

## CHAPTER 6

# MEDIATIC SQUADRISM

## Myths, Symbols and Identity in Third Millennium Fascism

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### INTRODUCTION

When Douglas R. Holmes wrote the now classic book *Integral Europe* in 2000, he drafted a portrait of something like a European attitude towards traditions, lifestyle and the socialization of cultural forms that he named ‘integralism’. With this term, Holmes indicated a specific attitude towards solidarity, the daily practice of life and the consciousness of belonging to a specific cultural milieu. Meanwhile, by avoiding the use of the f-word, Holmes was able to chart and unveil the similarities and proximity between these attitudes and more conventional forms of social life and cultural signification. Hence the term integralism.

In 2016, however, when the crisis following the Syrian war marked a turning point in European willingness to accept refugees and face ‘the other’, ‘Fascism2’, an *Anthropology Today* editorial by Holmes, proposed a change in terminology. As confirmed in the 2019 *Focaal* article ‘Fascism at Eye Level’, Holmes now suggests that we take seriously a fascism ‘in and of our time’ with its own specific character and manifestations. This argument marks a shift in the anthropological use of the f-word to analyse contemporary political narratives, emotions and actions. What place does historical fascism still occupy in contemporary Europe, and especially in Italy? What major social and political changes have emerged since 2000, in keeping with Holmes’s intellectual journey?

Italy is a peculiar case study to observe the contemporary re-proposition and appropriation of a historical fascist legacy, not only by virtue of its being the country of birth of historical fascism, but also for its experience of the Second World War, liberation from Fascist dictatorship thanks to the partisan struggle and Allied forces, and then the collective post-war jump into the Cold War and new political balances at the moment of a new world division. Italy was again in the front line: the need to preserve the West against the advance of the Soviets made new alliances possible, and the collective representations of the past underwent changes in terms of the place and image of the country's history.

Post-Fascist fascism in Italy has a long tradition (Ignazi 1989, 1994; Ferraresi 1984, 1995) and played a significant role in the configuration of the Italian Republic and the strategy of tension (Cento Bull 2009). It is not a phenomenon emerging now as a simple reaction to the current economic and social crisis: Italian continuity with, appropriation of, reproduction of and struggle with historical and contemporary evolving forms of fascism is an issue entangled with the entire history of the Italian Republic, from 1946 to today (Pavone 1995; Bermani 1996).<sup>1</sup>

Nonetheless, various important features characterize the last twenty years, some of which are made visible by the lens suggested by Holmes. At first, the collapse of the Soviet Union and end of the Cold War paved the way for a whole set of identity crises: the crises of communist beliefs, class identities and the modern project of the nation state (Friedman 1994; Kalb 2011; Harvey 2015; Latour 1993). One of these was the crisis of antifascism (Luzzatto 2004) following the diffusion of what is called anti-antifascism in Italian public life, a political attitude that some historians date back to 1974 (Bernardi 2019). At the turn of the millennium during the process of European integration, therefore, memory politics surfaced and the commemoration of the victims of the Shoah was established as a founding collective memory of the Union, not only framing it from a specific perspective but also failing to foster a more contextual analysis of the place the Holocaust occupied within the broader history of Nazism and Fascism. Focusing only on the victims makes it possible to shift the process that generated those victims to a secondary place in collective representations, thus also obscuring the ideology supporting Nazi violence. A concrete and profound process of collectively dealing with the Fascist *Ventennio* has never taken place in Italy, and historians are still writing about the collective responsibility that this country has for forging the memory of its own past (Filippi 2020) as one in which Italians were 'only good people' ('Italiani brava gente'; Del Boca 2008).

In this complex turn-of-the-millennium moment when national borders were called into question and the Schengen area was imagined and built together with the 'Erasmus Generation' and the beginning of the

externalization of European frontiers, a twofold process of reconfiguring both the inside and the outside of Europe began to take place (Ciabbari 2020). As part of this process, history and its power to contribute to reconfiguring cultural identities (Friedman 1994) assumed a new role at the heart of the social crisis emerging after the neoliberal turn, that is, the crisis of national, religious and class-based feelings of belonging. At this point, the legacy of historical Fascism in Italy was able to take on a new place and present a new shape: in what Holmes has called fast-capitalist societies in which everything is moving more and more rapidly and people feel that the only thing left to them is dispossession, there was a shift from looking for something to possess to looking for something to belong to, something that would grant direction to one's actions. It is only by delving into the turn of the millennium in this complex social context that we can interrogate and try to understand the emergence of CasaPound, the first self-defined fascist movement to appear in Italy since 1945.

It was at this point that the f-word, 'fascism', could be claimed as a new, contemporary identity to draw on in facing the challenges of today. This movement thus represents not a reproduction of historical Fascism but a reservoir of new, updated ideological content capable of drawing on the past as a mythological imaginary to forge a contemporary community and sense of cohesion. This movement has proven adept at proposing identity-based content that participants use to fill the void of meaning left by the crisis of modernity we are still experiencing.

## HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL ELEMENTS OF CASAPOUND ITALIA

The CasaPound movement emerged in 2003 when a group of young activists occupied a seven-storey building in downtown Rome. The movement saw Ezra Pound as their mentor, and their name reflected a dual reference: on one side, their attention to the housing ('Casa') crisis in Italy, and, on the other, their adoption of Pound's name to denounce the banking system. CasaPound was an integral part of the Fiamma Tricolore political party, one of the galaxy of right-wing parties founded after the Italian political crisis in 1994 (Forlenza and Thomassen 2016).

The building they occupied was located near Rome's Termini railway station, in an ethnically diverse neighbourhood populated mainly by Chinese and Bengali immigrants – a fact that led them to declare the building the 'Italian Embassy'. It was not the only building they occupied; a few years later, members of the group also occupied an abandoned former train station, which they called 'Area 19, Postazione Nemica' ('Area 19, Enemy

Position') and used for concerts and other public events. The activists were eventually evicted from Area 19 in 2015, but the group held on to its so-called 'Italian Embassy', and indeed this building is still occupied by movement activists, currently serving as both the group's organizational headquarters and its symbolic home. In 2006, CasaPound activists established Blocco Studentesco, a branch devoted to forming collectives in high schools and universities and presenting candidates for student government elections. In 2008, the group broke with Fiamma Tricolore to become CasaPound Italia (hereafter CPI), an independent association with offices in many major Italian cities. Five years later, in 2013, CPI participated for the first time in local elections (after becoming an independent political party in 2012), and in 2016 elections the party placed several delegates on municipal councils. At that point they established an alliance with the Lega party led by Matteo Salvini, supporting his candidature in the following elections. In 2019, the political party disbanded, reverting to being an independent movement with a focus on influencing far-right youth culture via publications, clothing brands and music.

CPI's political agenda incorporates many points central to the Fascist tradition (Cammelli 2018), and its political platform is clearly inspired by Benito Mussolini's 1943 'Manifesto of Verona'. While the group has eliminated explicit references to the racist policies of the epoch, their original written agenda contained an entire paragraph copied verbatim from the 'Manifesto' (although they did not present it as a quotation), and was presented in that form in public elections without raising any judiciary issues, despite the fact that Fascism is officially outlawed in Italy (Heywood 2019).

In terms of its political style, CPI has succeeded in modernizing many of the proposals already present in the legacy of Italian neofascism. Most striking are the attention it grants to communication through multiple channels, including social networks; its construction of an original and novel language; and its use of provocative media campaigns such as 'squadrisimo mediatico' or 'media squadrim'. The innovation CPI seeks to inject into the world of neofascism is not a specific policy programme so much as a new way of doing politics. As their neofascist guru Gabriele Adinolfi has said, 'push away everything that is far right, and take back everything that is fascist' (Adinolfi 2008).

Alongside its political platform and presence, CPI also grew as a cultural movement based largely around the Oi! punk rock band ZetaZeroAlfa, whose members were among the first to occupy CPI's 'Italian Embassy'. ZetaZeroAlfa's frontman, Gianluca Iannone, leads both the musical group and the political movement, and CPI as a movement revolves chiefly around the band. While the 'Italian Embassy' is where the movement began, CPI's second occupation in Rome, 'Area 19, Enemy Position' – what Albanese et

al. (2014) call the ‘temple’ of ZetaZeroAlfa – became a site for the community to meet, take shape and grow. While the station was occupied, it played a central role in this third millennium fascist movement, hosting meetings and concerts alike. Within the movement, there is a focus on hierarchy and obedience, virtues that activists interpret as absolute trust in the rightness of their leader (I have developed these aspects in Cammelli 2015, 2017).

The process of becoming involved in the CPI community entails the same kind of dynamics described by George Mosse (1975) in relation to the ‘new politics’ of the Third Reich, wherein rites and rituals helped to generate and grant structure to the political agenda. While in the past such rites consisted of militaristic parades and marches, among third millennium fascists music, concerts and even shared fashion assume the role of key rituals that assert the leader’s authority, for instance through song lyrics. Nonetheless, as we shall see, such rituals rely on an image of historical Fascism as shaped by a mythological presence. Already in the past, in fact, the construction of mythological spectacle played a central place in the formation of Fascism. As Simonetta Falasca Zamponi (2003: 181) argues, such spectacle was pursued using symbols and myths as tools for Fascism to define itself, thus contributing to forging Fascist identity. In other words, civic rituals, monuments and public holidays offered myths and symbols that were instrumental for the self-representation of the nation (Mosse 1975: 145). Mythologies served to normalize and naturalize meanings by containing them in an apparently permanent space. In contemporary third millennium fascism, on the other hand, myth, rituals and ceremonies take on a new shape: they both deploy historical Fascism as a reference point of identity on which to build, as in what CPI activists call ‘mediatic squadristism’ (which I discuss below), and, as outlined by Furio Jesi (2011), they retain the use of symbols and mythologies as a primary tool of political and cultural expression, finding in the use of language, and specifically in what Jesi termed ‘mythological machines’, a source of eternal legitimization.

## VIOLENCE AND SQUADRISM

The Italian word *squadristismo* refers to the Fascist violence committed in the 1920s in which Mussolini’s earliest followers killed and tortured thousands of people – mainly political opponents – to aid Fascism in its rise to power (Franzinelli 2003, 2009; Millan 2014). According to Franzinelli (2009: 108), we cannot understand Fascism without a clear, well-defined reference to these squadrist actions characterizing the first years in which Mussolini and his supporters made their violent appearance on the scene of Italian society (1919–22).

Over time, squadristism became a historically rooted concept with the power to represent a myth in and of itself, and as such it has appeared as a mythological image in the evolution of the Italian neofascist political tradition as a whole.<sup>2</sup> Although, as Franzinelli (2003: 7) argues, squadrist violence was caught up with the civil war waged in Italy in the 1919–21 period and therefore with the crisis of the socialist movement, it has also been historically proven that violence – and specifically organized and systemically perpetrated squadrist violence – was decisive in enabling Mussolini to secure a position of power (ibid.: 8).

As a myth and identity-building point of reference, the word squadristism has made frequent appearances in the public discourse of third millennium fascists since the beginning of their political activity. They continue to claim and assert this phenomenon despite the fact that it is currently illegal.<sup>3</sup> In 2008, for instance, a prominent Italian neofascist published ‘Sorpasso Neuronico: Il Prolungato Omega della Destra Radicale e i Vaghi Bagliori dell’Alfa’ (Adinolfi 2008), a document critiquing the radical right that was quickly adopted as a manifesto outlining how neofascists should act and what they should do. The author was Gabriele Adinolfi, former leader of Terza Posizione, one of the most well-known neofascist movements of the 1970s and a group that was involved in multiple acts of violence, murders and bombings at the time. Adinolfi fled Italy in the 1980s and spent twenty years in England to avoid serving jail time. He returned to Italy in 2002 and has since played the role of ‘spiritual father’ to the CPI movement. According to ‘Sorpasso Neuronico’:

Everything that makes up the far right should be destroyed and everything that makes up fascism recovered. This does not mean, of course, simply opposing ideal concepts and forms of ideological conditioning; rather, the right must do an about-face, gather its forces, take on consciousness, express and acknowledge honest rather than inverted hierarchies, completely change its relationship to politics and politicians, combine genius and substance and take the field as an active minority who enters into the arena as a squadrist, not an ideologized missionary.<sup>4</sup>

In his manifesto, Adinolfi explains how CPI ought to proceed, indicating a strategy, organizational model and even a style. This was not the first time that the word squadristism appeared in this sphere, however. The president of CPI had already asserted the crucial role played by this term and its associated image in the political organization and identity of CPI. On 7 April 2006, CPI held a demonstration in the streets of Rome involving a truck followed by approximately twenty cars and scooters. The cavalcade made its way across Rome for the entire day accompanied by ‘Roman’ (Fascist) salutes, chants and songs. In its coverage, one of the main Italian newspapers (*La Repubblica*, 7 April 2006) described this protest as characterized by a

'squadrist style'. In the same article, the secretary of CPI, Simone di Stefano, declared that 'this is a way of declaring our fascist identity clearly.' He went on to specify the contemporary character of the protest, however, saying that this procession had 'a very different climate than there was in the 1970s: smiles, Roman salutes and a carefree atmosphere'. In 2012, CPI produced a t-shirt bearing the slogan 'Perfetto stile squadrista camuffati da rock star' (a perfect squadrist style disguised as rock star style), once again asserting the image of and historical reference to squadristism as if it were a style.

In historical Fascism, 'squadristism was not only an armed force, it was also a mentality, a political culture, a lifestyle based on the exaltation of violence, manhood and martial virtues' (Gentile 2000: 53). Third millennium fascism, in contrast, asserts squadristism as a style first and foremost: a style of protesting, a style of organization and a style of music. Just as in historical Fascism, however, this tendency to represent squadrist and violent actions under the guise of carefree, playful political activity neither eludes nor erases the fact that violent actions do take place (Franzinelli 2003: 35). In this case, however, activists are not only asserting a connection with past squadrist activity and historical Fascism; indeed, by enacting this mythological narration of the past, they have been able to establish a concrete presence in contemporary political life and incorporate squadrist violence into the imaginary of the present-day movement.

This case illustrates the capacity of myth to function as a source of legitimization and the way that history permeates contemporary political identity and activities (Kapferer 2012: 19). Through their definition, CPI activists explicitly reference historical Fascism and its squadrist violence, thus illustrating the mythological function of history and the way that 'the representation of the past [is] linked to the establishment of an identity in the present' (Friedman 1992: 195). Nonetheless, squadristism goes beyond style. Indeed, this process of representation transforms the Fascist past into a legendary history, myth and political culture 'giving direction to action and firing the passions' (Kapferer 2012: 4).

CPI organizes rock concerts and these are important moments of consolidation for the movement, given that CPI leader Gianluca Iannone is also the lead singer of the rock band ZetaZeroAlfa. These concerts are the staging grounds for a very interesting phenomenon, something the participants refer to as *Cinghiamattanza* (belt-beating). This term comes from a song by ZetaZeroAlfa and, while this particular song is being performed, militants take off their belts and begin to hit each other with them, as the lyrics encourage them to do: '*Cinghiamattanza!* First, I take off my belt / two, the dance begins / Three: I aim well / four *cinghiamattanza* / First, I take off my belt / two, the dance begins / Three: I aim well / four *cinghiamattanza*.' While the group plays this song, the leader sings about fighting with belts

and the activists in the pit below follow his directions, striking each other with their belts. Activism in this case goes beyond merely supporting the cause; it also entails physical involvement, pushing the activists to engage in the act of beating one another. This ‘symbolic violence’ – as one CPI sympathizer called it – is perhaps best understood as an expression of the profound degree of involvement characterizing this specific political culture. It is also a vivid example of the way violence extends beyond mere style or political rhetoric to permeate the material lives of activists. In this violence-drenched environment, in order to participate activists must use their bodies to express their commitment to the movement (as in Wieviorka’s (1998: 5) discussion of ‘martyrisme’). Music and the corporality of violence are brought together in this case on and through activists’ bodies. Violence becomes a symbol of the concreteness of fascist political identity, the means through which a myth takes form in the present.

Framing squadristism as a style and violence as mere symbolic action characteristic of group identity-building processes fails to accurately represent and position the real, concrete physical violence against human beings that we find in third millennium fascism. In describing squadrist activity at the outset of the Fascist era, Franzinelli (2003: 35) writes that ‘Fascist brutality had a taste for mockery, but – under the goliardic hood of some of its manifestations – it powerfully affected [its] opponents, subjected as they were to the constant threat of shows of force by means of a potential violence that exploded into concrete action from one moment to the next’. The same could be said of today’s CPI activists as well, as we shall soon see from several examples.

CPI reached the front pages of media outlets in November 2008 when a large grassroots student movement held protests throughout the country against the ‘Gelmini reform’, an education bill designed to introduce significant changes in the Italian schooling system. CPI activists infiltrating the protests attacked students with iron bars in an effort to make their way to the head of the demonstration in Piazza Navona. In 2008, clashes between student collectives and CPI were routine in Rome. In Milan, thirty CPI activists burst into the offices of Radio Popolare in a ‘mediatic squadristic’<sup>25</sup> incursion meant to convey their disapproval of the critical statements pronounced the night before during a radio broadcast that had targeted the core of CPI. A similar action also occurred in 2008 at the central office of Italy’s national television network in Rome. There, CPI activists threatened the director of the programme *Chi l’ha visto*, holding him responsible for showing images of CPI not in line with their own narrative of the clashes with student protesters in Piazza Navona. On both occasions, they defined their actions as ‘mediatic squadristism’. Violence defined in this way is one of the predominant manifestations of this present-day movement’s continuity and innovation in



relation to historical Fascism: on one hand we have the squadrist violence characterizing the beginnings of Fascism, while on the other we have the mediatic assertion of such violence as a merely symbolic act.

## MYTHS AND IDEAS WITHOUT WORDS

If squadristism can be seen to represent a historical point of reference with the power to not only foster identity but also grant operational direction to activists' involvement and actions, I would argue that CPI's transformation of the historical narrative of the Fascist past into a mythological image with the power to inform a shared complex of values constitutes a similar process. This transformation is made possible by the role that words assume in CPI language, a role quite similar to what Furio Jesi (2011) describes in presenting his investigations into the 'culture of the right'.

Jesi coined the term 'mythological machines' to refer to the images used in political language, images that are not themselves myths but rather images of myths, 'something that by its very nature points to something that cannot be seen' (Jesi 2001: 116). Jesi has argued that these 'mythological machines' lie at the foundations of today's right-wing culture; they are functional to the type of language used in this political culture, described by Jesi as 'ideas without words':

The language used is, first of all, made of ideas without words, where a few words or phrases are enough: what matters is the closed circulation of the 'secret' – myths and rituals – that the speaker has in common with the audience. (Jesi 2011: 27)

What characterizes this language is a rhetoric full of images in which 'the aesthetics of politics' takes on the primary role described by Mosse (1975: 25): that 'force that served to solder together myths, symbols and the sentiments of the masses.' The reference to squadristism reflects a political use of words in which 'aesthetics becomes an integral part of politics and the economy' (Sternhell et al. 1989: 26). Holmes (2000: 181) argues that the power of integralist political style lies precisely in its 'intimacy', that is, its way of 'framing experience, acting as if it were indistinguishable from a specific life-style'. In this case, it casts the act of engaging in a violent clash with other groups as something that signifies – in itself – something more than the act of violence itself.

This is an example of the role that violence plays in political action, as captured by Wieviorka (2003), where violence serves to compensate for the incoherence between a political programme and an ideological statement. As argued by Jesi, in right-wing political culture, there is a rift between political practice and ideology, a 'dynamic vacuum' (Cavaglion 2007). In the same

way, the language of ‘ideas without words’ revolves around a lack of homology between behavioural alternatives and ideological alternatives (Jesi 2011: 112). Viewed in this light, rituals (such as concerts) and myths (such as squadrist) constitute the grounds for mobilizing the minds of third millennium fascists. These practices could be seen as a reinterpretation of the ideas that Georges Sorel, the revolutionary union leader, asserted a century ago: Sorel was appreciated by Mussolini and has been identified by many scholars of Fascism as a pivotal figure for understanding Mussolini’s transition from Socialism to Fascism precisely because of Sorel’s arguments about the importance of mythical thought (Sternhell et al. 1989: 112–14).

As Jesi has stated, when a language is based on the ‘mythological machine’, ideas cannot be anything but empty containers; it is only myths, and the symbols connected to them, that have the capacity to mobilize minds. Symbols are a function of this ‘flexibility’ that distinguishes third millennium fascism in that they are ‘susceptible to infinite exegetical readings’ (Jesi 2011: 48). In the case of CPI, the mythic and symbolic use of references to Fascist history and squadrist practices acts as a mythological machine capable of building community and gathering the activists around the leaders’ will in a cohesive way, making participants’ adherence to the political group and their immersion in the community a deeply emotional experience. As with other integralist movements around Europe, affective practices hold a primary place in shaping this belonging (Bangstad et al. 2019; Pilkington 2016). The process through which the words and political rhetoric of this movement are deployed to grant meaning and sense to its concrete actions not only illustrates the role that myth plays in guiding and orienting politics; also and especially, it illustrates the totalitarian tendency of fascism, which, like forms of nationalism, functions at a profound level (Kapferer 2012: 19).

## CONCLUSIONS

Emilio Gentile (2019) has recently pointed out the perils of what he calls writing a-historiography, that is, the practice of comparing different historical époques to identify similarities and continuity with the Fascist past; such scholarship, he warns, risks rendering the f-word extremely banal and empty. Nonetheless, seeing as there are currently individuals who like to call themselves ‘third millennium fascists’, should anthropologists not focus on the native point of view instead of engaging in the everlasting battle of naming? We need to take seriously the other’s point of view, trying to understand what fascism means for the people who use this label and, more broadly, what it means across the multiple countries where it has resurfaced in public discourse. Here I have argued that contemporary forms of fascism are not a

mere reproduction of its historical ideological form but instead a new phenomenon emerging from the social crisis of the contemporary moment. In this new millennium, historical Fascism assumes a mythic and symbolic role in helping to build identity and form community.

I have tried to give a glimpse of two instruments used by third millennium fascists to bring the historical past into the present and give it a contemporary shape. The first of these is their forging a connection with the past through a mythological representation of history capable of producing a reinvigorated set of ideas and practices today. By asserting and refreshing the myth of squadristism through the invention of what they have called ‘mediatic squadristism’, CPI activists help to build third millennium fascist identity as rooted in historical Fascism. This attachment to the past is also expressed by their symbolic use of language, as well as the place they grant myth and especially what Jesi termed ‘mythological machines’ at the foundations of what he defined as ‘right-wing culture’. Building on Jesi’s insights, we see that, if mediatic squadristism is an element characteristic of CPI, using the concept of mythological machines may help us to understand the extension of this aspect of political language well beyond CPI activists alone to Italian society as a whole:

In *Culture of the Right*, he argues that all monumental rhetoric is implicitly right-wing even if it has left-wing content: even the celebratory and uncritical myth of the Resistance or the ‘most explosive leftism’ of revolutionary movements fall within the realm of ‘ideas without words’. During an *L’Espresso* interview in 1979, Jesi defined the right in these terms: ‘the culture within which the past is a kind of homogenized mash that can be molded and maintained in a certain shape in whatever way is most useful. The culture in which a religion of death or even a religion of the exemplary dead prevails. The culture in which it is declared that there are some values, indicated in uppercase, that must not be questioned: first and foremost Tradition and Culture but also Justice, Liberty, and Revolution. In short, a culture made up of authority and mythological security about the norms of knowing, teaching, commanding and obeying. Most cultural heritage, even the heritage of those who, today, have absolutely no desire to be right-wing at all, is right-wing cultural residue.’<sup>6</sup> (Jesi 2011: 287, in Manera 2012: 127)

Just as Jesi saw the diffusion of this habit in Italian society of deploying symbols and style through language as a tool that distorts and falsifies social and political representation, Holmes (2000: 200) similarly suggests that it is ‘only by acknowledging the proximity of integralist ideals to more conventional political and cultural aspirations [that we can] assess their intricate nature and their abiding danger’.

Anthropologists should try to find meaning instead of arguing over definitions, to search out lowercase fascism as a heuristic device (Holmes 2019) and a violent human reaction to present-day social crises. Nonetheless,

fascism is not monstrous, inhuman or alien in any way. It is a phenomenon wholly entangled with modernity (Bauman 2010) and the way that we use reason to justify multiple forms of supremacy. Viewing fascists as monsters does not help us to understand fascism as a human and social process. Even in its new, contemporary version, fascism is not a spirit or ghost; rather, it is a concrete political actor living in the complexity of the social world with its specific who, what, when and how (Paxton 2004). Looking at the extreme others inside our own societies could help bridge the abyss built by a hundred years of ‘othering’ the fascist self as a monster that exists only in history or outside of our own societies. Having the courage to explore the diffusion of fascist style may entail staring into the abyss and accepting a dangerous insight: that searching for fascism, gazing at the extreme other, could lead us to interrogate our own societal proximity with the fascist self. And that, as anthropology teaches us, borders separate but they also unite, and a mirror may indicate a path forward.

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## NOTES

1. Cf. Heywood in this volume for an updated ethnographic exemplar of the conflict between the history of fascism and its legacy in the present.
2. The definition in the *Treccani* encyclopaedia reads: ‘Since the 1960s, the term neosquadrista has been used to talk about the theorizing and practice of violence by extreme right-wing groups that suggested once again a reorganization of the disbanded Fascist party, taking on its attitudes, symbols and behaviour.’ Retrieved 13 February 2024 from <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/squadrista/>.
3. Any reconstitution of the Fascist Party is a crime, as specified in multiples codes and laws (XII disposizione della Costituzione; Legge Scelba; Legge Mancini). Since the word squadrista is directly related to Mussolini’s Fascist Party, even though it is not explicitly referenced in the Italian penal code, it is assumed that the practice of

squadristism may be persecuted on the grounds that it is linked to the reconstitution of the Fascist Party.

4. 'Bisogna distruggere tutto quello che c'è di estrema destra e recuperare tutto quello che c'è di fascista. Il che non significa, beninteso, che si tratta banalmente di opporre concezioni ideali a condizionamenti ideologici ma che si deve far perno su di sé, far forza, acquisire coscienza, esprimere e riconoscere gerarchie erette e non invertite, cambiare del tutto la relazione verso la politica e il politico, unire genialità e consistenza e mettersi in gioco come minoranza attiva che entra in lizza da squadrista e non da missionaria ideologizzata.'
5. It is important to stress that 'mediatic squadristism' is an emic category, a definition that CPI's activists coined to describes their actions.
6. 'In *Cultura di destra* egli sostiene che ogni retorica monumentale è implicitamente di destra anche se ha contenuti di sinistra: anche il mito celebrativo e acritico della Resistenza o il 'sinistrese più dinamitardo' dei movimenti rivoluzionari rientrano nell'ambito delle 'idee senza parole'. Durante un'intervista de l'Espresso nel 1979 Jesi ha definito la destra in questi termini: 'la cultura entro la quale il passato è una sorta di pappa omogeneizzata che si può modellare e mantenere in forma nel modo più utile. La cultura in cui prevale una religione della morte o anche una religione dei morti esemplari. La cultura in cui si dichiara che esistono valori non discutibili, indicati da parole con l'iniziale maiuscola, innanzitutto Tradizione e Cultura ma anche Giustizia, Libertà, Rivoluzione. Una cultura insomma fatta di autorità e sicurezza mitologica circa le norme del sapere, dell'insegnare, del comandare e dell'obbedire. La maggior parte del patrimonio culturale, anche di chi oggi non vuole essere affatto di destra, è residuo culturale di destra.'

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