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Analyzing Accelerationism as Terroristic Praxis; Anticipatory Futures in the Alt-Right and
Alternative Extremist Origins

By
Paul Rausch

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Introduction

I first encountered the unveiled rhetoric of white supremacy from a trusted friend I met in an online video game when I was in middle school. Cultural imaginaries of the average white nationalist invoke either weekend torch-wielders attending marches like Charlottesville¹ or unemployed basement dwellers with nothing better to do than post hate speech online and ruminate on how to ‘take matters into their own hands.’ These stereotypes flatten the complexity and prevalence of this issue. In the case of my early interactions on the internet, there were many users who initially appeared as just your average young adult or teenager, with a multitude of offline “normal” hobbies, jobs, and relationships, but who I later cut off when it became clear they were engaging in extreme right reactionary politics and its associated bigotries.

I had begun playing online video games far too young and quickly began to accumulate an online network of friends. These friends would variously invite me to Skype groups, TeamSpeak groups, and after it exploded in popularity sometime after 2015, Discord servers. These online communities were interconnected through weak social bonds formed by chance encounters. However, politics quickly seeped into discussion. I was introduced to the “casual racism” of the alt right when I started to learn the lingo of these digital spaces. Terms and memes popularized on image boards and forums like 4chan that contained references to extreme reactionary politics were commonplace. I am uniquely positioned to expose and analyze concepts of importance to the alt-right because of my digital alt-right “literacy,” as well as my

¹ This is not to discount the real effects of digital spaces as second action space, the organizational benefits of digitally decentralized social movements have been widely reported in recent digital studies journals (Zur, 2023). The alt-right is no exception, as will be discussed later.

social science training. I present this thesis on accelerationism and extreme right apocalypticism with my background positionality fully in mind.

Among digitally literate academics, alt-right bloggers, and politically involved journalists of the past decade, the term “accelerationism” has been used occasionally to describe varying predictions and historical trajectories for society. Most infamously, the term has been co-opted by a minor contingent of neo-reactionaries within the alt-right, with the intent to conduct ideological hybrid warfare² against the Western liberal democratic system of governance itself, with the results of the doctrine visible in extremist actions both online and in physical spaces. In this thesis, I will describe, define, and build a history of the development of accelerationism first as an academic theory and later as a reactionary political doctrine. I construct this analysis of accelerationism using a multi-method interdisciplinary approach, focusing on tracing the development of accelerationism as an idea. Further sections will engage more deeply in critical theory and experiential ethnographic participation in online conservative circles with ties to the alt-right. Included in this analysis is also discussion of accelerationism within its own terms as a system of schizo-analysis, engaging in the futurity and terror potentials inherent within the ‘movement.’ I have modeled these potentials as comprising a temporally shifted machine, in cooperation with the protestant American apocalyptic canon of millenarian Christian eschatology (Wessinger 2012, Walls 2007).

Central to the ideology of extreme right terrorism in the United States is a belief in violence as the most effective mode for the establishment of new futures; mass-violence

² As defined in this context with non-state actors. There is overlap here with the propagation of destructive ideologies and the information/hybrid warfare tactics used in great power competition as well. The use of state-sanctioned psy-ops and bot campaigns is mostly outside the scope of this thesis, see Torossian 2019 for more.

extremists trust in the accelerating power of violent action to derail current cultural and political trajectories in favor of their own. Similarly, narratives about the climate disaster of the Anthropocene are incoherent when viewed from a Christian apocalyptic perception of reality, wherein worldly existence waits with bated breath for the return of Christ, such that a multiplicity of alternative futures for humanity cannot possibly matter.³ These threads of apocalypticism and accelerationism are present throughout the extreme right, and flow and bleed unconsciously from un-critical religious belief and “academic” post-structuralism into a terroristic praxis. Ontologically, despite the critical logical errors contained within them, it is impossible to separate accelerationism and Christian extreme apocalypticism from their futures, as both concepts depend entirely upon their future “potential” for destruction and subsequent creations. Exploring these concepts through their terroristic potential, extreme millenarian apocalypticism and alt-right accelerationism, is key to understanding the danger and error of both ideological doctrines. I also seek here to engage directly with the flaws of psychotic⁴ reasoning as it pertains to violence, which subconsciously interpret violence as a sort of oil of the actuating/desiring machine comprised of both accelerationism and millenarian apocalypticism. I attempt this using schizo-analytic methodologies, in opposition to action-theory based compositions of violence as situational action.⁵ In discussing accelerationism and apocalypticism, I will engage the topics via epistemological means that begat them, specifically schizo-analysis and eschatology.

³ Catastrophic apocalypticism, or catastrophism. Interpreted broadly here as a cross denominational Christian belief in the end times and ephemerality of worldly conditions for life, but further beyond a basic belief in the second coming to instead justify in themselves a disrespect or lack of enthusiasm towards worldly care for the living and environmentalism. In this view the world is already “toast” so to speak and requires divine intervention. Millenarian more than millennial but sometimes referred to in the literature as “catastrophic millennialism” (Wessinger 2012, 28-33).

⁴ Psychotic used here as in the Freudian sense of a psychosis, a detachment from the real.

⁵ See Wikstrom 2009.

I. Defining Accelerationism and Tracing the Development

“Many of the demigods are dissatisfied with the situation in the City. They had wanted a prolonged campaign against Accelerationism and against the followers of Tathagatha.”

-Zelazny, Lord of Light, 1967

Accelerationism as it has been used by the alt-right is an aesthetically convenient dress piece of a term; the alt-right unconsciously leverages a separate academic science fiction-infused heritage of accelerationism's “original” form for credibility to cover up the true neo-Nazi terrorist roots of the modern version of the term. Since the official academic coining of the term accelerationism in 2010 by Dr. Benjamin Noys, significant variation in meaning can be documented. Universally, its use captures the general idea that accelerating and intensifying the processes of the current order, whether capitalism, technology, liberalism, etc., will result in an eventual collapse of the status quo and a societal change towards whatever ideal post-society the theorist in question promotes. However, this ambiguity surrounding the exact definition of accelerationism has resulted in confusion about the true theoretical origins of the term as it has been adopted by the alt-right.

A sort of coded understanding has also emerged in the past few years that the term accelerationism is used exclusively within the context of political extremists and aggressive reactionary thinkers. The poorly understood but common claim is then that accelerationism’s origins trace back to Marxist interpretations of historical trajectories for capitalism but that it is particularly generative in the context of 20th century aesthetics of futurist philosophy and dystopian fiction (Beckett 2017). Accelerationism as it is employed by the alt-right and co-opted

as soft⁶ doctrine, is just a new label to describe older neo-Nazi doctrine and hopes for the future. This is not to say that the alt-right is even capable of adopting any official doctrine, in fact unified theory is entirely absent among the alt-right due to their decentralized nature and various groups. Often in describing the alt-right as a whole it is better to think of them as a political or cultural reactionary movement rather than as one cohesive group. Despite this disorganization, accelerationism captured the attention of a substantial number of these alt-right sub communities online around the mid to late 2010s, resulting in its reproduction across blog posts, social media threads, and later in the manifestos of mass killers.⁷

To locate academic accelerationism, the origin point of its description is inseparably tied to the U.K. and continental philosophy. The leading figures in the development of the theory, Nick Land, Nick Srnicek, Robin Mackay, Mark Fisher, and Benjamin Noys all hail from British institutions, and so accelerationism is fundamentally grounded within the English world perspective, and particularly in the capitalistic understanding of recent economic history. “At the basis of all accelerationist thought lies the assertion that the crimes, contradictions and absurdities of capitalism have to be countered with a politically and theoretically progressive attitude towards its constituent elements (Mackay 2014, 4).” Many of these thinkers are even more closely related to each other in their relationship to an entity known as the “CCRU.” This CCRU, or the Cybernetic Culture Research Unit, was founded in 1995 at Warwick University. The popular leftist theorist Mark Fisher and the disgraced “father of accelerationism” Nick Land were both involved at different points in its short run as a sort of disembodied collective of art,

⁶ “Soft” here used to indicate the disorganized nature of the alt-right as a social movement, whereas hard doctrine would be something written and adopted explicitly by a more hierarchical entity such as a government, agency, or highly organized political party.

⁷ Some mass shootings such as the 2022 Buffalo shooting have had shooters whose manifestos and online correspondences specifically mentioned accelerationism as an inspiration (Beauchamp 2022).

theory, and ritual steeped in the aesthetics of “cyberpunk-phuturism” and dystopian predictions of the future (Noys 2014, 51).

When Noys originally defined the modern ‘accelerationism’ in a published context with his 2010 *The Persistence of the Negative*, he was referring to a specific series of philosophical innovations during the early era of post-structural thinkers that believed in the potential to accelerate past the point at which capitalism thrives and turning radicalized capital against itself.⁸ Noys main concern with this book was not with accelerationism. Regardless, his main contribution to discourse at the time was the label of accelerationism first and foremost. Accelerationism was used once previously, in the 1967 *Lord of Light* by Roger Zelazny. Accelerationists are a sort of religious political faction in this novel, and Dr. Noys has never fully explained the connection or whether it served as his inspiration for the term (Becket 2017). I emailed Dr. Noys directly to ask about this connection, and his response was as follows, “I coined accelerationism as a critical term about 2008, on my blog, and really coined it based on Deleuze and Guattari's acceleration, adding-ism. It was only later I found the term in [sic]the Zelazny, so, as I say at the start of *Malign Velocities*, it might have been at work in my memory. I made no conscious reference to it.”⁹ It is quite fitting that the first time the term as written was ever used would be in a science fiction context where it has an entirely different meaning, then subconsciously conjured half a century later.

The 2014 follow up book by Noys, mentioned in the above correspondence, written to elaborate on the growing interest in accelerationism, *Malign Velocities: Accelerationism and*

⁸ “... if capitalism generates its own forces of dissolution then the necessity is to radicalize capitalism itself: the worse the better. We can call this tendency accelerationism” (Noys 2010, 5).

⁹ (Dr. B. Noys, December 8, 2023, Personal Communication)

Capitalism, he expands further on who exactly were the first accelerationists. These were the likes of Lyotard, Baudrillard, Deleuze and Guattari,¹⁰ and, as they all wrote on the coattails of Nietzsche and Marx, academic accelerationism owes a great deal to Marxist ideas of historical trajectory and Nietzsche's idea of the "schizo,"¹¹ as Dr. Noys puts it. This idea of the schizophrenic quality, that not being necessarily the actual disease per se, but a sufficiently "de-territorialized" person, shows up quite a lot in accelerationist theory, both in academic accelerationist theory and then vaguely, for aesthetic only purposes, in the contemporary alt-right understanding. To understand accelerationism, deterritorialization can be viewed as a step towards dissolving previous social systems and cultural values at the historical, personal, interpersonal, and national levels.¹² This deterritorializing is the process of damaging or altering territories, with a territory defined as elements making up a social relation. To reterritorialize in a schizophrenic fashion, or rather recompose our territories/social relations without the disfavored attachments of the structures currently existing, one must first go about the work of deterritorializing, which is of course a destruction. In the critical theory of Deleuze and Guattari in their 1972 *Anti-Oedipus*, this is the process that must be accelerated. To deterritorialize is to abandon current ontological attachments at every level, to become the wandering schizo when it comes to managing our flows of desire (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 130-131).

It is worth noting that the term "schizo" is considered offensive in most mental health-conscious circles, and although it was, and is still, used without intentional malice by academics, the term has since been perpetuated in online memes to describe a certain style of disjointed,

¹⁰Specifically in their works such as *Libidinal Economy*, *Anti-Oedipus*, and *Symbolic Exchange and Death*. Written by Lyotard, Deleuze, and Baudrillard respectively (Noys 2010, 5).

¹¹ "This leads to the new figure of the 'schizo', who is no longer the 'limp rag' of the schizophrenic locked in the asylum but a kind of relay for all the uncontainable liquid and accelerating flows of deterritorialization; in Nietzsche's 'schizo' delirium he announced, 'I am all the names of history' (Noys 2014, 2)."

¹² This is also broadly the idea behind schizo-analysis, expanded upon in a later chapter.

random, or violent audio-visual editing effects and textual syntax patterns making up an aesthetic that mirrors harmful stereotypes about schizophrenic behaviors. Among the alt-right, “schizo” is a combination insult or self-deprecating badge of honor that refers to someone of questionable mental stability, akin in its internal use to the term “incel.” Noys’s undeniably leftist work defined broadly the early 2010s discourse surrounding accelerationism. His work allowed Alex Williams and Nick Srnicek¹³ to later sound the call for the short-lived left-wing accelerationism trend among other political philosophers online, which then begat Land’s popular refutations (Mackay 2014, 24, Gardiner 2020, 134-135). It is especially worth noting that Noys originally intended accelerationism as a critique of theoretical economic tendencies and offered within *Malign Velocities* counter-accelerationist arguments. Noys himself does not seem to have ever advocated for a “political” accelerationism, leftist or otherwise.

The incorporation of futurist dystopian aesthetics in Noys’s work are visible in his conceptions of the man-machine, a merging of flesh and blood. Academic accelerationism is an inherently cybernetic theory, tied inseparably to capitalist technological advancement (Noys 2014, 33-35). The man-machine as a concept was taken from the title of Kraftwerk’s 1978 album, an apt phrase because later in his book Noys explains that the early techno aesthetics of bands like Kraftwerk influenced the Belleville Three. The Belleville Three were massive figures in the Detroit Techno scene, which in turn kickstarted the wider Anglo-American techno scene that Nick Land and his peers nursed their aesthetics from in the CCRU (ibid 2014, 52-54). Noys writes, “it is the computer, especially for those who work with them that embodies the ‘speed-up’ of labor, as each new model becomes faster and faster (or that is the promise) (ibid, 49)”.

¹³ Authors of #ACCELERATE MANIFESTO for an Accelerationist Politics, the short-lived leftist accelerationism owes most of its early 2010s traction online to their neo-Marxist anti-work ideology.

When the post-structuralists described the process of de-territorializing and accelerating capital they were hedging their bets that new forms of capitalist technological advancement would continue to accelerate and eventually ‘break’ society. This, of course, has not occurred as of the time of writing. The terminology of this theorization, devoid of its original intent, survives through the rhetoric of ‘dark enlightenment’ inspired academics. In the mainstream these concepts have manifested in the crass, reactionary language of alt-right memes.

In *Malign Velocities*, Dr. Noys critically examines the aesthetics and critical theory of the CCRU as it was led by Nick Land before its eventual dissolution around 2003. In 2013, just one year before *Malign Velocities* was published, Land wrote a sort of blog bible for neo-reactionaries, called *The Dark Enlightenment*. It is perhaps easiest to see Land’s early 2010s sympathies for the alt-right here, as he engages controversially with race and partisan politics as they pertain to topics like interracial marriage, racial terror, neo-Reactionism, progressivism, eugenics, and apocalypse (Land 2022). Here he flirts with the idea of the supposed failings of liberalism, and the ineffectiveness of mainstream conservatism to effectively react to leftist political theorizing. This series of blog posts was so influential in the development of 2010s reactionary far right-wing politics within the anglosphere that it was collected in 2022 into a physical copy by the alt-right Australia based publisher “Imperium Press”.

In the construction of alt-right accelerationism, there is no source more important than the essay Land released on jacobitemag.com in 2017. Called “A Quick and Dirty Introduction to Accelerationism,”¹⁴ this essay supplies what may be called the final nail in the coffin for accelerationism as a leftist philosophy, cementing it into the canon of the alt-right. Notably, this

¹⁴ Scattered across the internet in various blogs attempting to replicate the blogs original form, I recovered a copy of this blog through the anonymously put together *A Nick Land Reader: Selected Writings* from 2021.

was the same year that Land emigrated to Shanghai after a mental break (Beckett, 2017), by which point he had fully discredited leftist accelerationism and noticed the popularity in online forums like Iron March and 4chan of right-wing accelerationism. He writes, “At the time of writing, left-accelerationism appears to have deconstructed itself back into traditional socialist politics, and the accelerationist torch has passed to a new generation of brilliant young thinkers advancing an ‘Unconditional Accelerationism’ (neither R/Acc., or L/Acc., but U/Acc.)¹⁵ (Land 2021, 36).” Mark Fisher, an influential critic and former peer of Land with leftist popular credibility, had often-outstripped Nick Land’s alt-right cult following, with his own blog posts.

Fisher was a philosopher and founding member of the previously mentioned CCRU. His most important contribution to the modern philosophical canon is the short 2009 book *Capitalist Realism: Is there no Alternative?* which has influenced neo-Marxist and post-Marxist leftism in online discourse. He is most relevant to accelerationism in that he is often credited with consistently battling against Nick Land’s vision of accelerationism and endorsing a leftist definition of accelerationism instead. Fisher says this in a 2012 blog post addressing accelerationism and his old CCRU peer Land, “While Land’s cybergothic remix of Deleuze and Guattari is in so many respects superior to the original, his deviation from their understanding of capitalism is fatal. Land collapses capitalism into what Deleuze and Guattari call schizophrenia, thus losing their most crucial insight into the way that capitalism operates via simultaneous processes of deterritorialization and compensatory reterritorialization (Fisher 2012).” The critique here is that in the pursuit of the “schizo” and of schizophrenic thinking, Land has lost much of what was productive about the thought processes behind what these philosophers

¹⁵ R/Acc meaning right wing accelerationism, L/Acc meaning left wing accelerationism, and as he states, U/Acc meaning unconditional accelerationism. None of these abbreviations are used today as accelerationism is now almost synonymous with the alt-right.

consider the accelerationist tendencies of Deleuze and Guattari. Fisher never wrote a formal response to Land's key blog post as Fisher tragically passed away from suicide just four months before "A Quick and Dirty Introduction to Accelerationism" was released.

Fisher's critique might be extended; I would argue that Land's tendencies in theory, due to his time with the CCRU in the late 90s and early 2000s, end up delving too deeply into aesthetics to be useful for any sort of application-focused academic audience. In engaging with some of the most dense and abstract philosophical theory there is and diluting it with science fiction horror aesthetics and reactionary politics, it is worth questioning whether Land ever intended to contribute to the academic body at all. Some authors have even stated that he is more derivative of Marx to the point that Land himself would likely be ashamed. His position reproduces the "creative destruction" of capital that Marx wrote about exactly, only slightly altered with his cybergothic apocalypticism that just panders to our natural fear for the future of technology (Shaviro 2015, 15). Robin Mackay¹⁶ said this about the CCRU "I left before it descended into sheer madness (Becket 2017)." Clearly a dig at Nick Land and the late CCRU's tendencies toward the absurd and the fictional (at one point they are said to have held meetings in Aleister Crowley's old home in Leamington), this rocky reputation with former peers was seemingly a prelude to Land's final departure from any engagement with academia and full embracing of the alt-right. It is impossible to speculate what would have happened had Mark Fisher been able to craft another later response to the adoption of alt-right accelerationism, but it is safe to say his absence from academia over the past 6 years has facilitated Land and the alt-right's final dominance over the theory after the 2017 blog post "A Quick and Dirty Introduction

¹⁶ Main author of #Accelerate# and director of Urbanomic, a publishing house that focuses specifically on abstract philosophy and art.

to Accelerationism”. Here roughly ends the internally preferred academic lineage that begat modern accelerationism. I will now turn to an exploration of the extreme right influences, often understated in popular news articles that have latched onto the Land/Deleuze/Noys canon as the only trajectory for the development of accelerationism.

The extreme right in the United States has influenced accelerationism in a much more direct and practical manner than pure adherents to the academic lineage would suggest. In the history of the modern extremist right, it is possible that no collection of doctrine is more important than *Siege* by James Mason. This series of manifesto-like essays was originally written and disseminated in parts during the 1980s, but it was released together in 1992. In its far-reaching influence across the extreme right, to use a political theory analogy, it makes *The Dark Enlightenment* look like the racist alt-right version of Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense*, compared to *Siege* as Montesquieu’s *Spirit of the Laws*. James Mason himself was well versed in neo-Nazism from an early age, having joined Lincoln Rockwell’s American Nazi Party as a teenager, meeting William Luther Pierce¹⁷ among other infamous American neo-Nazis (Johnson, Bethan, and Feldman 2021, 2). In writing *Siege*, Mason was the first to articulate explicitly within a new American movement sometimes referred to as “the survivalist right,” the promotion of lone wolf terrorist action, hope for an impending race war, and from there an eventual collapse of the liberal democratic system (Johnson and Feldman 2023, 13). In the 2010s the Iron March forum, the most infamous of online extremist right forums to embrace accelerationism, disseminated *Siege* under a third edition and helped spawn what has recently been deemed “Siege Culture” by counter-terror experts. Siege culture has spread and influenced many extremist right-wing

¹⁷ Author of the infamous neo-Nazi science fiction *The Turner Diaries* and a well-known white nationalist, racist, and vicious antisemite.

terrorist cells across the anglosphere portion of the Western world, inspiring groups such as Iron March's own AWD,¹⁸ the SKD, Feuerkrig Division, and The Base. Each of these groups operated or still operate as terroristic cells across the Euro-American sphere, and all embrace the writings of James Mason with particular interest in the lone-wolf terrorism angle, which is functionally interchangeable with what we might call accelerationist 'praxis' (Johnson, Bethan, and Feldman 2021, 9-15).

In *Siege*, we see a parallel accelerationism developed independent of any academic theorizing. Take for example, this passage written in 1984, "It means - scientifically and irrefutably - that the country isn't going but has gone MAD; that the final END of society is accelerating; that the entire foundation itself is thoroughly corroded; and that there is no longer any place to go to hide (save maybe a tent in the North Woods). Now isn't that the most encouraging thing anyone has reported to you in a long, long time (Mason 2021, 199-200)"? The idea that society must accelerate towards collapse, and that this is an inherently good thing for neo-Nazis, has existed long before the academic debates surrounding left vs. right accelerationism began, with roots in neo-Nazi science fiction.

The Turner Diaries has also been a massive inspiration for right-wing terrorism since its 1978 creation by William Luther Pierce. The book is a science fiction neo-Nazi revenge fantasy written in the style of an adventure novel. The basic premise is that through acts of terrorism, bombings, etc., the oppressed white race can wrest control from federal agencies and a wider Jewish world order to create an authoritarian fascist white ethnostate, presented in the book as a

¹⁸ Atomwaffen Division, several high-profile murder cases involving alt-right extremists have come from their ranks, originally founded on the Iron March forum and one of the first to have members officially reference accelerationism.

utopia. It has been noted to have directly inspired right-wing extremist activity in the 1980s and 1990s, most notably perhaps in the Oklahoma City bombings. In chapter 6 of the book, a bomb is exploded at 9:15 a.m. in October 1991 at a federal building (Macdonald 1980, 52). In real life April 1995, at 9:03 a.m., a bomb killed 168 people at a federal building in Oklahoma, the perpetrator had several pages ripped out from the Turner Diaries sitting in the front seat of his car (Egan 2023). Here we see a propensity for science fiction aesthetics and lone-wolf terrorism decades before the introduction of academic accelerationism. If William Luther Pierce and James Mason's influence on extreme right terror is to be measured against the likes of Nick Land's, many more killings employ the rhetoric of these two than they do the often-uncited Land.

James Coates wrote in his 1987 journalistic exposé on the survivalist right, “All across today’s Survival Right landscape, strange people react to the talk of conspiracy, antisemitism, Armageddon, and associated themes with disastrous results for the people living about them (Coates 1987, 168).” Throughout James Coates' book, he details horrific survivalist right and neo-Nazi associated murders, all of which bear a striking resemblance to recent cases of alt-right extremist action. A lone, often mentally ill, individual has been reading content, listening to, or hanging around loosely organized groups associated with the extremist right, and then when an opportunity arises, or once certain threshold of disillusionment and hatred is reached, they lash out. Despite often being associated with larger mass shootings, these killings more often take the form of single target murders like that of Blaze Bernstein in 2018, murdered for his religious and sexual identity by his classmate, a member of the AWD, or that of Charles Goldmark and his family on Christmas Eve 1985¹⁹ (Beauchamp 2022, Coates 1987). In both examples, killers

¹⁹ Where the perpetrators belief was that he was part of a larger planned “Jewish communist” takeover of North America (Coates 1987, 157-159).

expressed the belief that their lone-wolf terrorist actions would help kick start, or “accelerate” the end of the current status quo via a race war. These types of murders are by far the most common statistically, both in the past and currently, but mass shootings are obviously much deadlier and have a wider terror impact. Since the 1990s, American hate crimes such as these have steadily increased in severity and prevalence, while today they are more often linked to the recently identified alt-right than the older survivalist right (Merkl and Weinberg 1997, 240-246).

The alt-right itself is an invention of the University of Chicago’s own neo-Nazi alumni Richard Spencer. He coined the term to describe the neo-reactionary movement of the late 2000s and early 2010s that he helped develop and inspire, with all its violent, racist, and anti-democratic sentiments (Hawley 2019, 51-54). He capitalized on conservative dissatisfaction in creating a website called ‘AlternativeRight.com,’ which published neo-reactionary and white ethno-nationalist-inspired articles espousing rhetoric common to earlier writers from the survivalist right and siege culture.

The degree to which the alt-right is today embedded in digital spaces cannot be overstated. Unlike the earlier movements that inspired it, the alt-right has always been directly tied to the nihilistic memes and digital recruitment strategies that come to mind when people hear the term. From Spencer’s original website to Discord and Instagram, it is digital memetics that have produced the strongest threads of alt-right culture and allowed for the radicalization and recruitment of young teens as in the case of AWD (Hawley 2020, 109-113).

The movement is historically-oriented, however; many of the apocalyptic aesthetics and German names adopted by alt-right extremist groups pull from a much older history of Euro-American right-wing extremism. Germany and Italy around the time of World War two, and the

associated grassroots fascist movements across Europe and the West in the early 20th century have clearly inspired much of the apocalypticism that fed into the 1980s survivalist and neo-Nazi movements as well as the current alt-right accelerationist worldview. Hatred of Hollywood, antisemitism, apocalyptic predictions of race war, and the black leather “skull” aesthetic²⁰ so common in modern siege culture propaganda online are directly paralleled as key ideas in early 20th-century American fascist organizations such as Gerald B. Winrod’s Defenders of the Christian Faith (Kaplan 1999, 25-37). Taking these concepts into consideration, it seems as if accelerationism as it is employed by the alt-right has more in common with protestant Christian conceptions of millenarian Armageddon and a “redemption” of the world through societal collapse than it does any Marxist or post-structuralist dream of a post-capitalist society. One such infamous member of the wider Euro-American fascist movement was a man named Anders Breivik.

Anders Behring Breivik is a Norwegian far-right domestic terrorist who carried out a series of attacks in 2011 that killed a total of 77 people. Despite having no direct connection to the academic conception of accelerationism and having written his manifesto before its unofficial adoption by the alt-right, he rants fervently about the concept in terms like those of Siege and later manifestos. “That’s why I believe you’re off base with attempting to salvage the current system. It’s like trying to put toothpaste back into the tube. What we’re faced with, and what most people will probably never acknowledge because it threatens their illusion of America, is the realization that we cannot turn back the rolling wheel. It will continue to roll, and the best we

²⁰ An interesting parallel between Nick Land and the alt-right as well as earlier fascist movements in general, the obsession with dark apocalyptic aesthetics (and then more obviously an affinity for eugenics).

can hope for is to slow²¹ its acceleration toward death (Breivik 2011, 753)”. This statement by Breivik is part and parcel of alt-right accelerationism before it was even supposed to have been co-opted by the alt-right from academic contexts, complete even with a cursory discussion of capitalism and liberal government just before the above passage. The essentials show up in manifestos from the late 2010s and early 2020s as well, with no change to indicate incorporation of the academic definition besides the term itself being used directly. In 2015, the Iron March forum self-published a collection of political essays and summaries of their own fascist beliefs in an anthology titled *Next Leap*. In the introductory portion of the text, the founder of Iron March, known by the alias Alexander Slavros,²² said the following regarding the purpose of terrorist action and what he believed should be the war doctrine of fascists everywhere, “The path of purposely accelerating the degeneration of the Modern World in order to help it die faster and thus make way for a new, Traditional world (Example: futurism would serve as a good example of the organized movement for this path as they promoted many of the “progressive”, modernist aspects with a distinct taste for action that would end with cleaning the slate of civilization as we know it, thus making way for new Tradition) (Slavros 2015, 24)”. Once again, at this point, according to the academic development model for accelerationism, the concept of accelerationism was still very much up in the air regarding whether it was a right-wing ideology, despite the above passage clearly mentioning the exact accelerationist concepts that *Siege* and earlier right-wing extremist had been espousing for decades. One movement heavily influenced

²¹ The implication here within the wider context of the manifesto being that anything short of violent action would only be able to temporarily slow the collapse, which indicates Breivik’s belief that there is no viable way to stop it, only futile mitigation. The conclusion he comes to then, is that acceleration via violence is the quickest way to turn things in his ideological favor.

²² Real name Alisher Mukhitdinov, he founded the Iron March forum under the name International Third Position Federation, or ITPF, in 2010. He recruited chiefly from forum websites like 4chan and Kiwifarms to boost initial membership (Upchurch 2021, 29).

by these earlier Euro-American extremists has recently become associated strongly with both the alt-right and accelerationism, that being Identitarianism.

Identitarianism first gained traction in 2019 in pan-European contexts as yet another wave of alt-right, neo-Nazi, and most relevantly white nationalist ideals exploded throughout the West. It is particularly popular in continental Europe, and advocates for the establishment of a stronger white Christian identity and violent pushback to solve “The Great Replacement” (Davey and Ebner, 2019). The Christchurch shooter wrote in his identitarian-influenced manifesto in 2019, specifically that society must be destabilized via accelerationism, and the global capitalist system collapsed via a combination of lone-wolf terror attacks, to achieve what he calls “racial autonomy”.²³ “These tumultuous times can be brought about through action. For example, actions such as voting for political candidates that radically change or challenge entrenched systems, radicalizing public discourse by both supporting, attacking, vilifying, radicalizing, and exaggerating all societal conflicts and attacking or even assassinating weak or less radical leaders/influencers on either side of social conflicts (Tarrant 2019, 66).” This is once again a recitation of earlier siege culture ideas, with some extra Identitarian elements included as well, but it still does not account for much of an actual change as far as the introduction of accelerationism as an academic term is concerned. The Great Replacement theory seems to take more of a center stage here, even acting as the title for this manifesto, due to the growing popularity of the theory in the late 2010s.

²³ Referring to the establishment of a white ethnostate, a post race-war “utopian” fascist society akin to that described in *The Turner Diaries* and a common trope among the alt-right and neo-Nazis as the end goal of accelerationism.

The Great Replacement²⁴ conspiracy theory and its adoption mirrors accelerationism in time closely, with its first formal description of the theory written around 2011 (Ehsan and Stott 2020, 15). These same passages from other manifestos regarding accelerationism and The Great Replacement were copied exactly in the 2022 Buffalo shooter’s “shit-posting” manifesto as well (Gendron 2022, 176-178). “Shit-posting” is a common feature of modern digital culture, where the use of irony²⁵ acts as a sort of protective barrier between the poster and liability for their statements. It allows for interpersonal plausible deniability as to the true intention behind their racist, homophobic, or otherwise inflammatory statements (Daly and Nichols 2022, 4-5). The earlier mentioned concept of the “schizo” has a variant called “schizo-posting,” which aesthetically adopts the disorganized paranoid, often overtly conspiratorial thought patterns described earlier. As of the time of writing, there is no well-cited academic source that discusses schizo-posting. The majority of the Buffalo shooter’s manifesto is either written in this “shit-post” or “schizo-post” style, or entirely plagiarized from earlier manifestos such as the Christchurch shooter’s, which makes the writers’ exact motivations difficult to understand. It is only clear from this plagiarism that the extreme-right lineage of accelerationist thought played some part in the young Buffalo shooter’s ideological development.

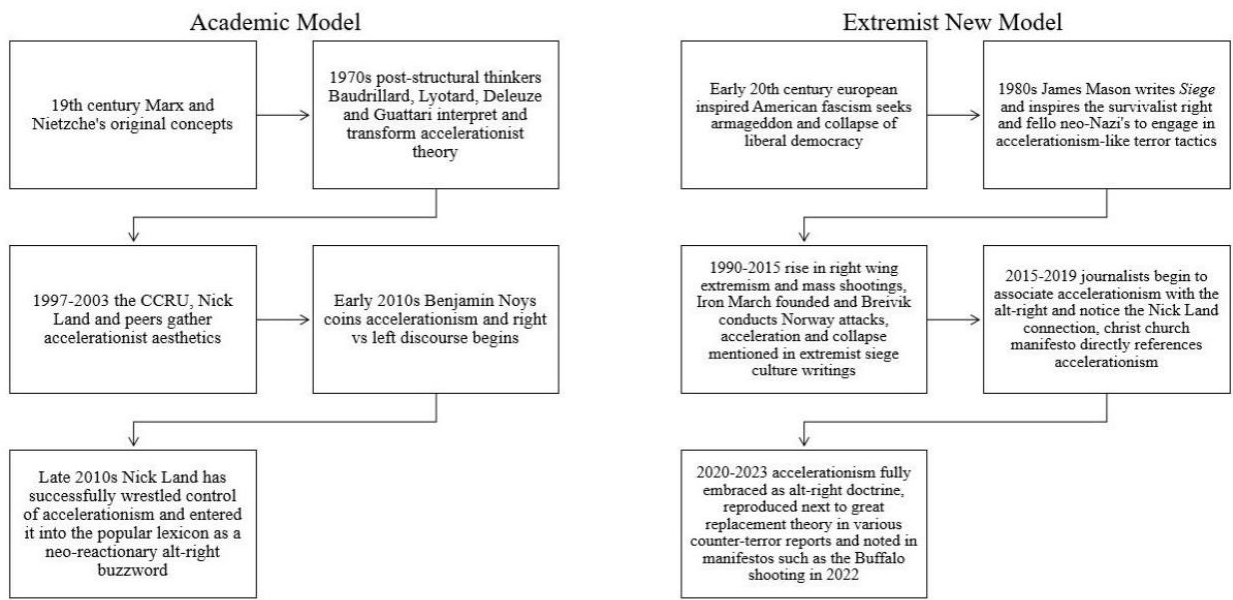
Having traced multiple routes to accelerationism, I have outlined the two models for development and influence in Figure 1 below.

²⁴ A heavily racist conspiracy theory that states the white race is being replaced due to low birth rates and immigration, usually attributed to some sort of deep state or Jewish conspiracy. It has shown up in mainstream conservatism on several unfortunate occasions.

²⁵ Irony used here in the modern digital studies sense of memetic or “meme” irony, popularized within a hierarchy of post-, meta-, and “original” ironies by the Youtuber JREG (JREG, 2020).

Fig. 1

Models for the Development of Accelerationism



Accelerationism as it has been adopted by the alt-right is clearly not just the hope of accelerating beyond capital, development towards a technological singularity, or some sort of transgressive bipartisan political unity in the face of a collapsing society. Accelerationism is a cover term, a buzzword, to obscure and allow for misplaced academic credibility and confusion of definition in what boils down to a nihilistic, racist, authoritarian, misanthropic, and inherently violent doctrine of lone-wolf terrorist action. It is the hopeful cheering on of societal collapse and the death of democratic politics.

It is worth also considering the aesthetic-focused and fiction-obsessed nature of accelerationist ideology. Much like fascism, accelerationism, and the abstract political philosophy that the popular academic model claims as its source borrows much of its language and aesthetic value from science fiction. Without *The Turner Diaries* or *Lord of Light*, accelerationism as a term would likely not exist, and the extremist right's fascist dreams of a post-democratic society may not have been as inherently tied to the "accelerating" element of

science fiction and radical futurism. Fascism, however, has always been a futurism-based ideology, whether it manifests in its original modernist or the current neo-reactionary post-modernist (or meta-modernist) context. Fascism is a rejection of the democratic way of conducting politics in favor of a post-humanist society of popular will and the tyranny of one-party majority politics, appealing paradoxically to the aesthetic attachments of an imagined past, which never existed in the form fascists would like to present.

In defining these two developmental trajectories for accelerationism, I have aimed to expand the potential for future researchers to better conduct research on the alt-right. With this new, explicitly separated out model for the development of accelerationism, future research can be conducted with the understanding that accelerationism, as it has been used in the terroristic praxis of the alt-right, is not, in fact, an academic theory, but instead a gloss for the continuation of the long history of existing extremist reactionary ideologies.

II. Miniature Ethnography: Digital Alt-Right Discord Groups

It is important to establish the concept of action theory as it pertains to virtual spaces when discussing the alt-right. Virtual spaces operate either as complementary, substitutive, or competitive of real spaces. In complementary action space, the virtual is added onto an already sufficient real world. Basic human needs are already being met in real space, but the virtual allows for further optimization of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Competition between virtual and real spaces occurs when there is an obstruction to real-life relationships and actions in the pursuit or maintenance of digital relationships and actions. Substitution occurs most obviously when real-life activities and spaces are subsumed or replaced by digital relationships (Kellerman 2014, 67-69).

In the case of the alt-right, traditional in-person action space conceptions are almost entirely replaced by digital spaces. Competition and substitution for real space interactions are the accepted norm, and instead of digital spaces complementing real spaces, the opposite is true. Operationalizing these definitions of organized space helps with understanding the nature of the alt-right, and in tracing the development of accelerationism it is important to understand that both real spaces and virtual spaces are interchangeable before and after the development of the alt-right. Later murders and earlier murders by members of extreme right groups have very little difference despite different action modules for the radicalization of perpetrators. It may be best even to perceive of the alt-right as a “hyper-culture”, a product of cultural implosion and a fitting analogy to match accelerationism, as culture has accelerated to become transgressive of time and place, allowing for the ethno-nationalist racial identities of the alt-right to coalesce in even more interconnected ways across the Atlantic throughout the entire Western world (Kergel 2023, 29-31).

In the ethnographic approach used here, I avoided ethically precarious interviews and surveys, to circumvent the issues with obtaining direct consent from paranoid individuals and the ethical problems that arise when describing the specific circumstances of those individuals. Instead, I opted for an experiential or ‘passive’ type of participant observation. In these online contexts, to obtain written consent from every individual in each server or chatroom is quite literally impossible. I do not describe or relay any specific instances of communication with individuals, as I found early on that direct interviews obfuscate and focus experiences to a point where the wider machinations of accelerationism and the alt-right become meaningless terms; not to mention the heavy selection bias inherent in anyone willing to speak to a researcher when their community is hostile towards academia. Very few members of these online groups

associated with the alt-right or accelerationism identify with those terms specifically. Instead of focusing on individuals, I have described group types and patterns observed via their participation in chatrooms and describing my personal experiences and reactions to the stimuli and cultural norms present in these contexts. I began by recording thick descriptions for personal analysis and interpretation in comparison to my previous experiences with digital groups such as these. This is also the reason that I am opting to call the research a “mini-ethnography,” to adjust for the smaller scale of work being done. The implications of these observations towards the wider issue of accelerationism and the neo-reactionary right are therefore quotidian. I seek simply to show how as second action space, digital realms unconsciously and casually reinforce the larger machinations of the alt-right (such as accelerationism) through a shared communal identity and a “welcoming” shared aesthetic language.

To begin my analysis, I joined around 6 discord groups, all posted publicly via the “disboard.com” website. Various, these groups had automated verification procedures, most of which required minimal identification of myself as anything other than a party interested in the community, or a vague familiarity with conservative politics and 4chan. To simplify and further anonymize the experiences of these groups, I will bundle together several into separate “field sites” based on their key function. Throughout the descriptions of these sites, image memes sourced from communities like those being described will be included, but these memes are easily accessed and unconnected from those spaces in order to maintain the full anonymity of all groups. I have picked examples that are varied in both format and content, while also avoiding any that are too excessively graphic or disturbing to the point where it would be irresponsible to include them. I categorize three of these groups as being meme focused field sites, S1, which had reduced daily activity aside from the posting of image memes and “shit-posting”. Next were two

politics-focused groups, both of which presented themselves as representative of specific political platforms while simultaneously encouraging anyone to come in and engage in conversation or debate against the servers chosen political platform. I chose both due to their neo-reactionary ideological potential and affinity for the alt-right, as well as member count, referred to here as S2. The final field site was one group that I would describe as an “aberration” for a group of that size, in that it was operated in an especially unserious way. As all my selected groups were between 30-100 members each, the standard for a discord group would be a relatively stable identity, name, topic, and “feel” to the digital space, with ranked hierarchies or “roles” as discord refers to them. Using my previous experience and general familiarity with digital spaces, I determined quickly that the group I have decided to label S3 did not operate under those rules and had only two roles, admin, or member, and presented a unique opportunity to describe and experience a group that, beyond simply posting memes, in itself seemed to *be* a ‘meme’ to its admins.

Aesthetically, S1 was the most unassuming. These groups had relatively tame in-joke names without betraying too much about the content of the group. User engagement was relatively small outside of sporadic, heavily irony infused text interactions, and the voice chat channels were rarely used. The main language of these servers was “shit-posting” and meme exchanges, sourced from other social media platforms. Although there was not significant discourse or discussion within the channels here, it is significant to consider the ideological effect of this exchange in the current construction of social media virality and radicalization. Thematically intense/instigating videos, Tik-Toks, memes screen capped from 4chan or reddit,

and Instagram reels²⁶ were featured heavily in the “meme flow” and therefore seemed in me to reproduce the experience of daily “doom-scrolling”²⁷ My daily check ins over a period of three weeks resulting in an obvious pattern, incel, sexual orientation, and race-based content dominated and often encourage most of the sparse interactions in these groups. Resulting arguments were



Figure 1. Meme sourced 4/15/24 via Twitter:
<https://twitter.com/jaunearecsgf/status/1777324684423692383>

often shifted far to the extreme right, with both parties engaging heavily in ironic veil tactics.

Figure 1 closely resembles the type of inflammatory content that could set off one of these



Figure 2. Meme sourced anonymously via discord on 4/15/24.

arguments, in this case depicting an anti-trans caricature in the form of a “soy-jak”²⁸ meme, a popular style of meme that functions as a sort of straw-man depiction of the creator’s opposition, or other times used in a more meta-ironic fashion to depict one’s own position. Figure 2 on the other hand depicts a contempt for a specific arrangement of personal identity in a fashion that seems mostly absent of serious concerns regarding political affiliation or identity, and more a commitment to separating one-self from statements and behaviors that are considered “cringe”. The meme is composed of a negative characterization of Hispanic conservatives,

²⁶ Important in the Instagram contexts are the cross-over relations with gen-Z individualistic, or “narcissistic” tendencies and the propagation of conspiracy theories and alt-right pipeline tactics, for more on Instagram usage behaviors, see Menon 2022.

²⁷ As popularized by journalist Karen Ho in 2020, the common modern practice of seeking or viewing substantial amounts of negative or upsetting content (Garcia-Navarro, 2020).

²⁸ “Soyjak represents a certain kind of masculinity, generally a negative and disadvantaged sort. He stands in for all repressed, beta and cringe behaviors, representing the part in each of us which is annoying and feeble.” (Walker 2022).

its reference derived from the popular video game series 'Call of Duty.' Interestingly, the meme seems to be critiquing the caricature for engaging in what reactionaries often refer to as the distraction of "performative" identity politics, in this case, arguing over the use of the term 'Latinx'. Many memes within S1 compose niche positions such as this one, and it is these types of memes that often resulted in textual engagement and argument. One might reason whether the members of this type of group's constant exposure to negativity, ideological gatekeeping (through "cringe" culture), and bigotry under the veil of passive meme consumption is not dissimilar to the commonly cited radicalization pathways or "conflict-economies" of YouTube, Tik-Tok, and Instagram reels themselves (Ulver 2021, O'Connor 2021).

In S2, by contrast, direct engagement and sociality was very high. Despite both groups existing under the pretext of politics, daily gaming sessions and movie screenings were the norm on most any day of the week. These communal activities strengthen social bonds and allow for the accruing of social capital within the wider online milieu of interconnected groups/servers. One of the S2 groups was, at the time of observation, significantly more active than the other. The other group had, at one time, based off the logs and the sheer quantity of channels and members, been as active if not more active with even larger numbers.

I am confident that despite the difference in "life-stage" of the two groups, their similarities in function and aesthetic mean they are more alike than different, especially when compared to the other groups. I therefore combine and refer to both groups as they were in their active stage, to comprise a temporally scattered field site, but it is also worth considering that each stage of rising/falling interest in various groups is part of the wider temporal milieu of online communication, with frequent migrations between groups, splintering, and reforming as various social situations and political changes develop.



Figure 3. Accessed via Twitter 4/15/24: <https://twitter.com/DrInsensitive/status/1776962590414909662/photo/1>

Memes in S2 skew heavily towards being genuine and unveiled, akin to the type of content that bots on Facebook often post. Figure 3 is an example of the kind of memes common in this space, vague and literal enough that it could very well have been produced as part of a foreign bot campaign. These usually comprise something to do with how the opposition or government are backwards and devoid of ‘common sense.’ The discussion regarding

memes like this is low, and commonly the responses would be just a simple “thumbs-up” reaction or “True!” Included in this discussion as well is Figure 4, and while similar posts are present in all three sites, in S2, the reverence for specific members of the alt-right/4 Chan ‘celebrity’ sphere was the highest. While S3 or S1 might skew more towards the ironic or meta-ironic sanctification of mass killers or terrorists, S2 places genuine belief on the ideals of reactionary or politically

divisive figures such as the pictured “Lord Miles” of Afghanistan infamy. In this quote meme, like some within S2, his photo and twitter handle are accompanied by an antisemitic tweet,



Figure 4. A quote meme sourced anonymously via discord on 4/15/24.

but as a more “grounded” figure among the alt-right (meaning not in jail for life or deceased), he is interpreted and revered more literally, with no or little ironic implication. These are the likes of Jordan Peterson, Andrew Tate, and Ben Shapiro, not explicitly violent or terroristic figures, but espousing generally conservative, hateful, or ‘disruptive’ ideals that reactionaries can twist towards their specific ideological attachments.

The key takeaways that separated S2 from S1 and S3 are not only in total size and frequency of interaction, but in the increased proportion of genuine, unveiled political discussions without the use of irony. These discussions skewed heavily anti-democratic and pro-collapse, espousing the rhetoric that makes up the accelerationist alt-right tendencies that drip through most modern neo-reactionary beliefs. The flavor of S2's ideology can be seen across the internet in niche sub-cultures of neo-monarchists, extreme anarchists, eco-fascists, homo-fascists, neo-Nazis, etc., characterized by engagement with extreme reactionary politics and a contempt for democratic institutions. S2 is a living space for the formation of relationships between like-minded individuals who feel either disenfranchised by modern society or disillusioned with the whole project of western liberal democracy.

S3's bizarreness appropriates one of the most difficult aspects of studying the digital alt-right, its' inherent ephemerality, even more than the split between the two groups that made up S2. S3 is a joke group, made up of mostly members who interact with each other in other contexts outside of the group itself. The name of S3 often changed, roles shifted around rapidly, and members seemed to either know each other very well or have never interacted. Sporadic text communication and voice chats happened at irregular intervals, sometimes in quick succession or other times after long break periods. The makeup of these communications is usually a "whoever is online" affair, and the pretext for the communications was equally as varied.

The main function of this type of group is either as an "escape" space or as a joke, likely both. Unlike other groups there are few rules and fewer regulars, and it acts as just another space in the wider network of interconnected groups. In its pure, pointless mundanity, S3 perhaps represents the most important aspect of digital communication in the modern era, its regular-ness beyond need for regimentation. Why not have twenty "joke" groups full of a random assortment

of people from other more structured groups? The social possibility and group creation potential is almost limitless, and that is where measuring the influence of the alt-right in digital contexts becomes such a monumental task. Memes spread in S3 may have the most potential for outreach, as little care is taken to cultivate a likeminded membership base, and as such I observed within the group the most variety of political opinions and exposure to the moderate debate of extreme right rhetoric of any of the field sites. As

an example of the sort of bizarre blend of ideologies and extreme irony present in S3, see Figure 5. In this meme, disconnected identities and concepts are mashed together in an “ironic” fashion, a “shit-post.” Interestingly, the user also “disliked” the post before capturing it

and reposting, adding another layer of potential interpretation as to whether the poster

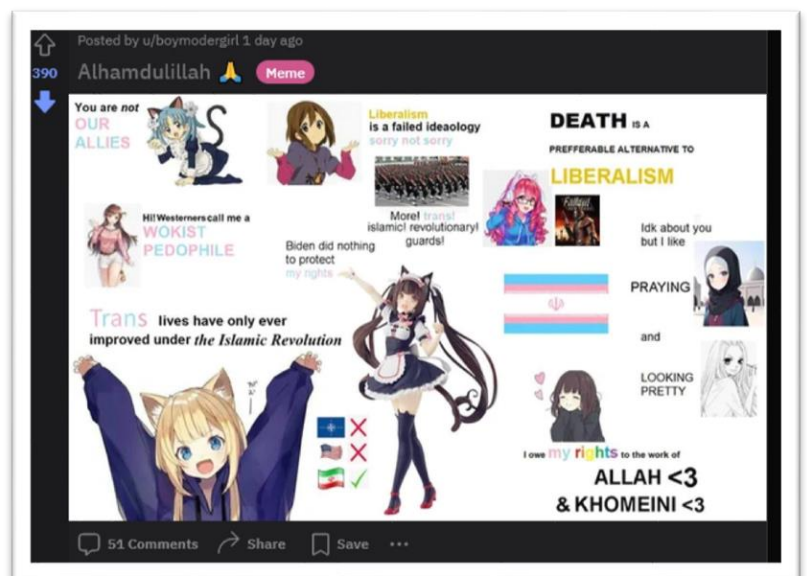


Figure 5. Screenshot of a reddit meme sourced anonymously via discord on 4/15/24.

agreed with the meme or not. The unclear nature of the meme, and its bordering on lack of comprehensibility is a feature of many memes posted in S3. Popular estimates put weekly active discord servers at an imprecise 19 million in 2023 (Geysler, 2024). If even one percent of that number are groups interconnected with aberrative alt-right adjacent servers such as S3 that is almost 200,000 potential sites for radicalization or the casual uptake of toxic memetic information, on any given week. This is of course without considering Twitter, Instagram, Reddit, YouTube, or any other social media site capable of fomenting neo-reactionary extreme

right sentiments via memes and the casual acceptance of a shift to the extreme right side of the Overton window, through suggested content on one's feed rather than group participation.



Figure 6. Sourced on 4/15/24 from deleted reddit user:
https://www.reddit.com/r/PhilosophyMemes/comments/1bd83c8/b_lack_sun_black_sun/

In some cases, there are obviously accelerationist tendencies visible within the memes of these spaces. Figure 6 is a meme depicting an aesthetic juxtaposition for the interpretation of the neo-Nazi Black Sun symbol.

It is notable that Nick Land has been depicted with

altered features to embody the “Chad” facial structure common in many mainstream memes.

Explicitly accelerationist memes can be found infrequently in all three field sites, and across multiple social media platforms. With the descriptive findings here I aim at convincing the reader that in the mundane nature of these interconnected online spaces, there is an undercurrent for the justification of psychotic violences and terroristic praxis via casual hate-speech. Look no further than in the cases of incel murders such as Bianca Devins²⁹ tragic case, or in the various mass shootings propagated by individuals heavily engaged in these types of spaces, and the further sanctification and meme-ability of violent actors after the fact. Of course, not everyone that engages in these spaces is going to be pushed towards a violent outburst, and all users are free agents able to resist and operate outside of wider trends. The point is merely that in its regularity, the commonness with which this type of extremist rhetoric and aesthetic tendency towards alt-right memes is viral and ubiquitous online, there are just that many more

²⁹ Specifically relevant to the discord field site, this horrifying case included the dissemination of photographs depicting the victim's body via the killers shared discord group. The victim and the killer in this case were highly active online in alt-right associated spaces (CBS News, 2021).

opportunities for the one person who really shouldn't have been exposed to that type of rhetoric to enact tragedy on others in its name.

III. Apocalyptic Christian Futures and Accelerationism as a Terror Machine

Aside from the more obvious immediate consequences of extreme right terrorist actions, it is a useful exercise to engage with acceleration within its own realm of abstraction, to further our understanding of the accelerationist attachments present in the extreme right's ontology.

There is a similar logical error made in various cases of 'lone wolf' terror, a suspension of value that is blindingly obvious for most members of our society. This logical error is the psychotic suspension or absence entirely of human empathy, even when considering the trajectory for what they believe to be the best path to the future. There is an engagement of psychotic logic, to take and to lose life as means of remedy against what is perceived as an evil state-of-being in the West. The extent of this suspension of empathy goes beyond hateful external violence and enters the realm of suicidal ideation via a collective martyr complex.

The tendency arises when writers like the inescapable Nick Land and Curtis Yarvin³⁰ enlist schizo-analysis in a war against the egalitarian, in favor of neo-reactionism and by extension, mass killing via lone-wolf extremism. This endeavor betrays more about their own specific intellectual libidinal attachments³¹ than any meaningful quality towards the nature of violence as praxis. I would argue that Land, in his attempt to produce a schizo-analytic interpretation of race and society, failed entirely to remove himself from the oedipal relationship many western thinkers exhibit in their obsession with race, and creates instead a psychotic

³⁰ Known to many by his blogging name of "Mencius Moldbug."

³¹ Libidinal utilized here in the Lacanian practical-economic sense as used by Lyotard in *Libidinal Economy*.

delusion-dream.³² Regarding this belief that an increase in the frequency of these mass shootings could somehow result in a collapse and subsequent rebuilding of society towards an ethno-nationalist future, as proponents of right-wing accelerationism so often espouse; this is a properronea, a fundamental failure in moral reasoning, logical reasoning, and self-preservation. Regardless, the idea has attracted a slight crowd in the neo-reactionary sphere anyway, with theorists like Land and Yarvin adding credibility to the accelerationism inspired lone-wolf terror movement with their academic jargon and shoddy application of post-structural theory to racist, anti-human ends.³³

Even if this belief is incongruent with our logical reality, extremist anticipation of some vague future authoritarian state begotten via this violence reaches back from that false future to affect extremist behaviors in the present. In the introduction to schizo-analysis, Deleuze and Guattari describe two poles of delirium, a “paranoiac fascizing” and a “schizo-revolutionary.” Try as Nick Land might, he is unable to ever reckon with the concept of race in a schizo-revolutionary way, always falling immediately back into the rhetoric of the first option, never free of his autocratic desire (Deleuze 2009, 276-277). He ends up using instead the aesthetics of the schizo pole while falling into the practical expectations of the paranoid fascistic pole. For example, in this statement on the nature of whiteness, “Because ‘whiteness’ is a limit (pure absence of color), it slips smoothly from the biological factuality of the Caucasian sub-species into metaphysical and mystical ideas. Rather than accumulating genetic variation, a white race is contaminated or polluted by admixtures that compromise its defining negativity – to darken it.” (Land 2022, 34). From the ground floor of this reasoning, Land exhibits a tendency towards the

³² Psychosis used again here as a detachment from the real, as Freud defined it.

³³ See Land *The Dark Enlightenment* and *A Nick Land Reader: Selected Writings*. For Yarvin, see Moldbug “An Open Letter to Open-Minded Progressives.”

dogmatic preservation of restrictive social constructions rather than disruptions, for strict categorizations of racial “purity” rather than individual freedom from racialization. This is present throughout his writing, and any of his later arguments pertaining to schizo-analytic disruption of the society, what he refers to as “PC,” or politically correct society, are then in favor of destruction only in its capacity to produce an authoritarian-paranoid state structure. Land advocates for the antithesis of the liberating schizophrenic nomadic qualities present in moderation within democratic³⁴ systems: total authoritarian control.

It is precisely Land’s unwillingness to think beyond social categorizations of race, class, and gender that keep him from a fully realized schizo-analytic. His antiquated conclusions about all these realms are therefore easily adopted in the manifestos of reactionary extremists with simplistic, violently racist aims. What Land believes a clever subversion, a repurposing of the post-structural theory behind Lyotard, Deleuze/Guattari, and Baudrillard, which are most often interpreted towards leftist politics, instead towards the neo-reactionary ends of the late 2000s, 2010s, and now into the 2020s, is in fact his failure. His conclusions are too heavily influenced by technocratic “race-realists” like Yarvin. Land ends up coming to the same basic conclusions that classic counter-revolutionary reactionaries like Joseph de Maistre³⁵ did on liberalism and secularism, to toss them out entirely in favor of autocratic rule. To imagine schizo-analysis without the fire of rebellion the likes of which fueled May of ‘68, anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism, and anti-capitalism is to wholly pervert and remove the concept from its meaningful place in the history of philosophy. It is to take that fire and raze rather than revolutionize. Land

³⁴ Democracy used here imperfectly to describe a state run with broad popular representation in government and voting.

³⁵ The irony here being that reaction against the French revolution by Joseph de Maistre had at least the substance of hopefully reducing chaos, whereas Land has no such objective and is reacting against the nebulous shadow of “PC” culture of the 21st century in favor of rapid transformative violence (Maistre 2006, 18).

was simply using academic jargon and cyber-punk aesthetics to repackage racist reactionary ideas for new audiences afforded by the rise of the internet. This hope for a collapse as espoused by violent alt-right extremists runs parallel to a small but growing minority of Christians who have embraced emphatically the promises of a violent Armageddon.

Ardent Christian apocalypticists, the most extreme of the millenarians in specific, differ within their theological reasoning from common millennial conceptions of the second coming of Christ substantially. One key difference is in the implication and anticipation of violence. “Motivated by a deep pessimism regarding the current world, the emphasis of millenarian beliefs is discontinuity, not continuity. The passage to the millennial period will not be one of steady social, moral, and spiritual progress; it will be one of violent transformation, during which one world is overthrown and another established” (Walls 2007, 192-193). The terroristic potential here lies then in a reversal of accelerationist terror, inaction instead of reaction. Besides the obvious dangers of violent action or mass suicide from members of explicit doomsday cults, the most extreme followers of millenarian thought offer a more insidious and passive form of violence. The potential for the conversion of key influential figures in society to ideologies that deny or reduce the threat of climate change represents a threat to the wellbeing of the entire population. There is present in extreme millenarism a passive inaction in the face of the climate disaster, low or no incentive to reform current social systems, and nonchalant attitudes towards mass violence as merely “signs of the end times” (Veldman 2019). If one imagines violence can come from two directions, either bottom-up or top-down, then millenarian sympathy in the leadership of oil companies and elected officials constitutes real and present danger of the top-down sort. A tyranny of negligence and stagnation is also a corrosive force on societal stability.

From a certain Machiavellian perspective on governance, the narratives of apocalypse present throughout the regular sort of Christian millennialism and even secular anticipations of the coming climate disaster³⁶ provides two oppositely beneficial modes of attack to control a population via fear. In the form of a sort of “possession” as Massumi puts it, triggered by threat, rational fear of a degradation of the world-situation makes up an “affective atmosphere” with politically advantageous consequences for the status quo, assuming they can control the fears furthest extent (Massumi 2015, 179-183). The type of fear found in most secular conceptions and in common millennialism is, as Mbembe wrote about terror and fear in general, a rational reaction perverted to a “democratizing” effect, a response to stimuli extrapolated cross-culturally through “stories of threat” (Mbembe 2019, 30-31). The most extreme interpretations of millenarian catastrophic apocalypticism do not operate this way, and therefore even within the most mundane matters a great distrust of long-term planning to better our world arises. To exemplify, I offer an anecdote. A person close to me is a proficient financial advisor with reputable experience. They once explained to me how difficult it was for them to convince one of their recent clients, belonging to a well-known millenarian Christian denomination, to invest long-term in anything, even charitable funds and foundations, under the belief that the present system of things, worldly creation, is swiftly coming to an end. This small anecdote does not prove anything broadly about any one millenarian group, but it does show how one could begin to ignore certain key aspects of contribution in the economy, politics, and other worldly matters if catastrophic apocalypticism is carried through in all things as in faith. It is also important to remember that while many issues such as abortion and war have often elicited activism from

³⁶ I nod here to the so called “environmental millennialism,” which suggests in opposition to catastrophic millenarism that we not throw out the proverbial baby with the bathwater (Wessinger 2012, 635).

even extreme millenarian groups, it has been warnings of climate change that induces the most passivity, for a wide range of reasons ranging from fossil fuel lobbying to a perceived lack of human agency and the attribution of climate change to the beginning of the second coming (Veldman 2019).

To characterize accelerationist mass violence and millenarist inaction as an individual issue affecting only a small group of extremists is wrong on two counts mainly. Firstly, it is ignoring the massively influential spread of these memes,³⁷ perpetuated and resulting in ideological conversion towards sympathy with the extreme Christian right and the extreme alt-right. Secondly, it ignores that with their capacity for violence and memetic warfare, right wing accelerationists and extreme Christian apocalypticists are eating away at the real progress that various social justice groups within the United States have made towards a more inclusive and safer future for all citizens. Accelerationism and the most extreme versions of millenarianism composite a multi-modal and temporally fluid terror machine, desiring and self-actuating.

With Christian apocalypticism and accelerationism imagined here as interconnected systems, the next axis to consider is temporal: how these ideologies connect to their own inherent futurity. The most helpful way to see these temporally shifted systems is through the lens of anticipation. Within the context of 21st century technoscience, I take for granted anticipation as an affective condition in our psychology. It follows then that there is a wider system chain: the terror machine is made up of systems differing in not only the present pursuit of action or inaction, but the shared anticipations and anxieties of all who perceive this path for the future as

³⁷ Used here as an amalgamation of Dawkin's meme theory and popular usage online; memes as in memetic warfare but also the lowest unit of culture transmittable between persons that make up larger social movements with alike aesthetics, politics, and identities (Shifman 2014, 37-40).

possible (Adams 2009, 248-249). In the case of the most extreme apocalyptic millenarians, this is a simple three-step temporal chain. The biblical past, the corrupted present, and the violent future collapse resulting in Christ's return. The right-wing accelerationist chain similarly has an idealized past and future. It begins with the widespread acceptance of liberalism and multiculturalism³⁸ causing the "fall" of the west and the degradation of an idealized past, then it moves to a liberal present requiring violent resistance in the form of lone-wolf terror, to a final future where race war and global collapse have led to the development of an authoritarian ethno-state utopia.

In these models, the collapse at the beginning of both futures is coupled with the inaction or "waiting" of millenarians coinciding with the violent mass killings of accelerationists, only differing in the result of these futures. It is important also to realize that individuals are affected by the entire machine, different systems may push on one person more than it does on others, but the general Christian apocalyptic zeitgeist and bipartisan radical tendencies towards reactionism are acting on all people through the composite psycho-social memetic warfare pathways of social media. Conversion towards extremist beliefs may be activated via aesthetic, conspiratorial, radically political, entirely spiritual, or, as Freud might say, a "polymorphous perversion" of any number of childhood traumas or base tendencies towards extremism and violence.

Defining accelerationism necessitates engaging with science fiction and futurist aesthetics as a medium for ideological conversion, as in the case of novels such *The Turner Diaries* or in the Landian additions to the CCRU. Similarly, for millenarians, we can find a trove

³⁸ Again, the past doesn't need to be empirically historical for the system to act on other systems, many accelerationists have bought into "Siege Culture" propaganda that espouses the virtues of "hyper-modernist" fascist states like Nazi Germany and incredibly simplistic understandings of the "white traditionalism" of ancient cultures like the Norse, the Greeks, and the Romans (Johnson 2021).

of popular secular post-apocalyptic and apocalyptic fiction present throughout American media, as well as explicitly rapture-inspired pieces of pop culture. The cultural obsession with the apocalypse in American media seems innocent enough when placed in the context of our wider self-awareness for self-destructive actions under capitalist extraction economies and global nuclear insecurity. Unfortunately, deeper within lies the cultural priming for nihilistic attachments and extreme passivity in the face of radical millenarian beliefs.

Popular novels like Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006) or movies such as *Wall-E* (2008) and any of a myriad of disaster flicks, present and repackaged narratives about disastrous futures for audiences of variable ages and political leanings. However, these narratives tend to imply secular or "worldly" causes for the end of days. In the *Left Behind* series of books by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, rapture has occurred, and the tribulation is now occurring ahead of Christ's return, making the series a pre-millennialism pre(or-mid)-tribulation dispensational interpretation of end times eschatology. In later books in the series such as *The Rising*, *The Regime*, and *The Rapture of the Before they were Left Behind* prequel trilogy, it is revealed that a mid-tribulation rapture, post-antichrist and mid-persecution millennial configuration was occurring the whole time. Moving away from the details of their specific eschatological premise,³⁹ this series has been massively influential over the past 30 years of its existence, including in secular media. It is undeniable that the storyline of *Left Behind* draws some conspiratorial similarities with the internal logic of *The Turner Diaries* and the belief in a "New World Order" run by the anti-Christ. In addition, the massively influential and somewhat infamous 1972 "Chick Tract" *The Last Generation* depicts a particularly brutal version of the

³⁹ Authorial intent was obviously to be vague about the specifics but played into the public's macabre fascination with the suffering promised by some configurations of millennialism in the period known as the tribulation.

tribulation where vaccines, worldly violence, and a ‘new world order conspiracy’ pressure and torture Christians before their eventual rapture mid-tribulation (Chick 1972). One has only to briefly browse the forum board of /pol/ on 4chan or the trickle-down communities present on Instagram and Reddit to see several soy-jaks popping up now and again depicting (with varying levels of ironic or meta-ironic implications) international organizations such as the UN, WEF, or liberal leaning politicians as agents of the anti-Christ forcing vaccines or homosexuality onto the populace. See Figure 7 for an example of anti-vaccine sentiment in the “troll-face” format of meme. The cultural penetration of these ideas has tangible psychological effects. Accelerationist inspired manifestos and memes incorporate ideas like the anti-Christ and the second coming often, showing once again the complimentary coupling of the present millenarian apocalypticism and present accelerationism systems within the larger machine.



Figure 7. Sourced on 4/15/24 from social media platform IFunny: <https://br.ifunny.co/picture/i-hate-the-antichrist-i-hate-the-antichrist-we-ve-sRU3gM199>

On fueling the terror machine’s various interconnected systems, there are several main sources of inspiration/motivation: self-actualizing insecurity, dogmatism, and a genuine belief in one's own disenfranchisement. This has been much discussed by psychologists under the terminology of “disenfranchised grief,” and if grief is to precede action as it often does, a basic understanding of the cross-cultural human experience and knowledge of historical realities allows us to easily consider the consequences. Why are Gen-Z men experiencing the largest social migration towards far-right movements and identities such as the men's rights movement, the incel movement, and the proud boy's movement? Why is antisemitism, white supremacy, and

gender based political disunity the highest it has been since World War Two?⁴⁰ The answer is certainly not that women, Jewish people, and people of color are somehow united against 15 to 30 year-old white men in a grand conspiracy organized by the anti-Christ. The true answer hinges on the belief in a lie, the lie that something has been lost and that something is owed. Either subconsciously internalized or overtly reasoned with, the lie is the same bile that fuels the inaction of the extreme millenarians and the right-wing accelerationists in the form of a desiring machine. The fuel is at its base level, a misguided belief that social justice and “wokeness” has created a dystopian, evil America that must be cleansed, either with holy fire or the fires of a violent Kristallnacht-meets-Tulsa-bombing race war. It is, in essence, a psy-op, with venom distilled across generations of racism and misogyny to be perhaps the most potent weapon reactionaries have in their toolbox today, a mostly passive internalized belief in disenfranchisement. Put another way, the myth of disenfranchisement itself is a “conspiracy theory” made up of multiple conspiracies, in the “de-pathologized” sense of the term, shared not only through the individual's psycho-social weakness to these psy-ops, but instead across the larger cultural zeitgeist of our time (Masco 2024, 428).

The output of this desiring machine is, as previously mentioned, a dual terror. We have discussed at length the components that make up the machine across both the spatial and temporal axes, and briefly about the output of terror and violence. It is the extreme right's embracement of psychotic violence, of either terroristic action or terroristic inaction, resulting from a complete lack of empathy towards those different than them in either belief, identity, or political affiliation. It is the climate disaster, the resistance to social welfare programs, and mass

⁴⁰ 82% of self-identified incels belong to Gen-Z, and one fifth of Gen-Z does not believe the holocaust happened as it is told in the history books (Jones, 2023).

shootings all cross-pollinating and produced together between social territories. It is in the blending and deterritorialization of the cultural, the world-historical, the self, and community, with traditional religiosity and 21st century cybernetic memetics that the outputs are connected. The terror may come from either inaction or action, but the result is the same. That all futures, our multiplicity of futures, would be sacrificed in favor of the attempted production or “waiting” inherent to accelerationism and extreme millenarianism.

Are there alternative futures that could derail this self-actuating, desiring, and corrosively violent machine? On the point of passive millenarianism, maybe we could simply subvert, on an interpersonal scale, the catastrophic and uncharitably violent depictions of the future present in some extreme Christian eschatology. It is worth examining the massively popular but elementarily basic apologetic protestant literature, such as *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis, in which the most popular author of Christian apologetics outlines explicitly just how socialistic and anti-capitalist a fully Christian society would be (Lewis 2001, 84). The argument proceeds then that, as Lewis says, we must produce only what is good, without, as he calls it, ‘swank’ or, more importantly, without relishing anxiety, fear, and violence, as in the case of the violent end times for millenarianism. Under this framework one would behave as if charitable action and hard work for the wider community were all that mattered regardless of the catastrophic future. What can be considered, to modern conceptions of goodness, a “good” product would undoubtedly be something other than the extractive process by which we acquire oil and minerals to fuel our intensely destructive economies of accumulation. If, as many groups on the Christian Right wish to convey by citing writers like C.S. Lewis, traditional family values, male supremacy in the family unit, and social conformity in matters of sexual orientation and gender are the norms to strive and fight for, why then do they ignore Lewis’s calls to follow up on your

charitable donations, to extend outward gestures of love⁴¹ to people you don't like or believe are going to heaven? This sentiment of *thorough* Christian charity cannot co-exist with a tendency for inaction, to fantasize about your enemies suffering during the return and allowing them, and the earth we all share, to suffer and burn in anticipation of that specific future (Lewis 2001, 129-133).

Even among Christian nationalists themselves there is a tendency to detest the passivity of certain extreme millenarian Christians. Although his ambitions are much closer to that of the fascist accelerationist's post-collapse dreams of a nationalist 'utopia', one of the key points in Stephen Wolfe's *The Case for Christian Nationalism* (2022), is that Christians should not sit idly by and accept the 'oppression' and 'moral degeneracy' being 'forced' upon them by a secular society. Instead, he advocates for a 'rising up' to establish a more active regime without the perceived faults of secular liberalism. It is interesting that climate passivism is always left out of these calls for action, and instead the focus is usually on removing protective legal rights for vulnerable groups and religious minorities, with no concern about the potential threat that climate change poses for their aims to establish a white nationalist Christian kingdom on earth.

Accelerationism, accordingly, has a leftist alternative future built right into it. Left accelerationism is dead, in the sense that the association of the word is now and perhaps forever tied to the fate of neo-reactionism. In the early 2010s however, this was not yet the case. To paraphrase the entire body of left-accelerationism in perhaps an unfairly simplistic summation as toyed with by Alex Williams, Nick Srnicek, Benjamin Noys, and Mark Fisher, left

⁴¹ Beyond, of course, the attempt to evangelize or preach out of "love," so often equated among a combative sort of Christian as an opportunity to critique and to moralize. The value of Christianity in this sense should be self-evident to outsiders via charitable action not related to conversion.

accelerationism is the belief that an exponential expansion and acceleration in free-market capitalist modes of production and world organization will collapse upon itself the whole system, resulting in an undeniable need for a Marxist society (Mackay 2014, Shaviro 2015, Noys 2014). While a less insidious path to think about in relation to an accelerationist interpretation of post-structural theory and the future-making potentials of an accelerating political-economy, the problems with right-wing accelerationism as a logical historical trajectory are once again applicable. The difference here is that no major social movement such as the alt-right adopted leftist accelerationism, and therefore it has faded into obscurity compared to its right-wing counterpart.

No, we need a different construction for this subversion. As much as the sublimation of society directly from an accelerating present into a utopian future is an attractive prospect, it is not realistic, the creative destruction never manifests itself. When Mark Fisher described throughout *Capitalist Realism* the recursive nature of capitalism despite Marx's predictions for the trajectories of history, he may have come closer to the truth of capitalism's resiliency than any 20th century theorist ever did. Weaponized capitalism is still capitalism, in much the same way that a so-called "late" capitalist society is still a capitalist society, and it will preserve itself even against accelerating environmental and internal pressures.

The praxis for subverting the right-wing accelerationism of mass violence hinges instead on properly understanding the problem and having a willingness to address it. What I cannot stress enough and what seems to escape the conception of policymakers and think tank members born before 1997, is that accelerationism, the alt-right, and the strange millenarian tendency toward climate inaction are chiefly cultural problems, with political and religious side effects. To curtail the output of violence from this machine, the input of perceived disenfranchisement and

conspiracy must be stopped. It is important of course to treat mental illness and control certain bad actors' ability to acquire firearms, but it is equally as important to properly educate and prepare young people to resist these influences and to stop the flow of unmitigated memetic warfare from radicalizing young white men in their teenage years.

There is an influence passed back from accelerationists and apocalypticists anticipated futures to the present state of the machine. This influence, the shared dream of a collapse, then inspires individuals affected by the construction and boundaries of the machine to act in ways that perpetuate a dual violence on the wider population and society of the United States, creating the main violent output of the machine, empathy free terroristic potential. The upshot is that a multiplicity of futures, futures in which we increase care for the poor, attempt to remedy the climate crisis, or expand democratic institutions with reform, become more difficult when the forces of the machine work to erode the very core of our society. It is, however, not the only future machine. There are uncountable individual conceptions of the future, which act and intertwine with memes, subcultures, and our zeitgeist's perception of the world historical. This implies under the model of systems and machines that there are also many more machines working alongside, and against, the apocalyptic-accelerationist machine of psychotic violence. We can choose, as a society, which machines we seek to fuel and which ones we deprive, in hopes that they wither. We decide and determine, as a collective, which futures are worth pursuing and preparing for.

Conclusions

After considering our ability to derail accelerationism, I think it best to examine once more the practical spaces that radicalization occurs in. I return to what I began this thesis with,

my early exposure to digital spaces and the alt-right reactionary sub-cultures that are so prominent within. Many of the memes and social media platforms mentioned within as modes of alt-right knowledge production online were familiar to me in some form or another long before I began research for this specific project. When I was in middle school, I had by that point accumulated many online friends, and been enmeshed into several mainstream digital communities that used the memes and lingo derived from digital spheres like 4chan that scholars now associate with the formation of the modern alt-right.

The lingo is easy to learn if you spend most of your free time as a child online, language full of self-referential jokes that act as a filter against those not familiar with the community. In my pre-teens and earlier, these cultural markers did not set off alarm bells. I reasoned that because there was the infrequent openly gay member or person of color and because people from other parts of the world were adopting the same lingo and irreverent affectation, none of it was truly extreme or bad, or even meant in seriousness. This type of mental gymnastics was likely made easier due to my positionality as a prepubescent youth, raised and socialized as a straight male and a white Protestant American. As one can imagine, few of these “jokes” were centered on topics I had critically interrogated as a white male student by that age.⁴²

I finally realized what I was being exposed to, or even groomed towards, when I was invited to a smaller group chat by a friend. He was older than I by around 8 or 9 years. He hinted multiple times in our gaming sessions that when the people he played with seemed “chill” then he had a separate group for them to play games and chat in. I was eventually let into that group

⁴² Gender, sexuality, race, religious difference, and the politics of national identity are often taught in public school as stable realities rather than fluid social potentialities, and dissonant individual experiences for white men regarding identity are relatively sparse compared to the experiences of women, people of color, and queer people.

and immediately encountered a more explicit brand of reactionary right rhetoric. Seeing this as a middle-schooler, I still believed it to be ironic, the veil that many alt-right communities use to pass off genuine bigotry as comedic, as we have explored throughout this thesis.

I wound up in one of that smaller group's gaming sessions and listened to a conversation about, in explicit and genuine terms, the "benefits" of segregation. I stayed and listened to it, unsure what exactly I should say or do; with the veil of irony fully suspended, I had finally begun to feel actively uncomfortable. What confused me most was those other members of the call, people I had played with in the past and who were my age or younger, eagerly engaged in the discussion. They had all seemed nice, many of them well-adjusted and relatable with apparently normal friend groups and good grades. Yet here they were, discussing, in the most explicit way possible, white nationalist ideological goals.

I left that smaller group the next day, and from then on, the seemingly disconnected, toxic pieces of rhetoric I had encountered in what I thought disparate groups began to make sense. What I saw over subsequent years as I drifted away from "gaming" culture, including the "ironic" sanctification of mass shooters, the dog-whistle in-jokes referring to racist and sexist concepts and theories, and the extreme ethno-nationalist perspectives touted by people in these settings from all over the world, made me consistently ill. Recognition of the apparent 'invisibility' of many of these groups before the events of Jan. 6th, 2021, disillusioned me regarding the efficacy of law enforcement and policy makers' attempts to curb the spread of extremist ideology online.

I created a barrier between myself and the dangerous inner circles of these communities when navigating online spaces, and that kept me out of trouble and away from the centers of

radicalization. This turned out to be not only the morally responsible thing to do, but it also kept me safe from the intensifying radicalization of the late 2010s. I knew of people in other servers with only a couple degrees of separation from myself who, according to rumors, were called to testify in court cases relating to crimes committed by other members within the same communities.

In other words, many children who were exposed to the same content as I was ended up being radicalized and turned through spaces like these. This is evident in recent cases like the Iron March forums, which document the development of the white nationalist “Atomwaffen Division” out of young teenage members, or the 2022 Buffalo Shooting. These cases show directly how young teens can be “called to action” and organized towards extremist ends via online radicalization, as in the case of Atomwaffen Division’s communal endorsement of their own member's hate crime murders and the Buffalo shooter’s copying of multiple previous extremist manifestos found online into his own.

Solutions to the resultant social problems caused by these trends must go beyond reforms in mental health access and gun control. This is a problematic technological and cultural affordance, wherein bad actors deliberately radicalize and spread extremist reactionary ideology to young children and teens through social media, memes, and gaming, disproportionately affecting the mentally ill or socially vulnerable. The perpetrators of resultant crimes might even, thus, be considered victims of a sort, and while many people within these communities live a sort of ideological double life, others crumble under the weight of their perceived “disenfranchisement” at the hands of an imagined societal conspiracy, resulting in severe social repercussions, delusions, and violence.

To stop this trend, to curb mass killings and hate, and to promote healthy relationships in online settings, policy must be introduced that will strike at these issues from the origin point. Legislating online communities and updating use policies may be a good place to start, but a total culture shift in digital spaces must be achieved to root out this toxic hate. At no point should extremist adults have access to directly influence the minds and alter the life paths of children when they are at their most vulnerable.⁴³ With the advent of algorithmic content online in recent years,⁴⁴ and the increasing nichification of digital subcultures, all combined with an exponential increase in internet usage by teens and young children, the current trajectory is concerning to say the least, and requires societal overhaul.

Digital groups and their associated societal implications can be deceptive, misleadingly close to home and yet functionally unknown and unique. Interdisciplinary anthropology could be a powerful discipline to tackle these problems, due to its unique modes of cultural analysis. The field of anthropology might better parse the difficult to understand inner workings of digital subcultures than psychology or sociology using ethnographic methods. Acknowledging that my positionality as a masculine presenting white American man allows me to engage in ethnographic contexts within the extreme right more easily than some other researchers, and that many researchers have expressed discomfort or concern regarding engagement with these types of communities, there is still much to gain from “inside” views of dangerous communities such

⁴³ It is worth noting that while current bills like the KOSA, the Kids Online Safety Act that seek to increase censorship and protect children online while exposing adults using anonymous usernames online would potentially mitigate the problem, a targeted response could be much more efficient and avoid the unintended harm along partisan lines. Conservatives and Liberals have both expressed major concerns about KOSA and other similar acts because of partisan issues such as children seeking gender-affirming care or sexual education in red states, and the purchasing of legal firearms online or fear of political censorship in blue states.

⁴⁴ Algorithmic content has seemingly automated this process of radicalization and the viral spread of alt-right ideology, see Benjamin 2021 and Ribeiro 2020. Additionally, the role that memes play in the alt-right has been linked to memory in contexts abroad, see Ristić 2023.

as these. As scholars and anthropologists, we have an ethical obligation to describe, understand, and critically analyze these groups using both their own internal cultural logics and our own scholarly methods, as we would with any other cultural group or movement, in pursuit of remedying the violence. In this sense, the angle I take on studying the alt-right is that of a scholarly, yet politically active, applied anthropology.

The prize that federal agencies have made of the alt-right leadership in the long awaited recent federal crackdown following the Jan. 6th insurrection has of course reduced the efficacy of such movements and forced them to further decentralize and operate underground, but it has not cured the wider cultural sickness that leads to the spread of this ideology in the first place. In my experience within the spaces that make-up the “frontlines” of alt-right knowledge production, it seems that these ideologies self-perpetuate despite constant suppression. The simultaneous insular nature of the alt-right and the paradoxically unbounded reach of its viral rhetoric and memes have situated the movement as more insidious and deadlier than the previous post-WW2 extreme right reactionary movements of the anglosphere and beyond. Accelerationism and extreme millenarian apocalypticism are but two of many ideas/doctrines that makeup the neo-reactionary right’s ideological terror potential, discussed chiefly in the American context via this thesis. The future of democracy seems particularly uncertain in the face of the potential for further digital fractalization of political belief. When neo-reactionary political theorists like Nick Land and Mencius Moldbug collide with millenarian apocalypticists and are then protected or platformed by Silicon Valley elites,⁴⁵ the recipe for further tragedy and disfunction is propagated in a language of memes and irony.

⁴⁵ Many of whom wish themselves to divide and reduce the power of democratic nation states, see *Crack-Up Capitalism*, Slobodian 2023.

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