

7. The “Mocking Varlets” of the Postmodern Left: Political Correctness, Education, and *Empire*

And next come our philosophers, revered for their gowns and beards; they look upon themselves as the only

knowledgeable ones and all others as fleeting shadows. How sweet it is to see them rave while they frame in their heads

innumerable worlds [...]. In the

meantime, Nature laughs at their conjectures. In fact, as proof of

their not knowing anything with certainty would suffice their

arguing about the explanation of every single phenomenon.

These, though they know nothing, profess to know

everything; not knowing even themselves and, at times, not being

aware of the pothole or the block that lies in their way, whether

because they're half blind, or because their wits wander in some other


place, contend that they have

discovered ideas, [...] separate forms [...]. Most of all, they loathe the profane populace.



Erasmus, *In Praise of Folly*¹

7.1. From French Fad to Discursive System

he use of the adjective “postmodern” punctuated the launch of a vogue.

It was not attributed to Foucault himself—who, fearing to lose ground, mocked the cliché forthwith—but to a massive *nouvelle vague* of second-rate imitators of his, pundits like Jean-François Lyotard (1924–1998),² or Jean Baudrillard (1929–2007)*. The United States welcomed them all. Postmodernism was a French import, which followed in the wake of the Foucauldian sensation, but the phenomenon has been unquestionably American. Postmodernism became the new mannerism of the Left. And before one could begin to assess what it was actually made of, academia was busy redrafting curricula, business plans, and logistics around this American prototype running on a Foucauldian engine for the novel institution of “cultural studies.”

But in people’s heads the confusion was as thick as ever. “Postmodern politics,” some said, “eludes easy definition. No one goes around campaigning for postmodern politics.”³ Indeed, postmodernism had no platforms, no grass roots—up until the Nineties, it was just a syllabus. Thin and contrived, and pedagogically immaterial, like the credits of distance learning.

Presently, though—forty plus years after Foucault’s launch,—shedding its postmodern skin and taking different names the latest of which is “Critical Theory,” this game has massively evolved: the seminal syllabuses of America’s early

* See chapter 9, pp. 474–78, 487–90, 497–98, and 502.

Reign of Discursive Terror

Foucauldians, originally proliferated into a profusion of professional journals, the myriad journals into books, the multitudinous books into a mushrooming of college programs, the unrelenting academic sprawl into a full-fledged institutional bastion half academic half-governmental propped up, on one side, by the Entertainment Industry and swaddled, on the other, by a complicit galaxy of foundations, NGOs, and State agencies, which has itself ramified into worldwide network of sub-colonial compliance: PC has gone global. The stellar mounds of (US-)money behind this imperial push are beyond reckoning. Dismaying as ever, the setup is further boosted by an oceanic mass of libidinal misfits (the majority of human beings, in fact) —malcontents whose true arousal trigger is the opportunity for lynching,— ever ultra-eager to give their fellowmen a backhand slap across the teeth with whatever (discursive weapon) in the shape of sanctimonious scourging the System sees fit to equip them with.

Postmodernism's jocosity and fictional treatment of traditional academic materials have been possibly one of its most attractive features for so many students. Scores of them, not quite sure how to steer through the obscenities of modernity, have found it easy to opt for this seemingly irreverent, Libertarian ethos of erudite mischief, which taunts for the sake of taunting in a world environment that makes little sense. However, as argued in the previous chapter, it was political expediency, rather than taste or appeal, that brought the Foucauldian discourse to the neighborhood.

Postmodernism became a byword for relativism. It followed from Foucault's Power/Knowledge that what has been

customarily called “truth” was, to him, the “truth” of the disciplinarian elites.

‘Truth’ is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation, and of operation of statements. ‘Truth’ is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extends it. A ‘regime’ of truth. (Foucault)⁴

It was *their* “truth,” versus the aboriginal (Bataillean) and heterogeneous “truth” of the “insane” others. In America, Bataillean “heterogeneity” vanished from the charts entirely. “Their” truth came to be treated just as *a* truth, one of many. Or rather, “their truth” became the truth of the middle-aged White Anglo-Saxon man. It was the truth, the discourse of the slave-owner, of the genocidal freak, of the “White Suprematism” —it patently had to be a lie.

But neither Bataille nor Foucault had by any means operated under the presumption that their project could also be reduced to a relativistic gimmick; they knew better, they had hoped for something better —that is, more effectively insidious— than that. And, in a sense, their expectations have not gone wholly unfulfilled.

So, Foucault became the hero of the new American postmodern converts. They mistook him for a Christ-like radical and applauded for him heartily. They said of him with admiration that he was “not concerned with the approval of the established regimes.” That made “him the *bête noire* of mainstream or liberal political theorists.”⁵ They liked his rebel antics and all this saga of “subjugated knowledges”; they could easily fit into its weave their late struggles fought in the name

of feminism, homosexuality, and (marginalized) ethnicity. But what they relished even more was Foucault's Lutheranism, as it were: his claim, that is, that the "disqualified multitudes" no longer needed the intellectual-priest to interpret the gospel of rebellion on their behalf. This was the seduction of "power": thanks to Foucault, the postmodern professor could fuse himself or herself (figuratively mostly) with the masses and dream he or she could harness the collective energy to a general movement of destabilization, of resistance.⁶

So far so good.

And it was from Foucauldian statements such as those on "truth" (and his *Two Lectures*, in general) that the institution of "cultural studies" took its first (curricular) steps.

Whose culture shall be the official one and whose shall be subordinated? What cultures shall be regarded as worthy of display and which shall be hidden? Whose history shall be remembered and whose forgotten? What images of social life shall be projected and which shall be marginalized? What voices shall be heard and which will be silenced? Who is representing whom and on what basis? THIS IS THE REALM OF CULTURAL POLITICS.⁷

Opposition to the State, as it was led by the Left in the Sixties, had broken down; it did rebound in the late Seventies, wholly deflated and hardly recognizable, in the form of a resigned concern with cultural difference. This shriveled up and stagnating pool of resentment, needed then, some kind of institutional framework, and Foucauldian language served the purpose. Like their French counterparts in Vincennes a decade earlier, American radicals were co-opted and shoved into readymade academic structures, where they would be tasked

to disperse energy by needling new, countless yarns of postcolonial oppression, *one at a time* —the tacit clause being that such threads were never to be spun together on a single loom.

In time, Foucault's quasi-system of thought, not surprisingly, underwent an evolution not dissimilar from that experienced a century ago by Marxism. Being in the nature and shape of a creed (for which God the One = "Power" = Evil), it has since lent itself to manipulation and multitudinous interpretations, each of which has come accordingly to spawn its own sect within the movement.

For instance, some postmodernists have opposed the modern lifestyle and their aversion has turned into anti-modernism, which occasionally has brought them to "join forces with neo-traditionalists."⁸ The nature of this peculiar, and significant, convergence, will be treated in the next chapter. Far more commonly, "for other postmodernists, being simply 'against' modernism was both impossible and beside the point." These have been the playful jugglers of antinomies, dichotomies, and oppositions, all of which, they sneer, should be abandoned and replaced with amorphous expressions that may be invested with a plurality of meaning —this is Foucauldian orthodoxy carried into the literary criticism of social science: a pit of maddening pointlessness, which "is often infuriating to modernists and other critics" since the Foucauldian pranksters "seem to avoid the kind of battle that their critics desire."⁹ Hence, postmodernism as non-modernism often appears as avoidance behavior, a retreat into non-confrontational stances distinguished by an emphasis on play, the relativity of

Reign of Discursive Terror

perspectives, self-absorption, and the inconsequence of theory, interest, value, and meaning.¹⁰ “Use the project as a ‘mocking varlet,’” Bataille had said. Send it ahead to muddy the waters, to buy time with the visitors, using glib, cries and affected scruples —until the experience can make its sovereign appearance.

In these past four decades of a century, the postmodern output has reached staggering levels: it is *de facto* in complete control of the entire propagandistic spectrum, viz. in a state of virtual monopoly, with which it seems perfectly comfortable, and which it appears to have no intention whatsoever to relinquish anytime soon. It has colonized and created a (structured) myriad of academic departments and associations (from English to economics by way of history & colonial studies), and through these it has tangentially affected the technocratic environment —the ministerial bodies of education, as well as the field of public administration with the Foucauldian analysis of “governmentality.”¹¹

Despite its publicized pose of inebriating detachment, sardonic equanimity, and aesthetic “self-absorption,” the highly regimented movement of postmodernism was from its inception fanatical, intolerant (remember Foucault calling the Greeks “disgusting!”), ambitious, and acquisitive: it began by passing itself off as disaggregated and creatively unorganized, but that was far from being the case. Through their various practices and “discourses,” many such sects achieve the goals previously mentioned, which are congruent with the agenda of power: that is, fragment dissent, impeach debate, antagonize and censor opposing views, promote U.S.

corporate influence through the pro-marketing discourse of diversity, discredit unified movements for “Social Justice” (which label postmodernism managed to appropriate entirely, pre-empting thereby the possibility of its being used in an ecumenical context),* and disable the comprehension of political dynamics through the ceaseless application of Foucault’s “theory” of Power.

It is not the aim of this section to propose a survey of the already immense “scholarly” production of postmodernism. In this chapter, I should like to review a number of representative works conducted in this tradition, with a view to evidencing their (methodological) derivation from the Bataillean project through Foucault’s reconfiguration thereof. This is done to stress that all such examples, precisely because they issue from such a special seed (or “core”), whether their respective authors are aware of it or not, are in fact (1) pervaded by an irresponsible worship of pessimistic inconsequence; (2) they are devoid of any scientific, interpretative value (like economics, they do not explain *anything*); and, as a result, (3) reveal themselves to be but instruments of a tendentious and

* “Social Justice,” these days refers exclusively to the platforms of the postmodern Left, namely to voicing, in organized, militant fashion, only the remonstrances of specific “minorities”: naturally, these “special groups” are opportunely selected by the System itself for its grand, ongoing pageant of victimized contestants, to whom it variously allots in eleemosynary fashion attention-slots in the form of favoritism, handouts, perks, jobs, TV exposure, documentaries, parades, special ad hoc festivities, academic focus & books, media space, social flattery, etc., all of which are in stratospheric demand, as the System very well knows, by the marginalized and non-marginalized “groups” alike (see following chapter, pp. 454-55).

divisive gospel. The sample is by no means exhaustive; it is here presented as a mere introduction to a forthcoming debate, which, hopefully, would reassess the postmodern record no longer in the light of its putative Foucauldian beginnings, but by making Bataille the point of departure.

The chosen illustrations have been grouped into two sections: the impact of postmodernism on education and political correctness in American discourse, and a discussion of the Foucauldian synthesis, *Empire*, by Hardt and Negri.

7.2. Education and Political Correctness

7.2.1) *Postmodern "Performativity"*

American postmodernism has been generally denoted by relativist agitprop ("there is no truth!"), pretentious hellenizing neologisms (e.g., heteroglossic, heterology, paralogy, etc.), an orgy of "plurified" mass nouns (discursivities, knowledges, pedagogies, literacies...), and a libidinous indulgence in split infinitives, in which "critically" is the adverb of choice (as in "to critically evaluate").

The cultural studies exponents, in general, offer fractured English, jargon and sentences that could bring tears to the eyes of a tenth-grade English teacher.¹²

The special terminology of postmodernism was encoded by Jean-François Lyotard, an associate of Foucault, as the standard with which we are all familiar. Lyotard's influential treatise on postmodernism and education (*La condition postmoderne*) appeared in France in 1979, and was translated into English five years later. The relativism in Lyotard's thesis was its most

superficial trait; the message and the intent —roughly the same as Bataille’s and Foucault’s— were more subtle.

In *The Postmodern Condition*, subtitled *A Report on Knowledge*, we learned that we should use the term “modern to designate any science that legitimates itself with reference to a metadiscourse.” A “metadiscourse” was a particular sublanguage that made “explicit appeal to some grand narrative” (*grand récit*).¹³ In other words, Western intellectual production could be construed as a collection of creative and self-contained word-games that have been crafted to animate a particular, plausible, and captivating *story* —say, the martyrdom of Jesus, the God-incarnate (the metadiscourse of Christian theology); or the advent of industrial capitalism as the trigger of proletarian rebellion (the metadiscourse of Marxism). The *postmodern*, by contrast, was simply defined as “incredulity toward metanarratives.” So, postmodernism was that special metanarrative that teaches that there are no metadiscourses. It was the skeptic’s renewed warning against the swallowing of tall tales, which are nothing but the ideas of screenplays written cyclically by generations of hacks, whom we call “thinkers,” to mask concrete power relations. No one failed to notice, of course, that since postmodernism was itself a screenplay, it was no less liable to being a hoax than the others. A traditional impasse —which has been, so it seems, bypassed with a grand *boutade*: Why not regard postmodernism as a fraud to end all frauds, and leave it at that? And so, it went.

For Lyotard, cases involving conflict between (at least) two parties “cannot be equally resolved for lack of a rule of

judgment applicable to both arguments,” because “there is no neutral ground upon which to adjudicate between competing claims, no synthesizing master-discourse that can reproduce the speculative unity of knowledge.”¹⁴ With this reformulation we were on even thinner ice than with Foucault, for now we could not even afford the privilege to *declare* whether something was “disgusting!” or not: we could still manifest that much through deeds, of course, but the threshold of hypocrisy set for the discursive game had been raised. “Dispersion,” Lyotard soothed, was “good in itself.”¹⁵

From the postmodern perspective, it followed that science is itself “a sort of discourse.”¹⁶ Its mathematical proofs and its technological sophistication do not make it truer, or less mendacious, than the other grand narratives. “By reinforcing technology,” Lyotard wrote, “we ‘reinforce’ reality, and therefore our chance of being right.”¹⁷

This is undoubtedly true. The “reinforcement of technology” is a product of what has been recently heralded as “the end of science.” This, too, is a fable, according to which our society has crossed an historical divide. It has allegedly stepped into a realm of knowledge that considers all major scientific questions resolved and fit to be finessed only by a patient work of mainframe computation. So-called Big Science *is* power, and it sees to it that its politics of massive investments, along with the phraseology that perpetuates its goals in academia and the State ministries, does not change. “In this context, the existence of a clearly defined—and above all, stable— scientific-technological ‘framework’, becomes a necessity for the political-military-industrial power triad,

whose strategies require ever greater margins of certainty.”¹⁸ Biotech, for instance, *is* technique and discourse, but is it “right,” is it true? It is right and true for “Big Science’s” “regime of truth,” which consists of a “sort of scientific plebs, whose task is to execute projects and programs formulated by anonymous committees, ever more dominated by bureaucrats, by that new genus of research managers —[individuals] utterly bereft of the culture and sensitivity that characterize the true scientist.”¹⁹

But Lyotard did not have the time, nor the knowledge, to weigh the merits and demerits of official science; even a summary judgment for this case would have forced him to rely on absolutes, that is, justice and truth —which is a luxury postmodernists cannot afford. They are to be satisfied with half-truths, at best. Besides, Lyotard had to get down to postmodern business at once:

The scientist questions the validity of narrative statements and verifies that they are never subject to argumentation and proof. He classifies them as pertaining to another mentality: savage, primitive, under-developed, backwards [...]. This unequal positioning is an intrinsic effect of rules of each game. We know its symptoms. It is the whole history of cultural imperialism since the beginning of the West.²⁰

So, we had the villain, always the same: the disciplinarian discourse of the West. Now for the rebels:

The *self* does not amount to much, but it isn’t isolated, it is caught in a fabric of relations more complex and mobile than ever. Be it young or old, man or woman, rich or poor, it is always situated on the nodes of communication networks, no

Reign of Discursive Terror

matter how peripheral these may be [...]. Situated on locations through which travel messages of diverse nature.²¹

Up to this point, the model remained Batailleian. And, had it stopped here, Lyotard's report, like the original, could scarcely promise in Ronald Reagan's America more than aesthetic escape and morose sentimentality —assuming that was what radicals demanded at the time. Many of them thought indeed that the open space of the metadiscourse that denied all metadiscourses could absolve them “of the blinding task of looking towards the heavens for some blazing sun of Truth”; they felt that it opened their “senses and [recalled their] responsibilities to the ‘colors and beauties and enigmas and reaches of significance’ in this life.”²²

But this could not have been enough. What Lyotard contributed to this Foucauldian exercise was a prophetic IT (information technology) spin. He recast the problem in terms of so-called performativity.

In the [postmodern] context of deligitimation [of all current metadiscourses], universities and the institutions of higher learning are henceforth tasked to form competences, not ideals: they will form so many doctors [...], so many engineers [...]. The imparting of knowledges no longer appears as destined to form an elite capable of guiding the nation [...], it provides the system with players capable of fulfilling suitably their role at the pragmatic posts that are needed by the institutions. In this sense, the “democratic” university [...] of our day appears scarcely performative.²³

Therefore, knowledge should no longer be foisted “in blocks,” as it is customarily done in the West through the reading assignments of the so-called Great Books, but should

rather be displayed and dispensed “à la carte.” From menus of itemized bits of information, languages, and language-games, students might selectively piece together the installments of the narrative that would best caption their “technical and ethical experience.”²⁴ Keeping abreast of the technological shift and of the new computer mania, Lyotard gazed ahead and forecast that, so long as it was expressible in computer language, didactic information might best be entrusted to machines and data bases.²⁵

Data bases are the encyclopedia of tomorrow [...]. They are ‘nature’ for the postmodern man.²⁶

The “Professor” would disappear, driven to extinction by the postmodern erasure of metanarratives and the electronic repackaging of higher learning.

The Professor had been the enforcer, the disciplinarian of imperial, racist metadiscourses—he would not be missed. Moreover, he could not claim to have a mind more capacious than the storage facilities of modern information networks, nor could he vaunt to possess greater competence than the interdisciplinary teams of experts that would be in charge of imagining “new games.”²⁷

Then, gauged by the criterion of “performativity,” the question posed by the student would no longer be, “Is it true?” but, “Of what use is it?”

In the context of the mercantilization of knowledge, this question signifies most often: is it saleable?²⁸

And so, we ask: What would these machines pass on to the user? “Established knowledge,” was Lyotard’s answer.²⁹

“Established knowledge”? Established by whom?

This was remarkable. Or rather, this was what one was bound to obtain by crossing Power/Knowledge with IT—Foucault's power reticulation had simply become the computer network. Conveniently, the speculative plane had been rid of the hidebound rector, and the rector replaced by the interdisciplinary team of experts playing games. The postmoderns were suggesting that everyone not willing to adjust should leave the lecture hall to them (Lyotard and associates couldn't have been so careless as to recommend their own demise after all). Who would then teach the pupils the (essential) metadiscourse that there is no metadiscourse?

Who is to spread the message about deligimation itself? Not any technocrat or computer program. It will have to be the professor, someone like Lyotard himself. Since the collapse of the grand narratives is itself a grand narrative, there is a logical necessity for at least some grand narrative.³⁰

Naturally.

Thereafter, postmodern education in America could take the following propaedeutic turn: in the early years of formation, the devotees of Lyotard proposed to communicate "enough of what is *held* to be true by the society to which the children belong so that they can function as citizens of that society." At the higher level, they suggested that "the role of education is not to pass on the truth, but to *edify*."³¹

"To edify"? The suggested pedagogy thus appeared to resolve itself into a preliminary rehashing of Liberal indoctrination, followed by "edification" —by which means, was not clearly explained. After storming the palace of higher learning, Lyotard was presumably envisaging an arrangement

whereby the interdisciplinary clans and their chieftains would collude with the grant-generous IT industry (a partner for hardware, media, distance learning, and presently Artificial Intelligence) and the business schools (“is it saleable?”), which, most of all, live by the ethos of performativity, to divide the “endowments for education” among themselves. It is fascinating how this practical understanding of contemporary education could have since been classed among the representative analyses of the “Left.” Nothing could be more fully aligned with the Interests of our contemporary regimes than the indifferent strokes of this postmodern sketch, which portrays, in essence, a pedagogical disaster.

Established knowledge. So, this meant that the bulk of what we “know,” which, however we look at it, *is* an unpalatable hodgepodge of “grand narratives,” would by no means disappear, and that it could be laid out in clean synopses and copied onto computer memory. This was no resolution. Postmodernism merely recommended that the debate be truncated at a point where most fundamental questions about the nature of our social realities still remained unanswered. We should thus be satisfied with piling trivia in our heads, and call it quits. *This was the “end of education”*: compact and standardized accounts (who writes?) of, say, human sacrifice, Anarchism, and the Opium Wars would be a click away from the pupils (“downloadable from the net,” as we say), and the remainder of one’s training would be taken care of in the campuses of trade, technical, and vocational schools —the infamous “colleges.”

Reign of Discursive Terror

Education —like art, science, and perhaps political history as well— may have reached its historical fulfillment [...]. We have reached the end [...]. It is the beginning of the post-millennium blues.³²

Masters of the house, what would these postmodern practitioners of interdisciplinarity presently busy themselves with? They would focus on the “undecidables,” chaos, catastrophe, paradox, and the like. “Postmodern science,” said Lyotard, would not “produce the known, but the unknown.” Bataillean blather, once again. To wit:

The postmodern would be that which, in the modern, puts forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a good taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable; that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unrepresentable.³³

While their business partners would obsess with performativity, the Foucauldians would look for “difference.” Not the “grand narrative,” but the minor one (*le petit récit*) should occupy the daily research activities of the new academy. Of course, one should not have apprehended this division of labor as taking place in a setting that would be stable and pacific. No. Remember, the “Postmodern condition” was a variation on the Foucauldian theme. Power is a given, and we are nested into it; we cannot wish for more than opposing resistance to it. Lyotard stated it explicitly: no “pure” alternative to the system is conceivable.

It was understood —though the tenor of Lyotard’s prognosis on this count was rather tame— that the “informatization of

societies” would inevitably lead to “terror,” that is, to an environment in which alternative views would be systematically eliminated. A giant filing bank of its constituents’ personal data is indeed “the dream instrument” of the disciplinarian society. How is one, then, to fend off the system’s inherent propensity ever to extend its monitoring, controlling reach? Precisely by cultivating *difference*. For Lyotard, the last thing the arts and sciences should be striving for is “consensus”;³⁴ the rule of consensus is that proper of an authoritarian regime. But if one were to reduce all explorations to individual cases requiring but a “local” consensus, then the obscurantist conceit of wanting one truth for all instances would be seriously antagonized.³⁵ All narratives would become prime narratives, each being putatively irreducible to a number of universal truths.

To compile a digital anthology of incommensurable fables: this was Lyotard’s quest for so-called “paralogy.” In the end, he hoped that computers, although they were potentially dangerous devices, could be tapped by “discussion groups” with a view to organizing knowledge and their culture of resistance. He concluded with a typical flourish of postmodern balderdash: “We see in the offing a politics that will grant equal respect to the desire of justice and to that of the unknown.”³⁶

Granted, the advent of the Internet confirmed Lyotard’s observations and refreshed his text. But what of these observations? Were they really novel, and most importantly, were they in any sense dissenting? Neither. On one side, they were old truisms masquerading as iconoclast pronouncements, and, on the other, meretricious rhetoric, straining to mesh into

Reign of Discursive Terror

the conservative mainstream.

One need only leaf through the pages of Thorstein Veblen's superb *The Higher Learning in America*, which was written at the end of World War I (1918), to see through this particular postural deceit. Veblen had already intuited how a persistent habituation to the "pecuniary conduct of affairs," coupled with the "mechanical stress" of the "industrial arts," had constrained, if not entirely disfigured, the traditional countenance of the pursuit of knowledge, which is in the nature of an "idle curiosity." "Business shrewdness," Veblen wrote, is "incompatible with the spirit of higher learning."³⁷ Even all that postmodern clamor about the end of "metadiscourses," is a development that, following Veblen, could have been construed intelligently as an instance of spiritual shift:

These canons of reality, or of verity, have varied from time to time, have in fact varied incontinently with the passage of time and the mutations of experience.³⁸

The drive to make money, as Veblen witnessed a century ago, has "submerged" the institution of the university in a variety of enterprises connected with the scope of business, which have destroyed the free environment of research. In its stead have emerged "quasi-universities installed by men of affairs, of a crass 'practicality.'" These are the contemporary academic conglomerates that sell collegiate catechism dispensed through mass-assembled electives, "training of secondary school teachers," "*edification* of the unlearned by 'university extension,'" and "erudition by mail-order"—structures capped by the cupola of the "academic executive" and the shareholders of the "governing boards" (the wealthy

Regents).³⁹

The university is conceived as a business house dealing in *merchantable* knowledge, placed under the governing hand of a captain of erudition, whose office is to turn the means in hand to account in the largest feasible output.⁴⁰

The struggle among schools for enrollment, publicity, and profit is conducted by each academic conglomerate's "centralized administrative machinery," which "is on the whole detrimental to scholarship, even in the undergraduate work."

Such a system of authoritative control, standardization, gradation, accountancy, classification, credits and penalties, will necessarily be drawn on stricter lines the more the school takes on the character of a house of correction or penal settlement; in which the irresponsible inmates are to be held to a round of distasteful tasks and restrained from (conventionally) excessive irregularities of conduct.⁴¹

This concerted and competitive effort at disciplining the masses is the ferocious routine of the academic personnel leading "bureaus of erudition —commonly called departments," whose politics is shaded by "a clamorous conformity" and a "truculent quietism," both stances passing as a "mark of scientific maturity."

These specialists exhibit an "histrionic sensibility," a jesting touch that blends nicely with the "jealous" attention that they otherwise reserve to the "views and prepossessions prevalent among the respectable, *conservative* middle-class."⁴² The inquiries of such "experts" are not "likely to traverse old-settled convictions in the social, economic, political or religious domain, for "it is bad business policy to create unnecessary

Reign of Discursive Terror

annoyance.”⁴³ All of which institutional disasters conspire, under a “regime of graduated sterility,” to consummate the “skillfully devised death of the spirit.”⁴⁴

Even in the light of a memoir such as Veblen’s, drafted over a century ago, can a late creation like postmodernism be reduced to a special case of a general and lamentable phenomenon. Exposed as but a tardy variant of the loyal bureaucratic gatekeepers, the Foucauldians should acknowledge how little they are entitled to sport those airs of dissident self-importance, which are their histrionic trademark. In point of fact, not only had Lyotard failed to display any originality, but by inscribing postmodernism in the modern-day utilitarian church, he betrayed the movement’s conservative intent.

7.2.2) *The Epistemology of Aztec Puritans*

Speaking of the “penal settlement” and the horrors of “standardization,” a question arises (which will be dealt with at length in chapter 9): if the Left had been so impatient to denounce in our time the iniquitous machinations of Finance’s larcenous encroachment, why did it not look close to home and paint Veblen’s effigy on its banners, instead of importing Foucault? The Norwegian-American had touched on the same problems and spoken of them truthfully, with his unsurpassable class. Veblen had advocated the literal dismantlement of our system, by disabling it at its *central nodes*, by abolishing, that is, some of its leading institutions. Above all, he had craved a change in mentality. Veblen meant revolution. Foucault and company, on the other hand, with

their cherry-tree tales of decentered power, which falsify the premises of all social analysis, were merely content to play the role of the enfants terribles —content to be allotted by the disciplinarian father a corner of the sandbox where they could pose as “radicals.”

And so, by the mid-Eighties, when America began printing new editions even of Bataille,⁴⁵ the postmoderns set out to “deconstruct.” They struck their hammers to the beat of “break and rupture of structure”: they disassembled the arguments of the “classics” with a view to isolating the ideological pigment, whose grain could unfailingly be shown to be patriarchal, racist, and disciplinarian. The color of Power, in brief. The obverse of this opus of critical demolition was Foucault’s “genealogical” imperative: to denounce the sexism and bias of the West’s elitist martinets amounted to celebrating “otherness,” “difference,” and the “minor narrative.”

A marketing shift was in the air: the academic machine was about to roll out bales of clannish chronicles of localized, exclusivist victimization. Soon enough, each “group,” each “knowledge” —alternatively defined by race, gender, class, or creed— that had been historically abused by the dominant classes of the West, was going to enter into a grotesque contest to win, as it were, the award for most subjugated tribe.

The pedagogy of deconstruction is disquieting; it almost seems aimless. It engages and develops most refined competencies of critical thinking not to allow anybody to make any meaningful use of them, apart from interrogating subsequent temptations to say ‘I know.’ [It is imperative that the students] do not replace old canons with a ‘new truth’. ‘Deconstructive teaching’ [...] is usable with certain socialist, libertarian,

Reign of Discursive Terror

anarchic ideals. That this pedagogy could serve ‘right’ and ‘left’ political ideologies is, one would suppose, incriminating. Such heterogeneity or undecidability, however, is the hallmark of deconstructive production.⁴⁶

To deconstruct in this fashion was to open a can of worms, which Foucault, as we saw, had already spilled, when, late in his career, he had to make amends, confusedly, for the excesses of his Bataillean penchant. What was the danger?

Clearly, fans of bestiality or neo-Nazism would both qualify as “disqualified knowledges,” but it is understood that the (white Anglo-Saxon) gamekeepers of the postmodern sweepstakes would in no case allow these two groups to enter the competition for privileged attention-slots. Foucauldian discourse must be applied selectively, or else it does not work.

Deconstruction, which is not a political critique, therefore has political significance.⁴⁷

And in politics there are rules, especially if they are established always by the same Interests, which in our story have actively encouraged this so-called “politics of diversity” since the American promotion of Foucault in the late Seventies. In order to prevent genuine inter-class alliances from functioning, what more sensible path is there than to attempt to set at variance those that are also born to understand one another—that is, humanity at large?

Culture becomes whatever any group or researcher wants it to mean [...]. Hundreds of essays on ‘cultural identity’ fling out references to [...] Foucault with little purchase on their topic. Endless discussions of multiculturalism proceed from the unsubstantiated assumption that numerous distinct ‘cultures’ constitute American society.⁴⁸

In the postmodern tradition, the overture to this massive exercise in the art of partition & cleavage (“divide & rule”), customarily features a barmy paper-crusade against “the whole metaphysical, Eurocentric tradition, of the ‘white mythology.’”⁴⁹ In the postmodern book of prayer, “Eurocentric,” “white,” and “metaphysical” are the customary attributes of the Devil. Exasperated by the all-Western dominance of the school curricula, multiculturalists bewail the white’s conviction that the arts and sciences are for the most part an occidental affair:

Who are the great composers? Bach, Beethoven, [...] Cage. Who are the great philosophers? Socrates, Plato, [...] Foucault [...]. It is obvious isn’t it? It is White people —mostly White men, actually. [...] But surely [the] achievements [by non-European ‘others’] do not compare with those of Michelangelo, Socrates, Beethoven or Shakespeare? [The ruling institutions] privilege White, middleclass and male interests.⁵⁰

Problematic situation in many ways. For one, Anglo-Saxon postmodernists most often display a remarkably clumsy grasp of Europe’s (tormented) soul: that one could in these textbooks draw a continuous line from Plato to Foucault, or even more absurdly, from Bach to Cage (!), is disquieting enough. But what is worse, for them, is that the founding fathers of their creed are indeed all *homines gallici* —French males steeped in Western metaphysics as white, privileged, and Eurocentric as could possibly be. But no matter. It was high time to unleash the “subjugated cultures” and fire broadsides of venom against the abominable “elite white male.”⁵¹ As if only *he*, grumble the postmoderns, thinks he can possess, manufacture, and

Reign of Discursive Terror

distribute truth, or knowledge. Very well, the news then is that we may proceed to mince the spectrum of discourse into an innumerable set of epistemologies including, say, a “feminist epistemology,” or even more pointedly, a “black feminist epistemology” —something as far removed from and, as Foucault had suggested, as “harshly opposed,” to white male business as discursively possible. This would thus permit one to contend that women, or especially nonwhite women, acquire knowledge in ways physiologically and psychologically different, if not diametrically antagonistic to those proper of Eurocentric males. And the whole “theory” may unravel through an exhibit of snapshots showing how the two creatures (the Eurocentric male and the nonwhite “non-male”) are aggressively alien to one another. Then, once this race is under way, one could very well end up devising an epistemology for every single human living upon earth — aren’t we all “different” from one another after all?

Although it is tempting to claim that Black women are more oppressed than everyone else and therefore have the best standpoint from which to understand the mechanisms, and effects of oppression, this is not the case. Instead, those ideas that are validated as true by African-American women, African-American men, Latina lesbians, Asian-American women, Puerto Rican men, and other groups with distinctive standpoint, become the most ‘objective’ truths. Each group speaks from its own standpoint and shares its own partial, situated knowledge. But because each group perceives its own truth as partial, its knowledge is unfinished.⁵²

This is a prime example of postmodern discursivity. Aside from wondering whatever happened to the Latino gays, the

Puerto Rican women, and the rest of the human population, one cannot but be struck by this presumption that certain racially and sexually defined groups, precisely because of the wrongs they have suffered at the hands of the whites, should be afforded a higher, clearer vista on truth, and on the depth of suffering and oppression (“more ‘objective’ truths”). As if given clans and specific cohorts could be accorded by a self-appointed tribunal of “counter-authority” a proprietary right to the blues. Clearly, a favorable reading of this excerpt would suggest that these particular groups of subjugated people are those that still need strong support in their struggle for social acceptance, a proud identity, and a peaceful life in white America. One may read in it a special motion of empathy toward some, rather than an acrimonious exclusion of others. But this would be granting this argument a favor it does not deserve.

No question: the white male is to date the most exploitative, arrogant, violent, murderous, mendacious, and duplicitous creature that has tread upon this earth —his record of ignominies, which grows by the day, is simply indescribable and matched by no other. Feminists are telling us nothing new; what they forget, however —and this is an unforgivable omission— is that the greatest amount of violence that the white male has expended, he has expended upon white males like himself. He oppresses ferociously, discriminates, and insults daily all those individuals mentioned in the above quote, but he violates and crushes with even greater determination, brutality, and profusion his own brethren. And this is a fact that the modern historical and social experience

Reign of Discursive Terror

reveals unambiguously.

Now, what about the rest of our race? Yes, feminist rhetoric is mostly governed by logistical exigencies: feminists make noise and perforce restrict the focus of their grievances to attract the public's attention to the plight of their sisters around the world. The cause is noble. But to affirm that only *they* qua women, or nonwhite individuals (i.e., weak targets), *know* or know more about suffering, is capricious bombast. It simply isn't true: there could be many white men that could share, and *have shared*, what they have suffered at the hands of their fellow beings in ways no less profound and insightful than those recounted by nonwhite women—in ways, truly, that are by and large *identical*. Possibly postmodernists should take a look at the literature; not *their* cliquish “literacies,” but the poetic patrimony of cultures to shift their myopia into focus. To realize further that all such insistence on this form of reverse discrimination, as we all know, brings no end to the tension. By making cultural difference a “differing science” and an “antagonistic discourse,” it entrenches clans and factions along racial and/or sexual divides, fossilizing acrimony and fueling needless tribal warfare among individuals that could easily be allies.

Let the fight be one, a fight which *does* acknowledge cultural and sex differences, but which is ultimately waged in the name of a common cause to alleviate suffering and to oppose the grave injustices wrought by the incumbent system of privilege.

But the postmodern priests and priestesses of multiculturalism will not listen. We suppose that it might be

titillating to arraign from the pulpits of male-driven academe the crimes of white elite males in the name of their “minority” victims. The show in the classroom gains in intensity when white (postmodern) males themselves take the stand to perform this routine. Quintessential self-criticism, so it seems. Yet the fact that it is the Vested Interests of the schools’ governing boards that manage the booking of such postmodern slapstick should give one pause to look upon the act with a tinge of suspicion. The bitter carnival continues nonetheless.

Everything is open to recrimination or dispute, from Jesus to the sunset of the Aztecs. The Christians worship a Hebrew God in the shape of a human, whom the Jews do not acknowledge. Jesus was a Jew. No, the Nazis said he wasn’t⁵³ (but the Nazis don’t count). Truly, he was black, swore an Afro-centrist scholar.⁵⁴ The Foucauldians beat them all with an icon of their own:

All artistic symbols lose power in time. If I were to fictionalize a resurrected Christ among us today, I would depict him as a black homeless man with a mild retardation, who —yes— is gay. For my understanding of Jesus is that, if he would return, he would be living on the *margins* of society, since his divine plan is to overturn the world establishment both ideologically and materially.⁵⁵

Consider, moreover, the Catholic suppression of the Aztecs cult —case in point. One will hardly find nowadays a student, or a professor, who will be able to appraise the matter dispassionately. The annihilation of the pre-Columbian civilizations is one of the fortes of postmodernism’s accusatory repertoire. In the postmodern view, there is no worse feat of

genocidal hypocrisy perpetrated by a traditional, hierarchical establishment than this extermination of the South American natives by the Catholic Spaniards. The conquistadores literally butchered those worlds out of existence —there is no arguing about it.* But the issue, as known, is a difficult one, for, even if we, as Westerners, should always condemn the violence, we are nonetheless confronted with the mass sacrifices practiced by the victims of the Spanish *conquista*. What about *that* sort of carnage? What was one to do with it?

This is a question that (well-bred, middle-class, comfortably living) postmodernists do their best to dodge. For, if they cannot, it might lead some of them (not few), for the sake of preserving —in words— their Bataillean integrity, to uphold a position that is, in fact, deliriously exhilarating. The following blurb taken from a monograph on Bataille, which was published by a renowned academic press, is less uncommon in postmodern circles than what one might think:

* The story of Mexico's conquest, as one of Hernan Cortes's men — Bernal Diaz— recounts it, was that of an expedition essentially driven by the pursuit of gold & riches which eventually turned into a full-scale military campaign. Contrary to what is conventionally told, the Spaniards' progress and extraordinary triumph —the domination of a quasi-continent with a meager squad of troopers, who barely survived the endeavor— was not the outcome of a Spanish plan, but rather the side-effect, as it were, of a relentless appeal for help. Insistently instigated and prodded by multitudes of indigenous clans and tribes ferociously hostile to the imperial, centralizing grip of Montezuma, who preyed on such tribes for plunder and sacrificial fodder, Cortes and his men received overwhelming military support, resources, and backup from various autochthonous factions in what appeared to be a deeply rifted empire (*The Conquest of New Spain*, New York; Penguin, 1963 [1568]).

[The principle of massacre] was established by the example of the Conquistadores, who massacred their way across America with a cruelty and violence and in such abundance *that it puts Aztec sacrifice to shame* [...]. The Aztecs did not go in search of riches to subjugate native populations to themselves but sought the wealth (that is sacrificial victims) that could be expended in excessive violence [...]. In this sense Aztec sacrifice does retain its *sacred quality* and remains at the antipodes of production. It stands against the spirit of conquest embodied by Spain. *In all probability sacrifice never involved cruelty and degradation*; on the contrary the sacrificial victim was an honored guest. Even in the extreme form that Aztec society gave to it, sacrifice retains its element of communication [...]. Aztec society was in fact extremely well-ordered and *puritan* and the human sacrifice conformed *to the general sense of order*.⁵⁶

“Puritan”?

We shouldn’t overdramatize the discussion but limit ourselves to taking these buffooneries for what they are. These vexatious pranks aim at pricking the flab of conventional moral sentiment (so loose and lax by now that it has become quite numb to the prick). More importantly, they work to instigate and fuel prejudice in the minds of students against the *professed* values of traditional monotheism (tolerance, compassion, and conservation of life) by attacking the religious institutions which have hitherto, for the most part, *disastrously* embodied those very aspirations. The dismal corruption of Judeo-Christianity as a bastion of devout observances has made the subversive job of Bataille, the Foucauldians, and their followers veritably an easy one.

Very well. To be fair, however, one would imagine that since certain segments of the Anglo-Saxon academia, *de facto*

Reign of Discursive Terror

condone, via postmodernism, the social heritage of the Aztecs, calling it “puritan” and “ordered,” Nazism, then, should be tolerated as well. It was ordered, and, in a certain sense, “puritan”; it practiced the holocaust in a methodical and orderly fashion, and, as mentioned earlier, appears to be steeped into chthonic forms of sacred belief. In short, Nazism was but a modern, Teutonic resurrection of the ancient warrior cult of the Aztecs. There are undeniable similarities — martial, social, and religious. Agreed?

No, not in the least.

We must not forget that postmodernists are conservatives of the Liberal order. And the defeat of Hitlerism is the most important myth of militant Liberalism. Yet Holocaust historians have occasionally used harsh words against postmodernism for mocking the virtues of “objectivity.” They fear that deconstructive wordplay would delegitimize the denunciatory findings of their denunciatory work (as yet another —pro-Semitic? — discourse), and thereby deny them in the long run the subtle political advantages of their current position. Which are: the ear of power, the considerable (propagandistic) proceeds of the Holocaust Industry, and a stake in the steady labor of surveillance directed at the Germans, whom the Anglo-Saxons still look upon with suspicion (& fear).

The postmoderns have rushed to apologize, downplaying the spat as a mere misunderstanding. Asked to choose between the “established” methodology of the Holocaust historians and the harangue of the late Holocaust deniers, the Foucauldians find it rather unproblematic to break their oath “of

incredulity,” and side, of course, with the former. “Holocaust denial,” they say, “is not history.”⁵⁷ Whether it is or it isn’t is certainly not warranted by their postmodern “vision.” In their terms, to pass judgment on anything, they will have to act and think like the rest of us, seeking evidence and acting upon it. For everyone knows that postmodernists rely precisely on the canons of thought that derive from the traditions they are so keen to denigrate.⁵⁸ But they cannot admit to doing so: that would be violating the letter of their “postmodern non-knowledge.” Postmodernism is therefore a swindle. On the one hand, by taking constant exception to its own rule, it corroborates what passes as “good in the way of belief,”⁵⁹ and on the other it weakens opposition by fomenting divisiveness. As a sign of their commitment to the current political orthodoxy, the postmoderns sentence: We have a duty to remember the victims of the Nazis, especially those murdered in the Final Solution.⁶⁰

Why “especially” these last? What about the millions of innocent others (*including* German civilians)? What perverse inclination could give form to a system of weight and tale applicable to the defenseless victims of violence? Are we not all worth the same? Isn’t justice one and the same for all? So, no, postmodernism will not allow to compare the Third Reich to the Aztec Empire (1) because the former was vanquished by the Anglo-Americans, which is a “good” thing, whereas the latter was destroyed by the Latin Catholics, who instead are patriarchal and sexist (i.e. “bad”); (2) because the Aztec society was according to Bataille “balanced” and possessed of an appealing carnality, which he thought lacked entirely in Nazi

Reign of Discursive Terror

Germany; and (3) because Nazism was no “sovereign” formation but a freak of the bourgeoisie, a disciplinarian society, so said Foucault, run by “the most sinister, boring, and disgusting petit-bourgeois imaginable.”⁶¹ So the sanguinary natives of Central America may go scot-free (and blessed), whereas the truculent, white, Eurocentric Germans and Columbus & the Spaniards are indiscriminately packed together to be forever reviled.

Fair enough.

The postmodern routine operates according to a simple pattern: one has to side with the customary targets of disciplinarian authoritarianism and construct on their behalf a “discourse,” which must then be employed as the antagonistic viewpoint for a war of accretion to be waged within the closed spaces of social interaction (at work, at school, in public spaces, conversing, etc.). Hence, the “disqualified truths” of homosexuals, women, minorities, Aztecs, colonized and uncolonized natives, junkies, and Aphrodisiac cults (Nazis excluded) come to constitute the new jungle of the “dangerous” in which the postmodernist lives, and from which he or she conducts daily sallies against the hated white Eurocentric cad. So, for instance, reggae music is “good”: it is the genuine and *popular*⁶² expression of disqualified minorities in a white, postcolonial administration—which is “bad.” But what if Jamaica happens to market “a new batch of reggae singers who sing some songs whose lyrics feature violent attacks on gay people”? Songs that encourage the listeners to “go out and shoot, stab, club, stone and burn lesbian and gay people?”⁶³ This reality—one in a myriad of similar instances—

is an embarrassment to postmodernism; it throws a wrench into the Foucauldian works. An embarrassment to the “high-minded Democrat” perhaps, but certainly not to the master Foucault, or least of all to Bataille. These would have been utterly indifferent to this passing rage; something that could lead to the spilling of blood—somewhere, in the back alleys of power’s sub-peripheral networks: wouldn’t both have shrugged it off as yet another meaningless sneeze of the violent, changeless law of heterogeneity? *C’est la vie*.

7.3. Hardt & Negri’s *Empire*

7.3.1] *Toni Negri: “Bad Teacher”/Good “Partisan”*

Truthfully, I am not, and have never been a pacifist [...]. Peace must be earned. To posit it as a condition is dangerous: peace itself may be a tool of domination and exploitation [...]. Violence does not provide a solution but it is fundamental [...]. I am a partisan of swarm violence.

Toni Negri⁶⁴

Sooner or later, someone had to apply Foucault’s neo-Gnostic fiction of Power on a world scale. It happened as yet another tribute to “globalization” in a book entitled *Empire*. The Foucauldian contractors responsible for this ambitious remodeling are Michael Hardt and Antonio (“Toni”) Negri (1933–2023), respectively an American professor of literature and an Italian political scientist, whose joint opus, released only a few days after the dictatorial, double-downing *coup*

d'état of 9/11, did “[receive] an astonishing degree of mainstream, as well as radical attention.”⁶⁵ Decidedly, the Foucauldians have proven to be an inexhaustible source of delightful surprises for the elites. Not content with having diffused the story about Power circulating at the domestic “margins,” the mocking varlets, had then decided, for play, to envelop the whole planet with acephalic dynamics.

Hardt and Negri were a curious match. The latter, trumpeted the enthusiastic Leftists at the time, had “unimpeachable revolutionary credentials.”⁶⁶ Hardt was one of Negri’s students during the Italian’s Parisian exile; as a professor of Literature, Hardt went on to join the faculty of Duke University, which is presently one of postmodernism’s redoubts.

Before going on to tackle *Empire*, let us dwell for a spell on this particular personage, Negri.

Ever since the dark days of Italy’s “low-intensity” civil conflict of the Seventies punctuated by recurrent terror —a season, dubbed “The Years of Lead” (*Gli anni di piombo*),* whose disturbing violence he, a professor of Political Science

* *Anni di piombo* in Italian, “years of lead” (ca. 1969-1984): viz., the lead of the bullets that zinged from across the barricades in Italy’s “low-intensity” civil clash, which came to be punctuated by several spectacular & devastating acts of terror, mass riots, street clashes, ongoing political gang-warfare and a slew of political assassinations, some of whose victims, owing to their high institutional rank, were referred to as “excellent cadavers” (tallying altogether a toll of ca. 400 dead).

at the University of Padua, along with a populous cohort of other sulphureous “terrorists” (of opposite factions) came to symbolize, — Negri carried about himself a weird, disquieting halo, a mixed legacy that somehow persists after his passing in 2023.

In the Seventies he had been one of the leading theorists of Italy’s so-called extra-parliamentarian Left —i.e., the splinter of the anti-System extremists. To many (of those on the Center-Left who lived through that era), there was no doubt that Negri had played a dirty game; and though, to this day, most still cannot fathom what the deeper mechanisms of this game may have been (there still exists no linear narrative, conspiratorial or otherwise, of this significant interlude), to them Negri remains an irresponsible delinquent, doubly guilty for having leveraged his power as an influential docent to poison the minds of his many students and instigate them to violence: a corrupter, a most foul one, they sentenced, *un cattivo maestro*, a “bad teacher.”

Others, the more “radical” ones, the ex-confederates, the chic hardliners, and the various epigones of Negri’s close entourage, vehemently deny the charges, arguing, instead, that their guru —an intellectual of indisputable genius, they aver— was unjustly framed by the forces of Reaction, which profited from the general mayhem to persecute what they feared as one of the most lucid minds that were then dedicated to midwifing Revolution —Revolution in a nation, Italy, still incapacitated by the strictures of a feudal straightjacket, and thus incapable and unwilling to change, unwilling to transform herself through the emancipation of her browbeaten

proletariat. To these others, and they were not few, Negri was a luminary, one of the highest, and a hero.

He certainly had “credentials.”

On his turf and across the various epochal divides of our recent history —counting the years of political agitation & urban warfare in the metropolitan hotspots of Italy’s Center-North during the “Years of Lead,” followed by incarceration, and his subsequent, seamless intellectual militancy from his Parisian exile throughout the late return to Italy (in 1997)—Negri had thus recouped for himself a not inconsiderable persona & scholarly resumé before (being reborn, as it were, with) this late gig, i.e., before finding himself cast (as if out of retirement) at nearly seventy by US intelligentsia as yet another European swami charged with infusing “old-school radical wisdom” in yet another high-brow, high-profile “project,” which was to take shape as yet another massive, massively illegible, and scientifically worthless piece of social sci-fi.

(‘Tis, by the way, always exhilarating to observe what an easy time the Americans always have in recruiting these decrepit bawds from the old continent to have them act on whatever script they see fit to issue for the political occasion at hand.)

As will be seen, the parallels between Negri with Foucault are several —though Negri, who rose to fame as a frantic yet thoroughly unimaginative juggler of hyper-terse Marxist obfuscation, and was manifestly nowhere as skilled as Foucault in the virtuosic art of sophisticated metaphorization, actually owed his fame and prestige to his being, unlike Foucault and

the virtual totality of Academia's certificated mystagogues & babblers, a veritable (political) "operative." An operative, or rather, to use a simile by Ernst Jünger's & Carl Schmitt's, a (high-level) "*partisan*."

The partisan represents for Jünger's & Schmitt a novel embodiment of the fighting spirit, a form that is attuned to the novel complexities of modern (civil) warfare. The partisan is a *political soldier*, i.e., an effective who, as the very word implies, militates for a "party" —he is an entity factional to its core. As an "*irregular*," i.e., as a fully-operational combatant enjoying "full mobility," the partisan does not wear a uniform; he is not even expected to wield a weapon, and he may very well choose to operate & engage under the guise of an anti-conformist or that of an individualist (C. Schmitt).⁶⁷

In keeping with his essence, the Partisan is assigned to operations to be carried out below the threshold of legality. He makes his appearance in the rearguard of the invading armies, specially tasked with espionage, sabotage and psychological warfare. In a civil war setting, he is given similar charges: his Party uses him for maneuvers that cannot be accomplished within the law's remit. It is for this reason that Partisan fights bear the stamp of a remarkable ferocity. The Partisan has no protection [...]. Much as he doesn't wear a uniform in battle, the Party cancels his membership before deploying him. According to this state of affairs, the Partisan's affiliation is always uncertain; it can never be determined whether he belongs to the party or its counter-party, to Espionage or Counter-Espionage, to the Police or the Counter-Police, or to all of them at the same time [...]. To try to establish responsibility in [matters affected by his doings] is impossible, for the puppeteering strings gradually disappear in the darkness of an underworld where all distinctions, including

the Parties' political divides, are blurred. There lies in the [repeated] attempts to heroize the Partisan a gross lack of discernment; the Partisan is not a type of hero, but rather a manifestation of the elementary realm (E. Jünger).⁶⁸

7.3.2) *Jilted Satraps & the "Revolution" Game*

What was the story?

For reasons that have yet to be clarified, it appears that by the mid-Sixties, Italy's landlords, i.e., the USA (abetted by a nondescript "Anglo-Dutch cabal"), had resolved to be rid of the colony's other co-proprietor,⁶⁹ the Vatican, which had been busily (micro-)managing things via its political front the DC, *la Democrazia Cristiana*—the Center-right majority party (the Christian-Democrats) that had theretofore acted as guarantor and (apparently not so dependable) partner of the North-Atlantic alliance. By the end of the Sixties, plans had been hatched to replace the DC with some other, more pliable "social-democratic" outfit—something to be assembled either from scratch or eventually patched together with existing (more malleable) materiel.

And the *gauchiste* groundswell of the Seventies, with its chronic hail of mass protest and violence, would have then been the ideal (& ideally controlled) environment for facilitating the substitution.

What unfolded thereafter as a consequence of this planned shift in imperial management is a twenty-year long campaign of destabilization punctuated by more than a decade (1969–1984) of terrorism and political violence (assassinations, ongoing street warfare between rival political squads, student

clashes, murderous devastations by explosives, sensational kidnappings, etc.): all of such happenings being the effects of the resistance put up by the incumbent (Catholic) satraps, i.e., the Italian trustees who were simply not willing to surrender their succulent (sub-colonial) tenure, i.e., to go down and vacate their posts just like that, without a fight —and fight the Christian-Democrats did. Eventually, in 1992, the Catholics were defeated and ousted, and a sort of truce (between the Anglo-Saxon masters and the shifty, recalcitrant Mediterranean fiduciaries) was confected by allowing (what was left of) the old guard, now profoundly debilitated, to regroup in the conservative bloc of the newly-formed populist formation of Silvio Berlusconi (1936-2023), the entrepreneur-turned-politico, whose abiding achievement is the thorough Americanization of Italy's televised ether. Meanwhile on the other side of the political fence there stood the old Communists, they, too, considerably diminished, in modern garb, self-rebranded as pro-market "Democrats" and directly spoon-fed by their American homologues. The old Leftists did not come out as the winners, though they were afforded a dignified footing as Italy's political caboodle was being somehow salvaged & re-processed through a cheap variant of Anglo-America's two-party system. Behind it all lay a massive spoliation of Italy's public assets, which were then "privatized" and subsequently "sold" to prime buying-consortia endorsed by Anglo-American, German and French interersts.⁷⁰ Sealed over such a reconfiguration, or better, a "Mexification" of the Italian colony, this truce, or rather, this conditional surrender has held to this day.

In the early Seventies, when the contending forces were freshly engaged in the arm-wrestling match, the old guard, according to an imaginative scenario featured in a popular *roman à clef*,⁷¹ put a vanguard of Neo-Fascist fanatics in play — as some kind of security detail as well as a phalanx of violent provocation, something, i.e., which could harass and antagonize in spectacular acts of murderous sabotage the Italian newcomers (novel industrial factions discreetly spurred on by the foreign sponsors) as well as being used by the State's incumbent executive as an excuse for declaring the “state of emergency” and proceed thereby to dig in, repress, and consolidate the position as long as possible.

Holding on to the helm, the Catholics managed to navigate skillfully this first phase (1969-74), during which Negri himself was deployed. Never a Leftist, Negri originally hailed from the ultra-conservative ranks of Catholicism, from which he eventually broke in the Fifties to join the Socialist Party.

Discursively, when destabilizing and/or counter-offensive operations are set in motion, the fielded agitators —virtually all of them highly “educated” products of the mid-, upper-classes— storm the scene chanting mantras of “Revolution” in the mystical name (of the plight & rage) of the working poor (or, a smidge more credibly, of the “scum,” if sung in *à la manière de* Foucault or Bataille). It is a travesty of stupendous proportions which, amazingly, held sway throughout the twentieth century, everywhere. The discursive vector for this grotesque sort of recital has been traditionally so-called “Marxian” rhetoric. Marxian, yes, after that indigestible nullity, Karl Marx (1818-1883) —armchair “revolutionist,”

third-rate publicist, Marat wannabe, and upper-class *raté* originally slated for utter and wholly deserved oblivion had it not been for the divine status he was posthumously accorded by the System to prop up with “philosophical cachet” (the fable of) the Soviet imbroglio.* Marxist literature —i.e., Marx’s works and the exegeses of his multi-billion votaries worldwide (an output which, sadly, could fill cosmic space to the brim)— is a profusion of do-gooding, anti-plutocratic rationalizations of “everything under the sun” issued from an imbecile, sub-dilettantish system of embarrassingly erroneous socio-economic propositions.† The mystifying power of this

* The prodromes of Marx’s cult lie in the “fortunate” adoption of his “system” by Germany’s Socialists as the doctrinal foundation of their Party’s program —a legacy of the influence Marx wielded in the directorate of the First International (a curious Franco-British outfit disguised as an international workers’ association, 1864-76) in its declining phase.

† Namely, 1) that, at heart, social (inter-)action consists of an irreconcilable antagonism (to the death) pitting employers against (slaving, “class-conscious”) employees —viz., “capitalists” vs. “working proletarians”; 2) that such an antagonism is inexorably bound, with the increasing development of the industrial arts and the concomitant schemes of exploitation, to usher in the providential victory of the Worker and inaugurate thereby the messianic “Dictatorship of the Proletariat”; 3) that economic exploitation is itself rooted in the production of goods, whereby “capitalists” plan production with a view to stealing a portion (plus-value) of the final product from the workers, who are the sole, legitimate, and irreplaceable proprietors of the goods crafted; 4) that economics is everything and (State) power but a (“super-structural”) reflection thereof; 5) that the value of goods is equivalent to the hours of labor spent in making them, and that such “labor-time” is, for the sake of proper reckoning, constitutively embodied, “congealed” in a given amount of gold, which is the only conceivable “good money.” What a screaming, dismaying jumble of cockeyed allegations! 1) Class-consciousness does not exist; it is a

chimera: toilers only wish to be fed and entertained as best as possible (Juvenal); spiritually debilitated by their subjection (Veblen), they entertain no conscious dream other than to evade their toilsome, barbarous condition and join that of their equally barbarous masters, whom they envy, imitate, and emulate. Starting with the Franco-Prussian War (1870) and then onto the colossal butcheries that various swarms of workers mutually inflicted upon one another with WWI (in the name of their respective flags) all the way to the present, every single historical conflict marked by profuse bloodshed is a standing, refutative monument to Marx's flatulent postulation of class consciousness (as the "dialectical engine" of history; e.g., the leaders of dissidence within the labor movement who categorically opposed war in 1914 were an exiguous minority). 2) Nowhere did the world, especially the hyper-industrialized one, witness the advent of a Proletarian utopia: all so-called "Communist" regimes which, to gain admission to the Geopolitical game of the Cold War, have speciously flown the Marxist colors in the past century (and China today), have all been but fascist outfits, "State capitalisms" in which industrial, exploitative toil, far from being abolished, was actually intensified. As known, in Marx there is no blueprint for tomorrow's society: he merely incited to seize power, the final objective being the (governmental) sequestration of the "means of production," means whose arrangement and organizational logic Marx could not understand in the least: 3) mistaking it for some sort of alchemical goose, this gassy windbag from Trier believed "capital" to be inherently "productive": he could not fathom that machines, resources, and the way the firm and its distribution are designed and organized are the collective fruit of R&D and business flair (and/or a more or less pronounced ability, by hook or by crook, to mono- or oligopolize the market) —matters in which unskilled workers, the most replaceable of all business cogs, have no share or say whatsoever. The stealing, if any, pertains to the apportioning of the revenue pie; it has nothing to do with the productive process per se. Exploitation is not rooted in production but in the exaction of overhead charges (chiefly bank interest) incurred to launch the venture itself: distinguishing between bankers (rentiers) and industrialists, between the private (yet State-sanctioned) money-cartel and production at large is essential: doing so isn't a "petty-bourgeois" misapprehension, as stupidly, spitefully decried by the dull-witted and useless friars & nuns of the Marxian Church: the captains of industry

spurious rhetoric lies in the suggestiveness of its putatively *totalizing* grasp: despite the patent inexactitude of its constitutive “theses,” it fills the practitioner with the empowering delusion of being able to scan *all* things (social) with a “faultless method” (G. Lukács). In the mythological compartment, Marxism’s nauseating mumbo-jumbo—and the cognitive disaster it marks—is typically paired with a professed awe and veneration for Lenin and the Bolshevik experiment in post-Zarist Russia. In the discursive vistas of the modern-day, professional agitator of the Left, the conventional

cut costs (more often than not, savagely) where it is easiest to do so: with wages: there is no aboriginal theft of an equally chimerical “surplus value.” 4) Anyone who’s studied economics & politics long enough knows very well that economic symptomology is undiagnosable unless the underlying power struggles are brought to light: that is what political economy is supposed to do: elucidating economic dynamics in the light of the overarching factional disputes among the vested Interests involved. 5) Money is a symbol for a vehicle that should belong to society in common: in the world, instead, the power wielded by the banking system—with the (sub-contracting) approval of the State, by whose grace it operates—originates in the practice bankers have perfected over the centuries of appropriating the “blood” of the body social by constricting it inside the arteries of a proprietary “grid,” along which this money circulates and is being sold to society at a price (interest) as if it never perished, as if it were indeed gold (it is a perversely sophisticated institution, whose essence and intricacies thoroughly eluded the coarse wit of the failed publicist from Trier). Of all the components that go on to make up a good’s price, labor, from the conceptual standpoint, is the least interesting and certainly not the most decisive. Inventiveness is (“the usufruct of the community’s immaterial equipment of technological knowledge,” Veblen)—along with the organizational ability to set up operations profitably enough to make the (business) concern viable.

narrative of the October Revolution of 1917, is revered in devout fashion as the foundational, scriptural account of the successful translation in the flesh of Karl the Prophet's impassioned annunciation of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. To anyone even cursorily and dispassionately familiar with the events of 1917–22; to anyone who has, therefore, realized how completely *artificial* that “Revolution” really was; and how the “Soviet file” in western textbooks is through some sudden change of style cast as a sensational saga of a wholly alien race with no point of contact with our own species; to anyone who knows this, the highfalutin disquisitions —on the alleged *spiritual* clash of “Capitalist West vs. Communist East”— that have been endlessly squeezed out of this historiographical hoax^{*} cannot but loom as one unsightly pie of bogusness the magnitude of which ought to be measured in sidereal units. Such is our world.[†] The

* As I've had occasion to lament, the [official] historiography of Soviet Russia, at least in the West, is a sorry affair. Erroneously appraised even by contemporaries endowed with the keenest of minds contemporaries such as, e.g., Thorstein Veblen or Rudolf Steiner, both of whom, enthusiastically the one and most unfavorably the other, grossly overestimated the event as some kind of Parousia, of grand divine/diabolical materialization, the Bolshevik coup and the subsequent saga of the Soviet Empire is clearly a central chapter in our recent history that still awaits a new, dignified retelling of its true timeline and vicissitudes. I, for my part, have attempted to redress the situation with a different narrative in my *Conjuring Hitler*.

† Western Intellectualism is a severe mental pathology contradistinguished by the ability of the “educated insane” to conjure verbalized specters and command their arrangement into litanies (stealthily) designed to aggrandize the no less spectrally contrived “moral splendor” of their Queens and sovereigns. To this day, there seems to be

orthodox, hallucinated Leftist must say he believes in (the exotic idol) Lenin, as he also says to believe that, owing to the vicious siege —the “merciless encirclement”⁷² (Negri)— of Soviet Russia by the Western Powers, the “Communist” experiment ran out of steam, wrecking eventually on the shoals of Afghanistan (before bowing out entirely in Berlin, ten years later). (Soviet) Communism really stood chance, they say, but, alas...

And Negri, sincerely or not (it matters little), professed to be subscribing to all of this in full, till the last, in fact, far past the inception of the game, when, around 1971, a tenured professor of political science in his late thirties at the University of Padua, he set out to attend to his partisan duties. The picture is indeed murky, owing not least to the fact that, initially, he is seen consorting, debating, and scheming with the founders of what was then bound to rise and impose itself on the scene as the most infamous of all Italian terrorist organizations, the Red Brigades (*le brigade rosse*, *le BR*). This was at a time when the “Blacks” (the Right-wing, Neo-Fascist extremists) still had the stage and were rampaging. The picture is murky because it looks as though Negri was *de facto* inscribing himself and his budding organization in the destabilizing radius of the “Reds,” who were going to relay the Blacks in 1974–1975 in what appeared at the time as a decisive switch in the terrorist dynamics of the game. Allegedly disaffected by the ever more legalist, reformist (“compromising”) posture of Italy’s Communist Party (the PCI), the Red Brigades —the

no remedy against this disquieting, or rather, terrifying malady of the psyche.

Reign of Discursive Terror

weaponized vestals of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy—professed to be intent on striking at the “heart of the System” with a view to precipitating a mass revolution (what else?), when, in fact, as it has been incisively suggested,⁷³ they were rather performing as the private army of the Communist Party itself: the tactic being sufficiently cynical and not without risk: by unleashing a fringe of purportedly schismatic “assassins” from its own ranks, a lunatic fringe it could thereafter grandiloquently condemn, disown, and criminalize, Italy’s Communists sought to best their Christian-Democrats rivals as Italy’s Law & Order stalwarts and thereby poach votes in their “moderate” constituency. This still lay ahead, in the key triennium 1975–78. As it turned out, this “switch” happened to coincide with a change of orientation among US imperial circles (the Rockefellers’ Trilateral Commission would then be in charge, Nixon having just been ousted), which, in what amounted to a bold, yet slightly crooked move, seemingly opted to lay their wager on a spruced up, gentrified, pro-NATO reshuffle of the old Communists themselves as a replacement for the unyielding Catholics.⁷⁴

Having hooked up with the Reds by way of his own outfit, an organization called *Potere Operaio* (“Potop,” “Workers’ Power”), possibly to spy on them as well as give himself a cover by acquiring credibility in the very camp he was most likely hired to sabotage, Negri forged ahead, agitating to the soundtrack of slogans calling for the merging of “Red terror with the mass movement.” Of all branches of “the movement,” it is said that Negri’s gang in the Northeast was by far the most dynamic and organized: not only territorially,

in supplying fellow-insurrectionists with guns, equipment, electronics, TNT, and fake IDs, but internationally as well. Potop could avail itself of an impressive “logistical network” that could reach, via strategic alliances, as far as Germany (Hamburg) and the UK, and operate most efficaciously through its bases and safe-houses in Switzerland (!) and France (including an “office” in Paris),* which were at the receiving end of an intense exfiltration activity dedicated to stowing away comrades on the lam after armed robberies, killings and other exploits of terror & destabilization.

The robberies — “expropriations,” the “rebels” called them— were intended as the organization’s means of self-financing. Preparations intensified, and by 1974 Negri’s posse —whose top echelons were staffed exclusively by young aristocrats and the scions of Veneto’s most “respectable families”— exulted as they secured the affiliation of a truculent gunslinger with connection to Milan’s organized crime as well as two additional professional bank robbers. In July of that year, Negri led another caucus with the BR, inviting all to strike with no mercy at the PCI, to teach it a lesson for selling out to the bourgeois allurements of power; the *brigatisti* balked, unconvinced.

* Beautiful Paris...and Switzerland...Switzerland, that tiny, disarrayed confederation famously known for its rabid “anti-capitalism” and pro-proletarian insurrectionist leanings...Negri’s front on Helvetic soil was called *Klassenkampf* (“Class-war”). What a blast, what fun the Years of Lead must have been for the Secret Services of the whole of Europe: never a dull day in their very secret and very intertwined daily routines...

7.3.3) 1977: *Mayhem & Showdown*

Meanwhile, the galaxy of Red terror, in which Negri's cluster still shone brightly, underwent restless changes spawning in turn scores of sub-splinter fighting formations, whose effectives, divided between "Leninists" (the visible organized vanguard of the "Revolution") and the "movimentisti" (the fanaticized militants seeking clandestine status to give vent to their thirst for violence), came and went by osmosis, with some of the latter defecting altogether to the majors of the terrorist underground —viz., the BR and other cells under "different jurisdictions." A very messy galaxy. Negri's baby itself, Potop, owing to doctrinal differences within its directorate and especially to a punitive raid gone terribly wrong,* was then dissolved and reborn in 1973 as the hyper-"spontaneous" and hyper-"independent" *Autonomia Operaia* (AO, Workers' Autonomy): a supple congregation of "collectives" detached to Italy's main hubs, Milan, Turin, Florence, Rome, and especially those of the Veneto region: Padua, of course, Rovigo, and Vicenza (host, among other things, to America's largest Army garrison on Italian soil). Electorally speaking, Veneto and Sicily were the DC's two most solid and loyal bastions. Revealingly enough, Negri himself referred to his new creation, AO, as a "Catholic movement against the Communists' alleged hegemony over the labor movement." AO's sub-partisans were for the most part academics (hyper-bourgeois, that is: not a single worker

* Wanting to "warn" a Neo-fascist district leader in Rome, a three-man squad of Potop, on the night of April 16th 1973, set fire to the landing of his apartment and ended up killing by arson his two young sons.

or old-school Leftist amongst them) and the soldiers — equipped as it were with standard-issue guns (especially the beloved Walther P38), Molotov cocktails, and crowbars— are remembered to this day as a redoubtable contingent of “determined and angry young militants,” many of them students hailing from wealthy milieus, as said. AO operated on different levels: it consisted of a propagandistic front and various submerged layers of “mass illegality,” whose most delicate (i.e., potentially murderous and devastating) missions were typically entrusted to the FCC.* How Negri came to reap such a harvest, in such conditions, is a sad question still weighing on those eerie times.

And then they went for it.

Negri's posse set out to wreak havoc on public more than private structures, preferring to cast over its playing grounds a generalized pall of fear rather than performing flamboyant deeds of terror: in its name, AO directly hurt, injured, and kneecapped many, but killed no one —a detail which, in his defense, Negri would proudly underscore. From 1974 to 1977, the enraged militants of AO would run rampant, robbing banks; clashing repeatedly with the Neo-Fascists; bombing the barracks of the Carabinieri† (courtesy of the FCC); crossing crowbars with the young Communists; vandalizing the property of small-scale industrialists; raiding movie theaters,

* Of all terrorist formations, it is said that the FCC (*Fronte Comunista Combattente*), aka “Il Fronte,” was the only which over the years, despite the defeats & the arrests, remained compact and united till the end, not suffering a single defection, a single betrayal, a single “disassociation.”

† Italy's militarized police corps.

Reign of Discursive Terror

supermarkets, stores, public transportation, restaurants; intimidating and roughing up (prevalently old-school Leftist and Communist) professors vocally opposed to the regime of academic self-government (*autogestione*) which Negri has chiefly established in the departments of Political Science, Education, Psychology and Italian at the University of Padua (guaranteed As for all enrolled militants). The climax was reached on May 1977 when in Padua the *autonomi* held an entire neighborhood hostage to their destructive wrath: arson, ransacking and beatings galore. Negri jubilated: “I feel at once the warmth of the workers’ and proletarians’ communities,” he poetically wrote, “every time I slip on my balaclava...”

We are now in the epicenter of the “Movement of 1977” — one of whose symbols is AO itself: these are the ephemeral days of punk, days of social upheaval, saluted with enthusiasm, among others, by the ever-looming Foucault and his close collaborators from friendly Paris. Still going full throttle, Negri met with the leadership of other insurgents,* including the *jefes* of the “rival” terrorist organization (to the BR), *Prima Linea* (Firing Line), the intimation being always the same: clear the “the path to civil of war,” make it a wide one-way street with no possibility of turning back (“irreversible”), and, along the way, obstruct by whatever means the (dreadful menace of the) “Historical Compromise.” The “Historical

* By that time, the proliferation of terrorist acronyms populating Italy's political landscape was nearly out of control: NAP (Nuclei Armati Proletari, Armed Proletarian Commandos), PAC (*Proletari Armati per il Comunismo*, Armed Proletarians for Communism), FCC (*Fronte Comunista Combattente*, Fighting Communist Front), PCO (*Proletari Comunisti Organizzati*, Organized Communist Proletarians), etc.

Compromise,” that is, between Catholics and Communists (Whites vs. Reds): a sort of truce whereby, in the face of social disarray and raging terrorism, both sides came to feign (sublimely) to support one another —i.e., the ones ruling without the paralyzing obstruction of the others,*— when, in fact, they were at each other’s throats (and the disarray persisted because of it): the DC being on the ropes, ever more aggressively besieged by the Communists.

The standoff came to a phantasmagoric head with the kidnapping of DC grandee Aldo Moro by a commando of the Red Brigades on March 1978. Televised worldwide, the stage of the rapt itself, sullied by the blood of Moro’s security detail (five policemen killed), and the surreal aftermath —55 days of captivity in secret lairs the Police allegedly could never find, a period littered with hallucinated proclamations by the captors, and culminating in the politician’s execution†— was but the macabre set against which the two fighting factions —the Catholic satraps vs. the Communist candidates— settled scores. In secret, the spectacle must have been previously concerted between the two contenders as the inciting incident by which a handful of Communist ministers could be exceptionally admitted into the DC executive —Moro having (devoutly, and riskily) offered himself as collateral for the DC’s “good faith” (and thereby making himself, and the whole of the DC

* In keeping with the theatrical dictates of the Cold War, the Communists, who *factually* shared power with the Catholics, were in any case *officially* barred qua Communists from holding institutional positions in the *executive* apparatus of the Italian Republic.

† Moro’s body was found on May 9th, 1978, in a car parked on a side-street of Rome’s historical center.

schemers privy to the orchestration, possibly, unwilling accomplices to the premeditated murder of the five bodyguards). A “good faith,” in fact, that never was good for it appears that the Christian-Democrats, untrue to their word from the outset, never intended, *under any circumstances*, to yield an inch to the Communists. On the very day of the “spectacular incident,” the Premier, Giulio Andreotti, seemingly reneging on the terms of the putative “pact,” nixed the Communist bid and a 55-day arm-wrestling match ensued, no one really believing that, in cruel reprisal, the Red captors^{*} would have the gumption to shoot Moro in cold blood. Yet they did.

The official narrative of this crucial episode is quite another from the one sketched here. But whatever the true plot behind the mystery, what is certain is that, for the [†]moment, the Catholic “Whites” had won this critical battle: the feared *sorpasso*, the “electoral overtaking” (of the Whites by the Reds), did not take place: what had been a 4-point gap between adversaries in 1976 widened to an 8 percent difference in the elections of 1979:[‡] an additional 4-point drop which the PCI, indisputably tarnished by the Moro affair (the gingerly game of ricochet with the BR having in end failed

* Which “Red captors”? Officially, it is the BR that are saddled with the murder—which is convenient, of course, because the executor in these instances is not the ultimate culprit: the BR were a political army, and armies have commanders, so the question is: who gave the order? In my view it could have only been the PCI itself (which in the official discursive arena is a contention so outrageous, so politically blasphemous that it shouldn’t even be contemplated, let alone voiced).

‡ While the DC did not gain any additional votes between 1976 and 1979, staying at 38 percent of the ballot, the PCI slid from 34 to 30 percent.

miserably), lost, not to the Christian-Democrats, but to the libertarian clowns of the Radical Party.

And, then, it was finally time to do some house-cleaning and strike back at the insurrectionist rabble with a vengeance, and hard, to the satisfied delight of Italy's silent majority. From 1976 to Moro's assassination in mid-1978, the Secretary of the Interior, i.e., the man institutionally in charge of Italy's Police and the chief representative of the Republic's repressive apparatus* was Francesco Cossiga (1928-2010), a granite pillar of the DC. Not surprisingly, to protesters, activists, and militants of the Left, Cossiga† incarnated what was most rotten and coercive in the "bosses' régime" (*il regime padronale*) they so intensely reviled: across city walls his name was accordingly smeared with a K and the double sig rune as that of a Nazi executioner: Ko~~ss~~iga.

In a late book-interview, Ko~~ss~~iga himself candidly summarized his approach to crisis-management in the face of mass insurrection and terrorist destabilization:

First of all, leave high school students alone [: too young. But let college students go on a rampage, instead]. Withdraw police forces from the streets and campuses, infiltrate the movement with agents provocateurs ready to employ any means and let the protesters run amok for a dozen days, ravaging stores, setting cars aflame and laying waste to the cities [...]. Thereafter, backed by public opinion, police forces should have no qualms in dispatching all [the militants] to the hospital —not arresting them, since the judge would let them

* Which was tough and efficient, despite rumors & claims to the contrary.

† He was also said to be Italy's chief fiduciary of the British Empire — although it isn't clear what was concretely implied thereby.

Reign of Discursive Terror

out anyway, but beating them, and beating those lecturers that foment them.⁷⁵

And so it went, in Padua and all over Italy's Center-North. With the then celebrated inquest of "April 7 [1979]," and the police round-ups & repression that followed it, AO was razed to the ground. Payback time. The "angry" militants were savagely beaten alright, "the lecturer that fomented them" not so much at all, though all of them, like one big family, ended up behind bars. On multiple charges, including armed insurrection, incitement to violence, criminal responsibility for attempted robbery, homicide and attempted homicide (of two Carabinieri, respectively); arson; the kidnapping of six prison guards; malicious destruction of property; thirteen armed robberies; illegal possession of 23 handguns; and the importation of 150 kg of explosives, Negri was definitively sentenced to 17 years' imprisonment.⁷⁶ Bad, bad teacher.

Taking it like a true soldier, Toni marched into prison, and it was not of the guards he was most wary: he did indeed come to fear for his life more than once, as when he found himself sharing carceral space with some of his old acquaintances from the Red Brigades; and he had every reason to be afraid, for, deep down, had he not (beautifully) performed as the Whites' chief partisan in the Italian Northeast?

Sooner or later his "superiors" had to do something; they just couldn't leave him there, stranded. And so, they did, with class, as befits true politicians: (acting at the suggestion of the Ministry of the Interior, maligned the Marxists), the merry pranksters of the Radical Party—very much in the spotlight since their electoral leap of '79 and ever more intensely

committed to “social justice,”— began to champion Negri’s candidacy in their electoral lists as a victim of judiciary abuse, as a political celebrity who could therefore be counted on to advocate for human rights in the God-forsaken recesses of the penitentiary system. The maneuver succeeded splendidly: in 1983, with 13,000 votes Negri was elected to the House of Representatives: vested with the mantle of MP, he forthwith invoked legislative immunity, which instantly sprung him out of jail, and before an outraged Congress could convene to waive the immunity and send him back to the slammer, Negri, like in a TV movie, had already reached a posh sea-resort on the Tuscan coast to board a yacht headed for Nice, the gateway to the sweetness of a much-coveted Parisian exile. Four years of prison (and an impeccable service record): he had earned it.

7.3.4) *Postmodern Afterparty, Re-birth & Coda*

He would reside in Paris for 14 years, teaching at prestigious schools, including Foucault’s alma mater, the École Normale Supérieure —living the plum life of an intellectual alpha, traveling, lecturing, cogitating, and publishing politological tracts, one more useless than the next. In 1997, he would voluntarily return to Italy to serve out the remainder of his (shortened) sentence under parole until 2003 when he finally became a free man.

In Paris, meeting Foucault and his acolytes proved to be a critical juncture in Negri’s trajectory: the encounter gave him new, juicy grit for his worn out, obsolete mills (of old-school philosophy and burned-out Marxian hermeneutics). So, he

happily set out to repackage it all, mixing Foucault and Marx, and throwing in the blend catchy soundbites and (good) ideas stolen (in classic fashion) from classical anarchism. He thus began to speak of “a Communist wish” in the name of a non-descript “bio-political Enlightenment,” peppering the argument with his old mantra of the “refusal of labor” (never mentioning what we should have in its stead), and capping it off with a general endorsement of a “universal basic income” (UBI)—a traditional staple of anarchism.* The crucial construct of “the proletariat” had to be post-modernized as well: he coined it as “multitude”—a new metaphor of the working masses cast as some sort of hyper-viscous flubber made up of billions of techies wielding “power” in the virtual interstices of the web through their computing (“cognitive”) skills. What slowly emerged from this fluffy politological salad was a not-so-subtle free-marketeering paean of the Silicon Valley entrepreneur: in other words, we should be placing our trust in “IT folk who made a ton of money and who can already retire by the age of 35, people,” Negri pleaded, “who work at most 2 days a week managing their funds and then do volunteer work, honest, clean people often risen to wealth by accident—and who, sometimes, agitate to change the world.”

* The question being not the opportuneness or cost of the social dividend per se, but its provenance: who is to disburse it? If it is the State, then the proposal is somewhat self-defeating: for it will only be dispensed to the extent and up to an amount that will not alter/endanger the current economic and labor conditions. It would still be better than none. Ideally, though, the universal income should be dispensed by a self-managing, economically self-contained community, as far removed from State interference as possible.

Wealthy by accident? Presumably, that's who leads "the multitude(s)" and pays their UBI. Poor (post-modern) "proletariat."

The Multitude is one of three actors on this planet and it is caught between 2) the "American Monarchy," which fumbles, staging (fascist) coup after coup all over the world, failing always and 3) the "transnational aristocracy" of (banking) capital: viz., the "Davos elite," so dear to the hearts of the "conspiracy nuts" fixated on the existence of a worldwide, supra-national brethren of satanical bankers bent on vampirizing the planet. Negri, for his part, says to believe in it too —seeing it as "the symbol of the supersession of capitalism, as the dream of the capitalist project on a global scale,"— and what is even more exhilarating is that (in 2005 or so) the Davos group itself did solicit a "reflection" from Negri (what on earth for?), who obliged at once replying deferentially: "You are an aristocracy with a clear awareness of your interests." Possibly alluding to the post-9/11 mayhem in Iraq, "The Americans," he went on to pontificate, "have attempted a coup d'état on the global market, which you have, de facto, thwarted." And in the finale comes a rather droll joint call-to-arms —vampire-bankers and multitudes of computer nerds, banded together: "At this time we must acknowledge that we share the common exigency to make the American project fail." Terrific.

Ours, says the postmodern Negri, is a changed world: the "multitudinous" workers (of the Internet) possess no class-consciousness whatsoever but they are "powerful," so powerful, in fact, that, in a funny reversal of the old power ratios, it is no longer the worker who is an appendage of

Reign of Discursive Terror

“capital,” but the “polycentrism of capital” itself that is now in tow of the “multitude’s polycentrism.” “Polycentrism”: the familiar postmodern suggestion that there is no nation of bossmen lording it over on a continuous basis: just clusters of “theocons” and “priests” seeking to subjugate a labor-force that is sufficient unto itself in producing wealth and establishing order—the latter being another tenet of classical anarchism, which Negri immediately defiles by humming an improbable ode to “poverty,” to its “power” (*la potenza della povertà*): poverty which he construes as “a great machine in terms of productive capacity” (?). Negri wants “communication and ‘alter-modernity’”(?), compounded by inflows of immigrants to increase population (as if the “indigenous” of the West had forgotten how to procreate): i.e., desperadoes that will come to cohabit in “the metropolis” with the cohorts of a “precariat” (all those workers suffering from job insecurity) on its way to becoming a “cognitariat” (techies barely making ends meet in a gig-economy)—all of it to the beat of “rap,” which, coos Negri, “is the soundtrack of the mestizo multitudes.” Geopolitically, in fine, considering what a “damning blow, what a major impediment” the Euro has been to American “unilateralism,” the only hope “for a truly revolutionary project,” Negri concludes, is *Europe*.⁷⁷

A more perfect summation of mystifying, unctuous nonsense is hard to find. To maintain, with a straight face, that

* A fusion of theocratic (professedly hyper-devout Christian) and Neo-conservative (“Neocon,” see next chapter) in reference to that vanguard of fanatically militaristic spin doctors risen to prominence under the presidency of George W. Bush (2000-2008) —i.e., with the dawn of the post-9/11 era.

the Euro has been a severe hindrance to American (financial) domination and that only Europe can “create polycentrism” is either the mark of hopeless incompetence in all things economic (yet another trait he shares with Foucault) or, more simply, a sign of willingness to play the game of geo-babble, whereby the “makers of reality” manufacture the (political) events, and the academics and pundits engage to their hearts’ delight in weaving all sorts of cockamamie interpretations thereof. And the talk never ends. (Postwar) Europe, we know it, is a technocratic construct assembled under strict American supervision, and the Euro, managed in proconsular fashion via the German colonial central bank has been a means to constrict via a general rationing of credit Europe’s peripheral economies into anemic rates of growth: the Euro has streamlined the process, proving to be an efficient buttress to America’s imperial policy of unrestricted acquisition of choice European assets via the dollar, which remains the unchallenged world reserve currency.

The rest of Negri’s postmodern proclamation is what this sort of thing is: a hyper-elitist, at heart Americanophile piece of phenomenally disingenuous rhetoric, with its phony call to respect the dignity of poverty (& the musical indigence of “rap”), compounded by hosannahs to the latter-day American tycoons of hi-tech, by the grace of whom we should all be dreaming of achieving the American techno-dream as online

* I am referring to that famous quote by a high-level official of the Bush II’s administration divulged by a journalist of *The New Yorker*: this quote opens the discussion of the first chapter of my *Phantasmagoria, The Spectacle of 9/11 and the War on Terror* (Città di Castello, Hemlock, NY: Ad Triarios, 2023, pp. 6, 10-11).

self-made entrepreneurs, “bloggers & influencers”; and if push comes to shove, Negri suggests that we can always call the cavalry of Davos’s multi-billionaires to oppose the offensive of rabid theocons; and, despite the fact that the demand for labor in Europe is virtually nonexistent, let us nonetheless have immigration galore, because, so Negri seems to suggest, Whites are supposedly infertile (are they, really?).

But push never comes to shove, because Negri’s “theocons” are as immaterial as “the White Suprematists” we hear so much about these days: they are all phantasms, different costumes, shifting holograms of the same evanescent villain created by the same minds in the same game of political deceit, of which Negri, besides, has been a fairly successful player. There is no supra-national aristocracy of capital, and Negri must have known this well enough: there certainly exists an aristocracy, whose imperial purview runs along the London-New York axis: everything else is an emanation of this main center of power: the rest of the world is but a congeries of vassal States inhabited by hapless, ever more confused masses of middle-class guns for hire, for whom an offspring is ever less affordable, and hordes of destitute nobodies (the hallowed “Poor”) that are, thematically speaking, perfect subjects for impassioned Leftist orations, entities whose existential lot *everyone* contemplates with the deepest abhorrence, entities *nobody* cares for, least of all academic mercenaries like Foucault, Negri and all the post-Marxian upper-class rabble that made a career out of the avenues cleverly opened by the System to sing the praise of “the people,” of “the Poor” with an obvious view to reinforcing the State’s stranglehold (viz.,

by *flattering* Society's losers and slaves so that they remain exactly where they are, at the bottom, forever). We know it, it is too easy to (be faking to) root for rap & poverty from the height of one's fancy pad in the "metropolis's" poshest *arrondissement*.

Such, then, is the rancid marmalade Negri came to extract from the mish-mash of *Empire*, marmalade he thereafter learned to can into a multitude of formats to fit the occasion. Allegedly, in doing research for the book, he had gone knocking on the door of good ole' Ko44iga himself (!) to pick the politician's brain and discuss "the theories" he would later "collect in that beautiful book, *Empire*," said the DC statesman in another book-interview, his last, entitled *Fotti il potere* ("Fuck Power"). "*Il mio amico Toni Negri, uomo coltissimo*" ("My good friend Toni Negri, a man of superlative erudition..."), gloated Ko44iga, had been sharing with him in these preparatory discussions loads of insights, including a sensational discovery —to wit, that "the social class bound to serve as the new vector for 'the Revolution' is no longer the working class but the [community of] engineers and physicists and all those endowed with specialized knowledge." What a revelation! Wasn't this always the case? Hadn't Thorstein Veblen made it crystal-clear in the early 1900s that business enterprise drew its usurpative power from the illegitimate appropriation of technical knowledge for commercial profit? And had he not suggested in his late Utopian memorandum "A Soviet of Technicians," that a better future lay in a society entrusted to "councils of engineers," who would base production-management on the disallowance of corporate

(“absentee”) exploitation?⁷⁸ Cultivated though he was, Negri was clearly not *colto* enough, or sufficiently interested in truth to know where to dig. But what do these people care about truth? Parroting the “bad teacher,” as if wholly seduced by the suggestiveness of Negri’s arguments (was he really?), the former Secretary of the Interior in the *Anni di Piombo* went on to regurgitate before his interviewer that “Globalization had wiped out the power of [national] States and, therefore, that of Empires [so thoroughly, that] in the absence of a superior authority, of a regulating principle, politics is no longer capable of managing the complexity of world affairs.”⁷⁹ Power? No such thing, nobody’s in charge — ‘tis so obvious.

There, even Kossiga had gone postmodern: yet another prestigious recruit, “converted” on his deathbed, as it were (was he, really?).

As stated in Negri’s obituary in the *New York Times*,^{*} *Empire* made Negri “a global intellectual celebrity,” an author “hailed in the Leftist press as the leading theorist of the new millennium, the first person to describe the emergence of a new form of society.” His block-buster is further characterized as “a compelling Marxist interpretation of Globalization after the Cold War,” “an immediate hit [that] appeared at the perfect moment.”

Those are big words, worthy of the highest, verily: notwithstanding his disobliging and rather inopportune remarks about “coups,” “unilateralism,” and the like, the “American Monarchy” seems to have been quite fond of

^{*} Risen, Clay. 2023. “Antonio Negri, 90, Philosopher Who Wrote a Surprise Best-Seller, Dies,” *New York Times*, December 22, 2023.

Negri. Go figure. So fond, in fact, as to have made “an instant hit” of his unpalatable manuscript. The Italian should have been grateful for the exciting coda his career got to enjoy by grace of the Monarchy’s reviewing bureaus & publicity agencies—what with the imprint of Harvard University Press, the multiple foreign editions, including two Chinese ones, and sold-out book-tours the world over. All of it “at the perfect moment,” indeed: right in conjunction with 9/11, and this is significant. That day marks an epochal divide in our recent history: it connotes a great turn of the screw the “US Monarchy” imparted first of all to America herself via an ultra-fascist coup (which perdures) —a real one that did not fail—and to the rest of its *Imperium* with the successful instillation of a “culture” of fearful anxiety for whatever specter America sees fit to agitate in turn (The Muslim suicide-bomber, killer viruses, Right-wing Suprematism, “the evil Russians” etc.). That Negri’s tome is possibly the most memorable bestseller from that critical juncture gives pause: it’s an odd pairing. It has now been nearly a quarter-of-a century since this book came out; strikingly ugly, void, unshapely, and already withered to begin with, it has not aged well either, but so it goes; such is our world.

7.3.5) *The Book*

“[Rewriting] Marx as Foucault” wasn’t much of a stretch for Negri, as he had reached a similar path by raising *labor*, instead of power, to “a kind of absolute subject.”⁸⁰ So, in schematic terms, Negri’s minor contribution to the postmodern project overlapped Foucault’s template: on the one hand, Negri posited Labor + Violence (=Bataille’s heterogeneity of the

Reign of Discursive Terror

Slave), as the joint expression of *potenza* (power); and he equated “Capital” with the State (or “meta-power,” in the wording of Foucault), on the other: in short, a Marxian carbon copy of Power/Knowledge.

To the great relief of the U.S. administration, whose propagandists had lately been fiddling awkwardly with a semantic synthesis of their country’s *Liberal* devotion and its troubled *imperial* vigor (Are we a Republic or an Empire?),⁸¹ Hardt and Negri proclaim that “imperialism is over.” The fateful transition of imperialism to *Empire* seems to have occurred, the authors aver, around 1968 —at the time of the Tet Offensive during the Vietnam War.⁸² By then, the old-fashioned manner of subjugating nations and their peoples, so we read, changed dramatically, and a new configuration of power relations emerged.

In contrast to Imperialism, “Empire” establishes no territorial center of power and does not rely on fixed boundaries or barriers. It is a *decentered* and *deterritorializing* apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers.⁸³

Sounds familiar?

Imperialism according to the authors was colonial, centralizing, bourgeois, nationalistic...In sum, Imperialism was modern. Imperialism, we guessed it, was also European. Modern and European, which, in postmodern terms, is to say despotic and obsolete.

Hiroshima, Sabra and Shatila, Vietnam, Cambodia, Verdun, etc.; that was yesterday and the dirty work of the nation-State. And if globalization erases that, ‘good riddance!’⁸⁴

But *Empire*, instead, Empire is postmodern, and “postmodernity,” the authors finalized, “is American.” American? The tone is ambiguous: What are we to deduce from this, that imperialism was pernicious, but that America’s postmodern *Empire*, because it allegedly rid the world of imperialism, is wholesome, or...? Well, yes, American patriots should be pleased to hear that “*The United States does not [...] form the center of an imperialistic project.*” Indeed, Hardt and Negri are convinced that “no nation will be the world leader in the way modern European nations were.”⁸⁵ They are confident that we all now live in a regime “outside of history, or at *the end of history.*”⁸⁶ End of science, end of education, end of history...The authors have just driven us past another signpost of *conservatism*: if something is finished, why bother fixing it?

And *oppression*, that old staple of dissenting oratory, how did it fare? Does (American) Empire oppress? Certainly, respond the authors, “but that fact should not make us nostalgic in any way for the old forms of domination. The passage to Empire and its process of globalization,” they wink, “offer new possibilities to the force of liberation.” “Our task is not simply to resist [the processes of Globalization] but to reorganize them and redirect them towards new ends.” In brief, the name of the new game is to “construct counter-Empire.”⁸⁷

So, what we are about to discover is a Batailleian tale combining Foucault’s fantastical sets with Marxian dialectics: the fluid and elusive villain will be played by “Power” appearing for the first time on the screen as a *global* entity (i.e., “Empire”), while the romanticized and downtrodden masses

—or rather, “the *diverse* legions” of “*Multitude*” to use the authors’ expressions— will be seen waging an underground struggle against a mechanized, capitalist State. Of special importance is the vital reliance of this faceless, decentered and computerized power on the energy of the core —represented by the lifeblood of the Multitude as a whole —which the machines need to vampirize in order to function. The main tension of this drama revolves around the rebels’ plan to sabotage the machines, repossess the energy of the core, and “redirect” it to create “counter-Empire.” This is the summary of the plot, and it isn’t particularly promising, for we have seen it all before: not only in Bataille and Foucault, of course, but recently in the movie *The Matrix*. We can only hope for some decent action and stunning special effects. Let us watch.

The sovereignty of Empire is realized at the margins, where borders are flexible and identities are hybrid and fluid. It would be difficult to say which is more important to Empire, the centers or the margins [...]. We could even say that the process itself is virtual and that its power resides in the power of the virtual.⁸⁸

The primal energy of the core, presently poured all over the surface of the world, and undulating like a snake,⁸⁹ is captured and trapped by *Empire*. The captive fluid circulates and is being conserved along the pipes, ports, and channels of Empire, which is the given, all-encompassing network of social interaction.

Empire is everywhere —bureaucratic-military authorities are but the manipulative usurpers of Empire; they do not truly own Empire but feed parasitically on the fuel (the life-giving

lymph of the people) that makes the whole illusory realm possible.

The ongoing Marxian suspense is meant to keep us riveted: the postmodern underground of flesh and bones engages the authorities in a tug-of-war whose pulls and counterpulls of increasing violence should lead —so the rebels hope— to a paroxysm of brutality such that a tidal surge of revolutionary vengeance would overwhelm the oppressor once and for all. When the Day of Reckoning should come nobody knows — the question is to be set aside as a messianic conundrum. In the meantime, there is struggle, blow, and counterblow, indefinitely.

When the action of Empire is effective, this is due not to its own force but to the fact that it is driven by the *rebound* from the resistance of the multitude against imperial power. One might say in this sense that resistance is actually prior to power. When imperial government intervenes, it selects the liberatory impulses of the multitude in order to destroy them, and in return is driven forward by resistance [...]. Empire in itself is not a positive reality. In the very moment it rises up, it falls. Each imperial act is a *rebound* of the resistance of the multitude that poses a new obstacle of the multitude to overcome [...]. Imperial power is the negative residue, the fallback of the operation of the multitude; it is a parasite that draws its vitality from the multitude's capacity to create ever new sources of energy and value.⁹⁰

It is interesting to note how this Foucauldian description of the interaction between modern Power and the sacred core ends up re-evoking, inevitably, the dynamics of power/laughter imagined by Bataille almost word for word.⁹¹ We recognize the hand of the master positing the energy of

the core (“resistance”) “prior to” discourse (“Empire”). We recognize Bataille’s metaphorical style in the ebbs and flows that culminate into the nothingness of the headless mannequin; in the “parasitical” encroachment of reason upon the heterogeneous forces; and even in the very choice of words, such as “rebound” (*rejaillissement*): the point of discontinuity that affords power its violent manifestations throughout the grid of the disciplinarian discourse...Postmodernism “at its best” is but one endless droning of Bataille’s mantras. Here, however, the interplay of reaction and counterreaction is even more contrived. Hardt and Negri suggest that power sucks the energy out of the Multitude not merely by regulating it, but by “whispering”⁹² to it *patterns of resistance*. The conspiracy, in other words, runs both ways: Empire, too, wishes to instigate among the Many a constant desire to rebel so that, by raising the temperature, it may rhythmically harness its hardware to the power surges unleashed by the rabble’s sedition. The villain, revealingly, is said to be but an illusion, “a negative residue”: it is Maya, a nasty trick of the light, a poltergeist’s nightmare, whose sinister powers of suggestion must be kept at bay before they may be dispelled altogether.

In *Multitude*, their 2004 sequel to their blockbuster *Empire*, Hardt and Negri wrote that “it takes a network to fight a network.”⁹³ They believe, therefore, it is time to give up all the talk of regional autonomy and cultural uniqueness. “Aware that in affirming this thesis [they] are swimming against the [Left postmodern] tide,”⁹⁴ Hardt and Negri insist, in keeping with their vision of salvation, that we need Empire as much as

we need globalization to organize counter-Empire. All late revolts around the world, from Tiananmen Square to Chiapas, they claim, have shown that all such motions have dissolved in a Babel of unrequited communication. Each uprising was unto itself singular and unique, and thus incapable of clasping on to the others, which were individually and severally articulated in mutually incompatible idioms. But along the common highway of globalization, the diverse clans may learn to drive at a common speed —the speed that will pace their forthcoming revolution. So, *in the meantime*, globalization it is.

The world market establishes a real politics of difference [...]. Marketing has perhaps the clearest relation to post-modernist theories, and one could say that the capitalist marketing strategies have been post-modernist *avant la letter* [...]. Ever more hybrid and differentiated populations present a proliferating number of “target markets” that can each be addressed by specific marketing strategies—one for gay Latino males between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two, another for Chinese-American teenage girls, and so forth. Postmodern marketing recognizes [that]...every difference is an opportunity [...]. People of all different races and sexes, and sexual orientations should potentially be included in the corporation; the daily routine of the workplace should be rejuvenated with unexpected changes and an atmosphere of fun.⁹⁵

“An atmosphere of fun” in the corporation?

There is something unreal about this passage; it is hard to say whether it is its insincerity, its meretricious plaudit of “postmodern marketing” (especially from the pen of an erstwhile, putative Marxist intransigent), its cloying conformism, its pandering multiculturalist affectation, or all of

these things together. We're being sold a "postmodern theory of revolution";⁹⁶ but where is the "theory," and where the "revolution"? Perhaps, most absurd and Indecorous of all is the above celebration of the mercantile exploitation of "otherness," of Western business's alleged attention to and respect for other cultures, when it is known that peddling "the ethnic" is but the latest trick of corporate salesmanship. Indecorous because the practice is obviously not the fruit of a bold cosmopolitan excursion, but rather the mere boxing of foreign materials and artifacts, standardized and overpriced by Interests that do not know, and do not wish to know a thing of the countries and "cultures" from which they have bought (for nothing). But we are glad to think that we buy and sell "in the name of plurality and multiculturalism."⁹⁷

Regardless, in the end, Hardt's and Negri's scrupulous concern for the fashion styles of homosexuals should suffice to dispel any misgivings one could have begun to harbor as to their "unimpeachable revolutionary credentials."

Struggle. The readers should not lose their patience just yet, as they are to approach the part in which the Multitude rebels. Let us listen: "Every struggle must attack at the heart of Empire." "This fact, however, does not give priority to any geographical regions, as if social movements in Washington, Geneva and Tokyo could attack the heart of Empire." "The only strategy available to the struggles is that of a constituent counterpower that emerges from within Empire."⁹⁸ So be it: the ministries and banks of the G-8 are to be considered irrelevant; again, the *center* is of no consequence. The thesis,

we see it, is a fatigued rebottling of Foucauldian wine. What sort of counter-power?

Counterpower, reply Hardt and Negri, construed as a loose aggregate of diverse individuals refusing hierarchy, transcendence, and authority.

Antihumanism [...] conceived as a refusal of any transcendence should in no way be confused with a negation of the *vis viva*, the creative life force that animates the revolutionary stream of modern tradition [...]. Once we recognize our posthuman bodies and minds, once we see ourselves for the simians and cyborgs we are, we then need to explain the *vis viva*, the creative powers that animate us [...] and actualize our potentialities.⁹⁹

“*Vis viva*” is but a Latinized embellishment of Bataille’s energy of the core. What could pass for semi-new, instead, is the flashing appearance on the screen of the cyborg, though even that is all too derivative, again, of Bataille’s *Acéphale*, whereas the added thrill of the “posthuman” baboon, though charming, fails to shock entirely. What else?...Why, the abhorrence of the Eurocentric white male, of course: “If the modern is the field of power of the white, the male, the European,” our authors recapitulate, “then in perfectly symmetrical fashion the postmodern will be the field of liberation of the non-white, the non-male, and the non-Europeans, the values and voices of the displaced, the marginalized, the exploited and the oppressed.”¹⁰⁰ What is exactly the “non-male”? And wouldn’t this list exclude Negri himself, a privileged white European male?

At this juncture, roughly between the first and the second act of *Empire*, we finally meet the transfigured symbol of the

oppressed multitudes, the son of the core and a reedition of Foucault's lunatic: this is "*the poor*," a figure Hardt and Negri modeled after St. Francis.¹⁰¹

The poor is God on earth. Today there is not even the illusion of a transcendent God. The poor has dissolved that image and recuperated its power [...]. But who is the subject that [...] gives a creative meaning to language—who if not the poor [...], impoverished and powerful, always more powerful? [...] The poor itself is power [...] Even the prostituted body [...], the hunger of the multitude—all forms of the poor have become productive [...]. The discovery of postmodernity consisted in the re-proposition of the poor at the center of the political and productive terrain.¹⁰²

The "poor," as a collectivity, are believed by the authors to be the "powerful," "extraordinarily wealthy and productive agents" of "absolute democracy."

Possessed of a "swarm intelligence," "with no central control," they fan themselves out in phalanxes, "[sliding] across the barriers [of Empire, and burrowing] connecting tunnels that undermine the walls."¹⁰³ These "hobos," "full of knowledges," are the yeast of globalization's "liberatory potentials," and their convulsive moving athwart the confines of Empire in a perennially undecided match is the emblem of history, which, for Hardt and Negri, "develops in contradictory and aleatory ways, constantly subject to chance and accident."¹⁰⁴ When they take power, the "hobos" shall redefine "truth," which, by the bye, is regarded as but an accessory "in the age of Empire." Whether this implies that the poor shall lie in turn, and thereby begin to oppress as in Foucault's tribunals of "pre-judicial justice," is not clear.

“Difference and mobility,” Hard and Negri believe, “are not liberatory in themselves, but neither are truth, purity and stasis.” “Truth,” they say, “will not make us free, but taking control of the production of truth will [...]. The real truth commissions of Empire will be constituent assemblies of the multitudes.”¹⁰⁵ Uniting their voice to the choir of protest of South African blacks, Hardt and Negri yell out: “We are the Poors!”¹⁰⁶

Of course, they are.

Even Satan and Dracula have a cameo in this epic. “My name is legion for we are many,” this the Evil One had once told Christ in the grand narrative of the Gospel.¹⁰⁷ Thus, Hardt and Negri fashioned the “poor” as the “legions of Multitude,” which are “composed of innumerable elements that remain different from one another, and yet communicate, collaborate, and act in common.

“Now that,” the authors exclaim, “is really demonic!” The Multitude is “a flesh that is not a body”; it is a lecherous vampire thirsting for ever more flesh.¹⁰⁸

We are all monsters—high-school outcasts, sexual deviants, freaks, survivors of pathological families and so forth.¹⁰⁹

Stripped of the erudite frills, the leftist patter and the kitsch cutouts with which Hardt and Negri have attempted to sex up their overhyped postmodern soap-opera, *Empire*’s depiction of the propertyless classes is a distasteful blend of conservative populism and of Liberal hypocrisy. Conservative and untrue, because behind the disarmingly phony paean to the “hobo” lies the tacit endorsement of a societal model that breeds such homeless, drifting ghosts as a matter of course. Indeed, a fair

dose of misanthropy must be relied upon to sing such a hollow praise of the poor and to pass off their broken speech as a kind of accomplished discourse. It can only be an inured capacity to loathe that enables some to characterize as “wealthy, knowledgeable and powerful” that which has been stunted and rendered impotent. Again: what can bring a privileged individual to flatter “the poor” so extravagantly if not the wish to see them remain precisely where they are?

Finally, an agenda.

Is there one? No. Never expect the Foucauldians to give concrete advice. Hardt and Negri write so themselves, that they are here to offer us “conceptual bases”;¹¹⁰ they are here to help us think, not to provide hard-and-fast pointers.

Hardt and Negri are at a loss for remedies. Nor do they hide it; twice in both books (*Empire* and *Multitude*) do they concede that they do not know how counter-Empire is concretely to come about.¹¹¹ Realizing, however, that it may be bad business to refuse to suggest *anything* to the generous reader, who has hitherto plodded through nearly 800 pages (for both tomes) of narcotic verbiage, they venture a few recommendations.

- “We have to accept the challenge and learn how to think globally.”¹¹²

- We must strive to “transform, mutate and create anew our posthuman bodies.” That is, “dress in drag,” tattoo, pierce ourselves,¹¹³ and shape our physique into a “body that is incapable of adapting to family life, to factory discipline, to the regulations of a traditional sex, and so forth.”¹¹⁴

- Fight the global fight with confidence knowing that we “are the masters of the world because our desire and labor regenerate it continuously.”¹¹⁵

- We should grant residency papers to immigrant laborers, guarantee a social wage to all citizens, and exclude exploitation.¹¹⁶

- Institute a “global parliament.”¹¹⁷

- Impose a tax on international financial transactions (the so-called Tobin tax).¹¹⁸

- Read the news from Indymedia, and promote “open source” sharing of intellectual property (which amounts to a relaxation of copyrights and to a diffusion of innovative techniques on the Web).¹¹⁹

- We must wield “new weapons.” (1) “Consider, for example, as an experiment [...], the new kiss-ins conducted by Queer Nation in which men would kiss men and women women in a public place to shock people who are homophobic [...]” (2) Have “people in the streets for a demonstration.”¹²⁰

And thus, the movie ends.

It had begun, swollen with realistic anticipation. It rolled on a few Liberal catch phrases, and then gradually lost itself in overcooked sci-fi déjà vu and stereotyped plugs of cyberpunk, before imploding, through one of those unfortunate shifts in narrative tone, in the tomfoolery of adolescent misfit-melodrama (viz. “we are all high-school outcasts, freaks...”). Its final take is a sorry avowal of impotence.

Of this prescriptive section, the sensible items (from the Tobin tax to “open source” sharing) are obviously not original to *Empire’s* analysis; these are limited reforms that have been

on the table for a long time. The remainder are either trite (“exclude exploitation”), meaningless (“think globally”) or downright inane (the piercings and the same-sex “kiss-ins”).

The portrait of economic change offered by Hardt & Negri bears a striking resemblance to the sort of analysis routinely offered by *The Economist* and the *Wall Street Journal* [...]. [It] is barely distinguishable from standard versions of globalization.¹²¹

“Meta-power” liked *Empire* much.

Harvard University Press published *Empire* in a good-looking edition, and the very mouthpiece of Anglo-American “Imperialism,” the Council of Foreign Relations (CFR), gave the book a favorable review, which appears on the back cover. Pleased, CFR’s quarterly, the world-renowned *Foreign Affairs*, commented: “The authors argue that globalization is not eroding sovereignty but transforming it into a system of diffuse national and supranational institutions.” *The New York Times*, on the other hand, found that *Empire* may be the “next big idea.” Establishment kudos for our postmodern, post-Marxian “rebels.” What a gift to the oligarchs this has been since Foucault: to contend, with a straight face that, in politics, the center does not matter. And that same-sex “kiss-ins” might be an avenue to changing the ways of our world...

Dissent’s response to *Empire* has been rather undifferentiated. On the one hand, the book has become *the* theoretical reference of the postmodern Left, especially in the aftermath of 9/11 —to incorporate which, *Multitude* was hastily drafted; and on the other, the evanescent, anti-oligarchic wing of Marxism—which has not (wholly) defected

to postmodernism— has critiqued the book in forward, yet overall restrained, terms. The critics have lamented *Empire*’s “idiosyncratic” abstractness and absence of “concrete illustrations,”¹²² the groundlessness of concepts such as “the virtual proletariat,”¹²³ and its being “an obstacle to the development of a successful movement against [...] global capitalism.”¹²⁴ Overall, the exchange has remained circumscribed and urbane—which is to say that postmodernism has reaffirmed its hegemony over that sorry wasteland that we call “the Left.”

Hardt’s and Negri’s commentary to 9/11 and the War on Terror will be related in chapter 9, in connection with the general theme of the Left’s reaction to the new season of wars at the dawn of the third millennium.

Postmodernism is doublespeak, of a sort that has emerged from the ashes of the Sixties, and has been decisively shaped by the vicissitudes of that epoch. Its clearest trait, since Foucault’s induction in the United States, is its manifest affectation, its phoniness. Intellectual mercenaries possessed with a knack for perfidious gab are the ones sought after, and past proper selection they rise to become postmodern luminaries.

Postmodern talk is the idiom of power, and as such it is designed to mask a variety of embarrassing truths; it is designed to uphold the status quo (viz., *Empire*’s globalization blurbs) and to discredit antagonistic forces, forces seeking to re-organize society on a communal basis with the power of cooperation, which power the French neo-Gnostics, from Bataille onward have not ceased to challenge and revile for an

Reign of Discursive Terror

instant (on paper at least). The maintenance and upkeep of postmodern doublespeak has been perforce assigned to the salaried employees of public discourse —academics, publicists, and ministerial flaks. The truths that this sort of doublespeak is expected to conceal are chiefly the actual mechanics and dynamics of power (i.e., social control, foreign policy, and wealth distribution), on the one hand, and America's failure of racial integration, on the other (the rise of cultural studies).

It has been said that multiculturalism plugged "a gaping intellectual hole" in the American panorama. "Robbed of a utopian hope," of ideas with which to shape the future, disillusioned "Liberals and Leftists" have retreated "in the name of progress to celebrate diversity."¹²⁵ No postmodern ever conducts a challenging critique of the prevailing economic system that "stands as invariant." "No divergent political or economic vision animates cultural diversity. From the most militant Afro-centrists to the most ardent feminists, all quarters subscribe to very similar beliefs about work, equality, and success."¹²⁶ Yet they all sojourn separately, each clutching at his and her own raft of gender/race specificity, marching to whatever tune a diversity-savvy administration should improvise. "The secret of cultural diversity is its political and economic uniformity." Thus, in the corridors of power and higher learning, the only fight among the irremediably "diverse" is one for "a bigger piece of the same action."¹²⁷

In general, multiculturalism, both as a slogan and an intellectual practice, has signified integration and subordination into the prevailing disciplinary construction of academic knowledge.¹²⁸

By the time the new postmodern vanguard had solidly entrenched itself in the tenured nodes of the academic network, it had become patent that this system of belief had exhausted its “theoretical” reserves. More than a decade ago, America’s Foucauldians were already grappling with the “problematic” legacy of Power/Knowledge. Many of them came to recognize that Foucauldian word-games afforded no prospects of liberation (resistance at margins offers no issue), and that, even though the multicultural movement had changed the face of academia, the barriers dividing the whites from the representatives of the “disqualified” groups, and these groups from one another, appeared no less forbidding than they were before. Soon, some began fretting over this absence of “solidarity” and “community, and thought they should instead “seek others out.”¹²⁹ They were to reconquer unity, that is, though *never* outside the “agonistics” of diversity (viz., *Multitude*). Which is an absurdity. In any event, the System had no tolerance for such disingenuousness of the eleventh hour. The mocking varlets of the postmodern Left were chiefly needed in the arena of public discourse, where they were to engage their counterparts of the Right in a purposefully interminable and spurious match between “conservatism” and “progressivism.” Ever since, the textual “trace” of this weird, virtual joust has been sold on the marketplace as the written evidence of America’s democratic fitness.

Notes

1. Erasmus, Desiderius, *Encomium Moriae* (1511), LII. Erasmo da Rotterdam, *Elogio della Follia* (Milano, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1992), pp. 83–84.
2. Lyotard's input on education is dealt with in this chapter, whereas Baudrillard's postmodern contribution will be tackled in chapter 9.
3. Roger Burbach, *Globalization and Postmodern Politics, From Zapatistas to High-Tech Robber Barons* (London: Pluto, 2001), p. 69.
4. Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), p. 74.
5. Honi Fern Haber, *Beyond Postmodern Politics, Lyotard, Rorty, Foucault* (New York, London: Routledge, 1994), p. 90.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 91–94.
7. Glen Jordan and Chris Wheedon, *Cultural Politics, Class, Gender, Race and the Postmodern World* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p. 4.
8. David Ruccio and Jack Amariglio, *Postmodern Moments in Modern Economics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 27.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
10. *Ibid.*
11. See for example Jack Z. Bratich, Jeremy Packer, and Cameron McCarthy, *Foucault, Cultural Studies, and Governmentality* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003), pp. 4–5 and 47.
12. Russell Jacoby, *The End of Utopia, Politics and Culture in the Age of Apathy* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), p. 88.
13. Jean-François Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne, Rapport sur le savoir* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1979), p. 7.
14. Michael Peters, "Introduction: Lyotard, Education and the Postmodern Condition," in *Education and the Postmodern*

- Condition*, ed. Michael Peters (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1995), pp. xxv, xxvi.
15. *Ibid.*, p. xxviii.
 16. Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne*, p. 11.
 17. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
 18. Giuliano Preparata, *Fine di millennio, fine della storia, fine della scienza: fantasie della globalizzazione?* Unpublished manuscript, 1999, p. 4.
 19. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
 20. Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne*, p. 48.
 21. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
 22. Peters, *Education*, p. 6.
 23. Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne*, pp. 79–80.
 24. *Ibid.*, pp. 81–82.
 25. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
 26. *Ibid.*, p. 84–85.
 27. *Ibid.*, pp. 87–88.
 28. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
 29. *Ibid.*, pp. 87–88.
 30. A. T. Nguyen, “Lyotard and Rorty on the Principle of the Professor,” in Peters, *Education*, p. 48.
 31. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
 32. Maurice R. Berube, *Radical reformers, The Influence of the Left in American Education* (Greenwich, CT: Information Age, 2004), p. 10, and Maurice R. Berube, *Beyond Modernism and Postmodernism, Essays on the Politics of Culture* (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 2002), pp. 92–93.
 33. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 81.
 34. Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne*, p. 106.
 35. *Ibid.*, pp. 103–4.
 36. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
 37. Thorstein Veblen, *The Higher Learning in America* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1918), pp. 3, 4, 6, 8, and 75.

Reign of Discursive Terror

38. Ibid., p. 8.
39. Ibid., pp. 16, 43–44, emphasis added.
40. Ibid., p. 85, emphasis added.
41. Ibid., p. 221.
42. Ibid., pp. 112, 176–77, 184, and 192, emphasis added.
43. Ibid., p. 185.
44. Ibid., pp. 226, 128.
45. Julian Pefanis, *Heterology and the Postmodern: Bataille, Baudrillard and Lyotard* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 1991), p. 39.
46. Tomasz Szkudlarek, *The Problem of Freedom in Postmodern Education* (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1993), pp. 102–3, 98.
47. Ibid., p. 8.
48. Jacoby, *The End of Utopia*, pp. 39–47.
49. Szkudlarek, *Problem of Freedom*, p. 108.
50. Jordan and Wheedon, *Cultural Politics*, pp. 9–11.
51. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 254.
52. Ibid., p. 270.
53. Alfred Rosenberg, *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts, Eine Bewertung der seelisch-geistigen Gestaltenkämpfe unserer Zeit* (Munich: Hoheneichen-Verlag, 1930), p. 76.
54. Murray Friedman, *What Went Wrong? The Creation and Collapse of the Black-Jewish Alliance* (New York: Free Press, 1995), p. 13.
55. Berube, *Beyond Modernism*, p. 117, emphasis added.
56. Michael Richardson, *Georges Bataille* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 83, 84, 81, emphasis added.
57. Robert Eaglestone, *Postmodernism and Holocaust Denial* (Duxford, Cambridge: Icon Books, 2001), p. 60.
58. Christopher Norris, *The Truth about Postmodernism* (Oxford; Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993), p. 300.
59. Ibid., p. 297.
60. Eaglestone, *Holocaust Denial*, p. 63.

61. Michel Foucault, *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, vol. 2 (New York: Free Press, 1998) p. 226.
62. Jordan and Wheedon, *Cultural Politics*, p. 7.
63. *The Economist*, “MOBO phonic,” September 2, 2004, p. 55.
64. Alex Callinicos, “Toni Negri in Perspective,” in Balakrishnan, *Debating Empire*, p. 126, and Antonio Negri, *Goodbye Mr. Socialism* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2006), p. 40.
65. Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin, “Gems and Baubles in *Empire*,” in *Debating Empire*, ed. Gopal Balakrishnan (London, New York: Verso, 2003), p. 52.
66. Macolm Tilly, “You Can’t Build a New Society with a Stanley Knife,” in Balakrishnan, *Debating Empire*, p. 83.
67. Carl Schmitt, *La teoria del Partigiano* (Milano: Adelphi, 2008 [1963]), pp. 26–31.
68. Ernst Jünger, “Über den Schmerz,” in *Blätter und Steiner* (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1941 [1934]), pp. 188–89.
69. Ettore Bernabei and Giorgio dell’Arti, *L’uomo di fiducia. I retroscena del potere raccontati da un testimone rimasto dietro le quinte per cinquant’anni* (Milano: Mondadori, 1999).
70. Sabino Cassese, *Le strutture del potere* (Bari, Roma: Laterza, 2023), p. 62, and Paolo Cirino Pomicino, *Il grande inganno. Controstoria della Seconda Repubblica* (Torino: Lindau, 2022).
71. Anonimo (Gianfranco Piazzesi), *Berlinguer e il Professore. Cronache della prossima Italia* (Milano: Rizzoli, 1975).
72. Negri, *Goodbye Mr. Socialism*, p. 14.
73. Amedeo Lanucara, *Berlinguer segreto. Carriera e lotta interna la PCI* (Roma: Telesio, 1978), p. 149.
74. Guido G. Preparata, *A Study in Gray: The Affaire Moro and Notes for a Reinterpretation of the Cold War and the Nature of Terrorism*. In Eric Wilson (Ed.), *The Dual State: Parapolitics, Carl Schmitt, and the National Security Complex* (213–72). Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate; 2012.
75. Antonella Beccaria, *Piccone di Stato. Francesco Cossiga e i segreti della Repubblica* (Roma: Nutrimenti, 2010), pp. 111, 158–59.

Reign of Discursive Terror

76. Pietro Calogero, Carlo Fumian, Michele Sartori, *Terrore Rosso. Dall'Autonomia al Partito armato* (Bari: Laterza, 2010).
77. Negri, *Goodbye Mr. Socialism*, pp. 55–198.
78. Thorstein Veblen, *The Engineers and the Price System* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1921), pp. 150–69.
79. Francesco Cossiga, *Fotti il potere. Gli arcana della politica e dell'umana natura* (Reggio Emilia: Aliberti Editore, 2010), p. 149.
80. Callinicos, “Toni Negri in Perspective,” pp. 127–29.
81. For an example of this sort of speculation, see Elliot Cohen “History and Hyperpower,” *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2004.
82. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, Press, 2000), pp. 179–80.
83. *Ibid.*, p. xii.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
85. *Ibid.*, pp. xiii–xiv.
86. *Ibid.*, p. xiv, emphasis added.
87. *Ibid.*, p. xv.
88. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
89. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
90. *Ibid.*, pp. 360–61, emphasis added.
91. Georges Bataille, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), vol. 1, p. 440.
92. Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. 59.
93. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude, War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004), p. 58.
94. Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. 44.
95. *Ibid.*, pp. 151–53.
96. Balakrishnan, *Debating Empire*, p. 1.
97. Ziauddin Sardar, *Postmodernism and the Other, The New Imperialism of Western, Culture* (London: Pluto, 1998), p. 125.
98. Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, pp. 58–59.
99. *Ibid.*, pp. 91–92.
100. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
101. *Ibid.*, p. 411.
102. *Ibid.*, pp. 157–58.

103. Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, pp. 129, 131, 90, 91, 137.
104. *Ibid.*, pp. 133, 102, 101, 93.
105. Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. 156.
106. Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, p. 135.
107. *Ibid.*, p. 138; in the New Testament the reference is to Matthew 8, 28–34; Mark 5, 1–20; and Luke 8, 26–39.
108. Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, pp. 192–93.
109. *Ibid.*, p. 193.
110. *Ibid.*, p. 328.
111. Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, pp. 399–400, and *Multitude*, pp. xiv, 328.
112. Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. 207.
113. *Ibid.*, pp. 215–16.
114. *Ibid.*, p. 216.
115. *Ibid.*, p. 388.
116. *Ibid.*, pp. 400, 410.
117. Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, p. 293.
118. *Ibid.*, p. 300.
119. *Ibid.*, pp. 301, 305.
120. *Ibid.*, p. 347.
121. Timothy Brennan, “Italian Ideology,” in Balakrishnan, *Debating Empire*, p. 101, and Peter Fitzpatrick, “The Immanence of Empire,” in *Empire’s New Clothes, Reading Hardt and Negri*, ed. Paul A. Passavant and Jodi Dean (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), p. 39.
122. Charles Tilly, “A Nebulous Empire,” in Balakrishnan, *Debating Empire*, p. 27.
123. Panitch and Gindin, “Gems and Baubles in *Empire*,” in Balakrishnan, *Debating Empire*, p. 56.
124. Callinicos, “Toni Negri in Perspective,” in Balakrishnan, *Debating Empire*, p. 140.
125. Jacoby, *End of Utopia*, pp. 32–33.
126. *Ibid.*, pp. 39–40.
127. *Ibid.*, pp. 40, 62.

Reign of Discursive Terror

128. Stanley Aronowitz, *The Knowledge Factory: Dismantling the Corporate University and Creating True Higher Learning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), p. 132.
129. Haber, *Beyond Postmodern Politics*, pp. 43, 97, 102, 107, 111, 125.