "slow and quiet stories," a "wholesome and slow summer weekend," and "slow and seasonal homemaking" teach you to take the time for a long, slow tea, or celebrate a gently languorous day in late summer with walks, books and brunch. These communicate that homemaking is a life of ease, simplicity, the time to make your own food – in contrast to working, urban women with job pressure who must conduct this home life as a "second shift." Like

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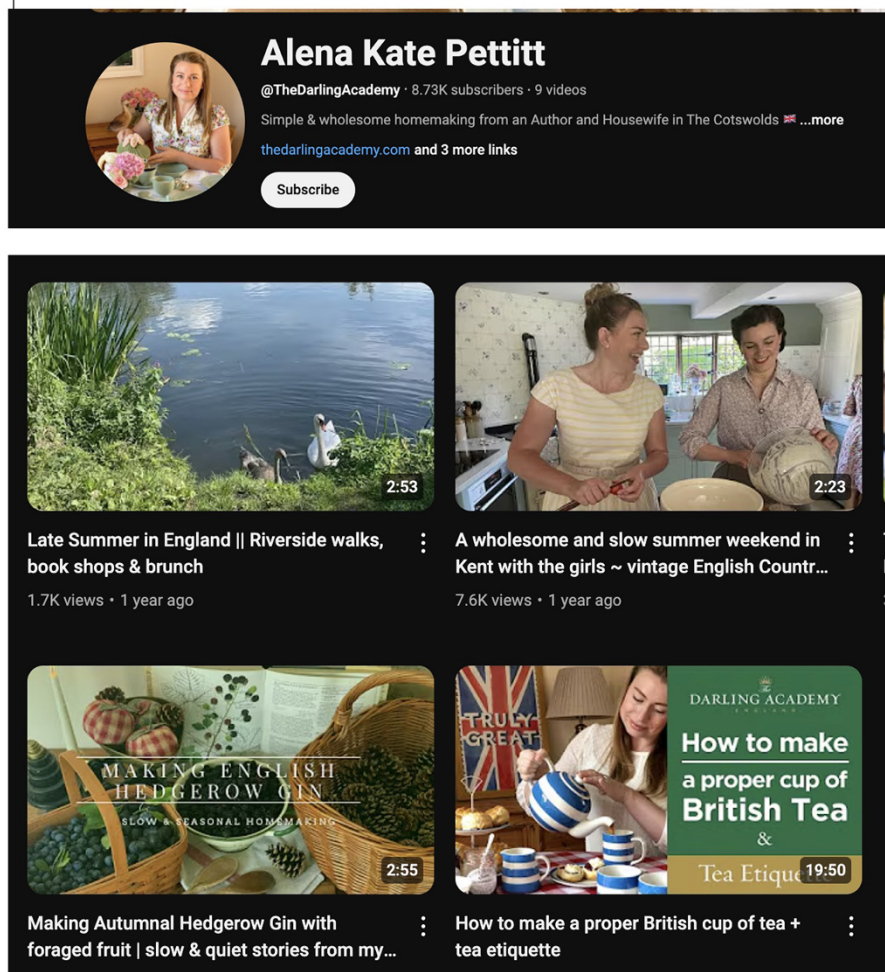[1] Who called her "the frilly version of fascism" https://archive.md/MCW4Q.

Figure 3. Photo array from Pettitt's Youtube channel.

Lynn's suburban life, this chronotopic representation suggests tradwife life is wonderful, but distinguishes itself as an aspirational, storybook pastoral full of ease and grace. It is a chronotope of ladies, garden parties and love on lazy summer afternoons.

Third, Ayla Stewart, offers a vision of a return to a still more distant past, one of frontier homesteads and Little House on the Prairie. She invokes this pioneer chronotope with an assemblage of images including a soft-focus picture of her in pioneer dress, introducing her as "wife with a purpose" in a font associated with Western films indexing pioneers, sheriffs, and general stores. This embrace of pioneer life may reflect a dominant chronotope associated with her Mormon heritage, as well as the broadly shared American chronotope of the settlers of the west which invoke a chronotope of nation building, of adventure, opportunity, hard work, and the "land of immigrants" narratives (less so, indigenous genocide). In her videos, she links a rejection

of feminism to a recovery of girlishness and true femininity, while her dress styles and art communicate a return to a rural homestead in the era not only before feminism, but before women's suffrage.

As shown in Figure 4, Stewart wears long prairie dresses and a braid and dresses her daughters in similar buttoned cotton dresses. Posed with her large family next to a wood fence, she stands, like Lynn, at the gate to a homestead, inviting you to her chronotope of western tradition, with its strong pioneering men and purposeful wives. She makes clear in her #whitebabychallenge, in which she invited women online to match or beat her 6 kids, that this purpose is raising a white race.

She distinguishes herself from other tradwives by becoming more religious, more traditional, and more of a real pioneer homemaker. Her explicit calls to have many (white) children align with Christian nationalist pronatalism (Ingersoll 2015). While much of her YouTube channel (8.8 k followers) has been banned or demonetized,[2] her Instagram (3.5k followers) reveals the same aestheticized images of a rural pastness she describes as "Christian & vintage culture). Figure 5 shows a representative sample: a rural church, goats and apples, a 19th-century cabin, 19th-century art and photos of Victorian people, children's books and her own watercolor paintings of women. Like other tradwives, she uses a mix of self-styling, performance of typified actions indexing chronotopes (e.g. baking, farming), artifacts and media representations of the past to construct her own chronotope of pioneer traditionalism, in which families live together in close harmony with each other, with nature, and with God.

Fourth, PhilosophiCat, a more esoteric traditionalist influencer, calls for a much more drastic return, to "the world of tradition and chivalry." This medievalist chronotope of magic and knightly virtue is constructed with her styling as a medieval princess in white, with long blonde hair (a look she compares to glowing holy grails) and through shared myth such as Atlantis or Arthurian Legend, but dominantly through media repertoires, notably Tolkien's Middle Earth (as illustrated in the videos pictured in Figure 6). PhilosophiCat exemplifies the tradwives' practice of what Maly's (2023) defines as "metapolitics 2.0," or the extension of far-right politics to new cultural spaces; here, a fantasy film series becomes a vehicle for introduction to spiritual racism and the Nazi occult. Unlike tradwives who anchor their performances in a specific decade or era, Philosophicat's chronotopic ideal world is less a specific past moment and more a generic world of "tradition," shown in esoteric, mystical, mythical and fictional texts, populated with male heroes and women who worship them.

Philosophicat, previously Cat Weiss, was a research assistant to the Holocaust denier David Irving and now teaches the esoteric anti-feminism and spiritual racism of Julius Evola. Philosphicat (22k followers on YouTube, 47k on Twitter) distinguishes herself in the crowded tradwife market as a traditional courtly love, her viewer the knight in shining armor or the heroic Aragorn in *Lord of the Rings*.[3] Her channel shows an

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[2]Demonetization is when videos with objectionable or salacious content that falls short of censorship standards are no longer accorded any revenue by the platform for views, advertisements or clicks. Despite tradwives' claims that demonetization does not work, it can harm their bottom lines.

[3]Many thanks to Elise Kramer for pointing out the "lord of the rings" was actually an evil spirit, and to Kit Woolard for pointing out that Viggo Mortenson, who played Aragorn, is an anti-fascist and fights against the use of his image by the far right in Spain. Nonetheless, this film and the image of heroism it evokes remains resolutely popular among the traditionalist right.
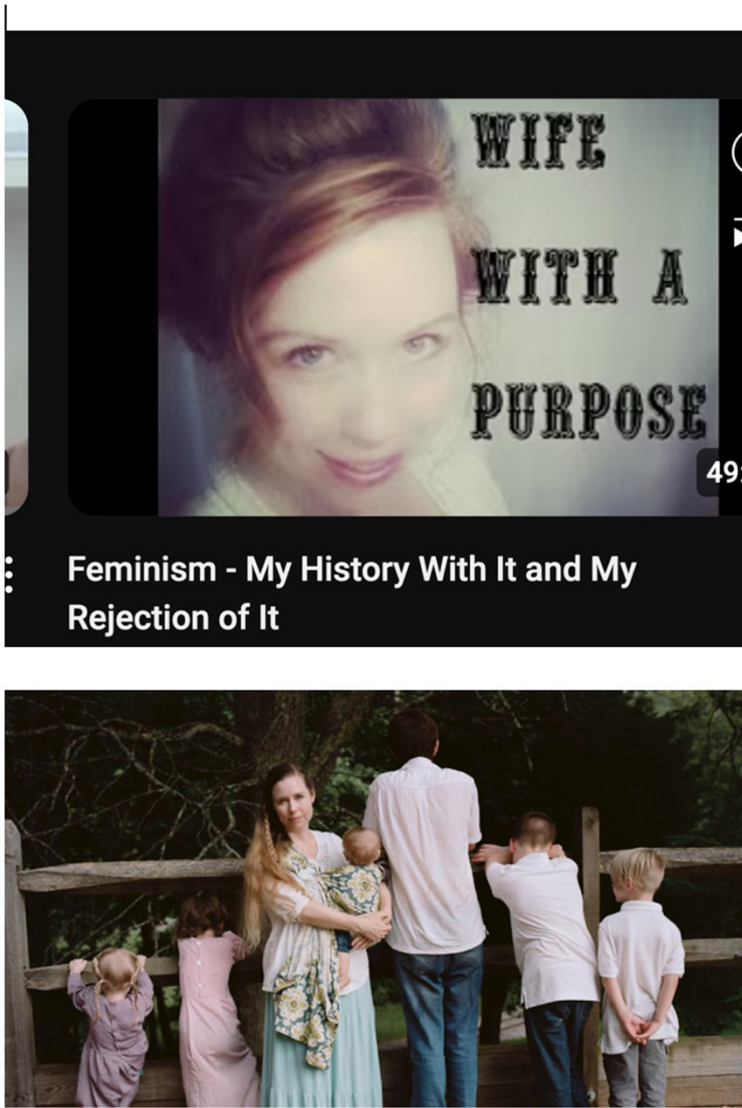
Figure 4. Photos from wife with a purpose Youtube channel and a photo of her with her large family, both showing pioneer style.

international audience (they offer translation in multiple European languages from French to Romanian) interested in her interpretation of esoteric philosophy and the spiritual Fascism of Julius Evola. She is even more traditional than the tradwives, endorsing Julius Evola's *Revolt Against the Modern World*. Evola's reading is expressed by PhilosophiCat as mythical, but also truer than true—as a chronotope outside of time and place, but also a chronotopic world of tradition that can be returned to.

Figure 5. Photo array from Stewart's Instagram.

This shows, I argue in the following section, that each of these individual chronotopic performances in the mass mediatized spaces of YouTube can also be read as instances of a single gendered chronotope—one in which submission is the gateway to the world of tradition.

From many tokens to a type of gendered chronotope

In this section, I show how each of these individual chronotopes is made part of the same value project. Gender is a thread along which all these chronotopes can be threaded, much like the tradwives' strings of pearls, and made coeval and deeply meaningful as expressions of a chronotope of tradition and a sacred archetype of the platonic "absolute woman." Absolute woman is sacred archetype, a type to which each one of the tradwives' chronotopic identity performances can be read or rescaled (Gal 2016). Whether returning to the 1950s suburban kitchen, the 1850s homestead, the 1930s English cottage or the world of Middle Earth, each as each woman instantiates
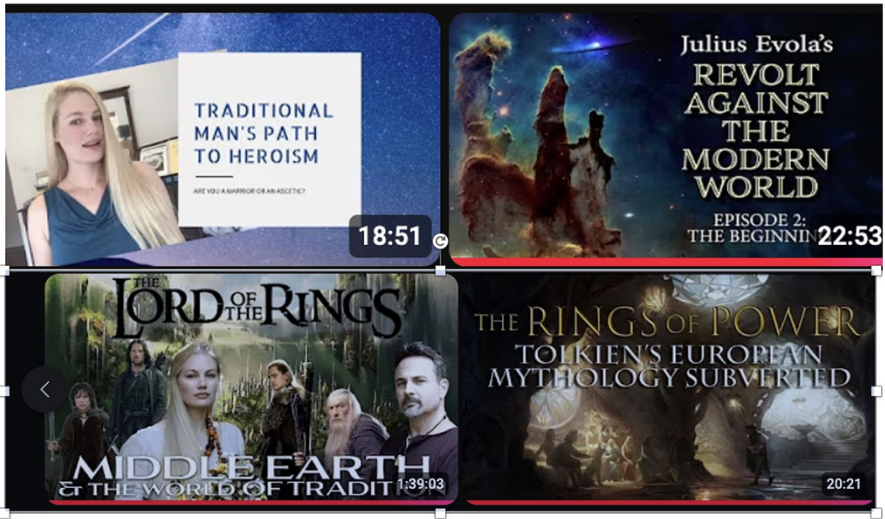
Figure 6. Photo array from philosophicat's youtube channel.

this archetype, she becomes part of a shared, higher order chronotope of tradition, the sacred, stable world outside time which is created through the restoration of hierarchy and female submission. In this section, I show how each influencer's individual evocation of a particular chronotope becomes an expression of a higher order, archetypal chronotope of tradition and womanhood—which shapes a chronotopic narrative of eternal return in which the restoration of woman to her right place in the home, brings a return of messianic ideal, "traditional" time.

Gender functions as a technology of commensuration (Chandras and Babcock 2025), which allows interpreters to rescale disparate space-times by establishing perceived moral and affective equivalences. Here, gender establishes an equivalence between disparate feminine visions from the 1950s home and housewife to the Medieval lady in her castle, as shared expressions of a single, sacred, transcendent, feminine submission. Gendered commensuration is a "techne.. a classificatory tool …which mediates the production and deployment of other technologies" (3) not merely rigidly framing any individual woman in her bundle of space time as expressions of a single essence, but calling on a host of other technologies and political projects: the private home, the return of the domestic sphere, anti-feminism, as part of a shared spiritual, affective, social project of restoring this sacred gender.

This is ideological work done in a spiritual register, in which the shared gender role is used to rescale multiple images of traditional gender styled differently across multiple individual chronotopes into a holy essence of tradition itself. An eternal form is created by disparate chronotopic performances, media, discourse, and sign elements bundled (Keane 2003) ideologically into what PhilosophiCat terms the sacred archetype of "truly traditional woman." In *Traditional Woman's Path to Heroism*, PhilosophiCat outlines two archetypes of womanhood: Demeter or the sacred mother, and Aphrodite or

the sacred muse. The first eternal unity is found in the "Demeter archetype… her purpose from them…She is a nurturer at heart, the vast majority of women are going to be Demeter types, um obviously … you know childbearing is a key function of Womanhood" (3:47:53). A second, spiritual analogue is Aphrodite, who, rather than birthing physical children, is an "alchemical goddess" who serves as a vessel for a man's artistic and intellectual offspring. PhilosophiCat suggests that "a woman who is an Aphrodite type will firstly be dedicated to her male partner. She's going to be a side kick to his superhero but she's also going to be his Muse and intellectual companion" (5:53–6:02). Across times, then, women are meant to be tokens of either one of these (arche)types.

This is at first an instance of traditionalist rescaling of individual women's lives as tokens of Womanhood. This higher indexical order is further resignified as a sacred order, the unity of femininity, or the absolute woman: "absolute woman is like a platonic form. It's the Divine expression of femininity and real women are just Shadows cast by it." (10:13–17, capitalization hers). Archetypes, and traditionalist semiosis more broadly, are syncretic, bringing together diverse instances to create a sacred order. Across different instances of the past, a divine chronotope of tradition is created. In parallel, traditionalism itself is a syncretic reading, a search for a sacred unity across diverse text to reveal a sacred order or divine world of being across philosophical texts: Evola, Jungian archetypes, Platonic forms, Greek mythology, Vedas, astrology (and now, with Philosophicat, Tolkien).

Gender is central to creating the overarching order and its chronotope of tradition, with Womanhood or Manhood the archetype that unites these diverse historical moments into a tradition above time. Gendered Archetypes are a sacred social hierarchy, and because they are gendered they also define sacred roles she calls "path to heroism," although only men are heroes: "in order for a woman to fulfill her natural role it must come through dedication to another being, this uh this passive is an expression of pure devotion … he calls Baki" (2:32 2:47). Men, PhilosophiCat states, reading Evola, should aim to become solar principals and women should become the moon who reflects and submits to them. This act of submission then becomes a moment of restoration of the spiritual order.

The restoration of spiritual order is "heirophany," the manifestation or restoration of the sacred within the profane. In Philosophicat's reading of *Julius Evola's Eros and The Mysteries of Love*, the home is an instance of this transcendent chronotope or the "manifestations of sacred realities" (7:33). She describes this as a kind of a religious history (7:40), an eternal recurrence of the transcendent or the sacred: "the same mysterious act the manifestation of something of a holy different order a reality does not belong to our world in objects that are an integral part of natural profane world" (7:44–53). The first instance of this is the home:

> homes weren't really possible in you know the times of—and this is another thing that's mentioned in Ancient City by Fel Colones, that you could build a house and people could be living in it, but until you perform the right rituals and you build it to the right layout it isn't a home, it's not a proper dwelling …because you're trying to recreate an image of the cosmos as accurately as possible and that was

the nature of—that was the means by which they they drew the sacred down into the profane, yes, I think it's the axis Mundi … it's emblematic of something like the axis Mundi, that Center Point … provides an orienting point in the chaos of profane space. (8:17–9:53)

The home is sacred as it represents the organization of the world and the sacred order drawn into the profane. This order is represented by male domination and female submission. This is not exclusive to esoteric traditionalism; as Bjork-James (2021) points out, belief in a sacred gender hierarchy exists as well in the Evangelical Protestanism that also influences the tradwife community.

Here it is illustrated by Evola's description of sexual magic. In this view, men represent the world of being, and women the world of becoming; men the world of the forms, and women the world of matter; men the sacred, and women the profane; men the vertical and women the horizontal. Sex then becomes its own kind of heirophany, a sacred rite in which the spiritual world penetrates the profane, and in which a sacred hierarchy is restored in a world of profane equality. She describes women's submission as "passive heroism," as a spiritual magic designed to recreate the sacred order, a sexual magic described as a "spiritual Devotion to their lord and King and what they're engaging in sexually is you know some kind of initiatory type of transcendent sexual relation aimed at producing a heroic quality" (38:37–52).

PhilosophiCat's archetypal womanhood and "heroic quest" makes explicit, and spiritual, a process of adequation of different chronotopes which I argue occurs with all tradwives. For each, feminine submission is about restoring not merely different visions of tradition—well-lit kitchen, rural farmhouse, or British cottage—but part of a higher-order chronotope of "traditional femininity" that argues women's submission is eternal, natural, necessary, holy. The chronotope of tradition, like the chronotope of messianic time which links to the sacred and the end of history (Agha 2007), represents the world of being, stasis, and purity, a transcendent, the spiritual world but also one of tradition and stable social hierarchies, in contrast to the world of "becoming" modernity and materiality which happens in time. This creates a higher indexical order which functions simultaneously to naturalize and to spiritualize the social roles indexed by individual chronotopes. It naturalizes the postwar social order of women at home and men at work as a sacred social hierarchy in which the home (or the missionary position) is the expression, framing motherhood and wifehood as tokens of atavistic tradition reiterated across other historical times. Following Wirtz (2016), this adequation of chronotopes through gender shows how indexical relationships can be naturalized to convey ideology through ever more encompassing social orders—much as the submission of any individual woman is naturalized by the term "traditional gender role" and the invention of a tradition in which women were enclosed in a domestic sphere. In the traditionalist chronotope, first there is the individual tradwife's chronotopic identity construction—the idealized femininity expressed as a relation between the moment of enunciation and a particular imagined past—and then a connection to the higher indexical order of womanhood and tradition itself. The repetition of these far-right time-space indexicalities goes so far as to naturalize femininity as the eternal return to the home.
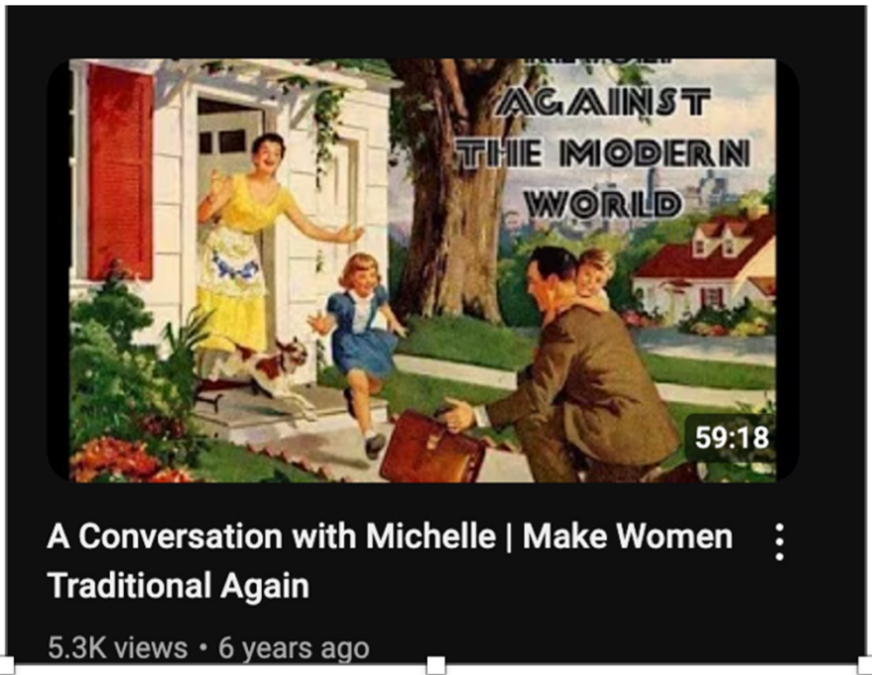
Figure 7. Thumbnail from Lynn's Youtube video referring to Julius Evola.

Chronotopic contrasts, constructing the chronotope of return

In the third section, I show how this chronotope of tradition is held in contrast to a chronotope of modernity to create a chronotopic narrative of "return to tradition."

To create desire for the chronotope of tradition, tradwives offer a chronotopic imagination of a degraded modernity characterized by feminist social equality. We can see this chronotopic frame clearly in an emblematic image, a thumbnail from one of "the original bad ass Tradwife" Lacey Lynn's videos, where the chronotope of tradition as evoked by the 1950s home ad is placed in explicit juxtaposition with modernity through the caption "against the modern world."

Across the top of the meme in Figure 7 is written "Against the Modern World," a reference to Evola's "Revolt Against the Modern World." The video is a call to return to tradition, as shown in the 1950s advertising-style image of the woman in apron at the threshold, welcoming the man into the home. The title "make women traditional again" not only indexes affinity to Donald Trump's MAGA but also positions women's traditionality as parallel or equivalent to America's greatness.

Here, I analyze tradwives' commentaries on feminism, beginning with Alena Kate Pettitt, the English tradwife discussed above, who frames this chronotopic contrast in terms of a choice between being a tradwife and "girl bossing." In the title of a widely circulated video on the *Guardian*'s website, she adjusts the framing to "I'd rather obey my husband than a boss," shaping the chronotope of modernity as one of stress, work,

capitalist oppression, and loneliness. She describes herself as a lonely girl, different from feminists, and constantly stressed by a London marketing job. Her husband is a fairy tale, a dream come true, her fondest desire. In contrast to the world of tradition, remaining in the home is a life of joy, ease, and selfless devotion.

These oppositions remain in the other vidieos, but the ideological elements of this contrast are intensified. Ayla Stewart contrasts a world of tradition, spirituality, and motherhood with modernity and social decline in her video *Feminism: my history with it and my rejection of it.* Stewart describes her MA research "into the divine feminine within religious structures and how that relates to certain aspects of this Society" (6:59) The sacred feminine was "so stay-at-home motherhood, home birth, breastfeeding, homebased education (11:12–56)" a conclusion she came to through study of "conservative communities, family based communities, traditional family structures, motherhood, the sacredness of motherhood" (10:41-11:12). In contrast to the sacred feminine, "Feminism… denies real feminine power" (44:41). Like Lynn, Stewart describes feminism as "an attack on the family" (45:19) and "on the West and its greatness":

> The cultural ideal behind feminism, the culture of feminism and what our culture says feminism is, is that dictionary definition of equality between a man and a woman —which isn't even possible but that's another subject—but the cultural reality is not that they are wanting to be equal with men, the cultural reality is that they're very degrading to men, to men's instincts …have served mankind um humankind for thousands of years. They lead. They protect. They are strong. They provide. They were crucial in development of things like the enlightenment, um developments, medical breakthroughs like penicillin. That was given to us by men … they've built up all of the Western World. (21:22-22:38).

Here she argues feminism, or the idea that men and women are equal, is an insult to men, and she argues that instead women's role is to inspire—what PhilosophiCat calls the Aphrodite archetype. Men, she argues, "built this most of the Western World number for two reasons: number one, to prove that they were the strongest man. Number two, to get chicks" (40:21–36). But (41:05–12) "feminism has made us not worth this, leading men to not work, nor be creative or inventive" leading to social decline. Indeed, "[o]ur society is quite literally doomed. Feminism is killing us" (49:17) she concludes.

For Lacey Lynn, feminism is not just responsible for current social ills but for the decline of all empires since Ancient Rome, as she makes explicit in *Yes, All Feminism.* Here Lynn tells the history of tradition, and forges gendered contrasts between prosperity and decline:

> Ancient Rome, when the economy was thriving, impressive infrastructure was being built, taxes were low, jobs were not hard to find and an emphasis was put on individual freedom in the family unit. This was first century BC. First century women, particularly wealthy women that is important to note, started abandoning their motherhood roles… Rome felt the breakdown of the family unit across the empire. The Roman empire enacted a bachelor's tax to help save marriage but it lost the battle and ended up taxing itself to death. (0:23-1:19)

Table 1. Contrasting the traditional and the modern woman

Traditional woman	Modern woman
Tradwife	Girlboss
Selfless	Selfish
Inspires men	Competes with men
Private space	Public space
Divine feminine	Mundane feminist
Motherhood	Self
Freedom	State power
Male innovation	Stagnation
Coverture/covenant marriage	Divorce
Homemakers	Selfish socialites
Sacred	Profane
Absolute woman	Shadow
Service to king above	Narcissistic self-service
Type	Token
Strong nation	Decline

In the rest of her video, feminism is made responsible not only for the decline and fall of Rome, but also for the end of many other periods of prosperity and the power of the state. Feminism brought the downfall of the Victorian Era and the golden age of Capitalism, when divorce laws extended the Marxist class war into the family. Women's right to vote brought two world wars, and then second wave feminism (and Hillary Clinton) attacked the suburban family unit and ended postwar prosperity, allowing Marxism to take hold (12:50). Ultimately, she states, all feminism is wrong – not just Clinton's pantsuits (16:07) but divorce, voting and the end of coverture laws, of which she says, "by marriage a husband and wife are one person under law as a very being or legal existence of a woman is suspended or at least consolidated or incorporated into that of her husband" (2:18). The ultimate message of *Yes, All Feminism*, then, is that woman's legal equality is an attack on tradition and greatness.

Bringing tradwives' anti-feminist discourses together, an ideological framework contrasting two chronotopes around a gendered axis of difference (Susan and Irvine 2019) appears as in Table 1.

This is a differentiation of gender roles across multiple historical and religious traditions, where tradition is characterized by women in the home and in service to men, and modernity by women in public. Tradition and modernity as contrasting chronotopic formulations of social relations (Harkness 2015, 305) also scale up to contrasts between institutional forms of life (Agha 2007): from a modernity of equal subjects to state power and taxation to a traditional work imagined as libertarian individualism for men and submission for women. They also pick out different, morally marked person types. Feminism is across these texts characterized as narcissism, the lack of a proper object to love or worship, embodied as a rich, selfish socialite. She is called to return

to the world of tradition, to become a mother, a divine feminine, an archetype and an inspiration.

This chronotopic contrast is held together in a single framework. This framework shapes a narrative of return. In tradwives' discourse, their choice to be stay-at-home wives and mothers becomes a chronotopic narrative of the return to the home as the rejection of femininity and the restoration of Western greatness. For Lynn, this is the rejection of feminism as the rejection of cultural Marxism and the state, and the restoration of prosperity. For Stewart, it is the recovery of divine feminine and the restoration of the West. For Philosophicat, it is the mapping of the sacred order into the profane. These discourses of return create meaning through an inherently gendered chronotopic contrast between tradition and modernity, femininity and feminism. This gendered contrast is necessary to the meaning of the traditionalist chronotope. Housework, reproductive labor, the humdrum qualities of everyday life which characterize the chronotope, take on this epic–adventure–time meaning when they are framed as the rescue and renewal of the nation. Otherwise, it would just be laundry day.

Chronotopes of gender

In the first section, tradwives constructed individualized chronotopes of tradition to show themselves as "feminine" women, and to construct a distinctly gendered life in the private sphere as a more pleasant, more purposeful, or more powerful social role. In the second section, it became clear that gender was a line across which particular chronotopes were made coeval and deeply meaningful as expressions of "absolute woman" embodying chronotope of sacred tradition. In the third, modernity was contrasted with tradition, yielding stories about return and restoration. Across these three processes, the wife, the helpmeet, the biblical gender role, the "absolute woman" or the tradwife comes to index the whole chronotope of tradition itself.

The "traditional" woman is a chronotope of gender—the woman who is in the home, as she was in the past. Highlighting the centrality of gender in these constructions has also brought out theoretical elements of the construction of chronotopes in mass media: *relationality, recombination*, and *ideological saturation*. First, the chronotope is *relational*—a chronotope of gender centers the chronotopic framework or the frame of contrast and creation of similarity and difference. Tradwives show not only that there is chronotopic contrast, but that their contrast or adequation can be a purposive dialogue across chronotopes, part of a single metapolitical argument about gender and the world of tradition. Just as traditionalist gender is relational, requiring men who are dominant and women who submit, stories of return need two chronotopes held in a frame of contrast.

Second, this chronotopic frame is *recombinant* and highly mediatized. Looking at the tradwives' construction of an archetypal understanding of gender across multiple modes of media, religion and history helps us understand what Agha terms "mass mediated spacetime" (Agha 2007), a realm of semiotic encounters between multiple and motley mass representations with complex links to everyday life. Here these links are complex, recombinant, and recursive. Take, for example, a tradwife's vlog, with

her depiction of a personal everyday life projected to mass media; at the same time, this story is shaped and informed by clips of mass media or elements of circulating (pseudo)historical or philosophical discourse, and her intimate discursive style forms an individual connection to a wide mass audience.

Social media itself is highly recombinant, with the ability to bring into a single video multiple semiotic elements which are emblematic of individual historical moments and remix and reshape them. However, rather than shaping recombinant selves and hybrid times as Agha argues, what seems to emerge is instead a kind of messianic time in which everything from Atlantis to Zelda is an instance of the world of tradition. Similarly, the different elements of traditional femininity combine not into a recombinant self, but into an archetype expressing shared elements of an absolute femininity. Mass media, and modern, hybrid infrastructures are used to create traditionalist, absolute ideologies.

Third, mediatized images of tradition are ideologically saturated—so much so that pearls indexing 1950s style become an enregistered emblem for suburban affluence, whiteness and gendered submission, captured in the phrase "pearl nationalism." This paper adds an exploration of how these ideologically saturated indexes of tradition are also ideological operations of scale making (Gal 2019), the construction of difference (Susan and Irvine 2019) and similarity across disparate media elements and chronotopes. Traditionalism is itself ideological scale making, in which multiple things are adequated into a vision of femininity as absolute submission and difference. It is not merely the affordances of mass media, but ideologies about gender and gendered power which allow these messages to circulate.

To reframe Agha's formulation of media chronotopes, "traditional" gender is the glassy essence under which messages flow and make individuals partial analogues of each other. Here each woman is meant to be an instance of the absolute woman, the lunar spirit honoring the masculine. Gender ideologies serve as another equally important infrastructure of meaning which makes this dialogue across chronotopes possible. Chronotopes then are held in deeply ideological relationships of similarity and difference which are used to naturalize and spiritualize relationships of social inequality, highlighting the importance of understanding chronotopes as social value projects. In tradwives' discourses, gendered chronotopes are powerful tools for organizing, aligning, and narrating idealized social and indexical orders, as well as creating desire for them.

Implications for understanding right-wing discourse

Understanding that "woman in her place" represents a whole chronotope—a whole social and spiritual world – can help us understand how media helps win assent to far-right metapolitics. Wirtz argues that chronotopes are the semiosis of historical imagination; this article has shown that they are a gendered and metapolitical semiosis of this imagination. On the political right, this gendered and affective semiosis not of history but of gendered tradition and of its intimate space-time is used to create what Jacques Rancière (1995) theorized as passion for inequality.

Tradwives create desire for this politics by displaying it as a desirable world, through images of ease and affluence. They construct it as women's true hidden desire, ready to be awakened, perhaps by a man like the viewer. Gendered chronotopes make the idea of returning to a past way of life achievable through masculine domination and female submission. It is as if one could go back in time to a golden era, restore tradition, enter the world the intimate sphere or the epic adventure time, simply by entering into the worlds of gendered relations described in and made desirable through these chronotopic performances.

Exploring tradwives' feminine chronotopes showed how intimate visions of the home and sexual relations are made into visions of far-right ideology and theories of tradition. Chronotopes of femininity help understand how reaction is made desirable, as ideal women are wholesome, softly pretty, and submissive wives who serve and elevate men. It shows how submission is made meaningful, a narrative vision of a moral order of male power and leadership they tell, naturalize and legitimate a story in which men should lead the nation, even history, while women represent reproduction, submission, tradition.

This chronotope offers a limited, ideologically laden vision of what tradition is and how chronotopes should be created and assembled, to create affluent well-lit homes—in this instance a shift away from class and towards gender as the site of political agency (Graan 2015). Feminism here is imagined as a creation of state power, a departure from tradition—but state power is not imagined as assuring the well-being of working people. The gendered chronotope of tradition shown in Lynn's "1965 red pill," for example, includes the role of government in managing a racist social order with immigration and civil rights acts, but ignores the roles of government in guaranteeing mortgages. Similarly, the gendered chronotope of tradition in Stewart's homestead erases the Homestead Act, or government land grants, while the midcentury cottagecore affluence of Pettitt certainly does not mention the NHS. Instead, care is shifted here to the feminine, domestic and private sphere.

Chronotopes of gender show the past as a series of glowing pearls, each highly mediatized and adaptable to right-wing metapolitics. In these mass mediatized, reactionary stories, we are made to feel the deep importance of gender and are encouraged to see gender as the answer to contemporary social issues. These short videos show gender as opening the door to a whole world of affect, characters, and moral orders. They are a fairy tale, a Hallmark movie, a Netflix Christmas special, made possible perhaps largely because of these kinds of mediatized representations selling us the magical thinking that postwar affluence will return when we return to postwar gender roles. These chronotopic formulations in the language of lifestyle media reframe a return to the domestic sphere as warm and affective, as a return home—as aspirational as a new kitchen, and as spiritual as a return to your ordained place. These circulating, socially typified chronotopic formulations of return then are used to mobilize viewers into a reactionary value project – one that sees aspirational, well-lit homes as only built by female submission.

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