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 FURIO JESI. MITOPOLITICA
 

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## Genealogy of Far-Right Accelerationism

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The aim of the present study is to outline a theory of fascist accelerationism through a genealogy of the core mythological structures that animate its actors. At issue is a constellation of narratives, symbols, slogans and watchwords embedded within a precise current of white supremacist militancy responsible for a considerable number of mass murder events over the span of four decades. The impetus for this research lay in the author's conviction that American far-right mass shootings of recent years cannot be adequately understood either as purely strategic acts of a coherent political-ideological movement, nor as expressions of a generic nihilism run amok, a "botched exit" from the despair, humiliation, and isolation of everyday life in the hell-world of late capitalism. This alternative between political and nonpolitical interpretations fails to offer a satisfying account of the prevailing motor of subjectivation that drives this culture of sacrificial murder. Even when responding to material conditions such as economic crises or pandemics, fascists prefer to think in terms of mythic narratives and imaginary forms that (as one recent study observed) are «always metaphysically clashing in a realm of pure strife, its images deeply freighted with feeling»<sup>1</sup>. While it is action that makes history and not disembodied ideas, the practice of accelerationist violence consciously inscribes itself within a highly symbolic and ritualized mythological framework with precise historical roots. While the presence of mythological narratives is often acknowledged by historians and specialists of the far-right, its specific function within its economy of violence remains undertheorized. The present study seeks to remedy this absence. Taking as its guide the conceptual framework provided by Furio Jesi's 1979 work *Cultura di destra*

<sup>1</sup> S. Moore and A. Roberts, *Post-Internet Far Right. Fascism in the Age of the Internet*, Dog Section Press, London 2021, p. 27.

[Right Wing Culture], it traces the origin and descent of far-right accelerationism, here understood as a distinct form of mythic violence. The article opens by laying out this Jesian framework, before proceeding to apply it to the context of the American far-right, focusing in particular on the period extending from 1975 into the present day.

## 1.

For much of the Twentieth century the politics of myth was structured by a compulsory decision upon the reality or unreality of what Myth purported to “reveal” to modern consciousness. Whether mythic epiphany was regarded as an exceedingly rare phenomenon whose disappearance belies the decadent artificiality of modern politics (Mann, Kerényi), or else as a mass affective contagion enabling subversive forces to leap over the impasses of ideological theoreticism (Sorel, Bataille), the realities afforded by mythic revelation were roundly regarded as a privileged point of entry into “authentic” human community whose powers we ignore at our own peril. Those who dismissed the mythic symbol either as metaphoric fiction, superstition, or a vestigial remnant of prerational forms of thought often later found themselves defenseless in the face of powers whose efficacy they had fatally underestimated<sup>2</sup>. However, the effort to take myth seriously frequently led many to commit themselves to a humanist political anthropology that seemed necessary in order to account for the authentic upsurge of mythic imagery from the collective unconscious, as well as anticipate and fend off their degraded manipulations at the hands of cynical modern politicians. Mythology thus found itself compelled to play a game of authentication, sifting genuine images of community from degraded simulacra, disentangling originary experience (e.g., in the work of art) from the destroyed or untransmittable alienation of contemporary communication, etc.

If the work of the Italian mythologist and critical theorist Furio Jesi continues to exert an influence on contemporary thought, this is in no small part due to his ability to deactivate the problems through which his own discipline tended to understand itself. This is particu-

<sup>2</sup> On Jesi’s remarks, for example, on the death of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, see K. Aarons, *Cruel Festivals. Furio Jesi and the Critique of Political Autonomy*, in «Theory & Event», Vol. 22, No. 2: pp. 1018-1046, 2019.

larly true of Jesi's works of the 1970s, which outlined a new approach to the study of mythology. During this final decade of his life, Jesi attempts to extricate questions of myth, human nature, and political transformation from the dialectic of the proper and the improper, the authentic and the inauthentic that continued to structure much symbolist and structuralist mythology in the late 1960s, including his own posthumously published *Spartakus: The Symbolology of Revolt* (1969)<sup>3</sup>. Beginning with his 1972 essay on Rimbaud, the opposition between myth and history will be presented as the product of a more primary operation or apparatus operating at the very heart of human subjectivity: a mythological and anthropological machine that functions by producing images or schemas of Myth and Man in its true or authentic state, while simultaneously withholding access to them<sup>4</sup>. Following this "mythological machine hypothesis", the aim of Jesi's critical mythology is to locate and neutralize the linguistic and social machines that nourish such divisions themselves, in order to deactivate their hold over us. It is no longer useful to consider mythic epiphany (whether in Antiquity or modern times) as the site of an encounter with a primordial collective unconscious substrate known as *Myth*. What we find in epiphany is only variously manipulated and technicized *mythological materials*, understood as products of a machine whose operation we must instead learn how to draw into view. Whether we consider the festivity of the Ancients or the revolt of communards in Paris, what must be studied is not the content of epiphanic experience itself but the functional efficacy of an *allusion* to esoteric content that epiphany installs at the heart of collective experience, with all its associated political and social consequences. How does this or that community wrap itself in mythological elements that define its borders and rituals, its image of the familiar and the different, as well as its practical impulses?<sup>5</sup> How does the essen-

<sup>3</sup> On the critique of this dialectic in mythologists and anthropologists such as Károly Kerényi and Claude Lévi-Strauss, see F. Jesi, «La fête et la machine mythologique» in *La fête et la machine mythologique*, translated by F. Vallos, Éditions Mixe, Paris 2008, pp. 73-123, and V. Descombes, *The Ambiguity of the Symbolic* in «Theory, Culture, and Society», Vol. 3, No. 3, 1986, pp. 69-83.

<sup>4</sup> F. Jesi, *A Reading of Rimbaud's «Bateau ivre»*, in «Time and Festivity», translated by C. Viti, Seagull, London 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Germán Osvaldo Prósperi has sought to distinguish Jesi's concept of the mythological machine (which, he claims, circles around a single void) from the concept of the apparatus in Giorgio Agamben's writings from the mid-1990s onward, arguing that only in the latter do we find a bi-polar structure. G. O. Prósperi, *La máquina elíptica de Giorgio Agamben*

tial opacity of the content that communities guard at their center at once nourish and sustain their hunger for myth, thereby ensuring their dependency on abyssal machines? In short, the task of a critical mythology must therefore be to produce a historical phenomenology of the shifting apparatuses of subjectivation that preside over epiphanic sequences, without succumbing to the temptation either to affirm or deny the metaphysical reality of something like Myth operating therein<sup>6</sup>. The outcome will be a new epistemology of the human sciences: in place of a knowledge of Myth or Man, Jesi calls for a science of their “non-knowledge” premised on the comparative study of the social and historical machines that elicit our belief therein. During the final years before his death, this methodological and strategic transformation also gave rise to a new approach to the study of fascism and right-wing culture.

## 2.

A central thesis of Jesi's *Cultura di destra* asserts that right-wing culture has no independent tradition or substance<sup>7</sup>. Rather, it operates through a manipulation of received cultural goods, by promoting a blind trust in names, words, slogans and insignia that it presents as reservoirs of esoteric and unspoken truths. Instead of recognizing tradition and culture as the chaotic bricolage of mythological materials that they actually are, right-wing thought *alludes* to a historic, superhuman, eternal and ineffable meaning lurking behind its watchwords and symbols. It accomplishes this through the production, hypostasis, and circulation of what Jesi calls “wordless ideas”, a term lifted from Oswald Spengler. In his 1934 work, *The Hour of Deci-*

in «Profanações», Vol. 2, No. 2, 2015, pp. 62-83. In my opinion, not only are binary divisions a perennial feature of Jesi's thought, but an appreciation of their shifting configuration proves decisive for understanding the fate of the concept of revolt in Jesi's late period work. On this point, see K. Aarons, «*A Dance Without a Song*»: *Revolt and Community in Furio Jesi's Late Work* forthcoming in «South Atlantic Quarterly» Vol. 122, No. 1 January, 2023.

<sup>6</sup> «In order to define the contours of an apparatus that produces epiphanies of myth and that inside it, beyond its impenetrable walls, might contain myths themselves – Myth as such [*il mito*] – but might also be empty, we may use the image of the *mythological machine*». F. Jesi, «La macchina mitologica: ideologia e mito» in *Mito*, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milan 1980, pp- 105-109, at p. 105. Translations are my own unless noted.

<sup>7</sup> F. Jesi, *Culture de droit*, translated by A Savona, Éditions la Tempête, Bordeaux 2021, p. 22. First published as *Cultura di destra*, Aldo Garzanti Editore, Milano 1979.

sion, Spengler writes: «That which we have in our blood by inheritance – namely, wordless ideas – is the only thing that gives permanence to our future. «Prussianism» [*Preußentum*]... is to be reached only through the living example and moral self-discipline of a ruling class, not by a flow of words or by force»<sup>8</sup>. We find here a paradigmatic case of that coincidence of the assertoric, the esoteric, and the exemplary that characterizes rightist enunciation: on the pretense of speaking truthfully, of making oneself history's scribe, the speaker simultaneously declares that the knowledge he has arrived at remains «inaccessible and incommunicable in words» and can only be confirmed in practice through exemplary ritual gestures<sup>9</sup>. Where he does speak, he has recourse to a repertoire of spiritualized words whose function is precisely to remain empty, to stop short of signification, and thereby to serve as a vehicle for wordless ideas. Through the circulation of capitalized terms such as Tradition, Patriotism, the Fatherland, and so on, right wing culture transforms the past into a homogenous pulp easily manipulated and adapted to the fluctuating needs of power at the moment<sup>10</sup>. What is in question is a culture in which «it is declared that there are indisputable values», where the appeal to the authority of «eternal values of the past» serves to reinforce a «mythological security regarding the n of knowledge, teaching, command and obedience»<sup>11</sup>.

However, if its discursive activity can get by with little more than a handful of words or syntagms, if it predominantly relies not on arguments and evidence but on watchwords, slogans and clichés, this is not due primarily or exclusively to a «poverty of culture» or a «vocabulary objectively limited by ignorance»<sup>12</sup>. Instead, Jesi argues, this restricted economy reflects a conscious decision to subordinate descriptive speech to the evocation of a truth that is only ever presumed, but which must itself remain unexpressed. The language of ideas without words is a language of public secrets, in which what remains implicit does as much or more work than what is made explicit. For

<sup>8</sup> «Introduction» in O. Spengler, *The Hour of Decision*, Rogue Scholar Press, 2020, 9.

<sup>9</sup> Jesi, *Culture de droit* cit., p. 22.

<sup>10</sup> «A range of ready-made fetishes, fashioned from a past reduced to a homogeneous "pulp", thus emerges, accompanied – quite logically – by a gallery of great men and esoteric sages, wrapped in prestige, mystery, wealth and aristocracy». A. Cavalletti, «Preface» in *Culture de droit* cit., p. 14. My translation.

<sup>11</sup> Jesi, *Culture de droit* cit., 227, 32.

<sup>12</sup> Jesi, *Culture de droit* cit., 25.

the same reason, right wing culture finds a welcome abode in our present age, in which permanent states of exception have reduced the normative pronouncements by democratic states to a condition of being *in force without significance*. Moreover, if Enlightenment discourse can grasp such a paradigm only with difficulty, this is because it does not rest on the Cartesian distinction between clear/distinct and opaque/confused, with its emphasis on the inversion of effects and causes<sup>13</sup>. If the function of the symbol is precisely to serve as a lodestone of a constitutively withdrawn meaning, this is because its enunciation carries out the perlocutionary function of binding speaker and audience: through the withdrawal of the idea from the words that invoke it, a powerful vacancy of meaning operates to install a magic circle linking audience and speaker. «What counts», writes Jesi, «is the closed circulation of “secret” myths and rituals that the speaker has in common with listeners, that all participants in the assembly or collective have in common»<sup>14</sup>. In general, wherever the production of a common substance of community proceeds through a magic circle installed by predicates to which the speaker lays claim («We love our Heritage, our History, our Culture, our Folkways, our Moral Beliefs, our Dreams, and our Children»)<sup>15</sup>, yet whose meaning is formally withdrawn, invoked without ever being explicated, we are likely dealing with right wing culture. Such cultures are marked, on the one hand, by a constant evocation of the High, the Ancient, the Pure, the Noble, which produces an effect of spiritual luxury by continually piling junk upon itself. At the same time, since these terms must remain opaque, they depend upon a mythological machine that allows them to rotate endlessly around the void they guard at their center, simultaneously reproducing and concealing it. What binds right wing community is a common participation in an absence<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> This remains a limitation of approaches that take Spinoza as their point of departure. See J. Read, *Charlie Kirk is Right to be Afraid of Spinoza* in «Jacobin», August 11, 2022 <https://jacobin.com/2022/08/charlie-kirk-right-wing-baruch-spinoza-conspiracy-freedom> («Conspiracy theories... are the secular version of the final-cause frame of mind once associated with Scripture and religion»).

<sup>14</sup> Jesi, *Culture de droit* cit., 25.

<sup>15</sup> L. Beam, *Essays of a Klansman*, A.K.I.A., Hayden Lake 1983, p. 50.

<sup>16</sup> A. Cavalletti, *Démolir la culture de droite*, in «Lundi Matin #286», May 2021: «It is because it *refers to the unverifiable* that the language of non-words can gather circles of adepts around it, since it acts purely at the level of hearsay» (<https://lundi.am/lundimatin-cette-semaine-518>).

## 3.

To accuse right wing culture of being either internally inconsistent or tautological, or to think that a deconstruction of its internal contradictions will suffice to unravel it, is to miss the point. If right wing culture configures a horizon that is *not meant to be understood*, if it can afford to be less concerned with epistemological confirmation, this is because its confirmation will ultimately be gestural and ritual, which is to say, *practical*. As Sorel understood in his day, wherever we are dealing with mythic symbols we are dealing with a use of language that maintains an essential, albeit not necessarily linear or coherent, relation to action. For its authentic devotees – and this is particularly true of the accelerationist far-right, which will be our focus here – the past that right wing culture alludes to as its withdrawn ground was never intended to be purely self-sufficient; its purpose is rather to function as a call to arms. Like all ritual and mythic discourse, it must be supplemented and realized by action. As Spengler insists:

The service of an idea demands mastery of ourselves and readiness for inward sacrifices to conviction. To confuse this with the intellectual compulsion of a program is to be ignorant of the whole issue...All other nations of the world have inherited a character from their *past*. We had no educative past, and have therefore still to awaken, develop, and train the character which lies dormant in our blood<sup>17</sup>.

Herein lies a second fundamental dimension of right-wing culture, namely, the presence of a *religio mortis*, a religion of death or exemplary deaths. What is in question, as Jesi distills it, is «a hegemonic, totalizing funerary mythology, exhibited as the sole anchor point of the norms that oblige one to act or not to act, of the modalities of judging oneself and others, of the world, of the vision of history and of nature»<sup>18</sup>. This emphasis on exemplary death underscores the overlap between a *virile apotheosis of defeat* (or «winning by dying») and a self-effacing ethos of *sacrificial acceleration*. By contrast with the Kabbalistic Jewish accelerationism of Sabbati Zevi from which it was

<sup>17</sup> «Introduction» in O. Spengler, *The Hour of Decision* cit. p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> Jesi, *Culture de droit* cit., p. 50. While Jesi speaks of the symbology of skulls that was embraced by the *arditi*, we might think of the “Punisher” skulls popularized by the far-right today. While such imagery is not in itself sufficient to indicate the presence of a religion of death, it represents «a symbolic arsenal aimed at putting into circulation or formalizing values» (p. 51).

mimetically derived, fascist acceleration fuses the idea of service to one's people or race with a sacralized yet empty image of a fruitful or beautiful death<sup>19</sup>. The ultimate purpose of its wordless symbology is to enlist a structuring myth in order to confer on activist violence the aura of a ritual self-immolation, thereby recoding personal and social defeat as a maieutic or "founding" human sacrifice that secures a future for the Race.

A lengthy case study in *Cultura di destra* is dedicated to the "secret" continuities between the mature writings of mythologist Mircea Eliade and his youthful enthusiasm for the Iron Guard, a militant fascist sect whose ideology was marked by an «endless, circular sequence of vengeful violence, self-denunciation, sacrifice, and further revenge»<sup>20</sup>. In his *Memoires*, Eliade crystallized this *religio mortis* into a lapidary image: «In 1937-1938, death was the most popular theme among the Legionnaires, and the death of Motza and Marin was the exemplary model. Matzo's statement, "your own ashes are the most powerful dynamite", had become the new Gospel»<sup>21</sup>. In a variation on the archetypal myth of Master Manole, who can only erect his famed monastery provided that he first fatally walls his own pregnant wife inside it (and eventually himself and his comrades too), in Eliade «the legionaries were to die in order to ritually found "the emancipation of the nation" – hence their perspective of not conquering or dying, but conquering by dying»<sup>22</sup>. The ritual aim of fascist action is to accelerate the advent of a new world through the «testimonial killing of those who were, par excellence, the men of the old regime, as sacrificial victims»<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> On Jewish messianism as the repressed and inverted origin of rightist sacrificial acceleration, see Jesi, *Culture de droit* cit., pp. 64-66.

<sup>20</sup> C. Grottanelli, *Fruitful Death: Mircea Eliade and Ernst Jünger on Human Sacrifice, 1937-1945*, in «Numen», Vol. 52, No. 1, 2005, pp. 116-145. See also I. Rowland, «Furio Jesi and the Culture of the Right» in *The Making of the Humanities*, Vol. 3, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2014, pp. 283-298, at p. 287: «Eliade's extensive diaries to show that shortly after his return from India in 1931, this famous student of yoga, shamanism, and world religion had become a fervent supporter of the Iron Guard, or Legion of St. Michael, the Romanian paramilitary organization that combined Orthodox Christianity with Fascist authoritarianism».

<sup>21</sup> M. Eliade, *Mémoire II: Les moissons du solstice*, Gallimard, Paris 1988, p. 35. Cited in Grottanelli, «Fruitful Death», cit., p. 123.

<sup>22</sup> Jesi, *Culture de droit* cit., p. 61. Emphasis added.

<sup>23</sup> Jesi, *Culture de droit* cit., p. 68.



## 4.

The ideal of the founding sacrifice, the notion that «your own ashes are the most powerful dynamite» permeates white supremacist mass shootings in the U.S. today. Among its most salient contemporary watchwords is the slogan popularly known as the “Fourteen Words”. The origins of this slogan allow us to trace the genealogy of fascist accelerationism, an idiosyncratic current of contemporary far-right thought that drives these attacks.

Often said to be derived from a passage in *Mein Kampf*, the Fourteen Words has served as a symbolic keystone in many of the most high-profile plots and attacks in recent decades, including the Barack Obama assassination plot (2008), the Wisconsin Sikh temple shooting (2012), the Charleston church shooting (2015), the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting (2018), and the Christchurch mosque shootings (2019), among others. Most recently, it appeared in the *Manifesto* of 18-year-old neo-Nazi Payton Gendron, who killed ten people and injured three others in May 2022 when he opened fire in a poor black supermarket in Buffalo, NY while livestreaming on Twitch<sup>24</sup>. The slogan itself – «We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children» – was first coined by David Eden Lane, a member of the white supremacist terrorist group the Order, while Lane was serving a 190-year sentence in federal prison following the conspiratorial murder of Jewish talk show host Alan Berg in 1984<sup>25</sup>. At face value, its rhetorical function is a banally familiar one: to translate a diffuse anxiety over the liquidation of social markers of belonging and

<sup>24</sup> A. Feuer, *How Buffalo Suspect’s Racist Writings Reveal Links to Other Attacks*, in «New York Times», May 16th 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/16/us/buffalo-shooting-replacement-theory-christchurch-el-paso.html>.

<sup>25</sup> G. Michael, *David Lane and the Fourteen Words* in «Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions», Vol. 10, No. 1, March, 2009, pp. 43–61. The slogan became the namesake of a publishing house called 14 Word Press, founded in 1995 by Lane’s wife to circulate his works. It appeared widely in Lane’s writings, including in the 14 points of his *White Genocide Manifesto*. Lane argued that the Fourteen Words ought to serve as a litmus test for activists in the white supremacist movement: anything short of unequivocal endorsement casts doubt on the sincerity and reliability of a member. D. Lane, «Dissension in the Ranks» in *Deceived, Damned, & Defiant: The Revolutionary Writings of David Lane*, 14 Word Press, St Maries, 1999), p. 135. An early variant of the “white genocide” thesis was popularized by Madison Grant in his 1916 book, *The Passing of the Great Race*, which would later exert a strong influence on Adolf Hitler. For an overview, see A. Serwer, *White Nationalism’s Deep American Roots*, in «The Atlantic», April 2019 <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/04/adam-serwer-madison-grant-white-nationalism/583258/>.

the diminishing prospects for the future – lack of social mobility, precarious employment, shrinking purchasing power and, more recently, ecological collapse<sup>26</sup> – into a focus on the supposed “replacement” or even “genocide” of the white race *specifically*, which is presented as a deliberate plot organized by powerful Jews. However, in its minimalism, in the ideological indeterminacy of the future it invokes and the means to “secure” it, the slogan also reflects a decisive historical shift in the strategy of American white supremacists during the mid-1970s, and which (I seek to argue) Jesi’s work is uniquely positioned to illuminate. This shift was initiated by William Luther Pierce.

Exasperated with ideologically sectarian organizations such as the American Nazi Party, which alienated mainstream Americans while attracting only weak and «defective» individuals, Pierce’s National Alliance organization sought to develop a style of propaganda consciously shorn of antiquated symbology and political theory<sup>27</sup>. In a wager reminiscent of Georges Sorel’s *Reflections on Violence*, his aim was to hollow out white nationalist ideology into a «flexible structure that operates as a call to action for racists with widely varied beliefs»<sup>28</sup>. In other words, to cull a highly functional yet ideologically nonspecific narrative from the detritus of outmoded fascist political jargon and rhetoric – a myth. As Sorel understood in his day, it is a mistake to look to myths for predictions or accurate claims about the future; their purpose is to act upon the present. Moreover, they aren’t directed at just anyone, but specifically at «men who take a very active part in the real revolutionary movement»<sup>29</sup>. Where such men (or women) of action are concerned, «it is a question of knowing what are the ideas which most powerfully move them and their comrades»<sup>30</sup>. A good political myth gathers up all the most intense senti-

<sup>26</sup> S. Moore, A. Roberts, *The Rise of Ecofascism: Climate Change and the Far Right*, Polity, New York 2022; T. Owen, *White Nationalists Want to Reclaim Nature as a Safe Space for Racists*, in «Vice News», June 15, 2022, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/wxnqeb/us-national-parks-racist-past-white-supremacy>.

<sup>27</sup> J.M. Berger, *Alt-History*, in «The Atlantic», September 16, 2016 <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/09/how-the-turner-diaries-changed-white-nationalism/500039/>.

<sup>28</sup> J. M. Berger, *The Turner Legacy: the Storied Origins and Enduring Impact of White Nationalism’s Deadly Bible*, in «International Center for Counter-Terrorism», No. 8, September 2016, <https://icct.nl/publication/the-turner-legacy-the-storied-origins-and-enduring-impact-of-white-nationalisms-deadly-bible/>.

<sup>29</sup> G. Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, Edited by J. Jennings, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1999, pp. 116-117.

<sup>30</sup> Sorel, op. cit., p. 117.

ments, memories, and experiences of committed activists and synthesizes them into a totalizing image that presents a «complete» and intuitive picture of the entire terrain of battle in which one is engaged.

The first product of this strategic shift from particular ideology to generic myth was Pierce's infamous race war novel *The Turner Diaries*, which first appeared in serialized form in the National Alliance journal *Attack!* between 1975 and 1978 – the same years that Jesi was working out his theory of right-wing culture – and which has since become the most influential work of white nationalist propaganda in the English language<sup>31</sup>. The *Diaries* tells the story of a violent revolution in the United States initiated by an underground terrorist group called the Organization, culminating in a nuclear war and the planetary extermination of most nonwhite people. Its guiding premise is that the White Race (a set whose membership the author is careful to never properly qualify) will not survive unless immediate insurgent action is taken. As its fictional protagonist Earl Turner explains, since the aim of the struggle is to «secure the future of our race...[m]uch more than our freedom is at stake. If the Organization fails in its task now, *everything* will be lost – our history, our heritage, all the blood and sacrifices and upward striving of countless thousands of years... [T]here will be only a swarming horde of indifferent, mulatto zombies»<sup>32</sup>. As with much fascist literature, the secret to the success of the novel lies in the way Pierce meticulously avoids making any direct argument for its core position, while simultaneously *alluding* to the existence of an argument that he neglects to provide<sup>33</sup>. For example, at one point in the story, Earl Turner is handed a book that (the reader is told) perfectly explains the reasons for the supremacy of the white race and offers a justification of the Organization's actions through

<sup>31</sup> Although the genre of racist dystopian fiction in the United States can be traced back to the decades prior to the Civil War, the most proximate influences for Pierce were likely Jack London's *The Iron Heel* (1908) and *The John Franklin Papers* published in 1958 by the John Birch Society.

<sup>32</sup> W. Pierce (pseudonym: Andrew Macdonald), *The Turner Diaries*, National Vanguard, Hillsboro 1978, pp. 52, 34.

<sup>33</sup> As Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe have observed, fascist style proceeds «always by affirmative accumulation, never, or hardly ever, by argumentation». It is composed of «a confused pile-up of the [supposedly] obvious...a tireless repetition of certitudes» in which «there is neither knowledge to establish, nor thought to overcome» but only an «already acquired, already available truth to declare». It is a style based, in the final account, «not on a *logos*, but on a kind of mythic proffering...which draws all its resources from the naked, imperious power of its own affirmation». J.-L. Nancy and P. Lacoue-Labarthe, *The Nazi Myth*, translated by B. Holmes, in «Critical Inquiry» No. 16, Winter 1990, pp. 304-305.

their alignment with natural law and God's will; yet its contents are never described. Secrecy, along with its associated authoritarian distinction between adepts and inductees, becomes essential here not only at an ideological level but also organizationally. Elsewhere in the story, Turner's violent exploits win him entry into a shadowy inner circle of the Organization referred to only as «the Order», whose inductees «have all passed the test of the Word and the test of the Deed. That is, we have all proved ourselves, not only through a correct attitude toward the Cause, but also through our acts in the struggle for the realization of the Cause»<sup>34</sup>. The «why» is not abandoned, but simply displaced behind the walls of the mythological machine, allowing the reader to fill in the content based on his or her own private experiences or beliefs. Meanwhile, the normative center of gravity is shifted to the «what» and «how», i.e., to the formation of disciplined cadres of dedicated soldiers responsive to the urgency of direct action against the enemy here and now<sup>35</sup>. Unlike much political literature, which serves to illustrate doctrinal positions clarified elsewhere in theoretical works, what is peculiar about the *Diaries* has been its ability at once to supplant and depose the ideological function, sidestepping the expository impulse almost entirely. The doctrine does not want to be understood; its purpose is to be *answered* in practice<sup>36</sup>. This explains why, whenever the author shifts from the register of doctrine to that of praxis, the book suddenly becomes replete with specifics, its pages becoming almost diagrammatic, covering everything from the storage of illegal weapons to secure communications, counterfeiting currency, the fabrication of bombs and the sabotage of essential infrastructure. The entire architecture of the narrative and its symbology are de-

<sup>34</sup> Pierce, *The Turner Diaries* cit., p. 73.

<sup>35</sup> Berger, *Alt-History* cit. This tendency is therefore distinct from the efforts at «stigma transformation» by which white supremacists such as David Duke and Wilmot Robertson spent decades urging their followers to «get out of the cow pasture and into hotel meeting rooms», i.e., to evade the negative connotations of racialist discourse by rebranding their movement in ways that pander to mainstream intellectual trends and norms. See M. Berbrier, *A Case Study of Intellectualization as Stigma Transformation in Contemporary White Supremacist Discourse*, in «Sociological Quarterly», Vol. 40, No. 3, 1999, pp. 411-433. On the formal differences between these strategies, which often «approximated» one another in actual practice, see L. Zeskind, *Blood and Politics. The History of the White Nationalist Movement from the Margins to the Mainstream*, Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, New York 2009, pp. 42, 87-93, 97-98.

<sup>36</sup> For the same reason, Pierce reserves his worst scorn for the «talkers» who do not act, those conservatives who, whether out of cowardice, complacency, or moral corruption, lack the nerve to stand up for their values.

signed to carry us as swiftly as possible to one unavoidable conclusion: in order to safeguard the «spiritual health» of the so-called white race against the «essentially feminine, submissive» and «infantile» «Jewish-liberal-democratic-equalitarian» worldview, an accelerationist campaign of «political terror» targeting the state and resulting in the murder of «thousands of innocent people» is not only justified but immediately urgent<sup>37</sup>. The goal is not to enact reformist policy changes, but to pave the way toward a revolutionary conflict – «to forge ahead into the future, with us choosing the direction, instead of the System»<sup>38</sup>. The aim of this terror campaign is to «force the authorities to take reprisals and to become more repressive [e.g., by enacting stricter gun legislation], thus alienating a portion of the population and generating sympathy for the terrorists»<sup>39</sup>.

At the most general level, the Fourteen Words must be understood as the most extreme condensation and crystallization of this broader turn in fascist strategy toward analytical austerity and activist urgency, a «making generic of ideology»<sup>40</sup>. At the same time, since its ideal context of interpretation is not theoretical but passionate and pragmatic, since it demands of its audience not comprehension but sacrifice, it represents a slide beyond ideology properly speaking into the domain of mythic symbolization.

## 5.

*The Turner Diaries* supplied David Lane's group the Order with not only a namesake but also a mythology and a political strategy,

<sup>37</sup> Pierce, *The Turner Diaries* cit., pp. 42, 51.

<sup>38</sup> Pierce, *The Turner Diaries* cit., p. 52. On efforts to theorize fascism as a specific genre of «revolutionary» ideology, see M. Lyons, *Two Ways of Looking at Fascism*, in «Socialism and Democracy», Vol. 22, No. 2, July, 2008, pp. 121-156. According to Lyons, fascism may be defined as «a revolutionary form of right-wing populism, inspired by a totalitarian vision of collective rebirth, that challenges capitalist political and cultural power while promoting economic and social hierarchy». While this definition aptly characterizes much of the «mainstreamer» far-right, the fact that accelerationist shooters not only make little to no effort to construct a mass base but in many ways oppose doing so requires that we expand and diversify this definition, a task that must be reserved for another occasion. On the distinction between movement-building fascism and «blackpilled» accelerationism, see Moore and Roberts, *Post-Internet Far Right. Fascism in the Age of the Internet* cit., pp. 11, 20, 166: «the smaller groups become, the more they oppose themselves to the wider population».

<sup>39</sup> Pierce, *The Turner Diaries* cit., p. 51.

<sup>40</sup> Moore and Roberts, *Post-Internet Far Right* cit., p. 162.

becoming required reading for all members, some of whom reportedly described it as their «Bible»<sup>41</sup>. Whereas the *Idee ohne Wörter* of the Fourteen Words can be traced back to the ideological strategy of William Pierce, the exemplary “fruitful death” that *fulfilled* them was furnished by Lane’s comrade, Robert Jay Mathews. Before co-founding the Order with Lane, Mathews led the Pacific Northwest chapter of Pierce’s National Alliance, which he joined after being inspired by *The Turner Diaries*<sup>42</sup>. From its earliest days, the escapades of the Order (or the *Brüder Schweigen* [“silent brotherhood”], as it was also called) so closely mirrored those of its fictional counterpart in the *Diaries* as to be considered essentially dramatizations or reenactments. The founding of the group occurred through a hackneyed rendition of the induction ceremony in the novel: in September 1983, Lane, Mathews, and seven other men gathered in a shed on Mathews’ homestead in Metaline Falls, Washington; there, overlooked by a portrait of Adolf Hitler, they arranged themselves in a circle around a six-week-old female infant, lit candles, clasped hands, and took a collective oath to «do whatever is necessary to deliver’ [their] people from the Jew and bring total victory to the Aryan race»<sup>43</sup>. Over the next two years, its core members would go on to murder three people, initiate a counterfeiting operation, bomb a synagogue in Boise, ID, and carry out \$4 million worth of strong-arm robberies from banks and armored trucks – all episodes ripped directly from the opening pages of the *Diaries*. But it was not until December of 1984 that the consummation of the sacrificial mythologeme would be complete. By this time, the FBI had initiated a nationwide pressure campaign against the Order. After wounding an officer and narrowly escaping arrest during a sting operation for counterfeiting at a hotel in Portland, Oregon, Mathews penned a letter declaring war on the US Federal Government, in which he declared: «I am not going into hiding, rather I will press the FBI and let them know what it is like to become the hunted. Doing so it is only logical to assume that my days

<sup>41</sup> Berger, *Alt-History* cit.; Michael, *David Lane and the Fourteen Words* cit., p. 46.

<sup>42</sup> Mathews reportedly introduced new Order recruits to the *Diaries* by saying, «in there is what the future will be. You must read it... You must». T. Martinez and J. Guinther, *Brotherhood of Murder*, McGraw-Hill, New York 1988, p. 83.

<sup>43</sup> M. Gardell, *Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism*, Duke University Press, Durham 2003, p. 193. A Hollywood portrayal of the ritual occurs at the opening of the film *Brotherhood of Murder* (Dir: M. Bell, 1999).

on this planet are rapidly drawing to a close. Even so, I have no fear. For the reality of my life is death, and the worst the enemy can do to me is shorten my tour of duty in this world»<sup>44</sup>. Within days, seventy-five federal law enforcement agents surrounded his hideout on Whidbey Island in Washington. Although the FBI was able to arrest four other members of the Order at nearby locations without incident, Mathews refused to surrender. A 35-hour standoff ensued, during which Mathews shot at federal agents numerous times with a submachine gun. When negotiations stalled, a Navy helicopter fired three M-79 Starburst white phosphorous illumination flares onto the house, setting it ablaze. Mathews did not surrender, but instead continued to fire upon agents as the house burned, until he suddenly stopped<sup>45</sup>. In a sacralizing homage to the final scenes of *The Turner Diaries*, whose protagonist perishes in a Kamikaze mission while detonating a nuclear warhead over the Pentagon (itself a rendition of the Master Manole myth), the founder of the Order entombed himself for the cause. In his communiqué to the FBI, Mathews had closed with the following lines: «I will leave knowing that I have made the ultimate sacrifice to ensure the future of my children. As always, for blood, soil, honor, for faith and for race»<sup>46</sup>. Upon his death, William Pierce hailed his martyred acolyte, declaring that Mathews «took us from name-calling to bloodletting»<sup>47</sup>. The magic circle was complete.

In the decades since, December 8th has been celebrated in white supremacist circles as Martyr's Day, with a secretive gathering taking place each year on Whidbey Island «as close as possible to the shrine of death»<sup>48</sup>. Among the propaganda associated with the event, one leaflet in particular stands out: a white sheet, entirely blank save for a

<sup>44</sup> R. J. Mathews, «Declaration of War» in *Encyclopedia of White Power: A Sourcebook on the Radical Right*, edited by J. Kaplan, Altamira Press, New York 2000, pp. 523-525; Michael, *David Lane and the Fourteen Words* cit., p. 47.

<sup>45</sup> *Fiery FBI raid ends Whidbey standoff*, in «The Seattle Times», December 9, 1984 (<https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/5627272/Whidbey-Dec-9-Page-1.pdf>). Zeskind observes, the death of Posse Comitatus movement activist Gordon Kahl during a shootout with law enforcement in Arkansas a year prior, in June 1983, had contributed to the mood of martyrdom, since he too «had enjoyed the prerogatives of being a white man in America, and still chose a struggle to the death». See Zeskind, *Blood and Politics* cit., p. 76.

<sup>46</sup> Mathews, «Declaration of War» cit.

<sup>47</sup> See the article *William Pierce*, in «Southern Poverty Law Center», <https://www.spl-center.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/william-pierce>.

<sup>48</sup> Zeskind, *Blood and Politics* cit., p. 102.

black and white photo of Mathews in the center, below which appears a single word set in large black capitalized letters – «SACRIFICE»<sup>49</sup>.

## 6.

The strategic meaning of martyrological violence is neither straightforward nor historically fixed. In an infamous passage of *Cultura di destra*, Jesi maintains that a not-insignificant number of the fascist bombings that rocked Italian cities in the 1970s were likely *useless by design*. This fact can only be explained by the function they served within the multi-tiered movement at the time. As Hannah Arendt once observed, «there is an abyss between men of brilliant and facile conceptions and men of brutal deeds and active bestiality, which no intellectual explanation is able to bridge»<sup>50</sup>. According to Jesi's reconstruction, the Italian fascist movement of the 1970s was composed of both esoteric and profane currents, a division that had as its correlate a hierarchy in the quality of "souls". At any given moment you had «two classes of people»: the true metaphysical initiates (followers of Evola), and the class of «all those who, unable or unwilling to detach themselves from the world, remain at the entry level»<sup>51</sup>. The most general strategic task of the sagely leaders was to discipline and train those of a lower, more worldly quality, to harden and strengthen their souls until they become bonafide bearers of so-called racial tradition. The commission of high risk and deadly terrorist bombings offered a venue for such didacticism. Although some of these acts might appear conspicuously "useless" from a military point of view, being inexplicable through a *cui prodest* method of reasoning, something else was happening in and through them at another level or register: «aided by the proper *pedagogy of the useless task*», these attacks contribute to a spiritual development by which «the *Race* perfects itself, improves, becomes stronger and purer with the passing of genera-

<sup>49</sup> B. Barrouquere, *A Day After a Neo-Nazi is Convicted of Murder, Associates of the Country's Oldest, Most Violent Skinhead Groups Charged with Hate Crimes*, in «Southern Poverty Law Center», December 9, 2018 <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2018/12/08/day-after-neo-nazi-convicted-murder-associates-country-oldest-most-violent-skinhead-groups>.

<sup>50</sup> H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Harcourt, New York 1973, p. 183.

<sup>51</sup> Jesi, *Cultura de droit* cit., p. 105.



tions»<sup>52</sup>. While they might later wind up being instrumentalized or promoted by other “profane” currents of the far-right, for whom military strategy demands that the bomb goes off at the *right* time and place, in an important way this must be considered an afterthought. According to its inner, esoteric meaning, the strength of the useless act lies precisely in the fact that it outstrips and escapes such technical considerations; as Andrea Cavalletti observes, «uselessness remains in some sense pure in itself»<sup>53</sup>.

Although such violence is presented as a means to “perfect” the one who performs it, by reinforcing his internal strength and purity of purpose, spiritual progress is ultimately indexed here not to the fate of the individual neophyte bomber (who might very well die or wind up in prison) but to the “race” itself, of which the individual is at best a bearer, servant or soldier. This superimposition of an esoteric spiritual vocation over action insulates its meaning from both its consequences and its agent: not only is the virtue of the act subtracted from any causal-historical logic of militaristic calculations, but there it is (strictly speaking) no need for the agent to even comprehend the role he or she plays in the wider strategy. Since the true victory is situated only at the level of an imagined transindividuation of the Race itself, local actors are under no obligation to burden themselves with long-term strategic considerations or even to appreciate the broader horizon under which they are acting<sup>54</sup>.

This was the message that William Pierce sought to impart on the Aryan Resistance Movement in the months following the death of Robert Mathews. At the same moment that federal agents were busy rounding up members of the Order from coast to coast, one half of whom would soon snitch on the other, Pierce emphasized that the real strategic task was spiritual<sup>55</sup>, and that it is only from this point of view that the true victory of Whidbey Island and of the Order’s actions

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Cavalletti, *Démolir la culture de droite* cit.

<sup>54</sup> Not only is it irrelevant whether the neophyte even understands its true nature, it might even be expedient to lie: «to make them believe that the tasks they had to accomplish were in fact *useful* as such, as means to awaken the conscience of the country...[and] prepare for the advent of the European Nation». Jesi, *Culture de droit* cit., p. 109.

<sup>55</sup> «It was not dirty politics that got the White race into its present jam: it was spiritual corruption. Unless there can be a transformation of values, a spiritual renewal and reorientation, the race cannot be saved». W. Pierce, *Thoughts on Recruiting*, in «National Alliance Bulletin», June 1985 (<https://nationalvanguard.org/2022/07/thoughts-on-recruiting-part-2/>) On snitching, see Zeskind, *Blood and Politics* cit., p. 99.

more generally could be understood<sup>56</sup>. The importance of its deeds, he argued, does not lie in their causal calibration of means and ends, nor the tactical repertoire they advanced (which, although admittedly «ill advised» from a military standpoint, should nevertheless be lauded as setting a new high-water mark and a «baseline for future efforts»)<sup>57</sup>. No, the true contribution to the Race lay in the «element of do-or-die heroism, of fanaticism and determination, and of idealistic motivation» displayed by the group, which «causes the heart to swell and the blood to pump more strongly»<sup>58</sup>. The message from the sagely leader was simple: don't be discouraged by the military defeat, for the "true" strategy was still playing out at another level, in view of which the *production of exemplary deaths* must be seen as a step forward. For the neophyte, what is truly valuable is the «deliberate choice to die fearlessly and defiantly» which «set[s] an example for other fearless and defiant fighters who would follow him in the years and decades to come»<sup>59</sup>. Rather than aligning means and ends in view of a concrete social and political program, what is needed are bold spiritually-invigorating sacrifices that inspire imitation. To wage a war on the Federal government, no amount of expropriated C-4, AR-15's, and claymore mines would suffice. What was needed was a new mythologeme, on the basis of which militant fascist subjectivity could respawn itself from one decade to the next, short-term losses aside. To this end, the ashes of Robert Mathews had supplied the most powerful dynamite.

## 7.

In our effort to understand the mythological machine that animates accelerationist far-right spree shootings today, we have considered both the strategic rationality that led to its genesis during the decade following the Vietnam war, as well as the moment of its practical consummation as a site of collective sacrifice. This consummation suc-

<sup>56</sup> «Whether or not these strikes were ill-advised, whether or not the recruiting tactics were well thought out, even the question of the feasibility of any type of armed action against the U.S. government under the conditions which now prevail – *these questions are beside the point*». W. Pierce, *What it will take*, in «National Vanguard», No. 103, January/February 1985 (<https://nationalvanguard.org/2015/03/what-it-will-take/>). Emphasis added.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

ceeded in elevating the myth above the historical conditions that created it, allowing it to unstick itself from its concrete origins in a specific social and political milieu and enter into a period of wandering during which it will take on new life under changed circumstances. It is this last phase leading into the present that I now wish to describe.

As we have seen, between 1975-1985 a constellation of loose-fitting racist narratives, slogans, and watchwords that we may refer to for simplicity's sake as "the Turner Myth" was consecrated into a liturgical apparatus commanding a level of ardent devotion that can only be described as religious<sup>60</sup>. During the early 1980s a cult emerged around the Turner Myth that assumed the form of a real-life paramilitary formation having at its disposal a dense network of safe houses, communes, and farms through which there circulated military-grade weapons, computers and printing presses, expropriated and counterfeited money, and dozens of full-time militants. Its aim was to wage a guerilla warfare campaign against the US state that would sufficiently destabilize it to enable an all-white enclave to secede and fight for its independence. This entire aggregate was held together not by a worked-out political ideology but by a «sustaining myth» that supplied its diverse coalition of actors with «a common set of worldviews, logics, and a violent repertoire of action held in common»<sup>61</sup>. By the time of its fiery outcome at Whidbey Island, what had previously been little more than a motley assemblage of wordless ideas and practical scripts penned by an obscure neo-Nazi had been transformed into a charged symbolic *topos*. Over the decade following the Vietnam War the Turner Myth had become a religious-symbolic weapon whose invocation would henceforth suffice to convert wanton acts of terror into ritualized martyrological tributes to the race<sup>62</sup>. However, as befits a myth of founding sacrifice, its sanctification coincided more or less immediately with the collapse of the cult that fulfilled it. Alongside other "mainstream"

<sup>60</sup> While many far-right revolutionaries were also adherents of Christian Identity theology, and were informed by its apocalyptic and fiercely antisemitic ideology, many ascribed to quite contrasting, even anti-Christian views (most notably, Pierce himself). The binding *mythos* that drew the militant wing together and guided its actions stemmed most directly from the *Diaries*.

<sup>61</sup> K. Belew, *Bring the War Home. The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2018, p. 111.

<sup>62</sup> W. Gibson, *Warrior Dreams. Paramilitary Culture in Post-Vietnam America*, Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, New York 1994, p. 196: «Paramilitary mythology offered men the fantastic possibility of escaping their present lives, being reborn as warriors, and then remaking the world. [...] Only through a New War could they redeem themselves and their country».

and subcultural neo-Nazi groups at the time whose organizational structures were crushed during the mid-to-late 1980s, the first generation of accelerationist fascists were undermined from without and within by a combination of heavy state repression, costly lawsuits, and a cascade of treason and snitching from within its own ranks. With its capacity to materially organize a collective territorial presence radically curtailed, the militant far-right was forced into retreat.

Driven underground, the movement sought to respond to its forcible dispersal by making a virtue out of necessity. The first signs of this turn appear in April 1985: the final issue of the *Inter-Klan Newsletter and Survival Alert*, for years a central publication of the milieu that had spawned the Order, included nothing but newspaper clippings related to Mathews' death and a brief unsigned statement that concluded as follows: «Because individuals can accomplish complex acts of resistance without [the] peril of betrayal or even detection...missions FORMERLY ASSIGNED TO GROUPS MAY BE UNDERTAKEN BY INDIVIDUALS EQUIPPED TO FIGHT ALONE»<sup>63</sup>.

It is important to remember that the embrace of so-called «lone wolf» terrorist attacks among white supremacists is rarely the symptom of a movement that is emboldened and reaching for greater efficacy, but rather of weakness and retreat<sup>64</sup>. The same is true of Louis Beam's argument in his well-known article on «Leaderless Resistance», drafts of which appeared already in 1983 before being reissued in revised and expanded form in 1992<sup>65</sup>. In it, Beam argues that the cadre-based model rooted in dense nuclei of trusted comrades is too risky, and that militants should instead create a loose network of leaderless «cells» shorn of any face-to-face communication, thereby obviating the need for the centralized command structures that had proven so vulnerable to infiltration and surveillance<sup>66</sup>. Besides being

<sup>63</sup> Cited in Zeskind, *Blood and Politics* cit., p. 100. Emphasis in original.

<sup>64</sup> For example, it was only after Southern Poverty Law Center civil lawsuit on behalf of the family of Mulugeta Seraw bankrupted the White Aryan Resistance organization that its then-leader Tom Metzger jettisoned his mass public approach in favor of advocating clandestine attacks. See Kdog, *American Strasser*, in «Three Way Fight», December 9, 2020, <http://threewayfight.blogspot.com/2020/12/american-strasser.html>.

<sup>65</sup> L. Beam, *Leaderless Resistance*, in «The Seditonist #12», February 1992. «The movement for freedom is rapidly approaching the point where for many people, the option of belonging to a group will be nonexistent. [...] It is sure that, for the most part, this struggle is rapidly becoming a matter of individual action».

<sup>66</sup> As early as 1983, Louis Beam and Robert Miles had argued in the pages of their *Inter-Klan Newsletter and Survival Alert* that vulnerabilities created by federal infiltrators might

riddled with practical contradictions, Beam's proposal had a further drawback: once divorced from both leadership structures and the community of the faithful, isolated actors might also find themselves unable to recognize themselves in the religious-symbolic machine that the Order had developed. The Turner Myth was a flexible framework, but its image of militant action was very opposite of atomized initiative, being entirely reliant on the necessary function of the *sage off-stage* («revolutionary command» in the novel's parlance). Earl Turner's story makes little sense without this presupposition of a long-term strategic vision. In what sense could an isolated accelerationist shooter include himself in the magic circle of the Organization? For this, two things would be necessary: the myth required a supplement, and this supplement would require a ritual confirmation – a monumental deadly deed – in order to seal it.

Ever alert to the shifting playing field and the needs of his movement, in 1989 William Pierce wrote a follow-up novel to *The Turner Diaries* entitled *Hunter*, inspired by neo-Nazi serial murderer Joseph Paul Franklin, «the Lone Hunter, who saw his duty as a White man and did what a responsible son of his race must do»<sup>67</sup>. Targeting mixed-race couples, Jews, and black teenagers, Franklin had engaged in a killing spree between 1977 and 1980 during which he assassinated

necessitate decentralized structures of horizontally networked cells that would «continue to stand, even if one or another of its supports did collapse». This recognition should not, however, lead us to characterize the events of the early 1980s as the beginning of a «leaderless fascist movement». Broadly speaking, although the broader milieu from which they emerged operated like a network, the revolutionary fascist formations of the 1980s were hierarchical quasi-militarized cadre formations whose social composition and material circulation of goods and resources were tightly coordinated and in which clear chains of command existed, even if the overall strategic vision resided in the opaque purview of select visionaries and luminaries. Although a handful of tacticians within these cadre formations nevertheless recognized the defensive value of indirect and encrypted patterns of communication (including early experiments with online message boards) and the relative operational autonomy of cells, this is a far cry from the decentralized, viral models of autonomous organization that characterize properly leaderless movements. It is anachronistic to present (as Kathleen Belew does) formations such as the Order as living examples of a nascent leaderless strategy, when the essentials of their practice and strategy – even on their own testimonies – indicate quite the opposite. In my opinion, while Belew is right to insist on the influence that the legacy of neofascism in the 1980s continues to exert today, this influence is largely mytho-symbolic as opposed to strategic-organizational. See Belew, *Bring the War Home* cit., pp. 107-110, 119-120; on command structures, see pp. 118 and 155. Cf. Zeskind, *Blood and Politics* cit., p. 148.

<sup>67</sup> W. Pierce, *Hunter*, National Vanguard Books, Hillsboro 1989. Pierce citation taken from Gardell, *Gods of the Blood* cit., pp. 91, 93, 134. Elsewhere, Pierce contests the idea that it was based on Franklin. See R. S. Griffin, *The Fame of a Dead Man's Deeds: An Up-Close Portrait of White Nationalist William Pierce*, 1st Book Library, n.p. 2001, p. 239.

eighteen people, bombed a synagogue, robbed banks, and paralyzed porn publisher Larry Flynt before being caught and eventually executed by lethal injection in 2013. In a willful departure from history, while *Hunter's* protagonist is murdering his way up the “gamified” point system<sup>68</sup> laid out by Louis Beam in his 1983 *Essays of a Klansman*, which passes from low-level street characters to high-level officials, a wave of copycat killings begins to spread laterally through mimesis. *You see*, Pierce seems to say, the actions of an “exceptional” individual – even one acting *without a plan or destination* – can not only instigate mass panic, but also mimetically awaken spontaneous initiative. By shifting his focus from a cadre-based vanguard organization to spree shooters acting alone or in small groups, *Hunter* responds to the collapse of the collective paramilitary strategy by extracting its mythological machine and displacing it onto a changed practical terrain. If *Hunter* is a “prequel” to *The Turner Diaries*, it means that the spree killer has a position within the symbolic universe of the Turner Myth. The conceit of this maneuver lies in the suggestion that, *with the proper guidance, the lone wolf can become the precursor to the formation of the Organization*. Just as it was unnecessary for the agent of the useless task to comprehend the ultimate aims of his own activity, the fact that there is, in reality, no practical connection between cowardly sniper-style assassinations and the formation of a guerilla army is of no consequence. The book’s true aim lies elsewhere: to ensure the survival and perpetuation of the Turner mythological framework beyond its initial conditions of realization.

Although a certain use of fiction is certainly in question, Pierce’s novels are not simple works of literature but machine parts within a dynamic semiotic assemblage commanding active devotion and ritual tributes from a considerable number of devoted activists, both young and old. For example, when small cells like those of the Aryan People’s Republic and the Aryan Republican Army committed a string of bank robberies and bombings during the early-to-mid 1990s, not only did they explicitly position themselves symbolically within the legacy

<sup>68</sup> In 1983, Louis Beam published a «point system» that assigned the killing of those in different social positions greater or lower values depending on their importance to the social system, as if one were playing a competitive game. See L. Beam, «Understanding the Struggle», in *Essays of a Klansman*, 45. This «gamification» of shootings became a reality over the course of the 2010s. See R. Evans, *The El Paso Shooting and the Gamification of Terror*, in «Bellingcat», August 4, 2019, <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/americas/2019/08/04/the-el-paso-shooting-and-the-gamification-of-terror/>.

of the Order and the Turner Myth, they also clearly recognized that the assignment had changed. «The revolutionary of the 1990s», they reasoned, «would be a man with no direct ties to a broader social movement»<sup>69</sup>.

Although a turn was clearly already underway, this mutation in the mythological machine would receive its ultimate ritual seal on April 19th, 1995. That day, which coincided with the second anniversary of the Waco massacre, a two-person autonomous cell bombed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people (including 19 children), injuring 680 others, and damaging some 300 nearby buildings in the city. The whole episode, down to the nearly-identical recipe for the bomb, had been ripped from an episode in *The Turner Diaries*, photocopied pages of which Timothy McVeigh carried on his person – and yet, from an organizational perspective, it was carried out on a model much closer to *Hunter* (which he and Terry Nichols both owned)<sup>70</sup>. Between 1995 and his state execution in June of 2001, McVeigh showed not a glimmer of remorse. In a context in which the collective paramilitary guerilla strategy was blocked and the movement needed to fall back on isolated individuals, McVeigh accomplished for *Hunter* something analogous to what Mathews had done for the *Diaries*: a renewed sacrifice to the Turner Myth that would adjust it to its new material circumstances.

## 8.

The Oklahoma City bombing formed the pivot between two eras of accelerationism. Its roots could still be traced back to the old vanguardist networks (McVeigh spent time at Robert G. Millar's Christian Identity compound Elohim City, and had contacted the National Alliance in the weeks prior to the attacks), yet the act itself was divorced

<sup>69</sup> M. S. Hamm, *In Bad Company. America's Terrorist Underground*, Northeastern University Press, Boston 2002, p. 138, 157.

<sup>70</sup> Curiously, McVeigh claimed in interviews from prison that if he had read John Ross' *Unintended Consequences* (published in 1996) rather than the *Turner Diaries*, he might have adopted a different course. Ross' novel tells the story of a vigilante team of snipers who wage a «war of attrition» against the government by assassinating officials perceived as hostile to gun rights activists. While the strategy is closer to the narrative of *Hunter*, it lacks the Turner mythos of which McVeigh was a fervent evangelist. L. Michel and D. Herbeck, *American Terrorist: Timothy McVeigh and the Tragedy at Oklahoma City*, Harper Collins, New York 2001. See Chapters 9 and 11.

from any collective strategy or coherent social movement structures. As Pierce described it, it was a form of «disorganized terrorism motivated by anger rather than by a plan»<sup>71</sup>. Driven by vengeance for those martyred by the FBI during the 1992 and 1993 sieges at Ruby Ridge and Waco, the bombing was carried out without any presumption that a “plan” was in place offstage at some higher level of organization that might allow his movement to capitalize on the explosive impact of his deed. In this, it heralded a new era of far-right violence to come.

The repression that followed McVeigh’s bombing solidified the closure of the first wave of far-right accelerationism (and, along with it, the combative period of militia occupations that had sprung up after Ruby Ridge and Waco). Across the board, the organization of a conspiratorial paramilitary guerilla strategy came to be seen as an impossibility. As the vanguardist luminaries of the previous three decades began to die or retire in quick succession, their legacy failed to find suitable heirs. Nevertheless, the post-Vietnam War vanguardist generation had «created a usable past for any similar movement in the future»<sup>72</sup>. Although their organizations largely fell into disarray, the mythological machine they spawned would survive and adapt. In their absence, voices that had remained marginal during the previous period would creep to the fore.

The Turner Myth had been crafted to operate within a two-tiered, leader-driven social organism. Neophyte shock troops could rely on the possession of a long-term vision and strategy by the “true initiates”. Yet when the vertically-integrated vanguardist cadre organizations that produced this *topos* collapsed under the weight of government repression, the machine was set adrift, circulating independently of any anchoring long-term strategy. If the bloody conclusion of the Order’s guerilla campaign had marked the moment at which the Turner Myth was transformed from a set of stories and slogans into a discursive engine of ritual devotion, complete with its own militarized cult, the crushing of the vanguardist network over the following decade left a strange product in its wake: a machine for *religious semiosis*, yet one without any corresponding religious social formation beneath it. While other religions might not have survived such an

<sup>71</sup> Radio Broadcast, April 29, 1995. Reprinted as «Terror Breeds Terror: Oklahoma City in Perspective», in W. Pierce, *American Dissident Voices*, Politically Incorrect Press, Melbourne 2011, pp. 50-54.

<sup>72</sup> Zeskind, *Blood and Politics* cit., p. 537.



amputation, the peculiarly *empty* and generic content of the post-ideological far-right made it well-suited for deterritorialization.

During its second phase, a respiritualized Turner Myth detaches itself from the strategic machine that hatched it and begins to circulate freely, mutating into an acephalous virtual contagion. As a mythological machine, its function was always to push neophytes into action, which remains unchanged. However, deprived of even the pretense of guidance by its vanguardist sages, in the new millennium the accelerationist agenda will settle into a static policy of brutality. The output of its mythological machine today is a bloody wave of useless tasks that, no longer being subject to group discipline or collective strategy, address themselves primarily to one another and to the anonymous swarm from which they are hatched. Any reader of the *Turner Diaries* who reacts by picking up the gun and lashing out violently at the book's preferred range of targets may now *self-initiate* into the magic circle of its negative community. The result has been an almost totally blind wave of decentralized killings designed ostensibly to undermine the stability of the System (the so-called ZOG, or "Zionist Occupation Government"), while in fact producing only a litany of ritualized murders, each adding nothing to the others but a "kill count" on a virtual scoreboard.

The recent uptick of attention paid to neo-Nazi James Mason's 1980s publication *Siege* – the core curriculum for nihilist or "black-pilled" groups like Atomwaffen Division – is a symptom of this acephalic wandering of revolutionary fascist myth. Although a far more marginal voice at the time, Mason had argued as early as 1980 in the bulletin of the National Socialist Liberation Front that «acts of revolution...are all of a nature that they can and MUST be carried out by INDIVIDUALS, and that removes all requirement for talk, the possibility of "conspiracy", and the danger of a leak. [...] We tell you flatly to NEVER engage in conspiracy»<sup>73</sup>. Mason's writings are marked by an adulation of illegality, advocating a total refusal of participation in the system combined with leaderless offensive attacks such as sabotage, bombings, and mass slayings. Yet he does not understand such acts as a prequel to a conspiratorial guerilla organization; their aim is exclusively to hasten the collapse of social order per se. *Siege* takes the pedagogy of the useless task to its ultimate nihilistic conclusion: a radical negativity separates accelerationist violence from its ostensible revolutionary goals,

<sup>73</sup> J. Mason, *Siege*, Ironmarch, n.p. 2015, pp. 91, 278.

resulting in a total suspension of any causal or strategic tie between means and ends. Whereas William Pierce lamented the «disorganized» character of McVeigh's terrorism and dreamed of using the Turner Myth to channel it back into disciplined cadre formations, *Siege* celebrates it. Its hope is that readers will «heed a clarion call, wage battles of attrition, and act in a manner commensurate to Timothy McVeigh of Oklahoma City fame»<sup>74</sup>. Although he shares with Pierce an admiration for the serial killings of Joseph Paul Franklin, he does not see in the serial killer's acts the embryonic form of a broader paramilitary organization coming into being, but a model unto itself: «Franklin was only one man. What if a dozen or more had followed his example?»<sup>75</sup>. There is a certain historical irony in all of this, given that in 1968, when Mason himself had planned to shoot up his high school and eventually take his own life – an anti-social act of the same sort that he today celebrates in others – it was William Pierce who stopped him from going through with it<sup>76</sup>. Yet the conclusions he draws from Pierce's own mythology are darker still than those of its author. For Mason, the lesson is that «the "Organization" had to shift its strategy from one of killing System leaders and celebrities, to one of crippling the System itself, of causing it to shut down and thereby forcing the population to cease their support of it»<sup>77</sup>. In short, if his writings have garnered increased attention in the second era of accelerationism, this is because Mason had already anticipated the mythological mutation from *Turner* to *Hunter*, while at the same time stripping away the last vestiges of Pierce's constituent impulse: «the primary ingredient for successful revolution is the complete breakdown of the existing order» – full stop<sup>78</sup>.

## 9.

In her 2014 article on Jesi's *Cultura di destra*, Ingrid Rowland emphasizes the gap that separates current day far-right culture from that of

<sup>74</sup> R. Schuster, «Introduction», in Mason, *Siege* cit., p. 28.

<sup>75</sup> Mason, *Siege* cit., p. 278.

<sup>76</sup> «I was going to take a 44 magnum, which was a five-shot revolver, go into the staff office and take out the principal, assistant principal, and two of the guidance counselors, then finally myself». Mason, *Siege* cit., p. 16.

<sup>77</sup> Mason, *Siege* cit., p. 297. 9

<sup>78</sup> Mason, *Siege* cit., p. 278.

the 1970s, which was still «largely a face-to-face activity» in which «contacts were physical rather than virtual, including the constant clashes of right and left on Italian streets»<sup>79</sup>. Rowland is of course right: as Jesi himself did not fail to remind us, «esoteric teaching is always concerned with adapting to circumstances, places and times»<sup>80</sup>. However, the fault lines are not always clear. As we have seen, many of the features that one might have assumed to be distinctive of a far-right ecosystem in the age of social media – the use of computer message boards to circulate racist manifestos and calls to action, «gamification» and kill scores, advocacy of leaderless resistance, etc. – in fact originated within the cadre-based vanguard organizations of the early 1980s. Moreover, while the overlap between spectacular fiction and real-world terror certainly continues today, the use of mass murder as a means to «abolish the separation between art and daily life»<sup>81</sup> (as Franco Berardi put it) did not wait for the July 2012 *Dark Knight Rises* shooting in Aurora, Colorado, having already characterized the far-right's relation to the *Turner Diaries* for decades. Nor is the fact that fascist violence unfolds in a fragmentary sequence of «frantic precarious activity» without any clear political strategy particularly new, since the pedagogy of the useless task long authorized a gap between means and ends<sup>82</sup>.

What has changed of late is the social and technical transmission and reception of mythological materials, which today depends far less on print publications or candlelight rituals than on online web forums, amateur video, and memes. This shift was gradual, and did not happen overnight. As late as 2009 Leonard Zeskind was still able to claim that there «no actual evidence [has] emerged showing that any lone wolf killers entered the white nationalist world through the internet portal»<sup>83</sup>. In his opinion, if internet use tends overall to produce not militant action but only more internet use, this is because the internet is easy to ignore, whereas events like that of Oklahoma City aren't.

<sup>79</sup> Rowland, «Furio Jesi and the Culture of the Right» cit., p. 294.

<sup>80</sup> Jesi, *Culture de droite*, 107. At the same time, Rowland laments that although Jesi «acknowledged the overwhelmingly visual emphasis of Fascist culture», he did so «without using his own experience in art, archeology and art history to develop an argument about visual media and «ideas without words». For Jesi, «*Cultura* continued to mean literary culture» (p. 292).

<sup>81</sup> F. Berardi, *Heroes. Mass Murder and Suicide*, Verso Books, New York 2015, p. 2.

<sup>82</sup> Berardi, *Heroes* cit., p. 7.

<sup>83</sup> Zeskind, *Blood and Politics* cit., p. 452.

All this would soon change. After Anders Breivik and Brenton Tarrant, the loop between the online world and the practice of material violence closes considerably. Breivik's murder spree was essentially undertaken as a form of publicity for the sprawling and plagiarized online manifesto he had sent out over the internet, while Tarrant's live-streamed slaughter of 51 people in Christchurch transformed mass murder into an act of internet performance art, one which went as far as referencing popular far-right memes during the course of the shooting. Recent incidents have only accentuated this pattern. Shortly before the Poway synagogue shooting on April 27, 2019, which left one person dead and three others injured, 19-year-old John Timothy Earnest posted a manifesto to 8Chan. In it, the shooter explicitly frames his act in terms of the genocidal episode from *The Turner Diaries* known as the «Day of Rope», during which thousands of non-white Californians were summarily executed<sup>84</sup>. In the same document, Earnest writes: «Fuck my life – I'm willing to sacrifice everything for the benefit of my race. [...] I willingly sacrifice my future – the future of having a fulfilling job, a loving wife, and amazing kids. I sacrifice this for the sake of my people. OUR people. [...] We are in the early stages of revolution. We need martyrs»<sup>85</sup>. The scripted violence, the ritual self-martyrdom, the invocation of wordless ideas, is all plainly recognizable: Earnest has decided to fight for his place within the magic circle of the Turner mythic community. But who and where is this community today?

Although they incorporate and weaponize news cycles and social media as essential components of their propaganda of the deed, the primary audience of today's clandestine «lone wolf» attacks is not the general public but the online «swarm», a distributed, post-social congregation<sup>86</sup>. Tarrant's manifesto was itself so scattered as to be «almost

<sup>84</sup> «The Day of the Rope is here right now – that is if you have the gnads to keep the ball rolling. Every anon reading this must attack a target while doing his best to avoid getting caught. Every anon must play his part in this revolution and no man can be pulling his punches». J. T. Earnest, *Manifesto*. Accessible here: <https://bcsh.bard.edu/files/2019/06/Earnest-Manifesto-042719.pdf>

<sup>85</sup> Earnest, *Manifesto* cit.

<sup>86</sup> «The movement is, at this point, entirely leaderless...[B]ecause there is yet to be an officially codified doctrine...The mob is the movement». A. Anglin, *A Normie's Guide to the Alt-Right*, in «Daily Stormer», August 31, 2016, <https://www.passeidireto.com/arquivo/94904385/a-normies-guide-to-the-alt-right-andrew-anglin>. On the dynamics of the «swarm», as well as its «extremization» through tactics such as «platform hijacking», «evolutionary bottlenecking», and «purity spiraling», see Moore and Roberts, *Post-Internet Far Right* cit., pp. 84-92 and 170-172.

unreadable to anyone other than its intended recipients on 8chan»<sup>87</sup>. Earnest's manifesto is addressed not to close personal comrades bound by a warrior oath, but to anonymous users of an online board («anons») who he enjoins to continue spreading the virus («Meme Robert Bowers back, and keep up the memes of Brenton Tarrant»)<sup>88</sup>. Through the feedback loop afforded by ritual action, the magic circle both originates within and returns to the swarm. The distributed pressure of influencers pushes shooters into action, while these acts themselves aim to compress, radicalize, and steer the mimetic impulses of their online audience. In this way, over the past decade the cult of accelerationist murder has become a monstrous and open-ended rhizomatic reality game without any mastermind or offline headquarters. The magic circle that binds the community has become more akin to an ellipsis or a spiral: it is remote, impersonal, arrhythmic, mimetic, infra-citational, and increasingly transcends national borders. And yet in spite of all these shifts, the symbology, slogans, and apocalyptic structure of the Turner Myth persists, having come to rely upon the diffuse, decentralized swarm of chat rooms, social media groups and image boards to circulate its religion of death.

## 10.

A false dilemma structures much of the debate over far-right attacks today. For those who recognize their inheritances from previous generations of revolutionary fascists, these are treated as proof of a «continuous» and unified social movement driven by a «coherent political ideology»<sup>89</sup>. On the other hand, those who recognize the fragmentary and nihilistic character of their violence often wind up dissolving it into the gray banality of «conservative ideology» broadly construed, shot-through with a perverse drive toward «identification»

<sup>87</sup> Moore and Roberts, *Post-Internet Far Right* cit., p. 172.

<sup>88</sup> According to the «San Diego Union Tribune», April 27, 2019, Earnest reportedly attempted to livestream the shooting on Facebook but failed.

<sup>89</sup> «It's critical to understand that we should not understand acts of mass violence carried out by the white power movement as «lone wolf» attacks. The white power movement is continuous, today's paramilitary groups and lone-wolf gunmen trace their ideological and organization heritage across decades». Kathleen Belew, quoted in Laura Smith, *Lone Wolves Connected Online: A History of Modern White Supremacy*, in «The New York Times», January 26, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/26/us/louis-beam-white-supremacy-internet.html>.

symptomatic of late capitalist deterritorialization<sup>90</sup>. In other words, either fascists are a «legitimate social movement» whose ideology works just like any other, but which just happens to be at odds with liberalism, or they are merely one genre of nihilist «spasm» among others, all of which are ultimately driven by the unruly machinations of financial capitalism.

For example, in her effort to interpret the symbolic continuities that link the post-Vietnam War era white supremacists to their present-day inheritors, Kathleen Belew insists on the need to recognize white supremacist culture as not only a «wide-reaching social network with the capacity to inflict mass casualties» but a «coherent social movement» driven by a «coherent worldview that poses a radical challenge to a liberal consensus around racial and gender equality»<sup>91</sup>. The ultimate aim of Belew's work is carceral: to convince the liberal state's repressive wing that, by misinterpreting a «legitimate social force and its ideologies» as «scattered actions and inexplicable lone wolf attacks», it underestimated its enemy, resulting in a lack of «effective prosecution» that allowed the white power movement to reproduce itself with relative impunity<sup>92</sup>. However, by interpreting the appearance of slogans, memes and citations originating in this earlier period as proof of the «direct genealogical throughlines» across these generations, Belew overlooks the extent to which the fragmentation, social evisceration, and virtualization of this movement altered the nature of its community, as well as the relation between discourse and practice therein<sup>93</sup>. While she is right to claim that some of the symbolic universe of the post-Vietnam movement «endure[s] in white power action» today, not only do fundamental features separate the two eras, but (as we have seen already) first wave accelerationism was *already* importantly post-political, united less by ideological doctrines or a coherent social agenda than by an apocalyptic mythological machine in which ritual sacrifice and a cult of death prevailed over militaristic strategies or rational choice frameworks.

On the other side of things, in his 2015 *Heroes: Mass Murder and Suicide*, Franco «Bifo» Berardi links the rise of mass shootings in our

<sup>90</sup> Berardi, *Heroes* cit., p. 123-129.

<sup>91</sup> Belew, *Bring the War Home* cit., p. 237.

<sup>92</sup> Belew, *Bring the War Home* cit., p. 239.

<sup>93</sup> «We're still in the same movement, we're still in the same playbook». Kathleen Belew, interviewed in Ben Makuch, *American Terror* (podcast), Gimlet/VICE News, Episode 3.

time to social, economic, and existential modulations associated with the financial turn in late capitalism. On his read, 1977 marked a turning point: the defeat of the Italian Autonomia movement announced the collapse of the great political ideologies and subjects of the 20th century, ushering in an «age of de-evolution, or de-civilization»<sup>94</sup>. At the same time, the dethroning of productive industry as the driving force of the valorization process at the hands of finance capital gave way to an abstraction of concrete reality and the rise of a culture based in images, figures, and algorithms. The result was a new economic regime modeled on competitive social Darwinism, which introduced a «desperate precariousness» into every corner of society, poisoning «the expectations and the emotions of individuals»<sup>95</sup>. Frenzy, panic, and depression set in, as the modern psyche became «spasmogenic»<sup>96</sup>. As the quotidian proximities that once nourished a feeling of social solidarity withers, the search for community and authentic forms of belonging is suffused with simulated fictional identities in which every relation to origins is abolished. Mass shootings represent two spasmodic responses to this common systemic groundlessness. On the one hand, there are the non-political «suffering losers» like Seung-Hui Cho, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold who, having «failed» to succeed in the competitive social environment, lash out violently from a suicidal desire to escape the pain of a meaningless life. On the other hand, there are «neo-conservatives» like Anders Breivik who murder «coldly, in the name of ideological, religious and political values» that are no different from «the agenda of conservatives the world over» – an agenda that should itself be understood as an «aggressive re-territorialization by those who try to grasp some form of identity»<sup>97</sup>.

Whereas Belew reads accelerationism as a direct outgrowth and hangover of the Vietnam War, and consequently overpoliticizes it as a coherent and consistent ideology and paramilitary strategy, Berardi's emphasis on the constitutive depoliticization of the post-1977 era bends the stick too far in the opposite direction, treating all political ideology as a simulacral symptom of the nihilism of our time. The specificity of accelerationist violence cannot be captured by the alternative of *conservatism* or *despair*. Instead, it originates in a technicized

<sup>94</sup> Berardi, *Heroes* cit., p. 6.

<sup>95</sup> Berardi, *Heroes* cit., Chapter 11 *passim*.

<sup>96</sup> Berardi, *Heroes* cit., p. 222.

<sup>97</sup> Berardi, *Heroes* cit., pp. 95, 100, 104.

revolutionary myth designed to initiate a cult of true believers united in a negative community that ritually confirms its existence through acts of *testimonial killing*. It is not depoliticized nihilism masking itself as political identification, but rather a form of political identification that, having outlived its conditions of realization, draws upon the resources of mythological consciousness in order to extend its agenda by other means. *The Turner Myth is the continuation of (a defeated) political war by religious means.*

## 11.

In the final analysis, the far-right after the 1970s is no more in possession of a practicable revolutionary strategy than the far-left is. The difference is simply that its mythological machine, having converted itself decades ago into a religious object of sacrificial devotion, nevertheless remains capable of eliciting practices once associated with a revolutionary formation, albeit in the absence of any corresponding horizon.

For the moment, mutual self-distancing prevents any political unity between the deadly violence of “blackpilled collapsists” and the movement-building “identitarian” right. Whether or not such a composition will occur, either under the rubric of ecofascism (as some have speculated)<sup>98</sup> or otherwise, the accelerationist machine has proven its capacity to survive in the desert, and will likely continue to mutate and respawn itself even in its isolation.

At the same time, right wing culture is not a self-contained legacy or tradition having its own interiority, but a hodgepodge of symbols ripped primarily from bourgeois culture. By defining right wing culture in terms of wordless ideas, Jesi simultaneously invites us to take up the problem beyond a narrow concern with explicitly fascist political currents, allowing “the right” to assume a more general significance not only within other radical political currents, but also for the analysis of pop culture broadly construed<sup>99</sup>. While our political leanings might lead us to associate wordless ideas with terms like Tradi-

<sup>98</sup> Moore and Roberts, *The Rise of Ecofascism* cit.

<sup>99</sup> Incidentally, the emptiness of wordless ideas is also what allows the vacuous drivel of pop culture to maintain itself at a perpetual degree-zero of meaning without imploding on itself, by constructing an «atmosphere that does not ask to be “understood” in any sense, if by “understanding” we mean an activity involving any effort of reason». Jesi, *Culture de droite* cit., p. 135.



tion, Heritage, or Bloodline, the same is no less true in many cases of Justice, Class, or Revolution. Whether we like it or not, «most of the cultural heritage, even of those who today do not want to be right wing at all, is a cultural remnant of the right»<sup>100</sup>. It was Jesi's deep familiarity with religious symbology that prevented him from ignoring the uncomfortable solidarity between the Red Brigades and the far-right in the late 1970s, both of which drew on the «secret sphere of the symbol» in order to construct a sense of belonging and consolidate a political identity<sup>101</sup>.

What are we to make of such formal symmetries? On the one hand, it is «useless and unreasonable to be scandalized by the presence of these residues»; nor is the occasional deployment of empty symbols sufficient to make a cultural milieu fascist<sup>102</sup>. After all, cultures that are marked by wordless ideas, that trade on authoritarian appeals to timeless values, and that homogenize and instrumentalize the past to suit their present political aims can be found throughout Western culture from the Enlightenment to the present day, and not just in the field of distinctly conservative political orientations or regimes. At the same time, when asked in a 1979 interview with the daily *L'Espresso* whether there is any meaningful distinction between Left and Right in Italy, Jesi stated that, «I have some doubts as to whether the distinction between right and left can be applied in Italy today, not because I consider it theoretically unfounded, but because I can hardly cite any examples of the left (if the right is indeed what I said)»<sup>103</sup>. In other words, the difficult thing is not locating right wing culture but carving off a meaningful criterion for a political use of language that would *not* depend upon technicized mythologemes<sup>104</sup>. This is the problem that continues to confront us today.

### Abstract

Drawing on Furio Jesi's 1979 *Cultura di destra* [*Right Wing Culture*], this article sketches a preliminary genealogy of fascist accelera-

<sup>100</sup> Jesi, *Culture de droit* cit., p. 227.

<sup>101</sup> Jesi, *Culture de droit* cit., p. 25.

<sup>102</sup> Jesi, *Culture de droit* cit., pp. 23-24.

<sup>103</sup> «L'Espresso», June 24, 1979. Reprinted in Jesi, *Cultura di destra* cit., pp. 227-228.

<sup>104</sup> On the deactivation of myth in the revolutionary communist movement today, see Aarons, «*A Dance Without a Song*» cit.

tionism, a distinct current of white supremacist militancy responsible for a considerable number of North American mass murder events over the span of four decades. After positioning Jesi's theory of fascist violence within the broader methodological turn of his late period work, the article proceeds to outline three key features of right-wing thought: a language of wordless ideas, a funerary religion of exemplary deaths, and a repertoire of militant yet militarily «useless» tasks. Resisting the tendency either to over- or under-politicize these deadly events, Jesi's analysis instead allows us recognize the operation of a mythological machine that animates white supremacist mass murders over the past half century. The aim of this article is to trace the genesis and mutation of this machine, with particular emphasis on the period from 1975 to the present.

*Prendendo spunto da Cultura di destra di Furio Jesi del 1979, questo articolo abbozza una genealogia preliminare dell'accelerazionismo fascista, una corrente distinta della militanza suprematista bianca responsabile di un numero considerevole di eventi stragisti nordamericani nell'arco di quattro decenni. Dopo aver collocato la teoria della violenza fascista di Jesi all'interno della più ampia svolta metodologica del suo lavoro dell'ultimo periodo, l'articolo procede a delineare tre caratteristiche chiave del pensiero di destra: un linguaggio di idee senza parole, una religione funeraria di morti esemplari e un repertorio di compiti militanti ma militarmente «inutile». Resistendo alla tendenza a sovra o sottopoliticizzare questi eventi mortali, l'analisi di Jesi ci permette invece di riconoscere il funzionamento di una macchina mitologica che anima gli omicidi di massa della supremazia bianca nell'ultimo mezzo secolo. L'obiettivo di questo articolo è quello di tracciare la genesi e la mutazione di questa macchina, con particolare attenzione al periodo che va dal 1975 a oggi.*

Parole chiave: Furio Jesi, myth, right wing culture, accelerationism, fascism, neo-Nazism, myth.

Keywords: Furio Jesi, mito, cultura di destra, accelerazionismo, fascismo, neonazismo, mito.