Futurism has long been recognized as an important and influential artistic movement, while its contribution to the political culture of the twentieth century has often been characterized as bizarre or amusing — of little consequence after the interventionist struggle during the first world war, or once the fascist movement had become established.1 This judgment is certainly correct as far as any direct Futurist influence upon the political events of their time was concerned, and yet it rests upon a very narrow definition of politics: instrumental and institutional as against the thrust of political culture. Political culture here means politics as the expression of a lifestyle, an attitude towards the totality of human experience.

When the artistic importance of Futurism is acknowledged but its political relevance denied, the aesthetic is torn from its political frame of reference. Yet culture and politics cannot be so readily separated. It was precisely because of its cultural orientation that Futurism was able to make an important contribution to modern politics.

While our political culture has been determined to a great extent by social struggles and political necessity, both modern culture and politics have been haunted by a spectre not so easily understood through the use of traditional historical concepts: how the masses of the population might be integrated into society and politics. The French and Industrial Revolutions raised this problem as more men and women than ever before lived in concentrated urban spaces, easily roused by political appeals, mobilized as a part of new citizen-armies which came into being during the wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon.

Nationalism was the first modern movement which attempted to integrate all citizens into society and politics, and the way it went about its task was to determine much of the future. From the very beginning, national movements allowed no separation between

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politics and culture. They wanted to possess the entire man and brooked no rival allegiances. The very metaphors used by the volunteers during the wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon to describe their relationship to the fatherland illustrated this totality: they were its children; it was the mother and bride — nowhere do we find the nation confined, exiled as it were, to the political sphere. The national anthems as part of the self-representation of the nation can furnish additional evidence. While national anthems focused upon a king or emperor had stressed his fame and glory, the new national anthems emphasized brotherhood and the pre-eminent claims of the nation over the individual.

To be sure, liberalism attempted to build its politics upon the autonomy of the individual without denying the needs of the nation, and its balancing act between politics and the maintenance of individuality was by no means unsuccessful. Yet during serious economic, political and social crises the demand for a totality of life was heard loud and clear until it managed to restrict effectively the space in which individuals could determine their own fate. Just as in earlier and present crises people flocked to the Church, so they were apt to look for security and shelter in the civic religion of nationalism — and as in their churches they saw the meaning of their own life represented by the symbols which surrounded them, hell as well as paradise, so they reached a new level of perception through national symbols and ceremonial.

Futurism cannot be torn from this context, and its so-called political statements must be evaluated as an integral part of the Futurist’s literary and artistic purpose. Certainly, the Futurist political programme of 1918 sought to make a distinction between political and artistic Futurism. But it did so because the Futurist avant-garde was thought to have outstripped the artistic sensibility of the people. This sensibility, so the Futurists thought, was essential for the political regeneration of Italy. Solely the artist through the fire of his intuitive genius, F. T. Marinetti tells us, can regenerate the nation and prepare it for the coming Futurist age.

This programme reflects the changes of human perception which determined many of the attitudes and fears of the age when Futurism was born, for not only the spectre of integration haunted modern culture and politics, but also the new speed of time, the rapid change in the pace of life which the Futurist Manifestoes capture so well. The Futurist’s joy in the simultaneity of experience summarized the change which, as our own century opened, was pressing in upon all
sides and was symbolized by the revolution of communications: railways, the automobile and even the bicycle — the culture of space and time was being transformed. Not only the Futurists saw in this revolution a challenge opposed to the present order of things. For example, the 1870 constitution of the first French bicyclist association called for a struggle against routine as the enemy of all progress. The earliest reaction to the telephone was that one could now be in two places at one and the same time, while in 1889 the English Prime Minister Lord Salisbury marvelled that the telegraph (an Italian invention which aroused the special enthusiasm of Futurists) ‘. . . combined almost in one moment . . . the opinions of the whole intelligent world’. Futurism took up and heightened already present perceptions of a world in rapid motion, a new dynamic which must be taken into account when assessing its influence upon political culture.

This revolution in time was accompanied by a revolution in visual communication: not only through the work of avant-garde artists, but also by the widespread use of photography and the beginnings of the cinema. They too seemed to involve a simultaneity of experience: being in several places at the same time, unsettling for most people who, before the turn of the century, had lived in a more one-dimensional world.

The new speed of time stood in close relationship to the need for integration with a community able to provide some immutability to life — to pull down a piece of eternity into the rush and bustle of time — while giving new meaning to life itself. But did this mean that such a community had to be rooted, static, communicating a feeling of belonging through organic growth analogous to nature and history? Traditionally nationalism had presented itself this way, condemning all that was rootless and which refused to pay its respect to ancient or medieval traditions. Without doubt, at one point nationalism itself had been a movement directed against the establishment, but by the end of the nineteenth century it had become firmly established. Nationalism had its own dynamic, but this was increasingly directed towards outward expansion and against internal enemies. The new speed of time, the dynamic which threatened to escape all control, was caught up and tamed by its eternal verities. Nationalism seemed to have become the cement and not the yeast of society.

Such nationalism was a reactionary ideology which apparently slowed down change and restrained the onslaught of modernity. Surely this static quality enhanced the success of this dominant nationalism as an integrative force of diverse groups of the
population. Yet it was the renewed dynamic, the appropriation of the new speed of time by another kind of nationalism symbolized by the Futurists, which must make us revise our approach to the means through which this integration was accomplished. While most twentieth-century nationalism retained its role as an immutable and unchanging force, the repository of eternal and unchanging truth, a different nationalism, as we shall see—just as enthusiastic and single-minded—integrated men and masses through non-integration. Modern technology was incorporated into such a nationalist system as a vital national symbol, and the individual rather than the masses supposedly stood at its centre.

The individual was not tied to the weight of past history or the product of organic growth. He could take off into uncharted spaces; proclaiming, for example, Italy’s glory through personal drive and energy. Yet he must also be disciplined, integrated with like-minded men, not through a set world view, but through a personal and political style: a way of perceiving the world, of acting and behaving based upon the sober and unsentimental acceptance of the new speed of time, as well as upon a love of combat and confrontation. The end product was not the resurrection of past ideals, but a so-called new man—symbolic both of modernity and of the power and strength of the nation. This new man of Futurism, then, was not properly speaking an autonomous individual—though he was given freedom of choice—but part of an élite of ‘supermen’ voluntarily sharing an identical attitude towards life, discipline and claims to national leadership. Individualism meant possessing the strength of will to rise above the mass of men in order to accept Futurism and its consequences. Such an ideal catered successfully to youthful desires to be part of a community, and yet to retain their individual identity.

When, in the spring of 1934, Filippo Marinetti visited the Germany of Adolf Hitler, he was greeted in the name of the National Socialist Writers’ Union by Gottfried Benn, then Germany’s greatest poet. After the obligatory reference to the Führer, Benn praised the Futurist’s love of danger, rebellious spirit, his joy in speed and lack of fear. He went on to describe the fundamental contribution of Futurism to fascism as the black shirt (whose real origins had no connection with Futurism) — ‘the colour of terror and death’ — the battle-cry ‘a noi’ and the Giovinezza. Benn concluded by exclaiming that Marinetti had demonstrated the immortality of the artist through his contribution to the political ideals of the nation. Here fascism was defined through its style and discipline, ‘the toughness of
creative life’,¹⁰ — to quote Benn once again — that resolute sobriety which was said to constitute the essence of both artistic and political form. Political style was substituted for ideology in the name of a new nation which looked to the future without the burdens of the past. This substitution was crucial to the fascist style, though Futurism in alliance with fascism pursued its own cause and created its particular propaganda, which was not always identical with that of fascism. Nevertheless, the artist was given a heightened importance in Futurist and fascist political culture — an immortality as Benn put it — though he himself was excluded from making a contribution to nazi ideals. National Socialism was based upon traditional nationalism and used its political style to an effect different from that of the Futurists: not as a substitute for historical memories, but in order to make the past come alive as a model for the present and future.

Yet Italian fascism, once in power, was not able to share Benn’s Futurist model of politics; a more solid integrating force was needed than the wearing of a black shirt, a battle-cry, an anthem and the example of an élite of so-called new men. Nevertheless, the Italian fascist political style attempted to concretize the glorious past even while calling for the new man of the future. Partly because of this ambiguity, some of the most creative artistic minds in Europe were attracted to Italian fascism: men like W. B. Yeats, Ezra Pound or T. S. Elliot — to cite merely some English examples — while National Socialism was devoid of all literary and artistic talent once Benn had left the party.¹¹ These men looked for the discipline of classical form and found it in the kind of fascism which Benn had praised. Young French intellectuals like Robert Brasillach misinterpreted the nazi ceremonial which they admired to fit their own undisciplined and youthful drives, their love of style rather than ideological imperatives. This emphasis upon style rather than ideology was captured by Léon Degrelle, the youthful Rexist leader, when he called fascist dictators the ‘poets of revolution’."²¹

To be sure, these intellectuals were deluded about the course fascist regimes were to follow. No nation could reign in the new speed of time and provide an integrating force merely through discipline and political style. Yet the Futurists were highly successful as propagandists for their own cause, using all means of publicity in order to attract attention. Their soirées perhaps served this purpose best: grand happenings in a rented theatre involving the audience as participants; being insulted and repaying in kind. Such evenings included political statements — for example, in 1914, eight Austrian
flags were burned on the stage — as well as lectures and demonstrations of Futurist art. The audience at these evenings cut across the social spectrum: bourgeois, students, workers and intellectuals. These serata were one of the chief means through which Futurism became one of the first popular avant-garde movements. More important from our point of view, Marinetti’s statement of 1920 that while we do not live in a terrestrial paradise, economic hell can be overcome through the staging of innumerable artistic festivals, anticipates the success and function of much of the political liturgy of European fascism.

Nevertheless, popularizing art and helping people to escape briefly from the routine of their lives was different from the attempt to mobilize the masses in order to take over power or the use made of such a liturgy once power had been attained. The Futurists themselves realized this fact in their attempt to create a political movement after the war: more concrete and continuous signposts were needed. But for the Futurists these did not include the past as an example for the present; instead they sought to institutionalize the avant-garde of a youthful élite. With the example of Marinetti and D’Annunzio before them, young writers like Robert Brasillach in France could be excused for believing that the avant-garde artist had a role to play within the political culture of Italian fascism, that the gulf between art and politics might finally be bridged.

This nationalism, then, was not weighted down by ‘volkish’ ideals; it accepted technology and with it a new speed of time, using the forces unleashed by modernity in order to integrate men and nations. The political culture of Futurism was expressed through a political style which sought to propel nationalism into modernity, to give it clarity and form without restraining its dynamic drive. Once this nationalism had been disentangled from volkish nationalism, the Futurists became part of a more general movement which sought to gain dominance for the new as over the old nationalism. The first world war was a crucial phase in the development of both nationalisms: though the traditional was apt to emphasize the defensive nature of war together with its glory and challenge, the other saw the war as the beginning of a permanent revolution, as a good in itself. These attitudes were not exclusive. The radical right in much of Europe after the war contained both nationalisms in an uneasy alliance.

When Marinetti called the war a guerra festa, he was articulating the sentiments of volunteers all over Europe who had rushed to the
colours as war was declared, seeking to transcend the boredom and responsibilities of their daily lives. These volunteers created a myth of their war experience which, with its ideals of camaraderie and sacrifice, influenced the politics of post-war Europe. After the war, the radical right broke out of its ghetto everywhere, organizing veterans and attempting to become a mass movement.

Political liturgy centred upon myth and the symbol became firmly rooted as an integral part of the post-war right-wing political culture, with its mass meetings, its choreographing of crowds and the creation of the proper solemn and monumental environment. All this had been in the making for a century as part and parcel of modern nationalism. However, the Futurist ideal of the political avant-garde stripped it of most of its ideological weight. The first world war gave Futurism an added momentum even as it encouraged the use of political liturgy by the radical right: where the mainstream of the right had sought to convey security and order as well as a certain dynamic, the nationalist right which the Futurists represented rejected the appeal to normalcy and focused upon the insecurity of perpetual war. It took concepts like manliness, energy, violence and death, and sought to tear them loose from the moorings of history and immutability in which more traditionalist nationalist movements had anchored them. Here modernity was again in conflict with tradition, nostalgia with the avant-garde.

Death constantly preoccupied the Futurists — especially after the first world war — and it was a test of their attitude towards life. During and after the war the unprecedented experience of mass death was made generally acceptable for the nation, tamed, as it were, through the cult of the fallen soldier with its constant analogy to Christ's death and resurrection. Death and resurrection were central to the iconography of military cemeteries as national shrines of worship, just as the ordered rows of graves in their natural setting also helped to transcend death in war.\(^\text{16}\) Futurists demanded confrontation instead: death was to be a test of self-discipline devoid of any transcendence. Sacrificing one's life for the fatherland was not beautiful or mystical, but must be taken for granted. In 1915, Marinetti wrote that 'we commemorate our dead in shorthand; in this way we can avoid smelling their stench for too long.'\(^\text{17}\) For the advocates of heroism in life and war, there was nothing heroic about the war dead. Futurism, Marinetti had written earlier, exalts life and ignores death.\(^\text{18}\) Here Futurism demonstrated a bloody-mindedness, a calculated brutality, which through its rhetoric was transformed
into a demand for battle without quarter, a fight to the finish — an extremism which at times outdid the vocabulary which fascists or nazi applied to their own enemies.

The young French fascist, Robert Brasillach, saw the attitude towards death which the Futurists advocated as central to the fascist myth, and pointed to the example set in the Spanish Civil War by the eighteen-year-old son of the commander of the Alcazar of Toledo — surrounded by Republican troops — who faced death rather than urge his father to surrender the fortress. The son was allowed to telephone his father in order to press him to surrender. ‘What is it, little one?’ the commander asked. ‘Nothing at all,’ the son replied. ‘They say they will shoot me if you don’t surrender.’ ‘You know how I feel,’ the father replied. ‘If it is certain that they will shoot you, commend your soul to God, give a thought to Spain and another to Christ.’ Shortly thereafter the son was shot. (Even now the telephone on which this conversation took place is displayed like a shrine in the fortress.) It was the matter-of-fact and unsentimental attitude towards his own death, and the father’s equally matter-of-fact assumption that the son’s sacrifice was necessary, which impressed fascists and National Socialists alike.

Such an ideal of death for the fatherland can also be found among certain youthful members of the fascist and National Socialist movements after the seizure of power. Here it was the often proclaimed principle of hardness towards one’s self and others, facing death as part of one’s regular duty, not to be sentimentalized but taken for granted, which led to attitudes parallel to those which the Futurists had put forward. Yet these attitudes were confined to a small and distinct minority — youths who thought of themselves as leaders of the future — such as, for example, those adolescents who attended the Nazi Party boarding schools. After they graduated from these schools, such young men tended to join the German army or the Waffen-SS before and during the second world war. Thus, death was redefined from its traditional place in nationalist mythology as sober and devoid of sentiment, a test of individual discipline which was supposed to unite the fascist élite. Instead, fascism in power identified with the traditional ideal of sacrificial death: in 1938 decorating the hall devoted to the memory of war heroes at the war cemetery of Redipuglia with a frieze showing a fallen soldier lying in the arms of Christ. Here, at the very centre of the worship of the civil religion, tradition triumphed over a new Futurist and fascist political style.
The ideal of manliness, always a part of the nationalist mystique, was an important metaphor through which Futurists perceived their dynamic, the active and energetic élan of their movement. Marinetti endowed the beauty of speed with a militant masculinity. I have shown elsewhere the close connection between nationalism and manliness in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The masculine ideal as the principle of creativity put forward by Otto Weininger in his obtuse and racist *Sex and Character* (1906) had an immediate following among the radical Italian right, including important Futurists. They took from this really quite un-Futurist book whatever they needed. His exaltation of virility opposed to the feminine also struck a chord in the nationalist journals *Lacerba* and *La Voce*, interpreted as contempt for the average human being by a youthful manly élite. Moreover, the clear and unambiguous distinction which Weininger drew between the sexes, and which encompassed moral and ethical judgement, drew those tight, clear lines which were of the essence to the political style of Futurist nationalism. Here there was no room for an 'indefinite wobble', as Ezra Pound described liberalism and parliamentary democracy, but clarity of form and decisiveness prevailed. Masculinity meant combat, and, in Germany as well as Italy or France, the ideal male after the first world war was a warrior represented by classical figures of youths on war memorials.

I have drawn my examples not only from the Italian Futurists, but from men of other nations as well, in order to illustrate the general appeal of this kind of politics. However, if the Italian and French fascist concepts of manliness were similar, they differed from that current among the nazis. The Futurists loved brutal sincerity, combat, and what they saw as rough masculine energy, but this did not lead them to abandon, in theory at least, individualism in favour of the tightly-knit male camaraderie characteristic of the nazi SA or SS. Their emphasis was upon integration through disintegration, each man practising in an autonomous manner what he regarded as the fascist style and discipline. This new man, as Marinetti defined him, was a disciple of the engine, the enemy of books, a believer in personal experience. Moreover, he was the product not of an inherited culture, but of his own activity — disciplined and lucid, sober and contemptuous of death. This new man was no worshipper of ancient beauty, like Nietzsche's Superman, but for all his individuality, he practised his discipline and style in the service of the nation. The acceptance of modernity was
shaped through faith in the power and glory of Italy. But at what price?

The search for a new man was a part of post-war political culture, not only a concern of the Futurists, but also of Oswald Spengler's barbarians or Ernst Jünger's workers. Once again they share certain traits with the Italian Futurists: the love of war and danger, the repudiation of the past and of books, and the self-discipline which they imposed upon themselves. All these new men are the result of the war experience: the front-line soldier — a new race of men, as Ernst Jünger called them — energy come alive.29 Yet it is precisely at this point that the two nationalisms met in an unholy alliance. The new man of the Futurists, and that of Italian fascism, inspired by their vision, was confined to a certain style and discipline, while his actions had a definite goal and prescribed conduct. He may have been imagined as energy come alive, but it was well controlled and disciplined energy. This avant-garde could not escape into orbits of its own choosing. It was tied to a certain definition of courage and manliness, fulfilling the destiny of the nation. Its integration through disintegration resulted in an ideal type rather than in ideal individuals.

The evolution of Ernst Jünger's thought in Germany from an emphasis upon the individual to the construction of just such a type is relevant in this context, symptomatic of the potential for depersonalization which existed even in that nationalism which accepted modernity and sought to transcend the weight of history. Jünger's writings during the war seemed to concentrate upon individual experience, the role of self-discipline, of energy, and the exaltation of battle. In his famous war diary, The Storm of Steel (1919), Jünger denied that infantry battles had degenerated into impersonal butchery. 'On the contrary, today more than ever, it is the individual that counts.'30 The challenge of battle created foolhardy fighters. This is not dissimilar to Marinetti's exaltation of war as both an individualistic and a national experience. Yet, as the book was being revised after the war, Jünger began to strike a different note: the condition of battle depersonalized man; stripped to his primeval instincts, personal feeling had to yield when machinery got the upper hand.31 Now death in battle was symbolic of an individualism destined for extinction. A new man will arise out of this war experience (Jünger calls him The Worker), whose heroism consists of treating his body as a mere instrument beyond all instincts of self-preservation.32 Such a man, when seen in group photographs, we are
told, has lost all individuality. His penetrating look is steady and focused, practised upon objects which have to be grasped while in rapid motion. 33 This ‘worker’ has experienced a process of integration, and transformed the undisciplined masses into a disciplined army. 34

Here the speed of time has lost its challenge, and modernity has created a human type which successfully absorbed it. Ernst Jünger, like Marinetti, had no use for the guidance of history or volkish ideals (his opposition to National Socialism is well enough known), but in his case style and discipline have themselves led to a conformity no less stifling than that advocated by volkish nationalism.

Marinetti and the Futurists did not mean to travel down Jünger’s road. They opposed all that could end the speed of time, the march forward into uncharted spaces: artistic movements like Strapaese idealizing a rural and provincial past, and political devices like racism. Germany was attacked for its exhibition of degenerate art, for believing in a photographic static. 35 Perhaps Wyndham Lewis, the Futurists’ sometime English disciple, expressed best the difference between the German tradition and their own taut political style, as they saw it, and this during the first world war before the rise of National Socialism. ‘Germany stands for romance and should not win the war.’ 36 But no modern mass movement could do without sentimentality and the appeal to tradition. It could not use the yardstick of an avant-garde élite in order to reassure all citizens. Fascist movements were populist and Marinetti was closer to reactionary modernists like Ernst Jünger, or those young French fascists who made no pretence at leading a popular movement.

Even so, Futurism was eventually slowed down by the need for the representational, even the commemorative, in its fascist political art. The Futurist contributions to the exhibition which celebrated the first ten years of the fascist revolution (1933) (the Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista) are instructive in this regard. Enrico Prampolini dedicated a panel to the Futurists and the Arditi which reflected something of their supposedly fiery and iron will, 37 but there were other paintings and statues attributed in the catalogue to the Futurists which are monumental and static. Above all, the Hall of Martyrs with its giant cross and multitude of names, though apparently of Futurist design, contradicted their own view of matter-of-fact death. The symbols of the Hall of Martyrs speak of transcendence, not sober acceptance. 38 The cult of the fallen, at the very root of national worship, left no room for a non-traditional vision.
Any consideration of Futurism and political culture must address the questions whether a nationalism based solely upon the challenge of modernity can be successful, and whether style can take the place of traditional content in nationalist politics. The love of technology, the fascination with speed and machinery, was common to fascisms all over Europe, and shared by many conservatives as well. For example, the engineers who flocked in such numbers to the nazi cause were not simply technocrats — whatever that may mean. They saw only two alternatives before them: effeminate and cowardly escape into a pastoral past, or masculine and courageous flight into the German future. Yet technology became a part of their self-identity with its roots thrust into the Germanic past; the ‘liberation’ of technology which the nazi regime was to bring about was said to be synonymous with the recovery of the German soul. Here, despite these alternatives, the new technology was absorbed by traditional nationalism.

Such ‘reactionary modernism’ was an attempt to reconcile the two nationalisms: with tradition — the dominance of a romantic and historically oriented system of thought — most often the victor. Modernity also created its own necessities: the longing for immutability in a changing world as well as the need for order. Adolf Hitler expressed it well when he wrote that with the seizure of power by National Socialism, the nervous nineteenth century had come to an end. Nervousness was, after all, that disease thought basic to most other bodily and mental illnesses, projected upon all those who refused to conform to accepted norms. The political culture of Futurism could not address nationalism as a new civic religion. Nevertheless, Futurism did make a vital contribution to this nationalism, though it itself would have thought it wasted.

Nationalism as a civic religion now contained a dynamic, a drive which must carry with it ever new generations. This involved not only the praise of war, the urge to take action, but also that style and discipline which the Futurists championed. Here Gottfried Benn was correct: the shirt, the battle-cry, the Gioveneza — symbols of action — projected a dynamic which was always present and at times difficult for European fascist parties to control. This difficulty proved much greater in Italy than in Germany, for the ‘reactionary modernism’ of the north was anchored securely in nationalism as a historical and civic religion. Here, in Italy, where the system upon which traditional nationalism was based was much thinner, porous and liberal, the Futurist élan could have a larger scope. The ideal of a ‘new man’ of a
yet undefined future was built into Italian fascism (even if he was a type rather than an individual) while in Germany such a 'new man' exemplified a past resurrected: from the fallen in the war or the Germanic heroes of ancient times.

However, Futurist contributions to political culture, politics as a way of life, had a still broader scope. They reflected the manner in which, after 1918, many people built war into their lives, accepted and even glorified violent struggle as a purpose in and of itself. Discipline and style were put in the service of permanent war as a way of life. This outlook on life appealed to the same kind of youth who had volunteered for war in 1914. Marinetti's emphasis upon war as a festival, upon life as a constant happening, paralleled the wish for the extraordinary which was so strong in the minds of European youth satiated with bourgeois life. The *vita festa* with its heroism of the spirit, manliness and will of iron — to stand the test of battle — addressed the hopes of pre-war and post-war youth, to be institutionalized and tamed by the political liturgy of the nationalist right. Futurism heightened this longing without institutionalizing it, pushing what is known as the 'spirit of 1914' to its extreme. As such it can be found in various movements of the radical right between the two world wars.

The so-called German Free Corps in the years immediately after the war provides one of the best examples of the implications of the Futurist political style. Here this style came alive, and quite unconsciously expressed a felt need of post-war youth which was not confined to Italy. The German Free Corps comprised former soldiers who chose to continue fighting once the first world war had ended in order to protect Germany's eastern frontier and to put down revolution at home. They thought themselves, not without reason, deserted by their own government, and for some of them the very concept of a German nation was no longer a political reality. After the Corps had been disbanded, a myth grew up around these 'soldiers without banners', *condotierri* fighting battles for their own sake, exemplifying self-discipline and creating their own political style. As one Free Corps leader wrote: '... we are an army of those men who must act'. The identical myth can be found more recently in works which have sought to glorify the courage, tenacity, and discipline of those volunteers who joined Hitler's foreign armies under the auspices of the SS. Here were men, to cite a French memoir, who '... had arrived at the outermost edge of Nietzsche's world view'.

This love of struggle, the assertion of manliness in a degenerate world, runs like a red thread throughout the first half of our own century, attracting much the same European youth to which Futurism appealed; here, however, without the necessity of a modernist aesthetic. Futurism was stripped of the bizarre and the artistic in these movements — only a stark and dynamic nationalism which had discarded all traditional and historical restraints remained. However, many of these later volunteers also believed in the new man of the future — indeed, they considered themselves as such new men — and asserted that the Free Corps or the SS had given firm contours to an otherwise vague ideal. Clearly, the future was no longer open-ended for such men. Like Jünger’s race of supermen or Spengler’s barbarians, the future had arrived and the new man was a finished product.

In spite of all their difference from the Futurists, such new men tell us how the political culture of Futurism might have looked when pushed to its extreme. They brought out something of the implications within the political culture of Futurism. There was no direct connection between the Futurists and these troops of volunteers, but the parallels help us to understand a political culture of which the Futurists were a part, a political culture which sought to integrate men and masses, even as it attempted to accept the chaos of modernity. Yet in this process it ran the danger of depersonalizing and brutalizing politics.

The new man who was to symbolize a new age constituting an élite which would lead the nation into the uncharted future proved in the end to be but another stereotype: a symbol not of an open-ended modernity but of the fact that twentieth-century nationalism, in the last resort, was tragically bound to be true to itself.

Notes

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2. For instance George L. Mosse, ‘Rushing to the Colors: The History of Volunteers in War’, Religion, Ideology and Nationalism in Europe and America, Essays
Mosse: *The Political Culture of Italian Futurism*  


4. Emilio Gentile, op. cit., 426; the programme is reprinted in Renzo de Felice, Mussolini il revoluzionario (Torino 1965), especially 741.


8. This is one of the theses of Arnim Mohler in his stimulating 'Der Faschistische Stil', *Von rechts gesehen* (Stuttgart 1974), 179–221.


10. Ibid., 106. For a stimulating criticism of the link I make between Futurism and fascism stressing instead the influence of the Florentine radical nationalists around *La Voce*, see Walter L. Adamson, 'Fascism and Culture: Avant-Gardes and Secular Religion in the Italian Case', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 24, 3 (July 1989), 411–35.


17. F. T. Marinetti, op. cit., 287.

18. Ibid., 209.


27. George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality*, op. cit., chap. V.

28. The most complete book on Futurism is still Rosa Trillo Clough, *Futurism* (New York 1961) from which these descriptions are taken.

31. Ibid., 263, 110.
33. Ibid., 107–8.
34. Ibid., 114.
35. As reported in *L'Œuvre* (24 August 1937).
37. *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista* (Roma 1933), 123.
38. Ibid., 229. For the dominance of Futurism over this exhibition, see Guido Armelini, *Le Imagini del Fascismo nelle Arti Figurative* (Milano 1980), 86–93.
40. Ibid., 32.

George L. Mosse

is co-editor of the *Journal of Contemporary History*, Professor Emeritus at the University of Wisconsin and the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. His latest book is *Fallen Soldiers. Shaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York 1990)