

## Article

# Death Cults and Dystopian Scenarios: Neo-Nazi Religion and Literature in the USA Today

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**Abstract:** In this article, I investigate the literary representation of the religious convictions and political strategy of neo-Nazi ideologues who are influential in rightwing authoritarian movements in the USA today. The reason that I do this is because in contemporary fascism, the novel has replaced the political manifesto, the military manual and proselytizing testimony, since fiction can evade censorship and avoid prosecution. I read William Luther Pierce's *Turner Diaries* and *Hunter* together with his text on speculative metaphysics and religious belief, *Cosmotheism*. Then, I turn to Harold Covington's *Northwestern Quintet* with *The Brigade*, reading this with Christian Identity and his own conception of Nazi religious tolerance. Finally, I look at OT Gunnarsson's *Hear the Cradle Song*, reading this together with discussions of racism in Californian Odinism. I propose that what this literature shows is that the doctrinal differences between the three main strands of neo-Nazi religion—Cosmotheism, Christian Identity and Odinism—are less significant than their common ideological functions. These are twofold: (1) the sacralization of violence and (2) the sanctification of elites. The dystopian fictions of fascist literature present civil war scenarios whose white nationalist and genocidal outcome is the result of what are, strictly speaking, supremacist death cults.

**Keywords:** fascism; neo-Nazism; *Turner Diaries*; dystopian fiction; Nazi religion; terrorism and literature; millennialism; civil war literature



**Citation:** Boucher, Geoff M.. 2021. Death Cults and Dystopian Scenarios: Neo-Nazi Religion and Literature in the USA Today. *Religions* 12: 1067. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12121067>

Academic Editor:  
Christopher Metress

Received: 22 October 2021  
Accepted: 29 November 2021  
Published: 2 December 2021

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## 1. Introduction

In contemporary fascist propaganda, the novel has replaced the political manifesto, the military manual and proselytizing testimony. Combining elements of all three, fascist literature today presents dystopian future scenarios that lead through civil war to the foundation of white supremacist states. This sort of didactic fiction is written in the realist mode and grinds through increasingly plausible scenarios for neo-Nazi terrorism, guerilla insurgency, high-intensity racial warfare and fascist dictatorship. Capable of evading censorship and avoiding prosecution, these fictions belong to a moment in fascist strategy of “leaderless resistance.” Here, influential ideologues script terrorist organizations and movement activation from the legally protected distance of their roles as literary authors, magazine editors and religious prophets. Once an emergent phenomenon attended to by specialist researchers, the continued influence of these figures and their works has now become important to politics in the USA. After the spike in rightwing authoritarian domestic terrorism and social mobilization over the last few years, researchers who are concerned about democracy and toleration can no longer afford to ignore this phenomenon.

What is most striking about some of its most important instances is the extent to which it is a *literary* and *religious* and not just a political phenomenon. In this article, I explore the fiction and beliefs of William Luther Pierce (1933–2002), Harold Covington (1953–2018), O. T. Gunnarsson (unknown) and the Californian Odinist movement. Under the pseudonym Andrew Macdonald, Pierce was the author of the novels *The Turner Diaries* (1978), which directly inspired neo-Nazi terrorist group The Order (1983–1984) and also the Oklahoma bombing (1995), and *Hunter* (1984), which contributed to the mass murders by Anders Breivik and Brenton Tarrant (Berger 2020). He was also the founder

of Cosmotheism, a mystically inflected Darwinian pantheism of the White supremacist variety, and its Cosmotheist Church, and a leader of the National Alliance, a neo-Nazi political party (Whitsel 1998). Harold Covington was the author of the “Northwestern Quintet”, a dystopian fiction involving Pacific-Northwestern secession and supremacism, whose most important volume, *The Brigade*, is strongly indebted to *The Turner Diaries* (Michael 2014). Covington’s novels and his Northwestern Front are the inspiration behind terrorist organization The Base (2013–2021) (Ware 2019; Wilson 2020), but Covington is also the writer of the occult novels *The Black Flame* (2001) and *The Stars in their Path* (2002), which present Christian Identitarian mysticism. The pseudonymously authored *Hear the Cradle Song* (1993), by “OT Gunnarsson”, is a racist insurrection novel set in Los Angeles, written from a white supremacist and Odinist perspective, which advocates a religiously buttressed fascist regime. Some clues as to the religious and organizational coordinates of this perspective are provided by the racist publications of the Wotansfolk movement.

These fictions depart from remarkably similar starting points in fictional dystopias, involving the efforts of democratic constitutional regimes to suppress fascist insurgency and secessionist rebellion. However, they then fan out to cover the main religious terrain of the American far Right: elaborations of Nazi mysticism, Christian Identitarianism and anti-Christian neo-paganism (Barkun 2018, pp. 1–19; Dobratz 2001, pp. 287–301). I argue that the centrality of mystical and millennial religion to neo-Nazism makes a striking contrast with the ultra-nationalism and pseudo-evolutionism of classical Nazi politics. The dystopian scenarios which elaborate the neo-Nazi imaginary explain why: Nazi religion aims at the sacralization of violence and the sanctification of elites. Although valuable survey articles exist on literature and millennialism on the racist right (Kaplan 2018, pp. 503–22; Michael 2009, pp. 149–70), these do not propose sacralization and sanctification as the ideological functions of neo-Nazi religion, or locate this in a systematic historical problematic to do with the effectiveness of fascist propaganda. To motivate the acceptance of my hypothesis, I begin by contrasting classical and contemporary Nazism along the axes of two questions. What legitimates violence? Who is supreme? I propose that the answers to these questions have changed for the obvious reason—that neo-Nazism is Nazism after the Holocaust. This massive and inescapable fact poses significant problems for fascist propaganda and fascist recruitment. In the literary representations that propagandize for neo-Nazi politics, Nazi religion emerges with absolute clarity and breathtaking explicitness as a solution to this problem.

In what follows, I shall characterize fascism as an ideology promoting the militarization of politics, aimed at the restoration of group supremacy through the violent imposition of a military dictatorship. Neo-Nazism is a specific kind of fascism that models itself on the German variant of the 1930s. I am of course aware that a complex debate around definitions exists in the scholarly literature. My definition synthesizes elements of Stanley Payne’s definition of fascism as a negatively defined authoritarian mass mobilization characterized by the militarization of politics (Payne 1995, pp. 7–10) with Roger Griffin’s specification that the political violence aims at “palinogenesis”, or national rebirth, based on supremacist ideas (Griffin 1991, p. xi). I note Robert Paxton’s objection that political violence in the service of authoritarian mobilization and national rebirth is inconsistent with democratic government and must involve imposing a totalitarian regime (Paxton 2004, pp. 219–20). Finally, I acknowledge James Gregor’s point that the ethnically defined national territory is only sometimes involved and that trans-national clerical variants exist (Gregor 2012), suggesting that “restoration of group supremacy” is better than “national rebirth.” Neo-Nazism meets the demanding criterion specified by my working definition for the simple reason that it deliberately emulates the paradigmatic instance of fascism, German Nazism, in the moment of its ascent to power.

## 2. From the Aestheticization of Politics to the Sacralization of Violence

In a celebrated expression, German Marxist Walter Benjamin proposed that fascist culture involves the aestheticization of politics (Benjamin 1973, pp. 253–54). The aestheti-

cization of politics legitimated political violence in classical fascism. There is considerable evidence that this is precisely what is central to interwar British, French and German fascist literature.

In the English-speaking world, Wyndham Lewis's support for proto-fascist ideas was expressed through the idea that civilizations are aesthetic realities that shape individuals through inhibiting their drives. Great art breaks the bounds of civilizational restraints, just as Lewis's sentences shatter the limits of representation with their angular hostility (Jameson 1979). Lewis "matured" into endorsement of Hitler, while Ezra Pound, whose poetic program resembles Lewis's prose strategy, preferred Mussolini (Paul 2016). DH Lawrence, meanwhile, advocated a dictator and dictatrix to rule over the working class and the middle strata because the "three fanged serpent", liberty, equality and fraternity, based in resentment and envy, needed to be suppressed (Eagleton 2004, pp. 256–80). As his novels, especially *Kangaroo*, indicate, the reason for this has less to do with political economy than with the inhibitions that "feminine" civilization places on "masculine" potency, which is the freedom to create peerless works (Millett 2000, pp. 237–59).

In France, writers such as Drieu la Rochelle and Lucien Rebatet suggested doctrines of strife and restoration, ones whose authoritarian implications involved political violence, under the rubrics of philosophical vitalism and aesthetic romanticism (Carroll 1995, pp. 147–70, 196–221). The good life is the sublime life, not the just life, the moderate life or the reflective life, something grasped within an expressive conception of vital forces, according to which movement and striving are forever in conflict with regulation and reciprocation. Having dignified the brutal expressivity of the body in conflict as aesthetically sublime, these authors then articulated this conception onto pessimistic doctrines of historical cycles. The basic thrust here was that democracy was decadent, while ancient imperialism was robust, by virtue of the failure of the one civilization, and the success of the other, in fostering a vibrant culture of aesthetic expression. This aesthetic recoding of potency and civilization then makes possible series of other equivalences which facilitate aestheticized cults of technological modernization, social hygiene, military violence, dictatorial rule, and so forth.

It is likely that Benjamin was thinking of the aestheticized spectacle of fascist political mobilization, including its infamous cinematic movement in Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*. However, such peak moments of fascist aesthetics surfaced against the background of a pervasive aestheticization of violence and willpower throughout the 1920s and 1930s. In the work of Jünger particularly, an expressive aesthetic of vitalist potency is tilted explicitly towards violence, in a way that blocks reflection on its social roots and moral implications, while focusing attention on a glorifying aesthetic of sublime intensity (Berman 1986, pp. 214–31). Other authors dedicated themselves to the description of a legendary Germanic past whose cultural sublimity and heroic epics were sufficient reason to regard it as a golden age (Berman 1986, pp. 205–13). In both of these literary strains, fascist irrationalism, aesthetically dignified as spontaneity and intensity, is central to the cultivation of folkloric-popular conceptions of authenticity. A voluntarist conception of authenticity sweeps aside considerations of solidarity and democracy to expose the resolute decision, liberated from any reference to the conformist "they", the "being with others" of sociability, as the supposedly true ground of human existence.

Because of the success of the aestheticization of politics, with its legitimation of violence as expressive authenticity, and because of the solidity of Christian traditions in the classical fascist contexts, it is highly unlikely that Nazi ideology, or any other classical fascism, can truly be regarded as having occult roots. The thesis of Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, that fascism is a religion rather than a nationalism, depends on the claim that the Holocaust is inconceivable without the doctrine of Aryan supremacy (Goodrick-Clarke 1992, pp. 1–6). That doctrine, he maintains, originated within Ariosophy, an occult syncretism of racial speculation and Theosophical mysticism, whose most historically important exponents were groups such as the Thule Society, Theozology and the Ordo Novi Templi. However, this conflates the predilections of certain members of the Nazi leadership with the histori-

cally contingent process by which fascist ideology was articulated in Germany. Doctrines of Aryan supremacy were pervasive in the period, available from philosophical, archaeological, historical, literary and biological sources (Herf 1984). Meanwhile, anti-Semitism, crucial to Nazi ideology, was not derived primarily from Ariosophy but from medieval Christianity and popular prejudice (Goldhagen 1996). Compared with the aestheticization of politics, religion played a merely supplementary role in classical fascist culture.

Things are otherwise with postwar fascist culture, where the sacralization of violence supplants the aestheticization of politics. Theodor Adorno famously announced that poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric (Adorno 1967, p. 34), a dictum that becomes non-vacuous when it is thought together with Benjamin's lemma on the aestheticization of politics: Literature aestheticizing Auschwitz is impossible. The poetics of violent action and irrational willpower of the British, French and German literary fascists has failed miserably when confronted by the task of the aestheticization of mechanical slaughter and coerced obedience. The novelists and poets who supported the fascist regimes have been exposed and the political implications of their works have been decoded. Of course, there are some minor exceptions. The novel of the Eastern Front (e.g., Guy Sajer, Günter Korschörrek), often presented as autobiography, has realism as its signature and cynicism as its leitmotif, projecting a world-weary resignation from any political judgments on the conduct of individual soldiers. Additionally, a para-literature of SS memoirs and "historical accounts", cribbed from the regimental diaries of SS units, has long circulated in the postwar fascist underground. However, this is not an aestheticization of politics; rather, it is a political counter-history, written against the general knowledge that Auschwitz was an atrocity. Nor have the "assassins of memory", the revisionist historians of the Holocaust, succeeded in erasing the popular idea that the death camps are the paradigmatic instance of radical evil (Vidal-Naquet 1992).

The marginal status of Nazi religion within the classical regimes, combined with its pronounced irrationalism and occult themes, is precisely what has recommended it to postwar fascism as a cultural vessel for the preservation of fascist ideology. Apparently innocent of politics, this sort of speculative mysticism camouflages Aryan supremacy and aversive anti-Semitism, patriarchal domination and the cultivation of violence, as a world-rejecting spiritualism. Here, in the exploration of postwar ideologues such as Julius Evola, Savitri Devi, Wilhelm Landig, Miguel Serrano and Michael Aquino, Goodrick-Clarke's insight into fascism as religious is on firm ground (Goodrick-Clarke 2002). Prewar Ariosophy, deliberately revived as the last publicly avowable connection to despised regimes, now takes on the meaning of irrational violence in the name of Aryan supremacy. Where, for most occult doctrines, the esoteric core of the spiritual belief involves some conception of reincarnation, the hidden center of mystical dogmas such as the Black Sun is a different sort of resurrection—of racial extermination. By inscribing the Holocaust—along with military fiasco and moral vilification—into imaginary histories of spiritual strife, happening in a long duration, mystical doctrines flatten historical catastrophe into a minor setback and encourage a more resolute sequel.

### 3. From Natural Selection to Divine Election

The supremacist ideas of the interwar years were predominantly informed by pseudo-evolutionary theories, which combined natural selection with civilizational cycles into racist histories, supported by racist biology. So much has been written about this fusion of Darwin and Spengler, and the importance of biological racism and racist anthropology to the Nazi regime in particular that it need only be mentioned here. For proto-Nazi and pro-Nazi philosophers, such as Nietzsche (Losurdo 2019) and Heidegger (Di Cesare 2018; Farias 1997) (respectively), the effective categories in political history are willpower and resolute decision. The literature of the period supports this contention, for the great artists and supreme warriors are Protean forces whose superiority is the result of their natural dominance, not the consequence of a supernatural dispensation.



All this changed after the Holocaust. Heidegger's "turn", away from the "resolute decision" towards a theologically inflected notion of the "dispensations of Being", announces an intellectual program of pro-Nazi hibernation in esoteric spiritualism. With Julius Evola, the programmatic entwinement of neo-Nazi violence, occult mysticism and speculative metaphysics hits full stride (Goodrick-Clarke 2002, pp. 52–71). Alongside Evola's neo-Nazi yoga, significant developments include Francis Parker Yockey's syncretism of Spengler with Blavatsky (Goodrick-Clarke 2002, pp. 72–87) and Savitri Devi's Hitlerian nature mysticism (Goodrick-Clarke 2002, pp. 88–106). An inspiration for Pierce's Cosmotheism, Devi's mysticism is a spiritualization of nature, not a Nietzsche-inspired naturalistic theory of religion. Other veteran contenders were also led out onto the postwar track: revivals of the Thule Society; Landig's Thelema Magic; and Serrano's "esoteric Hitlerism" (Goodrick-Clarke 2002, pp. 107–93). Finally, there are some surprise entries with novelty value: UFO theories and Atlantean mysteries (Goodrick-Clarke 2002, pp. 151–72) and Aquino's neo-Nazi Satanism and David Myatt's Order of Nine Angles (Goodrick-Clarke 2002, pp. 213–31). Most of these cults took up residence in America, today the world centre of neo-Nazi propaganda and organization, where postwar complacency and libertarian regulations have provided opportunities for supremacist self-expression unknown elsewhere.

If the central problem that the sacralization of violence has to solve—that the aestheticization of politics no longer works—was difficult, then the fundamental dilemma that mystical initiation has to resolve is literally wicked. The issue is that the "master race" is the dregs of humanity, and nobody knows that better than its self-appointed knights templar and grand wizards. How, then, to extract the race from the race, if natural selection has so completely failed?

The basic neo-Nazi answer is—by magic.

Magic works best when its obscurities are placed in the hands of mystagogues, and its mysterious operations are represented as donations from some numinous source. Neo-Nazi religion transforms this intuition into a spiritualized form without transcending the instrumental role of the creed. A glance at the two most important neo-Nazi religions in America today, Christian Identity and Odinist neo-paganism, clarifies how these spiritual doctrines help to identify the master race and rank its candidates.

Christian Identity, emblemized by Richard Butler's Aryan Nations, James Ellison's Covenant Arm and Sword of the Lord and the "Identity Christian" Church of Israel, represents a re-tribalization of the New Testament via a truly exotic (and hate-filled) reading of Genesis (Barkun 1997). It turns out that the 12 tribes of Israel are the "Adamic" ethnic groups of Western Europe and Scandinavia, while the rest of the world is the pre-Adamite non-white tribes who existed before Eden. Jews, meanwhile, are literally the spawn of Satan, by virtue of Eve's seduction by Lucifer in the Garden of Eden, which gave rise to the diabolical race of Cain. The usual conclusions—millennia of religious fraud and spiritual enslavement, fiendish plan for miscegenation and multiculturalism, hidden world government and shadowy secret societies, blah, yack . . . —all apply. In other words, the doctrine looks like it is a secondary delusional elaboration formed around the hallucinatory core of the fraudulent *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, designed to identify the master race as the Chosen People. However, it has shockingly real effects: "I have a sacred duty", wrote the Christian Identity terrorist Robert Mathews, "to do whatever is necessary to deliver our people from the Jew and bring total victory to the Aryan race" (Kaplan 1997, pp. 62–63). So much for the legitimation of racist violence by millennialist religion.

Christian Identity also provides a framework for ranking the superhumans. The theoretical necessity for this operation is outlined in the pseudo-histories of miscegenation, orchestrated by Jewish conspiracy and aggravated by democratic permissiveness, that buttress the race-hate agenda. Additionally, given the abysmal quality of the recruits who otherwise qualify for membership in the master race, this is a practical necessity for survivalists and terrorists. The providential dispensation outlined in the movement's millennialism depends on a narrative turn from passive endurance of a period of dispos-

session to active retrieval of a spiritual birthright. On this conception, terrorism is a test of faith and martyrdom is its confirmation, but because of the racial character of the faith conviction, this also functions as evidence of heritage. It is terribly important, as Mathews stated in his final manifesto, to “stand up like a White man and do battle . . . and make the ultimate sacrifice . . . for race” (Kaplan 1997, pp. 62–63). Within this Manichaean universe, where dusky hordes and race traitors are pervasive, a fighting death is not just the final, but also the only, proof of purity.

Although its theological framework is quite different, David Lane’s version of Odinism is no less a death cult. One of Mathews’ co-conspirators, a racist murderer and a convicted terrorist, Lane’s main neo-Nazi accomplishment has been to inflict the “fourteen words” of his Hitlerian race creed on the world. Originally a member of Aryan Nations, Lane turned against Christianity to become a co-founder of the Wotansfolk (along with Karen Lane and Ron McVan), perhaps the most virulent of the Californian Odinist cults (Gardell 2003, pp. 191–257).

The Wotansfolk is not the only Nordic racial neo-paganism active in the USA, but its links to neo-Nazi literature and mobilization are the most explicit. It sits within a cultic milieu emerging from Stephen McNallen’s Asatru Free Assembly, “a native European spirituality” with a pro-racist but anti-Nazi inflection (Gardell 2003, pp. 258–83), which split after neo-Nazi terrorism began in the 1980s. Edred Thorsson’s Ring of Troth is a multi-racial, New Age, neo-pagan and wiccan community, but Jost Turner’s NS Kindred, Wyatt Kaldenberg’s and Tom Metzger’s White Aryan Resistance and Lane’s Wotansfolk are all white supremacist religions. Relying on Jung rather than Job to do the work of linking spiritual archetypes to racial heritage, Lane’s esoteric Odinism involves imaginative ceremonial magic, tantric revelations and spiritual exercises. “Wotan awakens our racial soul and genetic memory. He stirs our blood”, Lane writes: “smite your enemies and the enemies of your people with the hammer of Thor” (Lane 1999, pp. 81–82). Ron McVan’s *Creed of Iron* and *Temple of Wotan* synthesize this simplistic war dogma with Serrano’s esoteric Hitlerism—the “Hindu-Aryan yoga of swastika-spinning *chakras*” (Goodrick-Clarke 2002, p. 268)—to produce a tantric death cult, within which Valhalla accepts only those who fall in battle. What this achieves is to translate the Christian Identity framework of identification of a special people and extraction of a spiritual elite into Nordic racist terms.

I now want to show how the sacralization of violence and the sanctification of elites is represented in neo-Nazi literature. I shall begin with works that have directly inspired neo-Nazi terrorism and conclude with a work by the pseudonym OT Gunnarsson that is possibly inspired by the terrorist David Lane.

#### 4. William Luther Pierce—Cosmotheism and *The Turner Diaries*

By virtue of the popularity of *The Turner Diaries* (1978), William Luther Pierce remains probably the most influential contemporary fascist ideologue in the USA (Whitsel 1995). Written under the pseudonym Andrew MacDonald, *The Turner Diaries* is Pierce’s effort to combine recruitment propaganda, an insurgency manual and a visionary statement about fascist utopianism into a single work. Broadly speaking, these three intentions sequentially define the book’s plot, which tracks the adventures of Earl Turner, lab technician turned member of a fascist movement called The Organization and then initiate into its secret directorate, the religious Order. The narrative arc of Turner, who progresses from armed rebellion against gun control through to heroic suicide bombing of the Pentagon, is interspersed with commentary from a fictitious editor, writing in the distant future. This figure triumphantly fills in the world-historic story of the emergence of a thousand-year Reich from the crucible of The Organization’s guerilla insurgency:

We are forging the nucleus of a new society, a whole new civilization, which will rise from the ashes of the old. And it is because our civilization will be based on an entirely different worldview than the present one that it can only replace the other in a revolutionary manner. There is no way that a society based on Aryan

values and an Aryan outlook can evolve peacefully from a society which has succumbed to Jewish spiritual corruption. (Macdonald 2019, p. 111)

Aryan civilization is repeatedly invoked but completely unspecified—instead, the book lavishes details on descriptions of arbitrary terror, ethnic cleansing, nuclear war and, finally, the extermination of humanity (with the exception of White America and Western Europe) in a unilateral escalation to total planetary Armageddon:

The Organization resorted to a combination of chemical, biological and radiological means, on an enormous scale, to deal with the problem [of other races]. Over a period of four years, 16 million square miles of the earth's surface, from the Ural mountains to the Pacific and from the Arctic Ocean to the Indian Ocean, were effectively sterilized. Thus was the Great Eastern Waste created. (Macdonald 2019, p. 210)

And they all lived happily ever after—which is to say that the fascist utopia is an orgasm of destruction motivated by hatred of the other, in which satisfaction and extermination are the same thing. More technically, in catastrophic millennial beliefs, catastrophe and the millennium tend to fuse, so that “the disaster assumes a role in the renewal process that carries with it a faith-sustaining power” (Whitsel 1998, p. 189). Meanwhile, destruction and reconstruction coalesce in an indeterminate “transformation” that solicits believers to “force the millennium” through political violence, something that catastrophic millenarianism clearly legitimates.

The spiritual framework for catastrophic millenarianism is articulated in Pierce's work *Cosmotheism* (1988), which is a catechism for the Church of Cosmotheism as well as a work of speculative mysticism. In essence, Pierce's Cosmotheism is a fusion of Ariosophy with pseudo-scientific racial Darwinism—“DNA as the scriptures of God” (Pierce 2013, p. 231)—where the spiritual and the material are synthesized through a pantheism that proposes universal spiritual consciousness, rather than a personalized deity. The most direct purpose of this stuff is to produce the Awakened Ones who are to guide the Cosmotheist Community in their task of racial purification, something which he anticipates will take “a hundred generations” (Pierce 2013, p. 180).

Pierce maintains that the source for these beliefs is prophetic awakening to the cosmic mind, mixed with some more direct inspiration from Adolph Hitler (Pierce 2013, p. 131), all of which leads to the standard doctrine of striving and strife (Pierce 2013, p. 18). As usual, the main problem here is theodicy: If the divine spirit is the merciless striving of blind life, pitiless as the sun, but somehow nonetheless all of life is busy gravitating towards higher consciousness, how come there is so much bovine stupor about? How come alien races? How come the epoch of decay? In short, what is the source of evil, if not the nature god, Invictus, itself? While there are no prizes for guessing who gets to play the demiurgic role of enemy figure and general wrecker, for there are more than 100 negative mentions of “Jew” and “the Jews” in *Cosmotheism*, the real question is how the Jews can be unnatural, when they are part of nature?

Fortunately for the Awakened Ones, this hidden knowledge has now been exoterically deposited as the “Holy Books of Cosmotheism”, a catechism whose core is the following. It turns out that human beings are divided between the ego, responsive to pleasure and displeasure, and the soul, which exists to serve the divine purpose (Pierce 2013, p. 87); in light of the divine purpose, survival itself is a false imperative, for “egoism is the way of death, and service is the way of life” (Pierce 2013, p. 167). “This may sound like a paradox”, Pierce admits rather lamely, announcing his ethics of suicide and murder as the culmination of a book on nature religion, but it makes perfect sense, provided that we start with the assumption that the Jews are evil, and work backwards via Darwin to the probable causes of their ubiquity, success and malice. The Jew is the ego, or rather, the ego is Jewish—as noticed by its “emissaries”, Sigmund Freud and Franz Boas (Pierce 2013, p. 205)—but its true masters are the drives of survival and sexuality, and so, having read Freud, the Jew-ego is keen to reduce the discontent with civilization by throwing

off the shackles of repression. Jesus, Rembrandt, Shakespeare and Newton appear in this light as torchbearers of the chastity belt and the scourging whip, fierce advocates of the renunciation of instinctual satisfactions, who sought to read in the “mysteries of nature” the “inner knowledge engraved in our souls by the creator” (Pierce 2013, pp. 85–86): the life instincts are death; suicide is life. The connections to authoritarian disciplining of psychological drives are spelt out in the catechism on how “he who has not mastered the chaos of conflicting forces within himself cannot render full service” (Pierce 2013, p. 47). The affinities of such an authoritarian doctrine for terrorist activity are obvious, but what is its connection with specifically fascist violence?

## 5. The Election Problem

I want to call the central problem that fascist religion has to solve the “election problem.” Fascism has a problem with democracy, which it does not resolve in the expected way, that is, by means of a novel religious doctrine. This, it might be supposed, would win the popular masses and reconcile them to the fascist leadership principle, persuading them to abandon Christianity and the Constitution. However, fascism, as thought by Pierce, does not do this. Instead, its solution is to promulgate a doctrine of special spiritual destiny that exempts the elect from conventional morality and temporal motivations. The catalyst for this line of thinking happens when Turner’s Organization is confronted by the fact that nobody wants to become a fascist.

We always come back to the same stumbling block: a revolutionary attitude is virtually non-existent in America, outside the Organization, and all our activities to date don’t seem to have changed this fact. The masses of people . . . are still far too comfortable and complacent to entertain the idea of revolt. . . . Without some sort of empathy between us and the general public we can never find enough new recruits to make up for our losses. (Macdonald 2019, p. 55)

Indeed, the Organization represents only “one percent” of the population (Macdonald 2019, pp. 86–87), and so, not surprisingly, because “we had counted on a positive, imitative response to our propaganda of the deed”, “our whole strategy against the system was failing” (Macdonald 2019, p. 100). The central cause of that failure is that “the average [White] American” is “a mass-man, a member of the brainwashed proletariat; a herd animal; a true democrat . . . a herd of cattle” (Macdonald 2019, p. 101). This is where the liberated zone/recruitment pool strategy takes shape:

Since they are no longer capable of responding to an idealistic appeal, we began by appealing to things they can understand: fear and hunger. We will take the food off their tables and empty their refrigerators. We will rob the System of its principal hold over them. And, when they begin getting hungry, we will make them fear us more than they fear the System. We will treat them exactly the way they deserve to be treated. (Macdonald 2019, p. 101)

When, with the “liberation” of California, what Turner calls “Boobus Americanus” (Macdonald 2019, p. 130) nonetheless proves surprisingly resistant to the blandishments of white supremacy and the imperatives of enforced hunger, the Organization begins its campaign of fear:

The danger in not constantly escalating the war is that the system will find a new equilibrium, and the public will become accustomed to it. . . . Otherwise, the worthless bastards will take the easy way out by just sitting back to see what happens. The American people have already proved that they can shamelessly continue their crass pursuit of pleasure under the most provocative conditions imaginable—so long as new provocations are introduced gradually enough for them to become accustomed to them. That is our greatest danger in not acting. (Macdonald 2019, p. 135)

Nuclear attacks against American cities, designed to generate the complete breakdown of social order, follow.



Against this background, it would be a fundamental mistake to suppose that the purpose of fascist religion is to provide ideological consolations and imaginary solidarity for “Boobus Americanus”, designed to mesh the 1% with the 99%. Fascist religion emphatically does not provide a universal social cement or popular political legitimation; instead, nationalism performs this role *transiently and disposably* in the transition from authoritarian populism to totalitarian regime and then total war. Instead, fascist religion supplies the “spiritual human”, or superman, with that conviction of election and suppression of inhibitions necessary to perform suicidal attacks and commit atrocities.

*The Turner Diaries* states this explicitly. In key passages, Earl Turner is initiated into The Order, a religious order with an esoteric doctrine, which runs the Organization from within. While the story of *Turner Diaries* concerns the historical achievement of the fascist utopia through an orgiastic release of apocalyptic violence, the plot of the novel formally resembles a tale of redemption. The sparse details of this religious experience are worth citing:

What I had read ... had lifted me out of this world, out of my day-to-day existence as an underground fighter ... and it had taken me to the top of a high mountain from which I could see the whole world, with all its nations and tribes and races, spread out before me. And I could see the ages spread out before me too, from the steaming, primordial swamps of millions of years ago to the unlimited possibilities which the centuries and the millennia ahead hold for us. ... For the first time I understood the deepest meaning of what we are doing. I understand now why we *cannot* fail, no matter what we must do to win and no matter how many of us must perish in doing it. Everything that has been and everything that is yet to be depend [*sic.*] on us. We are truly the instruments of God in the fulfilment of His Grand Design. (Macdonald 2019, p. 71)

When Earl Turner is initiated into The Order, he swears an oath never to reveal its secrets, but upon being captured and interrogated, he promptly discloses organizational details to the FBI. Turner’s suicide mission, which involves flying a crop duster armed with a nuclear warhead into the Pentagon, is the opportunity for redemption that the Order offers him. “Brother”, the robed and hooded members of The Order intone, “we accept your life. In return we offer you everlasting life in us” (Macdonald 2019, p. 204). Conveniently detecting the spark of immortality within, Turner announces that he is “about to partake” of that “something which cannot die”, and he obediently mounts to the cockpit of his atomic pyre (Macdonald 2019, p. 204).

## 6. Christian Identity and the “Covington Paradox”

Harold Covington’s “Northwest Quintet”—*Hill of the Ravens* (2003), *A Distant Thunder* (2004) and *A Mighty Fortress* (2005), then the sequel, *The Brigade* (2008), followed by a prequel to the series, *Freedom’s Sons* (2013)—is a political imitator’s literary homage to *The Turner Diaries* (Covington 2003, 2004, 2005, 2008, 2013). It is better written than Pierce’s foam-flecked fairy tale, and it is also embedded within a more sophisticated political program. Nonetheless, it attempts to apply the same logic, that of insurgency by a tiny minority, to the problem of creating a white supremacist secessionist movement within the Pacific Northwest region. The three works of the trilogy follow a utopian logic insofar as they work backwards from the creation of the Northwest Imperative following a war of secession, through the initial phases of the white supremacist mini-republic, to the war of secession itself. The sequel, *The Brigade* (2008), is much closer in content to *The Turner Diaries*, albeit significantly longer at a ponderous 735 pages. It follows the strategy of insurgency that leads to the war of secession, based on the logic of making the region ungovernable by acts of terrorism that are deliberately designed to generate excessive reprisals. These “justify” an increasingly destructive mass terrorism aimed at the urban centres of the USA, especially Washington and New York. Covington is conscious of the fact that urban terrorism of the sort represented in *The Turner Diaries* cannot possibly succeed without popular support and so the fifth novel, the prequel to the sequel, *Freedom’s*

*Sons* (2013) details (among other things) the creation of a white majority region as the precondition for white secessionism and racist insurgency.

In Covington's novels, alongside a calculated military strategy modelled on historical insurgencies, secessionist success is prepared by two social factors: the migration of 50,000 racist whites to the northwestern region and a strict policy of religious neutrality in respect of differences between Identity Christianity and neopagan Odinism. (Mystical Ariosophy of the Cosmotheistic variety is represented as a minority current amongst the white supremacists.) This brings us to "Covington's paradox": "the cause is so right, but the people are so wrong" (Michael 2014, p. 37). There are two horns to the dilemma. The first, already lamented by Pierce, concerns the "lack of revolutionary consciousness" amongst white Americans, combined with what both Pierce and Covington regard as the degradation and corruption of the "Anglo-Saxon" race by permissiveness, miscegenation and immiseration. In short, the new recruits are social refuse. The second, explicitly addressed by Covington in his imaginary histories, is that the cause is divided. This division involves a political kaleidoscope that mandates alliance politics within the Northwest Front and the Northwestern Volunteer Army. Central to this is the policy of religious neutrality, because the supremacist imperative is coded through "civilizations" and justified through faith. Covington's own white supremacism and anti-Semitism is spiritually inflected, rather than informed by pseudo-scientific racial biology.

Despite the policy prescription for the Northwest Front being religious neutrality, Covington's expressed preferences are predictably partisan. In *The Brigade*, Covington describes Christian Identity, the millenarian evangelical movement which thinks that the Nordic peoples and the Anglo-Saxons are the true descendants of Abraham, as "the very backbone of the Northwest nation" (Covington 2008, p. iv). Adherence to something such as Christian Identity is also suggested by the title *A Mighty Fortress*, although, again, the singing of the hymn by Martin Luther is represented in *The Brigade* as a vindication of the Nazi regime, not a specifically religious statement (Covington 2008, pp. 503–4).

Covington's occult novels, however, such as *The Black Flame* (2001), are a different kettle of fish. These work exclusively with Christian demonology and Christian anti-Semitism to construct an occult world history of Satanically inspired Jewish conspiracy. Furthermore, the esoteric revelation proposed by these lurid fictions embraces the idea that humanity consists of two genetic lines, of biblical origin, one of which actually originates in a metaphysical being of diabolical evil, namely, Satan. These two ideas are the signatures of Christian Identity, probably the most important religiously inspired white supremacist movement. For believers in the "two seedline" theory of Christian Identity, Eve was inseminated both by Adam and Satan, leading to the births of Abel and Cain (respectively), so that the Jewish people are the offspring of Cain, literally the "spawn of Satan".

In *The Black Flame*, Sir Thomas Clave, medieval inquisitor and occult detective, slashes his way through a gallery of pseudo-medieval stereotypes—a monastery full of monstrous secrets, a nunnery that is both brothel and coven, a secret royal marriage and murdered heirs lying all over the place, the Knights Templar and other secret societies and, of course, the high witch of the coven. Although the character of Clave seems drawn from memoirs of the Eastern Front and most of his activities are replica atrocities from the modern era, nonetheless, the story does have a historical dimension to add to its fake medieval melodrama. This dimension is that of nostalgia for a mythological past that vanished when the modern world arose in the context of conspiracy. Naturally, the plan was to install the offspring of the wicked witch in the royal line in order to hasten the victory of the secret society, The Black Flame. That provides an excellent opportunity to introduce gay monks, lesbian nuns, Satanic orgies, ritual torture and child abduction, but what is surprising about this penny-dreadful shlock development is that it is linked, in the novel, to a magical ring that can actually summon the Devil (Covington 2001, pp. 302–3). The wicked witch is really the Queen of Hell, and—surprise!—she happens to be Sir Thomas's sister by diabolical marriage, as well as—you guessed it—a wife of Satan (Covington 2001, pp. 303–4). Her sinister plot is to create a demonic order capable of overthrowing patriarchal privilege,

hereditary rule and ethnic allegiance, dominating the world through diabolical principles involving permissiveness and promiscuity. So much for modernity. What is intriguing here is that Thomas and Margaret are siblings, but not from the same bloodline: one is Adamic, the other Satanic; this is of course the “two seedline” theory represented in fiction. The “old Jew”, who knows of such things, warns Thomas (Covington 2001, p. 293), but he has to find out for himself, in the context of fratricidal slaughter, the torture of detainees and mass hangings.

## 7. Nazi Odinism and the White Republic

In the near-future dystopia depicted by Gunnarsson, the “new world order” of late modernity that results in the breakup of the USA is the consequence two forces: (1) the esoteric Illuminati combined with exoteric Christian socialism and (2) multiculturalism springing from immigration and miscegenation, driven by the desire for equality of the “sub-human rabble”, but ultimately motivated by a Jewish plot. Unlike *The Turner Diaries*, which quickly escalates towards the advent of a Fourth Reich, this “Judeo-Masonic system” (Gunnarsson 1993, p. 279) is only gradually revealed through the machinations behind the ethnic partitioning of California that sets the scene for the novel.

The novel is a “battle for Los Angeles” story of the Nazi variety, in which the first half imagines an increasing non-white oppression of white Californians, and the second half details a white uprising that successfully establishes a fascist micro-republic in the city. As is usual in such scenarios, proportionality is abandoned entirely: The episodic non-white gang-like violence of the first half is met with systematic extermination campaigns of non-whites in the second half, and the narrative lavishes as much detail on the white murder squads as on the imaginary atrocities of the non-white ethnic militias.

The plot initially busies itself with a *Last of the Mohicans* scenario in which the lovely—but liberal—Gwendolyn York (and sister) are rescued from marauding Latino militias by the heroic Styrbjorn Taggesson and his sidekick Tracey Saxena. Styrbjorn and Tracey are insurgents within a white resistance, and their cross-country escape and then daring rescue-raid to free York’s family and friends provide plentiful opportunities for narrative digressions. These range across the standard gamut: physical training, guerrilla tactics, the venality of non-whites and the effeminate degeneracy of modern lifestyles. Romance between Styrbjorn and Gwendolyn looms. However, then the plot abruptly switches to imitation of *Blood Red Snow* and other memoirs of the Eastern Front, in which desperately outnumbered Nazi fighters hold off faceless masses of enemy infantry and tanks. Styrbjorn receives an apparently fatal wound while fighting to the last, but he returns at the end, once the ethnic cleansing has been done by the emotionless Henry Thurston, having lost an eye. The novel closes with this Odinic figure being invited to Gwendolyn’s wedding, although in what capacity, the narrative refuses to disclose.

The story of the novel, however, moves on a different timescale. It is about the Jewish conspiracy and the degeneration of the white race. In relation to the first element, the novel, which is highly dependent on quotes from Adolph Hitler for its narrative orientation, does not go beyond *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*:

‘During the last conference for the promotion of world Jewry, I [Hiram Glass] was voted as the one to perform the supreme ritual, the act of glory, that would assure our people of triumph over all others on earth.’ He was referring to the last get together of rabbis, financial leaders, government advisers, and Israeli secret service men which had taken place in Zurich several years before the disintegration really began to unravel the western world. (Gunnarsson 1993, p. 167)

This supreme act involves a deadly biological agent designed to eradicate life on Earth, which the Jewish plot intends to use as a final assertion of their godhood over the planet as well as a religiously inspired political suicide (Gunnarsson 1993, p. 170). However, that actually does little narrative work and is just a pretext for long digressions on the connections between the Jewish diaspora and racial miscegenation, which culminate in

a five-page speech, mainly lifted from *Mein Kampf*, that Thurston gives about how races naturally separate rather than mix.

It is in relation to the second element that the narrative breaks new ground. Partly, this is all about imaginative retribution against white liberalism, which, confronted with ethnic violence, reveals itself as flabby and frightened:

[As the men were beaten and the women raped by a Latino militia,] Eugene Pruse was hyper-ventilating and his breath was making long hissing noises as it passed through his clenched teeth. He had been a staunch liberal all of his adult life, championing causes for the Third World, the Underprivileged, the people with 'Alternative Lifestyles' and a host of others. He had always been against private ownership of guns and he had always held the minorities in high esteem. (Gunnarsson 1993, p. 38)

The root of Pruse's roseate and emasculated worldview is, of course, the decadent lifeworld of the consumer society, something shared by Gwendolyn York and her entire family, who also do a fair bit of squeaking and fainting. This is, of course, an aggravated version of the "election problem", or "Covington's paradox", but unlike Pierce and Covington—who foresee hundreds of generations of eugenic breeding as a lamentable necessity—Gunnarsson's narrative is ready with magical means to solve the dilemma.

When the rescued whites are introduced to the lifestyle regime of the white resistance, they learn that it combines military training in insurgency techniques with "spiritual training" in the "will to seize power." Spiritual discipline involves a return to mystical Odinism, which turns out to be a religion of permanent self-transcendence, through "self-sacrifice", whose correlate is the killing of enemies. Styrbjorn, the pinup boy for these tantric techniques, "becomes greater and greater by using his will and consciously directing himself into new states of being" (Gunnarsson 1993, p. 93), including those associated with both killing and loving. As the battle of Los Angeles begins and the white resistance realizes that theirs might be a doomed last stand, Styrbjorn's speech on the ethics of Thor (final victory, progress and expansion) "awakens their blood" and "whips the men into a complete state of warlike fury" (Gunnarsson 1993, p. 275). Here, neo-paganism and an imaginary animism are an essential pillar, alongside military training, of white supremacism, putting the iron in the soul necessary for both standing firm on the Wotan Line and ruthlessly executing designated race traitors.

This Odinstic mysticism, harnessed to esoteric Hitlerism, is exhibited through the triumphant revelation, late in the plot, of the reason behind the book's title: The Cradle Song is the name of Styrbjorn's axe, which speaks to him in battle and which summons the ideas of Adolph Hitler on life as strife (as his birth-song) (Gunnarsson 1993, pp. 273–75). Here, the "cradle song" does triple duty as a motif. It is the song of racial birth-right, the ancestral battle song of the Vikings, etc. (as imagined by Gunnarsson), it is the song of life as strife that belongs to every birth and it is a reversal into violence of the typically pastoral "cradle song" of Christian culture.

## 8. Conclusions

Despite their superficial diversity and manifest irrationalism, these books have a serious and focused purpose. On the one hand, they make violence into a form of transcendent self-expression, based in a mystical conception of permanent strife and spiritual supremacy. In the final analysis, the salvific power of regenerative violence is only available to Aryan believers, thus locating supremacy in the spiritual (not evolutionary) superiority of the "white race." On the other hand, spiritual transcendence through redemptive violence functions as a process of trials and tests that winnows a priestly elite from the rank and file. Here, neo-Nazi religion functions as a moral stiffening force for the tiny minority, whose contempt for the authoritarian followers—let alone the general population—is not even concealed in the literature. The literary form of this neo-Nazi revelation not only evades prosecution for hate speech—it also provides a vehicle for propaganda and recruitment. The distribution of such stories creates an ideological climate in which neo-Nazi political

violence and civil conflict can become normalized. Conspiracy theories and racial stereotypes that the novels provide rationalize and justify pre-emptive aggression. Meanwhile, the imaginative transportation that fictions provide supplies a vivid set of vicarious experiences that prepares individuals for real violence. Intellectual participation in the imaginary community of the neo-Nazi resistance helps to make actual membership more likely.

Perhaps the most concerning aspect of the role of the neo-Nazi novel in linking literature, religion and organization is the contemporary proliferation of imitations and cognates in the space of digital self-publishing. This includes a whole raft of second civil war novels and political violence dystopias, such as Matthew Bracken's *Enemies* trilogy or James Rosone's and Miranda Watson's *Falling Empires* series. There are literally dozens of such self-published narratives, circulating in the space of Alt-Right, survivalist, Second Amendment fundamentalist, white supremacist and men's movement novels. They all seem to have beginnings that echo Covington and Pierce. A liberal government, secretly backed by the UN and the Chinese, comes to power through electoral fraud, and America descends into civil chaos, in which Latinos and the Chinese invade while Black gangs riot on the streets. Alternatively, a liberal government infringes the Second Amendment by banning automatic rifles, and America descends into civil chaos and armed violence. The movement from liberal government, to armed resistance, to civil war and then, finally, to the restoration of order—including racial order—may not have the justification of neo-Nazi religion to support its implied call to prepare for violence. However, its resonance with neo-Nazi literature is what is meant by the normalization of the ideological climate that Pierce, Covington and others sought to create.

Imaginative preparation for “inevitable” violence represents the passive complement to the active stance of the acceleration of civil conflict into racial warfare. The neo-Nazi authors surveyed in this article are all “accelerationists”, in the sense of active promoters of terrorist actions. Well do they understand that this would involve not just murder, but also suicide, for their adversary is formidably armed and strongly supported—which is why they advocate death cults. Survival is the way of death, and suicide is the gate to life: such is the Cosmotheist catechism, paradigm of neo-Nazi religion. It is not just because of its capacity to terrify potential victims that neo-Nazis are obsessed with banal death imagery. Right at its center, neo-Nazism is a religion of mass murder. It proposes magical means to extract the race from the race, and it offers the few who survive this winnowing death.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Not applicable.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

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