

THE PEN IS MIGHTIER THAN THE BOMB: REPRESENTATIONS OF RIGHT-WING
TERRORISM IN FICTIONAL WORKS.

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A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
Department of Romance Languages and Literatures.

Chapel Hill
2015

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ABSTRACT

MICHAEL SGUERRI: The Pen is Mightier than the Bomb: Representations of Right-wing Terrorism in Fictional Works.
(Under the direction of Federico Luisetti)

This dissertation investigates the representation of the neo-fascist terrorist in Italian literature and cinema. In Italy, very few novels and cinematic works deal directly with Right-wing terrorism during the Seventies and early Eighties, and, as a result, very few scholarly works examine the representation of Right-wing political violence in fiction. In my dissertation, through an analysis of novels, autobiographies, and films devoted to neo-fascist terrorism in Italy, I seek to fill this gap. This study focuses primarily on Ferdinando Camon and Carlo Castellaneta's novels, autobiographies penned by ex- terrorists, and films depicting Right-wing terrorism.

In my dissertation, I will attempt to interpret neo-fascist terrorism as an effort to immunize the country against the Communist threat in Italy. Through the placing of bombs in public places, and the attempt to place the blame on Left-wing subversive organizations, neo-fascist terrorist organizations wanted to create a reaction that would weaken the Communist party and that would turn public opinion against the Left. Using the notion of neo-fascist terrorism as an attempt to immunize the country, in my dissertation I will analyze how the themes of immunization and purity are key features found in political and ideological works written by Right-wing ideologues, such as Julius Evola and Franco Freda, and in fictional works devoted to the representation of neo-fascist terrorism.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER I. EVOLA, FREDA, AND THE QUEST FOR PURITY.....	39
CHAPTER II. THE NEO-FASCIST IN FICTION: CAMON'S <i>OCCIDENTE</i> AND CASTELLANETA'S <i>OMBRE</i>	74
CHAPTER III. <i>IO, L'UOMO NERO</i> : MEMOIR OF A NEO-FASCIST TERRORIST...	119
CHAPTER IV. CIAK, SI FA UNA STRAGE: REPRESENTATIONS OF RIGHT-WING TERRORISM IN CINEMA.....	146
CONCLUSION.....	165
WORKS CITED/CONSULTED.....	174

Introduction

The clock at the Bologna train station will forever strike 10:25 am, the exact moment when a bomb ripped through the waiting room on the second day of August, 1980, killing eighty-five people and injuring more than two hundred. The bombing of the Bologna station will be forever etched in the collective memory of the nation as the biggest terrorist massacre in post-war Italy. The city was quick to respond to the state of emergency, as its citizens came together as one to help out the survivors and to dig the bodies out of the rubble of what once was the waiting room of the station. The immediate response of the Italian government, as well as of the police, was that the explosion was caused by a faulty boiler; however, after a series of investigations conducted at the station, it became apparent to authorities that the explosion was instead caused by a device that had purposely been placed in the waiting room of the train station. Whoever planted the explosive device was looking for the maximum amount of casualties. Not coincidentally, Bologna is one of the biggest junctions in Italy, connecting every corner of the country, from North to South and from East to West. Not long after the explosion, news agencies and authorities started receiving phone calls from anonymous sources claiming responsibility for the bombing. The prime suspects were the two most notorious Left-wing and Red-wing subversive groups of the late Seventies: the Red Brigades and the *Nuclei armati rivoluzionari*. The bomb, however, did not belong to the *modus operandi* of Left-wing extremist groups. Groups like the Red Brigades and *Prima linea*, in fact, would strike the system by eliminating its

representatives and its symbols, whereas Right-wing extremist groups, instead, targeted the masses by placing explosive devices in public places, such as train stations, banks, and public squares. Some saw this event as a return to the years of the “strategy of tension,” the period in which neo-fascist subversive groups were seminating terror by placing bombs in public locations and attacking the masses indiscriminately. The investigations conducted in the days immediately following the bombing confirmed the initial suspicions: the culprits were Right-wing terrorists and the prime suspects were the members of the subversive Right-wing organization *Nuclei armati rivoluzionari*. Three weeks after that fatal August 2nd, Bologna’s district attorney issued twenty-eight search warrants against the members of the *NAR*, who had been hiding out in several Italian cities, such as Ferrara, Padua, Parma, and Rome, where the extra-parliamentary organization was founded in 1977. At the top of the district attorney’s list were the Fioravanti brothers, Francesca Mambro, Roberto Fiore, and Gabriele Adinolfi, all of whom had embraced the armed struggle in 1977, when the *NAR* were created. The criminal activities of the organization reached an end on February 5th, 1981 when the founder of the organization, Valerio Fioravanti, was arrested in Padua while trying to recover a purse containing weapons. One by one, all of the members of the *NAR* were arrested in the following months, bringing to a conclusion the bloodiest chapter in the history of post-war Italy: the *anni di piombo*, or “years of lead.” All of the members of the *NAR* were brought to trial and were given life sentences. Of course, in the aftermath of the Bologna bombing and of the trials against Valerio Fioravanti and Francesca Mambro, who were sentenced to life in prison for being the material culprits of the massacre, several theories emerged concerning the true nature of the Bologna

bombing. Scholars and journalists have often asked themselves whether the two neo-fascists, Fioravanti and Mambro, were truly responsible for the bloodiest massacre in the history of the Italy of the *prima Repubblica*.

Whether Fioravanti and Mambro were actually responsible for the terrorist attack is not a matter that concerns us in this study; we will leave the issue to journalists and historians. What interests us about the events surrounding the bombing of the Bologna station is instead another little known fact: during one of the searches conducted in one of the hideouts of the members of the *NAR*, authorities found, among other things, a pamphlet that was written by the militants to explain and to justify the August 2nd massacre. What the manuscript contained was an excerpt from Ferdinando Camon's novel *Occidente*, which was published in 1975. Camon's novel chronicles the activities of a Paduan Right-wing extremist group at the beginning of the Seventies. The novel ends with Franco, leader of the terrorist cell and main character of the story, planting a bomb in front of a school. Camon had based his novel on real events, such as the campaign of neo-fascist bombings at the end of the Sixties and at the beginning of the Seventies, and on real people, such as Franco Freda, the leader of a Right-wing terrorist cell and the culprit behind the 1969 bomb in Piazza Fontana. Interestingly enough, the manuscript containing the excerpts taken from Camon's novel was titled "Linea politica," meaning that, whoever wrote it, had the intention of using it as the basis for the subversive organization's political platform. The official documents released by the Procura della Repubblica di Bologna, titled *Studi dei documenti teorici elaborati dalla destra eversiva*, published in 1982, state: "Chi ha manoscritto questi documenti è certamente consapevole dell'attentato del 2 agosto, poiché autore di un messaggio

diretto a spiegare la scelta stragista alla base del movimento nazionalrivoluzionario [...] L'utilizzazione di un brano tratto dal libro *Occidente* di Ferdinando Camon [...] dimostra che esso doveva comunque assumere un ruolo funzionale al progetto rivoluzionario" (134). The passage taken from Camon's novel had not been copied word for word, but was re-elaborated and inserted in a larger political discourse, meaning that, whoever wrote the manuscript, did not simply copy an excerpt from a literary work, but utilized the fictional work as a basis for the organization's political line and adoption of violence.

We must clarify that Camon, in writing a novel like *Occidente*, did not want to support the neo-fascist cause, nor did he want to provide any subversive organization with a political basis for their activities. The Paduan author merely wanted to explore the psychological reasons behind the phenomenon of politically motivated violence. As stated before, Camon took inspiration from real events and real people. He used his city, Padua, a hotbed of Right-wing extremism during the Sixties and Seventies, as the background for his story, and utilized several political works penned by Right-wing militants, such as Franco Freda's *La disintegrazione del Sistema* (1969), to give depth to the main character of the novel, Franco. Regarding his motivation for writing a novel like *Occidente*, Camon in the preface of the 2002 edition of the book, explains that "quello che m'interessava era il lungo viaggio degli stragisti verso la conquista e l'applicazione del *diritto di strage*. Credevo d'interpretarli, e cioè che questo diritto fosse già chiaro dentro di loro" (6). In writing *Occidente*, Camon was solely attempting to provide a psychological profile of the individuals behind the campaign of neo-fascist bombings of the early Seventies. However, the author, while attempting to interpret neo-fascism in a fictional work, had obviously been able to sense something deeply intrinsic

to the nature of Right-wing extremism in Italy and its adherents. Camon was able to understand and verbalize, in his fictional work, something about neo-fascism in Italy that perhaps the *NAR* militants themselves were not able to put into words. Camon simply fictionalized the reality of Right-wing terrorism of the late Sixties and Seventies; however, the author was so accurate in depicting the intrinsic elements of neo-fascism that a group of Right-wing extremists would turn the fictional world of *Occidente* back into reality with the bomb at the Bologna station in 1980. This brings us to the main issue at hand: what was Camon able to grasp about the nature of Right-wing extremism in Italy? How did the author interpret neo-fascism and how did he portray the Right-wing militant in his novel? How did the individuals responsible for the Bologna bombing see themselves in Camon's novel? Did the Right-wing militants of the *NAR* share the same perspective of *Occidente*'s protagonist, Franco? Is there perhaps a link between the excerpt taken from Camon's fictional work and the strategy adopted by neo-fascists during the "years of lead"? Does the excerpt lifted from *Occidente* and included in the manuscript found in the terrorists' hideout include elements that are intrinsic to extremist Right-wing ideology of the Sixties and Seventies?

Interestingly enough, the passage taken from Camon's novel was part of a subchapter titled "La strage è un diritto" in which a Right-wing militant gives a speech regarding the need for a terrorist act. In his brief speech, the political militant compares the actions of his subversive organization to those of an antibiotic that strikes unicellular organisms, such as bacteria and viruses. The Right-wing militant, in fact, explains:

"Ci sono organismi unicellulari che, schiacciati, risorgono, e mutilati si riuniscono: ma in ognuno c'è un organo delicato dov'è la sede della vita: noi dobbiamo colpire quel nucleo come fanno gli antibiotici, noi dobbiamo

dare lì al Sistema un colpo tale che ogni coscienza si rimetta a noi con tutta la docilità” (84).

The use of the biological metaphor to describe the actions, or the need to place a bomb, of the Right-wing subversive organization in the novel might appear to be purely a matter of style. However, if one takes into the account the history of Right-wing political violence in post-war Italy and the political text which served as an ideological foundation for neo-fascist organizations, the adoption of this metaphor by the author, and subsequently by the Right-wing militants of the *NAR*, may not seem casual at all. An analysis of the “sacred” texts of the extreme Right reveals, in fact, that the adoption of biological terminology and the theme of purity were quite common in the language used by neo-fascists. In addition to the use of biological terms, the metaphor of immunization is also quite prevalent in the political texts used by neo-fascists during the period of the “strategy of tension.” This stage of Italian post-war history, which spanned from 1969 to 1974, might, in fact, be interpreted as an attempt by Right-wing extremist groups, as well as certain government officials, to immunize the country against the Communist threat. The basic premise of the “strategy of tension” was for Right-wing militants to infiltrate Left-wing extra-parliamentary organizations, and place bombs in public places. By adopting such strategy, Right-wing militants aimed at creating a reaction, among the general population and the State, against the Communist party and the Left-wing. By making the bombings appear as being a product of Left-wing extremism, neo-fascists were hoping to sway the body of the nation to reject the Communist threat. The bombings of Piazza Fontana in 1969 and the massacres of Piazza della Loggia and the *Italicus* train in 1974, as well as the numerous other neo-fascist terrorist acts that characterized the first half of the Seventies, can be interpreted

as an attempt to vaccinate the country against the Communist threat. With each bombing, neo-fascists injected the body of the nation with the Communist “virus,” hoping that the organs of the State would activate and react against it. A more in-depth examination of the political texts dear to the Right-wing militants of the Sixties and Seventies will demonstrate that the metaphor of the immunization of the social body was widely used by the masterminds of Right-wing extremism, Julius Evola and Franco Freda, whose works have served as an ideological basis for Right-wing subversive organizations of the Sixties and Seventies. Camon himself, in describing one of the ideological texts he used as a source for his novel, uses bio-medical terminology to interpret the ideas conveyed by the book; as a matter of fact, he explains:

“Diceva che per abbattere il sistema borghese bisognava fare come i virus che aggrediscono un organismo: ci sono attacchi virali a cui l’organismo resiste, trovando in sé le difese o creandosele, ma ci sono attacchi che colpiscono un organo vitale, per cui l’organismo collassa. I primi sono gli attacchi alle istituzioni, i secondi sono le stragi tra il popolo. È il popolo che bisogna colpire” (Camon).

Our goal will be that of establishing a link between the strategy adopted by neo-fascists during the period of the *strategia della tensione*, their ideology, and the fictional neo-fascists of Camon’s *Occidente*. This brings us to our next issue: how have neo-fascist terrorists been portrayed in other fictional works? Are there any parallels between the neo-fascists in Camon’s novel and those portrayed by other authors in other novels? Is the theme of immunization, for example, present in other novels depicting Right-wing political violence? Is the language used by the fictional Right-wing extremists in Camon’s novel similar to that used by neo-fascist characters in other novels? In this case, Christian Giordano’s assertion regarding the link between reality

and fiction, taken from his article “Literature and Terrorism in Italy: From *Bandiera rossa* to the *Roman noir*,” is of particular importance:

“A novel, a play, and even a poem is never pure fiction since it is always related to reality, though the subject and the plot may be far from realism and take on absurd or surreal overtones. The ideas that are expressed and the psychological, political, and social realities that are described in any literary work will always provide inside knowledge, thus they are an important source of information for an anthropologist who wants to broaden his understanding of a group’s lifestyle” (40).

The task at hand will be to investigate which realities of Right-wing terrorism were Camon and other writers, as well as directors, been able to translate into fiction and what knowledge about neo-fascism can these works transmit to the audience. A perusal of scholarly and academic works devoted to the analysis of literary works that deal with politically motivated violence during the *anni di piombo* reveals that very little attention has been dedicated to the examination of the figure of the Right-wing terrorist in the literary world. The main reason for the absence of studies conducted on the fictionalization of Right-wing extremism might be, perhaps, due to the fact that very few novels deal specifically with neo-fascism; however, even though the majority of fictional works about the *anni di piombo* focus on Left-wing terrorism, attention should also be devoted to the portrayal of Right-wing sponsored violence in works of fiction. Our goal will be to bridge this gap by providing a more thorough analysis of the neo-fascist militant in works of fiction. In addition to examining the Right-wing terrorist in literary works, we will also see if the theme of immunity is present in other fictional works and how authors have uses it in portraying the neo-fascist militant in their works.

a. An Overview of Studies on the Representations of Terrorism

Before we venture on with our analysis, it is imperative for us to conduct an overview of scholarly research devoted to the topic of politically motivated violence and the *anni di piombo* in fictional works. A brief examination of previous studies, in addition to helping us understand the foundation on which the present study will take shape, will also allow us to see how our research will contribute to the study of the narrativization of the *anni di piombo*.

The last decade has seen the publication of several important volumes and articles dedicated to the analysis of the fictionalization of political terrorism in Italy; however, the vast majority of these scholarly works focus primarily on the analysis of Left-wing terrorism in literary productions. One of the first academic works on the subject at hand is Beverly Allen's article "Terrorism Tales: Gender, and the Fictions of Italian National Identity," published in 1992 on *Italica*. Allen uses a psychoanalytical approach to analyze the sexualization of the terrorist in several novels, such as Ginzburg's *Caro Michele* and D'Eramo's *Nucleo Zero*. Allen also briefly touches on the representation of Right-wing extremists in Camon's *Occidente* and Castellaneta's *Ombre*, which are two novels we will examine in our present study. Regarding the portrayal of the neo-fascist terrorist in these two novels, Allen states: "The fascist men are generally middle aged, going to fat, balding, unmarried (an anomaly in Italian society), and sexually perverse: sadists, voyeurs, and the like" (170). Allen's assertions on the portrayal of the Right-wing extremist in literature are echoed by Ermanno Conti in his 2013 volume *Gli "anni di piombo" nella letteratura italiana*. Conti examines the literary output of authors who have dealt with the politically motivated violence of the

anni di piombo in their novels. Conti examines in a chronological order a wide variety of literary works, including novels and plays, paying attention primarily to the stylistic variety with which the theme of political terrorism has been treated in the literary outputs taken into consideration. Even though the vast majority of the novels and plays analyzed by Conti deal exclusively with Left-wing terrorism, two subchapters are also devoted to the portrayal of the Right-wing terrorist. In a similar fashion to Beverly Allen, Conti, in analyzing neo-fascist characters in fictional works, focuses primarily on their sexual dysfunctionality, emphasizing the sexual dysfunctionality of the neo-fascist characters in Camon's *Occidente* and Castellaneta's *Ombre*.

Other studies, such as Raffaele Donnarumma's essay "Storia, immaginatio, letteratura: il terrorismo nella narrativa italiana (1969 – 2010)," included in the volume *Per Romano Luperini*, published in 2010, or Gabrielle Vitello's 2011 study *Terrorismo e conflitto generazionale nel romanzo italiano*, acknowledge the presence of novels devoted primarily to neo-fascism, but do not offer any analysis on the subject matter. Another recent volume dedicated to the representation of the *anni di piombo* in Italian literature is Demetrio Paolin's *Una tragedia negata. Il racconto degli anni di piombo nella narrativa italiana*, published in 2008. Paolin analyzes how, in all the novels he has taken into consideration, the political violence of the *anni di piombo* has been camouflaged within a family setting, thus defusing the true violence of the events that marked the Sixties and the Seventies in Italy. Even though Paolin, in his work, takes into account the presence of references to the *strategia della tensione* in the novels he has analyzed, there is no examination of the representation of the Right-wing militant in fictional works.

One important, and unique, contribution to the study of the representation of the *anni di piombo* in literature is Giuliano Tabacco's volume *Libri di piombo. Memorialistica e narrativa della lotta armata in Italia*, published in 2010. An important and innovative feature of Tabacco's work is the analysis of autobiographical works authored by ex-terrorists and political militants. Tabacco, in the chapters devoted to the examination of autobiographies, identifies several motifs, such as the *motivo delle armi*, that are present in all of the memoirs taken into account. What Tabacco's work lacks, however, is an examination of memoirs written by Right-wing extremists, such as Pierluigi Concutelli's 2008 autobiography *Io, l'uomo nero*, which we will analyze in our present study.

Regarding the study of the *anni di piombo* from an historical perspective, we can, instead, count on a plethora of volumes devoted to both Left-wing and Right-wing terrorism. The last decade has seen the publication of several works about the genesis of Right-wing subversive organizations in Italy, such as Nicola Rao's trilogy *La fiamma e la celtica* (2006), *Il sangue e la celtica* (2008), and *Il piombo e la celtica* (2009). Other works chronicling the history of Right-wing extremism in post-war Italy include Mario Caprara and Gianluca Semprini's *Destra estrema e criminale* (2010) and *Neri! La storia mai raccontata della destra radicale, eversiva e terrorista* (2011). These historical surveys are important, of course, because they give us a better insight on the inner workings of the extreme Right in Italy during the *anni di piombo*; however, they examine neo-fascism in Italy solely from an historical point of view.

Two other vastly important works about Right-wing extremism in Italy during the Sixties and Seventies are Franco Ferraresi's 1984 volume *Minacce alla democrazia* and

Furio Jesi's seminal text *Cultura di destra*, published in 1979. Ferraresi, in addition to tracing the history of neo-fascist subversive organizations in Italy, also identifies certain themes present in the ideology of the extreme Right, such as the concept of *purification* and *sacrificial death*. The motifs identified by Ferraresi will prove to be particularly helpful in our present study, as we will also detect some of these themes in the works we will examine. Furio Jesi, instead, in *Cultura di destra*, investigates the linguistic and iconic apparatuses intrinsic to neo-fascism and to the discourse brought forth by its ideologues, such as Julius Evola.

b. The Representation of Neo-fascism in Cinema

Even though this research will take into consideration primarily literary works devoted to Right-wing terrorism, a chapter of this dissertation will also deal with the representation of neo-fascism in the realm of cinema. The past decade has seen the publication of several volumes and articles dedicated to the subject at hand. Just as in the case of the field of literature, most studies focus primarily on the representation of Left-wing terrorism in film. There are, however, a few articles dealing with the portrayal of Right-wing terrorists in cinematic works. Mary P. Wood, for example, in her 2012 article "Navigating the Labyrinth: Cinematic Investigations of Right-Wing Terrorism," examines how the *polizieschi* and the political thrillers of the Seventies served as a representation of the complexity of unsolved political crimes, such as the possible involvement of the secret services in the *strategia della tensione*.

Andrea Pergolari, in Christian Uva's volume *Schermi di piombo. Il terrorismo nel cinema italiano*, published in 2007, also devoted a chapter to the examination of representations of Right-wing terrorism in Italian cinema. Similarly to Mary P. Wood,

Pergolari identifies the *poliziesco* genre as the best portrayal of Right-terrorism and the *strategia della tensione*; in fact, he asserts: “Tutto il *surplus* di mistero che circonda la strategia della tensione sembra essere inserito perfettamente nel quadro di un genere codificato come il poliziesco” (160). He also identifies the 1972 movie *La polizia ringrazia*, directed by Stefano Vanzina, as the quintessential *poliziesco* film. Of a similar opinion is Alan O’Leary, who, in his article “Moro, Brescia, Conspiracy: The Paranoid Style in Italian Cinema,” analyzes how the conspiracy mode has been utilized by film directors as the preferred type of narrative to portray neo-fascism and the *strategia della tensione*, as well as the kidnapping of Aldo Moro.

Even though the abovementioned scholars have identified the *poliziesco* genre, as well as conspiracy films, as the best cinematic representations of Right-wing terrorism, none of these movies present a clear portrayal of the Right-wing militant. The *poliziesco* genre represents Right-wing terrorism by recreating the atmosphere of the “strategy of tension;” the perpetrators, however, are always shrouded in mystery and act in the background, thus not providing a clear insight of the psychology of these characters. One movie, however, that deals specifically with Right-wing terrorism is Marco Tullio Giordana’s 2012 film *Romanzo di una strage*, in which the director reconstructs the events leading to the Piazza Fontana bombing in 1969, and its tragic aftermath. Most of the screen time is taken by the characters of the Commissioner Luigi Calabresi and the anarchist Giuseppe Pinelli; yet, in *Romanzo di una strage*, the Right-wing extremists are also clearly identifiable in the characters of Franco Freda and Giovanni Ventura, the two members of the Right-wing subversive organization *Ordine nuovo* who were responsible for placing the bomb at the Banca Nazionale

dell'Agricoltura in Piazza Fontana. This research will take into consideration the previous studies conducted on the representation of the *strategia della tensione* and Right-wing terrorism in the *poliziotteschi* and the political thrillers of the Seventies, but will add to the research on the subject at hand by analyzing Giordana's movie and the neo-fascist characters in *Romanzo di una strage*.

c. A Methodological Approach to the Study of Representations of Right-wing Extremism.

Concerning the methodological approach for the analysis of the representation of Right-wing terrorism in literary works, the main texts of reference for our interpretative study will be Roberto Esposito's seminal works *Immunitas. Protezione e negazione della vita*, published in English in 2012, and *Bios. Biopolitica e filosofia*, released in 2008 for English speaking audiences. Esposito's main premise is that the paradigm of immunization is at the center of modern Western thought. In order to validate his assertions, Esposito demonstrates, through an analysis of political theory from Hobbes to present day, how the modern concepts of security and freedom can be understood only through the notion of immunity. Esposito sees immunity as the connection between life, or biology, and politics, which protects and promotes the proliferation of life, while restraining its expansive power. At the core of the notion of immunity is the preservation and protection of life; the concept of immunity, however, can lead to a negative dimension, in which the safeguarding of life results in the negation of those particles of life which threaten the existence of the system as a whole. In other words, for life to be preserved and protected, life itself must go through a self-destructive process, which negates that part of life that does not contribute to its proliferation.

Esposito identifies National Socialist racial policies, and its programmatic extermination of entire ethnic groups, as the radicalization and extremization of the notion of immunity. The immunitary rationality of the Nazi regime, according to Esposito, is rooted in the concept of “thanatopolitics,” in which the politics of life are encircled in a negative politics of death. In reference to the concept of “thanatopolitics,” Esposito explains: “It is summarized in the principle that life defends itself and develops only through the progressive enlargement of the circle of death” (110). The basis for the “thanatopolitics” of the National Socialist regime is found in the concept of racism, which provides a separation between those who are to be protected and those who are to be killed; it is precisely through the death of the latter that the rest can survive. The elimination of a category of people would ensure the survival and proliferation of the rest, thus immunizing them from death. In order to prove the concept of “thanatopolitics,” Esposito places emphasis on the medical and eugenic objectives of National Socialism; he, explains, in fact:

“The disease against which the Nazis fight to the death is none other than death itself. What they want to kill in the Jew and in all human types like them isn't life, but the presence in life of death: a life that is already dead because it is marked hereditarily by an original and irremediable deformation; the contagion of the German people by a part of life inhabited and oppressed by death... In this case, death became both the object and the instrument of the cure, the sickness and its remedy” (137-8).

In our present study, we will adopt Esposito's notion of immunity and “thanatopolitics,” to analyze the role of the neo-fascist character in literary works and to establish a link between the excerpt taken from Camon's novel *Occidente* and adopted by the Right-wing extremists of the *NAR*, who were responsible for the bombing of the Bologna train station. We will see how the concept of immunity and purity was central to neo-fascist ideology and the “strategy of tension” during the *anni di piombo*, and how

this notion has been translated into works of fiction. The main character in Camon's novel, for example, places bombs in public places in an attempt to immunize himself from death by exporting it onto others.

d. Program of Research

In the first chapter of this dissertation, we will first try to establish a working definition of the term "terrorism." Given that classifications of "terrorism" and "political violence" are multifaceted, it is imperative for us to determine what falls under the category of "politically motivated violence." We will examine several definitions of the concept of "terrorism," and we will establish that acts of political violence oftentimes will have a symbolic value to them. Once we have found a working definition of the terms "terrorism" and "political violence," we will then focus our attention on the notion of Right-wing extremism. Peter H. Merkl and Leonard Weinberg's volume *Right-wing Extremism in the Twenty-first Century*, published in 2003, will aid us in understanding what constitutes Right-wing extremism and which parameters can be ascribed to it. Our analysis will reveal how the notions of racism and purity are at the core of the ideology held by Right-wing extremist organizations. Before shifting to the textual analysis, we will also take a brief look at the history of the Right in post-war Italy and we will chart the genesis of Right-wing subversive organizations, such as *Avanguardia nazionale* and *Ordine nuovo*, and subsequently the *Nuclei armati rivoluzionari*. Our main focus will be on these extra-parliamentary organizations because several of its members were involved in acts of terrorism and political violence during the *anni di piombo*, and were the main perpetrators behind the so-called *strategia della tensione*. After this brief historical parenthesis, we will proceed to the textual analysis of Evola and Freda's

political essays, in order to establish the centrality of the notions of immunity and purity in their ideologies. We will focus primarily on Evola's works *Orientamenti* (1950), *Gli uomini e le rovine* (1953), and *Il cammino del cinabro* (1963). In addition to the works of Evola, we will also devote our attention to Franco Freda's political essay *La disintegrazione del Sistema*, which was published in 1969. As mentioned before, Julius Evola and Franco Freda were considered to be ideological basis for the extra-parliamentary Right in post-war Italy. We will concentrate our examination of these texts because they were written specifically for Right-wing militants and for members of extra-parliamentary organizations, such as *Avanguardia nazionale* and *Ordine nuovo*. The analysis of these political texts will show how the metaphor of immunization and purification is omnipresent in the ideology of both Evola and Freda. In examining Evola's works, we will also see how the concept of racism was a key feature of his ideology. Evola believed in a biological, as well as in a spiritual form of racism, which differentiated the lower, spiritually impure castes from the caste of the spiritually pure, or the celestial race of Tradition. Throughout the first chapter we will also open several historical parenthesis to contextualize Evola and Freda's texts with the political situation in Italy during the Sixties and Seventies. The same immunitary metaphor used by the two Right-wing ideologues can be also be used to interpret the *strategia della tensione*, the period during which Right-wing extremist groups were infiltrating Left-wing extra-parliamentary organizations and were planting bombs in public places with the intention of letting the public believe that Left-wing militants were responsible for the terrorist acts, thus forcing the State and the army to react against Left in Italy.

In the second chapter of our present study, we will analyze, instead, the representation of neo-fascism in works of fiction. Our main focus will be on two novels: Ferdinando Camon's *Occidente* (1975) and Carlo Castellaneta's *Ombre* (1982). As mentioned before, an excerpt from *Occidente* was included in a manuscript written by members of the *NAR*, the subversive organization responsible for the bombing at the Bologna station. Our study will concentrate on these two novels because they are the only ones in which the neo-fascist terrorist is a main character, therefore allowing us to develop a thorough analysis and composite sketch of the Right-wing terrorist in fiction. Of course, the figure of the Right-wing extremist is also present in other works, but the neo-fascist is often relegated to the background, thus not granting us enough insight into the character's personality and worldview. Oftentimes, the neo-fascist is also stereotyped as being a ruthless killer, without giving the reader any access to the character's psyche and motivations, such as in the case of Il Nero in De Cataldo's *Romanzo criminale*. Another important aspect of Camon and Castellaneta's novels, in addition to being written during the years of terrorism in Italy, which spanned from 1969 to the beginning of the Eighties, is that they also provide a Left-wing militant as a main character. This allows us to compare, within the novel, the psyche of the neo-fascist with that of the Left-wing extremist. Both novels, *Occidente* and *Ombre*, are also structured in a similar fashion, with the chapters devoted to the Right-wing militant character alternating with those dedicated to the Left-wing extremist.

In Camon's novel, we will analyze how the Right-wing character, Franco, an ardent follower of Evolian thought, wants to immunize himself from death by exporting it onto others. Franco does so by placing a bomb in front of a school at the end of the

novel. By immunizing himself against death through the exportation of death onto others, Franco is able to purify himself, therefore purifying also the spiritual elite to which he belongs, or the race of Tradition, as Evola termed it. Additionally, we will also analyze the language and terminology employed by Franco and other Right-wing extremists in *Occidente* to see how the immunitary metaphor is used to address the strategy that must be used to stop the Communist threat.

We will employ a similar interpretative approach to analyze Castellaneta's 1982 novel *Ombre*. Our analysis of the language adopted by the Right-wing terrorist will reveal the use of the immunitary metaphor to address the strategy that must be employed to obstruct the Left-wing in Italy. The strategy consists of inoculating the body of the nation by placing bombs in public places and making the public believe that Left-wing organizations are responsible for these acts of terror. The purpose of this strategy was to cause a reaction against the Left-wing in Italy.

In the third chapter of this dissertation we will remain in the realm of literature to examine the representation of the neo-fascist terrorist in autobiographical works. In the previous chapter we will have seen how authors have portrayed neo-fascist terrorists in their novels; in the third chapter, instead, we will examine how Right-wing terrorists have portrayed and interpreted themselves in their autobiographical works. In this section we will focus our attention on Pierluigi Concutelli's memoir *Io, l'uomo nero. Una vita tra politica, violenza e galera*, published in 2008. Concutelli had been a member of the subversive organization *Ordine nuovo* in the Seventies. As opposed to Left-wing terrorists, Concutelli is the only Right-wing extremist to have written a memoir. There are other examples of autobiographies written by neo-fascists, such as Giulio Salierno's

Autobiografia di un picchiatore fascista, but the author was never a terrorist. In addition to examining the theme of immunity in Concutelli's autobiography, we will also identify other themes which are common in autobiographical works authored by ex-terrorists. Giuliano Tabacco's volume *Libri di piombo. Memorialistica e narrativa della lotta armata in Italia* will be a very valuable source for this part of our analysis. Tabacco has identified several themes present in the autobiographies of Left-wing terrorists he has taken into account. The themes recognized by Tabacco are the *motif of the weapon*, the *motif of the game*, and the *motif of betrayal*. We will see how these themes are also present in Concutelli's memoir. Even though there are obvious ideological divergences between Right-wing and Left-wing terrorists, there are also similarities in their experiences and in their descent in the tunnel of the armed struggle.

The final chapter will, instead, be devoted to the filmic representation of Right-wing terrorism. The investigation on the subject at hand will use Mary P. Wood article and Christian Uva's volume as its departing point, but will take into consideration other more recent cinematic productions, such as Giordana's *Romanzo di una strage* (2012) and, to a lesser extent, Michele Placido's 2005 movie *Romanzo criminale* to analyze the representation of the Right-wing terrorist in the realm of cinema. Even though, as we will see, the *poliziotteschi* and the political dramas of the Seventies have been identified by scholars as the best representations of Right-wing terrorism in cinema, we will argue that these productions do not offer an accurate and more complete portrayal of the neo-fascist personage. Even though these movies deal primarily with the *strategia della tensione*, they do so by emphasizing the role of politicians and other high ranking governmental entities in the *stragismo nero*. These filmic productions, more than

attempting to investigate the psyche and personality traits of the neo-fascist, are more concerned with the representation of the labyrinthic complexity and intricacy of the events surround the so-called “strategy of tension.” Other movies, such as Giordana’s *Romanzo di una strage*, allow the viewer to have a better understanding of the neo-fascist terrorist by giving him a voice and by not hiding him behind the complexity and tortuousness of the plot. In analyzing *Romanzo di una strage* we will also see how the theme of purity is also of prime importance for the Right-wing terrorist in the movie.

To conclude our analysis of the representation of the Right-wing extremist in fictional works, it is possible to see the reoccurrence of the theme of immunity and purification in both ideological works, written by Evola and Freda, as well as in novels written by authors who were trying to interpret and portray neo-fascism. We can also ascertain that the language and terminology employed by Right-wing ideologues to provide an ideological base for the “strategy of tension” and the political violence of the Seventies and early Eighties was tied to the concept of immunity and purification. Perhaps, the neo-fascists of the *NAR* identified themselves with the characters of Camon’s *Occidente* precisely because of the need to immunize both themselves and the nation against the Communist threat and the risk of the death of the race of Tradition. The need for purification and immunity might be intrinsic to neo-fascist ideology and thought, and authors like Camon and Castellaneta were able to translate this aspect into their novels.

e. Historical Context: the “strategy of tension” and the Immunization of the Nation

Before we proceed with the textual analysis of the texts pertinent to our research, we must provide a brief analysis of the key events that characterized the period known

as the years of the *strategia della tensione*. This brief historical overview of the phase spanning from the late Sixties to 1974 will give us a better understanding of how Right-wing terrorism developed in Italy, and how it played a major role in the shaping of the political landscape of the country. In addition to briefly examining the key events of the *strategia della tensione*, we will also chart the genesis of Right-wing extra-parliamentary organizations, such as *Avanguardia nazionale* and *Ordine nuovo*; these two groups were thought to be behind many of the terrorist acts that characterized the *strategia della tensione*.

When speaking of the *anni di piombo*, or “years of lead,” we are referring to the period that lasted from the late Sixties to the early Eighties, during which the country experienced both Left-wing and Right-wing terrorism. Regarding the term “years of lead” we must clarify that this expression, in fact, may only allude to the bullets used by Left-wing revolutionary groups like the Red Brigades, which adopted firearms as their weapons of choice. Even though there is no use in changing the expression “years of lead,” since it has become crystalized in Italy’s collective consciousness, it is important to note that the term excludes references to the bombings perpetrated by Right-wing subversive groups.¹ Within the period of the *anni di piombo*, we can identify

¹ The expression “years of lead” was adopted after Margarethe Von Trotta’s 1981 movie *Die bleierne Zeit*, which was released in the United States as *Marianne and Juliane*. In Italy it was released as *Anni di piombo* and it was presented at the Venice Film Festival in 1981, where it also won a Golden Lion. The movie is based on the Ensslin sisters, Christiane and Gudrun. Gudrun became one of the most prominent members of the German revolutionary group Rote Armee Fraktion, also known as the “Baader-Meinhof gang.” The movie chronicles the lives of sisters Marianne and Juliane who are both involved with the New Left in post-war Germany. Whereas Juliane becomes a journalist fighting for women’s rights, Marianne, instead, decides to embrace the armed struggle by joining a revolutionary terrorist cell. After her arrest, Marianne commits suicide in jail, thus alluding to Gudrun Ensslin’s alleged suicide in her jail cell in Stammheim in 1977. Regarding the importance of Von Trotta’s film for the collective memory of the “years of lead,” O’Leary explains that “la Von Trotta ha definito *Die bleierne Zeit* ‘un atto di lutto’; una funzione dell’inserimento nel suo film di estratti dal documentario sull’olocausto *Nuit et brouillard* di Alan Resnais del 1955 è quella di indicare che il film è inteso come un lavoro per la trasmissione della memoria storica.

two stages of Right-wing terrorism: the phase of the *strategia della tensione*, during which Right-wing subversive groups, in collaboration with the Italian secret services, were planting bombs in public places, and the stage of the *spontaneismo armato*, in which Right-wing terrorist groups began adopting the same strategy of Left-wing groups. In terms of specific time frames, it has been established by scholars and historians that the period of the *strategia della tensione* spanned from the end of 1969 to 1974, even though the bomb at the Bologna station in 1980 is seen as a return to the earlier period of neo-fascist bombings. The stage of the *spontaneismo armato*, instead, is associated with the end of the Seventies and the beginning of the Eighties. In our brief historical analysis we will focus on the period of the *strategia della tensione*, as all fictional works about Right-wing terrorism deal specifically with this stage of Right-wing terrorism.

Well before the “strategy of tension,” the different neo-fascist fringes were already organizing themselves to bring about a change to the state of things. In the fall of 1946, veterans of the *Repubblica sociale italiana* decided to bring together under one umbrella all the different neo-fascist factions that had survived the end of the war. The result of this attempt at unifying the different neo-fascist fringes was an organization named *Fasci d’azione rivoluzionaria*, or *FAR*.² The *Fasci d’azione rivoluzionaria* group, which can be considered the first neo-fascist organization to embrace the armed struggle during the post-war period, was responsible for various actions of subversions,

In Italia *Die bleierne Zeit* adempie in modo eccezionale a questa funzione di trasmissione, fino a essere parte dell’apparato tramite il quale possiamo capire i lunghi anni ’70 in Italia” (50).

² Regarding the name of the organization, Mario Caprara and Gianluca Semprini, in their volume *Neri!*, explain: “Già con il nome che si attribuiscono, i FAR dimostrano la voglia di rivendicare con fierezza il proprio passato: questa sigla, infatti, risale al 1914, alle radici della nascita del Movimento fascista. Il programma dei nuovi FAR viene pubblicato dal giornale clandestino *Rivoluzione*, in seguito da altre due pubblicazioni clandestine: *Credere e Mussolini*” (79).

such as throwing cherry bombs and taking control of the Monte Mario radio tower. The group was founded by Mario Tedeschi, a journalist who had joined the *Repubblica sociale italiana*, and counted among its ranks other characters, such as Giorgio Almirante and Pino Romualdi, who would eventually become key players in the development of the *Movimento sociale italiano*. Part of the reason why such organization was brought to life was to create a network that would allow RSI veterans to help each other and, most importantly, to fight against what they saw as being the antifascist State that took power after the collapse of Mussolini and the RSI. For many of these veterans, the armed struggle was the only viable option to adopt in order to paralyze the State and to gain support from the masses. Members of the *FAR* also compiled a political program containing an outline of the group's strategy and objective. It is believed that the creator of this political program was Pino Romualdi, who also became one of the leading figures of the *MSI*. The program included several strategical points reminiscent of the "strategy of tension" of the Sixties and Seventies. In fact, according to the document, the goal of the *FAR*'s strategy was to "creare nel paese una psicosi anticomunista tale da costringere tutti i partiti ad appoggiare il Fascismo come il più dinamico dei movimenti anticomunisti" (89). According to the *FAR*'s political program, Fascism would serve as the country's defense against Communism by threatening the State's prestige and credibility through the use of terrorist actions that would bring the masses to support the *FAR*'s vision for the country's future. In the strategy of the *FAR* we can already see the blueprint for the *modus operandi* that Right-wing subversive groups would adopt later while attempting to create a reaction against the Communist "virus."

On the legal front, the different neo-fascist factions united to create the *Movimento sociale italiano*. The *MSI*, which would eventually become the fourth largest political party in Italy, was officially founded on December 26th, 1946. With the creation of its own political party, the neo-fascist movement could have counted on two structures: a legal one, represented by the *MSI*, and a subversive one, constituted by the *FAR*. Of course, the fact that there were two faces to the neo-fascist movement, a legal and a subversive one, does not mean that the *MSI* and the *FAR* were two sides of the same coin. It is definitely true that the two organizations shared members, but it is also true that many neo-fascists belonging to the more extremist fringes condemned the *MSI*, accusing the organization of moderatism. Just as the *MSI* was about to debut in the Italian political realm, the *FAR* inaugurated the new year, 1947, with a string of bombings in Milan and Rome. The wave of bombings spurred the police to begin a countrywide investigation that resulted in many arrests and in the discovery of clandestine headquarters, as well as a network of arms trafficking. After the wave of arrests of 1947, the *FAR* reformed in 1950 adopting the name *Legione nera*. The reformed *FAR*, or *Legione nera*, was responsible for a series of bomb attacks that targeted the headquarters of several political parties in Rome. A few weeks after these attacks, the police arrested Pino Rauti and Enzo Erra as well as other members of the *FAR*. The investigation against the *FAR* also allowed authorities to make an interesting discovery: the typeface used in the flyers left at the scenes of the crimes was the same as the one used in the periodical *Imperium*, which was the *FAR*'s official journal. Interestingly enough, Julius Evola also published articles in *Imperium*. Following Erra and Rauti's arrest, authorities were able to bring into custody all remaining members of

the *FAR*, including Julius Evola, who was considered the group's ideological and spiritual guide. In 1951, the members of the *FAR*, along with Evola, were brought to trial, but were sentenced to only two years of jail.

Even though all the leaders of the *FAR* were sentenced to jail terms, Evola was acquitted for lack of evidence tying him to the subversive organization. The Right-wing ideologue had also been accused of racism and conspiracy to reform the National Fascist Party. Evola had collaborated with members of the *FAR* through the publication of his articles in the periodical *Imperium*, but there was not enough evidence indicating that Evola had been actively involved in the campaign of bombings perpetrated by the *FAR*. In his autobiography *Il cammino del cinabro*, which was originally published in 1963, Evola further elucidated his ties to the neo-fascists of the *FAR* and *Imperium*:

“[...] nel 1948 rientrai in Italia. Qui mi aspettavo di trovare solo un mondo in rovine, spirituali ancor più che materiali. Restai sorpreso di constatare che esistevano invece dei gruppi, soprattutto di giovani, che non si erano lasciati trascinare nel crollo generale. Specie nei loro ambienti il mio nome era noto e i miei libri erano molto letti” (89-90).

It must also be noted that Evola would eventually publish his political manifesto *Orientamenti* in the journal *Imperium*, thus providing Right-wing militants with a political manual they could use in their fight against Communism. From his court deposition we can definitely ascertain that Evola was indeed in contact with members of subversive Right-wing groups and that his writings had already been circulating among neo-fascist circles for some time.

After the demise of the *FAR*, some of its leading members, such as Pino Rauti and Clemente Graziani, formed the political organization *Ordine nuovo* in 1956 as a result of a disagreement with the *MSI*'s official political stance. *Ordine nuovo* was

conceived as a Right-wing think-tank and research center for Traditionalist studies. The research center focused its attention on writers and thinkers like Evola, Guénon, and Spengler. At the end of 1969, Pino Rauti disbanded the organization in order to rejoin the ranks of the *MSI*. The following year, Clemente Graziani decided to reform *Ordine nuovo* under a new moniker: *Movimento politico ordine nuovo*. After the *MPON*'s involvement in the so-called “strategy of tension,” the organization was eventually disbanded in 1973 as a result of the “Scelba Law,” which prohibited the formation of any neo-fascist groups. With *Ordine nuovo* no longer in existence, some of its members gravitated towards another neo-fascist subversive organization, *Ordine nero*, which was responsible for the bombing of the *Italicus* train in 1974. Many of *Ordine nuovo*'s members also sought refuge in Spain, where Franco offered them political asylum. With the fall of Franco's regime in 1977, many of *Ordine nuovo*'s members who escaped to Spain were eventually arrested.

In 1956, another neo-fascist organization came into existence: *Avanguardia nazionale*. The *Avanguardia nazionale* project was conceived by Stefano Delle Chiaie after breaking away from the other Right-wing extra-parliamentary organization, *Ordine nuovo*. Delle Chiaie had joined *ON* as a result of his dissatisfaction with the *MSI*'s official political line. As a member of *ON*, Delle Chiaie was in disagreement with Rauti over the purpose and the role the organization was to adopt; according to Delle Chiaie, *ON* should have become a true political movement, whereas Rauti wanted to keep *ON* solely as a research project. As a result of this disagreement, Delle Chiaie formed *Avanguardia nazionale* together with ex-members of *ON*. Delle Chiaie's organization was able to attract many youths who were more interested in political activism, rather

than in research and in esotericism, like *ON* advocated.³ *Avanguardia nazionale*'s more activist stance was also visible in the organization's interest in social and economic issues. Regarding AN's political program, Nicola Rao explains:

“Si tratta . . . di un programma caratterizzato da alcune tesi demagogiche, da altre populiste, da altre tipicamente fasciste. Il tutto inserito in un contesto di forte militarizzazione che non può non risentire delle contaminazioni evoliane e nazionalsocialiste. Prima ancora di Rauti, quindi, Delle Chiaie è forse il primo a tradurre in attività politica concreta gli insegnamenti di Evola e a tentare di sposarli con le opzioni sociali tanto care alla sinistra fascista prima e missina poi” (97).

Stefano Delle Chiaie decided to disband *Avanguardia nazionale* in 1965 due to a lack of funds and the threat of being indicted for “ricostituzione del Partito Fascista.” Adriano Tilgher reformed the organization in 1970, while Delle Chiaie, who had escaped to Spain, was being investigated for the Piazza Fontana bombing. With Adriano Tilgher as its leader, *Avanguardia nazionale* participated in the “Golpe Borghese” in 1970 and started pollinating Northern Italy, where AN groups began subversive activities in cities like Brescia and Milan. AN officially disbanded again in 1976 after several of its members had been arrested for participating in subversive activities, such as the bomb at the *PSI* headquarters in Brescia in 1973, and after the Italian magistrature deemed the organization illegal due to its identification with neo-fascism.

May 3rd, 1965 marks an important date in the course of events that later shaped the years known as those of the *strategia della tensione*. This day marks the moment in which the foundations of what would become the strategy adopted by Right-Wing extremist groups were laid. On May 3rd, the *Istituto Pollio per gli affari strategici*

³ Regarding the symbolism adopted by *Avanguardia nazionale*, Nicola Rao, in his volume *La fiamma e la celtica*, explains that “*Avanguardia nazionale* assume come simbolo la Odal, una delle lettere dell'alfabeto runico. La runa Odal, tra l'altro, era anche il simbolo di una divisione delle Waffen-SS, che costituiranno uno dei miti dei giovani neofascisti degli anni Settanta. Evidentemente nell'ex ordinovista Delle Chiaie l'influenza di Evola ha avuto il suo peso per quanto riguarda la simbologia” (95).

organized, in Rome, a conference on “revolutionary war” and the spreading of Communism in the world. In reference to the importance of this conference in the history of Right-Wing extremism in Italy, Mario Caprara and Gianluca Semprini, in their volume *Neri!*, explain that “gli esperti del neofascismo lo ricordano come il convegno del *partito del Golpe*, piattaforma ideologica e programmatica della strategia della tensione” (193).⁴

The main purpose of the conference was to discuss which strategic modalities should be adopted to stop the spreading of the Communist ideology. According to the participants of the conference, Communist regimes were devising a plan which would have resulted in a total war against the West. By total war, the attendees of the conference not only meant a military one, but also a psychological and ideological one. According to the vision of the attendees, Communist regimes were conducting this war through military intervention, as well as by infiltrating the masses and by spreading disinformation through the educational system and the media. Some of the interventions at the conference were made by Pino Rauti, who presented “La tattica della penetrazione comunista in Italia,” Guido Giannettini, who offered an analysis on “La varietà delle tecniche nella condotta della guerra rivoluzionaria,” and Vittorio De Biase, whose contribution to the conference was the essay “Necessita` di una azione concreta contro la penetrazione comunista.” At the conclusion of the conference, several

⁴ Regarding the list of attendees, Caprara and Semprini explain that: “Fra i relatori vi era Guido Giannettini, fra coloro che erano stati presenti con un intervento Pino Rauti e fra gli studenti invitati per apprendere le nuove teorie giovani come Stefano Delle Chiaie e Mario Merlino, personaggi tutti i cui nomi sarebbero comparsi pochi anni dopo nelle cronache delle indagini sui più gravi fatti eversivi” (193). In addition to those mentioned above, the list of attendees included also Mario Merlino, who will become a very controversial figure during the years of the *strategia della tensione*. Merlino joined *Avanguardia nazionale* in 1962, and later founded the anarchist group *22 Marzo*. The anarchist group included Pietro Valpreda, who, along with Mario Merlino, will be investigated for the Piazza Fontana bombing, which took place on December 12th, 1969.

strategical parameters had been hypothesised, but the crux of the proceedings was that it was necessary to render the masses in Italy aware of the ideological and military war that was being imposed by Communism on the West. Pino Rauti's intervention at the conference is particularly interesting, because he specifies that the best strategy to adopt would be to allow the Communist virus to manifest itself to the masses, thus allowing for a reactionary action against it; Rauti, in fact, explains:

“Se un numero crescente di italiani sarà indotto a riguardare il comunismo non secondo lo schema ormai non più valido e sorpassato di un partito che conquista o cerca di conquistare il potere attraverso il ricorso alle elezioni [...] ma sarà indotto a riguardare il comunismo in Italia, come un male che contrasta la nostra civiltà di italiani, di europei, di occidentali [...] noi avremo compiuto un'opera utilissima” (193).

Rauti's plan could be achieved by administering a series of booster shots that would cause the masses to react against the Communist threat, thus weakening the presence of the Communist party in Italy.

The advent of the 1968 student protest movement and the workers' strike were seen by the Right-wing as a tangible and concrete threat against the stability of the country. With the social climate ready to burst into flames, the end of the Sixties, characterized by the spirit of revolt, was the ideal time to implement the theories postulated at the Istituto Pollio meeting in 1965. It is at the end of the Sixties that we start seeing the application of the techniques of infiltration ideated three years before at the Istituto Pollio. Right-wing subversive organizations began to prepare the booster shots that would be administered to the masses, so that a reaction against the Left could be achieved.

A key player in the the infiltration operation was the fictitious press agency *Aginter Press*, which was based out of Lisbon, Portugal. *Aginter Press* functioned as a

laboratory for anti-Communist activity. Regarding this fictitious press agency, Mimmo Franzinelli, in *La sottile linea nera*, explains that *Aginter Press* “propone l’implosione del sistema mediante l’exasperazione della confusione con attentati a obiettivi civili da attribuire alla sinistra per suscitare la mobilitazione d’ordine e militarizzare la società” (18). The agency facilitated the creation of a network of neo-fascist organizations by offering courses on sabotage and counterespionage, as well as by offering support to neo-fascist groups in other countries, such as Italy. Among those who attended the courses sponsored by *Aginter Press* were fifty-four members of neo-fascist organizations, such as *Ordine nuovo*, *Avanguardia nazionale*, *Europa Civiltà*, as well as members of the Right-wing student organization *Caravella*. The group of fifty-four Right-wing militants also included Mario Merlino and Stefano Serpieri, who became key figures in the infiltration operation implemented by Right-wing extra-parliamentary groups, as well as by the Italian secret services.

One of the results of the infiltration of Right-wing militants in Left-wing organizations was the development of *Nazimaoist* ideologies, or the consolidation of Right-wing and Left-wing ideologies, thus creating one subversive front against the bourgeois state. The purpose of the development of this sort of ideology was to create confusion among the public. One example of some of the activities conducted to create confusion was when neo-fascists plastered the walls of several Italian cities with political posters which praised Stalin and the Soviet Union. The purpose of such actions was to give the public the impression that the country was succumbing to subversive Left-wing groups. This phenomenon became known as *manifesti cinesi*, because the purpose

was to make the public believe that young Left-wing extremists were responsible for affixing the posters and that the Communist “virus” was a real and tangible threat.

A key figure in the development of *Nazimaoism*, or the fusion of Right-wing and Left-wing ideologies, was Franco “Giorgio” Freda, who we have already encountered previously in our study. Freda, in addition to being an *ordinovista* had also been a member of the *Nuclei di difesa dello Stato*, a paramilitary organization whose function was that of stopping any Communist advancement in the country. The *Nuclei di difesa dello Stato* counted among its ranks neo-fascists like Pino Rauti, Giovanni Ventura, and Guido Giannettini. The paramilitary organization was responsible for sending a letter in 1966 to many high ranking officials of the Italian armed forces urging them to act against the Communist threat. The opening paragraph of the letter is a clear call to arms: “Ufficiali! La pericolosa situazione della politica italiana esige il vostro intervento decisivo. Spetta alle forze armate il compito di stroncare l’infezione prima che essa divenga mortale. Nessun rinvio è possibile: ogni attesa, ogni inerzia significa vigliaccheria” (24). It is interesting to notice the use of the term “infection” as a way to describe the threat the Right-wing perceived coming from the Left. The spreading of the Communist “infection” might have required the nation to activate its immune system in order to stop the “virus” from becoming lethal.

Freda’s *nazimaoist* ideology was reflected in his influential work *La disintegrazione del sistema*, published in 1969. The publishing of the volume came as a result of Freda’s talk at a conference in Regensburg, where spoke in front of the *Fronte rivoluzionario europeo* committee. From a historical point of view, *La disintegrazione del Sistema* is an important work because it was an attempt at trying to bring together

Right-wing and Left-wing ideologies against one common enemy: bourgeois society. It is also possible that Freda's *Nazimaoism* was just another attempt to infiltrate Left-wing groups, as Mimmo Franzinelli explains: "Difficile stabilire fino a che punto Freda creda davvero nella cooperazione delle due ali estreme dello schieramento politico, anche perché è possibile che simili teorizzazioni siano funzionali all'infiltrazione e alla provocazione, per indurre gli estremisti di sinistra al terrorismo" (27).

Freda kept in close contact with Giannettini, a neo-fascist member of the Italian secret services. The two would exchange information regarding Left-wing revolutionary groups and persons of interest who can be used to carry out illegal activities for Right-wing organizations. A few reports from 1969 indicate that Freda and Giannettini had designed a plan to veer the public's opinion against the Left-wing. Most of the points contained in these reports actually materialized in the second half of 1969 with events such as the split of the Socialist Party, which would weaken the Left, and the purchase by Attilio Monti, a Right-wing sympathizer, of several newspapers. According to these reports, the final stage of the plan would have been a campaign of bombings that would convince the public to stand against any openings to the Left by the Christian Democrats.

The final stage of this plan began in April on 1969 when the process of vaccination began and two explosive devices were placed in Milan: the first one was placed at the "Fiera campionaria" in Milan, while the second was positioned in the city's central station. As a result of the second explosion, twenty people were injured. In May other explosive devices were found at Turin's courthouse and in other government buildings in Rome. The police's reaction to these terrorist attacks was to focus on

anarchist groups and Left-wing organizations. With the attention being diverted towards anarchist groups, Freda's *ordinovisti* were able to conduct another string of attacks on the night between August 8th and August 9th. This time the explosives were placed on trains. In response to August's wave of attacks, authorities began compiling a list of possible suspects, all of whom belonged to anarchist factions and Left-wing groups, almost foreshadowing the events of December 12th, 1969. These waves of attacks only foreshadowed what was about to happen in the following months. With the bomb in Piazza Fontana, of which we will talk about in the following section, the history of post-war Italy will be changed forever.

On Friday, December 12th, 1969, at 4:37pm, a bomb exploded inside the National Bank of Agriculture located in Piazza Fontana, in the heart of Milan. As a result of the explosion, seventeen people died and more than a hundred were injured. Another bomb was found inside the Italian Commercial Bank located in Piazza della Scala.⁵ On the same day of the Piazza Fontana bombing, three other explosive devices went off in Rome. At approximately 4:55pm, a bomb at the National Labor Bank in Via Basilio went off injuring fourteen people, whereas the two other explosive devices were placed at the Altare della Patria, injuring a police officer and three bystanders. The synchronization of the bombings indicates that the objective was to cause a massacre even greater than the one perpetrated at the bank in Piazza Fontana. According to Mimmo Franzinelli, in his volume *La sottile linea nera*: "Se al già tragico bilancio delle vittime si fossero aggiunte quelle dell'altra banca milanese e di quella romana, senz'altro ci sarebbe stato

⁵ The Milanese authorities were able to safely set off the bomb in the courtyard of the bank. However, the setting off of the bomb also caused important clues to be lost in the process.

un impatto destabilizzante sulla società intera e il governo avrebbe dichiarato lo stato d'emergenza" (51).

For the public there were no doubts: the bombs were placed by Left-wing revolutionary groups. Even before there was any evidence that might indicate a possible culprit behind the string of bombings, the police directed its attention to Left-wing extra-parliamentary groups. In addition, Prime Minister Mariano Rumor, while addressing the nation through a televised announcement, placed the blame on Left-wing groups, even though there was a lack of evidence validating his assertions. The fact that the explosives were placed in a bank, a symbol of capitalism, and in front of the Altare della Patria, a military symbol, indicate, according to the public and news sources, that Left-wing groups were responsible for the act. As a result, authorities began targeting anarchist and Left-wing groups in Milan and Rome. In the days following the Piazza Fontana bombing, a wave of arrests swept the country, with 244 people being arrested and 81 political headquarters being searched. Two of the anarchists who were arrested were Giuseppe Pinelli and Pietro Valpreda, who were accused of being the material culprits of the string of bombings, despite evidence indicating their innocence.

While the Italian magistrature was devoting its attention to Left-wing revolutionary groups, a collective of Roman journalists and lawyers began its own investigation on the Piazza Fontana bombing. In 1970 the collective published its investigation with the name *La strage di Stato*, bringing forth new evidence demonstrating how members of Right-wing extra-parliamentary groups, such as *Ordine nuovo* and *Avanguardia nazionale*, had infiltrated anarchist groups and other Left-wing organizations in order to implement the so-called "strategy of tension." At the center of the investigation was

Franco Freda, also known as Giorgio. In addition to being a member of the Veneto *Ordine nuovo* cell, Freda was also the owner of two bookshops in Padova, one of which was named *Ar*. The name *Ar* is taken from the root of the words “Aryan,” “aristocracy,” and “Arete,” which means “virtue.” Freda’s store carried books on Evola and Hitler, as well as on Mao and Stalin. At the different sites of the bombings, investigators found pieces of the briefcases that concealed the explosives and pieces of the timers used to trigger the explosions. Subsequently, investigators discovered that Freda had purchased the briefcases on December 10th, 1969 from a store in Padova and that he had also purchased fifty timers, just like the ones used in the bombings.

The investigation on Freda also brought attention on another member of *Ordine nuovo*, Giovanni Ventura, who had infiltrated a Left-wing revolutionary group in the city of Treviso. In the mid-Sixties Ventura had joined the ranks of the extreme Right and started publishing the newspaper *Reazione*, in which he defined democracy as an “infezione dello spirito e pratica immorale” (33).⁶ It is interesting to note how the title of the publication echoes Evola’s words in *Gli uomini e le rovine*. In fact, as we will see in the next chapter, Evola was calling for a reaction against the Communist infection. After meeting Freda, Ventura opened a bookstore in Treviso catering to Left-wing militants. Ventura also ventured in the publishing industry by opening the publishing house *Litopress*, which was affiliated with Left-wing circles. At the time of his arrest for his alleged involvement in the Piazza Fontana bombing, Ventura denied any affiliation with Giorgio Freda and the Right-wing extremist fringe. In the spring of 1973, however, Ventura admitted to infiltrating Left-wing revolutionary groups and of being affiliated with Right-wing groups, such as *Ordine nuovo*. Ventura also confirmed the existence of a

⁶ These statements are included in Mario Battaglini and Vittorio Borraccetti volume *Eversione di Destra* (1986).

plan directed by *Avanguardia nazionale* and *Ordine nuovo* to infiltrate Left-wing circles. According to Ventura, Right-wing subversive groups had organized a system of “seconda linea e doppia organizzazione, o organizzazione parallela, che viene però manovrata da una o due persone che siano in grado di aver rapporti con persone che siano in posizioni politiche diverse e siano in grado di utilizzarli, indurli, coartarli e strumentalizzarli” (71).⁷

The bomb in Piazza Fontana inaugurated the bloodiest chapter in the history of post-war Italy: the *anni di piombo*. The bombings of 1969 also signaled the beginning of what will become known as the period of the *strategia della tensione*. Other important events in this time of bloodshed and turmoil were the attempted Borghese coup in 1970, which was an attempt by *Avanguardia nazionale*, under the guidance of Valerio Junio Borghese, to bring about an authoritarian military regime in Italy. Interestingly enough, Valerio Junio Borghese, who had been a fascist commander during World War II, had also written the introduction to one of Evola’s most important works, *Gli uomini e le rovine*. Borghese, in fact, was the embodiment of Evola’s notion of *uomo differenziato*. The *uomo differenziato* was a spiritually superior man, whose role would have been to usher in the age of Tradition, which was considered, by Evola, the epoch of spiritual purity. We will discuss Evola’s notion of spiritual purity and the age of Tradition in the following chapter.

Other defining moments of the years of the *strategia della tensione*, during which neo-fascist subversive groups were aiming at creating a reaction against the advancement of the Left in Italy, were the bombing of a train near the Gioia Tauro

⁷ This statement is included in Mario Battaglini and Vittorio Borraccetti’s volume *Eversione di Destra* (1986).

station in the summer of 1970, committed by members of *Avanguardia nazionale*, the Peteano massacre, in which three *carabinieri* lost their lives, the bombing of the Questura di Milano in 1973, and the terrorist attacks of Piazza della Loggia and the *Italicus* train in 1974. All these events had been committed by members of *Avanguardia nazionale* and *Ordine nuovo* with the intention of letting the public believe that Left-wing subversive organizations were responsible for these acts of terror.

Several different factors contributed to the end of the *strategia della tensione*: the rise of Left-wing terrorism had already been damaging the reputation of the Italian Communist party; a shift in world politics, which saw the fall of Right-wing regimes in Greece, Spain, and Portugal; the arrest of many members of *Ordine nuovo* and *Avanguardia nazionale*. After the period of the *strategia della tensione*, neo-fascist subversive organizations began adopting the same strategy of the Red Brigades and other Left-wing terrorist groups, such as *Prima linea*. This strategy consisted in targeting specific symbols of the State, such as judges, lawyers, and politicians, in order to bring down the System and obstruct certain political developments from being achieved. In this second strategical stage, Right-wing subversive organizations, such as *Costruiamo l'azione*, *Terza posizione*, and the *Nuclei armati rivoluzionari*, began addressing issues, for example class warfare and capitalism, that were dear to Left-wing organizations; however, the theme of purity and immunization can still be found in the terminology and ideology of Right-wing extremist organizations of the second half of the Seventies.

Chapter 1

Evola, Freda, and Terrorism: the Quest for Purity and Immunity/

a. A Definition of Political Violence.

Political violence is a topic and a phenomenon to which more or less everybody has been exposed to, either directly or indirectly, at some point in their life. One needs only to think about the media to see the extent to which this phenomenon has been examined and reported. Scholars have also devoted ample attention to political violence and have determined that there is a wide variety of interpretations and analytical approaches that help us have a better understanding of the subject at hand. Even though there already exists a large body of literature devoted to the analysis of political violence and terrorism, there are still gaps in the research methodology on the subject at hand and in the understanding of some of the motivations, both at an individual and an organizational level, which lay behind politically motivated violence. Despite the growing interest in the subject of political violence and the proliferation of scholarly research devoted to the topic, there still seems to be a lack of awareness of the many different ways the phenomenon of political violence can be analyzed and interpreted. Regarding this lack of cognizance on the subject, Peter H. Merkl, in his volume *Political Violence and Terror* states that “the more empirical studies of political violence proliferate, and the more we become aware of the extraordinary complexity of the

phenomenon, the greater our need to define it and to categorize analytical approaches along lines suggested by a logical scheme” (19).

Before we can proceed with the analysis of the causes, justifications, and interpretations of the phenomenon of politically motivated violence it is imperative that we find, or attempt to find, an operational definition suitable for this study. How are politically motivated violence and terrorism different from other forms of violence? How do these occurrences differ from other types of human behavior? Is it even possible to define political violence? Does governmental violence constitute terrorism as well? Answering all of these questions will take us beyond the scope of this research, but they are, nonetheless, aspects that we need to keep in mind while examining terrorism and politically motivated violence in Italy during the *anni di piombo*. Any definition or explanation of this phenomenon will inevitably fall short of defining all of the different degrees and modes of political violence.⁸ One definition, for example, is provided by Ted Honderich in his volume *Political Violence*:

“Political violence [...] is a considerable or destroying use of force against persons or things, a use of force prohibited by law, directed to a change in the policies, system, territory of jurisdiction, or personnel of a government

⁸ According to some scholars, such as Alan O’Leary, in his 2007 volume *Tragedia all’italiana. Cinema e terrorismo tra Moro e memoria*, terrorism has so many different definitions and connotations that it cannot be defined. As a matter of fact, he states: “[...]il terrorismo non esiste. Questa affermazione può suonare grottesca dati gli avvenimenti degli ultimi anni, di cui gli attacchi dell’11 settembre spiccano come emblema spettacolare, anche se non rappresentativo. Tuttavia il terrorismo continua a essere una chimera; il fatto che la comunità internazionale non sia riuscita a concordare una singola definizione dà il via libera a una situazione in cui certe forme di violenza o, più comunemente, certi autori di violenza vengono giudicati illegittimi dalle autorità proposte, etichettati come terroristi e quindi colpiti da anatema. In tale situazione si è verificata una tendenza alla proliferazione delle definizioni strumentalizzate del termine. Gli autori di una pubblicazione datata ma autorevole elencano non meno di trentacinque recenti definizioni governative e accademiche; possiamo supporre che nei due decenni trascorsi dall’uscita del libro il loro numero si sia moltiplicato. Di fatto non c’è una definizione di terrorismo che sia soddisfacente, cioè una che sia allo stesso tempo precisa e comunemente accettata. Perfino le definizioni normative tendono a essere volutamente vaghe, e rivelano così in che misure sono formulate come strumento di sicurezza o di politica militare per l’entità preposta, facilitando la demonizzazione dell’antagonista del momento” (12).

or governments, and hence also directed to change in the lives of individuals within societies” (1).

Honderich’s definition, for example, does not take into account the symbolic aims that lay behind politically motivated violence. Honderich states that political violence must be characterized by a “considerable or destroying use of force.” Certain behaviors, however, such as unlawful resistance to a police officer or a government official, may not result in acts of violence or destruction, even though they may still be perceived as being violent. There are also acts of destruction, such as vandalism, which do not constitute real acts of violence. One aspect that truly differentiates political violence from other acts of violence or destruction is precisely the symbolic value that lays behind the violent act. Regarding the importance of the symbolic importance behind the act of political violence, Merkl explains that “to be taken seriously, it seems, political violence not only has to *violate* the taboos of the prevailing order but has to give the impression of an attempt not just to nudge, but to overwhelm some persons or objects symbolic of that order” (20). Despite this elucidation, any attempt to define what constitutes terrorism and politically motivated violence will not be able to encompass all of the varying degrees and types of political violence as well as the motivations that lay behind such acts. It may be easy to lump together all politically motivated violence in one category, but it would be more appropriate and more useful to analyze each act separately and to adopt different analytical methodologies because each act of political violence may be substantially different from the rest. As Merkl explains in regards to the different varying degrees of political violence, “the person actively involved and their motivations, the small-group setting, and the larger organizations and their

sympathizers may vary dramatically. A would-be assassin or bomb-layer is not the same kind of person as one who joins a revolutionary or propaganda army” (21).

One of the defining characteristics of Right-wing sponsored terrorism in Italy is that it can be defined as violence for effect. The indiscriminate act of placing bombs in public location would guarantee the maximum amount of casualties and would assure that the feeling of terror caused by the images of mangled bodies and demolished trains would spread through the masses quickly. The theatricality of the neo-fascist bombings of the *strategia della tensione* would ensure the maximum effect on the population and the State.⁹

Even though there are varying degrees of politically motivated violence that can be categorized and analyzed in different ways, we must also acknowledge that there are underlying similarities between the different people and organizations that engage in such behavior. One common factor, according to Merkl, is the presence of a rationalizing belief that would provide a motivation strong enough to push a person to engage in politically motivated violence. Other important common elements that Merkl identifies are the presence of a support group and of a perceived enemy: “there has to be a very strong motivation supplied by a rationalizing belief, such as religion, an ideology, or nationalism, and a tightly knit, supportive group that helps the terrorist to maintain the fiction of a world peopled by monsters that deserve to be fought with extreme deeds” (29). Another similarity identified by Merkl in his volume *Political*

⁹ In reference to Jenkins’ definition of terrorism as “violence for effect” Merkl explicates that “The effect is not limited and sometimes not even meant for the actual victims, but for the wider public audience that may become alarmed and perhaps begin to pressure government, the most likely addressee, to give in to demands of the terrorists” (55). The “strategy of tension” is a clear example of the use of terrorism as “violence for effect.” By planting bombs in public places, neo-fascist militants wanted to pressure certain governmental branches to take action and to intervene against the “Communist threat.” The purpose of such strategy was also to condition the general population to acquiesce to a political change in the country.

Violence and Terror is the common view of the government as the prime antagonist against which terrorists and subversive organizations direct their actions, by targeting police officers, members of the armed forces or government officials. In the case of Right-wing terrorism during the “years of lead” we see a change in attitudes towards the government and the police force. In the first part of the *anni di piombo*, Right-wing militants directed their actions against the general populace by placing bombs in public places, whereas in the second half of the Seventies we see Right-wing extremist groups adopting the same strategy of organizations, such as the Red Brigades and *Prima Linea*, who targeted primarily government officials and industrialists. The bombing of the Bologna train station can be seen as a return to the “strategy of tension” of the early Seventies.

The task at hand is to identify the multifarious interactions and correlations between people who engage in politically motivated violence and certain ideologies. When analyzing these interactions it is imperative to understand, however, that a belief in an ideology does not lead directly to violence. Oftentimes, it is a matter of distorting certain ideologies and utilizing them for personal gain and for the rationalization of certain behaviors. For example, when taking into consideration far Right-wing political organizations in Italy and in other European countries, such as France and Germany, and when examining their ideologies, it may be difficult for a reader to accept Evola’s doctrine of alienation and withdrawal from political actuality or J.R. Tolkien’s fantasy world as legitimate ideological writings, especially when compared to those adopted by the Left, which places more emphasis on political and social issues.¹⁰ How can

¹⁰ Regarding the relationship between Tolkien’s works and the ideology of the Right in Italy, Gianfranco de Turris, the main curator of Julius Evola’s works, explains that “La narrativa di Tolkien e la “heroic

Tolkien's fantasy world and Evola's escapist writings inspire a young neo-fascist to embrace political violence? Perhaps, it may be more of a matter of murderous individuals who find asylum in extreme political organizations that provide them with an ideological platform which will help them in rationalizing the use of violence and the embracing of politically motivated violence as a tool to bring about a social change. It may also be the case that many Right-wing militants may have found justification for their personal animosities and prejudices in certain literary and ideological works, even though the purpose of these writing may not be political at all. According to Merkl, prejudice, such as xenophobia, plays a very important role in the formation of a Right-wing militant; as a matter of fact, Merkl states that "the prejudice in question is a kind of missing link between physical aggressiveness and ideological beliefs" (41-2). In the following pages we will examine this missing link in the ideology of Right-wing militants in Italy during the "years of lead" and we will see how it is tied to the ideology of Right-wing extra-parliamentary organizations of the Sixties and Seventies. The concept of racial purity is crucial to the understanding of neo-fascist ideology during the *anni di piombo*.

fantasy" era per così dire più connaturale all'animus del ragazzo di Destra, al suo modo di vivere e di sentire, alla sua mitologia personale e collettiva. Nel mondo immaginario descritto in quei romanzi, negli eroi e nelle eroine, nei loro modi di essere e di vivere, si speculavano innumerevoli fantasie ideali sorte dall'humus ideale e politico in cui si erano formati personalmente e collettivamente. Non lo si può negare. Ed ecco perché i Campi Hobbit si chiamarono così, ed ecco perché la Nuova Destra pose molta attenzione prima a Tolkien e poi alla "fantasy" più in generale. Il "significato" di questo interesse nella Destra, che si è estrinsecato da un lato in una produzione narrativa ed in un approfondimento critico di questa narrativa, ma anche in alcuni tentativi comunitari da un altro, è per me importantissimo, anche se a qualcuno potrà sembrare eccessivo ed esagerato; nei momenti più tragici degli "anni di piombo", nei momenti più deprimenti degli "anni di latta", nei momenti più scoraggianti degli "anni di fango", il ritrovarsi di parecchi giovani di Destra nella letteratura fantastica ha consentito loro di non perdersi, scoraggiarsi, deprimersi, riverberandosi in un mondo ideale, in un mito, che non trovavano più nella politica politicante, nell'attivismo del piccolo cabotaggio delle sezioni e delle federazioni. Invece di disperdersi, invece di annullarsi, invece di chiudersi in se stessi, sono sopravvissuti alla mediocrità, al conformismo, alla massificazione, al politicamente corretto" (<http://www.minimaetmoralia.it/wp/tolkien-e-la-destra-una-storia-italiana>).

b. What is Right-wing Extremism?

Scholars and analysts seem to be in disagreement on what constitutes Right-wing extremism and on the categorization of different Right-wing movements. This inability to reach a consensus on what can be termed as Right-wing extremism stems, for the most part, from the fact that it is an evolving phenomenon and that Right-wing politics and ideology are constantly in transition. The problem with finding a universal template for extreme Right-wing organizations resides in the fact that it would be counterproductive to generalize and compare one country's experience to that of others. Every country that has experienced instances of Right-wing extremism may have experienced such phenomenon for different reasons.¹¹ Regarding the impossibility to

¹¹ The same notion can be applied to Left-wing terrorism. The way Italy experienced Left-wing terrorism, for example, is different from the way Germany experienced it. This differentiation can be attributed to the different experiences these two countries had during World War II. Germany, for example, did not have the experience of the civil war and of the Resistance, as Italy did. For this reason, the myth of the Resistance is not found in the ideology of the members of the Red Army Faction, as opposed to that of the Red Brigades. As a matter of fact, members of the Red Brigades have clearly emphasized a link between their organization and the brigades of the Resistance that fought against Nazi-fascism. Another interesting distinction between Left-wing extremism in Italy and Germany is the strong emphasis placed by members of the Red Army Faction on international issues, such as global imperialism and the war in Vietnam. The primary targets of the Red Army Faction were, in fact, places frequented by American soldiers stationed in Germany, such as the US Army headquarters in Frankfurt, which were bombed in 1972, and the Officers Club in Heidelberg, which was also bombed in 1972. Luigi Manconi, in his volume *Terroristi italiani*, analyzes the genesis and the transformation of the Red Brigades throughout the Seventies and the Eighties, and asserts that the Red Brigades started adopting a strong anti-imperialist stance only at the beginning of the Eighties with the kidnapping of general Dozier: "Con la crisi innescata dall'uccisione di Moro, e successivamente aggravate da quella del sindacalista comunista Guido Rossa (24 gennaio 1979), si registra una spaccatura all'interno delle Br. Tale spaccatura è esemplificata dal fatto che, a partire dal 1981, non si ritroverà più la sola sigla dell'organizzazione se non accompagnata da quella delle nuove componenti: Br-Colonna Walter Alasia, Br-Partito guerriglia e Br-per la costruzione del Partito comunista combattente. Sono proprio queste ultime, le Br-Pcc che, prime, danno vita alla *campagna antimperialista*, con il sequestro a Verona (17 luglio 1981 – 28 gennaio 1982) del responsabile logistico del settore Sud-Est della Nato, generale James Lee Dozier" (191-2). Even though, with the kidnapping of general Dozier, the Red Brigades begin to include anti-imperialism in their lexicon, Italian Left-wing subversive organizations will remain focused primarily on the "operaista" cause. Luigi Manconi has compiled a chart which traces all the attacks perpetrated by the Red Brigades. In addition to recording all the attacks, Manconi also divides these attacks according to whether the target was part of the Red Brigades' "operaista" campaign or "anti-imperialista." According to Manconi's chart, only 20 of these attacks were motivated by anti-imperialism, whereas 180 of them were part of the Red Brigades' "operaista" campaign.

universalize the patterns and framework of Right-wing extremism, Merkl and Weinberg explain that “the very nature of these different ultra-nationalisms, to name the most prominent feature, militates against universalizing the striking diversities” (4). With every country manifesting a different form of nationalism, the task of reaching a general consensus regarding what constitutes Right-wing extremism can be quite daunting. Aside from scholars, government agencies have also tried to define and to provide a framework for the identification of Right-wing extremism. One example of this is provided by the *Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz*, the domestic intelligence service of the Federal Republic of Germany. In addition to providing a set of parameters to define Right-wing extremism, this agency has also created frameworks to identify other forms of radicalism, such as Left-wing and religious forms of extremism.¹² The German domestic intelligence service can be a reliable source because Germany has experienced both Left-wing politically motivated violence, such as the Red Army Faction, as well as Right-wing sponsored violence, which has been perpetrated by Neo-Nazi organizations. Regarding the definition of Right-wing extremism, the *Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz* website provides the following parameters to identify and classify this phenomenon: “In terms of ideology, right-wing extremism in Germany is not a homogeneous movement but displays different elements of nationalist, racist and anti-Semitic ideology, resulting in different objectives”. The racist element, or prejudice, which Merkl has identified as the missing link between aggressiveness and ideology, is

¹² Regarding Left-wing extremism, according to the *Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz* “Left-wing extremists adapt their political activities to revolutionary Marxist or anarchist ideas, and they endeavour to replace the existing political and social order with a socialist or communist system or an anarchist society “free of rule”. To this end, they participate in social protests, and they attempt to instrumentalise them for their purposes. Their forms of action range from open agitation to clandestine, partly serious acts of violence, with isolated autonomous groups also accepting individuals to be injured.”

at the foundation of many Right-wing organizations; the *Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz* also sees racism as a key element in the composition of Right-wing extremism: “It is governed by the idea that belonging to an ethnic group, a nation, or a race determines the value of a human being.”¹³ In the case of Right-wing extremism in Italy and Evolian thought, the ideology was governed by the notion of spiritual purity and superiority. The search for purification and achievement of spiritual superiority was a driving force behind many of the actions perpetrated by Right-wing terrorists during the “years of lead.” We must also acknowledge that neo-fascist organizations had been instrumentalized by certain government officials and members of the secret services to obstruct the political advancement of the Italian Communist Party. In other words, the aim of both entities, neo-fascist subversive organizations and certain government officials, was the same: the impediment of the spreading of Communism. The motivations behind this goal, however, were different: neo-fascists wanted to obstruct the advancement of Communism in Italy because they saw it as a sign that the world had reached an age of spiritual impurity; certain government officials wanted to reduce the influence of the Italian Communist Party because it would have upset the balance of powers between the West and the East.

Regarding the Right in Italy, we can identify two entities: the official and legal one, embodied by the *Movimento sociale italiano*, and a subversive, extra-parliamentary

¹³ The *Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz* has also identifies other important elements which define Right-wing extremism. Another key feature present in most Right-wing subversive organizations is the concept of the authoritarian state; as a matter of fact, according to the *Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz*, “Apart from these fragments of ideology, one feature common to all right-wing extremists is their authoritarian concept of the state, in which the state and the people, an ethnically homogeneous group in their view, merge into a single unit within a supposedly natural order. According to this ideology of a *Volksgemeinschaft*, a National Socialist term for a community based on shared racial characteristics, the state leaders intuitively act in accordance with the supposedly uniform will of the people” (<http://www.verfassungsschutz.de/>).

one, of which *Ordine nuovo* and *Avanguardia nazionale* were part of. Even though the *MSI* openly denounced the acts of political violence perpetrated by neo-fascist organizations, there is also evidence that certain figures within the legal party endorsed certain acts of violence committed by members of *Ordine nuovo* and *Avanguardia nazionale*. Scholars have termed the *MSI*'s ambivalence towards the more radical fringes of the Right-wing sphere during the “years of lead” as *politica del doppio petto*, or Almirante’s successful attempt at keeping the different fringes of the *MSI* united and focused on the same issues. Regarding the *politica del doppio petto*, Furio Jesi, the late Turinese scholar, in his seminal work *Cultura di destra*, published first in 1979, asserts:

“Siamo abituati a parlare di neofascismo dalla faccia feroce e di neofascismo in doppio petto, distinzione che, se la si riferisce a due stili di comportamento, risulta appropriata: lo stile di comportamento dei neofascisti è di volta in volta essenzialmente da faccia feroce o da doppio petto, oppure mostra una mescolata calcolata mescolanza dei due ingredienti in varie proporzioni. La medesima distinzione è meno appropriata quando si esamina la sfera ideologica piuttosto nebulosa che corrisponde a quel comportamento” (111).

Jesi, additionally, offered another distinction within the realm of neo-fascism in Italy. According to Jesi, a more appropriate distinction should be made between sacred neo-fascism and profane neo-fascism. Further on, in his chapter entitled “Il linguaggio delle idee senza parole,” in which Jesi analyzes the relationship between Evola and Right-wing extremists, the Turinese historian expounds on the notion of sacred and profane neo-fascism:

“Neofascismo *sacro*, *esoterico*, è quello dei didatti della Tradizione. Neofascismo *profano*, *essoterico*, è quello di chi strumentalizza costoro. Sono due stili ideologici diversi. I due stili di comportamento, da faccia feroce e da doppio petto, si ritrovano sia negli atteggiamenti degli uomini della Tradizione che ‘non possono o non vogliono staccarsi dal mondo attuale’, sia in quelli dei neofascisti profani. Il profano ed essoterico

Almirante li alterna a suo piacimento; ma già li alternava il sacro ed esoterico Adriano Romualdi” (137).

We will focus precisely on the sacred neo-fascism identified and described by Jesi. We will take into consideration primarily the sacred, or esoteric neo-fascism, which Jesi associated with the world of Tradition and with certain central figures, such as Julius Evola. The concept of Tradition is key to understanding the ideology and the world vision of neo-fascists during the “years of lead.”

c. Evola: Spiritual Purification and the world of Tradition

Evola is crucial for our understanding of Right-wing ideology during the “years of lead” because the ideologue served as the maximum representative of what Jesi termed as *neofascismo sacro*. Evola, with his works, such as *Rivolta contro il mondo moderno* and *Gli uomini e le rovine* exposed many young Right-wing militants to the world of Tradition, or to the more sacred and esoteric aspect of neo-fascism.¹⁴ We can count on numerous statements and testimonies regarding the importance of Evola for the Italian Right-wing subculture of the post-war period. Regarding Evola’s reputation and influence on young Right-wing militants, Pino Rauti, founder of *Ordine nuovo* and of the political party *Fiamma tricolore*, explains:

“Evola ci fece una enorme impressione. Era un saggio di una cultura sterminata. Modificò profondamente le nostre convinzioni e operò una rivoluzione culturale nel nostro mondo. Da Evola in poi il nostro fascismo fu profondamente diverso da quello precedente. Tanto per fare degli esempi, ci allontanò dal nazionalismo retorico e dallo sciovinismo del periodo mussoliniano. Prima di lui i nostri soli riferimenti culturali erano Alfredo Oriani e Gioacchino Volpe. Lui ci aprì le porte della cultura internazionale e mondiale. Ci dava a posteriori la spiegazione a quel senso di orgoglio che avevamo sempre avuto. Ci spiegò che avevamo

¹⁴ An important figure in the popularization of Evola and his works among Right-wing militants was Massimo Scaligero, who invited many young Right-wing political activists to read works such as *Rivolta contro il mondo moderno*.

partecipato a uno scontro planetario tra civiltà. Ci disse: ‘Voi credete di aver partecipato a una guerra nazionalista, invece la seconda guerra mondiale fu una guerra ideologica, cosmica. Tra diverse visioni del mondo, altro che interessi nazionali’” (51).¹⁵

Another account of Evola’s influence on Right-wing culture in post-war Italy is provided by Enzo Erra, one of the founders of the *Movimento sociale italiano* and, possibly, a member of the terrorist group *Fasci di azione rivoluzionaria*. In regards to Evola, Erra explains:

“Evola è stato il primo a farci capire l’esigenza di cercare riferimenti culturali che andassero al di là del fascismo italiano. Ci ha trasmesso una impostazione completamente nuova. La sua è stata una vera e propria spallata a tutta la cultura precedente. Ha allargato i nostri orizzonti, ci ha insegnato a guardare ad altre realtà e ad altre esperienze” (51-2).¹⁶

Born in 1898 in an aristocratic Roman family, Evola first gained notoriety as an artist, becoming one of Italy’s leading representatives of the Dada movement. After abandoning avant-garde art at the beginning of the Twenties, Evola began publishing volumes on philosophy, such as *Saggi sull’idealismo magico* (1925), *L’individuo e il divenire del mondo* (1926), *L’uomo come Potenza* (1926), *Teoria dell’uomo assoluto* (1927), and *Fenomenologia dell’individuo assoluto* (1930). In these works, Evola explained that the limits of the real world can be removed by individuals who have achieved wisdom and who have reached a state of absoluteness by asserting complete control over themselves. Evola’s personal interest in philosophy also included Oriental studies, magic, the occult, and alchemy; as a matter of fact, the Roman aristocrat founded the *Ur* group with other Italian occultists and spiritualists in order to revive the interest in ancient Roman Paganism.

¹⁵ This interview is included in Nicola Rao’s volume *La fiamma e la celtica*.

¹⁶ This interview is included in Nicola Rao’s volume *La fiamma e la celtica*.

A key event in Evola's life was his encounter with René Guénon's seminal work *La crise du monde moderne*, published in 1927. Guénon believed in a spiritual rebirth of the West through the creation of a spiritual elite which was to be initiated to spiritual purity through a series of rites. The French Traditionalist served as the primary influence for Evola's most important work, *Rivolta contro il mondo moderno* (1934), and exposed Evola to the notion of Tradition and to the Traditionalist movement. The notion of a spiritual elite was a central concept to Traditionalist thought. Regarding the concept of Tradition, Marc Sedwick, in his 2004 volume *Against the Modern World*, explains that "the word *tradition* derives from the Latin *tradere*, to hand over or to hand down, and in an etymological sense a tradition is a statement, belief or practice transmitted from generation to generation" (22). Traditionalist thinkers, such as Guénon and eventually Evola, see Tradition as a set of beliefs and practices that have been transmitted and passed on from one generation to another since antiquity.

Evola also believed in the presence of an Absolute Being who existed in a higher, purer spiritual realm; every being is an imperfect reflection of this absolute and eternal being. An individual imperfect human being could reach the realm of the Absolute being through wisdom, which could be obtained through rites of initiation and through the exercise of inner spiritual self-control. Paul Furlon, in his volume *Social and Political Thought of Julius Evola* (2013), also clarifies that some of these initiation rites could also "involve extremes of physical experience" (8). The process of achieving spiritual superiority and purity through self-discipline and initiation rites also affected the physical body, meaning that the obtainment of spiritual enlightenment would positively affect the body by reinforcing it. Consequently, those who were spiritually superior were

also physically superior to those who had yet to be enlightened. Evola's notion of racism, which we will discuss more in depth in the following sections of this chapter, stems from this differentiation between spiritually pure, or enlightened, and those who are the imperfect reflections of the Absolute Being. The rites of initiation needed to achieve spiritual purity are essentially the process through which an individual can differentiate him or herself from those who are spiritually impure and imperfect. Spiritually pure individuals were superior to others because they had obtained the wisdom of the world of Tradition. It is important to differentiate Tradition, with a capital T, from the term *tradition* as we know it. The notion of Tradition championed by Guénon, and eventually Evola, is not to be confused with the feeling of nostalgia; what Traditionalists meant by Tradition was the belief in an eternal, superior form of knowledge that sprung from the Absolute Being and expressed order and harmony in the universe. It was this knowledge that differentiated those individuals who had achieved wisdom, or spiritual purity, from those who were impure. The concept of Tradition encompassed the eternal and absolute values of obedience, order, hierarchy, and authority. These values were ahistorical and have been emanating from the Absolute Being since the beginning of time. Therefore, history, according to Traditionalist thought, was nothing more than a constant struggle between the spiritually pure forces of Tradition and the spiritually impure forces of the material world. With modernity, the impure forces of disorder and indifferentiation had reached their culmination of strength, meaning that the forces of Tradition found themselves in a period of crisis.

According to these Traditionalist thinkers, the West is in crisis because of the loss of Tradition and of the transmission of these beliefs and practices. Evola's answer to the crisis experienced by the Western world was *Revolt Against the Modern World*. In *Rivolta*, Evola asserted that the Western world was going through a cycle of decadence, with "decadence" meaning a progressive loss of spiritual values and a rise in materialism, which was represented by capitalism and, primarily, by Communism. Evola identified the Humanist movement of the Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation as the beginning of the decline of the West. The apex of this decline was reached with the French Revolution, which signaled the triumph of the liberal State. According to Evola, the French Revolution opened the floodgates for the spreading of democracy, socialism, and Communism, thus signaling the end of the world of Tradition. In Evola's worldview, the modern world, with its democracies and pluralistic societies, stood in direct antithesis to the world of Tradition. Regarding the contrast between the modern world and the age of Tradition, Evola, in his 1963 autobiography *Il cammino del cinabro*, explains:

"La critica contro la civiltà moderna era, nel Guénon, potenziata, ma, a differenza di quella di vari autori contemporanei più o meno noti, in lui aveva una precisa controparte positiva: il mondo della Tradizione, considerato come il mondo normale in senso superiore. Era di fronte al mondo della Tradizione che il mondo moderno appariva come una civiltà anomala e regressiva, nata da una crisi e da una deviazione profonda dell'umanità. Questo fu appunto il tema basilare che andò a completare il sistema delle mie idee: la Tradizione" (35).

In his autobiography, Evola acknowledges the influence of Guénon, as well as Friedrich Nietzsche and Johann Jakob Bachofen. The Right-wing ideologue reworked Guénon's concept of the decline of the West, the Nietzschean superman, and Bachofen's typology

of uranic and telluric civilizations to conceive his own understanding of history, which he saw as being divided into four stages, each one representing a different stage of decline. Evola, in his autobiography, provides a summary and a condensation of his theory of the four stages of decline and of regression of the castes:

“Tramontati i sistemi poggiati sulla pura autorità spirituale (« civiltà sacrali», «re divini»)» in una seconda fase l'autorità passa nelle mani dell'aristocrazia guerriera nel ciclo delle grandi monarchie, in cui il « diritto divino » dei sovrani è tuttavia solo una eco residuale della precedente dignità dei capi. Con la rivoluzione del Terzo Stato, con la democrazia, il capitalismo e l'industrialismo il potere effettivo passa nelle mani degli esponenti della terza casta, dei possessori della ricchezza, con corrispondente trasformazione del tipo della civiltà e degli interessi predominanti. Infine socialismo, marxismo e comunismo preannunciano, e in parte già realizzano, la fase ultima, l'avvento dell'ultima casta, dell'antica casta dei servi - in termini moderni: dei « lavoratori » e dei proletari - che si organizzano e volgono verso la conquista del potere e del mondo, dando la propria impronta ad ogni attività e portando sino in fondo il processo regressivo” (50).

With the advent of Communism and socialism, the world had reached its final stage of the cycle of regression, in which the lowest caste was now in power and the world of Tradition had been inverted. In order to understand Evola's influence and how his theory of the cycle of regression influenced many Right-wing militants during the Sixties and Seventies we must take into account the historical context and the political situation at the time. With the growing tensions between the West and the U.S.S.R. and the escalation of the Cold War, Italy found itself in a very delicate situation. The country was part of the North Atlantic Treaty, but harbored, at the same time, the strongest Communist party in Europe. The Italian Communist Party, or *PCI*, served as the model party for all other European Communist parties across Europe. With the strong presence of the Communist party in Italy, there was a growing concern, both in the Italian parliament and military, as well as in Washington, that the country might fall

under Soviet influence, thus upsetting the balance of powers established at the Yalta conference and tipping the scale in favor of the Warsaw Pact. The growing strength of the Communist party in Italy, as well as the process of decolonization in Northern Africa, such as in Algeria, were all signals that the last stage of the cycle of regression ideated by Evola was reaching its climax. In a way, from the point of view of a neo-fascist in post-war Italy, the Sixties could be compared to the so-called “Biennio rosso” of 1919 and 1920; this brief period, which was followed by the backlash of the Fascist blackshirts, was marked by social turmoil and by the growth of the syndicalist movement.

An important feature of Evola's theory of spiritual regression is that the cycle could be restarted and the age of Tradition restored. In order to understand how the cycle can be inverted and how we can see a return to the age of Tradition we must take a look at the different classifications Evola conceived to categorize human beings. As we have already seen, Evola divided humanity into different castes, each one characterized by a different degree of spiritual purity. Evola used the term *uomo differenziato* to refer to those men who have been able to obtain spiritual purity through the process of initiation. Evola, in fact, addressed all of his political works to those men who are *differenziati*, or who are disposed to purify themselves. The purest caste, which comprises individuals who have accepted the notion of Tradition and who have been able to differentiate themselves from the spiritually impure masses, is, subsequently, divided into two categories. Regarding this differentiation, Furio Jesi explains:

“Vi sono due classi di persone: quella di coloro che giungono al secondo e più alto grado dell'iniziazione, e quella di coloro che, non potendo o non volendo staccarsi dal mondo, restano a un primo grado. Il comportamento di questi ultimi non può essere forte e puro e privo di illusioni quanto

basta; occorre quindi che gli iniziati di grado superiore, i saggi, orientino gli iniziati di grado inferiore verso il raggiungimento di obiettivi mondani che di per sé sono vani, privi di qualsiasi utilità, ma che hanno una preziosa funzione didattica” (131).

In order to access to the superior level of spiritual perfection, the initiate must perform certain acts, or sacrifices, that will allow him or her to attain the spiritual purity needed to access the higher level and join the ranks of the men of Tradition. Through the perfecting of the initiate, the final objective is the strengthening of the race of Tradition, which becomes stronger and purer with every passing generation. In the end it won't only be the individual to reach the higher level of initiation, but the entire race, thus ushering in a new age of Tradition. The purpose of these acts of sacrifice that the initiate must undertake will eventually resolve into the creation of the race of Tradition.

In *Sintesi della dottrina della razza*, for example, Evola explains:

“Una idea, dato che agisca con sufficiente intensità e continuità in un dato clima storico e in una data collettività, finisce col dar luogo a una razza dell'anima e, col persistere dell'azione, fa apparire nelle generazioni che immediatamente seguono un tipo fisico comune nuovo, da considerarsi, da un certo punto di vista, come razza nuova” (125).

Furio Jesi, in his work *Cultura di destra*, argues that the acts of sacrifice needed by initiates to reach the highest level of spiritual purity and to purify themselves may well be the terrorist acts committed by Right-wing militants during the “years of lead,” during both the period of the *strategia della tensione* and of the *spontaneismo armato*. The “obiettivi mondani” which are “privi di utilità” identified by Furio Jesi in reality might have had the purpose of purifying the initiate and, consequently, heightening the degree of spiritual purity of the entire race of Tradition. In these acts of terror we can then see an actualization of thanatopolitics, in which only the everlasting and continuous death of the degenerate part of the social body can ensure the survival and strengthening of the

healthy part of the body of the nation. The placement of bombs in public places would ensure the maximum number of casualties and would serve the purpose of purifying the militants who committed the act; additionally, it would also strengthen the country by causing a reaction against the “Communist infection” which would have been seen as the primary cause of the spreading of political violence. This might also explain why Right-wing militants, for the most part, targeted the general populace and the masses, whereas Left-wing extremists focused on specific figures, such as industrialists, lawyers, and politicians. In the worldview of the Right-wing militant, the masses were the symbol of degeneration and of the advent of the last phase of the cycle of the castes. The association of degeneration with the masses is a prominent theme in Evola’s writing and in the discourses of several Right-wing militants and Evolian disciples, such as Pino Romualdi and Pino Rauti. For example, in Evola’s short pamphlet *Orientamenti*, published first in 1950 and subsequently included in his work *Gli uomini e le rovine*, the ideologue makes a clear connection between degradation and the masses. In *Orientamenti*, which was written as a manual for those men seeking to obtain spiritual purity, the Right-wing *santone* makes a case for the creation of a political movement capable of opposing the spreading of Communism in the West. In describing the role of the *MSI*, Evola explains:

“Stava prendendo forma uno schieramento di forze rappresentante una sfida aperta alla civiltà moderna: sia a quella delle democrazie eredi della rivoluzione francese, sia all’altra, rappresentante il limite estremo della degradazione dell’uomo occidentale: la civiltà collettivistica del quarto stato, la civiltà comunista dell’uomo-massa senza volto” (18).

In this particular passage, the advent of Communism and of collectivist societies is seen as a degradation in the spiritual purity of the Western man. With Communism and the

Soviet threat, according to Evola, we see a degeneration in the social body of the Western world. The emphasis on the separation from the masses was also seen in several Right-wing political journals, such as *Cantiere* and *Carattere*, which were both edited by Gaetano Rasi. In *Carattere*, for example, Rasi addresses himself to those individuals who have differentiated themselves from the masses of “bruti”:

“Oggi si parla alle masse, contano i partiti di massa, ci si ispira perfino ad una civiltà di massa, unendo i due termini in evidente contraddizione fra di loro. Noi vogliamo parlare agli uomini, non a quantità indifferenziate di bruti” (85).¹⁷

Evola, in *Orientamenti*, does not give explicit instructions on how to hinder this advancement, but he does compare the actions that must be taken to stop Communism to an act of disinfection and sanitation. In *Orientamenti*, in fact, Evola states: “È da questa premessa che bisognerebbe agire, nel senso anzitutto della sproletarizzazione ideologica, della disinfezione delle parti ancora sane del popolo dal virus socialista” (26). Socialism, or Communism, is seen as a virus affecting the social body; parts of the body of the nation have already succumbed to the infection, but Evola acknowledges that the healthy parts of this body can still be cured and sanitized from the Communist virus. Of course, as mentioned before, Evola does not provide specific examples on how this disinfection can be achieved, but places emphasis on the ideological “sproletarizzazione,” which can be achieved by changing the public opinion in regards to Communism and the Left-wing.

The immunity metaphor pervades throughout all of Evola’s *Orientamenti*. In one key passage in which the Right-wing ideologue addresses himself directly to the younger generations, Evola compares Communism to an infection affecting many

¹⁷ This particular excerpt was taken from Mario Bozzi Sentieri’s 2007 volume *Dal neofascismo alla nuova destra*.

different parts of the social body and exhorts those who seek spiritual purity to protect themselves internally from the spreading of the virus. In this particular passage, Evola places emphasis on the interior protection and integrity of the individual, as if he or she had to protect him or herself from the Communist virus that affects the spirit and causes it to degenerate. Evola, in fact, explains:

“Vi sono correnti specifiche da cui la gioventù d’oggi deve difendersi interiormente. Noi abbiamo parlato per primo di uno stile di drittura, di tenuta interna. Questo stile implica un giusto sapere e specie i giovani devono rendersi conto dell’intossicazione operata in tutta una generazione dalle varietà concordanti di una visione distorta e falsa della vita, che hanno inciso sulle forze interne. Nell’una o nell’altra forma questi tossici continuano ad agire nella cultura, nella scienza, nella sociologia, nella letteratura, come tanti focolai d’infezione che vanno individuati e colpiti” (31).

Even in this passage, as well as in the others we have taken under examination, the ideologue avoids providing a clear course of action to cure the social body of the Communist infection, leaving his words open to interpretation. Only by identifying and by reacting against the sites of the infection will the social body be strengthened and the new generation will remain pure and untainted by the Communist infection. In this excerpt we can also notice a comparison between the internal state of a person with the political situation of the time. The nation becomes the bodies of the youths of the new generation which is at risk of becoming infected with the Communist virus. If the nation and its newer generations want to remain alive, they must maintain an internal strength and balance that would allow them to obstruct the spreading of the infection. In the next section of this chapter we will analyze Evola’s understanding of internal balance and purity, but, for now, we will keep focusing on the works he wrote appositely for Right-wing militants of the Sixties and Seventies. As we have seen from the passages aforementioned, in the short pamphlet *Orientamenti*, which is only fourteen pages long,

Evola makes ample use of the immunity metaphor to describe the political situation of the time and to urge his disciples to take action against the spread of Communism. Interestingly enough, Franco Freda, who published most of Evola's works with his Paduan publishing company *Edizioni Ar*, also focused on Evola's use of the immunity metaphor in his commentary included in the edition of *Orientamenti* issued in the year 2000. Freda, in fact, asserts that Evola's political pamphlet "ebbe su molti lettori l'effetto di un salutare vaccino" (75). In another part of his analysis of the impact of Evola's *Orientamenti* on young Right-wing militants, Freda states that "l'inflessibile dettato evoliano ebbe un vero e proprio effetto terapeutico, al tempo stesso chirurgico e immunitario" (76). Just as the young neo-fascist militants had to immunize themselves from the Communist infection, so did the nation need to undergo a process of immunization that would strengthen the body of the nation and prevent the Socialist virus from spreading. As we will see in the next sections of this chapter, racism will play an important part in the concept of immunization, as it is the driving force behind Evola's theories and his view of the world. We will also see how Evola's notion of racism differs from that which is found at the core of National Socialism and, to a lesser extent, Fascism.

d. Gli uomini e le rovine.

The second of Evola's works that we will take into consideration is *Gli uomini e le rovine*, first published in 1953 and subsequently in 1967, with an introduction written by the founder of the *Fronte nazionale* Valerio Junio Borghese. In *Gli uomini e le rovine*, the ideologue calls for a counter-revolution, or a conservative revolution, to obstruct the advance of Communism. Interestingly enough, the exact word Evola uses to brand the

counter-revolution Right-wing militants should launch is “reaction.” Evola, in fact, states: “Di rigore, la parola d’ordine potrebbe essere dunque *controrivoluzione* [...] altrimenti è preferibile un’altra parola d’ordine: *reazione*” (15). Further on in his work, Evola clarifies what he means by “reaction”: “Naturalmente il termine *reazione* ha, in sé stesso, una coloratura negativa: chi reagisce non ha lui l’iniziativa dell’azione; si reagisce, in funzione polemica o difensiva, di fronte a qualcosa che si è già affermato di fatto. Occorre, dunque precisare che non si tratta di parare le mosse dell’avversario senza disporre di nulla di positivo” (17). The reaction Evola was advocating for was an action that would strengthen the body of the nation by purifying it. In reference to the use of the term *reaction*, Roberto Esposito, in his volume *Immunitas*, explains:

“The first thing to point out is that the immunitary paradigm does not present itself in terms of actions, but rather in terms of *reaction* – rather than a force, it is a repercussion, a counterforce, which hinders another force from coming into being” (7).

In other terms, one can say that the body’s immune system makes use of what it negates to actually strengthen the organism. The body must include within its system the force it opposes in order to use it to fortify itself. In order to begin the process of purification and strengthening of the body politic, a reactionary action was needed, so that the final stage of the regression of the castes, also known as the Kali-Yuga, could reach its conclusion, thus allowing the cycle to restart. The restarting of the cycle signifies a return to the age of Tradition, and the re-formation of a “celestial race.”¹⁸ The

¹⁸ Regarding the concept of a celestial race, James Gregor, in his volume *Mussolini’s Intellectuals: Fascist Social and Political Thought*, explains: “In the golden age, the celestial race was spiritual--only gradually, over time, taking on material properties. The original celestials could command all the tangible and intangible forces of the cosmos--and left behind, as evidences of their presence, gigantic megalithic and pyramidal structures, which are still to be seen in Europe, in Egypt, on Easter Island, and in the high plateaus of South America” (209). Evola believed the regression to have started when the superior and

injection of a pathogen, in this case the Communist “virus,” in the social body would have caused a reaction that would have accelerated the process of degeneration, thus allowing for a return to the Golden Age of spiritual purity. Esposito, in his work *Immunitas*, identifies violence as a key feature of the process of immunization, or reaction; in fact, he explains: “Far from being limited to the role performed by the law of immunizing the community from the violence that threatens it, violence actually comes to characterize the immunitary procedures themselves” (10). Only a violent act, such as a bomb in a public square which would have ensured the maximum amount of casualties, would have given enough strength to the system to react against the “virus” within itself. Here we go back to the principle of *violence for effect* mentioned previously in our research. The bomb in a public place would have guaranteed the “virus” to manifest itself in all its brutality, thus forcing the system to react against it. Further on in *Gli uomini e le rovine*, Evola compares this reaction, or conservative revolution, to a process of liberating an organism of its excrescences, or stopping the spreading of a cancerous growth. He states, in fact, that reactionary actions should be executed “alla stessa guisa che si rialza chi è caduto, che si libera un organismo delle sue escrescenze degenerescenti arrestando un processo canceroso” (23-4). Once again, we see the use of the metaphor of the process of immunization being used to describe the political situation at the time and to exhort his fellow disciples to take action against

spiritually pure beings of the “celestial race” began breeding with inferior beings, thus giving birth to inferior generations and races. Gregor, in his chapter on Evola, further elucidates the concept of spiritual and racial degeneration: “As a necessary consequence of miscegenation, there was a continual and irreversible decline of the celestials throughout ancient times,⁷⁷ a tenuous revival under the Romans, and another by the Nordic-Germans during the course of the Holy Roman Empire-but by the time of the Renaissance, with its humanism, rationalism, universalism and its gradual submission to the theses of the equality of all humans, humankind had reached *kali-yuga*, the terminal age of “obscurity,” the end of this current race cycle. For Evola, given the fateful path traversed by history, there, remained only one course for contemporary humanity: an attempt at reconstitution of the primordial celestial race” (209-210).

the Communist threat. In another passage present in *Gli uomini e le rovine*, Evola also compares the body of the nation to that of an organism that must be forcefully intoxicated, so that a certain reaction can be expected from it. The intoxication of the organism causes it to experience a psychosis that pushes it to mobilize and to react in a certain manner. Evola, in fact, explains:

“Per far marciare la massa, è necessario ubriacarla o ingannarla, con la conseguenza, appunto, di avvelenare la guerra con fattori passionali, ideologici, e propagandistici. [...] Di questo non avevano bisogno gli stati tradizionali; essi non avevano bisogno di fabbricare un pathos sciovinista e quasi una psicosi per mobilitare le loro forze e per dar loro un *morale*” (138).

Now that the cycle has reached the Kali-Yuga, an action was needed to sway the masses to think and act in a certain way, thus making possible the re-constitution of the age of Tradition and the purification of the social body by cleansing it of its viruses and cancerous growths. If we juxtapose this comment with the events that marked the years of the “strategy of tension,” it appears to be clear that the objective of the stratagem adopted by neo-fascists was to inject the body of the nation with a foreign pathogen that would then cause the social body to react in a certain way against the threat. Injecting the body with a foreign pathogen also means sacrificing a certain part of that body, because, with every injection of the foreign bacteria, or virus, a certain part of the system is compromised and sacrificed. The casualties of the neo-fascist bombings of the *anni di piombo* become the sacrificial victims that replace the entire body of the nation, thus becoming substitutes of every member of the community.

In *Gli uomini e le rovine*, Communist ideology is seen as a contaminating agent that penetrates the human spirit and changes a person’s behavior and way of thinking. Evola also terms Communist ideology as an obsession, almost comparing it to a

psychological illness that takes control of a person's psyche. Regarding Communist ideology, Evola asserts:

“Sulla linea del comunismo vi sono stati casi nei quali qualcosa ha cominciato a penetrare fino ad una tale profondità. Non a torto un uomo politico ha parlato di un mutamento interno e profondo che, manifestandosi quasi dei termini di una ossessione, si produce in coloro che aderiscono veramente al comunismo; essi ne sono mutati nel pensare, nell'agire. Secondo noi, è bensì una alterazione o contaminazione fondamentale dell'essere umano” (167).

What is at stake here, according to Evola, is the very border that separates an individual from the common. Each person is at risk of being contaminated with the foreign pathogens, which would alter an individual's internal balance causing it to degenerate into dissolution. Those militants who do achieve spiritual purity have been able to immunize themselves from the contamination of the common and have been successful in achieving an internal spiritual balance which renders them immune to degeneration and dissolution.

As we have seen, Evola's volume *Gli uomini e le rovine* makes ample use of the immunitary metaphor to describe the political situation in Italy during the post-war period and to provide a course of action that must be taken to stop the spreading of Communism in Italy. In the words of Roberto Esposito, in his volume *Bios*, Evola and Right-wing militants used “biological processes as criteria with which to guide their own actions” (113). In order to have a better understanding of how biology and racism were used by the extreme Right as a guide for their own actions we must also examine racism's role in Right-wing ideology. Evola's concept of racism can give us a better understanding of how the process of immunization would strengthen the spiritual purity of both the Right-wing militant and the social body.

e. Evola and Spiritual Racism

The concept of race was central to Evola's worldview and for the attainment of the age of Tradition. Evola, with his numerous articles on race published in the Thirties, even directly influenced the racial laws imposed by the Fascist regime in 1938. In fact, Mussolini himself took note of Evola's writings on race and was so impressed by them that he requested the 1941 work *Sintesi di dottrina della razza* to be republished as *Sintesi di dottrina fascista della razza*. The *duce* had also agreed to provide support for Evola's journal *Sangue e spirito* after meeting with the ideologue in 1941, but the project was never finished. When talking about Evola's interest in the concept of race, we must clarify, however, that the ideologue proposed a different understanding of racism. Even though biological racism was, indeed, of importance to Evola, his view was that race should not be conceived only in biological terms; according to the Traditionalist ideologue race should also be understood as a spiritual concept. Evola interpreted racism primarily in terms of spirit, instead of terms of blood, as in biological racism. Of course, there was still a very strong physical and biological component in Evola's understanding of racism, but the biological factor was not as central as it was for the National Socialist ideology in Germany. According to Evola, each person is made up of three components which determine his or her purity and rank in society: the body, the soul, and the spirit. Degeneration happens when there is a disequilibrium between the three components which make up a person. Only those who have a perfect balance between the body, the soul, and the spirit can reach the highest level of spiritual purity and be considered "men of Tradition." He also believed that race was not only a set of biological characteristics, but was also an attitude and a vision of the world. His anti-

Semitism, for example, was based chiefly on certain the spiritual and attitudinal characteristics that he ascribed to Jews, more than to a question of blood. Jews, according to Evola, contributed to the spiritual decadence of the West because they reduced every human activity to an economic matter and because of their sexualization of society, with Marx and Freud being the primary culprits for these phenomena. There is no doubt that Evola also saw certain cultures and races as being inferior, like the Ethiopians during Italy's colonial expansion, and saw others as having dominant traits that would rightfully place them above other cultures. Therefore, according to the Right-wing ideologue, the primary function of racism, be it spiritual or biological, is to identify which cultures, or races, should dominate the others and should shape society in its own image. For Evola, the *razza dello spirito* should reflect its spiritual superiority and purity on the lower castes, thus creating a top-down society where the more inferior parts of the social body act under the guidance of the spiritually pure elite. The societal model conceived by Evola stood in direct opposition to the model proposed by collectivist societies, which, according to the Right-wing ideologue, have an inverted structure. Collectivist societies, with their lack of differentiation, signified a world of chaos and disorder, in which the shapeless and indistinct *demos* was placed at the center of the political sphere. Once again, it is important to stress the difference between the spiritually pure *uomini differenziati*, and the spiritually impure, undifferentiated masses.

f. Freda and "La disintegrazione del Sistema."

As we have already discussed previously in our present study, Franco Freda has been a central figure in the sphere of Right-wing extremism in the Sixties and

Seventies. In addition to being a member of the *Ordine nuovo* cell in the region of Veneto, and to being the primary suspect of the Piazza Fontana bombing in 1969, Freda has also published several works on political theory and on political activism. Among his works, the most important and relevant to the history of Right-wing extremism in Italy remains *La disintegrazione del Sistema*, a political pamphlet published in 1969, and subsequently republished in 1980. Freda's 1969 work had a profound impact on Right-wing organizations of the second half of the Seventies, such as the *Nucleri armati rivoluzionari*, who were responsible for the biggest massacre in post-war Italy: the bombing of the Bologna station in 1982. In Freda's *La disintegrazione del Sistema*, which is only thirty-four pages in length, the metaphor of the social body is omnipresent; however, conversely to Evola, Freda does not advocate the immunization of the social body, but its complete destruction, so that the last cycle of degeneration can be accelerated and the age of Tradition can be reconstituted. For Freda, there is nothing in the present system that should be saved. Only its utter destruction can allow for the constitution of a spiritually pure caste. Regarding Freda's theorizations and understanding of the cycle of regression of the castes, Francesco Ingravalle, who curated the fourth edition of Freda's work, explains that "l'opera manifesta una intuizione che è stata sviluppata da Freda nel "lavoro politico" non meno che nell'opera editoriale: la possibilità di invertire la tendenza del decadentismo dell'Occidente, di restaurare la Gestalt aria attraverso il disfacimento della civilizzazione del *Terzo Stato*" (9).

Freda commences his diatribe against the decline of the West by comparing Europe to the body of a prostitute who has been in too many brothels and who has

contracted too many ideological diseases. The role of the Right-wing militant, in this context, is to redeem the prostitute by rehabilitating her. In *La disintegrazione del Sistema*, Freda states:

“L’Europa è una vecchia baldracca che ha puttaneeggiato in tutti i bordello e che ha contrattato tutte le infezioni ideologiche. [...] Una baldracca, il cui ventre ha concepito e generato la rivoluzione borghese e la rivolta proletaria; la cui anima è stata posseduta dalla violenza dei mercanti e dalla ribellione degli schiavi. E noi, a questo punto, vorremmo redimerla” (20).

In this passage in particular, we see an emphasis on both the physical aspect, with the body of the prostitute being infected by different ideological diseases and giving birth to an inferior being, as well as the spiritual aspect, with the spirit of the prostitute being possessed by demonic forces, such as capitalism and the advent of Socialism.

Figuratively speaking, the role of the Right-wing militant will be that of acting as a doctor and, at the same time, as an exorcist, to cure the body of the prostitute and liberate her soul from the demonic forces which render her impure.

Just as in Evola, racism also plays an important role in Freda’s theorizations. In *La disintegrazione del Sistema*, Freda creates two categories: those who are pure, and “the others,” who are deemed to be inferior, both on a physiological and spiritual level. In his most important work, Freda makes a clear distinction between these two races of people, specifying that the actions brought forth by the race to he belongs to have a specific meaning. In *La disintegrazione*, in fact, when talking about the opposing political factions, Freda explains:

“Continuo a dire *gli altri* – e non i nostri avversari o i nostri nemici – proprio perché voglio insistere e chiarire sino alle estreme rappresentazioni che i vocaboli possono rendere o le immagini evocare, come tra noi e gli altri vi sia molto più di una semplice differenza di mentalità, di modo di agire, di *ideologia* politica. È un’anima diversa, è una

razza diversa quella che consente alle nostre azioni il loro significato tipico e vi attribuisce la fisionomia propria” (21).

In this excerpt, Freda places emphasis on both the spiritual and the physical purity of a person by specifying that the faction to which he belongs to has a different soul, and is a different race altogether. It also appears that Freda is asserting that belonging to the pure race allows an individual to commit certain actions, and that these activities have an important significance because they are a product of the pure race. It is not clear which actions Freda is referring to, but it is quite possible he was talking about acts of political violence that would serve as acts of sacrifice for the Right-wing militant. The purpose of these acts of sacrifice would be to purify the spirit of the militant, thus making him a part of the pure race. Freda's obsession with purity and spiritual hygiene is highlighted in several of his other writings and contributions to Right-wing periodicals. In reference to the role of the Right-wing militant, for example, Freda states: “Egli non deve odiare né amare. [...] Fredda eliminazione dei nemici. Egli deve mantenersi *puro*, alieno da sentimenti anche di odio verso i nemici. Costoro devono essere eliminati per una semplice questione di *igiene*” (16). Freda makes it clear for his readers and disciples that the primary concern of the Right-wing militant should be the preservation of purity, both within oneself and within the social body. In the 1980 edition of *La disintegrazione del Sistema*, Freda further explains: “In un soldato politico, la *purezza* giustifica ogni durezza, il disinteresse ogni astuzia, mentre il carattere impersonale impresso alla lotta dissolve ogni preoccupazione moralistica ” (87). In this passage, as in the preceding one, Freda places emphasis on the concept of purity and asserts that the quest of purification justifies any hardness. Of course, it is not clear what Freda meant by using the term “hardness,” but it is quite possible that the *ordinovista* was referring to

actions of political violence. The theme of purity is also present in periodicals published by other Right-wing militants. One of these bulletins was *Quex*, a periodical written and published by neo-fascists who were serving time in prison.¹⁹ The purpose of *Quex*, which was published on irregular intervals between 1978 and 1981, was to unite all Right-wing militants who were serving sentences in the Italian prison system. Freda had also tried to take control of the publication of the bulletin, but eventually abandoned the task. In *Quex*, the Right-wing militant is often referred to as a “legionary soldier” whose role is to purify him or herself, as well as society, by committing an act of self-sacrifice. In the Right-wing bulletin, the purifying action of the legionary soldier is praised because it places him above “di qualsivoglia legge di questa civiltà degenerata [...] L’azione del Legionario è distruttrice e creatrice [...] distruttrice per tutto ciò che rappresenta questa civiltà di mercanti; creatrice perché in essa si *purifica* tutto ciò che questa società ha generato” (*Quex* 2, 1). In this quote we see the affirmation of the principle of thanatopolitics of Right-wing extremists, which Esposito discussed in his volume *Bios*. Only through the enlargement of the circle of death and destruction can society be purified. The death of a part of the social body ensures the purification and the strengthening of the entire body. In this passage we also see another reference to the concept of immunity: the militant, by committing bloodshed, is immune to the laws of the land, because these are rulings which do not pertain to the race of Tradition, but only to

¹⁹ The title of the periodical derives from Herber Norkus’ nickname “Quex.” Norkus was a fifteen year old Nazi activist who had been killed by German Communist militants. The death of Norkus inspired the National Socialist party to release a propaganda film and a book. Interestingly enough, the periodical *Quex* had been published without any authorization from the prison officials. Eventually, it was also determined that *Quex* was the channel through which many of the Right-militants involved in the *spontaneismo armato* of the late Seventies were able to communicate and exchange ideas. The main force behind the publication of *Quex* was Fabrizio Zani, an ex-member of *Avanguardia Nazionale* who eventually joined the *Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari*. Even though letters sent by inmates were subjected to censorship by the authorities, the contributors to *Quex* were able to bypass controls and restrictions by using ambiguous language.

the inferior race of the common and of a degenerate society. Regarding the role of the law, Esposito, in *Immunitas*, explains: “Laws are always partial, never for everyone: the all, like nothingness, is a matter of justice. It is logically impossible to extend a right to all without emptying it of meaning as a right [...] It would lose the faculty that differentiates those who possess it from the status of those who are deprived of it, namely, its immunitary sense of privilege or privation” (24). The Right-wing extremists of the *anni di piombo* differentiate themselves from the common because of their belonging to a higher caste, or race; they belong to the race of Tradition, which is immune from the laws of the common and of present societies.

Even though, of course, there were many similarities between Right-wing and Left-wing militants during the “years of lead,” especially during the period of the *spontaneismo armato* of the late Seventies, the theme of purification is absent in the diatribe of the Left. Regarding the difference between Left-wing and Right-wing militants, Franco Ferraresi, in his volume *Threats to Democracy* explains:

“The Left, despite the drift of some late fringes toward an existential, aestheticizing dimension, remained strongly anchored to such political values as class struggle, revolution, identification with the masses. On the Right-wing side, on the other hand, a totally different theme acquired overwhelming importance in this period, that of *purifying action*. It corresponded to a deeply rooted topos of the radical-right thought, in turn deriving from some archetypes of the Weltanschauung of the Right in general” (181).

The obsession with purity and purification is what truly sets apart the Right-wing militant from members of Left-wing subversive groups during the “years of lead.” Even though documents, bulletins, and political pamphlets penned by Left-wing militants did contain terms such as “parasites” and other biological terminology, the politically violent actions

of the members of the Red Brigades and other subversive organizations were never motivated by the desire to purify themselves and society. The acts of political violence perpetrated by Right-wing militants, during the late Sixties and all throughout the Seventies, might have been motivated by the need to achieve purification. By committing sacrificial acts of political violence, the Right-wing militant might have been seeking self-purification and, at the same time, the purification of the entire social body, or race.

After this brief parenthesis in which we analyzed Freda's influence on other Right-wing militants and their political activities, we will return to his work *La disintegrazione del Sistema* and we will identify other passages in which the immunity metaphor is present. As mentioned before, the role of neo-fascists was to accelerate the process of decline, so that the age of Tradition can be restored and the cycle of the regression of the castes can be restarted. As Freda explains, for Right-wing militants "occorre propiziare e accelerare i tempi di questa distruzione, esasperare l'opera di rottura del presente equilibrio e dell'attuale fase di assestamento politico" (34). In describing the process of acceleration of disintegration of the system, Freda, once again, resorts to using the human body as a metaphor for the course of action that must be taken in order purify society: "[...] dobbiamo proporre un obiettivo di lotta risolutivo: la distruzione del mondo Borghese. Ovvero, dobbiamo convincerli che il male rappresentato dalla società borghese è inguaribile: che nessuna terapia è possibile; che nemmeno una operazione chirurgica riesce ormai efficace; che occorre accelerare l'emorragia e seppellire il cadavere" (34). To describe such process, Freda adopts

specific imagery: a surgical operation, a hemorrhage, and a cadaver. Only by sacrificing the body can the body itself be reborn stronger and purer.

Chapter 2

The Neo-fascist in Fiction: Camon's *Occidente* and Castellaneta's *Ombre*.

a. "*Occidente*" and the Immunitary Metaphor of Right-wing Terrorism.

With his third novel, *Occidente*, the Paduan writer Ferdinando Camon has taken upon himself the daunting task of exploring the fanatical world of Right-wing extremism and its role in the *strategia della tensione*.²⁰ Camon published *Occidente* in October of 1975, right at the tail end of the period of the "strategy of tension." As a matter of fact, in 1975 the Red Brigades had not yet fully embraced the armed struggle and Left-wing terrorism had yet to sweep the country with its wave of assassinations and kidnappings. Even though the Red Brigades had already made the news previously with the kidnapping of Sossi and other demonstrative actions, Left-wing terrorism really started escalating only in 1976, with the assassination of the judge Coco. The period spanning from 1969 to 1974 was instead characterized by Right-wing terrorism and the bombings of Piazza Fontana, Piazza della Loggia, and the Italicus train. The years during which the novel was written and published, the first half of the Seventies, places the novel right in the midst of the period most relevant for our present study, thus making Camon's work an extremely valuable source for understanding and analyzing the

²⁰ Camon himself, in the preface of the 2003 edition of novel, explains how writing *Occidente* was the most demanding and most difficult task he has had to encounter as a writer: "Questo è, in assoluto, il libro che m'è costato più caro, moralmente parlando. Sia quando lo scrivevo, sia quando l'ho pubblicato, sia quando è diventato un film, sia più tardi ancora, quando la vicenda che esso racconta è diventata una super-strage, la più vasta che il terrorismo abbia inflitto all'Italia." With this last sentence, Camon is clearly alluding to the bomb at the Bologna station in 1980.

representation of Right-wing extremism and the “strategy of tension” in the fictional world. Even though other novels, such as Sciascia’s *Il contesto*, have dealt with the *strategia della tensione*, what makes Camon’s *Occidente* even more significant is the fact that the main characters themselves are terrorists. Sciascia’s novel is, instead, devoid of any protagonists who are clearly identifiable as terrorist. In *Il contesto*, the Sicilian writer limits himself to the exploration of the apparatuses of power that are pulling the strings behind the *strategia della tensione* and the politics of terror, but does not give us a psychological and ideological profile of the people behind the material acts that brought about the years of terror in Italy. Camon, instead, goes beyond a metaphorical representation of the “strategy of tension” by immersing the readers in the mind of the terrorist and making them understand the psychological and ideological motivations that would push a person to commit certain acts, such as the bombing of the bank in Piazza Fontana. As we have mentioned in the introduction of this project, a chapter of *Occidente* was found in one of the hideouts of the presumed culprits of the bombing at the Bologna station in 1980. The chapter in question was transcribed by members of the Right-wing terrorist cell responsible for the Bologna massacre and was used as a political manifesto to explain their motivations and their political stance. In addition, we have also asserted that the language adopted by extreme Right-wing ideologues and militants during the period of the “strategy of tension” was characterized by a consistent use of terminology belonging to the medical and biological fields. The purpose of this chapter will be to examine Camon’s novel as whole and to explore more in depth the language used by the protagonists of *Occidente* to see if the use of this type of terminology is intrinsic of the characters belonging to the Right-wing terrorist cell

described in the book. We will conduct this research by adopting a bio-political approach; more precisely, we will use the notion of immunity expounded in Roberto Esposito's volume *Bios*. Esposito's concept of immunity will serve as a guide to understand the terminology used by Right-wing militants in Camon's novel, as well as a tool to interpret specific episodes in *Occidente* as metaphors for the "strategy of tension." We will see how the paradigm of immunization present in neo-fascist ideology is represented in *Occidente* through the language adopted by Right-wing extremists in the novel and through their subversive actions.

With *Occidente*, Camon wants to explore and analyze Right-wing politically motivated violence and the psychological motivations behind certain organizations, such as *Ordine nuovo*, by reconstructing the ideologically motivated mentality that brought about the massacres that characterized the first half of the Seventies in Italy. Regarding the purpose of writing a novel focusing on Right-wing extremism, Camon, in the preface of the 2003 edition of *Occidente*, explains:

"Quello che m'interessava era il lungo viaggio degli stragisti verso la conquista e l'applicazione del *diritto di strage*. Credevo d'interpretarli, e cioè che questo diritto fosse già chiaro dentro di loro. Non supponevo che dentro di loro fosse chiara e definitiva la conclusione, e cioè che le stragi andavano compiute e che, più vaste erano, più erano efficaci, e, più innocente era il material che sacrificavano, più erano giuste" (6).

What makes this novel of primary importance for our research is the fact that it was written during the period of the "strategy of tension," it is the first novel written in which the protagonist is a Right-wing terrorist, and the author was in close proximity to the environment of Right-wing subversive groups. As a matter of fact, the Paduan author conducts his analysis from a privileged point of view, since the city of Padua, at

the time, was one of the primary centers for Right-wing subversive groups. Additionally, both Franco Freda and Giovanni Ventura, who had been accused of the Piazza Fontana bombing, were from the city of Padua. It is also important to note that Camon used Franco Freda as the primary inspiration for the development of the novel's primary character, Franco. In order to conceive the fictional Franco, Camon studied and analyzed Right-wing literature as well as political pamphlets of organizations such as *Ordine nuovo*. The novel itself also includes quotes taken directly from Freda's works *Manifesto del gruppo di Aristocrazia Cristiana* and *La disintegrazione del Sistema*.²¹ The author's advantaged position allowed him primary access to documentation and materials belonging to the real of Right-wing extremism, thus providing the novel with a rigorous political realism. The inclusion of direct quotes and other documentation makes *Occidente* a hybrid novel, making it stand apart from other novels dealing with the subject of terrorism. Ermanno Conti, in his work *Gli "anni di piombo" nella letteratura italiana*, for example, sees *Occidente* both as a "romanzo" as well as a "saggio" (33). Carlo Bo, in his 1975 article "Una nuova e importante opera romanzo-storia," also recognizes the uniqueness of Camon's novel: "E' un romanzo aperto, suscettibile di infiniti innesti" (33). Even though *Occidente* is marked by a deep sense of realism, the novel is devoid of any temporal cues and any specific references to actual facts. Camon's novel can be seen instead as a contraction of the chronology of the first half of the Seventies; in fact, Camon gathers in one narrative entity the entire sequence of events that took place during the period of the "strategy of tension." Even though the events described in the novel took place between 1969 and 1974, the narrative

²¹ In addition to researching Right-wing literature, Camon also interviewed members of *Potere operaio* to have a better understanding of the inner workings of Left-wing subversive groups.

sequence that takes place in *Occidente* appears to develop over a period of only a few months. Thus, Camon condenses the events of the “strategy of tension” into one continuous story that follows the subversive actions of a Paduan neo-fascist group; however, this novel does not exclusively deal with Right-wing terrorism. As a matter of fact, even though the story focuses on a neo-fascist subversive group, Camon also devotes his attention to Left-wing political violence. Essentially, Camon’s *Occidente* is a representation, a snapshot of Padua during the Seventies, when the streets of city had been overtaken by the students in revolt: the author describes the conflict between Left-wing and Right-wing factions in Padua.

The two opposing factions are represented by Franco, leader of the Right-wing group “Gruppo d’Ordine,” and Miro, the organizer of the Left-wing faction “Potere Rivoluzionario.”²² In this case, the city of Padua can be seen as a microcosm representing the political climate felt throughout Italy during the period of the “strategy of tension” and the “opposite extremes,” when opposing political factions battled against each other in the streets. The novel begins with the description of a nocturnal gathering in a mansion on the hills surrounding the city of Padua. All of the Paduan neo-fascist underground meets at this villa to discuss the presence of the Left-wing organization “Potere Rivoluzionario” in the city and to decide where to place the headquarters of their nucleus, “Gruppo d’Ordine.” The neo-fascists decide to open this strategic base in reaction to the birth of “Potere Rivoluzionario.” At the gathering of the Paduan Right-wing underground, the attention is devoted primarily to Franco, the leader of the group, and to another character, known only as the “Maestro,” who in fact may well be a

²² The names of these two organizations are references to two real political subversive groups: the Right-wing *Ordine nuovo* and the Left-wing *Potere operaio*.

reference to Julius Evola. The “Maestro,” as a matter of fact, is the ideological leader of the group, as he is the one who provides the spiritual foundation of the entire organization. At the gathering at the villa, the “Maestro” is seen entertaining the other guests with his theories and his teachings. After the episode of the gathering, the attention shifts on Franco, who travels through the Paduan countryside in search of a suitable location for the headquarters of the “Gruppo d’Ordine.” During his search in the countryside, Franco comes in contact with a “primitive” world populated by farmers and people of the lower classes. In this episode, the reader is able to peer into Franco’s view of the world as he makes several remarks about his racist and elitist beliefs. The third episode of *Occidente*, instead sees Lupis, another leader of the “Gruppo d’Ordine,” at the center of the attention, as he explains the group’s ideological and political platform. We will analyze more in depth both Franco and Lupis’ views further on in this chapter. In the fourth episode of Camon’s novel, the focus is once again on Franco, who decides to visit a psychoanalyst to discuss about his anxiety and his other psychological disturbances. During the meeting with the psychoanalyst, Franco reveals his obsession with his own death and how he wants to export it onto others. The leader of the “Gruppo d’Ordine,” in fact, says that he wants to “importarla tra gli altri” and “esportarla da sé.” The final episode takes the reader in the streets of Padua, where Left-wing militants, Right-wing militants, and the police are battling it out. The leading figure in this episode is Miro, the leader of the Left-wing organization “Potere Rivoluzionario.” Even though Miro is the prominent character in this chapter, he still does not have the psychological and emotional depth of Franco. The author definitely seems to be more concerned with the exploration of the psyche of the Right-wing militant instead of that of the Left-wing

militant. In the same chapter, the battle moves from the streets to the factories, where the workers and the members of “Potere Rivoluzionario” set up barricades to block the police. The events described in this chapter closely resemble the strike that took place in 1970 in Porto Marghera.²³ As a result of these incidents, Franco and the “Gruppo d’Ordine” decide to plant a bomb in a kindergarten in order to bring terror among the masses.

As we have mentioned before, the leader of the Right-wing subversive group “Gruppo d’Ordine,” Franco, was conceived by Camon using Franco Freda as the primary inspiration. In reference to the adoption of Freda as a model for the fictional Franco, Ermanno Conti explains that “Freda è presente in *Occidente* con la citazione di numerose parti di suoi scritti politici” (33). Camon himself, in a 2007 article entitled “*Occidente* e la strage di Bologna,” explains that “se io ho costruito un personaggio che fila dritto verso la strage, l’ho costruito sulle sue parole” (Camon)²⁴; Camon’s explanation means that the author was able to grasp a key defining factor of neo-fascism and the strategy it adopted during the period of the “years of lead” and was capable of translating it into narrative form.²⁵

We first meet Franco, the leader of the Right-wing terrorist cell in *Occidente*, at

²³ On August 3rd, 1970 workers struck in front of the Petrolchimico factory by forming barricades and blocking traffic. After the police’s intervention, the strikers occupied the train station and one of the freeway overpasses. As the fight between the strikers and the police intensified, three workers were shot by the authorities.

²⁴ www.ferdinandocamon.it

²⁵ In his 2007 article, published on www.ferdinandocamon.it, Camon tells us also how he first came in contact with Franco Freda and his writings: “Franco Freda aveva una libreria in via Patriarcato, accanto al Liviano. Era aperta solo al giovedì, dalle 22 alle 24. Aveva materiale fascista, nazista, maoista, italiano, tedesco, romeno. Anche materiale proibito per legge. Non aveva vetrina, ma una saracinesca, sempre abbassata. Sul campanello c’era scritto *Ar*. È la radice di Ariani, Ares, arètè, aristocrazia: i termini che indicano guerra, razza superiore, virtù militare. Tra i libri che ho acquistato lì c’era uno importantissimo: pubblicato senza nome dell’autore, esprimeva le ragioni per cui ‘bisognava fare una strage,’ ma ‘una strage dalla quale non uscissero che fantasmi’, e dopo la quale il popolo, inginocchiato, si consegnasse a chi solo poteva garantirgli la sicurezza. Da quel libro estraí alcune frasi, e le calai nel romanzo che stavo scrivendo” (Camon).

the gathering held in a villa on the Paduan hills depicted in the first chapter of the novel. One of Franco's distinguishing traits is his *erre moscia*, which can be seen as a sign of social distinction. He also stands out among the party guests by emanating around him an aura of leadership and authority. We first encounter the leader of the Right-wing extremist group as he is dictating orders to the other party guests using verbs in the infinitive "Portare un'auto . . . accendere i fari . . . illuminare l'acqua" (18). The other attendants of the celebration at the villa all belong to the Paduan upper-middle class and all come from the same political and social background:

"Questi ragazzi hanno trent'anni, poco più o poco meno, ma è come se fossero stati partoriti da una sconfitta che ha cancellato le loro famiglie; e nello stesso tempo è come se la loro esistenza fosse quotidianamente regolata in modo da dimenticare o da vendicare quella sconfitta. Non sono tuttavia dei vinti: si riuniscono nelle case più lussuose della zona residenziale, assoldano guardian per la custodia delle loro champagne, conservano il senso del circolo o della casta, le loro biografie si somigliano tutte come se appartenessero allo stesso clan" (25).

As the reader progresses through the first chapters of *Occidente* we also start having a better understanding of Franco's worldview and his way of categorizing people according to their spiritual and biological worth. Franco and the other members of the "Gruppo d'Ordine" obsessively use this sort of classification throughout the novel. We begin seeing this type of language when Franco goes around the Paduan countryside in search of a remote place to use as headquarters for his Right-wing subversive group. In one instance, as he is exploring an abandoned house in the Paduan hills, the leader of the "Gruppo d'Ordine" refers to the farmers who had once inhabited the building as "questi animali contadini – due gradini sotto l'uomo" (44). In another instance during his patrol, Franco meets the occupant of one of these houses in the countryside and thinks to himself:

“Che relitti, questa gente [...], pare che sia passato il diluvio. Di loro non val la pena di occuparsi: non c’entrano con la storia, neanche come vittime. Potresti anche ucciderla, la vecchietta, non se ne accorgerebbe nessuno, né i carabinieri né il prete né i suoi stessi familiari, spersi e spaventati in qualche fabbrica di Milano o di Torino. Ma i vermi, nel pane della vita, son necessari? Un abisso sotto l’uomo: stesso gradino dell’animale” (55-6).

Franco’s search for a location for the headquarters of his subversive group is also a descent, or a tour, through all the different categories of sub-humanity which are part of his classification system and view of the world. After the encounter with one of the occupants, Franco enters a shack where he gives the reader a detailed account of the backwardness of the premises and once again classifies its inhabitants according to his worldview:

“Chi diavolo potesse abitare in una capanna del genere Franco non riusciva ad immaginarlo. Probabilmente qualche guardiano di campi, qualche custode di greggi: tre gradini sotto l’uomo; un contadino no, perché il contadino ci tiene molto alla casa, la perfeziona di giorno in giorno, e non riuscirebbe a vivere in una stanza senza finestre” (57).

These examples give us a clear understanding of Franco’s view of the world and of his thoughts regarding the worth of human life. He classifies the people around him according to the categories established by Julius Evola in his works and his political pamphlets, which we have examined in the second chapter of our present study. We will continue the analysis of Franco’s character and his psyche further on in this chapter, but before we can do that we also need to examine other important figures present in Camon’s novel: the “Maestro” and “Lupis,” who fill the roles of the ideologues of the “Gruppo d’Ordine.”

We encounter Lupis, one of the leaders of the Paduan neo-fascist organization, for the first time in the third chapter of *Occidente*. Camon devotes the majority of this chapter to describing the group’s political program and its strategy. It is in this chapter

that we find the passages used by the terrorist cell responsible for the Bologna bombing. In this part of the novel, Lupis becomes the mouthpiece through which Camon provides the reader with his understanding of the ideology of Right-wing subversive groups during the years of the “strategy of tension.” Franco has just returned from patrolling the area and goes to a meeting of the “Gruppo d’Ordine.” At the beginning of the session, Lupis stands up and begins his diatribe against bourgeois culture, stating that it must be destroyed in order to make room for a new order. Lupis also theorizes a possible alliance with Left-wing subversive groups in order to accelerate the downfall of the entire system. Lupis’ speech is characterized by an ample use of medical and biological terms, which he adopts to create a metaphor for the strategy and the tactics that the “Gruppo d’Ordine” should adopt in order to bring down bourgeois society. In one part of his speech, Lupis explains that no therapies or surgical operations can cure the state in which bourgeois society finds itself. The function of Right-wing subversive groups should be that of accelerating the hemorrhage and burying society, as if it were a cadaver:

“E al di fuori di noi e dei nostril avversari, con le nostre stesse idee ci sono milioni di uomini oggi in Italia. A questo schieramento d’uomini – che da soli non avremmo potuto creare, ma che il Sistema stesso ha creato, come l’organismo infetto genera da sé gli anticorpi –, a queste moltitudini che sono stufe, annoiate, sofferenti per tutto ciò che esiste, noi facciamo arrivare la lieta novella: che ci siamo anche noi. Esse ci aspettano. Diamo un segno, inequivocabile, della nostra presenza: ci riconosceranno. Ci seguiranno, perché ciò che vogliamo è ciò che esse vogliono: la distruzione del mondo Borghese. Cerchiamo di scoprire i pavid, gli incerti, e mostrar loro proprio ciò che temono di scoprire da soli: che il male Borghese è inguaribile, nessuna terapia è possibile, nessuna operazione chirurgica è ormai efficace. Occorre accelerare l’emorragia e sotterare il cadavere. Noi dobbiamo convincerli che non si può edificare nulla fin tanto che rimangono anche solo le rovine: l’unica, la sola condizione per costruire uno Stato nuovo è che dei regimi borghesi siano spazzate via perfino le macerie” (74-5).

To compose Lupis' speech, Camon reformulated an excerpt from Freda's *La disintegrazione del Sistema*. In addition to the medical terms used by Freda, we also see the adoption of the word *anticorpi* to describe those men who are able to stand up amongst the ruins, to use Evolian terminology. The *anticorpi* are the men who live among the multitudes and who will answer the neo-fascist call for the disintegration of the system. The actions of the "Gruppo d'Ordine" are supposed to cause a reaction among these *anticorpi*; the purpose of this immunitary response is to kill the body by accelerating its hemorrhage so that it may be reborn, or regenerated, and become stronger. As Lupis continues to present the strategic platform the "Gruppo d'Ordine" should adopt, we arrive at the prophetic passage that would later be used by the culprits of the Bologna massacre to explain the motives behind such act:

"Occorre un'esplosione da cui non escano che fantasmi. Ci sono organismi unicellulari che, schiacciati, risorgono, mutilati, si riuniscono: ma in ognuno c'è un organo delicato dove è la sede della vita: noi dobbiamo colpire quel nucleo come fanno gli antibiotici, noi dobbiamo dare al Sistema un colpo tale che ogni coscienza si rimetta a noi con tutta la docilità, con tutta la gratitudine per qualunque cosa faremo in essa. Occorre che il nostro gesto sia così chiaro, da far nascere in tutta la popolazione, inerme e inginocchiata, due sole risposte e nessun dubbio: <Sono loro> e <Finalmente>" (145).²⁶

Even in this passage we see an extensive usage of medical and biological terms to metaphorize the actions of the "Gruppo d'Ordine." The *organismi unicellulari* are the viruses and bacteria infecting the body of the nation. What the members of the "Gruppo d'Ordine" and all of its followers must do is to strike these unicellular organisms at their core, or the the *organo delicate* where the essence of life is housed. The "Gruppo d'Ordine" should act as an *antibiotico* against the *organismi unicellulari*. The term

²⁶ This excerpt is taken from the first edition of *Occidente* published in 1975.

“antibiotic” comes from the Greek *anti* +βιωτικός, with the word *biōtikos* meaning “fit for life” or “lively.” In turn, the term *biōtikos* derives from βίωσις (*biōsis*), or “way of life,” and from βίος (*bios*), which means “life.” In this sense, what the “Gruppo d’Ordine” wants to create a reaction that would impede the progression of a form of life that is not pure. The delicate organ in which life resides is the population. Camon, in the closing paragraphs of the novel, also identifies the population, the multitudes, as the organ of life which the “Gruppo d’Ordine” is aiming at:

“Più è casuale, più il delitto è efficace. Non serve più che il re, il presidente, il ministro si sentano insicuri: occorre che si senta insicuro l’uomo qualunque, la donna in casa, l’insegnante a scuola, il viaggiatore in treno, il vecchio sulla soglia, la folla in piazza, il pubblico al cinema. Perché il potere non è più nel re, nel president, nel ministro: il potere è nella folla, e per spingere la folla nella direzione voluta nessun’arma è migliore del panico, e il panico si diffonde coi giornali, e lo spazio sui giornali si ottiene con l’attentato o la strage” (184).

Camon is able to give a political answer and purpose to the terrorist acts of the “Gruppo d’Ordine”: since power is now concentrated in the population and the multitudes, the way to control and to influence the masses is through the use of indiscriminate terror, or, as Camon states in the final chapter of *Occidente*: “La strage è il mezzo per il potere nelle società di massa” (183).

As mentioned previously, another essential character in Camon’s *Occidente* is the so-called “Maestro,” who the author conceived using Julius Evola and his writings as a point of reference. The reader first comes into contact with the figure of the “Maestro” in the first chapter of the novel, in the episode of the neo-fascist gathering at the villa up in the Paduan hills. The “Maestro” provides the “Gruppo d’Ordine” with an ideological foundation based on the concepts of spiritual racism and hierarchy. The basic tenets of the ideology preached by the “Maestro” are the exaltation of the spiritual aristocracy, the

principle of order and discipline, and the rejection of bourgeois society. According to the “Maestro” and his disciples, the final objective of groups like the “Gruppo d’Ordine” are the instauration of a spiritual hierarchy and the building of a new Europe governed by an elite of spiritually pure individuals who would be also capable of elevating the spiritual pureness of those deemed inferior. In one instance, for example, the “Maestro” is trying to explain to some of the party guests the criteria according to which human beings can be divided into different categories:

“Quando si sente la bellezza non si può descriverla. [...] La gente normale, che lavora e che vive, non ha gusto, è inutile scrivere per la gente [...]. Salire più in alto degli altri non significa vedere solo la propria strada, ma anche la strada degli altri [...]. Il bambino progettuale parte, per la sua conquista del mondo, da zero, ma il bambino imitativo parte da sotto zero. Il disavanzo psichico che c’è tra un progettuale e un imitativo è lo stesso che c’è fra un normale e un subnormale. [...] Quando queste persone sono intere classi, formano le civiltà morte, come oggi quella contadina” (36).

We see a direct correlation between the words of the “Maestro” and Franco’s when he goes through the countryside in search of a base for the operations of the “Gruppo d’Ordine.” As we have seen previously, Franco categorizes the people he encounters according to how many degrees they are below a “normal” human being, or a spiritually pure one.

During the same episode, the “Maestro” also provides the reader with an understanding of his views on the role of the masses in contemporary society. The ideologue of the “Gruppo d’Ordine” in his speech presents shades of Evola’s theory of the castes and of his own brand of spiritual racism. When asked by one of his disciples what roles do masses have in society, the old teacher condemns modern society for

allowing individuals of a lesser spiritual purity to be on the same level of those who are spiritually superior:

“I comuni sono tutti fuori posto perché possono permetterselo: un posto vale l'altro. Quindi il mondo è in ordine perché nella folla anche chi è fuori posto è al suo posto, e nessuno lo vede perché sta in piedi, e cammina, come gli altri. Uno sta in piedi quando c'è una proporzione fra la base della sua personalità e l'altezza della sua esperienza. Se un uomo comune ha la base piccola, bisogna impedirgli di avere esperienze alte, per la sua stessa salute, e per quella del mondo. Il senso comune è quello che non arriva a sentire i problemi della storia: il senso comune sta nell'evitare la sproporzione tra l'ampiezza dell'esperienza e l'altezza della problematica, tra la capacità di costruire e la capacità di salire” (27).

Even in this brief portion of the ideologue's speech we notice an emphasis on health and on wellbeing. As the “Maestro” explains, it is good for the individual's health, as well as for that of the world, if the multitudes of the spiritually impure were kept in their place in the classification of the different castes. The equalization of these castes is not good for the world's health, according to the old teacher of the “Gruppo d'Ordine.” Further on in his speech, the “Maestro” also refers to those who belong to the multitudes and who are spiritually inferior, or impure, as being afflicted by a sickness:

“I malati di normalità sono come marionette difettose: recitano coi fili troppo tesi o troppo lenti. Essi si comportano non come se fossero del mondo, ma come se fossero accanto al mondo; accettano la tradizione come un regalo, non una cosa che gli è dovuta, anzi gli appartiene” (33).

The continuous existence of a system that equalizes the different categories of human beings also causes the proliferation of dead civilizations and hinders the growth and the development of societies in which the differentiation of the castes is preserved and each person covers the role dictated by their position in the classification of human beings.

The old teacher explains the process which brings to the multiplying of dead societies:

“Mancando l'unità vivente della persona, manca uno sviluppo della persona lungo la storia, e subentra qualcosa come *una marcia sul posto*. Miliardi di uomini oggi *segnano il passo*. Quando queste persone sono

intere classi, formano le civiltà morte, come oggi quella contadina, al Nord e al Sud, in Italia e in Spagna e nell'Europa dell'Est e in Sudamerica, o come le civiltà tribali africane. Tra queste manifestazioni di civiltà vuote, deserte, ferme, in qualche luogo e in qualche tempo possono balenare forme di civiltà improvvise, potenti anche, e certo significative. [...] Ma anche qui, per mancanza di una spinta autonoma, si ha subito un arresto dello sviluppo" (34).

The imbalance of a person's unity causes the natural progression of a society to come to an end and brings about the multiplying of dead civilizations. We will see further on in our analysis of Camon's novel and its main character, Franco, that the theme of death is quite significant for the progression of the story. What the "Maestro" is essentially saying is that the function of organizations like the "Gruppo d'Ordine" is to stop the death of civilization from occurring. What the "Gruppo d'Ordine" must do is to give the "spinta autonoma" that would allow the desired progression to continue and that would show the individuals who belong the *imitative* category their right position in society. Of course, the old ideologue does not explicitly say to his followers that this "spinta autonoma" can be achieved through the use of political violence, but his words are definitely open to interpretation. The "spinta autonoma" would protect society from its own death and would allow it to continue its existence and progression. In order to prevent death from occurring, the civilization in question must sacrifice a part of itself, or those who are deemed as being spiritually imbalanced, so that it may reinforce itself and continue to progress towards the role assigned to it by Tradition.

As we have mentioned above, death plays a central role in the novel. The element of death is important to understand Franco's psyche and the motivations behind his actions. The leader of the "Gruppo d'Ordine" has internalized the concept of death of a civilization expounded by the "Maestro" and has made it the driving force behind his activities as well as his use of political violence. Just as a civilization would

have to protect itself from its own death, Franco as is trying to escape his own inevitable death by exporting it onto others. The fear of death is the key to Franco's personality and allows us to understand how the concept of the death of a civilization has been internalized by the leader of the "Gruppo d'Ordine." The author allows the reader to peer into Franco's psyche in the fourth chapter of *Occidente*, which is almost entirely devoted to the description and the analysis of the neo-fascist's own preoccupation with existence and death. The reader has already caught a glimpse of Franco's inner demons in the second chapter of the novel, in which some of the character's physical and cognitive disturbances are described. From the many descriptions of Franco we know that the character was affected by a neurosis that makes his muscles spasmodically twitch and causes pain in his chest. We also learn that Franco suffers from insomnia, which is directly related to his fears. In one instance, for example, the author explains, in regards to Franco:

"Da qualche giorno era più eccitato del solito, e poiché soffriva di disturbi notturni – una forma di incapacità di sopportare la notte, di accettarla; doveva ingoiare ogni sera dei confetti, per impedirsi di lottare fino all'alba – credette di vederla male" (51).

The real key to unlock the reason behind Franco's personal anguish is found in the fourth chapter, which is almost entirely devoted to the protagonist's meeting with his psychoanalyst. It is through the session with his therapist that the reader comes to understand the true reasons that lie behind Franco's feelings of anguish and his fear. When asked what the cause of his preoccupations and his fear is, Franco replies: "Io... non accetto la morte" (105). The therapist then probes him for a more detailed answer: "Cioè... non accetta la sua morte o la morte di tutti?" (105). Franco explains that "La morte... di tutti, di me... di mia madre. Non sopporto l'idea del mio corpo morto... io lo

guardo da un lato... dal fianco destro... e non posso resistere” (106). The reader learns that Franco’s biggest fear is death and the very concept of the existence of death and the termination of life; in fact, Franco clarifies that he is afraid “della mia morte. Non posso sopportare – fisicamente, psichicamente- l’idea che esista la morte” (109). Interestingly enough, the author describes Franco’s feeling of dread as a disease comparable to leprosy; just like an infection, the sense of fear slowly started to spread through his whole body as time progressed: “Col passare del tempo, questa paura si era sempre più allargata.: era diventata paura che ogni cosa avesse a che fare col discendere e col precipitare. Con la morte, in qualche modo. Da questa paura, una volta contagiato, non era più guarito: come una lebbra, lo aveva invaso tutto” (102).

The only thing bringing any comfort to Franco was the thought of the death of pharaoh Tutankhamun. The Egyptian king, just as the leader of the “Gruppo d’Ordine,” feared death and was obsessed with finding a remedy against his own passing. Through Franco’s thoughts, the author explains that King Tutankhamun believed that there were two remedies against his death: “Aveva paura della morte. Perciò ha voluto due rimedi contro la morte: la morte degli altri e la propria vita” (103). Camon, always through the inner voice of the leader of the Paduan neo-fascist organization, describes a typical day in the pharaoh’s life, in which the young king would ask to be taken to see the slaves working on his pyramid so that he could observe them dying from the excessive heat and exhaustion. Seeing others die would bring to the young king a sense of relief because, in his view, he was curing and ridding himself of the fear of death by importing it among others. The author describes in great detail how the king

would go every day to see the slaves die and how he would also enjoy seeing the younger and the stronger ones succumb because it would bring him even more relief:

“Ogni mattina si faceva portare in lettiga sul deserto dove costruivano la sua piramide, e qui all’ombra e all’aria, coi piedi nel catino pieno d’acqua, guardava gli schiavi morire a mucchi nel calore, nell’afa e nell’arsura, e con le pupille deboli cercava specialmente gli schiavi giovani, quelli glabri e senza rughe, se li faceva indicare dai ministri, e quando aveva individuato il più giovane di tutti, che doveva vivere più a lungo di tutti, lo seguiva con lo sguardo opaco per intere giornate, e alla sera gli faceva segnare le caviglie con la calce per indovinarlo subito il giorno dopo, e così lo spiava per intere settimane fino al giorno della morte, e si disperava se quello viveva qualche giorno più del previsto. Quando il giovane cadeva, e i suoi compagni passandogli a fianco con le pedate di sabbia lo seppellivano un poco per volta, il faraone contento della morte altrui cioè della propria vita si rilassava, ritirava i piedi dal catino, una schiava inginocchiata glieli asciugava senza toccarli con le mani, lui si rannicchiava nel baldacchino e così appisolato lo riportavano al palazzo facendogli vento. Questo era il primo rimedio contro la morte: importarla tra gli altri” (103).

The second method to immunize himself from death was to export it from oneself. To achieve the second step in the process of immunization against mortality, the young king began to prepare his tomb at the age of eighteen, however, instead of having it arranged as a mortuary chamber, he ordered to have it prepared as a nuptial room. He also requested to have a light, or a lantern, that was to be kept on at all times, so that people entering his tomb would be drawn to the immortal light, as if they were walking towards a celebration of some sort:

“L’altro rimedio era il seguente: esportarla da sé. Per ottenere questo secondo rimedio. Tutankamon cominciò a preparare la propria tomba fin da quando aveva diciotto anni, come se preparasse la stanza nuziale. La volle profonda, al termine di una lunga scala in discesa, dentro una stanza a cono, senza finestre, stabile il catafalco di pietra, fece filare le bende incorruttibili, e prima di morire fece accendere una lampada alimentata in modo che non si spegnesse mai: così egli “discese” ma verso la luce, e quelli che si recano da lui scendono con paura i primi gradini, oscuri e pericolosi, tenendosi per mano, ma alla fine della discesa, non appena scorgono i bagliori della lampada immortale, accelerano il passo, si

sciolgono uno dall'altro e si precipitano verso la luce come verso una festa" (104).

The thought of the immortal light in Tutankhamun's funerary chamber would bring reassurance to Franco and was the only thing that would allow him to fall asleep because it showed him that there was a solution to his fear of death and his search for immortality. Just as the young Egyptian king, Franco sought to immunize himself against death by exporting it onto others and out of himself. By voluntarily causing other people's death, Franco tries to defeat his own death, just as Tutankhamun tried to do during his lifetime. The thought of his natural death becomes more unacceptable as Franco realizes that the world surrounding him is constantly changing and that the only way to relieve his fear of demise is to stop any type of political, social, and anthropological societal transformation. Essentially, behind the cult of violence and of the warrior lays the fear of death and of generational change.

Let us go back to the conversation between the leader of the "Gruppo d'Ordine" and his therapist. After having ascertained that what Franco suffers from is anxiety and fear, the therapist asks the patient which aspect of death he fears. To the therapist's inquiries, Franco replies:

"Ecco, è questo il problema. Io... io non riesco a sopportare di morire... *naturalmente*. La morte *naturale* mi è *intollerabile*. Non riesco a rassegnarmi all'idea della morte... del mio corpo morto... fermo... mentre lì intorno tutti gli altri vivono e si muovono" (111-2).

It is interesting to notice that what Franco fears the most is his actual physical death. In the neo-fascist's words there is a strong emphasis on the actual physical body and on matter, giving importance to the biological aspects of the act of dying. In addition to the revulsion over the image of the deceased body, Franco also clarifies that he fears the death of what the neo-fascists deem immutable: "Bisogna che nulla cambi, di ciò che

noi crediamo immutabile...” (113). The leader of the Paduan neo-fascist cell does not specify what is considered “immutable,” but it is possible that he may be referring to a certain political ideology or to a certain belief system. While talking with the therapist, Franco also gives his opinion on the meaning of revolution, asserting that for him it is found in preventing people from dying definitively: “È ciò che gli altri chiamano reazione... ma è qui che sta la rivoluzione: nell’impedire infine che la gente muoia definitivamente” (113). What needs to be determined is who are the “gente” Franco is referring to; are they the *imitativi* the old teacher talked about at the gathering at the villa? Franco’s statements during his session with the therapist appear to be in direct contrast with each other. On one hand he states that in order to immunize oneself against death, one should export it onto others by making sure that they cease to exist; however, he also states that the end goal of the revolution is to prevent people from dying. What Franco might be implying in these statements is that a part of the social body must die in order for the rest of it to continue existing. He does not provide an answer to this question, but continues to explain his condition to the therapist using another metaphor. He compares his fear of death to the same feeling parents experience, according to Franco, when a child is born. According to the neo-fascist leader, the birth of a child signifies the death of the parents because the son will slowly take their place and will “dethrone” them from a position of authority. He then reverts to using biological terminology to compare human beings to carbon and water: “Gli uomini sono grumi di carbonio e acqua... io studio queste cose” (114). In this statement, we see Franco almost comparing himself to a scientist, or a researcher, studying the elemental composition of the human body. Further on, Franco adds that human beings

are nothing but carbon and water with residues of impurities, or “con qualche residuo di impurità” (114). When asked by the therapist to explain more in depth the meaning of the belief that people are composed of carbon, water, and impurities, Franco clarifies:

“I grumi si disintegrano, alla fine, dopo aver girato a caso per qualche decennio sulla superficie della Terra. Non restano che le impurità... quelle che distinguevano un uomo da un altro [...] È anche possibile, io credo (sì, io lo penso davvero), è possibile sottoporre al microscopio queste impurità, analizzarle e descriverle, senza ricordarsi dei grumi di carbonio e acqua dentro ai quali vagavano per il mondo” (114).

By comparing himself to a scientist, Franco is able to classify people according to their impurities and their elemental composition. The degree of impurity which composes a human being can determine the category to which a person belongs and dictates the position, or role, they hold in society. As Franco specifies in his statement, it is through these impurities that one can distinguish a human being from another. It must also be noted, however, that Franco is aware of the fact that he himself is subjected to these impurities and is composed of the same elements of other human beings. Franco, in fact, also states: “Benché io non creda che l’esistenza di chi osserva queste impurità – egli stesso impuro di mille residui – abbia più senso del granello che si lascia osservare” (114). It is perhaps the impure composition of his being that Franco fears and compares to death. The therapy session ends inconclusively because of Franco’s unwillingness to accept any type of cure and because of his confrontation with the therapist, who challenges the neo-fascist’s view of the world and his reluctance to change. The therapist, in fact, says:

“Tutte le teorie che lei ha espresso sono le barriere con cui vuol proteggersi dal pericolo della guarigione... poiché la guarigione è anche un pericolo, nei casi come il suo. Lei è venuto con il presentimento che una cura comporterebbe la scoperta del male... ma lei ha paura sia della scoperta sia del male” (116).

What the therapist is essentially saying is that Franco is trying to immunize himself from change and healing. The therapist invites Franco to do another session, but the neo-fascist leader refuses the offer, thus continuing to live with his illness and his fear of death. The morning after visiting the therapist, Franco even reflected on the status of his sickness and the fact that the session might have actually helped him to lessen his feeling of fear for death, despite his refusal to accept any cure from the therapist. While being absorbed in his thoughts, Franco noticed that “la malattia regrediva, stamattina era meno acuta del solito, non solo si lasciava dominare ma in qualche modo si rifiutava di prendere il comando, di svilupparsi automaticamente” (119). We will see, however, how Franco’s fear of death and his need to immunize himself against it by exporting it onto others will actually worsen and will bring him to plant a bomb in a public place.

After an entire chapter dedicated to the analysis and exploration of Franco’s mental state, Camon devotes instead the fifth chapter to Miro and the Left-wing subversive group “Potere rivoluzionario.” In this part of the novel, the author tries to outline the strategic platform of the Left-wing group. It is interesting to notice that the Left-wing militants, when discussing which strategy should be adopted by the group, believe that the first stage of the revolution should involve the sons rebelling against their parents. During the session with the therapist, Franco used the metaphor of the children defying the authority of their parents to describe his feeling of dread and his view of the world. The Left-wing militants agree that in order to bring down the bourgeoisie they must target the sons and daughters in order to entice them to rebel against parental authority. Miro asserts that:

“Ma prima bisogna far saltare l’anello debole della borghesia, i suoi figli. Noi dobbiamo cogliere i figli della borghesia nelle scuole, nelle università,

ovunque siano fuori casa, e restituirli alla casa e alla scuola diversi, intrattabili, ostili: il figlio contro il padre, la figlia contro la madre, i genitori senza eredi. Non possiamo togliere alla borghesia il passato. Possiamo toglierle il futuro [...] La disobbedienza dei figli ai padri costa meno della rivoluzione. Cominceremo da qui" (129).

In the first chapter of *Occidente*, Camon gives us a vivid portrayal of the city of Padua during one of the many student protests held during the "Anni di piombo." Camon describes how the members of "Potere rivoluzionario" took over the university of Padua and how this led to a confrontation with the local police and the members of the "Gruppo d'ordine." The part of the chapter in which these events take place is aptly called "Una città in guerra" because Camon is able to give a detailed account of the instances of urban guerilla seen in many Italian cities at the time.

After a brief parenthesis dedicated to Miro and his Left-wing militant group "Potere rivoluzionario," the attention shifts once again on Franco and his attempt to export death from himself onto others. In this chapter, named "La strage," we find Franco reflecting on the recent bombing of a train near Bologna and looking at the photos on the newspaper of the torn bodies of the victims. The author describes Franco as feeling only apathy at the sight of the maimed and slaughtered corpses of the victims: "egli guardava le foto dei morti arrostiti ma non riusciva a provare nulla: come si guarda per terra un sacchetto d'immondizie. La storia ha i suoi avanzi, si buttano via" (163). In the two subchapters "La strage è un dovere" and "Tagliare un lembo casuale d'Europa" we see Franco bringing to completion his objective of exporting death onto others by planting a bomb in front of a kindergarten. As Franco is making preparations for the bombing of the school, we are able to peer into his mind and read the thoughts going through his mind. Once again, the death of others is associated with immortality for those who survive, as Franco's thoughts demonstrate: "Così, in Europa, la morte

degli innocenti [...] era, per i sopravvissuti, non solo una garanzia, ma una prova d'immortalità: si poteva uccidere, dunque si era in grado di esportare la morte" (181).

The death of some would ensure the strengthening of life and the immortality of others, so, in order for society to proceed on the desired path, a part of its population needs to be sacrificed to guarantee the survival of the others. The terrorist act can be interpreted as a sacrifice of part of the weaker part of the population in favor of the stronger part of it. Franco, in fact, also thinks: "essendo un sacrificio ha bisogno solo di materiale vivente" (182). The living material used for the sacrifice in this case will be the children of a kindergarten. The author does not provide any explanations for Franco's choice of using a school as a target, nor can we surmise the reasons from Franco's thoughts.

From the final thoughts of the neo-fascist before the blast we can see that the leader of the "Gruppo d'Ordine" uses the principles of his political doctrine to assess the human and spiritual worth of his targets. As he gets closer to the kindergarten, Franco sees all the children dressed in their school uniforms and labels them as being "imitativi." He also says to himself: "Erano analfabeti. Sì, erano tutti piccoli analfabeti, piccole cose imitative" (188). After evaluating the worth of the children, Franco proceeds to place the bomb in a trash can in front of the kindergarten and then vacates the premises.

Camon's novel ends with Franco walking away from the trash can. The author spares the readers from having them read the description of the blast and the massacre that will soon ensue, but we can only assume that the explosive device will go off and that the kindergarten, as well as the children, will be blown to bits. By blowing up the kindergarten, Franco is defending life by condemning to death another part of life, thus engaging in what Roberto Esposito has identified as a negative form of immunization.

With the bombing of the kindergarten, Franco is introducing into society a pathogen that will cause a reaction: he is inoculating society with the terror and fear pathogen. It is also important to notice that Franco decides to carry out his plan to place a bomb in a public place after witnessing the protests and the rioting caused by the Left-wing organization “Potere Rivoluzionario” in the streets of Padua. Ermanno Conti, in his volume *Gli “anni di piombo” nella letteratura italiana*, also sees a direct correlation between the rioting and Franco’s decision to bomb the school: “La lotta si trasferisce poi dalla città alle fabbriche, con la cronaca dei fatti di Porto Marghera dell’Agosto 1970. Proprio dopo questi fatti e le loro conseguenze, Franco decide di compiere la strage in un asilo d’infanzia” (35). The choice of the target, a kindergarten, is also not casual because it fits in with Franco’s ideology and his view and understanding of the role of the son as of one of an agent of destruction of the natural order of things. By targeting schoolchildren and by choosing the school as his primary target, Franco is trying to reinforce and to strengthen society by negating, or hindering, its natural potential for expansion. With the bombing of the school, Franco is preventing the children, who are also sons and daughters, from replacing their parents and from having them, the parents, face their decadence and their eventual death. It is only through the indiscriminate killing of people, or the so-called *imitativi*, that Franco and the militants of the “Gruppo d’Ordine” can guarantee the survival and the spiritual/biological strengthening of those deemed spiritually superior.

Of course, there are similarities between Miro and Franco, as well as between the doctrines of the two opposing factions. As we have seen previously, Lupis, one of the leaders and ideologues of the “Gruppo d’Ordine,” had even theorized the possibility

of a joint effort with Left-wing militants in order to bring down the system and to bring about its disintegration. The two protagonists of Camon's novel are similar in that they both suffer from psychological disturbances and they both refute the society in which they live in. Regarding the similarity between the two militants, Ermanno Conti asserts:

“Miro e Franco sono dunque simili; anzitutto nella malattia, poiché entrambi sono afflitti da turbe nervosa, da spasmi fisici; entrambi rifiutano la società nella quale vivono e sentono la mancanza di un codice morale che possa dare un senso alla loro vita. L'ideologia e la conseguente violenza diventano quindi un modo per riempire il vuoto lasciato dalla religione e di altri valori “forti” (Miro, fervente attivista cattolico, abbraccia il movimentismo di sinistra subito dopo un alterco con il vescovo locale” (39).

Camon draws comparisons between Left-wing and Right-wing terrorism and sees both phenomena as a new form of mysticism. According to the author, the function of the two ideologies is to fulfill the need of spirituality which is no longer provided by religious institutions which are, in Camon's eyes, in disarray as they no longer wield the power and influence they once had. Camon interprets terrorism and political violence, both perpetrated by the Left and the Right, as a symptom of a system in crisis and as a result of the absence of a spiritual fulfillment which previously had always been provided by religious institutions. The author sees the actions of the terrorists as an attempt to export onto others the emptiness and the feeling of spiritual death they carry inside:

“L'attentato e la strage sono i chiodi che impediscono alla storia di scivolare: non sono le leve della rivoluzione che sbloccano il mondo. Le grandi rivoluzioni sono povere di attentati. Le grandi restaurazioni ne sono pieve. Il terrorismo è estraneo ai regimi della fede collettiva. Appartiene alla fede dei pochi, dei gruppi, delle cellule. Con il terrorismo i gruppi celebrano a un tempo la loro speranza e la loro disperazione, la loro vittoria e la loro fine: perché la morte che esportano è la morte che hanno dentro di sé, i loro atti sterminatori sono esemplari e naturali come il suicidio. Ci si uccide perché si è soli” (183).

Even though there certainly are similarities between the two factions and their ideologies, there are also features which distinguish them from one another. Aside from the different *modus operandi* of the two terrorist groups, the language and terminology adopted by the two opposing parties appear to be quite dissimilar. It may be true that both political groups, which are represented by Franco and Miro, have filled the spiritual emptiness they carry within them with a new form of mysticism based on the cult of violence, but the language and the terminology used to construct their new worldviews are different. The lexicon adopted by the Left-wing group is rooted in the concept of history, and its main subjects are social classes and economic systems. The neo-fascists' view of the world is instead based primarily on the concepts of race and biology. Regarding this notion, Roberto Esposito, in his seminal work *Bíos*, in which he analyzes the biological language adopted by National Socialism, explains that “what before had been a vitalistic metaphor becomes a reality in Nazism, not in the sense that political power passes directly in the hands of biologists, but in the sense that politicians use biological processes as criteria with which to guide their own actions” (113). Even though Esposito's analysis limits itself to National Socialism and, to a lesser degree Communism, the same notion can be applied to the neo-fascist groups of the “anni di piombo,” as well as to the “Gruppo d'Ordine” described in Camon's novel. Franco, the “Maestro,” and Lupis all use biological principles to justify their actions and to validate their view of the world. Even though the racism advocated by the “Maestro,” who was based on Julius Evola, is of the spiritual kind, the language and the lexicon used are deeply rooted in the field of biology because what is at stake is the very essence of the biological and spiritual body of the nation. In order to carry on the therapeutic task which

would physically and spiritually strengthen the body of the nation, the militants of the “Gruppo d’Ordine” became executioners of all those whom they deemed to be harmful to the healing of the nation and whom they believed contributed to the physical and spiritual degeneration of the social body.

With the next novel we will take into consideration, Sergio Castellaneta’s *Ombre*, we are already passed the years of the “strategy of tension” and are now in the Eighties. In the first years of the new decade we see an intensification of politically motivated violence both by Left-wing and Right-wing subversive groups; as a matter of fact, 1980 marks the year with the most victims of terrorist acts. The new decade is also ushered in by the bombing of the Bologna train station, which is considered the biggest massacre in Italian history after World War II. Even though politically motivated violence reached its apex in 1980, the new decade also signaled the beginning of the end for many terrorist organizations in Italy. For many Left-wing terrorist organizations, the death of Guido Rossa, a factory worker who had been killed in 1979 by the Red Brigades for reporting to the authorities subversive activities at his workplace, marked the end of any form of consensus that workers may have had for the activities of Left-wing extra-parliamentary organizations. The collaboration between the ex-terrorist Patrizio Peci and the State also allowed the judicial system to arrest many Left-wing militants and to dismantle many subversive groups. For many Right-wing extremist groups, instead, the bombing of the Bologna station signaled the beginning of the end, as many militants were brought to justice as a result of the massive wave of arrests after the Bologna massacre. It must also be noted that the Eighties brought about a major change in attitudes and political consciousness in Italian society. With the advent

of the new decade, we witness a general renouncement of political engagement in favor of a retreat into the safety and comfort of private life.²⁷

b. Castellaneta's "Ombre" and Terrorism James Bond Style

During the Eighties we see an intensification of the literary production of novels dealing with political violence and we also see the figure of the terrorist becoming the protagonist of many of these literary works. The authors of these novels try to understand and to analyze the motivations and the psychological profile of the political militant; on the other hand they also try to explore the historical and political context in which the phenomenon of politically motivated violence flourished. In many cases, these authors adopted the *giallo* format in order to explore terrorism by framing it within the context of political intrigues and scandals.²⁸ The adoption of the *giallo* genre and the use of the "spy-story" to fictionalize the phenomenon of politically motivated violence was also a precursor of the historical works published at the end of the Eighties and during the Nineties on the phenomenon of terrorism in Italy; many of these historical works, in fact, theorized the presence of internal and international conspiracies behind the major events that characterized the "anni di piombo," such as the Moro assassination and the bombs of the first half of the Seventies.²⁹ Some of the most

²⁷ A clear example of this phenomenon is the so-called "march of the forty-thousand," which took place in Turin in 1980 and was organized by FIAT workers as a protest against the unions, which had been picketing in front of the FIAT factories for more than a month, thus preventing many workers from having access to the workplace. The strike had been planned by the unions to protest against the FIAT's decision to fire many of its workers. The "march of the forty-thousand" resulted in a big defeat for the unions and marked a break between the workers and the syndicalist organizations.

²⁸ It must be noted that some of these works were written and published at the same time that Licio Gelli's Masonic lodge P2 had been discovered.

²⁹ In addition to the crime novels written at the beginning of the Eighties, one work important for the popularization of the historical essay genre was Sergio Flamigni's *La tela del ragno*, published in 1980. In his investigation, Sergio Flamigni theorized the presence of an international conspiracy behind Aldo Moro's kidnapping and subsequent assassination. Flamigni's work will also serve as inspiration for Renzo Martinelli's 2003 movie *Piazza delle Cinque Lune*, which explores the conspiracy theories expounded by

prominent authors of the Eighties who have based some of their works on the phenomenon of political terrorism in Italy and who have tried to fictionalize the events of the “anni di piombo” are Attilio Veraldi, who published the crime novel *Il vomerese* in 1980, Diego Zandel’s 1981 work *Massacro per un presidente*, and Carlo Castellaneta’s *Ombre*, which was published in 1982. Even though all of these novels deserve ample attention, we will focus solely on Castellaneta’s novel due to its relevance to the present study and the ample attention the author devotes to Right-wing terrorism. In a similar fashion to Camon, Castellaneta, in his 1982 novel, tries to explore the psyche of two militants: a Left-wing militant and a member of a Right-wing organization in collusion with the Italian secret services. In reference to the two points of view presented in Castellaneta’s novel, Olga Lombardi, in a review written in 1983, explains:

“[*Ombre*] presenta a capitoli rigorosamente alternati i due volti in apparenza contrastanti dell’eversione rossa e di quella nera: a una prima persona femminile che racconta i sentimenti che accompagnano il suo passaggio da una normale vita borghese di giovane madre alla lotta clandestina nel partito comunista combattente, si alterna una terza persona maschile che costruisce oggettivamente la trama dell’organizzazione terroristica di destra” (406).

The alternation of the chapters devoted to Left-wing and Right-wing terrorism is enriched by the interchange of the narrating voice: the chapters devoted to Left-wing political violence are narrated in first person, with Marina, one of the novel’s two main characters, chronicling her descent into the world of political militancy and her life as a member of a Left-wing subversive group; on the other hand, the chapters dedicated to Right-wing terrorism are narrated in the third person. The life of the other main character, who has ties to Right-wing terrorist organizations and whose name is never

Flamigni in his work. Another important historical essay penned by Sergio Flamigni is *Trame atlantiche: storia della loggia massonica segreta P2*, published in 1996.

mentioned, is instead chronicled in the third person, thus providing the reader with a more ample understanding of the situation of the male character. Both Ermanni Conti and Max Henninger have commented on the peculiarity of the alternation between the two narrating voices. Conti, as a matter of fact, in reference to the difference in narrating voices, states: “Come risulterà evidente nel corso dell’analisi di *Ombre*, ciò avviene perché il personaggio maschile è più consapevole di Marina” (91). Max Henninger shares Ermanno Conti’s opinion about the importance of the Right-wing militant’s life being narrated in the third person: “The very fact that the chapters in which he appears are narrated in the third person suggests his perspective affords a more comprehensive overview of the situation than hers” (613). By narrating the chapters devoted to Right-wing terrorism in the third person, the author gives us a more panoramic view of the inner workings of Right-wing subversive organizations and their collusion with the Italian and international secret services. Castellaneta tries to describe and to map out, using narration as his tool, the functioning of Right-wing terrorism and its chain of command. Castellaneta’s narratological chart of the inner workings of Right-wing terrorism includes different levels: at the top there are the ideologues and the masterminds who provide the strategic platform for Right-wing subversive organizations. The role of ideologues and strategists can be ascribed to politicians and high ranking government officials, such as the “senatore.” At the lower level there are the militants who belong to Right-wing terrorist organization and who try to implement the strategy ideated by the masterminds. Between the upper and the lower levels lies another stratum composed of secret service agents and high ranking military officials who are able to infiltrate Right-

wing subversive organizations in order to implement the strategic plans ideated by the upper level.

Before we proceed to analyze the novel more in depth, we will give a brief overview of the major events that mark the course of the story. The actions narrated by Castellaneta in his 1982 novel take place in the brief period spanning from the end of 1979 to the August of 1980, even though there are references to events that took place in the past, such as the Piazza Fontana bombing. The novel chronicles the lives of Marina, a Left-wing militant, and of another character who remains shrouded in mystery throughout the story. This second character, whose name remains unknown to the readers, has ties to the secret services and to Right-wing terrorist organizations. The unknown protagonist of the novel was also involved in the bombing in Milan in 1969 and is the editor of a newspaper at the time of the events narrated in Castellaneta's novel. Even though the unnamed protagonist is no longer officially in the secret service, he is still in contact with secret agents belonging to various international agencies. The focal point of Castellaneta's novel is the bombing of the Bologna station in 1980, which, according to the official story and the author of this novel, was carried out by Right-wing subversive organizations in order to bring about a political shift in the country. The unnamed Right-wing sympathizer in the past also had a relationship with Nora, a young Jewish girl. At approximately the same time as the bomb at the Bologna station, the nameless protagonist becomes obsessed with his ex-lover and decides to look for her, only to find out that she is now in a relationship with a Left-wing militant. Not being able to rekindle her love for him, the nameless protagonist kills her and tries to make it seem as if her Left-wing boyfriend was actually responsible for her death. After the bombing of

the Bologna station, which failed to bring about an authoritarian state, the unnamed Right-wing sympathizer is able to leave the country thanks to the help of his friend Pollock, a CIA agent, thus eluding the police.

Marina is instead a young single mother who decides to leave her son and her parents to join the Left-wing subversive group "Squadre Proletarie." Marina, during her permanence in the militant Left-wing organization, participates in a bank robbery, an assassination, and in the kidnapping of an important industrialist. Despite her feelings of remorse and her reconsideration of purpose of the armed struggle, Marina is arrested by the police at the end of the book, thus ending her militancy in the "Squadre Proletarie." Interestingly enough, both protagonists find defeat at the end of the novel, as the members of the "Squadre Proletarie" are arrested and the bombing of the Bologna station fails to bring the political change much awaited by Right-wing militants.

The stories of the two protagonists never intersect during the novel and seem to proceed in parallel fashion, as the chapters devoted to each protagonist alternate each other; however, the lives of the two figures never intersect and have no narrative ties to one another. Before we proceed to the analysis of the unnamed character, we will briefly examine Marina's personage and her role in the novel. Castellaneta depicts Marina as a weak character, as she constantly oscillates between being enthusiastic about her political militancy and being disillusioned by it all. Even though Marina decided to join the armed struggle, she does not seem to fully embrace it, as she is unable, throughout the novel, to completely detach from her former self and her previous life. Marina's struggle with her commitment to the armed struggle is evident in her reluctance to completely abandon her son. In order to remain in contact with her

son, Marina even breaks the rules imposed by her comrades by calling her parents, who are now taking care of her child. Marina serves an important purpose in Castellaneta's novel. Through the young Left-wing militant, the author tries to understand and to trace the different pathways taken by many young Italians who decided to join subversive organizations during the "years of lead." Some of examples include Marina, who decided to join the armed struggle as a result of the student protests of the late Sixties, and Marco, who grew up in a very Catholic environment, but who later found true redemption in Communism. Through Marina's words and reflections, Castellaneta also attempts to understand and to portray the sense of isolation and alienation felt by many political militants once they joined a subversive group. In Marina's case, the sense of alienation results in the character feeling as if her identity were fragmented:

"Mi sento sovreccitata, smaniosa di raccontare, di parlare, una voglia come se avessi bevuto qualche bicchiere di troppo, e che invece devo reprimere perché mi sembra indecente, non è la prima volta che ho l'impressione di essere agita da qualcun'altra, che sua un'altra Marina a pronunciare certe parole, e oggi a commettere un atto di cui non mi credevo capace, la suprema constatazione di com'è facile uccidere, troppo facile perché sia vero" (97).

Castellaneta also uses Marina to reflect on the strategical objectives of Left-wing terrorism. The young character, as a matter of fact, is often portrayed reflecting and internally questioning the strategy adopted by many subversive groups. Marina believes that what the terrorists lack is a clear objective and a reachable point of arrival. Additionally, Marina also criticizes her comrades for adopting a strategy that will not bring any long-lasting results. The protagonist, in fact, would like to see her group engaging in actions that would directly benefit the working-class, instead of opting for military targets. Marina believes that focusing on military targets would only heighten the

feeling of fear among the population, whereas, a deeper focus on issues pertaining to the working-class would create a more positive revolution; one that would bring more support from the lower classes. For Marina, the revolution should not carry a message death, but one of support for the lower classes instead.³⁰

We will now move on to the analysis of the other protagonist of Castellaneta's *Ombre*: the unnamed one. As mentioned previously, we do not know the name of Marina's counterpart, but the author gives us enough information to have a clear picture of who the character is. We do know that he is an ex-secret agent who sympathizes with Right-wing subversive organizations and who still has ties with several international secret service agencies. We also know that, despite being married, he has had an extra-marital affair with a young Jewish girl named Nora. His wife has a minimal role in the novel, and the only fact the author discloses about her is that she is accepting of her husband's repeated absences. Regarding his political and ideological beliefs, Castellaneta describes the character as a conservative who is opposed to divorce and abortion and who also sees himself as being morally superior to the masses and everybody he interacts with. Behind the conservative views, however, one finds a man enslaved by his own sexual obsessions and his voyeuristic tendencies. The unnamed one, in fact, harbors a consuming obsession for his ex-lover, Nora. Castellaneta describes his obsession as a shadow that follows him everywhere:

“Detestava dover restare in ozio perché quelle pause lo rendevano più vulnerabile alla sua ossessione, ai sedimenti di un sogno erotico che

³⁰ According to Ermanno Conti, writers like Castellaneta and Luce D'Eramo, who also wrote a novel about political terrorism in Italy, began perceiving the ideological and strategic divisions that began appearing among the different militant groups during the Eighties. Regarding the breakdown of the ideological unity between Left-wing militants, Conti explains: “Anche sulle strategie le opinioni divergono, e in questo Castellaneta, come molti altri scrittori – in particolare Luce D'Eramo – che affrontano il tema del terrorismo, percepisce le divisioni che iniziano a percorrere il mondo dell'eversione di sinistra all'inizio degli anni '80” (93).

accompagnava con le sue ombre l'intera giornata. Agire era il solo antidoto, l'unico rimedio efficace" (124).

As the events in the novel unfold, we also start noticing a correlation between the worsening of his sexual obsession and the deepening of his involvement in a plot to bomb the Bologna station in order to bring about a political change in Italy. The unnamed protagonist eventually begins to associate his sexual obsession with Nora with the need to carry out a highly destructive action:

"Dopo due anni quel vuoto, quell'assenza, quell'immensa mancanza di piacere e la nostalgia sempre più acuta di esso stavano diventando intollerabili, ormai reclamavano un gesto, un intervento" (114).

Castellaneta's protagonist's obsession and sexual perversion place him in direct relation with the protagonist of Camon's *Occidente*. As a matter of fact, both Franco and the unnamed character of *Ombre* share the same neurotic disturbances and both find the roots of their homicidal and destructive tendencies in their inner psychological conflicts, even though such mental instabilities are hidden behind their political beliefs. Franco's homicidal impulses are rooted in his fear of death and of degeneration, whereas the unnamed character's sexual obsessions and perverted sexual fantasies are the source of his belief in violence as a political tool to bring about a change.

The two characters are also similar in other ways: both see themselves as being part of an elite and both believe themselves being morally and spiritually superior compared to the masses. As we have seen previously, Franco classifies people according to their spiritual purity and labels "sub humans" all those individuals who do not fit into his parameters of moral superiority. The mysterious protagonist of Castellaneta's novel often engages in the same thought process, in which he elevates himself above others and compares those who he deems to be inferior to animals or

sub human beings. The protagonist of *Ombre* is often seen glancing from his window at people in the streets and experiencing a feeling of aversion to them, as they are all considered to be morally and spiritually inferior to him and other individuals who share his political and ideological convictions. One of the first times the reader comes into contact with the unnamed character is precisely when he is looking outside a window and he is looking at the pullulating streets below his apartment:

“Mentre aspettava lo squillo del telefono si alzò e andò alla finestra. A quell’ora della mattina via Torino è un carosello frenetico. Lo aveva sempre colpito lo spettacolo della gente in giro per acquisti, e insieme indignato quella continua disponibilità di denaro. Quando aveva aperto l’Agenzia, poco distante dalla sede attuale, gli uffici guardavano l’interno della Galleria, e la sua finestra inquadrava l’Ottagono, di modo che egli poteva vedere, stando in poltrona come da un osservatorio i passanti di sotto fermi alle vetrine e i turisti seduti ai caffè, una folla di ozioni che parevano non avere altre ambizioni e nessun altro progetto che dipendere. “Ma cosa diavolo comprano?” ripeté anche questa volta tra sé, la fronte appoggiata ai vetri” (28).

This reaction, or aversion, to the crowd is also visible in D’Annunzio’s *Le vergini delle rocce*, in which the aristocrat Claudio Cantelmo, while gazing out of his window, has a negative response to the sight of the masses populating the streets of Rome. A very similar scene is also present in Ardengo Soffici’s picaresque novel *Lemmonio Boreo*, in which the protagonist, Ermanno, shows a feeling of strong aversion as he looks at the city of Florence from the hill on which he is standing and thinks of the city streets filled with people.

We see the character engaging in the same behavior once again in the first chapters of Castellaneta’s novel. Even in this instance, the unnamed one categorizes people according their moral worth and according to their role in society. According to the thought process of the protagonist, the only way to rid the country of those deemed morally inferior is to sacrifice a part of society so that it can regenerate itself in a

healthier way. In this particular scene, the unnamed character is observing the other people who are on the train with him. As he sees the people who surround him, the protagonist has a negative reaction to their presence and allows the reader to have a glimpse of his inner thoughts and his worldview:

“Il pubblico raffinato che fino agli Anni Cinquanta frequentava i *wagons-restaurant* aveva lasciato il posto a una specie mista di funzionari di Stato, contadini inurbati, artigiani arricchiti, avidi fotomodelle favorite dalla nota spese, manager che si ingozzavano a piè di lista, orgogliosi tutti della propria volgarità, incapaci di fingere la minima indifferenza per il cibo, anzi entusiasti, quasi che non fosse mai capitato loro di rimpinzarsi a quel modo. Un simile spettacolo lo induceva alle conclusioni più torve: che davvero il Paese, per risorgere, per rigenerarsi, dovesse prima sprofondare nel caso, o meglio in un bagno di sangue purificatore” (35).

In this particular instance, what the unnamed protagonist is not so much concerned with the immunity as he is with the sacrificial balance and equilibrium of society. In reference to the concept of sacrificial balance, Esposito, referring to Nietzsche's position on biopower and biopotentiality, explains: “What is undoubtedly in question is this sacrificial balance, in which one level must drop down so that another can rise up, isn't only power, prestige, or work, but life itself [...] Not only is life to be protected from the contagion of death, but death is to be made the mechanism for life's contrastive reproduction” (98). What this means, as concerns the protagonist's views and opinions, is that death can be the only, or the principal, mechanism through which society can be regenerated. In order for life to sustain itself, it needs to sacrifice a part of its living matter, the degenerate part, so that the healthy part, or the one deemed to be worthy of life, can strengthen itself and continue its existence. In other words, life is set against life, or, as Esposito clarifies “the life of one against the non-life of others” (98).

In the same chapter in which the “protagonist without a name” illustrates, in his mind, his belief in the need of a sacrificial act in order to save the social body from its degeneration and eventual death, the character also gives the reader his opinion on the “strategy of tension,” to which he had given his contribution in previous years:

“L’unico risultato certo, di quella strategia che la stampa di sinistra aveva denominato ‘della tensione,’ era il progressive consolidamento elettorale, provocato dalla paura, a favore del partito dominante. Risultato che egli stesso, in passato, aveva cautamente condiviso; ma che ora, dilagando gli abusi e l’impotenza dei governanti, sentiva di nuovo estraneo alle sue convinzioni come al suo carattere” (36).

The protagonist feels that the so-called “strategy of tension” has failed to bring about the change it was designed to establish, thus making of vital importance the need for a new reactionary agent. The unnamed character also gives us his own metaphorical interpretation of the years of the “strategy of tension.” This brings us to the most important part of the novel, for the purpose of this research. In his reading of the events that characterized the years of the *strategia della tensione* of the first half of the Seventies, the protagonist uses biological terminology to describe the purpose of such strategy and uses the metaphor of the body being inoculated with a foreign pathogen as a representation of those years. Let us now look at the unnamed character’s interpretation of the “strategy of tension” and let us pay particular attention to the terms he uses:

“La verità era che, per puro calcolo elettorale, si erano lasciati crescere questi gruppi, quando schiacciarli sarebbe stato facilissimo, fino al punto che ora non era più possibile controllarli, come se nell’organismo del Paese – era un’immagine che gli tornava spesso alla mente – fosse stato inoculato il germe di una infezione che ora sfuggiva alle reazioni dei farmaci, distruggendo i tessuti senza provocare il collasso definitivo. Era un trattamento iniziato dieci anni prima con l’esperimento alla banca di Piazza Fontana e poi portato avanti cambiando di volta in volta i reagenti chimici, sostenendo ora questa ora quella fazione, con o senza la

benedizione dei governanti, premendo o lasciando il pedale della paura a seconda degli eventi politici e delle convenienze, ma sempre con quell'unico obiettivo: fermare il caso provocato dalle ideologie e restaurare l'ordine" (46).

In the protagonist's interpretation of the "strategy of tension" the nation becomes a human body where subversive political organizations are a germ, an infection inoculated into its system in order to create a specific reaction. The nation becomes an agglomerate of living tissue that throughout the years has been subjected to different chemical treatments; different pharmaceutical cures have been tested. The bombing in Piazza Fontana becomes the first of a series of experiments, each one characterized by a different combination of chemicals and pharmaceutical applications. In the unnamed protagonist's reflections, the body of the Italian state becomes the object of medical experiments. The ultimate goal of these experimentations was to stop the proliferation of ideologies that were deemed unhealthy for the survival of the survival of the Italian social body. The only way to stop the spreading of these currents of thought was to restore the order and impede the natural dispersion of these ideologies. In both Lupis' speech, to which Franco is also present, and the unnamed character's interpretation of the "strategy of tension" we see an emphasis on pharmaceuticals. In Lupis' discourse, the neo-fascists are the antibiotic that will cure the social body of the Italian nation, whereas in *Ombre's* protagonist, Right-wing organizations are seen as different types of medications, each one having a different effect. The terrorist act advocated by Lupis in *Occidente* was supposed to be one of the many pharmaceutical applications administered to the social body of the Italian nation. The dosage of the type of medication suggested by Lupis was supposed to cause the correct sort of reaction within the body of the nation; this reaction, according to Lupis and the other members of

the “Gruppo d’ordine,” should have resulted in a political change in Italy and in the establishment of a new kind of order. The sought-after reaction never occurred, as the protagonist of Castellaneta’s *Ombre* interprets the “strategy of tension” and the terrorist actions carried out by Right-wing subversive organizations during the Seventies as failed experiments. The unnamed character now sees the need for a new medical treatment; one, perhaps, with a higher dosage. As we continue our analysis of Castellaneta’s novel, we will see what kind of treatment the protagonist of *Ombre* has in mind.

The answer to which kind of treatment must be used to cure the body of the Italian nation is given by Pollock, an American secret agent who is collaborating with the Italian secret services. The American secret agent, who is also the protagonist’s friend, theorizes that the right medication would involve the use of a bomb to create a reaction among the population. As a matter of fact, after giving an assessment on the futility of the strategy of the “opposti estremisti” adopted in the past, the secret agent advocates for an action with bigger destructive potential, so that the people would more accepting of a political change in Italy. He states, in fact, that “L’esplosione di una bomba, invece, colpiva l’immaginazione per la sua ottusa ferocia, reclamava un’immediata ritorsione, l’urgenza di una mano forte, un intervento autoritario che rispondesse alla violenza con una violenza maggiore e definitiva” (76). Interestingly enough, as Pollock, the unnamed protagonist, and members of Right-wing subversive groups, sought to target the general population because they believed that power resided in it, the members of the Left-wing group instead believed that a change could be brought about by focusing on a specific target, one that would symbolize the State. In one of her many reflections, Marina

analyzes the strategy adopted by her own group, as well as the one embraced by other Left-wing organizations, and states that “gli anarchici miravano al cuore di un sovrano, noi a un servo dello Stato, così spari contro un simbolo, contro un Sistema che si perpetua, per rompere il cerchio, per uscire dalla trappola, per cercare un’altra forma di giustizia, e perché succeda finalmente qualcosa” (106).

In the third part of Castellaneta’s novel, precisely in the forty-fourth chapter, we see, once again, the metaphorizing of the “strategy of tension” and of terrorism in biological terms. When the author allows us to peer inside the thoughts of the unnamed character, we see him comparing the nation to a human body and comparing terrorism to a phenomenon affects the skin of the body of the nation: “Qualunque attentato, qualunque rapimento, qualunque omicidio politico, anche se ripetuti all’infinito, ormai era chiaro che producevano consuetudine, adattamento, niente di più che un prurito, una specie di eczema che il corpo sociale si stava abituando a sopportare, come la peste nei secoli passati” (224). Terrorism, up until then, had only been able to create a reaction at the cutaneous level of the body of the nation, but the current state of affairs, according to the unnamed character, required an action that would cause a greater reaction. This attack, instead of targeting the surface of the social body, would instead aim at one of the vital organs of the nation, just as Lupis stated in Camon’s novel *Occidente*.

The metaphor of the body of the nation being inoculated with a foreign pathogen that would then cause a reaction appears once again in the forty-sixth chapter of Castellaneta’s novel. The unnamed protagonist is laying in his bed and, as he is waiting for the news of the much awaited terrorist act that would cause the reaction needed to

bring about a political change in the country, he reflects, once again, on the “strategy of tension” and its effectiveness. As we look through his thoughts, we see that the protagonist without a name uses, once again, biological terminology to interpret and to justify the massacre that will soon ensue at the Bologna train station. As he impatiently awaits the news of the bombing, the neo-fascist sympathizer thinks: “Ma questo giorno poteva essere affrettato, su tutti i fronti era venuta l’ora dell’azione, l’infezione inoculata reclamava il suo effetto, il pollice che preme sulla siringa, lentamente ma senza remissione, il marcio che si propaga in quei tessuti già in disfacimento, una coltura di batteri iniettata per anni con pazienza si spande, fino a invocare il colpo di bisturi risolutore [...] Che diavolo aspettano a premere il bottone?” (238). The bomb at the Bologna station would be the much awaited reactions that would result in the “colpo di bisturi risolutore.” The years of repeated inoculation of bacteria in the body of the nation now required an action that would finally remove the bacteria causing “il marcio che si propaga in quei tessuti già in disfacimento.” Once the body reacts to the inoculation of these bacteria by destroying them, the “tessuti già in disfacimento” can be regenerated and the social body can strengthen itself. The surgeon’s knife become the button that the unnamed protagonist so eagerly awaits to be pressed, so that the Bologna train station can be blown to bits and the desired political change can occur.

In addition to the two biological metaphors we have already analyzed, the plot of Castellana’s novel also presents another sort of allegory representing the “strategy of tension.” As mentioned previously, the character without a name had had a relationship with a young Jewish girl, Nora. After the end of their relationship, the unnamed protagonist became obsessed with her and, throughout the novel, he is often depicted

thinking about her. While in Venice for one of his business trips, he recognizes Nora walking down the street and decides to pursue her and to discover where she lives. After finding her domicile, the protagonist without a name knocks on her door and makes his presence known to her. Nora refuses him and threatens to call her boyfriend, a Left-wing militant, if her ex-lover does not leave. In hearing that Nora is now in love with a Left-wing militant, the unnamed character decides to strangle her and to kill her. He flees Venice while the body of Nora is left lifeless in her apartment. As the ex-secret agent is riding a train on his way out of Venice, he reads the newspaper and sees a short blurb about Nora's death and how her Left-wing militant boyfriend is suspected of killing her. These events can be interpreted as a metaphor of the "strategy of tension" because, just as the neo-fascist groups of the late Sixties and early Seventies were placing bombs around the country in hopes of forcing the population and the State to react against the Left-wing, so does the unnamed protagonist tries to shift the blame onto Nora's Communist boyfriend. Of course, the protagonist without a name was not planning on killing her, but the outcome, with the Left-wing boyfriend being blamed for the murder, is very similar to the one neo-fascists hoped for during the years of the "strategy of tension;" the Right-wing militants of the early Seventies wanted to commit the murder, but were hoping that the blame would fall on Left-wing militants, thus causing a backlash against Left-wing political organizations.

The final pages of the novel see both Left-wing and Right-wing militants being defeated. The members of the "Squadre Proletarie" are all arrested, including Marina, whereas the bomb at the Bologna train station fails to bring about a political change, as Olga Lombardi, in her review of Castellaneta's novel, explains: "La colonna rossa è allo

sbaraglio; la strage alla stazione di Bologna [...] non ha sortito l'effetto di provocare lo Stato ad intervenire con mezzi antidemocratici, cioè con quell'golpe militare che da Piazza Fontana in poi la destra aveva tentato di rendere inevitabile" (406-7).

Chapter 3

. *Io, l'uomo nero*: Memoir of a Neo-fascist Terrorist.

a. Terrorist Autobiographies.

A parallel phenomenon to the vast production of fictional works centered on the “years of lead” has been the publication of memoirs authored by ex-terrorists. With the drastic decrease of instances of politically motivated violence during the first half of the Eighties, many militants who had been members of subversive groups and who were now serving jail sentences decided to pick up the pen and to put into writing their experiences during the “years of lead.” The majority of these memoirs have been penned by ex-members of Left-wing subversive groups, who started this trend in the Eighties in 1981 with the publication of *Memorie dalla clandestinità. Un terrorista non pentito si racconta* written by an anonymous author who is only known by the name Giorgio. The past fifteen years have also seen the publication of several memoirs authored by ex-militants of Right-wing extra-parliamentary groups. Some of these memoirs include Nicola Cospito’s 2007 *Poco più di una storia personale*, and Pierluigi Concutelli’s *Io, l'uomo nero. Una vita tra politica, violenza e galera*, published in 2008 and cowritten with Giuseppe Ardica. Other interesting sources for testimonies by Right-wing militants are Anna Cento-Bull’s volume *Italian Neo-Fascism: The Strategy of Tension and the Politics of Non-Reconciliation*, which includes numerous first person accounts by some of the authors of politically motivated violence perpetrated by

members of Right-wing subversive groups, and Alessandro Preiser's *Avene selvatiche*, which instead provides an example of a fictionalized personal account. We will take into account some of these memoirs and we will analyze them in order to identify any parallels and differences with memoirs written by Left-wing militants. The reason why we are going to examine only a few of the memoirs written by Right-wing militants is because some of them, such as Cospito's work, were meant to be political manifestos, even though they do include personal accounts and experiences of the "years of lead." For this reason we will focus primarily on Concutelli's autobiography and the interviews included in Anna Cento-Bull's volume. Even though the accounts taken in consideration do not include any of the medical and immunological terminology examined and highlighted in previous chapters, it is still important to analyze these works inasmuch as it provides us with a better understanding of the process of transformation that many militants, both Left-wing and Right-wing, went through during the years of the *opposti estremismi*. Thus, in this chapter, we will favor a narratological analysis over a biopolitical one and we will see, through these autobiographies, how both Left-wing and Right-wing militants went through the same process of radicalization and how their memoirs include the same themes and motifs.

Before we can proceed with the analysis of these memoirs, it is necessary for us to identify the different categories to which these works belong. Scholars, such as Giuliano Tabacco, in his volume *Libri di piombo*, have categorized these memoirs according to whether they were other-directed, or whether they were written autonomously by ex-militants. The first category includes works that are not autobiographies per se, but are the result of interviews done by a third party with the

purpose of conducting historico-cultural research on the subject of politically motivated violence. Works with a strong autobiographical input that are presented to readers as fictional works, instead, belong to the second category.³¹ These categories have been determined according to the status of the authors and their intentions behind the production of such works, as well as according to the degree of fictionality present within each autobiography.

When speaking of the autobiographical genre, one must distinguish between different types of memorialistic literature. There is, in fact, the more conventional type of autobiography, in which the memorialist takes full responsibility for the whole writing process and is not subjected to any influence by a third party. Another form of autobiography, instead, is incited by an interviewer, such as a journalist or a scholar, who then elaborates the answers given to him, or her, and uses them to compose a text which is essentially a non-genuine autobiography. This type of memorialistic work can be considered non-genuine because the interviewer is essentially only interested in highlighting the aspects which he or she is researching. By focusing only on certain

³¹ The first attempt at categorizing and examining memoirs penned by members of extra-parliamentary groups was made by David Moss in his article published in 1990 on the scholarly journal *L'Indice*. Moss, in his article, noted that there had been an increase in publications of biographies of ex-militants of the armed struggle, but that there had never been an attempt at trying to classify and analyze these works. In response to the absence of an analytical framework that would aid in understanding and examining these works, the author of the article provided an initial categorization of these memoirs. Moss explains: "Fino alla fine del primo decennio di lotta armata le spiegazioni della violenza erano necessariamente esterne, data la scarsità di versioni interne che non fossero meramente propagandistiche. [...] In una seconda fase, dal 1980 in poi, sono apparsi i racconti degli ex-partecipanti, volti soprattutto ad una comprensione del loro passato e del modo in cui erano arrivati ad essere le persone che erano – militanti prima, nemici poi della lotta armata. Queste versioni, scevre inizialmente di auto-interpretazioni elaborate, furono date in primis ai giudici e confermate nelle aule giudiziarie. In seguito sono state elaborate in contesti molto diversi. La circolazione di *Contro le regole di questo assurdo gioco* nel 1982 inaugurò la serie di confessioni in pubblico che passa attraverso lo scritto di Peci e le interviste di Peci [...] e molti altri alla televisione, alla radio e ai vari giornali. Con i libri di Franceschini e Fenzi, e le testimonianze curate da Tranfaglia [...] Bussu [...] e l'Istituto Cattaneo [...], la raccolta e la diffusione di versioni interne sta registrando una notevole crescita in coincidenza con la fine [...] della lettura giudiziaria degli anni di piombo. In una terza fase, dopo il 1985, sono comparsi racconti o resoconti di discussioni costruiti insieme da ex-militanti e da persone che, direttamente o indirettamente colpite, erano motivate dall'intenzione esplicita di trovare un sollievo (14).

aspects of a person's life, the interviewer does not provide the reader with a holistic view, but rather with an understanding and an acknowledgement of the existence of certain patterns within a subject's life. Usually, these types of memoirs are solicited by an interviewer for scientific and anthropological purposes, and, as Raimondo Catanzaro explains in his volume *Ideologie, movimenti, terrorismi*, they are used to "individuare una base antropologica degli atteggiamenti dei terroristi, o colmare una lacuna costituita essenzialmente dalla mancanza di una elaborazione di memoria collettiva" (13).

According to Fabio Gambaro's 1997 article "Le loro prigionie," in which the author provides a list of these autobiographies, the ex-militants' memoirs also serve another purpose. Gambaro, in fact, asserts that these works try to stimulate "un certo immaginario del ribellismo giovanile" (119) in which the terrorists "assumono i contorni quasi romantici dei rivoluzionari idealisti" (119).

Some of the most famous autobiographical interviews are Renato Curcio's *A viso aperto*, published in 1993, and Mario Moretti's *Brigate rosse: una storia italiana*, which was published in 1994 in collaboration with Rossana Rossanda and Carlo Mosca. These two works stand out among other types of biographical memoirs because they are based on single, long interviews done with the two leaders of the Red Brigades, whereas other biographical works constructed in an interview format, such as Ida Faré's and Franca Spirito's *Mara e le altre* (1979) and Giorgio Bocca's *Noi terroristi* (1985), include a vast array of interviews conducted with different ex-militants of Left-wing subversive groups.

Another variable of the interview-based work is what Giuliano Tabacco, in *Libri di piombo*, calls "eterobiografia in prima persona," in which the interviewer not only

becomes the curator of the volume, but also becomes the coauthor of a literary work that is no longer an interview. The interviewee, instead, becomes the author of his or her own biography, which is no longer in interview format, but starts to acquire the characteristics of a work in prose. Some of the most important *eterobiografie in prima persona*, in which the transformation from interview format to prose is visible, are *Io, l'infame*, written by Patrizio Peci, the first member of the Red Brigades to start collaborating with the justice department, in collaboration with Bruno Giordano Guerri, and *Mara Renato ed io*, written by Alberto Franceschini, one of the founders of the Red Brigades, with the assistance of two journalists, Pier Vittorio Buffa and Franco Giustolisi. Another biographical work that would fall under the category of the *eterobiografie in prima persona* is Anna Laura Braghetti's *Il prigioniero*, written with Paola Tavella and published in 1998, in which the ex-militant of the Red Brigades recounts her experience as a member of the terrorist cell responsible for Aldo Moro's kidnapping and subsequent assassination.

Franceschini's autobiography is particularly interesting among other memorialistic literary works authored by ex-militants of Left-wing subversive groups because it includes a series of motifs that are present in many autobiographical works penned by ex-terrorists. Giuliano Tabacco, in his volume *Libri di piombo*, identified these motifs as "il motivo delle armi; il motivo del gioco; il motivo del tradimento" (74). All autobiographies written by militants of extra-parliamentary Left-wing groups include some of these motifs, if not all, but we will focus primarily on Franceschini's work *Mara, Renato e io* because it includes examples of all these motifs.

The “weapon motif” represents, for Franceschini, the reason why he embraced the armed struggle and became one of the founding members of the Red Brigades. As a matter of fact, his autobiography begins with a rite of passage in which an old partisan gives his weapon to a young Franceschini, who, at the time, already had revolutionary aspirations. The rite of passage of the weapon represents, for Franceschini, a transfer of the ideals of the Resistance from the old partisan to himself, thus constituting a highly symbolic point in his life, as Franceschini explains: “Non fu solo una consegna d’armi: mi stava affidando i suoi ideali, la sua giovinezza e la sua forza che non c’era più” (4). Franceschini started using the weapon he received from the partisan once he formed the Red Brigades and began his political militancy. For Franceschini, the gun not only represents an object symbolizing the continuation of the struggle of the Resistance, but also an extension of his own body. The founder of the Red Brigades, in fact, learned from another partisan that the weapon should represent more than a mere object to the gun carrier; the gun should be seen as an extension of one’s own body, as Franceschini explains in his memoir: “Sergio ci spiegava in continuazione che l’arma è un prolungamento del braccio del corpo” (11).³²

³² The concept of the weapon as an extension of one’s body is also visible in other memoir penned by ex-terrorists. In Enrico Fenzi’s 1987 work *Armi e bagagli. Un diario delle Brigate rosse*, the weapon is seen as an extension of the author’s body, but it also acquires a different meaning that in Franceschini’s autobiography. For Enrico Fenzi, who joined the Red Brigades in 1979, the weapon is a symbol representing his exclusion from society: “Con il gomito destro sfioro ogni tanto l’impugnatura della pistola [...] Ma è come toccare un bubbone: la peste, il colere [...] La si deve portare non tanto per difesa, credo [...], ma piuttosto per sentirsi in ogni momento, e specialmente in mezzo agli altri, diversi” (6). For Morucci, instead, the weapon does not appear to have any symbolic connotation. In Morucci’s 1999 autobiography *Ritratto di un terrorista da giovane*, the weapon only acquires meaning for its aesthetic valence, as the following example demonstrates: “il respiro mi si blocca: in bella mostra sul balcone c’è un fucile mitragliatore nero, lungo lungo, poggiato sul suo cavalletto” (42). In another instance the author even fantasizes about his weapon and how he could use it: “sognavo di tirarlo fuori da una macchina col tettuccio, per piazzarlo sul cavalletto e terrorizzare le pattuglie della polizia durante un inseguimento” (73).

As mentioned above, another important theme present in the founder of the Red Brigades' autobiography is the "game motif," or "adventure motif." In Franceschini's memoir there are different instances in which this motif is visible, such as when he burns his identity document before becoming a fugitive, thus canceling any relationship with the outside world, and when he compares doing a bank robbery to performing on a stage. Regarding the burning of his identity card, Franceschini explains that "Quando bruciai la mia carta di identità mi sentii un uomo libero. Potevo essere e diventare quello che volevo: ingegnere, avvocato, operaio" (14). By destroying his document, Franceschini is able to play an identity game which allows him to escape the parameters established by a more schematic type of lifestyle, as he explains in his memoir when referring to his education in engineering at the University of Bologna: "Immaginavo la mia vita come una galera. Matrimonio, moglie, figli, tutto previsto e organizzato" (15). According to Alessandro Orsini, in his 2011 volume *Anatomy of the Red Brigades*, the action of shedding one's identity can be interpreted as an initiation rite through which terrorists "acknowledge they are *new* people who no longer have a past" (87). Now that Franceschini had shed his real identity, the founder of the Red Brigades had to reinvent himself as something else and had to adopt a new role: that of a political militant dedicated to carrying on the struggle and the ideals of the Resistance. Interestingly enough, Franceschini compares the adoption of his new role to playing a part and learning how to impersonate someone else, as if he were an actor getting ready to perform on stage. When describing his experience in robbing a bank, Franceschini explains: "Si sarebbero potute fare le rapine a mani nude, perché in realtà non si faceva altro che eseguire una trama in cui l'arma non era che un simbolo

secondario, quello che contava era la parola, la frase *Mani in alto, questa è una rapina* recitata col tono giusto, con un'espressione adeguata al viso" (49). Franceschini also explains how he would prepare himself for these bank robberies, which were used to finance the group's activities: "Avevo passato quindici giorni a far le prove davanti allo specchio, pistola in pugno. [...] Avevo cercato di ascoltare la mia voce, di trovare il tono giusto, quello più convincente" (50). Even in this instance, the founder of the Red Brigades rehearsed his lines, as if he were part of some sort of role-play. The role-playing game, or the feeling of playing a part in a play, will continue even after Franceschini and Renato Curcio's arrest. In fact, the author of the memoir, in reminiscing about his first trial, explains how, in that occasion, he and Renato Curcio had to demonstrate of being the leaders of the Red Brigades by acting out the part of the leaders: "Entrammo in aula sorridendo e ci era piaciuta [...] quella gran confusione intorno a noi. Rispondevamo alle domande che i cronisti ci facevano attraverso le sbarre con slogan e battute: eravamo i capi e dovevamo comportarci come tali" (151-2).

The emphasis on the "game motif" is also present in other instances described in Franceschini's memoir. One episode involves Valerio Morucci, another prominent figure of the Red Brigades. In this specific episode, which takes place in 1972, Valerio Morucci, who at the time was a member of a Roman cell of Potere Operaio, another Left-wing extra-parliamentary organization, contacted Franceschini to propose a possible collaboration between the Red Brigades, which were based in Milan, and Potere Operaio. The author explains that he and his comrades had to carefully choose the location where the meeting with Morucci, who was coming from Rome, would take place. The *brigatisti*, in fact, decided to set the meeting in a place that would help in

giving the Red Brigades a specific image of themselves in the eyes of Morucci.

Franceschini and his comrades decided to have the meeting in front of the Breda factory in order to boost the organization's working class credentials, as Franceschini explains: "Un posto comodo per chi veniva dall'autostrada ma che sceglieremmo anche perché volevamo dare a lui, studente romano, l'immagine delle Br operaie. Volevamo essere chiari, dirgli che al Nord non è come a Roma, non giocavamo a fare la guerra" (168). In reference to the same meeting, Franceschini also describes the members of Potere Operaio, such as Morucci, as being "mezzi aristocratici che volevano giocare alla rivoluzione" (169). This ludic aspect of the Red Brigades, however, will also be an important factor in the demise of the organization, as Franceschini explains in reference to a police roundup which brought to the arrest of 30 *brigatisti* in 1972: "La nostra ansia di coinvolgere sempre nuovi compagni, essere clandestini e rivoluzionari quasi per gioco era l'origine di quella sconfitta" (66).

One last prominent theme present in memoirs written by ex-militants of Left-wing subversive organizations is the "betrayal motif," which can also be connected to the abovementioned "weapon motif." The word *tradire*, "betrayal" in Italian, in fact, appears several times throughout Franceschini's memoir, as if to emphasise the militant's obsession with the importance and meaning of his unspoken pact with the old partisan who gave him his weapon. This motif appears early in Franceschini's life, as he states at the beginning of his memoir: "Ripensai al vecchio partigiano, alle sue parole, non potevo *tradirlo*" (13); however, it seems to accompany and to haunt the author throughout his militancy in the Red Brigades and, as mentioned previously, conditioned his decision to join the armed struggle. The author explains that, in his youth, his father

wanted him to become an engineer so that he wouldn't have had to work in a factory. Franceschini, however, hated engineers for their structured life, but also, as he explains, because, by becoming an engineer, he would have betrayed the working class and the ideals of the revolution: "sarebbe stato anche un tradimento diventare ingegnere, avrei lavorato contro gli operai tradendo anche mio padre" (15). During his militancy in the Red Brigades and his subsequent detention, Franceschini had been tempted several times by the thought of abandoning the armed struggle and betraying the revolution. In one instance, for example, when the four founders of the Red Brigades had to hide for a period of time in a farmhouse and had to define a new strategy to adopt after a wave of arrests had crippled the organization's potential, Franceschini explains how the thought of abandoning the armed struggle was an option that they four militants had taken into consideration, but, at the same time, betraying the other members of the Red Brigades and giving up on the revolutionary dream was not a viable option. Franceschini, in fact, explains that one recurring thought haunting the *brigatisti* during the temporary self-imposed withdrawal from the political scene was: "Abbandonare a se stessi i compagni che fino a quel momento avevano creduto in noi?" (67). The four militants, as history tells us, never opted for the option of abandoning the armed struggle and their comrades, but were confronted with the temptation of betrayal on several other occasions. On another occasion, after the Red Brigades kidnapped Ettore Amerio, who at the time held an important role at Fiat's Mirafiori plant, some officials belonging to the Italian Communist Party decided to make an offer to the *brigatisti*, which would have involved giving them special treatment in exchange for their collaboration with authorities and the release of the prisoner. Franceschini, once again, felt tempted to

accept the offer, thus betraying his comrades, but the thought of the stigma attached to being labeled as a traitor prevented him from collaborating with the authorities, as the author explicates: “accettare sarebbe stato ammettere di aver sbagliato, di essere stati sconfitti dalla realtà. [...] Né potevo abbandonare Mara, Renato, i compagni: mi sarei sentito un traditore” (84).

Interestingly enough, it was betrayal that brought about the demise of the so-called *nucleo storico* of the Red Brigades. It was in 1974 that the founders of the Left-wing extra-parliamentary group were arrested as a result of Silvano Girotto's collaboration with the *carabinieri*. Silvano Girotto, also known as *frate mitra*, had been able to infiltrate the Red Brigades thanks to his past as a revolutionary in South America. In Franceschini's memoir, his arrest and Girotto's betrayal signal the beginning of the second part of his autobiography, which chronicles his life while incarcerated in Italy's top penitentiaries. In the second part of his memoir the “betrayal motif” is ever-present, and is visible in numerous instances. Franceschini's life in jail was characterized by encounters with many *traditori* who had decided to collaborate with authorities, thus contributing to the demise of the Red Brigades. The author's contempt for traitors had also led him into believing that some of his closest comrades, such as Renato Curcio, might have been guilty of collaborating with the justice department and providing the names of other people involved with the Red Brigades.

Another theme that can be tied back to the “game motif” is that of emulation, or imitation. In Franceschini's memoir, as well as in other ex-terrorists' autobiographies, there are often models, either real or fictional, that the terrorists try to emulate. In *Mara, Renato e io* there are several instances in which the author makes references to certain

models the *brigatisti* were trying to emulate and certain cinematic scenes they would try to imitate. One of the biggest sources of inspiration, and emulation, for the Red Brigades were the Tupamaros, an Uruguayan urban guerrilla organization active in the Sixties and the Seventies. The Red Brigades modeled their armed propaganda after that of the Tupamaros movement, which was responsible for political kidnappings and assassinations, as well as bank robberies to support their activities. Regarding the influence of the Uruguayan guerrilla organization, Franceschini explains that in every action committed by the Red Brigades, the *brigatisti* would make reference to the Tupamaros and, in trying to solve certain strategical issues, they would say to each other: “i tupamaros facevano così” (10). Every subversive action perpetrated by the Red Brigades was modeled after those of the Tupamaros, as Franceschini explains in one of his accounts: “Come fare un esproprio? [...] [i tupamaros] andavano, la notte, a casa del direttore, lo sequestravano, si facevano aprire la banca e si portavano via tutto il denaro” (47). We can see from these few examples, how the theme of emulation is connected to the “game motif.” Even in these instances, the author gives us the impression that imitation and, in a way acting, were an important element in defining who the Red Brigades were and how they perceived themselves.

This emulation can also be based on fictional characters taken from filmic productions and literary works. Whereas the Tupamaros represented a real-life model, the *brigatisti* often drew inspiration also from certain movie scenes. One such example is a scene from the movie *L’Amerikano*, Costa-Gravas’ 1972 film on the Tupamaro movement. The scene Franceschini makes reference to in his memoir is one in which a police officer is questioning a member of the Tupamaro organization who refuses to

collaborate and tries to intimidate the officer. In Franceschini's memoir, the scene from Costa-Gravas' movie is almost reacted when the founder of the Red Brigades is interrogated for the first time by the police after his arrest. The author, in fact, recalls: "Ripresero con le domande. Vedevo l'ufficiale sempre più nervoso, temevo che volesse passare a un interrogatorio duro e decisi di agire come i tupa nel film *L'Amerikano*: al poliziotto che li interrogava dissero che sapevano tutto di lui" (119). Another instance in which the author's life is likened to that of a fictional character taken from the realm of cinema is when Franceschini was being transferred by boat to the penitentiary on the Tuscan island of Pianosa. While on the hydrofoil, the leader of the Red Brigades, in thinking how he could escape, envisioned himself as Steve McQueen in the movie *The Great Escape*, in which the character escaped from a German prison camp riding a motorcycle: "Sapevo che da Pianosa si poteva evadere. [...] E sull'aliscafo rividi dentro di me, ancora una volta, le scene della *Grande Fuga*, il film in cui Steve McQueen affronta i reticolati tedeschi con una moto da cross per fuggire da un campo di prigionia" (184).

The cinematic element is also quite prominent in Valerio Morucci's 1999 work *Ritratto di un terrorista da giovane*, in which the author recounts his experience as a militant in Left-wing extra-parliamentary organizations, such as Potere Operaio and the Red Brigades. While in Franceschini's memoir, as we have seen previously, the emulational theme is primarily based on real-life models, such as the Uruguayan Tupamaro movement, Morucci instead tries to emulate principally fictional characters belonging to the realm of cinema. Morucci's memoir, in fact, abounds in references to cinematic productions. In one instance, for example, the author makes compares

himself to Robert Redford in the movie *Three Days of the Condor*. “In quei giorni era appena uscito *I tre giorni del Condor* e io, ovviamente non me l’ero perso. [...] Con Redford, *il Condor*, semplice lettore di gialli della CIA che [...] riesce a tenere in scacco l’Agency e una banda di killer internazionali usando solo l’intelligenza. [...] Davide contro Golia. Proprio quello che mi sentivo io” As mentioned previously, not all the themes we have analyzed are present in every memoir written by Left-wing ex-terrorists. However, they all seem to include at least one of these themes, be it the “weapon motif,” the “game motif” or the “betrayal motif.”

b. Concutelli: the Neo-fascist Embraces the Pen.

We will now begin to examine memoirs biographies and autobiographies written by or about Right-wing ex-terrorists. The first one we will take into consideration is Pierluigi Concutelli’s memoir *Io, l’uomo nero* published in 2008 with the aid of Giuseppe Ardica. We will focus primarily on this work because, just as Franceschini’s autobiography, it includes examples of all three different themes, thus allowing us to make a comparative analysis of both works and to draw parallels, as well as divergences, between the experiences of the militants belonging to the two different factions. It must be clarified, however, that Concutelli’s autobiography is not an ideological work. It merely traces his experience with the armed struggle in Italy, but there are no references to the ideological beliefs which led Concutelli to commit acts of political violence. Therefore, there will be no references to the concept of purification and immunization, which instead we have seen in Right-wing political texts, as well as in the works of Camon and Castellaneta. However, given that one of the aims of this research is to investigate the representation of Right-wing terrorism in fiction, it is still

important to take into examination the neo-fascist's autobiography as it provides us with a chance to analyze how the Right-wing terrorist has fictionalized himself.

Before we can proceed with the examination of Concutelli's memoir, we must mention a few brief biographical facts regarding who Concutelli was and what role he played during the *anni di piombo*. Pierluigi Concutelli, who during the Seventies had been rechristened *il comandante*, was born in Rome in 1944, but later moved to Palermo, where he first came in contact with Right-wing subversive organizations, such as Borghese's *Fronte nazionale*. After his brief stint in Borghese's organization, Concutelli joined Clemente Graziani's newly formed *Movimento politico Ordine nuovo* until its demise in 1973 as a result of the Scelba decree which banned the reformation of the Fascist party. By that time, Concutelli had already been arrested several times for assault and for carrying a weapon. After the demise of the MPON, Concutelli began his first period on clandestinity, during which he participated in the kidnapping of the banker Luigi Mariano in 1975. After spending a brief period in Spain, alongside Stefano Delle Chiaie and other Right-wing militants, Concutelli returned to Italy in 1976 with the intention of reforming *Ordine nuovo*. In the summer of that same year, Concutelli assassinated the judge Vittorio Occorsio, who, according to *il comandante*, played an important role in bringing down the MPON. A few days after the Occorsio assassination, Concutelli organized a bank robbery to finance his newly reformed *Ordine nuovo*. Concutelli's career as the leader of ON ended in 1977, when authorities were able to locate and arrest him. While in jail, *il comandante* had been responsible for two other murders: those of Ermanno Buzzi and Carmine Palladino, two Right-wing militants who, according to Concutelli, were guilty of being collaborators and traitors. To the contrary of

many other protagonists of the armed struggle of the 60s and 70s, such as the ones who appeared on Sergio Zavoli's television series *La notte della Repubblica*, Concutelli never officially dissociated himself from the events that marked the "years of lead," making him one of the few perpetrators of political terrorism to still be in custody. It must also be clarified that Concutelli disassociated himself from the first wave of neo-fascist *stragisti* of the *strategia della tensione*. With Concutelli, we have, instead, the example of a neo-fascist terrorist who refuted the earlier *modus operandi* of the neo-fascist *stragisti* of the late Sixties and early Seventies, in favor of adopting the strategy of Left-wing subversive groups, such as the Red Brigades and *Prima linea*. Concutelli will also become one of the role models for the perpetrators of the *spontaneismo armato*, such as the *Nuclei armati rivoluzionari*.

One of the first things one notices in the account of Concutelli's descent in the vortex of political violence are the similarities between the beginning of the story of the Red Brigades and that of Right-wing extremists. In fact, as Giuseppe Ardica states in the introduction to Concutelli's autobiography *Io, l'uomo nero*: "Le prime pistole e i primi fucili in dotazione alle Br di Alberto Franceschini e Renato Curcio e agli estremisti neofascisti come Concutelli, per esempio, furono quelle dei partigiani da una parte e degli ex combattenti della Repubblica Sociale Italiana dall'altra" (12). In a similar fashion to Franceschini, Concutelli became attracted to the events that marked the period between 1943 and 1945 after hearing stories from ex-combatants. Concutelli recalls being enthralled by the recollections of his elementary school teacher, who had been a Fascist during the *Ventennio*, and who used to have the students sing the *Inno di Mameli*, since the Fascist hymn *Giovinezza* had been banned by the time Concutelli

was a child. One significant event, both from a historically and metaphorical standpoint, is Concutelli's meeting with Giuseppe Pugliese, a member of the DC and an ex-combatant of the RSI, who had given him the permission to use his Breda 37 machine gun, which had been used during World War II. Just as in Franceschini's account, Concutelli's first steps towards embracing the armed struggle were characterized by the *weapon motif*. By receiving the permission to use the weapon from Pugliese, Concutelli also inherited the ideals and the values of the fighters of the RSI. Regarding this encounter, Concutelli recalls that the *democristiano* ended the conversation by saying: "Se quelli attaccano sai dove trovarla," (25) with *quelli* referring to the Communists. The weapon does not only signify a rite of passage of ideals from one generation to another, but also signals the continuation of the fight between the Resistance and the RSI. In reference to the continuation of the hostilities between the supporters of the RSI and the Resistance fighters, Concutelli himself recognizes that all those who embraced the armed struggle in the decades following the war were in fact the very products of the civil war that ravaged Northern Italy between 1943 and 1945. Concutelli, as a matter of fact, explains that: "Eravamo, senza rendersene conto, tutti figli della guerra civile: giovani fascisti e comunisti, neri e rossi" (52). These "sons and daughters" became the direct recipients of all the values brought forth by the two opposing sides of the civil war, and the passing on of the weapons represents a symbolical transfer of these ideals from one generation to another. Concutelli further elucidates on this matter: "Gli ex partigiani affidavano ai rossi il testimone della rivoluzione proletaria incompiuta e della resistenza tradita. I *nostri* vecchi, invece, ci trasmettevano un oscuro desiderio di rivalsa" (52).

Just as we have seen in Franceschini's work, Concutelli's *Io, l'uomo nero* also includes several examples of the "game motif" and is pervaded by several instances in which the author feels as if he were emulating a fictional or historical character. One clear example of this motif is when the author recalls the nights when he and other members of *Ordine nuovo* would go around the city to append political posters and to pass out flyers, often resulting in fights with exponents of Left-wing extra-parliamentary groups. Concutelli describes these skirmishes as being "gli indiani contro gli yankee" (62), thus comparing these events to a game of "cowboys vs. indians." He also clarifies that the atmosphere felt during those nights resembled a "clima da disfatta sudista alla fine della guerra civile americana" (62) in which the neo-fascists were "inadeguati alla situazione, anche se ci sentivamo gli eroi che stavano difendendo Fort Alamo dalla barbarie. Oppure ci sentivamo come quel soldato mandato a fare la guardia al bidone di benzina" (62). The streets of Palermo, where these scuffles took place, become the American frontier, and the clash between the two opposing factions is transformed in the collision between "civilization" and "savagery." In this case, not only are the characters transformed, but also the environment becomes a playground where the neo-fascist "cowboys" fight against the forces of "barbarity." Similar imagery is also present in Stefano Delle Chiaie's account of his militancy in *Avanguardia nazionale*. In one of the interviews included in Anna Cento-Bull's 2007 volume *Italian Neofascism: the Strategy of Tension and the Politics of Nonreconciliation*, Delle Chiaie, who was being interviewed by the author, uses the metaphor of the "errant knight" to describe his experience with neo-fascist organizations and the armed struggle. When talking about the purpose behind *Avanguardia nazionale*'s actions, Delle Chiaie, in fact, states that

“We thought only of achieving a beautiful death, this was our decadent romanticism” (134) and that “I used to subscribe to the values of the errant knight” (136). Just as in Concutelli’s autobiography, Delle Chiaie uses the myth of the hero on quest, in this case the “errant knight,” who is able to win despite the odds being against him.

Just as in Franceschini and Morucci’s accounts, Concutelli’s autobiography also abounds with references to cinematic fictional characters, thus reinforcing the *game/emulation motif* present in his memoir. In one episode in particular, which is very similar to one described in Franceschini’s personal history, Concutelli tells the readers about a robbery he organized. After Judge Occorsio’s assassination, Concutelli needed funds to finance his life as a fugitive and *Ordine nuovo*. In order to do so, *il comandante*, as he had been called by many of his comrades, decided the best way to obtain these funds would have been to rob the Department of Labor. The robbery would have served the purpose of financing the group’s activities as well as attacking one of the symbols of the system. Concutelli explains that, before entering the building of the Department of Labor, he and his partner in crime found themselves in a quasi-comical situation when they confronted the doorman of the building. Concutelli recalls that the porter, when he saw the two bandits approaching him while embracing a gun, at first believed it was a joke, because their weapons perhaps did not look like the ones seen in movies popular at the times, such as the *poliziottesco* film genre. At *il comandante*’s warning that there was going to be a robbery, the porter started gesticulating in a comical manner because, in reality, he believed the two bandits were joking. Concutelli says, in fact, that “il tizio pensò a una battuta per farlo ridere. Si mise a gesticolare, quasi scherzando. Forse perché una pistola mitragliatrice verdina con un silenziatore nero (quella che

impugnava) non rientrava nella sua idea cinematografica da *Roma violenta*" (119). The robbery described by Concutelli is almost transformed in a tragicomic scene, with the porter not believing the robbery is real because it does not match what he sees on television or in films popular at the time. The tragicomic feeling tints the entire scene and transforms it from a moment of fear to one of comedy. As a matter of fact, Concutelli describes the final seconds of the robbery as a scene from a comedy, in which *il comandante* himself is not a merciless bandit, but a character who Alberto Sordi could have played. Here is how the leader of *ON* describes the final moments of the holdup: "L'amico con la valigia in mano, io dietro impugnando il mitra. E agli impiegati che guardavano spaventati e sorpresi, tutti con le mani sulla testa, dicevo come Alberto Sordi: 'Boni, state boni che ce ne andiamo.' Una scena tragicomica" (120). Instead of being a criminal, Concutelli becomes the character played by Alberto Sordi in a scene from Monicelli's 1959 comedy *La grande guerra*.

Another important element to the *game/emulation motif* is the loss of identity and the shedding of any residual trace of one's own selfhood. Just as in Franceschini's case, by discarding his own identity, Concutelli lives through his experiences as if he were a multitude of fictional or historical characters; at one time he could be a Southern soldier fighting in the Civil War and in another instance he could be defending Fort Alamo from the incursions of the Mexican troops during the Texas Revolution. In other occasions he could be, instead, a comedic character acting in a parodic bank robbery. The leader of *Ordine nuovo* identifies the moment in which he shed his identity with the time when he made a decisive turn towards embracing the armed struggle as a way of life and as the only means of attaining the revolution. *Il comandante* describes this

radical step in the following manner: “Prima di tutto dovevi tagliare i contatti con tutto quello che avevi dietro le spalle: amici, famiglia, fidanzata. Dovevi rinunciare alla vita ‘borghese.’ [...] Dovevi diventare invisibile, non destare mai sospetti, muoverti con estrema prudenza” (77). Another clear example of how Concutelli identifies himself with other identities and other characters once he rid himself of his can be seen in his description of his life as a fugitive. After the assassination of Judge Occorsio in July 1976, authorities were able to bring down *Ordine nuovo* through a series of arrests which forced Concutelli to become a fugitive and to hide in the Tuscan and Umbrian countryside. Even in this instance, Concutelli makes reference to a movie and identifies himself with a character from an Italian comedy of the Seventies. Concutelli recounts that “Prima andai in Umbria e in Toscana. Qui mi sistemarono prima a Pisa, a casa di un tipo stranissimo che faceva collezione di paccottiglia militare, e poi in campagna, ospite di un apicoltore che di mestiere faceva il guardiano di un pollaio. Un alienato. Mi sentivo come Nino Manfredi nel film *Pane e cioccolata*” (138-9). Just as in the episode of the robbery at the Department of Labor, Concutelli identifies with the character of a comedy, thus defusing the gravity of the situation and of the fact that he was on the run from the law for having assassinated a judge.

Concutelli’s cinematic adventure continues even after his arrest and his incarceration in several of Italy’s maximum security prisons. For the description of his arrival at the Asinara prison, Concutelli makes use, once again, of the imagery found in Western movies. We have seen, previously, that *il comandante* used the metaphor of the “cowboys vs. Indians” as well as the imagery of Fort Alamo to describe his early incursions against the Left-wing. In giving his account of his landing on the island of

Asinara, Concutelli arranges the scene as if it were the movie set of a Sergio Leone Western, with horses running wild and a guard on a horse approaching the prisoners, or the set of a war movie, with trenches and barbed wire. This is how Concutelli describes the Asinara island when he arrived at the prison:

“C'erano cumuli di filo spinato ovunque e cavalli di Frisia, minacciosi. Come in una trincea della prima guerra mondiale. Una scena da film. Ad attenderci, un agente penitenziario in groppa a un cavallo: la barba di qualche giorno, una camicia grigia, sporca e sudaticcia, e un moschetto 91 messo di traverso sulla sella. Un'atmosfera da western come nel migliore Sergio Leone. Uno spettacolo da fumetto di Tex Willer, da 'ultimo treno per Yuma.' L'Asinara mi stava dando il benvenuto mostrando il suo volto più truce” (167).

In this description Concutelli creates a pastiche of references spanning from the world of cinema to that of comic books. The prison guard is portrayed as one of the rugged characters you may see in a Sergio Leone movie and the location is depicted as one of the movie sets used in movies like *For a Fistful of Dollars*: desolate, isolated, and wild.

Interestingly enough, the theme of “emulation” is also present in another memoir penned by another veteran of Right-wing subversive groups: Gabriele Adinolfi, who had been one of the founding members of *Terza posizione* in the late Seventies. Adinolfi published his political testament *Quel domani che ci appartiene* in 2005. The author devoted most of his book to the political interpretation of the major events that characterized the *anni di piombo*, such as the “strategia della tensione” and the Moro kidnapping, but also included snippets of his personal experience with the phenomenon of the armed struggle at the end of the Seventies and the beginning of the Eighties. In Adinolfi's case, the primary source of emulation is Chuck Palahniuk's best-selling novel *Fight Club*, as well as the movie of the same name. In fact, according to Adinolfi, neo-fascists should be able to find spiritual and existential inspiration in Palahniuk's work:

“Se si vuole definire una linea di tendenza esistenziale e politica, più che nelle gioiose rivoluzioni del passato, l’ispirazione va cercata in *Fight Club*” (104). What is interesting about Adinolfi’s view of *Fight Club* as a source of inspiration is the fact that the main character of Palahniuk’s book, as well as of the movie, develops an alter ego which allows him to escape from the banality, monotony, and conformity of everyday life. In a similar fashion, both Franceschini and Concutelli describe the process of shedding their identity in order to create an alter ego which allows them to escape from the conformity of *bourgeois* life. Regarding the interpretation of *Fight Club*, Adinolfi explains that: “Il notissimo romanzo di Chuck Palahniuk . . . è imperniato sul personaggio centrale che si sdoppia in risposta alla nevrosi e alla schizofrenia dell’inferno quotidiano rappresentato da questa vita frenetica, uniforme, banale, piatta, sciatta, politicamente corretta, conforme. Il suo doppio, Tyler Durden, scardina i cancelli dietro i quali l’uomo è stato imprigionato” (105). Another important ethical and spiritual guide for Adinolfi is provided by Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451* because, according to the founder of *Terza Posizione*, it promulgates the idea that culture must be defended from deformities and must be cured. In Adinolfi’s interpretation of Bradbury’s novel “si deve difendere la cultura dalla deformità uniforme, curandola e custodendola in attesa del risveglio future” (105).

As we have mentioned previously, another important and prevalent motif in autobiographical accounts of Left-wing militants is that of betrayal. Concutelli’s account is no different. As a matter of fact, almost a third of his book is dedicated to his life in jail and to his hunt for those who he deemed to be traitors and collaborators with the police. Additionally, *il comandante* also devotes a chapter to the betrayal that led to his arrest.

Just as in Franceschini's case, the haunting fear of betrayal is everpresent in the neo-fascist's memoir. The only striking difference between the two accounts is that Concutelli never thought of abandoning the armed struggle or at least never mentions it in his autobiography. Franceschini, instead, recounts of having questioned his commitment to the Red Brigades on several occasions, opting always to continue to devote himself to the life of the political militant. The motif of betrayal is so central to Concutelli's life that he is one of the few terrorists still in custody, given his refusal to collaborate with authorities and the murders he committed in jail, which cost the lives of Right-wing militants Ermanno Buzzi and Carmine Palladino. Both Buzzi and Palladino had been accused of being involved in the terrorist attacks in Brescia and Bologna respectively. As a result of these murders Concutelli was rechristened "er sentenza," which can roughly be translated to as "the punisher."

Concutelli's embracement of the life as a political militant never seemed to falter, so the thought of betraying his comrades and *Ordine nuovo* was never taken into consideration by the neo-fascist. The thought of being betrayed by others, however, became a constant fear for the terrorist. In the chapter entitled "Il tradimento," *il comandante* tells us that "Avevo paura del tradimento. Lo temevo. Mi rendevo conto che c'erano tutte le condizioni perché potesse succedere" (139). His fear eventually became reality when two neo-fascists, Paolo Bianchi and Rossano Cochis, who were also affiliated with the Vallanzasca criminal gang, were intercepted by the police and started collaborating, thus mentioning the name of Concutelli. According to the leader of *ON*, these two characters were "borghesi emarginati" because, even though they wanted to emulate the Right-wing terrorists of *ON*, they lacked the political background

needed to be a successful militant. Given the absence of a genuine political commitment to the neo-fascist cause, Concutelli almost sensed that there was a clear danger of betrayal by these two individuals. Regarding this threat, the leader of ON explains: “Il tradimento, intanto, stava entrando a vele spiegate, con tanto di bandiera al vento. Abboccai” (140). The day following Concutelli’s interaction with Paolo Bianchi, who then met Rossano Cochis in the vicinity of the Quirinale where they were intercepted by the police, the *comandante* was arrested by the police in his apartment in Rome.

Once in prison, Concutelli’s principal activity became that of seeking revenge against those who betrayed him and the neo-fascist cause by collaborating with the police. The last section of his memoir is, in fact, called “Caccia al pentito. La follia entra in galera.” The fear of betrayal entered the jail cell with him and pushed him to kill two neo-fascists who were guilty of having collaborated with the police. Regarding the presence of Buzzi in the prison of Novara, where Concutelli was detained at the time of the murder, *il comandante* explains how he, as well as other neo-fascists, believed that “l’antiterrorismo aveva mandato Buzzi a Novara con uno scopo ben preciso: mettere zizzania tra i neofascisti, insinuare dubbi, origliare, riferire e, infine, fabbricare pentiti” (195). Driven by this fear, Concutelli and Mario Tutti strangled Ermanno Buzzi and left his lifeless body in one of the hallways of the Novara prison. The leader of ON even admits that the atmosphere felt in the prison at that time permeated with the feeling of fear of betrayal: “Fui fomentato dal clima di quei giorni: dall’ambiente, dall’atmosfera di sospetto, dai ragazzini” (196).

Concutelli devotes another chapter to the killing of another “traitor,” Carmine Palladino, who had been a member of Delle Chiaie’s *Avanguardia nazionale* and was

suspected of having collaborated with the police since 1968. The main reason why Concutelli believed Palladino had to be eliminated was because he had betrayed the neo-fascist cause, not only for collaborating with authorities, but also for giving them information on how to find Giorgio Vale, who at the time had returned to Rome after a period spent hiding from the law for being a member of the NAR. The *comandante* choked Palladino to death with a string taken from a ping pong net. Concutelli, in his memoir, explains that “Palladino morì perché volevo evitare che un uomo come lui, un delatore, potesse continuare a nuocere alla mia parte, ai camerati che ancora volevano opporsi al regime, agli uomini che si stavano sacrificando per un’idea, per un’utopia senza possibilità di successo” (205). After Palladino’s murder, Concutelli was sent to the infamous “braccetti” in the Foggia penitentiary, where he remained till 1987. The *comandante* will remain in prison until 2009, when his sentence is changed and Concutelli is placed under house arrest as a result of the deterioration of his health conditions. Franceschini, Morucci, Concutelli, and Delle Chiaie: all men who came from different backgrounds and found themselves on opposing sides of the low-intensity civil war that marred post-war Italy and colored its streets blood red. Even though they chose to take different paths and pledged allegiance to opposing political factions, the analysis of some of their autobiographical works demonstrates that the process of radicalization for many of these militants was very similar, regardless of their political affiliation. We have seen how their memoirs share similar motifs and themes, and we have also ascertained that each of the militants taken into consideration went through a series of steps that brought them to a cancellation of their previous identity in order to assume new ones. Professor and psychologist Kenneth Gergen, in his work *The*

Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life, has termed the phenomenon of adopting new identities as “populating the self,” which the author describes as “the acquisition of multiple and disparate potentials for being” (69). In the cases of Concutelli and Franceschini, and to a lesser extent Delle Chiaie and Morucci, we see the characters becoming pastiches, or assemblages of different identity patterns that are taken, for the most part, from historical and mediatic figures. Regarding the notion of one’s identity becoming a pastiche, Gergen explains: “With social saturation, each of us comes to harbor a vast population of hidden potentials – to be a blues singer, a gypsy, an aristocrat, a criminal. All the selves lie latent, and under the right conditions may spring to life” (71). In the case of *Io, l’uomo nero* and *Mara, Renato e io*, we see the identities of the authors being populated by fictional characters taken from *spaghetti Westerns* and spy movies of the time. For each episode described in their autobiographies, there is a new identity that springs up and replaces their former one. In a way, Concutelli and Franceschini, in their autobiographies, can be described as post-modern beings who constantly shift identity in order to give meaning to their actions and to intensify their potential of carrying on actions, such as bank robberies and assassinations.

Chapter 4

Ciak, si fa una strage: Representations of Right-wing Terrorism in Cinema.

a. Right-wing Terrorism and the poliziottesco of the Seventies.

The title of an article published in the Right-wing newspaper *Il giornale* on November 24th, 2011 states: “Terrorismo nero, la pellicola è (ancora) un tabù per tutti.” Of the same opinion is Andrea Pergolari in his 2007 article “La fisionomia del terrorismo nero nel cinema poliziesco degli anni '70,” included in Christian Uva’s volume on the cinematic representations of terrorism in Italy, *Schermi di piombo*. Pergolari, in fact, asserts: “Il terrorismo nero: un argomento tabù. O almeno tale è sempre stato considerato” (159). In the filmography devoted to the *anni di piombo*, it is, in fact, difficult to find a proper representation of Right-wing terrorism. After all, it is only recently that we have started to see films devoted to the exploration of Left-wing terrorism. It has taken almost thirty years for directors to come to terms with Left-wing political violence and its representation. With the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of Aldo Moro’s assassination in 2003 we can witness a proliferation of movies devoted to the events surrounding the kidnapping of the statesman, and to the phenomenon of Left-wing terrorism in Italy. This revival in the interest for the period of the *anni di piombo* might have been sparked by the assassinations of Marco Biagi and Marco D’Antona and by the resurgence of the Red Brigades at the end of the Nineties. Some of the most

notable, recent productions on the subject of political violence in Italy are Bellocchio's *Buongiorno, notte* and Renzo Martinelli's *Piazza delle Cinque lune*, both released in 2003. Political terrorism is also a central theme in Marco Tullio Giordana's *La meglio gioventù* (2003), in which one of the main characters, Giulia, joins a Left-wing subversive group and embraces the armed struggle. Michele Placido's 2005 *Romanzo criminale*, based on Giancarlo De Cataldo's 2002 novel by the same name, presents the two most traumatic events of the "years of lead," namely the Moro kidnapping and the Bologna bombing, and inserts them in a tale of crime and corruption recounting the story of the violent *banda della Magliana*. The past decade has also seen several television productions dedicated to the topic of political violence in Italy, such as Michele Soavi's *Attacco allo stato* (2006), which focuses more on the efforts by counter-terrorist forces to bring down the New Red Brigades of the Nineties.

Most of the cinematic production of the past twenty years has focused almost exclusively on Left-wing terrorism and the events surrounding the Moro assassination. One movie, however, Marco Tullio Giordana's *Romanzo di una strage* (2012), has reopened the wound left by the *stragismo* of the Seventies on the collective memory of the country. Giordana's movie, in fact, deals with the first massacre of the so-called *strategia della tensione*: the Piazza Fontana bombing. By focusing on such event, Giordana has reopened a chapter of Italian history which very few, if any, directors have had the courage to brave. Several directors have addressed the period of the *strategia della tensione* in their movies, but none have actually investigated and represented those events in a direct manner, opting, instead, for the use of the metaphor as the best way to portray on the big screen that chapter of Italian history. With *Romanzo di una*

strage, Giordana, instead, chooses to directly investigate the events leading up to and following the Piazza Fontana bombing by laying them all out for the viewer to see and interpret. In addition to focusing on real facts, Giordana also tries to portray the protagonists of those events as truthfully as possible. In a way, Giordana's movie can be considered the very first cinematic production to have taken into consideration Right-wing terrorism in all its brutality and mysteriousness. Of course, one of the reasons why so many directors have avoided dealing directly with the *stragismo* of the Seventies might be perhaps due to the fact that the wounds left by the *stragismo nero* are still too painful to allow for an objective understanding and representation of those events in the fictional world. Giordana's movie, in fact, has been criticized by several of the people involved in those events, such as the family of Giuseppe Pinelli, who have accused the movie of exonerating Calabresi from the death of the anarchist, who died under mysterious circumstances during one of the police questionings. Adriano Sofri, Calabresi's accused killer, also criticized the movie for its inaccuracies in dealing with the assassination of the commissar. The main problem with attempting to represent the *stragismo* of Seventies on the big screen is the lack of concrete evidence regarding the true nature of this phenomenon. For this reason, directors, in their films, need to fill the empty gap left by the judicial system, which has been unable to provide a clear understanding of the terrorist acts perpetrated by Right-wing subversive organizations.

A few scholars, such as Andrea Hajek, have interpreted *Romanzo di una strage* as a homage to the *polizieschi* of the Seventies. Regarding Giordana's movie, Hajek, in fact, states:

"Abbiamo tutti gli ingredienti per un poliziottesco: una strage senza autore e una morte sospettosa, un giovane commissario alla ricerca della verità

che viene a battersi contro uno stato potente e, infine, contro il terrorismo di sinistra che nacque proprio con la strage di Piazza Fontana. In vista anche del grande successo del poliziottesco negli anni '70, *Romanzo di una strage* [...] potrebbe allora essere una specie di omaggio a questo genere”

Even though there certainly are similarities between Giordana's 2012 film and the *poliziotteschi* of the Seventies, it must be clarified that there is an important difference between the two: in *Romanzo di una strage* the neo-fascist terrorist is clearly identifiable, whereas in the *poliziotteschi* of the Seventies, Right-wing militants are never clearly visible and recognizable to the audience. Several critics have identified the *poliziesco* genre as the best representation of Right-wing terrorism in cinema. Andrea Pergolari, in his chapter “La fisionomia del terrorismo nero nel cinema poliziesco degli anni '70,” included in Christian Uva's 2007 volume *Schermi di piombo. Il terrorismo nel cinema italiano*, for example, asserts:

“Le relazioni tra le diverse componenti del terrorismo nero erano (e sono) così indecifrabili da impedire alla base qualsiasi tentativo di esprimere e rappresentare con chiarezza il fenomeno. Impossibile sorprendersi, allora, se a mettere in scena il terrorismo di destra nel nostro cinema sarà un genere particolare come il poliziesco” (160).

Mary P. Wood, in her article “Navigating the Labyrinth: Cinematic Investigations of Right-wing Terrorism,” published in 2012 in *Terrorism, Italian Style: Representations of Political Violence in Contemporary Italian Cinema*, acknowledges the detective mode as the most common means of representing Right-wing terrorism. Wood, in fact, explains that “in the case of the explorations of right-wing terrorism examined here, the popular genre of the police investigation predominates” (30). The reason why, perhaps, the investigative mode is the most popular genre can be traced to the fact that evidence pertaining to the involvement of neo-fascist organizations was not easily accessible at

the time, or even now, thus keeping Right-wing terrorism perennially veiled in a shroud of mystery. The *poliziotteschi* of the Seventies, however, more than representations of Right-wing terrorism, should be interpreted instead as depictions of the feeling of chaos and confusion created by the *strategia della tensione*. We must also clarify, as we have mentioned in previous chapters, that the violence that occurred during the period of the “strategy of tension” was not only caused by neo-fascist organizations, but could have also been the product of the interventions and manipulations by the secret services. The police investigation genre of the Seventies tried to capture the atmosphere that pervaded throughout Italy during the first half of the decade, when the country was being torn apart by bombs and attempted coups. The neo-fascist character, however, always remained in the background and was never clearly identifiable by the audience. Viewers could only assume that the perpetrators of many of the *poliziotteschi* of the Seventies were members of Right-wing subversive groups, but there was never any insight into the ideology and the psyche of the Right-wing terrorist. The neo-fascist terrorist, in the police genre of the Seventies, was an entity shrouded in mystery, thus never really being accessible to the audience. The most iconic movies of the *poliziottesco* genre, in fact, do not offer any clear representations of the Right-wing terrorist.

The few critics to have taken into consideration the representation of neo-fascist terrorism in the realm of cinema have identified Stefano Vanzina's 1972 movie *La polizia ringrazia* as the quintessential *poliziottesco* of the Seventies, serving as model for all other police genre movies of the decade. Scholars have also noted Vanzina's movie for its treatment of Right-wing terrorism. In *La polizia ringrazia*, however, the

organization behind the acts of violence which should have destabilized the public order are never identified as being Right-wing militants. Vanzina's movie was able to capture the feeling of paranoia felt during those years, but it does not provide any insight into the psyche of the assumed neo-fascists behind the acts of violence. In *La polizia ringrazia*, commissar Bertone discovers that a subversive organization called *Anonima anticrimine* is behind a string of homicides that has gripped the city. The targets of the dissident group are petty criminals, prostitutes, and homosexuals. Commissar Bertone will eventually learn that these killings are part of a larger scheme intended to make the population believe that the city is overrun by criminals. The final objective of the subversive organization is to pave the way for a coup d'état and to facilitate an authoritarian turn in the country. The scenario, of course, is reminiscent of the *strategia della tensione*; however, the viewer has no access to the psyche of the members of the *Anonima anticrimine*. There appears to be an obsession with "hygiene" and "cleanliness," as the subversive organization engages in an operation of *pulizia urbana*. The members of the dissident group always remain in the background and are never accessible to the audience. The acts of "urban cleansing," for example, are always conducted at night, thus creating an association between the obscurity of the night and the actions of the subversive group. More than focusing on the agents of "cleansing," the main focus in Vanzina's movie is placed on the entities maneuvering the subversive organization responsible for the killings. Commissar Bertone, in fact, discovers that his friend Stolfi, an ex-member of the police, and his working partner Santalamenti are part of the group of dissidents. The emphasis in *La polizia ringrazia* is placed on the corruption of the State and the involvement of certain government officials in the

strategia della tensione, whereas the neo-fascist characters, if they can be considered such, remain in the shadows.

Other films follow the same pattern as Vanzina's *La polizia ringrazia*, adopting the same narrative elements, as well as the same plot developments. One example is Roberto Infascelli's 1973 *La polizia sta a guardare*, which strictly adheres to the representational codes found in Vanzina's movie. Just as in *La polizia ringrazia*, the plot of Infascelli's film centers on a commissar and a corrupt ex-police commissioner. The movie reaches its climax when the commissar discovers that the ex-police commissioner is actually using a violent gang of kidnappers to destabilize the public order and to finance Right-wing terrorist acts. Even in *La polizia sta a guardare*, the emphasis is placed on the *strategia della tensione* and the involvement of governmental entities in the *stragismo nero* of the Seventies. Additionally, the psychological profile of the kidnappers and the Right-wing extremists are never accessible to the audience. The viewer can only assume that those responsible for the kidnappings are neo-fascists, but it is never clarified in the movie. Regarding the inaccessibility of the Right-wing characters in Infascelli's film, Andrea Pergolari explains:

“[...] tutto il versante politico del film risulta superficiale e la descrizione appena accennata dei rapitori non va al di là di un bozzettismo malavitoso memore di Scerbanenco [...]: non si capisce chi siano e che retroterra abbiano questi rapitori che finanziano le trame nere” (163).

Andrea Pergolari's observation regarding the representation of the Right-wing extremist can also be applied to other *poliziotteschi*, such as Giuseppe Rosati's *La polizia interviene: ordine di uccidere* (1975) and Luciano Ercoli's *La polizia ha le mani legate* (1975). In Rosati's film, those responsible for the *strategia della tensione* are a corrupt senator and the clergy, whereas in Ercoli's *La polizia ha le mani legate*, the

perpetrators are a group of young university students. Even though both movies make references to Right-wing terrorism and real events, such as the Piazza Fontana bombing in 1969, these films deal with neo-fascism only superficially. The plot of Ercoli's *La polizia ha le mani legate*, for example, revolves around the bombing of a hotel in Milan, but the perpetrators appear to be grotesque and devoid of any ideological and psychological depth. The gang responsible for the bomb at the hotel are portrayed as being rich kids without any sense of direction. All the viewer is able to infer is that the group of dissidents is part of a greater scheme coordinated by high ranking politicians and members of the secret services. Even though the reference to the Piazza Fontana bombing is quite obvious, the exploration of neo-fascism and its representation are overshadowed by the intricacy of the plot and by the personality of the commissar. All of the movies abovementioned deal with neo-fascist terrorism superficially and never investigate the psyche of the Right-wing terrorist. The perpetrators are never easily accessible to the audience, thus relegating them to the shadowy corners of the plot. The emphasis in the *poliziotteschi* of the Seventies is placed on the complexity of the events surrounding the *strategia della tensione*, on the corruption of certain governmental officials, and on the manipulation of subversive organizations by members of the political class. Importance is also given to the association between the upper class and the subversive organization whose actions are used to destabilize the public order in order to facilitate the coming to power of an authoritarian and conservative regime. In the *poliziotteschi* of the Seventies, in fact, the subversive organization is often financed by a member of the aristocracy or an industrialist. Right-wing extremists, or at least what appear to be neo-fascists, are often seen as a tool used by the ultra-rich to bring

about a political change in the country, but no investigation of their ideology and the psychology behind their actions can be found in the police movies of the Seventies.

Aside from the *poliziotteschi* and the police movies of the Seventies, more politically engaged directors have also tried to address Right-wing terrorism and the *strategia della tensione* in their movies. Some examples of *cinema d'impegno* dealing with neo-fascism are Elio Petri's *Indagine su un cittadino al di sopra di ogni sospetto* (1970), Francesco Rosi's 1976 *Cadaveri eccellenti*, and Damiano Damiani's 1977 thriller *Io ho paura*. In a similar fashion to the *poliziotteschi* analyzed previously, these political thrillers focus primarily on the complexity and the labyrinthic nature of the *strategia della tensione*, while placing the psyche of the Right-wing terrorist in the background. Just as the police movies of the Seventies, Petri, Rosi, and Damiani's films deal with Right-wing political violence only superficially, favoring instead the metaphorical representation of the corruption and intricacy that characterized the period of the "strategy of tension."

In Petri's *Indagine su un cittadino al di sopra di ogni sospetto*, the focus is on the psychology of the State functionaries who are possibly behind the *strategia della tensione* and the reactionary effort to obstruct the advancement of the Left in Italy. The corruption of State officials is metaphorized through the sexual perversions of the main character, the police commissar, who is guilty of killing his lover, Augusta. The plot of the movie, characterized by a heavy use of the flashback, centers around the interplay of sexual perversions between the commissar, simply known as "Il dottore," and Augusta. In addition to enjoying sexually perverse role-plays with his lover, the commissar also shows obvious reactionary and authoritarian tendencies. After

murdering his lover, the police director, played by Gian Maria Volonté, during the movie, is seen placing different clues incriminating himself to test whether his colleagues will arrest him or not. Similarly to the neo-fascist protagonists in Camon and Castellaneta's novels, the main character in Petri's movie is also typified by his dysfunctionality and his obsessions. *Indagine su un cittadino al di sopra di ogni sospetto*, just as the *poliziotteschi* of the Seventies, can be interpreted as a movie about the *strategia della tensione* more than a representation of Right-wing terrorism.

The same can be said about Rosi's 1975 movie *Cadaveri eccellenti*. Just as with Petri's film, *Cadaveri eccellenti* is an allegory of the corruption that pervaded the Italian political class during the Seventies. Rosi, in fact, takes Sciascia's 1971 novel *Il contesto* and adapts it to the reality of contemporary Italy by making references to the current political situation in Italy at the time. The task of both Sciascia novel and Rosi's film is to identify the sources of the *stragismo* and of the "strategy of tension" of the early Seventies. The movie begins by making allusions to the political situation in Italy at the end of the Sixties, with the so-called *autunno caldo* and the wave of strikes that was sweeping the country at that time. The political turmoil of the late Sixties serves as the background for the unfolding of the plot, which centers around the mysterious assassination of high profile judges and the Palermo district attorney. The protagonist, inspector Vargas, discovers that certain government officials and other judges are the masterminds behind the series of assassinations that have rocked the political world. Vargas also learns that the purpose of these murders is to raise the tension by making it appear as if Left-wing extremist groups are behind the assassination of the judges. The inculcation of Left-wing extremism for the death of the magistrates would facilitate a

reaction against Left-wing organizations. Rosi's movie shares a similar purpose as the *poliziotteschi* and other more politically engaged movies of the Seventies by focusing on the sources of the *strategia della tensione*, and by addressing the complacency, as well as the inefficiency, of the State in the face of the *stragismo nero*. Rosi also wants to bring the viewer into the habitat of those powerful, corrupt men who are possibly behind the "strategy of tension." By making ample use of the *mise en scène* and by creating a visual theme centered on architectural elegance and grandiosity, the director also wants to emphasize the wealth of the people who are sponsoring the *stragismo nero*. As mentioned previously, the stress on the affluence that lies behind the "strategy of tension" is a prominent theme in almost all movies that have tried to represent Right-wing terrorism and the *stragismo* of the early Seventies. The emphasis on the wealth of the instigators and masterminds behind events like the Piazza Fontana bombing and the Borghese coup is meant to accentuate the fact that such actions were sponsored by the upper class, and that the financing of these actions came from people in power. The focus on the visual richness and refinement of the scenery in which the events in *Cadaveri eccellenti* unfold are also meant to metaphorize the complexity and intricacy of the *strategia della tensione*. Regarding the purpose of Rosi's particular attention to the *mise en scène*, Mary P. Wood explains:

"Classical, neoclassical and modernist architecture and institutional spaces are framed and shot to stress regularity and order. The excesses and decorative aspects of baroque and gothic buildings provide a contrasting, complex spatial paradigm [...] The baroque is not confined to a particular period; it rejects order and stability, and deliberately seeks ambiguity and turbulence" (35).

More so than any other movie devoted to the period of the "strategy of tension," Rosi's

Cadaveri eccellenti makes use of the complexity of the scenery to metaphorize and represent the labyrinthic nature of the events surrounding events, such as the bombing in Piazza Fontana and the *stragismo* of the early Seventies. Rosi's film, however, as well as Petri's *Indagine su un cittadino al di sopra di ogni sospetto*, should be considered representations of the *strategia della tensione*, as the main focus is on the inaccessibility of the truth behind the *stragismo nero*, and the lack of transparency within the State apparatuses. Even though many critics have considered these movies as the prime examples of the portrayal of Right-wing terrorism in the realm of cinema, the figure of the Right-wing bomber is either absent, or is not clearly defined. Some characters may have personality traits stereotypically ascribable to Right-wing or conservative personages, but such mannerisms do not necessarily make a character a neo-fascist per se.

Damiani's film, *Io ho paura*, instead braves the intricacy of the *stragismo nero* by utilizing the same conventions of movies like *Cadaveri eccellenti*, but by adopting the point of view of the victims, instead of those of the masterminds of the *strategia della tensione*. The plot is strikingly similar to that of Rosi's movie: a detective investigates the assassination of a few high profile judges, and discovers that the perpetrator is a Right-wing terrorist who has ties with the secret services. The neo-fascist character in Damiani's film is not accessible, as in the other *poliziotteschi* and political thrillers of the Seventies, but the representation of the complexity of the *strategia della tensione* is metaphorized through the character of Graziano, the detective and brigadier whose role is to investigate the murders, and to protect one of the judges from being assassinated. Instead of being portrayed as the heroic detective of the *poliziotteschi* of the Seventies,

Graziano often shows fear and anxiety as the events unfolding in his life become more complex and tortuous. The detective, in this case, becomes the embodiment of the sense of anxiety and helplessness felt by the viewer and, more generally, by the Italian population.

Outside of the realm of the police movies of the Seventies, the only other representation of Right-wing terrorism is found in Mario Monicelli's 1973 comedy *Vogliamo i colonnelli*. The central event in Monicelli's movie is the failed Borghese coup, which took place in 1970; additionally, *Vogliamo i colonnelli* also makes allusions to the Greek military junta. Instead of portraying the complexity and intricacy of the *stragismo nero*, Monicelli, instead, interprets neo-fascism in a farcical key, emphasizing the incompetency and the buffoonery of the perpetrators of the Borghese coup. The movie had also been criticized precisely for reducing the Borghese coup to a grotesque farce, and for its portrayal of Right-wing militants as mere caricatures. In reference to these criticisms, Monicelli, in Sebastiano Mondadori's 2005 volume *La commedia umana. Conversazioni con Mario Monicelli*, explained that "la volgarità, il pressapochismo, l'incompetenza, l'ingenuità stessa erano ridicoli. [...] Potevano sembrare delle caricature, invece quando emersero i fatti avvenuti in quella notte del 1970 si scoprì che la realtà era quasi più farsesca dei film" (127). The purpose of Monicelli's comedic approach to the topic of Right-wing *golpismo*, or the attempt to establish an authoritarian government through a coup d'état, was not so much to give the viewer the sense of helplessness in the face of the complexity and intricacy of the *strategia della tensione*, but to allow the spectators to perceive the incompetency and the grotesque characteristics of the alleged conspirators. The fact that the figure of the Right-wing

terrorist has either not been clearly delineated, as in the case of the *poliziotteschi*, or has been grotesquely stereotyped shows that filmmakers, as well as producers, have had difficulty in conceptualizing the perpetrators of the *stragismo nero*. Additionally, film directors also encountered problems in finding production and distribution offers for movies that dealt with Right-wing terrorism and the *strategia della tensione*.

Even though the *poliziotteschi* and the political thrillers of the Seventies do address Right-wing terrorism, they do so by emphasizing its complexity as well as its impenetrability. More than exploring the main characteristics of neo-fascism, these genre highlight the possible collusion of certain governmental apparatuses with the subversive fringes of the Right in Italy. Even though scholars have identified these genres as the best depictions of Right-wing terrorism, it must be clarified that more than representations of neo-fascism, these films try to capture the atmosphere of uncertainty created by the *strategia della tensione*. By providing complex plots, the *poliziotteschi* and the political thrillers of the Seventies aimed at making the viewer feel a sense of helplessness in the face of the intricacy of the *stragismo nero* and the alleged State sponsored terrorism. As Alan O'Leary explains in his article "Moro, Brescia, Conspiracy: The Paranoid Style in Italian Cinema," published in 2009 in the volume *Imagining Terrorism. The Rhetoric and Representation of Political Violence in Italy 1969-2009*: "Politically, the problem with the use of the conspiracy mode is that the success of the 'plot' may seem irresistible, and the viewer can be left feeling enervated and politically impotent" (50). The ideology and the psychological makeup of the neo-fascist terrorist, however, are never taken into consideration; as a result of this lack of depth, the Right-wing terrorist is often stereotyped and is never clearly identifiable as being a neo-fascist.

b. Romanzo di una strage: the Bomb on the Silver Screen.

With the expiration of the *poliziottesco* genre and the *cinema d'impegno* of the Seventies, so do the *strategia della tensione* and Right-wing terrorism cease to be topics of interest for filmmakers and producers. The *stragismo nero* of the Seventies will resurface in the cinematic world with Marco Tullio Giordana's 2012 film *Romanzo di una strage*, which deals with the Piazza Fontana bombing in 1969. Unlike its predecessors, Giordana's movie takes into examination the real events that characterized the *strategia della tensione*, and offers representations of real-life characters, such as the commissar Calabresi, and the anarchist Giuseppe Pinelli. In addition to focusing on the events surrounding the Piazza Fontana massacre, the neo-fascist characters are clearly identifiable, and the viewer has some access to the psyche of the perpetrators. Under certain aspects, *Romanzo di una strage* follows the template of the *poliziotteschi* of the Seventies, as it contains some of the same elements, such as the commissar, a mysterious death, and a terrorist act without a culprit. Andrea Hajek even sees Giordana's movie as an homage to the police movies of the Seventies; as a matter of fact, she states that "In vista del grande successo del poliziottesco negli anni '70, *Romanzo di una strage* – che fa tornare in mente vecchi film che mettevano in scena il terrorismo di destra, come *La polizia ringrazia* e *La polizia accusa: il servizio segreto uccide* – potrebbe allora essere una specie di omaggio a questo genere" (Hajek, 2012).³³ Even though Giordana's film might present some of the same elements found the the *poliziotteschi* of the Seventies, one striking difference is that the perpetrators are clearly identified, and the figure of the neo-fascist is not hidden behind the complexity of

³³ Interestingly enough, the character of the commissar in the *poliziotteschi* of the Seventies was often modeled after the figure of Calabresi.

the plot. Additionally, the viewer has also access to the Right-wing terrorist's psyche, and his character traits. Even though the movie centers primarily around the personages of the commissar Calabresi and the anarchist Giuseppe Pinelli, who had been wrongfully accused of being responsible for the Piazza Fontana bombing, Giordana's movie still devoted enough screentime to the neo-fascist characters to allow the spectator to have some understanding of the psychology of the Right-wing terrorist. Once again, the neo-fascist is represented by the character of Giorgio "Franco" Freda and, to a lesser extent, by Giovanni Ventura, the two members of *Ordine nuovo* responsible for the Piazza Fontana. Just as the neo-fascist characters in Camon's *Occidente* and Castellaneta's *Ombre*, the character of Freda is also preoccupied with the concept of purity and hygiene. In *Romanzo di una strage*, Freda makes his first appearance in the episode in which Guido Giannettini, a secret service agent and neo-fascist sympathizer, meets with the members of *Ordine nuovo* to stipulate an agreement of mutual support. The meeting takes place in an institute for the blind. As the members of *Ordine nuovo* and Guido Giannettini enter the room where the meeting is about to take place, there are also some of the blind patients. As the character of Giannettini sees the blind men being escorted out, he says: "Certe volte vorrei essere cieco come loro" (*Romanzo di una strage*, 2012). Freda makes his debut in the movie with the following response: "Io invece vorrei che non esistessero. Il cristianesimo da duemila anni ci ha riempito la pancia di nauseanti buoni sentimenti, invece ogni falla nell'ordine dell'universo andrebbe eliminata" (*Romanzo di una strage*, 2012). Freda's opening statement reveals a deep concern with purity and hygiene. Even though the Freda character in *Romanzo di una strage* does not make use of the immunitary metaphor, as

the protagonists of *Occidente* and *Ombre*, his opening statement shows that the pursuit of purity is a prominent feature of the neo-fascist terrorist. Compared to some of the other characters in the movie, such as Calabresi and Pinelli, Freda does not have many lines. Aside from his opening statement and a scene in which Freda introduces Giannettini to the other members of *Ordine nuovo*, the neo-fascist also always speaks in Paduan dialect, making his lines difficult to understand and to interpret for the audience. Freda and Ventura, the two neo-fascists of *Ordine nuovo*, appear to be the only characters in the movie who speak in dialect. Other characters, such as Valpreda, also adopt a regional accent when they speak, but their lines are still understandable for the audience. The fact that the two neo-fascist characters are the only ones who speak strictly in dialect in some scenes of the movie might be an allusion to the impenetrability and the complexity of Right-wing terrorism. In the scene in which they introduce Giannettini to the other members of *Ordine nuovo*, however, they shed their dialectal parlance in favor of a standard Italian that would be comprehensible to all viewers. It is precisely in this scene that Freda expresses the driving force behind his ideology, which is the quest for purification, and the elimination of every “falla nell’ordine dell’universo” (*Romanzo di una strage*, 2012). Even though the characters of Freda and Ventura do not share nearly as much screentime as some of the other personages in Giordana’s film, the viewer is still able to peer into the terrorists’ psyche. Of course, on a practical and pragmatic level, the neo-fascists in *Romanzo di una strage* are aiming for the weakening of the Left-wing, and for a coup d’état that would ensure an authoritarian turn in the country’s politics, but on a psychological level, the terrorists are seeking for a purification of the world’s order, as indicated by Freda’s opening statement. In a similar

fashion to the alleged Right-wing militants in the *poliziotteschi* of the Seventies, the neo-fascist characters in *Romanzo di una strage* operate in the background, and are always shrouded in mystery; one striking difference, however, is that the viewer has access to the psyche of the Right-wing terrorist in Giordana's movie. In addition the political objectives of the members of *Ordine nuovo*, the audience can also have a glimpse of the terrorists' quest for purity and cleanliness.

Even though *Romanzo di una strage* does address more directly Right-wing terrorism, it still cannot be defined as a movie about neo-fascism in the *anni di piombo*. Freda and Ventura, as well as the other members of *Ordine nuovo*, are secondary characters in the movie, whereas the main focus is placed on the figures of Calabresi and Pinelli, and on the bombing in Piazza Fontana. Freda and Ventura were only some of the characters involved in the events, but the movie takes into account all the chess pieces implicated in the Piazza Fontana bombing, Pinelli's death, and the assassination of Calabresi. The movie, however, does give the viewer a clearer understanding of the perpetrators' psyche and of the underlying reasons for the terrorist acts of the first half of the Seventies. At the moment, within the realm of cinema and television, the best efforts at attempting to understand not only the *strategia della tensione*, but also the ideology of the neo-fascist terrorist can be found in documentaries devoted exclusively to Right-wing terrorism. In the cinematic world, however, there is still the need for a film production devoted exclusively to Right-wing terrorism and to the *stragismo* of the early Seventies, as well as the Bologna train station bombing. Perhaps, the next few years will be able to produce a film that is devoted exclusively to Right-wing terrorism, and that provides a more in-depth understanding and portrayal of the neo-fascist terrorist of

the years of the *stragismo nero*. With the proliferation of television documentaries and books dedicated to the subject, a movie on Right-wing terrorism is long overdue. Now that scholars and historians have a better understanding of the nature of neo-fascist terrorism during the *anni di piombo*, a movie that accurately portrays the psyche of the neo-fascist, and that goes beyond the stereotypical representations found in the *poliziotteschi* of the Seventies can be a feasible project.

Conclusion

The scope of this dissertation has been to examine the representation of the neo-fascist terrorist in works of fiction, such as Ferdinando Camon's *Occidente* and Castellaneta's *Ombre*, in autobiographies, like Pierluigi Concutelli's *Io, l'uomo nero*, and, to a lesser extent, in cinema. The lack of research on the subject at hand, and the fact that most scholarly studies focus entirely on the analysis of the representation of Left-wing terrorism make the need for an analysis of the presence of Right-wing terrorism in fictional works more pressing. The examination of the representation of neo-fascist terrorism and the *stragismo nero* of the Seventies allows for a more complete understanding of the different facets that characterized the *anni di piombo*.

The starting point for this analysis has been Camon's 1975 novel *Occidente*, which can be considered the first fictional work devoted entirely to the phenomenon of Right-wing terrorism in the Seventies. An excerpt from Camon's novel would eventually be included in a manuscript written by the members of the terrorist cell responsible for the bombing at the Bologna station in 1980. Camon, who based his novel on real events and on actual Right-wing terrorists, such as *Ordine nuovo* member Franco Freda, had inadvertently been able to understand and to sense certain aspects present in the ideology and the psychology of the Right-wing terrorist of the *anni di piombo*. The

terrorists responsible for the bombing at the Bologna station identified themselves so much with the fictional neo-fascist *bombaroli* of Camon's novel that they decided to use one of their speeches and to include it in their manuscript, which would have eventually been used to explain their motivations behind the terrorist act.

After establishing this link between reality and fiction, this study identified a theme, or motif, that was present in the excerpt adopted by the perpetrators of the Bologna station, as well as in other neo-fascist ideological writing and in other fictional works devoted to the phenomenon of Right-wing terrorism. The theme identified in this dissertation is the motif of purity and immunization. The excerpt found in the manuscript composed by those responsible for the Bologna massacre contained medical terminology pertaining to the process of immunization and to ridding the human body of the presence of bacteria and viruses, this purifying it and curing it. With the aid of Roberto Esposito's notion of immunization, this dissertation has taken into consideration the political writings of the two most important ideologues for Right-wing extremism in post-war Italy, Julius Evola and Franco Freda, and has focused on other fictional and autobiographical works devoted to neo-fascist terrorism to examine the reoccurrence of the motif of immunity and purity in these different literary productions.

As this research has highlighted, the immunitary metaphor has been used by writers to interpret the ideology and psyche of the neo-fascist terrorist, but can also be found in the political manuals penned by Julius Evola and Franco Freda. In addition to the notions of purity and immunization, another concept that has been ascribed to neo-fascist terrorism and its representation is that of "thanatopolitics," which Esposito termed as the expansion of the circle of death that would ensure the survival of one part of the

social body by killing the other part that is deemed to be “unhealthy” or “impure.” Esposito uses National Socialism and the Holocaust as examples of the concept of “thanatopolitics.” Through the ideation of the “Final Solution,” the Nazis put into practice “thanatopolitics” in an attempt to immunize the German social body from its own death. In a similar fashion to the Nazis, the main character of *Occidente*, the neo-fascist terrorist Franco, wants to commit a terrorist act to export death onto others, thus immunizing himself from dying. Additionally, the neo-fascist characters in Camon’s novel make frequent use of biological terminology to describe the purpose of their actions. The protagonist of *Ombre*, the unnamed Right-wing extremist, also uses biological and medical terms to describe the act of planting a bomb and committing a terrorist act.

As we have seen, the same themes of immunization and purity are used extensively in the political writings of Julius Evola and Franco Freda. Even though there certainly are similarities between Left-wing and Right-wing terrorism in Italy, especially between the Red Brigades and the neo-fascist *spontaneismo armato* of the late Seventies, the concepts of immunization and purity are solely ascribable to the ideology of the extreme Right. This dissertation has highlighted how these themes and metaphors pervade throughout the political writings of neo-fascist ideologues, such as Evola and Freda, as well as through the literary and cinematic fictional works which aim to portray and interpret Right-wing terrorism. Perhaps, the revived interest in Right-wing terrorism ushered in by televised series, such as RAI’s *Blu notte*, and movies like Giordana’s *Romanzo di una strage*, will allow for the publications of more novels and for the release of new movies that deal directly with Right-wing terrorism. Volumes, such as

Nicola Rao's trilogy and Gianluca Semprini's books on Right-wing extremism in Italy, have definitely aided in creating more awareness in terms of the phenomenon of the *stragismo nero* and the *strategia della tensione* in Italy, but there is definitely the need for a more holistic approach to the subject at hand. In addition to the historical analysis of Right-wing terrorism in Italy, scholarly research should also focus on the way the Right-wing terrorism of the Seventies has engrained itself in the collective memory of the Italian people. Novels and films can be seen as useful tools for the analysis of how people have come to terms with certain traumatic events, such as the *anni di piombo*. As mentioned previously in this study, we can count on a plethora of scholarly research conducted on the effect that the Aldo Moro kidnapping has had on both intellectuals and the general population. The effects of equally traumatic events, such as the Bologna massacre and the bombs of the early Seventies, have undeservingly received less attention, especially by writers and filmmakers.

The lack of consideration for these events has, in a way, contributed to the ever present lack of awareness of the *strategia della tensione* and the *stragismo nero* in the newer generations. One journalist, for example, while interviewing Giordana on his new film *Romanzo di una strage*, asserted that “non si studia a scuola la strage di Piazza Fontana” (TG3, March 12th, 2012). Andrea Hajek, in her online article “Lo stragismo sul grande schermo: terrorismo, didattica e le strategie dell'oblio in Italia,” has also observed the same trend in the Italian educational system; as a matter of fact, Hajek explains that “c'è una grossa lacuna nella didattica italiana a proposito dei famigerati *anni di piombo*, in particolare per quanto riguarda il terrotismo di destra, ovvero sia lo stragismo” (*Storia e Futuro*, 29). The task of educating people on the *stragismo nero* of

the Seventies has been left to those directly affected by these acts of violence, such as the family members of the victims of Right-wing terrorism, or to the protagonists themselves, such as old militants and ex-terrorists who, in many cases, were those responsible for the politically motivated violence of the Seventies. The growing number of associations dedicated to preserving the memory of the victims of political terrorism, and to seeking the truth about events such as the Piazza Fontana bombing and the Bologna massacre. These associations have allowed the memory of these events to remain alive in the collective mind of the nation. Regardless of the existence of these organizations, there is still a lack of awareness of the reasons why the *anni di piombo* took place in a country like Italy. Perhaps, one major problem with the production of novels and films about the *stragismo nero* is that viewers and readers aren't informed well enough on the major events that marked the *anni di piombo*, nor are they entirely aware of what neo-fascist terrorism was in the Seventies and early Eighties. It is highly probable that viewers not familiar with the events surrounding the Piazza Fontana bombing and the characters involved in that chapter of Italian history would not have been able to follow a movie like Giordana's *Romanzo di una strage*.

In addition to associations dedicated to the preservation of the memory of the *anni di piombo*, the task of educating the masses on the effects of political terrorism in Italy has been left to writers, directors, and playwrights. The reason why the analysis of the representations of politically motivated violence in fictional works is important is precisely because these artistic outputs are the primary, and often the only, sources that allow us to understand and to evaluate how the phenomenon of Left-wing and Right-wing terrorism have been engrained in the collective memory of the nation. The fact that

there is much less awareness and understanding of what constituted neo-fascist terrorism and the *stragismo nero* in Italy makes the reconsideration of novels such as Camon's *Occidente* and Castellaneta's *Ombre* highly important. Historical research on the subject of Right-wing terrorism is, of course, of great importance, but it is through fictional works like *Occidente*, as well as autobiographies such as Concutelli's *Io, l'uomo nero*, that the public is able to gain access to the psyche of the Right-wing terrorist and sense the inner motivations for actions like the bombings that marred post-war Italy.

In conclusion, Giacomo Sartori's comment regarding the relationship between literature and the *anni di piombo*, found in his article "Gli anni di piombo, Berlusconi, la lingua," can aid us in understanding the educational value of novels and other fictional works dealing with the phenomenon of political terrorism in Italy: "Ma perché non abbiamo [...] un grande e riuscito romanzo sugli anni di piombo, un romanzo che aggiunga qualcosa di radicalmente nuovo a quello che già sappiamo, che sfati i nostri pregiudizi?" (*Nazione indiana*, March 30th 2006). Perhaps, the problem with writing a novel, or directing a movie, that aims at representing the political violence of the *anni di piombo* is that it cannot be devoid of any prejudice or stereotypical interpretation of the events that marked that period of Italian history. In the case of the portrayal of Right-wing terrorism, we have seen how the tendency to stereotype and to focus on the most grotesque aspects of neo-fascism has prevented the production of more accurate representations of Right-wing terrorism, especially in the realm of cinema. There might not be a definitive novel about the *anni di piombo*, but if there is one fictional work that truly captures the essence of Right-wing terrorism, it is Camon's *Occidente*. Not only can Camon's novel allow us to have a better understanding of the true nature of neo-

fascist terrorism in Italy, but it can also serve as a launching pad for the exploration of the relationship between the fictional world and political terrorism, placing itself in the same category as other novels which deal with political terrorism, such as Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907) and William Luther Pierce's infamous *The Turner Diaries* (1978).³⁴ Both novels served as influences for some of the most notorious cases of homegrown terrorism in the United States. Conrad's novel was a source of inspiration for the Unabomber, Theodore Kaczynski, who was responsible for fabricating sixteen explosive devices and mailing them to unsuspecting victims, killing three of them. The Unabomber strongly identified with the character of the "Professor" in the novel, and felt that Conrad's novel contained the key to understanding his own psyche. For Kaczynski, Conrad's novel was so important that he felt the only way people could truly understand him was by reading *The Secret Agent*. David Foster, one of the investigators involved in the Unabomber case, for example, explains that Kaczynski felt that "his family could not understand him without reading Conrad" (140). Of course, this does not mean that Joseph Conrad advocated terrorism or political violence. The author drew inspiration from true events, such as the advent of anarchism in Europe and the bombing campaign perpetrated by subversive Left-wing groups at the beginning of the twentieth century. Conrad, perhaps, was able to sense certain aspects of the psyche of the terrorist, and was capable of successfully translating these characteristics in the fictional world.

The other famous case of the interlacing of fiction and reality is *The Turner Diaries*, which served as the inspiration for the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995. Two

³⁴ Pierce wrote the novel under the pseudonym Andrew MacDonald. In addition to being a writer and a physicist, Pierce was also the founder of the white supremacist organization *National Alliance*, which was based out of Hillsboro, West Virginia.

pages from Pierce's novel were even found in the car of Timothy McVeigh, the perpetrator of the bombing. Pierce's novel, unlike Camon and Conrad's works, was written as a political manifesto for the extreme Right in the United States. The central premise of the novel revolves around a racial war between whites and minorities, resulting in the victory of the white race over the "impure" ones. Another prominent theme in the book is that of a revolt against the Federal government, which is what inspired McVeigh to bomb the governmental building in Oklahoma City. Pierce himself was an extremist, having founded the white supremacist organization *National Alliance*, so this might explain why McVeigh, as well as others, have used his novel, *The Turner Diaries*, to justify their criminal acts. Perhaps, a more in depth analysis should be conducted on the figure of the terrorist in these novels, allowing for a comparative study of the different representations of the subversive in the fictional world.

In conclusion, Pasolini's assertions in his famous article published in 1974 in the *Corriere della sera* is still relevant to this day is pertinent to the scope of this research. Pasolini, in his article "Che cos'è questo golpe?," also known as "Il romanzo delle stragi," asserted that he knew who was responsible for the *stragismo nero*, not so much because he was in possession of a critical piece of evidence, but simply because he was a writer and an intellectual. Pasolini, in fact, states:

"Io so perché sono un intellettuale, uno scrittore, che cerca di seguire tutto ciò che succede , di conoscere tutto ciò che ne scrive, di immaginare tutto ciò che non si sa o che si tace; che coordina fatti anche lontani, che mette insieme i pezzi disorganizzati e frammentari di un intero coerente quadro politico, che ristabilisce la logica là dove sembrano regnare l'arbitrarietà, la follia e il mistero. [...] Tutto ciò fa parte del mio mestiere e dell'istinto del mio mestiere. [...] Credo inoltre che molti altri intellettuali e romanzieri sappiano ciò che so io in quanto intellettuale e romanziere" (89).

Essentially, for Pasolini, just as it is important to analyze historical facts and sources, it is also imperative that we study fictional works devoted to the *anni di piombo* because, though their intuitive approach, they offer new insights into the reality of one of the most traumatic chapters in the history of post-war Italy.

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