9. True Power: The End of Dissent, Iran/Iraq, and the War on Terror

And all the while, being a new nation and of humble antecedents, this American people has ever been quite irritably beset with a felt need of national prestige; which has engendered a bitterly patriotic sentiment and a headlong protestation of national solidarity; such a spirit as will lend itself to all manner of dubious uses in the hands of astute politicians.

Thorstein Veblen,
Absentee Ownership (1923)[1]

In the past century, the American Left has undergone three phases: a Socialist beginning (1900–1950s), the interval of the New Left (1960s), and the postmodern end-of-the-century (1980s–present). On the old continent, the

trajectory has been similar, even though Europe's Socialist apparatus held out much longer (until 1990). Overall, the need for a postmodern mood was far less urgent in Europe than it was in America (though in the end, in these last ten years or so, it has percolated into the Old Continent as well). In any case, the task of the Liberal administration has been to exercise control over the spontaneous forces for change, which are generally expected to drift toward the established Left.

Whenever State coercion proved insufficient or simply ineffectual, the government has, far more efficiently, proceeded to co-opt the representatives of these forces. Out of this process was born the "official Left." In this sense, the institutional work of these "acceptable Leftists" cannot be construed as genuinely progressive, for any gains accruing to its credit are truly increments conceded on the negotiating table by the administration itself, which, by definition, is always in charge. The official Left is perforce conservative.

As recounted throughout this narrative, when America came to adopt Foucault, it was, in fact, *sealing* a season of social turbulence, which had ended with the discomfiture of the spontaneous drive for peace and cooperation that had played a (mixed) role in the agitation of the Sixties. All things considered, the Left might have missed its chance to become an authentic movement of dissent since it distractedly forsook Thorstein Veblen. Veblen, the greatest social scientist of the modern era, had composed treatises of political economy, which were works of theoretical art, as well the most uncompromising invectives against the modern Liberal State ever written. These were formidable documents, drafted by a champion of cooperativeness and pacifism, which should have naturally formed the intellectual heritage of a responsible and nonviolent Left. But they were ignored. His vision is here summarily re-proposed to afford volunteers of all stripes the opportunity to reconsider Veblen, and incorporate his opus in their plans. Had the Left mined the legacy of this forefather of communal self-governance, it might have made of it a stepping stone to a renewal of confidence in the constructive

possibilities of wide-ranging reform. But in the Liberal State there could only be room for a Marxist or Socialist Left; Veblen was thought fit only for lifestyle sarcasm and pie-in-the-sky utopia. The traditional Left, instead, was trustworthy: most importantly, it was a firm believer in the orthodoxy of the gold standard,[2] and, no less than the oligarchic directorate, it wished for the system of business enterprise just as it was; the Euro-Communists were disingenuously proclaiming that tomorrow the machines would belong to the workers.

Thus, since the end of World War II, the energy for reform of the Westerners was diverted into a cheer-leading joust, in which the "progressives" applauded the anti-colonialist guerrillas, while their conservative opposites (bourgeois all of them, naturally) supported America, Israel, and "traditional values." This acrimonious match lasted until the end of the Cold War, at which time, the anti-imperialist Left, which had done a fine job of denouncing the abuses of the aggressing West, but a poor one of siding automatically with any (Communist) leadership that had officially come under "Western attack," found itself orphaned of the Soviet shadow. Throughout this stage, Red Russia had proclaimed its devotion to the "people's fight for freedom" around the globe; it was doublespeak, of course, but (half of) the Western public had rolled with it. In the post-Soviet scenario, however, though one could keep on denouncing the misdeeds of imperialist America, there was no "symbolic" counterpower to look up to anymore: the traditional Left lost then half of its luster. Hence the rush on the Right to redefine the tension no longer in terms of North vs. South, or capitalism vs. State socialism, but

rather as the resultant of a "clash of civilizations." In this setting, the professed nonviolence of the old Left, as well as its analyses predicated on Marxist-Leninist stereotypes, proved to be nugatory: middle-class Westerners just could not bring themselves to applaud the new Arab rulers and the Islamists. Institutional dissent was coming to an end.

At this break, the postmodernists emerged as the champions of the Leftist discourse. Foucault, again, had set the precedent in 1979, when he embarked on his controversial sojourn to Teheran to acclaim the advent of the "Imam" Khomeini. Generally appraised by postmodern admirers as a troublesome gaucherie on the part of Foucault, this was an episode of fundamental significance. It exposed the mercenary nature of the unwritten contract tying the "radical intellectual" to the establishment. As it always is between courtiers and the crown, the essential *do ut des* (a gift with forced reciprocation, so to speak) transacted between power and the scribes of the Left is one of fame and favor in exchange for "oppositional" propaganda consonant with deeper geopolitical strategies. Strategies, whose conception and management lie far beyond the purview of the retainers. On the occasion of the first Gulf War in 1991, which inaugurated the post-Soviet age of clashing cultures, the Foucauldian Jean Baudrillard opened an important chapter of postmodern finessing. By means of catchy allegorical blurbs, he would claim that the first Iraq war was a "non-event," a feat of illusion conjured via the TV screen by the spiritual energy (power) of the West, which had sickened through a gradual loss of existential meaning.

In the forum of political construction, the Foucauldians have

ever since laid firm hold of the space reserved for the Left. Foucault's epochal mission to Iran and Baudrillard's psycho-virtual toying with Foucauldian myth have set the tone for Leftist evangelism during the last quarter of a century. On September 11, 2001— the West's second momentous rendezvous with politics in the Near East after the Gulf War— Baudrillard, over-eager, attempted a sleight of hand in the same vein, portraying terrorism as the West's subconscious nemesis grown out of self-hatred.

Understandably, this time the reception on the Anglo-American market was icy, although the Foucauldian constructs à la Hardt and Negri more than made up for Baudrillard's (Sci-fi-Freudian) *faux pas*. Baudrillard himself came to typify a minority within the postmodern movement —one that pranked to the Left of the mainstream Foucauldians such as Hardt and Negri, and to the far Left of those postmoderns who, affecting a passionate concern for the fate of women in the Muslim world, had saluted Bush II's War on Terror with enthusiasm. Not to be left out of the game, the patriarchs of the anti-imperialist Left and their late followers have hastily rallied to the debate by accounting for 9/11 in terms of the so-called "Blowback effect." According to their usual schematics, they suggested that terror was the brutal pay back for decades of imperialistic intrusion.

The perplexing aspect of this entire episode is that, in its essentials, every single explanation offered by the official Left of the *dynamics* of the terrorist act —that is, it being a counterblow to an opening gambit (good or bad, depending on the political positioning of the opinion-maker)— actually

coincided with the government's version of events. Ultimately, the show of a Left that has moved on to espouse consensually the theory that enraged Muslims are bent on "shaming" America by means of terror has been instrumental in removing one of the last obstacles to the launch of warfare against an undeclared enemy. Twenty years hence, the results are known: ravages in Afghanistan, tens of thousands of civilians killed, most of them in Iraq —none of whose "scary" despots was "believed" by the US government to be involved in 9/11, — and a weird series of "insurgencies" in Afghanistan, at the weirder end of which, this shamble of a "country" was surrendered to America's arch-savage arch-enemy, the Taliban (May 2021). This is all ancient history now yet nobody bothered to understand what that strange, crucial episode and its long aftermath truly signified.*

Since 2002, when the killing in the "Muslim zone" began, the anti-imperialists and most Foucauldians did advocate peace, but their plea amounted to little, and it came too late. By refusing to question the rationale for terror and reprisal when the ashes were still smoldering, and by contenting themselves with issuing "analyses" that matched governmental communiqués, these official leftists had in fact openly renounced their duty to justice, and peace, they had renounced to dissent.

> Much of the Left, [which] derived from the Sixties generation, remains an anomaly living on college campuses on memory […]. A Left without power is familiar and perhaps a defining

* See my *Phantasmagoria,* op. cit.; v. note on p. 393.

> characteristic of its historical predicament; a Left without knowledge loses its excuse for being.[3]

This chapter opens with a brief excursus on the failure of the Left, seen from the Veblenian perspective. Next comes a section devoted to Foucault's experience in Iran at the time of the downfall of the shah, which is followed by Baudrillard's approach and treatment of the intrigue in Iraq (first Iraq war, aka "Gulf One"). An overview of the leftist debate surrounding the War on Terror completes our discussion of the postmodern imprint on American politics.

9.1 Veblen's Testament and the End of Dissent

> The current situation in America is by way of being something of a psychiatric clinic.
>
> Thorstein Veblen, *Dementia Praecox*[4]

It is now a truism that the so-called Left is *dead.*

Our contemporary history books remember essentially two periods during which a visible movement of dissent within Western society rose against the established order: the aftermath of World War I and the Sixties. Both pangs of revolt, in their beginning, appear genuine; how they came to be derailed or perverted, neutralized, and suppressed by the authorities is another (important) story. But something like the original spirit of protest that animated both events appears to many, on this day, irrecoverable.

The significant difference between "then" (especially the late nineteen-tens, which saw the campaigning of Socialist leader Eugene Debs in America) and "now" seems to have been the

Left's appeal to the universal value of cooperation, whose virtue is that of engendering union across divides. This is an essential binding factor, which today seems virtually dissolved. Forty years of postmodern habituation —in academia, at school, and in the workplace— has so managed to corrode and break the sentiment of togetherness that such a bond appears, with every passing day, ever more beyond repair. This phenomenon is conspicuous in the United States, and increasingly more so in Europe, in which similar forces are at work —given, indeed, that postmodernism is through and through a European construct.

Had the Left been Veblenian, it might have been immune to the rigid, and unfulfilled, infantile and erroneous schemas of Marxism, which fed those imbecile and specious partisan rivalries played out in the Cold War. And more to the point, a Veblenian Left would have been impermeable to the anti-humanist sophistries of postmodernism. It is with a view to resuming the labor of critique on the Left against misconceptions and damning compromises that we here relate an overview of Veblen's final reflections on the diseased state of modern society, and on the possible means by which to cure it.

9.1.1) A Forsaken Master-thinker of Anarchism

Thorstein Veblen (1857–1929) had been an exceptional witness, and also a peripheral actor, of America's last fires of revolt in the aftermath of World War I. Originally, repulsed as he had been Imperial Germany's "vibe," he had stood behind the Allied effort during the conflict. But noticing thereafter

that the Anglo-American commonwealth had intrigued at Versailles to perpetuate the state of war, he had, like many American radicals at the time, turned his back on the West and hailed the advent of Bolshevik Russia. Lenin had described the latter as Soviets (Councils)+ electricity, and Veblen took him at his word. City-States of masterless men, directed by councils of technicians in a world without business, conspicuous waste, and salesmanship, was all Veblen was hoping to see emerge for the sake of human well-being. This, of course, was a vision of communal and pacific anarchism, which had nothing to share with Bolshevism: indeed, Lenin had appropriated and perverted the anarchistic notion of "soviet" for his own totalitarian ends.[5] A true dissenter and an "alienated intellectual," Veblen, however, "remained aloof from politics"; his radical critique of society would never be incorporated into the radical politics of the Left.[6]

When Eugene Debs was giving American socialism a good name, and proving in 1918 that there might be more heroism in resisting war than in hailing it; when the International Workers of the World struck in 1919; and when the folk and the conscientious objectors manifested here and there a pervicacious resolve not to surrender to the schizophrenic "distemper" and "headlong intolerance" of patriotism, Veblen took heart. But he sank thereafter in a state of bottomless despondency as he saw the police forces, abetted by mobs of "Detective Agencies," victoriously beat the uprisings into submission. By the early Twenties it was all over; it had been a biennium of passion. To remember it and to put the last, embittered word on the subject, Veblen wrote his final

volume, *Absentee Ownership,* in 1923 —this would be a testament of sorts. One that contemporary dissenters should urgently revisit.

Veblen, too, had understood that nationhood was finished. He saw clearly that "national frontiers no longer [divided] anything but national groups of special interests." And that these "national frontiers [were clearly] useful to these special interests," which proceeded with "feverish urgency" "to foment national animosity" with a view to extending their reach by means of forthcoming clashes.[7]

Instrumental to this fomentation of dissension was the cross-fire of Socialist and anti-Socialist slogans, which had already become "obsolete in the face of the new alignment of economic forces" prevailing at the turn of the twentieth century. "The red line of cleavage," Veblen countered, "runs not between those who own something and those who own nothing […], but between those who own more than they personally can use and those who have urgent use for more than they own."[8] But violence and propaganda were not sufficient to exercise power if the *spirit* of the underlying population had not been itself the target of a persistent process of sentimental molding, so to speak. It was in the field of collective psychology that lay the true power of Veblen's analysis. An anti-oligarchic analysis of hegemonic force that, unlike Marx's, was not fixated on economic factors but on spiritual ones, and that, unlike Foucault's, was actually realistic rather than fictional.

Veblen accounted admirably for that process of "autointoxication" whereby the instinctive awe that the

average citizen feels before "authority" brings the former to convince himself that the wealth accruing to the leaders rests on some proper and sovereign right. A right that the citizen may claim for himself in his drive to share the sheen of power.

Power in the modern era Veblen called "absentee ownership": this is a claim to wealth, to the labor of others exercised in absentia —that is, a systematic exaction of rents, of a free unearned income, perpetrated behind the anonymous façade of the banking and financial networks.[9] Jünger had said that "the deep and ineradicable instinct of men is monarchic,"[10] and it was precisely against this barbarous pulsion, which presently compelled men "to scramble to get something for nothing,"[11] that Veblen waged his idealist fight.

The scramble to make one's dollars "work" in the bank "at the cost of the underlying population" was coupled with "patriotic devotion to the national establishment."

Which came, in effect

> to much the same thing as partisan devotion to the fortunes of some particular gang or clique of political hucksters whose concern it is to make use of the national establishment for the profit of some particular group of special business interests […]. When national inflation is compounded with business enterprise […], the product is that *democratic "imperialism"* that is now carrying on the ancient traffic of statecraft.[12]

This is a compelling observation of a system that has remained identical to itself for the last century, and a prescient testimony of the rhetoric that would also become the trademark of the Neocons —themselves referred to as "democratic imperialists."[13] Veblen found the American people "very credulous about anything that is said and done in

the name of business," and their "sentimental deference to the sagacity of business men […] profound and alert."[14] Within this mindset, the "illusions of national solidarity" have brought the "loyal American taxpayers" to believe that their remittances to Washington would benefit them in some "occult way —in some obscure way which no loyal citizen should inquire too closely."[15]

> And the taxpayers faithfully pay the public cost of armaments […] by use of which their absentee owners are enabled to increase their private gain. Indeed, on occasion the same local taxpayers have been known gladly and proudly to risk life and limb in defense of […] trade that 'follows the flag'. Should any undistinguished citizen […] hesitate to throw his life and substance […] for the greater glory of the flag […], he becomes a "slacker" […]. Born in iniquity and conceived in sin, the spirit of nationalism has never ceased to bend human institutions to the service of dissension and distress. In its material effects it is altogether the most sinister as well as the most imbecile of all those institutional encumbrances that have come down of the old order. The national mob-mind of vanity, fear, hate, contempt and servility still continues to make the loyal citizen a convenient tool in the hands of the Adversary, whether these sentiments cluster about the anointed person of a sovereign or about the magic name of the Republic.[16]

To Veblen, the nationalist animus and "business expediency," which he deprecated as an "alien" dimension of the economic realm,[17] were the spiritual drives responsible for he what he called the American plan or policy, namely, the "settled practice of converting all public wealth to private gain on a plan of legalized seizure."[18] Veblen was exasperated by the fecklessness of the "great unions," which had begun to treat

membership the way the captains of industry dealt with production: curtailing deliberately the output (membership), through strikes and lockouts, in order to shore up perquisites and wages. Overall, masters and foremen seemed agreed that "what may be a suitable livelihood for the workman" was best left to the decision of "the substantial citizens." In other words, both parties concurred that "the workmen should work for a living and the owner-employer should invest for a profit." It hadn't crossed anybody's mind, Veblen interjected, that the solution might just be the converse of such a proposition, to wit, that "the owner-employers should invest for a living and the workmen should work for a profit; leaving the workmen to fix on a suitable livelihood for the employer-owners."[19]

To turn the latter vision into a feasible project one had to revolutionize the structure governing the "several systems" of Christendom. There were three such apparatuses: the mechanical system of industry; the credit and price system; and the national establishment. Veblen construed the nation as a predatory and dynastic relic, which had been revamped by the Interests of absentee ownership into the Liberal State by means of democratic and parliamentary institutions.

The credit system, instead, is the ever more sophisticated institution engineered by the absentee elite to regulate the transfer of wealth from the laboring population to the high spheres of decision making.[20] Such a system functions as a parasitical appanage, which encroaches upon every single capillary of the industrial apparatus. This technical stock was for Veblen the unique and treasured source of wealth of the community, and therefore its exclusive property. He thus

perceived the current economic situation to be "drawn on lines of a two-sided division of its forces or elements: –the Interests; and the underlying population."[21]

To wrest the technological patrimony away from business and bureaucratic control, Veblen saw in the future no alternative but "to take this businesslike arrangement to pieces and put the works together again on some other plan for better or worse."[22] One had to look for the "self-made though reluctant abdication"[23] of the elite, who should have pacifically dispossessed itself of its financial titles of wealth.

Thereafter Veblen would have exhorted all "those shudderingly sanguine persons" to undergo the "critical adventure," which should have hopefully led to the formation of "soviets of technicians."[24] The "spirit of teamwork" animating these councils of physicists and engineers, at last freed from the shackles of Big Science and of the corporate ethos, should have been counted on to ensure "an equitable distribution of the consumable output." Platonic philosopher-kings (of a sort), yet again.

"The main lines of subsidiary preparation" for such an adventure were to be (1) "an extensive campaign of inquiry and publicity, such as [would] bring the underlying population to a reasonable understanding of what this is all about"; and (2) the working out of a "a solidarity of sentiment between the technicians and the working force engaged in transportation and the greater underlying industries of the system."[25]

So, in defense of the people's well-being, Veblen stood defiantly against a highly *centralized* structure of command

tenanted by barbarous and parasitical overlords, whom he sought to see replaced by teams of non-belligerent and competent scientists dedicated to balance and fairness: no absentee ownership, no dictatorship of the proletariat, and least of all no Foucauldian all-encompassing power magma shot through with jets of "minority" rage. *This* should have been a platform of a workable Left.

Of course, Veblen had qualms. His "councils" seemed "at the most a remote contingency."[26] To this day, the "scientists" have shown no inclination whatsoever to pursue a "revolutionary diversion," kept as they have been on the tight leash of their "hired-man's loyalty."[27] Veblen had forecast this much. In light of that credulous frame of mind and the reverence for business, both of which incapacitate the critical faculty of the average citizen, Veblen resignedly understood that an abdication of the Vested Interests, accompanied by a shift in popular apprehension, was something to hope for only after "an appreciable lapse of time."[28] A lonely, disillusioned man, he died in August 1929, a few weeks before the first apparent collapse, which he had foreseen,[29] of the system he so abhorred.

It had been his wish that, in case of death, no effigy or monument be set up to his memory in any place at any time.[30] He wanted to vanish. Yet, it would certainly be a shame if today all reformist movements pursuing peace, the flourishing of local economies, and the introduction of regional (and perishable) currencies were to forget to hoist his very effigy on their banners. The legacy of Veblen is necessary in our time

more than it ever was to understand truly, as he said, "what this is all about," and change thereby things for the better.

But Veblen was an anarchist, a daydreamer, and, in the realm of power, as Jünger taught and Foucault lived to prove, only anarchs truly prosper. The Left dismissed Veblen altogether and confined him to an undeserved oblivion from which he still has not emerged. There could be no room for him in the myth-making arena of the Liberal governments —Liberal governments that much preferred to engage the Marxists, whose "meta-discourse" was, in fact, much like that of the Liberals themselves. While the modern Liberals blamed social disorder on an "anti-Liberal conspiracy" perpetrated by the nationalist agrarians and, above all, the Socialist trade unions, the Marxists countered that the emancipation of the working masses was hindered, instead, by an anti-proletarian conspiracy fomented by the industrialists' imperialism and the agrarians' chauvinism.[31] In fact, they were both reasoning around the exact same economic myth, while taking opposite sides. In respect of power, money, and progress, they all thought alike. Upholding similar "truths," the "enemies" thus arrayed themselves along the constitutional arc: Liberals to the Right and Socialists to the Left.

9.1.2) The Grand Circus of American Gauchisme & the Multicultural Reformation

A leftist in good standing would have thought that the Great Depression would have been the propitious occasion for world revolution. But, again, the Western "masses" barely budged. Least of all those of America, which remained, barring a few

exceptions in the early Thirties, eerily tame throughout that grim interlude.[32] In fact, what the government held in store for eleven million jobless individuals, was a second world war, which these would fight with no less ardor than the first.

When Germany was finally dispatched in 1945, the game of nations changed yet again, and this time it reverted to a simple bipolar organization, in which the pro-Communist "opposition" to the Liberal State was curbed in standard fashion by relegating it to preestablished role-playing of "the antagonist on the Left." This tacit arrangement reflected the far superior power of the United States vis-à-vis the USSR throughout the duration of the Cold Game: the cleaving of Eurasia had never been the Russians' idea. The arrangement was palpable, for instance, in the Marxist posture of Western Europe's Communist parties up to the fall of the Berlin Wall. These parties were in large part financed by Moscow.[33] They brought some benefits to the working classes, but, as a well-established rule, they were *never* to aspire to any true position of command. They shared power for the sake of sharing, in the capacity of token opponents, and nothing more.[34] These parties of the Left also afforded a platform and a shelter to all those more or less ambitious upper-class anarchs that fancied to taste power in the guise of "radicals" and latter-day enlightened tribunes. For instance, the intellectual's semi-mandatory militancy in the PCF (France's Communist party—also a Soviet pawn), which was undertaken with varying degrees of conviction by many late postmodern exponents including Foucault, is a notable trait of the power theatrics in Cold War Europe.

The rebellious flames of the late Sixties —at a time when the postwar boom had exhausted itself and an authentic desire for change had arisen— were put down in Europe by means of conventional repression and State-organized terror, the so-called "strategy of tension" (the arming and fitting of subversive Left- and Right-wing nuclei by the Services, domestic and foreign), of which Italy (as related with the story of Negri) and Germany bear the most vivid memories. In America, the elites, such as the Morgan trust, had likewise "[infiltrated] the Left-wing political movements" since the disorderly times that followed WWI.[35]

> This was relatively easy to do, since these groups were starved for funds and eager for a voice to reach the people. Wall Street supplied both. The purpose was not to destroy, dominate or take over, but was really threefold: (1) to keep informed about the thinking of Left-wing […] groups; (2) to provide them with a mouthpiece so that they could "blow off steam," and (3) to have a final veto on their publicity and possibly on their actions, if they ever went "radical."[36]

The logistic contiguity of the establishment to the Left helps to explain the particular landscape of change, spin, and control that took shape in America during the Sixties on the occasion of its two defining moments: the civil rights movement and the protest against the Vietnam War. The regime's exigency to rein in the resentment that was beginning to seethe amongst the blacks of the South culminated in Martin Luther King's March on Washington in the summer of 1963. Stewards of the Kennedy administration were pleased to comment that the President had successfully "moved to incorporate the Negro revolution into the Democratic

coalition."[37] On the other hand, speaking for the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X denounced the event as a "circus." It appeared, indeed, that the government had defused the "anger" out of the march, preventing it from "going radical." The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited discrimination, was designed to encourage hiring on the basis of ability and qualifications, not race or religion. But according to Samuel Huntington, as soon as the Civil Right Acts was passed, black leaders, presuming that blacks as a group would still suffer under a meritorious regime enforced by whites, began to agitate for racial quotas.

Ever distrustful of the U.S. administration, these leaders "stopped demanding rights in common to all American citizens and instead began demanding governmental programs to provide material benefits to blacks as a distinct racial group."[38] In this sense, the Supreme Court interpreted the Voting Rights Act of 1969 "to mandate systems of representation that would insure the election of minority candidates."[39]

The turn in favor of racial quotas became manifest in the Spring of 1966, when civil rights activists demanded, for instance, that there be African-American principals in schools offering "Afro-centric" curricula.[40] This tendency had its origins in the institutionalized fragmentation of society along racial lines advocated by the Nation of Islam, which sought to turn the black neighborhood into a Chinatown —a racially segregated microcosm within the wider American society.[41] All of a sudden, elitist philanthropists, such as those acting behind the Ford Foundation, started to release tens of millions

of dollars[42] for the launch of multiculturalism in the name of "community control."[43] The dollar manna from on high soon led to a ferocious competition among "minority" contestants for scarce positions and resources. To the detriment of integration, and exacerbating the growing fixation for "identity," the rival "groups" sought to outbid one another in attempting to win the palm of "victimization."[44] The pattern was set when the Nation of Islam relativized the importance of the extermination of the European Jews by the Nazis, by bringing the focus on slavery.[45] At this time, in the late Sixties, after having fought side by side in the civil rights movement, American Jews and blacks parted ways. Allegedly, "each side [felt] wounded and victimized, and each demanded a recognition of its special pain and suffering before agreeing to define a new relationship."[46] From the Jewish side, "racial preferences" were too reminiscent of "anti-Semitic quotas," and the awareness of being a "highly-educated and successful group representing less than 3 percent of the population" would not bring this group to agree to a sharing of the spoils "along ethnic lines."[47] Since then, all clans vying in this "macabre competition"[48] have been looking askance at one another, each brandishing its own holocaust as a weapon and an argument settler: Gorea, Wounded Knee,* Auschwitz…

This politics of acrimony was so successful in disrupting the lower and middle classes that in 1972 even President Nixon

* Gorea is a tiny island off the coast of Senegal that once was a nodal anchorage in the slave-trade. In the Wounded Knee Massacre (South Dakota), 300 Sioux, many of them women and children, were shot dead by US troops in December 1890.

endorsed legislation on ethnic groups and "allegedly encouraged affirmative action in employment to promote conflict between blacks and working-class whites within the Democratic Party."[49]

No less successful was the U.S. government when it definitely smashed the black protest by cornering its last representatives, the Black Panthers. How it was that of all the forces existing within the black movement, its symbolic direction passed into the hands of these extremists is something of a puzzle. The postmodern scene made its debut when the conductor of the New York Philharmonic, Leonard Bernstein, became fond of playing flamboyant host to the Panthers in much-gossiped cocktail parties: the expression "radical-chic" came then into vogue. The Panthers were united by a cohesive vision, which stemmed in part from Malcolm X's segregationist plan, and which looked forward to building solidarity in the community and education projects. Yet their leaders were far too gun-prone, refractory, and intransigent to have been the genuine expression of dissent among American blacks as a whole. Jünger would have doubtless categorized them as "partisans." The Panthers' fashionable killing of "pigs" and their semi-hallucinated talk of "overturning the government of the United States" (identical, for all intents and purposes, to the pronouncements of any terrorist organization, in fact), were rather ideal material for weakening the Left and for the maneuvering of the FBI. The Bureau had a relatively easy time, infiltrating, dividing, incarcerating, and murdering the whole lot. By 1970 it was done.[50]

The coming and going of the Black Panthers on the front of the civil rights movement coincided with the rise and fall of the Weather Underground on the front of white, antiwar "New Left." The so-called New Left had emerged in the early Sixties as a modernized movement of dissent —in principle independent from, if not hostile to, Soviet Russia[51]— which was supposed to incarnate the progressive aspirations of the American middle class. It "was one of the great surprises of the mid-twentieth century."[52] However, the vanguard of the New Left, the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), came itself under the leadership of partisans such as Tom Hayden, who, since 1965, seemed far more bent on provoking riots than on constructing a lucid understanding of the crisis in Vietnam and at home. Hayden could also avail himself of the protection of his friend, the then Attorney-General Robert Kennedy. Starting in 1962, the SDS became the recipient of large emoluments from the Ford Foundation. And the Rockefellers, too, were supporters of the New Left, whose publications they financed.[53] What was peculiar in this affair was the synchronized effort on the part of the World Communists to patronize these selfsame partisans of the American Left, including the Panthers,[54] by giving them shelter or by receiving them with fanfare on propagandistic tours of the "revolutionary outposts" from Havana to Pyongyang (N. Korea), by way of Algiers, Bratislava, Moscow, and Hanoi (N. Vietnam). The trip to Hanoi during the Vietnam War of Hayden and his wife, the actress Jane Fonda, made up a memorable frame of this odd reel. Equally intriguing was the odyssey of the black activist Robert Franklin Williams, an

advocate of violence for self-defense.

Forced to flee the United States because of trumped up charges, Williams flew to Cuba, where in 1961 Fidel Castro allowed him the space for inflammatory radio broadcasts. In 1966, Williams was received with pomp in Beijing, as Mao's guest, before being repatriated in 1969 by the U.S. government and the CIA, which were looking forward to casting him as America's new black leader after the assassination of Martin Luther King and the rout of the Black Panthers. Williams chose instead to take a up a post of sinologist at the University of Michigan, where for a year he would brief Henry Kissinger's aides on the dime of the Ford Foundation.[55]

When in January 1968 Castro convened in Havana the great "Cultural Congress," which featured a contingent of 470 intellectuals from Europe, Africa, Latin America, and Asia, the world witnessed the inauguration of the clamorous season of so-called *gauchisme,* that is, of the "Leftism" that would become so fashionable and ingrained in a good half of the Western bourgeoisie. The show also spotlighted a group of Palestinian representatives on the eve of that long decade of Arab nationalist terrorism, which has been of late recycled as "Islamic." So the Cold Game thenceforth offered two built-in options to the Western opinion-reader: he or she could either be an anti-imperialist leftist, rooting for Ho Chi Minh, Mao, and the Vietcong, Castro and Che Guevara, Palestinian fedayeen and the USSR, or a conservative, cheering for America, Israel, and Liberal democracy.

Tertium non datur. Through a nebulous sequence of

maneuvers, which paralleled not accidentally the ascent of the Panthers, the SDS was overtaken by its maximalist fringe, which embodied in pure form the New Left's "aversion to universal principles."[56] This was a splinter formation calling itself the Weathermen (after a Bob Dylan song),* which, starting in 1968–69, came to advocate cop-killing, the uncompromising subversion of "Amerika," and consequently a revolutionary alliance with the Black Panthers. Along with other terrorist formations from all over the world, the Weathermen were taught insurgency tactics in the training camps of Cuba,[57] whose intelligence apparatus was then an outpost of the KGB.[58] In late 1969, at the time when the State had begun suppressing the Panthers forcibly and the bulk of America's nonviolent antiwar protesters by means of the courts (through trial time and litigation costs),[59] the Weathermen changed strategy. Driven underground by self-styled "monomaniacal" leaders determined to destroy "the mother country,"[60] the organization engaged in a long campaign of bombings, which included targets such as the Pentagon and the U.S. Capitol. How such a meager faction could carry on such a campaign with impunity for nearly a decade is a mystery. What appears certain, however, is that the Weathermen, like the Panthers, were infiltrated by *agents provocateurs* of the FBI.[61] Which is, of course, not surprising, because this is how "these things" actually function. This circumstance would explain the authorities' noninterference as an expedient wherewith to monitor the organization so long

* "...You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows..." (*Subterranean Homesick Blues*, 1965).

as the counterwork of discrediting the Left, from which the Weathermen had issued, would be considered accomplished. Seemingly, this came to pass in the mid-Seventies: the war in Vietnam had been lost, and, more importantly, the antiwar movement had also been defeated in the process. The way the wind was blowing became evident to the Weathermen themselves as they shifted the emphasis of their late pronouncements from the evils of imperialism to those of "male supremacy."[62] The jig was up. Mark Rudd, their leader, surrendered in 1977 —the same year of the American launch of Foucault's *Discipline and Punish.* In 1981, two other leading exponents of the Weathermen —Bernardine Dohrn and her husband Bill Ayers— turned themselves in, to become a decade later, respectively, Associate Professor of Law at Northwestern University and Distinguished Professor of Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago.[63] Little American Negris, both of them, like a great many others: ah, the bizarre & wondrous life of "partisans"…

All that was left of the nonviolent Left after having been overwhelmed by the fantastic machinations of the Cold War and of its anarchs and partisans, was a slew of "single-issue groups," the most important of which were the women's and the gay and lesbian movements. "The hope of a Left based in universal principles that had raised its head in the early Sixties was dead and buried."[64] The survivors of the New Left have since then retreated to the university campuses, from where they had originally emerged, forming in time the "strange anomaly" of "a radical enclave in a conservative environment."[65] Some thought that no one "could have

anticipated the eagerness with which former protesting graduate students later accepted positions at the very institutions they said were responsible for racism, imperialism, fascism, sexism, and other evils of 'liberalism'."[66] As a former SDS spokesman put it, "While the Right was occupying the heights of the political system […], the Left was marching on the English department […]. We squandered the politics, but won the textbooks […]: 'political-correctness' was [our] consolation prize."[67] (Speaking of division of political labor: fascists of the Right in the *palazzo* and fascists of the Left in the academe: I truly wonder who got the sweeter deal).

Meantime, it was by grace of affirmative action that feminism —the first great success story of the Academic Left —as well as multiculturalism, were able to assert themselves.[68] Neither would have existed but for the pressure exercised by the judicial system on the institutions of higher learning. All of such programs were in the final analysis creations of conservatism.

On campus, the chant had changed from "Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh," to "Hey, hey, ho, ho, western culture's got to go."[69] The Eighties had arrived, and the postmodern mood set in. By the time Foucault had landed in America, the Left had long been moribund. The first segment of this tale had thus come full circle by reaching that very historical juncture at which the French anti-humanists were imported by the American intelligentsia. Per se, postmodernism represented no epochal, lifechanging shock; it was a fancy, academic fixative that came to be employed in the late Seventies to clinch a state of near-complete fragmentation. A state that was the legacy of a

decadelong effort on the part of the American government to disrupt and neutralize the ferment for change that had arisen in the early Sixties. In the end, what postmodernism has shown to have contributed so far has been an outstanding capacity to aggravate a situation that was already compromised.

But before he boarded the plane to San Francisco, Foucault, ever the trailblazer, had previously flown to Iran, in the course of a subtle propagandistic operation that constitutes a special, yet remarkable, precursor to the politics and opinion making in the post-Soviet, postmodern age.

9.2 Mr. Foucault Goes to Teheran

> "Fuck the Shah."[70]
>
> Jimmy Carter, 39th President of the United States, and Nobel Peace Laureate (2002)

When the West endeavored to depose the shah of Iran in 1977–78, the mass media solicited the contribution of several intellectuals including Foucault. Part of this maneuver consisted in casting a fanatic as a "democratic" alternative to the shah. Identifying, choosing, and dressing partisans for the purpose of political intrigue are a standard specialty of a country's intelligence service. Miles Copeland, a former mastermind of the CIA, revealed in his invaluable *The Game of Nations* a few tricks of the trade for recruiting fanatics.

> A 'fanatic' […] is anyone who abnegates himself and who will go to any lengths, regardless of harm to self, in the interest of the cause. He is a loser by definition, but he is an important weapon in the hands of the determined non-fanatic —one who

> intends to *live* for the cause, in other words […]. The nonsense [the fanatics] talk can be polished up so that it not only makes a modicum of sense, but seems to be on a high moral plane […]. There is also the advantage of easy availability. In any country where frustration is general there are bound to be fanatics, or latent fanatics, just waiting to be awakened by the right messiah […]. They are beautifully expendable.[71]

While conventional theory offers no conceptual tools to make sense of such a programmatic statement, the sociology of Bataille and Jünger readily explains it: at work is the typical manipulation of the "partisan" by the tyrant (or "*butor,*" to use Bataille's expression). The former, being a creature of "the gutter," is readier to espouse death than the latter, who uses the death wish of the rabble to conserve or extend his power —he "intends to live." It is in this particular context that one must study Foucault's encounter with Khomeini's "revolution" in the late summer of 1978.

As known, a joint operation conducted by the intelligence services of America and Britain had unseated Nationalist leader Mossadegh and enthroned their candidate, the shah, in 1953. The Soviets had watched from the sidelines, as the Anglo-Americans, thanks to a masterful countercoup, had gone on to repossess the oil wells that had been temporarily nationalized by Mossadegh.

During a gala thrown by the shah to celebrate his own restoration, the king had raised a glass to Kermit ("Kim") Roosevelt, a grandson of Theodore, and the CIA's chief officer of the Iranian putsch: "I owe my throne," he declaimed, "to God, my people, my army —and to you!"[72] He was a "weak king," and he knew it;[73] but he tried to forget to have been yet

another Middle Eastern pawn by dreaming. He fancied he could redeem himself by fashioning a modern Persian empire. He ended up using the rents of petroleum to create a two-tier country —a francophone elite one side, and an alienated majority on the other, which, as Jünger would say, naturally thirsted for "apotheoses" in a sea of nihilism. Under the shah's twenty-five-year regency, per capita GDP rose dramatically, but the country remained no less cleft than before.

Among the rabble-rousers that had taken money from the CIA to break Mossadegh's front were not a few Shiite mullahs. Among them was an ayatollah by the name of Kashani —a "holy man" whose lust for power and intrigue was notorious.[74] Among his entourage was one Ruhollah Khomeini, who promptly followed in Kashani's footsteps, by allegedly becoming one of Moscow's top informants within the Shiite hierarchy.[75] In 1960, the shah had launched a program for reform seeking the emancipation of women, the implementation of referenda, as well as the breaking up of landed estates. In 1963, to protest the reform, an alliance of Communists and Shiite clerics rose in the city of Qom and vented its rage by vandalizing schools, banks, and cultural centers, regarded as symbols of modernization.[76] The regime was caught off guard, and the shah faltered, before resolving to send in the army, which suppressed the uprising in blood. This had been the first serious shock of the shah's post-Mossadegh era —and a presage of the disorders of 1978. For, indeed, the leader of the riot had been Khomeini himself, who was then expelled from Iran, and who went on to spend the following 15 years of exile in Iraq's holy city of Najaf.

Thereafter, the shah played the Cold Game dutifully. He shopped from both the United States and the USSR,[77] until in 1973, he was implicated by the United States and Israel in a trilateral harassment of Iraq.

Iraq, as France's client,[78] had been recently allowed to nationalize its oil, and had come as a result to make its debut on the grand arena of international politics. Iraq's other patron was the Soviet Union. The trilateral harassment consisted in arming and instigating Iraq's Kurds against Baghdad's regime so as to "embroil Iraq in domestic turmoil" and keep in check its potential for expansion in the area.[79] To Baghdad, the Kurdish insurgency was a nuisance, but not one serious enough to destabilize the country, which was in the meantime crossing swords with Iran over their common pretension to the waterways of the Gulf. This standard Cold War ploy (the United States playing Iran against a Soviet-sponsored Iraq) evidently sought to trigger an Iraqi-Iranian conflict in which to drown the ambitions of both countries. Divide, hemorrhage, and conquer. So, the shah and Saddam Hussein, then Iraq's young vice president, did something bold and unexampled; they defused the tension and composed their differences at the summit of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) at Algiers in March 1975. Their stated objective was "to consolidate their ranks" as oil producers, but above all "to exclude both the U.S. and the Soviet Union from the strategic Gulf region." The shah declared: "[Saddam Hussein and I] want to keep third parties out."[80] A CIA analyst at the time saw this as "one of the most surprising turns of the post-WWII era."[81] The Unites States'

outrage was immediate and loud.[82] But it wasn't on account of his having raised the price of oil since 1973* that the shah earned the violent reprimand of the American government, as has generally been claimed.[83] Aside from the prospects of the Algiers conference itself, the American nervousness appeared rather to have stemmed from Iran's (as well as Iraq's) successful bid with the Europeans, led by France, to obtain nuclear technology in exchange for oil.[84]

The "weak king" had envisaged thereby the possibility of becoming, in his own words, "an immense power in the region," whose security margin could be extended "to the 10th parallel between the south of India and the north of Ceylon."[85] What the United States had given him in 1953 it would now take away. On the basis of experience and extensive research, Houchang Nahavandi, an internationally respected academic and former minister of Iran, maintains that "the irreversible decision to trigger a process of destabilization in Iran was taken in 1977."[86] Carter was then president.

"The fact that fanatical movements are usually *against*

* In truth, the Shah *had then been ordered by the US* to raise the price of oil in 1973 as part of a hostile offensive against Europe, the maneuver being aimed at shoring up the dollar at a delicate juncture which saw America continuatively engaged in arm-wrestling its industrialized vassals as she sought to regain the sort of uncontested financial supremacy it had enjoyed for about a decade after the war —i.e., by freely printing dollars wherewith she could "buy the word" and trusting the vassals would keep them as reserves and/or "investment," rather than getting rid of them. See Guido G. Preparata & Domenico D'Amico, "The Political Economy of 'Hyper-Modernity'. A Tale of America's Hegemonic Exigencies Recounted

something," wrote Copeland, "makes them extremely useful when the purpose is to bring pressure on the leader of some other country." Copeland added that "it takes very little ingenuity to convince fanatics of *any* country of the wickedness of their government, whatever its complexion […]. Fanatics need no specific direction, only a general 'go' sign."[87] A government that does not play along is referred to as a "scab government."

> To summarize the Standard Operating Procedure in bringing about the overthrow of a scab government: first attack the government on [the] Radio, making accusations against it which are most likely to incite fanatical groups while refraining from specific accusations which might be embarrassing to [the schemer] should the coup succeed; second, study the reactions of the propaganda so as to identify fanatics and fanatical groups which may be counted on for action; third, approach the fanatics […], arm them, and learn what can be learned about *their* plans; fourth, identify suitable *non*-fanatics who might take over the leadership at the right strategic moment (sometimes before the government is overthrown, sometimes after), and consolidate the gain, and make arrangements with them.[88]

The overthrow of the shah seemed to have followed mechanically the above template. The disinformation campaign had already begun on 1974, when U.S. newscasts set out to target the SAVAK (Security and Information Organization), the infamous secret police of the shah, which

through the Undulations of the US Balance-of-Payments (1946–2015), in G. G. Preparata, *New Directions in Catholic Social and Political Research* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2016).

had been overhauled since 1953 in collusion with the CIA and the Mossad. The SAVAK's record was probably as
dirty as that of any other Middle Eastern "security" apparatus, but the Western press, echoed by Amnesty International, insisted that this organization, availing itself of a budget of millions of dollars and a manpower running in the tens of thousands, had murdered tens and incarcerated hundreds of thousands of political prisoners.

These were all fabrications.[89]

The "go sign" to the fanatics came in November 1977 on the occasion of the shah's official visit to the White House. By the fence, a group of masked anti-shah protesters was caught on video chanting next to thousands of shah supporters. When speeches were exchanged on the lawn of the White House, a scuffle ensued between the two groups, which the police dispersed with tear gas. The shah and the President were then seen on millions of TV screens wiping their tears in a cloud of smoke. When the head of the SAVAK saw the film of the demonstration and mêlée, "he predicted that the shah was doomed: "Carter," he said, "was obviously prepared to dump him." Iran's fanatic opposition thought likewise.

"As the Shah was leaving Washington, […] Khomeini received an international call at his headquarters in exile in Najaf. On the line was […] one of the Ayatollah's organizers in the United States who had helped assemble the demonstration […]. He suggested to increase pressure inside Iran."[90]

Khomeini's "saintly" image was first boosted —it is still not known whether by mistake or by design— in Teheran, whose

main newspaper published under a pseudonym in January 1978 a denigratory piece on the cleric. It was a typical blend of fact and slanderous falsehoods (e.g., the cleric's homosexuality), which had the effect of raising the stature of the target opponent by victimizing him publicly.

Inflamed by the article, violent manifestations erupted in Qom once again. Shortly afterwards began the elaboration of the myth. At the time, Khomeini wielded no authority within the Shiite clergy of Iran; he had been absent far too long to have done so. Though Khomeini's writings were unknown, Nahavandi recounts how the Western media would pass off "this senile and uncultivated mullah" as "a brilliant philosopher and a theologian."[91] "The carefully crafted image" of Khomeini was the work of professionals; it "played well" with the entire gamut of the world's public opinion: the aureole of sainthood appealed to devout conservatives, the revolutionary bent allured the Left, and the democratic, anti-dictatorial stance pleased the Liberals.[92]

Led by France's *Le Monde* and the BBC, the press organs of the West had by the spring intensified their denunciation of Iran's "authoritarian" regime, which chimed with Carter's menacing advocacy of "human rights."[93] Pressured repeatedly by the shah to desist, these foreign media kept on beaming and diffusing anti-regime propaganda within the country of an official ally: this was unprecedented.[94] Tension mounted and protests became increasingly more virulent. In September, the shah received China's president, who confided to him that the United States and the USSR were both intent on sabotaging his regime.[95]

Likewise, the chief of French Intelligence and Turkey's elite via consular channels warned the shah to beware of the Carter administration,[96] which, they confided, was seeking his fall in connivance "with certain religious authorities."[97] Torn on one side by duplicitous doves imploring him to compromise with the fanatics and, on the other, by callous hawks urging him to order a bloody and systematic repression, the shah was exceeded. He could not have failed to recognize those very subversive methods that had toppled his enemy Mossadegh twenty-five years previously (and were this time around aimed at him): he was lost.[98] On September 8, the first veritable disaster occurred: responding chaotically to a massive demonstration, the police killed 121 people —this was "Black Friday." A week later Foucault landed in Teheran.

In Paris, Foucault, along with other prominent intellectuals, had been animating "support committees" for the ayatollah, which were part of France's anti-shah propagandistic effort: it so appeared that the country had backed out of its former commitment to provide nuclear know-how to Iran, and realigned itself. Foucault had arrived on a two-day visit, funded by one of Italy's premier newspapers *Il Corriere della sera,* whose editors considered the philosopher's mission "a major event."[99] Foucault said he went to Iran to witness "the birth of ideas." Once in Teheran (he would pay a second visit in November), he played beautifully the part of postmodernism's radical intellectual. Though his honorarium was paid for and his opinions were soon to be diffused by the *Corriere* —the voice of Italy's capitalism— Foucault ingratiated himself with his pro-Khomeini hosts by execrating capitalist

society: "The harshest," he averred, "most savage, most selfish, most dishonest, oppressive society one could possibly imagine."[100] The flattery of the Islamists, on the other hand, would not have been complete without berating Communism's "authoritarian" alternative to colonialism — such as, say, Castro's Cuba, which he loathed.[101] Foucault then had to square the circle. Clearly, he added, Marx's dictum applied only to the Western churches at a given time: Islam in contemporary Iran was *not* the opiate of the people, but should have rather been regarded as the beginning of "a new spirituality," not just for the Near East but also for Europe. Humble, he told the Khomeinists he had come "to observe and to learn."[102]

With fascination, he had indeed observed the thousands of anti-shah demonstrators "wearing white shrouds as a sign of their willingness to face death."[103]

In a way, Shiisim was an Islamized digestion of Christian Gnosticism: according to its creed, Mohammed's son-in-law, Ali, was a paragon that originated a bloodline of saints, the Imams, the last and twelfth of whom, the Mahdi, vanished, and was expected to reappear at the end of days. Central to Shiisim was the cult of Ali's son, Hussein. In the war of succession that pitted his clan against the Caliphate of Damascus, Hussein was betrayed, and suffered martyrdom in the battle of Karbala at the hands of the emissaries of his rival Yazid. The Shias have since then celebrated the "sacrifice" of the son-king Hussein with passion plays featuring self-flagellation and self-mutilation in remembrance of the bloodshed. Shiisim had thus incorporated into the Mosaic model of God-prophet-book

(Allah-Mohammed-Koran) two other, typical "sovereign" propensities: the dynastic predisposition (Ali's "royal blood") and the immolation of the son-king, who shall be resurrected at the end as messiah.

Why this particular "regime of truth" should have appealed to a Bataillean such as Foucault is not hard to fathom. Bataille himself, of course, had mused with interest over Islam's original missionary push, over the illimitable tension of the permanent jihad. But he was naturally more attracted to the combination of violence and poetry, which was the mark of Arab tribalism, and which the Jihad had disseminated across the Muslim empire. Bataille ultimately lamented the absence in Sunni Islam of that "internal violence, which founds a religious life and culminates in sacrifice."[104] Foucault, then, behaved as if this late and extraordinary surge of Shia Islam could have been precisely a manifestation of authentic sacredness. Foucault found little difficulty in fitting the passion play of Shiisim into his postmodern system: the villain Yazid became the "disciplinarian" shah with his SAVAK, while Hussein was played by the "old saint" Khomeini, who found himself leading from the margins "an irreducible" form of resistance against Western modernization and "the most police-ridden monarchy in the world." This movement, Foucault wrote, was "a tidal wave without a military leadership, without a vanguard" —a typical instance of heterogeneous centerless "power."[105]

> [The Iranian revolution] is perhaps the first great insurrection against global systems, the revolt that is the most modern and the most insane (M. Foucault).[106]

This Foucauldian panegyric appeared at a time when the U.S. ambassador was making overtures to the Islamists.[107] On December 29, 1978, the shah abdicated and nominated a figurehead to preside over a "constitutional government." On January 6, 1979, U.S. Air Force General Huyser arrived in Teheran to secure the allegiance of the Iranian generals to the provisional government by threatening to withhold American spare parts, upon which the Iranian army was wholly dependent.[108] The shah departed on January 16, and Khomeini, after much hesitation for fear of a military coup, finally alighted in Teheran on February 1, acclaimed as the Mahdi, as it were, by a "tidal wave" of allegedly three million individuals. On the sixteenth, one could read in *The New York Times* that Khomeini was no dissembler, fanatic or reactionary, but rather "a hopeful sign" that could "yet provide us with a desperately needed model of humane governance" and "convince the world that 'politics is the opiate of the people.'"[109]

Shortly thereafter began the purges, the double-dealings, the ploys behind the liberation of the U.S. hostages, the gay- and women-bashing, and finally the war with Iraq (September 1980) —the very war the Shah had sought to prevent in 1975. The tune of the Western press changed yet again: Khomeini was no longer the old saint of the Spring of '78, but a retrograde, homophobic, and misogynist fanatic, bent, as he himself claimed, on seeing the Islamic Revolution "conquer the world" from the talons of "the Great American Satan." Khomeini was now a freak; he was the enemy of the West.

At home, Foucault came under attack for having written the

Corriere articles: they cost him friends and did "his reputation no good."[110] To this day most of his worshippers are at loss to account for this "error."[111] Accustomed and committed as the Foucauldians have been to the multicultural adaptation of his Power/Knowledge, they have tended to suppress this episode, which did not accord with the postmodern iconography of the philosopher. And this is yet another confirmation of the state of unconscionable denial that rules the postmodern Left today: its exponents seem unaware, or rather, refuse to acknowledge, that Foucault's testimony was in essence that of a chaos-loving aesthete wholly subservient to State propaganda. Clearly, his attraction to death, "rituals of penitence," and the Khomeinists' "intoxication of sacrifice" were all tributes to his Bataillean formation, which, as argued in this study, is virtually unknown to the Foucauldians. Even the board of the *Corriere della sera* had a better sense of what Foucault was all about, as it hired him to discredit the shah precisely by tapping the Bataillean vein of his work. And what appears just as vividly from this incident is the rotund corruptness of Foucault, who lent, or better, sold himself out from the beginning, in 1966, to play whatever role the intelligentsia's deciders wished him to play: from the anti-humanist alternative to Marxism in France, to the anti-conservative multiculturalist in America, by way of the anti-shah, anarchoid philosophaster in Iran. Indeed, in this instance, Foucault's input was needed so longas would last the period of destabilization (the last six months of 1978). Like the fanatics he had lionized, he was himself entirely disposable. Not surprisingly, he would forever hold his peace on this Iranian affair after the developments of '79. California made

everybody forget.

When Foucault died, in 1984, the Iran-Iraq war hit the midpoint; it would be the longest conventional engagement of the twentieth century after World War II. When it ended, four years later, a curious sequence of diplomatic shenanigans led to its surreal sequel, the Gulf War. To continue the patient labor of mystification directed at the Western audiences, a new breed of Foucauldians —savants conversant with the upgrades of cyberspace and information technology— stepped up to provide a postmodern exegesis of war in the post-Soviet age.

9.3 Gulf One: The Grand Illusion

9.3.1) Baudrillard's Vengeful Nightmares

An established figure of postmodernism, Jean Baudrillard (1929–2007) reworked Bataillean and Foucauldian mythology into the more contemporary disciplines of social psychology and communications studies. Subtitling TV ads
and reportage, statistics, video games, film, and lifestyle trivia with existential soliloquy, Baudrillard trod much on the fine line dividing reality from fact, and argued that this perceived world of ours is the object of an incessant manipulation.

He insisted, however, that reality is not manipulated by some at the expense of others (of course, not…), but that it is rather, after the manner of Foucauldian "power," the expression of a collective nightmare. Baudrillard came to enjoy a season of fame in 1991 when he came to filter through his version of postmodernism the experience of the Gulf War.

For Baudrillard, though brilliant, Foucault's myth of Power/Knowledge ultimately did not work. If Power had

been the "magnetic infiltration" Foucault purported it to be, it would have invested the entire social field long ago; conversely, had Power been unilateral subjugation, it would have long since been repulsed.[112] Baudrillard reproached Foucault (and Bataille)[113] for not having intuited that Power is "an exchange" —an exchange that expends itself through "cycles of seduction." For Baudrillard, it is true, as Foucault claimed, that an institutional antagonism between central power and periphery does *not* exist, but that is not because "power is everywhere," but rather because Power circulates everywhere in cyclical fashion. Power invests and raises a party, and then forsakes it for another. It seduces thus, with cunning, periodically annihilating itself. And what lies behind this sea of circular discharges? The Void, of course — "it is the void that lends [Power] its last glimmer of reality."[114] Here the derivation from Heidegger is obvious.

> This secret of the inexistence of Power, which was once that of the great statesmen, is also that of the great bankers, namely, that money is nothing, that money does not exist; this was the secret of the great theologians and inquisitors, namely, that God does not exist, because God is dead.[115]

What is being lamented is, again, the debacle of nihilism. This is a tale of our modern obsession for *rationalizing* "reality."[116] This "disciplinarian" obsession to categorize and measure everything has led to a gradual extinction of the production of "satanic energy,"[117] which has been replaced with "dead" forms and a superabundance of "reality."[118] Dead power is best exemplified by obscenity and fascism: hollowed pantomimes attempting to re-evoke the vertiginous powers

that once were. The superabundance takes the form of facsimiles, information overkill, videos, and online simulations, all of which are "decoys."[119] Ours is the "Xerox-culture,"[120] where everything, from power to sex is "virtual," fake —clonable ad libitum. Ours is the society that came one day too late; one day after "the revolution" (viz. Kojève), one day "after the orgy," which we can do no better than reenact through porn.[121] As we are the creators of this reality, our "pessimist"[122] mania to see "the Good" prevail everywhere has spun this virtual hall, in which we mistake appearance for reality, and in which the "accursed share" takes revenge upon us for having perverted and curtailed the production of sacred energy.

In other words, where Bataille's "Evil" has been everywhere denied and suppressed, Evil regroups and metamorphoses itself to aggress the body social via "all those viral forms that obsess us."[123] In politics, then, "Evil" takes the form of "terrorism," as illness it manifest itself as cancer/AIDS, and it epitomizes the new aesthetics of eroticism with the figure of the transvestite.[124] Echoing Heidegger, Baudrillard suggested that it is not we who think Evil, but "Evil that thinks us."[125] Hence the suggestion of our culpable vulnerability to terrorism: the latter is a disaster of our own making. It is as if our terrorist alter ego conspired continually to bomb us out of our rationalistic coma. Rejoining the macho rhetoric of Fukuyama, Baudrillard contended that it is because we have become "fanatically soft" and "tolerant" that our highly technicized world manifests such impotence before the pure, antagonistic strength of, say, Khomeini's Islamic Republic.

Khomeini is to the West what Jekyll is to Hyde: two sides of the same afflicted soul.

> Islam does not exert any revolutionary pressure upon the western universe, there is no risk of its converting or conquering it: Islam contents itself with destabilizing it by way of this viral [attack?] in the name of the principle of Evil, to which we have nothing to oppose.[126]

In the end, for Baudrillard, we have no choice but to embrace Evil —to embrace, in other words, the hypothesis that we are neither good nor bad, but perfect the way we are.[127] And because Baudrillard saw politics as the favored locus of Evil, proper praxis dictates that we surrender to *power* in all its traditional guises: as privilege, vice, and corruption. "For the corruption of the elites," he concluded, "is that of everybody," in a world where what always wins is "the eternal incomprehensibility, the irreducible foreignness of cultures, mores, of faces and languages."[128]

In sum, Baudrillard barely deviated from Foucault and Bataille. What is of interest is the psychologistic artifice he used to revise Power/Knowledge in order to make *antagonism* disappear entirely. Baudrillard must have thought that there is no better way *to destroy the notion of political responsibility* than to regard chaos, war, and violence as mere symptoms of a deeper torment that haunts the conscience of the world as *a whole.* In this sense, his twist is a colorful combination of Foucauldian theory, Freud, and traditional Leftism (the voice of "capitalism's bad conscience"), the difference with the latter being, however, that in Baudrillard's variant of the myth, there are no victims or executioners. Being Power "reversible,"

hangmen and victims are interchangeable halves of the same bankrupt setup. Propaganda-wise, Baudrillard's formula was tested successfully only once, and this was in connection with the media barrage that accompanied the Gulf War of 1991.

9.3.2) Reruns of Orwellian Buffooneries in Iraq

As shall be detailed shortly, between January and March 1991, Baudrillard came into the spotlight with a series of articles that enjoyed immediate and ample diffusion in the English-speaking world. In these, Baudrillard would weave a rather singular explication of the Gulf War —one which also provoked the indignant reaction of the anti-imperialist Left. In fact, speaking himself as a Leftist, Baudrillard would affirm that opposition to this war would be nugatory since the conflict itself was imaginary, it was rehearsed —a fake, in short. Now, it appears that, for as much as this contention could have been the effect of his own postmodern vision of the world, Baudrillard could not have failed to have been influenced by the particular interpretation of the Gulf War that was circulating at that time in France's journalistic environment.

While passing in review the books and memoirs of French journalists published immediately after the Gulf War, one frequently encounters the surreptitious intimation via one fact or another that this had been a staged conflict. As the story went, Pope John Paul II, for instance, had allegedly confessed before a visiting delegation of Middle Eastern bishops —six months before the fact— that the war had been planned to commence before August 2, 1990.[129] To corroborate the hypothesis of premeditation, various French sources cite the

existence of a secret program of the Pentagon code-named "Top Fiddle" (no. 1002–90), which was reactivated by General Colin Powell two weeks before Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait: this was a war-simulation whose scenario contemplated the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq.[130] Accordingly, many French reporters found it "incredible"[131] that a seasoned politico such as Saddam, who incidentally had been a CIA asset* since 1959,[132] would act so "blindly" as to assail the sovereignty of an emirate so closely tied to British interests as that of Kuwait.[133] What all these accounts cast in relief was the *incongruity* of the steps and decisions that led to the invasion of Kuwait on the one hand, and the escalation to a full-scale

Allied intervention on the other. Saddam had fought Khomeini's Iran for eight years (in a war that cost both countries 360,000 lives), and to play the heroic role of the anti-Islamic leader he had run deeply into debt vis-à-vis the Gulf States.

Insolvent, yet armed to the teeth (by the West), Saddam came presently to be dunned, especially by his Kuwaiti creditors, who deported in the process an aggressiveness that many analysts found baffling (phenomenal actors, the lot of them).[134] No less baffling was Saddam's hysterical response to the pretensions of such military nonentities as the Gulf sheikdoms: why not just refuse to pay? When Kuwait started in 1990 to pump oil in excess, thus driving its price down and

* It was indeed in 1959 that a twenty-two-year-old Saddam Hussein was selected by Kassem's rivals of the Baath party to partake in a commando set up to assassinate the general. The attentat failed and Saddam escaped to Cairo, where he came under the purview of Egyptian and American Intelligence.

weakening as a result Iraq's petroleum receipts, Saddam and his ministers denounced clamorously a "Zionist conspiracy" against the Arabs. By mid-July, there was diffuse talk of a "trap," sprung by the United States, by way of the Kuwaitis, to provoke Saddam into making a "mistake" that could afford American hawks a pretext for further deployment in the area.[135] So everybody was alert, everybody, that is, except Saddam himself, whose restlessness was said to originate in his "desperate" attempt to save his finances, even though the plan to invade was clearly deemed "suicidal":[136] in brief, the once-shrewd Saddam had become a complete idiot.

French publicists depicted the Americans as shifty: they were supposedly ensnaring Hussein with a "double-game," whereby an appeasing party led by Bush I and the White House was artfully contrasted on the home front by an anti-Iraq faction comprising a majority of Congress and the Liberal media. While the former faction, as late as July 31 (the eve of the invasion), sold Saddam equipment,[137] and signaled overtly to him that the United States had no treaty binding it to defend Kuwait's borders,[138] the latter had since February 1990 fulminated against Saddam, whose regime was qualified by the State Department as "the worst" in the area of "human rights."[139]

The foregoing chronicles seemed to hint that all of this might have been histrionics, and that the climax of this putative charade was reached in Baghdad on July 25, when Saddam summoned the U.S. Ambassador April Glaspie. After Glaspie conveyed the oblique message that the U.S. president was, in fact, washing his hands of the forthcoming border

dispute between Iraq and Kuwait, Saddam launched into a seemingly incoherent maundering about Iraq's "pride." He dwelt on the inevitability of facing death to save the country's "dignity" should Iraq's well-being be threatened in any way. Saddam was, in fact, envisioning war with the United States, and his certain rout in the event.[140] This sort of "sovereign" and defeatist musing, which is actually a staple of fanatic talk, was strangely out of line with Saddam's character.

On August 2, 1990, Iraqi tanks crossed the border of Kuwait and invaded the emirate; Glaspie had gone on holiday the day before. Claude Cheysson, a former foreign minister of France and a leading steward of France's sponsorship of Iraq since the mid-Seventies, recalled in an interview an encounter he had with Saddam's foreign minister, Tareq Aziz, at the end of August 1990. Aziz cryptically told Cheysson that although he himself had not been favorable to the invasion, Saddam had assured him of the solidity of the "American agreement," and had also mentioned in this connection the "precedent of General Kassem."[141] What this "agreement" could have been and what it could have guaranteed, a month after the invasion to boot, is a matter of speculation; but Saddam's mention of the Kassem precedent is intriguing.

In 1958, Brigadier-General Adbelkarim Kassem had seized power in Iraq with a coup, and had been thereafter involved in a complex relationship with Britain, which retained control of the Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC). From a relatively recent study of that event, it appears that by 1960 —that is, a year before it was to grant Kuwait formal independence— Britain was seeking to achieve two related objectives in the

Gulf region. In order (1) to keep in check the "strong sense of independence" of Kuwait, which supplied 40 percent of Britain's oil supplies;[142] and (2) to stage a spectacular military deployment that could relaunch Britain's colonialist traffic in the area,[143] British military strategists thought of something.

In November 1960, they "produced what was termed a 'reinforced theater plan' for the direct British defense of Kuwait against an Iraqi military threat. The plan was given the codename 'Vantage.'"[144] On June 25, 1961, surprising the world, Kassem claimed Kuwait as a province of Iraq. Instantly, the Western press flashed news of an invasion, while British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan warned the public opinion that the Iraqi leader was "a mad and very dangerous man."[145] In fact, Kassem barked but did not move: throughout the "crisis," the Iraq-Kuwait border remained open for trade, and no Iraqi soldiers or tanks were seen pushing south.[146] Notwithstanding, on July 1, 10,000 British troops debarked in Kuwait and the *Daily Telegraph* exulted: "History this weekend is staging a brief flashback to the far-off days of Pax Britannica."[147] It was an impressive show, and Kuwait paid for all of it. Meantime, Radio Cairo raged against "British deviousness," which had pushed the "irresponsible" Kassem into "the imperialist trap."[148] In October the British left, and an Arab contingent took over the patrolling of the Gulf. Shortly after the incident, Kassem "gave an exceptional party in honor" of the British ambassador.[149] If this, then, had been pretense, what could have been Kassem's payoff? Most likely, the Law 80, negotiated with Britain in December, which contemplated the creation of an Iraqi National Oil Company

with prospecting rights over areas ceded to it by the IPC.[150] The law was to come in force in 1963, but Kassem would never reap its benefits, for a CIA-engineered coup unseated his regime in February 1963 and brought to power the Baathists, who executed the general.[151] Saddam's tortuous ascent to power dated from this coup.[152]

So, Aziz seemed to have intimated to Cheysson that the Gulf War was going to be some sort of replay of "Operation Vantage." Immediately after Saddam's invasion of Kuwait, all the major powers including the USSR voted for U.N. Resolution 660, which called for an immediate withdrawal of Iraq's forces from the emirate. But Saddam seemed irremovable. He alleged that he would only trade his retreat for that of Israel from the occupied territories, which was patent bluster, not diplomatic talk. America, too, was inflexible; Saddam, Bush had realized, was Hitler (naturally). The Soviet president, Gorbachev, sent an envoy, Evgheni Primakov, to "reason" with Saddam in October, but to no avail: Primakov told Hussein that if he persevered, he would face war, and lose it. "Perhaps," was Saddam's response.[153] Following some inane bickering about scheduling, a final meeting between U.S. Secretary of State James Baker and Tareq Aziz was arranged in Geneva on January 9, 1991.

The performance put on by the protagonists, as transcribed in the French memoirs, was worthy of Ionesco's theater of the absurd. As State Secretary James Baker gave Aziz to understand that a war against the United States was not going to be comparable to the clash with Iran, Aziz countered that Americans did not know what the desert was. Aziz sneered:

"Mr. Secretary of State, you've never ridden on a camel's back."[154]

On February 16, 1991, Operation Desert Storm was launched. This was the first televised mayhem ever viewed by a Western audience. With its blurs of black and green streaked by showers of sparks, it was said that CNN's film of Baghdad made this war look like a video game. Over those fluorescent skies, the Allied coalition, led by America, Britain, and France, flew 110,000 sorties for a week and allegedly dropped the equivalent of seven Hiroshima bombs. The Allies assured that their targeting was "surgical," but it was subsequently found out that 93 percent of those bombs were dropped helter-skelter. While Bush I himself was portrayed sitting at home zapping frantically from one channel to another, and exclaiming "Jesus!" at every blast, Saddam was hollering through Radio Baghdad that the "Mother of all battles" had just commenced to defeat the "Satan Bush."[155]

French reporters noted a great many other oddities. To begin, there was no curfew: during these initial aerial raids, Baghdad was "lit up like Las Vegas"; U.S. pilots were finding this all "too easy." At the Pentagon, it felt like "smashing a mosquito with a hammer."[156] Everyone wondered where had gone those posh jet fighters that Iraq had purchased from France in the eighties, why weren't they used? It happened that they had been safely smuggled to nearby Iran, which affected neutrality, while "other planes were dispersed as far away as India and Algeria."[157] On February 24, ground operations began. But there was no fighting. Iraqi soldiers, who appeared to the outsiders as a stupefied lot, surrendered,

thousands at a time, to the Allied armies without firing a single shot.[158] After three days, it was over, Kuwait City was liberated, and the Iraqis withdrew. Bush I then incited the Shiites of the south to rebel, which they did. But concomitantly, the U.S. forces allowed Saddam's elite corps, the Republican Guard, to slip across the border so as to crush the rebellion. The rationale affected by the Americans for such a perplexing volte-face was that a victory of the Shiites in the south could have afforded Iran a base for the spread of Islamism, which was not the truth.

Iraqi Shias had just fought Iran in the regular army for eight years. On April 3, 1991, the U.N. cease-fire stilled the maneuvers: though weakened and formally excluded from two buffer zones in the north and south, Saddam was still the ruler of Baghdad. The world audiences then started to wonder what on earth this conflict could have possibly signified. In one documented instance, Iraqi civilians had been killed in a shelter and hundreds of retreating Iraqi troops cowardly butchered by air-fire on February 24. Yet, throughout the engagement, though they had been loquacious when asked to comment on the destruction of Iraq's military apparatus, Allied generals had fallen mute on the subject of Iraqi losses.

There was never an official count. Later, the Pentagon and the Saudis advanced an estimate of roughly 100,000 dead,[159] but it was never corroborated. The Allies had fielded a contingent of 744,000 men to dragoon an Arab wasteland with a gross product that was not even a twentieth of that of France. The United States, which had contributed half a million men to that contingent, lost 147 soldiers, the majority

of them in logistical accidents. Military analysts posed uncomfortable questions: What, in fact, had been hit? Certainly, the bulk of Saddam's tank force had been pulverized, but these were obsolescent Russian-made T55s, whose wrecking was welcome.[160] The existence of those super-equipped underground bunkers, in which the impregnable Saddam had supposedly lurked, could never be located. And suspicions ran high that a great deal of fire power had been squandered on decoys —inflatable tanks, armor of plaster, and cardboard planes— an enormous amount of which Iraq had been commissioned from Italy, Belgium, and France.[161] Though he had promised to ravage Israel with a bacteriological scourge should he be attacked, Saddam ended up catapulting pell-mell 86 missiles with no chemical heads over Israel (and Saudi Arabia). These launches caused four deaths and little damage; they earned Saddam few cheers amid the Arab populace and no military gain whatsoever.[162] As for the burning oil fields, they were most likely hit accidentally by Allied fighters. No reporters were allowed on the sites, hence the prompt montage of the CNN showing recycled footage of a baby cormorant mired in crude.[163]

In sum, France's contemporary reportage on the Gulf War appeared to insinuate that this incident had been a grand parody of a war. A replay, indeed, of the "reinforced theater plan" of 1961. As in those days, the rich oil sheiks of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia had been pressured once again to pay for the spectacle, and to bribe into the bargain a whole new cast of participants including Egypt, Turkey, Syria, and Russia.[164] What for? The French experts proposed four main reasons: (1)

to allow thereby the American forces to establish in Saudi Arabia a durable military presence, which had been denied to them until then;[165] (2) to reinforce the security of Israel as a consequence; (3) to blast away the arsenals of the West and rekindle its armament industry;[166] and (4) to "freeze"[167] Iraq into a derelict oil-smuggling precinct[168] by means of a regime of U.N. sanctions so long as the geopolitical fate of Russia remained unsettled. It was understood that, from the outset, none of this could have succeeded without Saddam's full, theatrical complicity.

9.3.3) Airing the War-Show of a Non-War...

How did Baudrillard confect for the Leftist public such colorful, morbidly droll material? The Gulf War, he said, was but the second installment of a generalized tendency to reduce the "dangerous" and "refractory culture" of Islam to the Western "world order."[169] The first had been the Iran-Iraq war, whose objective, as Kissinger put it, was that neither country should win. Therefore, as if to settle scores, Saddam and the Americans had gone to the mat —Saddam to seek revenge for having been played, and the Americans to rid themselves of a cumbersome accomplice.[170] But this conflict was no conspiracy of elites: it was rather the subconscious wish of Western society to strike repeatedly at the "irreducible alterity" of Islam, and which knew of no better ways to employ its swelling surpluses than to squander them in fabricated bloodfests.[171] The fruit of such collective anguish became "the virtual apocalypse" of the Gulf War. This was a "dead," "unreal, "rigged," "sexless," and "anorexic" war, which, by

blasting your surroundings while letting you live, was worse than the conventional one.[172] "Crazies" like Saddam with which to run this "rotten simulation" were never in short supply. Leveraging the "pride" of this "cunning" "dumbass," and parading him like a "CIA agent dressed up as Saladin," the West could now and then channel its disruptive forces.[173] "The objective complicity" of an "eternal, hysterical shithook" like Saddam could be counted on to "pimp the Arab world" to the perverse appetites of the restless West. In this "masquerade" of a war, waged with "smart bombs" and "minor losses," everybody, and everything, was "hidden."

Hidden behind the masks of the decoys, bought in profusion from Italy, that country of natural-born hustlers, faction of an industrial apparatus ever more focused on the perfection of standardized "counterfeit." Counterfeit like that of placebos and especially of "censored information," which the buzzing media networks "inoculated" in our heads by means of "phony discourse."[174] In this "irrespirable atmosphere of deception and stupidity," everyone cheated: when the decoys ran out, targets had to be bombed five consecutive times, while Saddam hurled his petards and "Israel played possum." On TV, we saw American slapstick versus Iraqi "hokum": like "circus grifters," the two enemies fussed by day and consorted by night. And the news kept us all "in erection," "jacking-off on empty" to this poor show, in which Saddam was played by a "fictitious double."

"Bad actors, bad stunts, bad strippers," but boosted ratings and profits galore for the TV sponsors.[175] So, in the end, "being pro or against this war [was] idiotic." Idiotic like the

"imbroglio" of those "pacifist" street protests, which were indirectly for Saddam. "Enveloped by a halo of bluff," "a sentimental patriotism" in our breast had allowed the media to terrorize us a bit with these phony tales of "war." But deep down, nothing could be done, really, because, "no one gave a shit." In short, the Gulf War "had not happened."[176]

This was a skillful argument. A typical instance of Leftist discourse crafted to defuse popular outrage (i.e., radicalism). Its power resided in the use Baudrillard made of *ambiguity* in fusing evidence, common prejudice, and disenchanted iconoclasm into a Foucauldian mold. In other words, even though most viewers could not but suspect foul play behind this war and doubt the veraciousness of the official version, Baudrillard accompanied that perception without, however, construing it as anybody's intentional fault. As a public intellectual politically positioned "on the Left," he instinctively berated "capitalist" society, but on the other hand, he deprecated Saddam, and dismissed both phantasms as the grotesque, inseparable halves of a Western subconscious tantrum. A tantrum, metaphorically speaking, triggered by Islam's "viral" attack against the disciplinarian world of the West. Nobody was "in the know": Bush, the US President, was no less unwitting than Saddam, both being ugly masks of the same hallucination. In a sense, Baudrillard, like Foucault in 1978, appeared to be rooting for Islamism, which he was, but in this instance, he caught the anti-imperialist Left off guard by exposing the awkwardness of manifesting for peace when the alternative was admittedly a "shithook" like Saddam. What was more, Baudrillard thus made inaction a fashionable pose

on the Left, playing, as it were, on the dislike and negative prejudice that most Westerners harbor for the Arabs. From the establishment's viewpoint, a cynical, inactive Leftism of this sort was ideal: it equivocated about the reality of the war, but did nothing about it. The antiwar Left, instead, took the explosions, rants, and CNN updates at face value, but was hard put to delineate the physiognomy of this weird "conflict," let alone define a militant stance on the topic.

Baudrillard's critics of the Left decried *The Gulf War Did Not Happen* as a "postmodern screed,"[177] "sheer nonsense" culpable of marring the issue with relativism, and of breaking "moral and political nerve" with a "cynical acquiescence" to the ways of the establishment.[178] But Baudrillard's Leftism won the match. This was an important precedent. It heralded the complete ineffectuality of the pacifist Left in preventing bloodshed in March of 2003, when, upon premises nearly identical to those of 1991, the United States put an end to Saddam's satrapy. And it established the incapacity of the peaceniks to overcome in the post-Soviet age the dualism of the Cold War. So long as the strife produced romantic effigies such as Che Guevara and constellations of anti-colonialist insurgencies, it was rather facile to take the radical stand and deprecate the Western exploiter. But when the geopolitical scene was altered somewhat, and the "Islamic civilization" became the enemy bloc, the Leftists could not bring themselves to cheer for its icons —the Khomeinis, Saddams, and Bin Ladens. Hence, the flourish of Foucauldian tales and the general sense of resigned powerlessness in the face of death and destruction. It was hardly a surprise, therefore, that the

War on Terror that followed 9/11 would have granted these tales of globalized power a second lease on life.

9.4 The War on Terror

> Terrorism is immoral […]. So let us be immoral […], if we want to figure things out.
> Jean Baudrillard, *L'esprit du terrorisme*[179]

When the Soviet Union passed away in 1990, the consequences of the dissolution were felt in Europe more than they were in the United States, which had by then profitably fitted a great many of its surviving Leftists in the new receptacles of feminist and relativist ("cultural") studies. Overall, the former Left at this time sundered into four factions: a sizable detachment turned its coat and flowed into the mainstream (i.e., as "pro-market" Democrats, or even Neocons), another substantial portion defected to postmodernism, a fringe joined the scattered ranks of anti-oligarchic conspiracy theorists, and the rump of what used to be the vast anti-imperialist party of the Sixties persisted. Still clustered about its senescent standard-bearers, it has recited ever more uncouthly the part that had been its own since the days of the glorious marches, namely, that of hailing any foreign political leadership that happened to be the victim of Western, "capitalist" aggression. Lately, in America, it is this semi-decimated rearguard of the old Socialist front that the establishment makes a practice of engaging polemically as "the Left," or, in the US, "the Liberals."

With regard to the War on Terror, the diffused opinions

of this disarticulated Left are thus fanned out. At one end stands the anti-imperialist Left. It is followed by the postmodernists, who are themselves divided into an antiwar faction and a prowar faction. To the right of this last, schismatic grouping lies but State propaganda itself. The official version describes "the attacks of 9-11" as a "shock," but not a surprise.[180] According to the *9-11 Report,* this act of sabotage was perpetrated by the benighted vanguard of a culture "disoriented by [the] cyclonic change" of "modernity and globalization."[181] Plagued by "State monopolies" and unable to "welcome modernization," continues the *Report,* these Arab States have "stifled growth" and "crippled overall economic productivity" also by "repressing and isolating women."[182] All such ethnic frustration born out of market failure has allegedly led hordes of disillusioned Arabs into the arms of the evil Caliph, Bin Laden, qualified by the *Report* "as *a symbol of resistance* —above all resistance to the West and America."[183]

In the face of 9/11, the immediate reaction of a worthy Left should have been twofold. First, it should have demanded that no retaliatory measure whatsoever be taken without having ascertained *in a court of law,* and in the most meticulous and definite manner, the identity of the masterminds, their motive, and the means employed to carry out the sabotage. Second, it should have proceeded on this basis to involve the Arab world —via the pacifist representatives of its political, economic, and religious spheres— in defusing the tension, and invited the world community to refute the existence of a cultural clash between the Western and the Mideastern worlds. The first and

decisive task was entirely discarded. And the second one, which was admittedly more difficult, aborted from the start.

Any Westerner who has set foot in the Middle East, and observed, knows that there is no such thing as this purported spiritual chasm setting our society apart from that of the Arabs. In terms of mere power relations vis-à-vis the West, the reality of the Middle East is one of patent technical, economic, and military inferiority. Culturally speaking, it is a world no less bankrupt than ours: its Islamic revival is as hollow as the late spurts of evangelism in America. Islamism, Islamic banking, and the new waves of *hijabed* women (many of them nowadays wearing tight jeans & Nikes to match) are a phenomenon that dates from the Seventies —a rebound from a time marked by the conclusive humiliation of the Yom Kippur War, after which an increasing number of Arabs have, in their quest for social identity, traded in the secularism of post-World War II ("Arab Nationalism") for a perfunctory resumption of Islamic devoutness. This ever-flammable and collective bigoted fury, which the Western media have been imputing obsessively to the *Arab* (and Persian) *folk* since the days of Khomeini, is, in fact, an invention. From Cairo to Damascus and the Gulf, by way of Lebanon's Bekaa valley, what actually strikes the Western guest is the meekness of the Arab people. A people that is no less confused than its Western counterpart as to the drift of world politics, and that harbors, in spite of all, no prejudicial dislike whatsoever for the occidental visitor.

If only we always came in peace —and we know it —this would be a different world. And, possibly, the Arabs may teach

us something in this regard.

The situation, however, is greatly complicated by the Arab establishment on the one hand, and the official Orientalist debate on the other. Virtually all Arab heads of State have upheld the Western explication of 9/11 and have thereby given credence that a sizable stratum of the Arab body social is indeed affected with this viral, destabilizing, and uncontrollable disease of radical Islamism. How damaging this has been for an attempt at mutual understanding cannot be emphasized enough. For instance, the TV channel Al-Jazeera —headquartered in the Gulf State of Qatar, where the U.S. Army has stationed its greatest deployment base in the area— has fulfilled in this connection a significant role by playing the inflammatory Arab counter-altar to America's patriotic newscasting. It is, moreover, through videotapes that have been timely aired by Al-Jazeera that Bin Laden "speaks."[184] This antithetical role-playing has been further reinforced by the late revival and political toleration in the Arab institutional panorama of the Muslim Brotherhood. At the grass roots, its preachers have been deputized to agitate against Israel and the West as sheiks in the mosques, and as theologians (of the Sharia colleges) in the curricular space of Westernized universities. A modern political movement (founded in 1928), with a complex history and a reputation for extraordinary mercenariness,[185] the Brotherhood has effectively sustained the clime of hostility required by the War on Terror to thrive. It has done so through some of its spokesmen by professing a not undisguised admiration for the myth of Bin Laden, and by pursuing the dream of an all-encompassing Muslim

community.

A project of this sort presupposes, in fact, the "fragmentation of territorial sovereignties" and the establishment of mafias and "transnational networks" disconnected from any State and national environment, such as those operative in the war theaters of Bosnia, Chechenya, Afghanistan, and the Philippines. In this point, the interests of Islamism converge with those of American imperialism, which profits from such geopolitical fragmentation in three ways: (1) by extending the radius of its Eurasian penetration, (2) by supplying ready markets for weapons and raw resources, and (3) by impeding thereby the emergence "of competing poles."[186]

On the intellectual front, a coalition and dialogue for peace and truth between Westerners and Arabs has been thwarted by an incessant replay of the old Orientalist dispute, which is the Arabizing offshoot of multiculturalism. America's and Europe's rostrums of higher learning have thus been occupied by scholars of Middle Eastern extraction, whose routine is to rail against the racist depiction by Westerners of all things Arab. Again, there can be no denying that the West is racist and supremacist, and that a great deal of its ethnography may be discounted on this account. But Western prepossession is no more responsible for this communication breakdown than the incapacity of the Arab professors to explain what the Middle East actually is.[187] In truth, these intellectuals have not been able to admit that their world is on the defensive in every respect —*especially* the spiritual/religious one, which has shown to possess virtually nothing with which to oppose Western soccer, fashion, fast food, and films. Those millions

of satellite dishes atop the roofs of Mideastern cities are a sad testimony to this reality. And the tragic irony is that this alleged "satanic," "irreducible," spiritual vigor, which we Westerners are presently accustomed to attribute to the Arabs, is itself the latest contrivance of Orientalism —one originally custom-tailored, as it were, by Foucault upon orders from the Western media. This, rather, should have been a time to come together and assess what each has to offer, see then what it is truly worth, and possibly redefine everything.

But there seems to have been no time or desire for peace or honesty. Since the Iranian days of Foucault and the post-Soviet *rêveries* of Huntington, Western intelligentsia has been collecting many such fabulous tales of the Orient. And after 9/11 it has taken extreme care to assemble and compose them in captivating ways. As said, the administration of Bush II has been in a rush, and the public debate had to be so structured as to mobilize swiftly support for the War on Terror, while affording no possible avenue for dissent. This was achieved by a measured allotment of media exposure to the select array of political voices mentioned above, namely, the antiwar Left and the currents within postmodernism.

The anti-imperialist gurus have denounced terrorism, although they reckoned the latter an "understandable" reaction, a sort of red harvest for America's protracted spell of imperial meddling —a scourge that they refer to as the "Blowback" effect. As explained by the proponents of this "theory," "'Blowback' is a term first used in 1954 by the CIA on the 1953 operation to overthrow the government of Mohammed Mossadegh in Iran. It is a metaphor for the

unintended consequences of covert operations against foreign nations and governments: bringing the Shah to power brought 25 years of tyranny."[188] So while the antiwar Left has been taking its analytical cues from the CIA, the Foucauldians have split up into three formations. Two tail-end minorities and the bulk distributed in the center: Baudrillard's psycho-dramatic interpretation of 9/11 at one end, Hardt and Negri in the middle, and the warmongering (male and female) feminists at the other end. For his part, Baudrillard recycled his adventure from the Gulf, claiming this time that the destruction of the Twin Towers was, deep down, an act of masochism, whereby we had punished this obsessive craving of ours for "definitive order."[189] Thus, it was as if the towers had "committed suicide."[190] Terrorism, once more, was the virus spawned by the "ferocious jealousy" that the cloven psyche of this "desacralized" West nurtured for the sacrificial energy of Islam. And so, by way of these heterogeneous agents that offer their death in a symbolic exchange (the terrorists), we finally turned the obsession against ourselves and contemplated, "with an unavowable complicity," this "beautiful" suicide.[191]

Now, Baudrillard should have anticipated that his trick of the "eventful nonevent," which had worked in 1991 to suggest that people ought not to rise against a war that was phony, was unlikely to appeal to an intelligentsia bent on leveraging popular indignation on the basis of a deed whose reality was never to be questioned. Far more presentable, therefore, was the intermediate position of Hardt and Negri, who have led with assurance the Foucauldian mainstream, and reveled in the

laurels awarded to them by the press. Like Baudrillard, Hardt and Negri have denied the existence of a clash of civilizations, while contending, on the other hand, that the fetishes of, say, Saddam or Bin Laden are "pedagogical tools," the "stand-ins for the more general threat" of this new terrorist enemy network "with no center."[192] The rest of the radical academia has rallied to this approach, rehashing that terror is the "downside" of the "objective ambiguity of globalization." In other words, Al-Qaeda's "subculture of resistance" is the "backlash" of "retrograde, pre-modern Islamic fundamentalism," against Bush II's "old fashioned patriarchal and unilateralist Wild-West militarism."[193] Or, to couch the same idea in the old Leftist jargon, Bin Laden's turning "on his creators" at the CIA "seems to offer a textbook example of dialectical reverse" —a process of reaction and counterreaction "that does not have to come to a synthesis."[194] Which is a needlessly pretentious parroting of Vice President Dick Cheney's alarm that the War on Terror "will not end in our life-time." None of this was original, of course. Not because it was Foucauldian, but rather because it was derivative of a catchphrase coined by an academic in 1992, according to which the world has come to be driven by the antagonistic relationship between the "Jihad" of "parochial hatreds" and the "universalizing markets" of "McWorld."[195] A catchphrase, indeed, that was but a variation on Huntington's clash of civilizations. So, in the end, the boilerplate has been the same for all.

What of the women? What of the mothers and the lovers of these warring men? What have they said and done?

Aristophanes's most moving play is indeed that of Lysistrata, an Athenian who thought of stopping the carnage in the Peloponnesus by inviting her sisters across Hellas to withhold the pleasures of sex from their war-crazed husbands until these laid down their weapons (a play that had infuriated Strauss).[196] Where were the Lysistratas of America? Apparently nowhere. As far as media coverage was concerned, we saw only one mother of a boy shot dead in Iraq rattle the gates of the president's Texan ranch; and her supplication was deeply resented by the local community. Among the intellectuals, not all feminists fell for what they saw as the "utmost hypocrisy"[197] of George and Laura Bush's purported wars of women's liberation in Afghanistan. But it was nonetheless troubling to find belligerence even amid the ranks of those who claim to be "powerful voices ready to challenge the enormous barrage of lies surrounding U.S. foreign policy."[198] One of such feminist voices lamented after 9/11 the government's "neopatriarchal subordination of women" within the armed forces. This voice argued that "one would have expected that elites would have welcomed the skills of all citizens for military service."[199] Skills? It so seemed that women themselves were clamoring & salivating for their share of the killing in the Mideast, but that Bush II had patronizingly phased them out. In any event, that a sizable segment of the feminist faction had countenanced the War on Terror either through apathy or through downright militancy is indisputable. And ignoble. As "explained" by one postmodernist, "faced with an enemy as incomprehensible and as implacable as Bin Laden, much of the Left checked the man's policy positions on women,

homosexuality, secularism, and facial hair, and slowly backed out of action."[200] Others, instead, have jumped right in, saluting the War on Terror, not as a clash of civilizations, but as a global struggle of "democratic secularism" and "feminism" against "authoritarian patriarchal religion."[201] Such is the bellicose current of postmodernism that had rejoined the conservatives after 9/11. Its spokespersons made up a self-styled "third force" of Liberal, "humanitarian" hawks, resolved to assume a "progressive" role in opposition to "Islamofascism." Accused of being prostitutes by their former Leftist mates, these progressives have responded that "a few insider contracts with Bush's cronies […], a bit of retrograde Bible thumping, Bush's ridiculous tax cuts, and his bonanzas for the superrich" are still petty matters if contrasted to, say, Saddam Hussein's abominable rule.[202]

In conclusion, this plethora of opinion-weaving on the War on Terror is the labor of intellectuals, whose credentials as historians, political economists, and students of terrorism are virtually nonexistent. They have simply regurgitated through semi-identical schemes information that has found its way into an industrial throughput of books on Bin Laden, Islamism, and Al-Qaeda. How there could be such a torrential flow of data on an organization officially considered impenetrable and hitherto invincible is moreover an oddity that has not seemed to perturb these Leftists in the least. Though this is not the proper venue for treating such a subject, which I have dealt with in another book,[*] a suitable point of departure for

[*] See my *Phantasmagoria, The Spectacle of 9/11 and the War on Terror* (2023).

understanding Islamic terrorism is a memoir drafted by Mohammed Samraoui, a former high-ranking officer of Algerian Military Intelligence. Samraoui describes the nature and dynamics of this phenomenon when it first appeared in Algeria during the early nineties.[203]

So, barring minor variations and suppressing the more or less polemical accents, it is readily seen that the views on 9/11 propounded by the established Left coincide for all intents and purposes with the government's interpretation of the event. In fact, the anti-imperialists' "Blowback" and the Foucauldians' "heterogenous" and "symbolic" "backlash" against globalization add nothing to the National Commission's *Report,* which captions Islamic terrorism "a symbol of resistance against cyclonic change." And what is even more remarkable is the way in which the official version has insulated itself from dissenting attack by inducing a system of self-policing conducted in antagonistic fashion by the several factions of the Left itself. Consider first the mainstream Foucauldians. On the one hand, for sport, they have gloatingly derided the likes of Huntington, who, Hardt and Negri snickered, has allegedly fallen from grace since the government has disowned the "clash of civilizations"[204] — which is not true. On the other, they have turned against their former comrades on the antiwar Left by insinuating with studied malice that some of their language is not only obsolete but smacks indeed of "anti-Semitism."[205] Thus provoked, the anti-imperialist Marxists have bitten back at the Foucaudians, recriminating that the latter, instead, have been "manipulated by the masters of the system," for whom postmodernism is

allegedly nothing but an "ideological accessory."[206] Which is true. And while the postmodern bellicists have accused the peaceniks of "isolationism" and immobilist complicity with "Islamofascism," the latter have retorted that siding with Bush was signing "a pact with the devil."[209] On the other front, whenever the surliest among the antiwar activists have gone so far as describing 9/11 as "karma,"[210] the Liberal-conservative press rejoiced at the opportunity. The opportunity, i.e., to paint the whole Left not just as "unpatriotic" but, more pointedly, as cynical, callous, if not inhuman ("unpatriotic" being actually a label that works best as a tool for defaming dissenting voices on the Right). For the same reason, the establishment has profited from this sort of anti-imperialist exaggeration no less than from the Bataillean excesses of Baudrillard and his ilk. When Baudrillard spoke of "beautiful suicide," and the music composer Karlheinz Stockhausen had the audacity to proclaim the conflagrations of 9/11 "the most sublime works of art,"[209] the press could, instantly and effectively, muster indignation aplenty with which to dress down the ultra-Gnostic posers for their "morbid" follies and insufferable "fascination for the terrorists."[210] Finally, this propagandistic theater appears to be built in such a way that, no matter how internally divided the action may appear, it is capable of closing ranks rather efficaciously against any alternative theory or approach —especially one seeking to establish responsibility for political malfeasance: one seeking, i.e., to identify the culprit(s). A substantive critique leveled *from the outside* at this Leftist assembly will be dismissed as "fascist" by the anti-imperialists, as "racist" by the

Foucauldians, and as "conspiratorial" by all of them, with the added censure of the establishment. The mechanism is airtight.

Nothing epitomizes the discomfiture of dissent better than the late tenure of the mainstream Foucauldians over the fate of the Left in these obscene times of Orwellian war and geopolitical chicane. The story told in this manuscript is that of a neo-Gnostic thinker and modern worshipper of Aztec sacrifice, who had conceived a sociological theory whereby he could account for the nature and motions of power. The sixth, seventh, and ninth chapters have detailed the extraordinary path that Bataille's insights would traverse before they were transformed by Foucault and his followers into a specious fantasy, which the readers and scriveners of America's intelligentsia have come to incorporate in the Empire's discursive makeup. It is a bewildering story, which could have been hardly imaginable when Bataille collected his notes for the *Collège de Sociologie.* Hardly imaginable, but not impossible, considering in the end the unabashed espousal of violence, mendacity, and arrogance ("sovereignty") that ties the Bataillean vision to the contemporary ways of power.

Notes

1. Thorstein Veblen, *Absentee Ownership, and Business Enterprise in Recent Times (The Case of America)* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1923), pp. 34, 444.
2. Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation, The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001 [1957]), pp. 26–27.
3. John Patrick Diggins, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992), p. 16.

4. Thorstein Veblen, "Dementia Praecox," in *Essays in Our Changing Order* (New York: Viking, 1934), p. 429.
5. Martin Buber, *Paths in Utopia* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958 [1949]), pp. 99–128.
6. Diggins, *American Left,* pp. 47, 48.
7. Veblen, *Absentee Ownership,* p. 6.
8. Ibid., p. 9.
9. Ibid., p. 350.
10. Jünger, *Der Waldgang* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1951), p. 135.
11. Veblen*, Absentee Ownership,* p. 29.
12. Ibid., pp. 30, 31, emphasis added.
13. Irving Steltzer, "Neoconservatives and Their Critics, An Introduction," *in The Neocon Reader,* ed. Irving Steltzer (New York: Grove Press, 2004), p. 18.
14. Thorstein Veblen, *The Engineers and The Price System* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1921), pp. 112, 150.
15. Veblen, *Absentee Ownership,* p. 36.
16. Ibid., pp. 36, 38.
17. Ibid., p. 274.
18. Ibid., p. 168.
19. Ibid., p. 295.
20. Ibid., p. 398.
21. Ibid., p. 399.
22. Ibid., p. 425.
23. Veblen, *The Engineers,* p. 141.
24. Ibid., pp. 116, 152.
25. Ibid., p. 168.
26. Ibid., p. 134.
27. Ibid., pp. 150, 138.
28. Ibid., p. 151.
29. Veblen, *Absentee Ownership,* p. 364.
30. John Dos Passos, *U.S.A.* (New York: Penguin, 1966 [1938]), p. 815.
31. Polanyi, *Great Transformation,* pp. 151, 158–170.

32. Diggins, *American Left,* p. 146.
33. Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield, The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), chapter 17.
34. For a roster of the CIA's foreign incursions, see William Blum, *Killing Hope. U.S. Military Interventions Since World War II* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2004), and for an insight into the role of the KGB in the American sphere of influence (Italy), see Rocco Turi, *Gladio Rossa. Una catena di complotti e delitti dal dopoguerra a Moro* (Venezia: Marsilio Editori, 2004).
35. Carroll Quigley, *Tragedy and Hope, A History of the World in Our Time* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), p. 938.
36. Ibid.
37. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., cited in Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States, 1492–Present* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), p. 458.
38. Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to American Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), pp. 147, 148.
39. Ibid., p. 150.
40. Maurice R. Berube, *Radical Reformers, The Influence of the Left in American Education* (Greenwich, CT: Information Age, 2004), p. 22.
41. Gilles Kepel, *A l'ouest d'Allah* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1994), p. 60.
42. Huntington, *Who Are We?* p. 151.
43. See Berube, *Radical Reformers,* p. 24.
44. Kepel, *A l'ouest d'Allah,* p. 76.
45. Ibid., p. 86.
46. Murray Friedman, *What Went Wrong? The Creation and Collapse of the Black-Jewish Alliance* (New York: Free Press, 1995), p. 3.
47. Ibid., pp. 309, 312.
48. Kepel, *A l'ouest d'Allah,* p. 86.
49. Huntington, *Who Are We?,* p. 144.

50. Ward Churchill and Jim van der Wall, *The COINTELPRO Papers. Documents from the FBI's Secret Wars Against Dissent in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2002), pp. 117–64.
51. James Weinstein, *The Long Detour. The History and Future of the American Left* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2003), p. 175.
52. Diggins, *American Left,* p. 219.
53. David Horowitz, *Radical Son, A Generational Odyssey* (New York: Free Press, 1997), p. 211.
54. See for instance, Andrew and Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield,* pp. 237–38.
55. See Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie. Robert F. Williams & the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), and the documentary by Sandra Dickinson and Churchill Roberts, *Negroes With Guns,* (South Burlington, VT: Documentary Institute, 2005).
56. Weinstein, *The Long Detour,* p. 176.
57. David Horowitz, *Unholy Alliance, Radical Islam and the American Left* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 2004), p. 197.
58. Juan Vives, *Les Maîtres de Cuba* (Paris: Éditions Robert Laffont), p. 346.
59. Churchill and van der Wall, *The COINTELPRO Papers,* p. 187.
60. Ron Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew. A History of the Weather Underground* (London and New York: Verso, 1997), p. 85.
61. Churchill and van der Wall, *The COINTELPRO Papers,* p. 223.
62. Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew,* p. 177.
63. *The Weathermen,* documentary by Sam Green and Bill Siegel (New York: Docurama, 2004).
64. Weinstein, *The Long Detour,* p. 192.
65. Diggins, *American Left,* p. 288.
66. Ibid., p. 289.
67. Todd Gitlin, cited in Berube, *Radical Reformers,* p. 55, and in Horowitz, *Unholy Alliance,* p. 106.
68. Diggins, *American Left,* p. 302.
69. Ibid., p. 291.

70. David Harris, *The Crisis, The President, the Prophet and the Shah—1979 and the Coming of Militant Islam* (New York: Little, Brown, 2004), p. 188.
71. Miles Copeland, *The Game of Nations. The Amorality of Power Politics* (London: Weidenfeld, 1969), pp. 172, 173.
72. Kermit Roosevelt, *Countercoup. The struggle for the Control of Iran* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), pp. ix, 199.
73. Ehsan Naraghi, *Des palais du Chah aux prisons de la Révolution* (Paris: Éditions Balland, 1991), p. 119.
74. Stephen Dorril, *MI6. Inside the Covert World of Her Majesty's Secret Intelligence Service* (New York and London: Touchstone, 2000), pp. 565, 583, 593, and Robert Dreyfuss, *Devil's Game. How the United States Helped Unleash Fundamentalist Islam* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2005), p. 115.
75. Houchang Nahavandi, *Carnets secrets: chute et mort du Shah* (Paris: Éditions Osmondes, 2004), p. 68.
76. Houchang Nahavandi, *La révolution iranienne, vérité et mensonges* (Lausanne, Switzerland: L'Age d'Homme, 1999), p. 71.
77. Ibid., p. 50.
78. Claude Angeli and Stéphanie Mesnier, *Notre allié Saddam* (Paris: Olivier Orban, 1992), pp. 29–30.
79. Jasim M. Abdulghani, *Iraq and Iran. The Years of Crisis* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, 1984), p. 139.
80. Ibid., p. 157.
81. Stephen Pelletière, *Iraq and the International Oil System. Why America Wanted a War in the Gulf* (Washington, D.C.: Maisonneuve Press, 2004), p. 159.
82. Nahavandi, *Carnets secrets,* pp. 52–54.
83. For an explanation of the politics behind the oil shock of 1973, see William Engdahl, *A Century of War. Anglo-American Oil Politics and the New World Order* (London: Pluto, 2004), p. 138.
84. Dominique Lorentz, *Une guerre* (Paris: Éditions des arènes, 1997), pp. 165–75.
85. Naraghi, *Des palais du Chah,* p. 26.
86. Nahavandi, *Carnets secrets,* p. 54.

87. Copeland, *The Game of Nations,* pp. 173, 174.
88. Ibid., pp. 174–75.
89. According to an official statement of the Islamic Republic issued in March 1979, there had been 233 "victims" in the fifteen years preceding the revolution (Nahavandi, *La révolution iranienne,* pp. 58–65).
90. Harris, *The Crisis,* p. 71.
91. Nahavandi, *Carnets secrets,* p. 194.
92. Harris, *The Crisis,* p. 109.
93. Ibid., p. 107.
94. Naraghi, *Des palais du Chah,* p. 57.
95. Nahavandi, *Carnets secrets,* p. 152.
96. Christine Ockrent and Comte de Marenches, *Dans le secret des princes* (Paris: Éditions Stock, 1986), p. 296.
97. Nahavandi, *Carnets secrets,* p. 187.
98. Harris, *The Crisis,* p. 114.
99. Janet Afary and Kevin B. Anderson: *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution. Gender and the Seduction of Islamism* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 69.
100. Ibid., p. 75.
101. Yves Roucaute, *Le Néoconservatisme est un humanisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2005), p. 18.
102. Afary and Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution,* pp. 3, 75–76, 187.
103. Ibid., p. 38.
104. Bataille, *La part maudite,* pp. 119–29.
105. Afary and Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian revolution,* pp. 15, 94–96.
106. Foucault, cited in ibid., p. 222.
107. Harris, *The Crisis,* p. 113.
108. Ockrent and Marenches, *Dans le secret des princes,* p. 306.
109. Richard Falk, "Trusting Khomeini," *The New York Times,* February 16, 1979, p. A27.
110. David Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault* (London: Hutchinson, 1993), p. 422.

111. Afary and Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian revolution,* p. 7.
112. Jean Baudrillard, *Oublier Foucault* (Paris: Éditions Galiliée, 1977), pp. 58–59.
113. Jean Baudrillard, "When Bataille Attacked the Metaphysical Principle of the Economy," in *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 15 (1991): 137.
114. Baudrillard, *Oublier Foucault,* pp. 51, 58–59, 60–62.
115. Ibid., p. 81.
116. Jean Baudrillard, *Le pacte de lucidité, ou l'intelligence du mal* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2004), p. 31.
117. Jean Baudrillard, *La transparence du mal. Essai sur les phénomènes extrêmes* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1990), p. 89.
118. Baudrillard, *Le pacte de lucidité,* p. 13.
119. Baudrillard, *Oublier Foucault,* p. 88.
120. Baudrillard, *La transparence du mal,* p. 17.
121. Ibid., p. 11.
122. Baudillard, *Le pacte de lucidité,* p. 121.
123. Baudrillard, *La transparence du mal,* pp. 88, 89.
124. Ibid., p. 43.
125. Baudrillard, *Le pacte de lucidité,* pp. 130, 136.
126. Baudrillard, *La transparence du mal,* p. 91
127. Baudrillard, *Le pacte de lucidité,* p. 117.
128. Baudrillard, *La transparence du mal,* p. 152.
129. Abdallah Baroudi, *Lettre au Président Mitterrand: L'Irak ou "cris et chuchotements" de l'autre rive* (Brussels: Éditions Epo, 1993), p. 15.
130. Chapour Haghigat, *Histoire de la crise du Golfe. Des origines aux conséquences* (Brussels: Éditions Complexe, 1993), p. 47 ; and Eric Laurent*, La Tempête du Desert. Les secrets de la Maison Blanche, Tome 2* (Paris: Olivier Orban, 1991), p. 26.
131. Patrick Denaud: *Irak, la guerre permanente. Entretiens avec Tarek Aziz* (Paris: Éditions du Felin, 2002), p. 45.
132. See Saïd Aburish, *Saddam Hussein, The Politics of Revenge* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2000), p. 54, and John K. Cooley, *An Alliance Against Babylon. The U.S., Israel and Iraq* (London: Pluto,

2005), p. 96.
133. Pierre Salinger and Eric Laurent, *Guerre du Golfe: Dossier secret* (Paris: Olivier Orban, 1991), p. 60.
134. Aburish, *Saddam Hussein,* p. 277.
135. Salinger and Laurent, *Guerre du Golfe,* p. 59.
136. Pierre-Jean Luizard, *La question irakienne* (Paris: Fayard, 2004), pp. 304, 305.
137. Laurent, *La Tempête du Desert,* p. 28.
138. Salinger and Laurent, *Guerre du Golfe,* pp. 94–95.
139. Laurent, *La Tempête du Desert,* p. 12.
140. Ibid., pp. 75–76.
141. Denaud, *Irak, la guerre permanente,* pp. 45–46.
142. Mustapha M. Alani, *Operation Vantage. British Military Intervention in Kuwait* (Surbiton, Surrey, UK: Laam, 1990), p. 252.
143. Ibid., p. 249.
144. Ibid., p. 88.
145. Ibid., p. 114.
146. Ibid., pp. 102, 103, 205.
147. Ibid., p. 233.
148. Ibid., p. 239.
149. Ibid., p. 172.
150. Uriel Dann, *Iraq Under Qassem. A Political History, 1958–1963* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), pp. 354–55.
151. Aburish, *Saddam Hussein,* pp. 55–59.
152. Ibid., p. 54.
153. Salinger and Laurent, *Guerre du Golfe,* p. 260.
154. Laurent, *Tempête du Désert,* p. 146.
155. Ibid., pp. 188–9, 190, 223–24.
156. Ibid., pp. 195, 210.
157. Elaine Sciolino, *The Outlaw State: Saddam Hussein's Quest for Power and the Gulf Crisis* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1991), pp. 28–29.
158. Laurent, *Tempête du Désert,* pp. 280–81, 327–28.
159. Ibid., pp. 341–42.

160. Thierry d'Athis and Jean-Paul Croizé. *Golfe, la guerre cachée* (Paris: Jean Picollec, 1991), p. 153.
161. Ibid., pp. 104, 121, 153.
162. Haghigat, *Histoire de la crise du Golfe,* p. 41.
163. D'Athis and Croizé, *Golfe,* pp. 180–82.
164. Haghigat, *Histoire de la crise du Golfe,* p. 43.
165. This was actually the suspicion of the Soviet General Staff, see Salinger and Laurent, *Guerre du Golfe,* p. 248.
166. Luizard, *La question irakienne,* p. 306.
167. Ibid., pp. 157–72.
168. Denaud, *Irak, la guerre permanente,* pp. 134–37.
169. Jean Baudrillard, *La Guerre du Golfe n'a pas eu lieu* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1991), pp. 98–100.
170. Ibid., p. 60.
171. Ibid., pp. 26–27.
172. Ibid., p. 35.
173. Ibid., pp. 32–33, 70–71, 92.
174. Ibid., pp. 34, 40.
175. Ibid., pp. 22, 54, 55, 65, 66, 69, 82, 86.
176. Ibid., pp. 28, 50, 52, 72, 78.
177. Ward Churchill, *On the Justice of Roosting Chickens. Reflections on the Consequences of U.S. Imperial Arrogance and Criminality* (Edinburgh, London, and Oakland: AK Press, 2003), p. 8.
178. Christopher Norris, *Uncritical Theory. Postmodernist Intellectuals and the Gulf War* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1992), pp. 15, 29.
179. Jean Baudrillard, *L'esprit du terrorisme* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2002), p. 20.
180. Thomas H. Kean (chair) and Lee H. Hamilton (vice chair), *The 9-11 Report. The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004), p. xxxvii.
181. Ibid., p. 73.
182. Ibid., pp. 79–80.
183. Ibid., p. 81, emphasis added.

184. Eric Laurent, *La face cachée du 11 Septembre* (Paris: Plon, 2004), pp. 131–35.
185. See for instance, Copeland, *Game of Nations,* pp. 155–56.
186. Richard Labévière, *Les dollars de la terreur, Les États-Unis et les islamistes* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1999), pp. 48, 57.
187. The classic reference is Edward Said's *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).
188. Chalmers Johnson, "American Militarism and Blowback," in *Masters of War: Militarism and Blowback in the Era of American Empire,* ed. Carl Boggs (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 113, emphasis added.
189. Jean Baudrillard, *L'esprit du terrorisme* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2002), p. 12.
190. Jean Baudrillard, *Power Inferno. Requiem pour les Twin Towers. Hypothèse sur le terrorisme, La violence du mondial* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2002), p. 15.
191. Baudrillard, *L'esprit du terrorisme,* pp. 10–12, 22–23, 29, and *Power Inferno,* p. 76.
192. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude, War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004), pp. 31, 54.
193. Douglas Kellner, "Globalization, September 11, and the Restructuring of Education," in *Critical Theories, Radical Pedagogies and Glogal Conflicts,* ed. Gustavo E. Fischman, Peter McLaren, Heinz Sünker, and Colin Lankshear (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), pp. 87, 88, 93, 98.
194. Frederic Jameson, "The Dialectics of Disaster," in *Dissent from the Homeland, Essays After September 11*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas and Frank Lentricchia (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 59.
195. Benjamin Barber, "Jihad versus McWorld," in *Globalization and Challenges of a New Century,* ed. Patrick O'Meara, Howard D. Mehlinger, and Matthew Krain (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000 [1992]), p. 24.

196. Leo Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes* (New York and London: Basic Books, 1966), pp. 198–200.
197. Rhonda Hammer, "Militarism and Family Terrorism," in Boggs, *Masters of War,* p. 294.
198. Boggs, "Empire and Globalization," in Boggs, *Masters of War,* p. 15.
199. R. Claire Snyder, "Patriarchal Militarism," in *Masters of War,* ed. Boggs, p. 266.
200. Michael Bérubé quoted in Afary and Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution,* p. 171.
201. Ellen Willis quoted in Afary and Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution,* pp. 171–72.
202. Paul Berman, "A Friendly Drink in a Time of War," in *A Matter of Principle. Humanitarian Arguments For War In Iraq,* ed. Thomas Cushman (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2005), p. 151.
203. Mohammed Samraoui, *Chronique des années de sang, Algérie: comments les services secrets ont manipulé les groupes islamistes* (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 2003).
204. Hardt and Negri, *Multitude,* p. 35.
205. Ibid., p. 40.
206. Samir Amin, *The Liberal Virus. Permanent War and the Americanization of the World* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2004), pp. 19–20.
207. Howard Zinn, *Terrorism and War* (New York: Seven Stories, 2002), p. 44.
208. Ward Churchill, *On the Justice of Roosting Chickens,* p. 10.
209. Baudrillard, *Power Inferno,* p. 19.
210. Alain Minc quoted in Afary and Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution,* p. 170.