

7.3. Hardt & Negri's *Empire*

7.3.1) Toni Negri: "Bad Teacher"/Good "Partisan"

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

Toni Negri⁶⁴

Sooner or later, someone had to apply Foucault's neo-Gnostic fiction of Power on a world scale. It happened as yet another tribute to "globalization" in a book entitled *Empire*. The Foucauldian contractors responsible for this ambitious remodeling are Michael Hardt and Antonio ("Toni") Negri (1933–2023), respectively an American professor of literature and an Italian political scientist, whose joint opus, released only a few days after the dictatorial, double-downing *coup d'état* of 9/11, did "[receive] an astonishing degree of mainstream, as well as radical attention."⁶⁵ Decidedly, the Foucauldians have proven to be an inexhaustible source of delightful surprises for the elites. Not content with having diffused the story about Power circulating at the domestic "margins," the mocking varlets, had then decided, for

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play, to envelop the whole planet with acephalic dynamics.

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

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

Ever since the dark days of Italy’s “low-intensity” civil conflict of the Seventies punctuated by recurrent terror — a season, dubbed “The Years of Lead” (*Gli anni di piombo*),* whose disturbing violence he, a professor of Political Science at the University of Padua, along with a populous cohort of other sulphureous “terrorists” (of opposite factions) came to symbolize, — Negri carried about

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

himself a weird, disquieting halo, a mixed legacy that somehow persists after his passing in 2023.

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

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

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unwilling to change, unwilling to transform herself through the emancipation of her browbeaten proletariat. To these others, and they were not few, Negri was a luminary, one of the highest, and a hero.

He certainly had “credentials.”

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

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

As will be seen, the parallels between Negri with Foucault are several —though Negri, who rose to fame as a frantic yet thoroughly unimaginative juggler of hyperterse Marxist obfuscation, and was manifestly nowhere as skilled as Foucault in the virtuosic art of sophistical metaphorization, actually owed his fame and prestige to his being, unlike Foucault and the virtual totality of Academia's certificated mystagogues & babblers, a veritable (political) "operative." An operative, or rather, to use a simile by Ernst Jünger's & Carl Schmitt's, a (high-level) "*partisan*."

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

In keeping with his essence, the Partisan is assigned to operations to be carried out below the threshold of legality. He makes his appearance in the rearguard of the invading armies, specially tasked with espionage,

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sabotage and psychological warfare. In a civil war setting, he is given similar charges: his Party uses him for maneuvers that cannot be accomplished within the law's remit. It is for this reason that Partisan fights bear the stamp of a remarkable ferocity. The Partisan has no protection [...]. Much as he doesn't wear a uniform in battle, the Party cancels his membership before deploying him. According to this state of affairs, the Partisan's affiliation is always uncertain; it can never be determined whether he belongs to the party or its counter-party, to Espionage or Counter-Espionage, to the Police or the Counter-Police, or to all of them at the same time [...]. To try to establish responsibility in [matters affected by his doings] is impossible, for the puppeteering strings gradually disappear in the darkness of an underworld where all distinctions, including the Parties' political divides, are blurred. There lies in the [repeated] attempts to heroize the Partisan a gross lack of discernment; the Partisan is not a type of hero, but rather a manifestation of the elementary realm (E. Jünger).⁶⁸

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

What was the story?

For reasons that have yet to be clarified, it appears that by the mid-Sixties, Italy's landlords, i.e., the USA (abetted by a nondescript "Anglo-Dutch cabal"), had resolved to be rid of the colony's other co-proprietor,⁶⁹ the Vatican, which had been busily (micro-)managing things via its political front the DC, *la Democrazia Cristiana* —the

Center-right majority party (the Christian-Democrats) that had theretofore acted as guarantor and (apparently not so dependable) partner of the North-Atlantic alliance. By the end of the Sixties, plans had been hatched to replace the DC with some other, more pliable “social-democratic” outfit —something to be assembled either from scratch or eventually patched together with existing (more malleable) materiel.

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

What unfolded thereafter as a consequence of this planned shift in imperial management is a twenty-year long campaign of destabilization punctuated by more than a decade (1969-1984) of terrorism and political violence (assassinations, ongoing street warfare between rival political squads, student clashes, murderous devastations by explosives, sensational kidnappings, etc.): all of such happenings being the effects of the resistance put up by the incumbent (Catholic) satraps, i.e., the Italian trustees who were simply not willing to surrender their succulent (sub-colonial) tenure, i.e., to go down and vacate their posts just like that, without a fight —and fight the Christian-Democrats did. Eventually, in 1992, the Catholics were defeated and ousted, and a sort of truce

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(between the Anglo-Saxon masters and the shifty, recalcitrant Mediterranean fiduciaries) was confected by allowing (what was left of) the old guard, now profoundly debilitated, to regroup in the conservative bloc of the newly-formed populist formation of Silvio Berlusconi (1936-2023), the entrepreneur-turned-politico, whose abiding achievement is the thorough Americanization of Italy's televised ether. Meanwhile on the other side of the political fence there stood the old Communists, they, too, considerably diminished, in modern garb, self-rebranded as pro-market "Democrats" and directly spoon-fed by their American homologues. The old Leftists did not come out as the winners, though they were afforded a dignified footing as Italy's political caboodle was being somehow salvaged & re-processed through a cheap variant of Anglo-America's two-party system. Behind it all lay a massive spoliation of Italy's public assets, which were then "privatized" and subsequently "sold" to prime buying-consortia endorsed by Anglo-American, German and French interersts.⁷⁰ Sealed over such a reconfiguration, or better, a "Mexification" of the Italian colony, this truce, or rather, this conditional surrender has held to this day.

In the early Seventies, when the contending forces were freshly engaged in the arm-wrestling match, the old guard, according to an imaginative scenario featured in a

popular *roman à clef*,⁷¹ put a vanguard of Neo-Fascist fanatics in play—as some kind of security detail as well as a phalanx of violent provocation, something, i.e., which could harass and antagonize in spectacular acts of murderous sabotage the Italian newcomers (novel industrial factions discreetly spurred on by the foreign sponsors) as well as being used by the State’s incumbent executive as an excuse for declaring the “state of emergency” and proceed thereby to dig in, repress, and consolidate the position as long as possible.

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

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

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been traditionally so-called “Marxian” rhetoric. Marxian, yes, after that indigestible nullity, Karl Marx (1818–1883) —armchair “revolutionist,” third-rate publicist, Marat wannabe, and upper-class *raté* originally slated for utter and wholly deserved oblivion had it not been for the divine status he was posthumously accorded by the System to prop up with “philosophical cachet” (the fable of) the Soviet imbroglio.* Marxist literature —i.e., Marx’s works and the exegeses of his multi-billion votaries worldwide (an output which, sadly, could fill cosmic space to the brim)— is a profusion of do-gooding, anti-plutocratic rationalizations of “everything under the sun” issued from an imbecile, sub-dilettantish system of embarrassingly erroneous socio-economic propositions.†

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

† Namely, 1) that, at heart, social (inter-)action consists of an irreconcilable antagonism (to the death) pitting employers against (slaving, “class-conscious”) employees —viz., “capitalists” vs. “working proletarians”; 2) that such an antagonism is inexorably bound, with the increasing development of the industrial arts and the concomitant schemes of exploitation, to usher in the providential victory of the Worker and inaugurate thereby the messianic “Dictatorship of the Proletariat”; 3) that economic exploitation is itself rooted in the production of goods, whereby “capitalists” plan production with a view to stealing a portion (plus-value) of the final product from the workers, who are

the sole, legitimate, and irreplaceable proprietors of the goods crafted; 4) that economics is everything and (State) power but a ("super-structural") reflection thereof; 5) that the value of goods is equivalent to the hours of labor spent in making them, and that such "labor-time" is, for the sake of proper reckoning, constitutively embodied, "congealed" in a given amount of gold, which is the only conceivable "good money." What a screaming, dismaying jumble of cockeyed allegations! 1) Class-consciousness does not exist; it is a chimera: toilers only wish to be fed and entertained as best as possible (Juvenal): spiritually debilitated by their subjection (Veblen), they entertain no conscious dream other than to evade their toilsome, barbarous condition and join that of their equally barbarous masters, whom they envy, imitate, and emulate. Starting with the Franco-Prussian War (1870) and then onto the colossal butcheries that various swarms of workers mutually inflicted upon one another with WWI (in the name of their respective flags) all the way to the present, every single historical conflict marked by profuse bloodshed is a standing, refutative monument to Marx's flatulent postulation of class consciousness (as the "dialectical engine" of history; e.g., the leaders of dissidence within the labor movement who categorically opposed war in 1914 were an exiguous minority). 2) Nowhere did the world, especially the hyper-industrialized one, witness the advent of a Proletarian utopia: all so-called "Communist" regimes which, to gain admission to the Geopolitical game of the Cold War, have speciously flown the Marxist colors in the past century (and China today), have all been but fascist outfits, "State capitalisms" in which industrial, exploitative toil, far from being abolished, was actually intensified. As known, in Marx there is no blueprint for tomorrow's society: he merely incited to seize power, the final objective being the (governmental) sequestration of the "means of production," means whose arrangement and organizational logic Marx could not understand in the least: 3) mistaking it for some sort of alchemical goose, this gassy windbag from Trier believed "capital" to be inherently "productive": he could not fathom that machines, resources, and the way the firm and its distribution are designed and organized are the collective fruit of R&D and business flair (and/or a more or less pronounced ability, by hook or by crook, to mono- or oligopolize the

market) —matters in which unskilled workers, the most replaceable of all business cogs, have no share or say whatsoever. The stealing, if any, pertains to the apportioning of the revenue pie; it has nothing to do with the productive process per se. Exploitation is not rooted in production but in the exaction of overhead charges (chiefly bank interest) incurred to launch the venture itself: distinguishing between bankers (rentiers) and industrialists, between the private (yet State-sanctioned) money-cartel and production at large is essential: doing so isn't a "petty-bourgeois" misapprehension, as stupidly, spitefully decried by the dull-witted and useless friars & nuns of the Marxian Church: the captains of industry cut costs (more often than not, savagely) where it is easiest to do so: with wages: there is no aboriginal theft of an equally chimerical "surplus value." 4) Anyone who's studied economics & politics long enough knows very well that economic symptomology is undiagnosable unless the underlying power struggles are brought to light: that is what political economy is supposed to do: elucidating economic dynamics in the light of the overarching factional disputes among the vested Interests involved. 5) Money is a symbol for a vehicle that should belong to society in common: in the world, instead, the power wielded by the banking system —with the (sub-contracting) approval of the State, by whose grace it operates— originates in the practice bankers have perfected over the centuries of appropriating the "blood" of the body social by constricting it inside the arteries of a proprietary "grid," along which this money circulates and is being sold to society at a price (interest) as if it never perished, as if it were indeed gold (it is a perversely sophisticated institution, whose essence and intricacies thoroughly eluded the coarse wit of the publicist from Trier). Of all the components that go on to make up a good's price, labor, from the conceptual standpoint, is the least interesting and certainly not the most decisive. Inventiveness is ("the usufruct of the community's immaterial equipment of technological knowledge," Veblen) —along with the organizational ability to set up operations profitably enough to make the (business) concern viable.

The mystifying power of this spurious rhetoric lies in the suggestiveness of its putatively *totalizing* grasp: despite the patent inexactitude of its constitutive “theses,” it fills the practitioner with the empowering delusion of being able to scan *all* things (social) with a “faultless method” (G. Lukács). In the mythological compartment, Marxism’s nauseating mumbo-jumbo—and the cognitive disaster it marks—is typically paired with a professed awe and veneration for Lenin and the Bolshevik experiment in post-Zarist Russia. In the discursive vistas of the modern-day, professional agitator of the Left, the conventional narrative of the October Revolution of 1917, is revered in devout fashion as the foundational, scriptural account of the successful translation in the flesh of Karl the Prophet’s impassioned annunciation of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. To anyone even cursorily and dispassionately familiar with the events of 1917–22; to anyone who has, therefore, realized how completely *artificial* that “Revolution” really was; and how the “Soviet file” in western textbooks is through some sudden change of style cast as a sensational saga of a wholly alien race with no point of contact with our own species; to anyone who knows this, the high-brow disquisitions—on the alleged *spiritual* clash of “Capitalist West vs. Communist East”—that have been endlessly squeezed out of this

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historiographical hoax* cannot but loom as one unsightly pie of bogusness the magnitude of which ought to be measured in sidereal units. Such is our world.[†] The orthodox, hallucinated Leftist must say he believes in (the exotic idol) Lenin, as he also says to believe that, owing to the vicious siege —the “merciless encirclement”⁷² (Negri)— of Soviet Russia by the Western Powers, the “Communist” experiment ran out of steam, wrecking eventually on the shoals of Afghanistan (before bowing out entirely in Berlin, ten years later). (Soviet) Communism really stood chance, they say, but, alas...

And Negri, sincerely or not (it matters little), professed

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

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

to be subscribing to all of this in full, till the last, in fact, far past the inception of the game, when, around 1971, a tenured professor of political science in his late thirties at the University of Padua, he set out to attend to his partisan duties. The picture is indeed murky, owing not least to the fact that, initially, he is seen consorting, debating, and scheming with the founders of what was then bound to rise and impose itself on the scene as the most infamous of all Italian terrorist organizations, the Red Brigades (*le brigade rosse, le BR*). This was at a time when the “Blacks” (the Right-wing, Neo-Fascist extremists) still had the stage and were rampaging. The picture is murky because it looks as though Negri was *de facto* inscribing himself and his budding organization in the destabilizing radius of the “Reds,” who were going to relay the Blacks in 1974–1975 in what appeared at the time as a decisive switch in the terrorist dynamics of the game. Allegedly disaffected by the ever more legalist, reformist (“compromising”) posture of Italy’s Communist Party (the PCI), the Red Brigades —the weaponized vestals of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy— professed to be intent on striking at the “heart of the System” with a view to precipitating a mass revolution (what else?), when, in fact, as it has been incisively suggested,⁷³ they were rather performing as the private army of the Communist Party itself: the tactic being sufficiently cynical and not without

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risk: by unleashing a fringe of purportedly schismatic “assassins” from its own ranks, a lunatic fringe it could thereafter grandiloquently condemn, disown, and criminalize, Italy’s Communists sought to best their Christian-Democrats rivals as Italy’s Law & Order stalwarts and thereby poach votes in their “moderate” constituency. This still lay ahead, in the key triennium 1975-78. As it turned out, this “switch” happened to coincide with a change of orientation among US imperial circles (the Rockefellers’ Trilateral Commission would then be in charge, Nixon having just been ousted), which, in what amounted to a bold, yet slightly crooked move, seemingly opted to lay their wager on a spruced up, gentrified, pro-NATO reshuffle of the old Communists themselves as a replacement for the unyielding Catholics.⁷⁴

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

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

The robberies — “expropriations,” the “rebels” called them— were intended as the organization’s means of self-financing. Preparations intensified, and by 1974 Negri’s posse —whose top echelons were staffed exclusively by young aristocrats and the scions of Veneto’s most “respectable families”— exulted as they secured the affiliation of a truculent gunslinger with connection to Milan’s organized crime as well as two additional professional bank robbers. In July of that year, Negri led

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

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another caucus with the BR, inviting all to strike with no mercy at the PCI, to teach it a lesson for selling out to the bourgeois allurements of power; the *brigatisti* balked, unconvinced.

7.3.3. 1977: *Mayhem & Showdown*

Meanwhile, the galaxy of Red terror, in which Negri's cluster still shone brightly, underwent restless changes spawning in turn scores of sub-splinter fighting formations, whose effectives, divided between "Leninists" (the visible organized vanguard of the "Revolution") and the "*movimentisti*" (the fanaticized militants seeking clandestine status to give vent to their thirst for violence), came and went by osmosis, with some of the latter defecting altogether to the majors of the terrorist underground —viz., the BR and other cells under "different jurisdictions." A very messy galaxy. Negri's baby itself, Potop, owing to doctrinal differences within its directorate and especially to a punitive raid gone terribly wrong,* was then dissolved and reborn in 1973 as the hyper-"spontaneous" and hyper-"independent" *Autonomia Operaia* (AO, Workers' Autonomy): a supple

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

congregation of “collectives” detached to Italy’s main hubs, Milan, Turin, Florence, Rome, and especially those of the Veneto region: Padua, of course, Rovigo, and Vicenza (host, among other things, to America’s largest Army garrison on Italian soil). Electorally speaking, Veneto and Sicily were the DC’s two most solid and loyal bastions. Revealingly enough, Negri himself referred to his new creation, AO, as a “Catholic movement against the Communists’ alleged hegemony over the labor movement.” AO’s sub-partisans were for the most part academics (hyper-bourgeois, that is: not a single worker or old-school Leftist amongst them) and the soldiers — equipped as it were with standard-issue guns (especially the beloved Walther P38), Molotov cocktails, and crowbars— are remembered to this day as a redoubtable contingent of “determined and angry young militants,” many of them students hailing from wealthy milieus, as said. AO operated on different levels: it consisted of a propagandistic front and various submerged layers of “mass illegality,” whose most delicate (i.e., potentially murderous and devastating) missions were typically entrusted to the FCC.* How Negri came to reap such a

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

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harvest, in such conditions, is a sad question still weighing on those eerie times.

And then they went for it.

Negri's posse set out to wreak havoc on public more than

private structures, preferring to cast over its playing grounds a generalized pall of fear rather than performing flamboyant deeds of terror: in its name, AO directly hurt, injured, and kneecapped many, but killed no one — a detail which, in his defense, Negri would proudly underscore. From 1974 to 1977, the enraged militants of AO would run rampant, robbing banks; clashing repeatedly with the Neo-Fascists; bombing the barracks of the Carabinieri* (courtesy of the FCC); crossing crowbars with the young Communists; vandalizing the property of small-scale industrialists; raiding movie theaters, supermarkets, stores, public transportation, restaurants; intimidating and roughing up (prevalently old-school Leftist and Communist) professors vocally opposed to the regime of academic self-government (*autogestione*) which Negri has chiefly established in the departments of Political Science, Education, Psychology and Italian at the University of Padua (guaranteed As for all enrolled militants). The climax was reached on May

* Italy's militarized police corps.

1977 when in Padua the *autonomi* held an entire neighborhood hostage to their destructive wrath: arson, ransacking and beatings galore. Negri jubilated: “I feel at once the warmth of the workers’ and proletarians’ communities,” he poetically wrote, “every time I slip on my balaclava...”

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

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

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

The standoff came to a phantasmagoric head with the kidnapping of DC grandee Aldo Moro by a commando of the Red Brigades on March 1978. Televised worldwide, the stage of the rapt itself, sullied by the blood of Moro's security detail (five policemen killed), and the surreal aftermath — 55 days of captivity in secret lairs the Police allegedly could never find, a period littered with hallucinated proclamations by the captors, and culminating in the politician's execution[†] — was but the macabre set against which the two fighting factions — the Catholic satraps vs. the Communist candidates — settled scores. In secret, the spectacle must have been previously

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

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

concerted between the two contenders as the inciting incident by which a handful of Communist ministers could be exceptionally admitted into the DC executive — Moro having (devoutly, and riskily) offered himself as collateral for the DC’s “good faith” (and thereby making himself, and the whole of the DC schemers privy to the orchestration, possibly, unwilling accomplices to the premeditated murder of the five bodyguards). A “good faith,” in fact, that never was good for it appears that the Christian-Democrats, untrue to their word from the outset, never intended, *under any circumstances*, to yield an inch to the Communists. On the very day of the “spectacular incident,” the Premier, Giulio Andreotti, seemingly reneging on the terms of the putative “pact,” nixed the Communist bid and a 55-day arm-wrestling match ensued, no one really believing that, in cruel reprisal, the Red captors* would have the gumption to shoot Moro in cold blood. Yet they did.

The official narrative of this crucial episode is quite

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

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

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

And, then, it was finally time to do some house-cleaning and strike back at the insurrectionist rabble with a vengeance, and hard, to the satisfied delight of Italy’s silent majority. From 1976 to Moro’s assassination in mid-1978, the Secretary of the Interior, i.e., the man institutionally in charge of Italy’s Police and the chief representative of the Republic’s repressive apparatus[†] was Francesco Cossiga (1928–2010), a granite pillar of the DC. Not surprisingly, to protesters, activists, and militants of

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

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

the Left, Cossiga* incarnated what was most rotten and coercive in the “bosses’ régime” (*il regime padronale*) they so intensely reviled: across city walls his name was accordingly smeared with a K and the double sig rune as that of a Nazi executioner: Ko~~ss~~iga.

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

First of all, leave high school students alone [: too young. But let college students go on a rampage, instead]. Withdraw police forces from the streets and campuses, infiltrate the movement with agents provocateurs ready to employ any means and let the protesters run amok for a dozen days, ravaging stores, setting cars aflame and laying waste to the cities [...]. Thereafter, backed by public opinion, police forces should have no qualms in dispatching all [the militants] to the hospital —not arresting them, since the judge would let them out anyway, but beating them, and beating those lecturers that foment them.⁷⁵

And so it went, in Padua and all over Italy’s Center-North. With the then celebrated inquest of “April 7 [1979],” and the police round-ups & repression that followed it, AO was razed to the ground. Payback time. The “angry” militants were savagely beaten alright, “the

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

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lecturer that fomented them” not so much at all, though all of them, like one big family, ended up behind bars. On multiple charges, including armed insurrection, incitement to violence, criminal responsibility for attempted robbery, homicide and attempted homicide (of two Carabinieri, respectively); arson; the kidnapping of six prison guards; malicious destruction of property; thirteen armed robberies; illegal possession of 23 handguns; and the importation of 150 kg of explosives, Negri was definitively sentenced to 17 years’ imprisonment.⁷⁶ Bad, bad teacher.

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

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

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

7.3.4) *Postmodern Afterparty, Rebirth & Coda*

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

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In Paris, meeting Foucault and his acolytes proved to be a critical juncture in Negri's trajectory: the encounter gave him new, juicy grit for his worn out, obsolete mills (of old-school philosophy and burned-out Marxian hermeneutics). So, he happily set out to repackage it all, mixing Foucault and Marx, and throwing in the blend catchy soundbites and (good) ideas stolen (in classic fashion) from classical anarchism. He thus began to speak of "a Communist wish" in the name of a non-descript "bio-political Enlightenment," peppering the argument with his old mantra of the "refusal of labor" (never mentioning what we should have in its stead), and capping it off with a general endorsement of a "universal basic income" (UBI) —a traditional staple of anarchism.* The crucial construct of "the proletariat" had to be post-modernized as well: he recoined it as "multitude" —a new metaphor of the working masses cast as some sort of hyper-viscous flubber made up of billions of techies wielding "power" in the virtual interstices of the web through their computing ("cognitive") skills. What slowly

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

emerged from this fluffy politological salad was a not-so-subtle free-marketeering paean of the Silicon Valley entrepreneur: in other words, we should be placing our trust in “IT folk who made a ton of money and who can already retire by the age of 35, people,” Negri pleaded, “who work at most 2 days a week managing their funds and then do volunteer work, honest, clean people often risen to wealth by accident —and who, sometimes, agitate to change the world.” Wealthy by accident? Presumably, that’s who leads “the multitude(s)” and pays their UBI. Poor (post-modern) “proletariat.”

The Multitude is one of three actors on this planet and it is caught between 2) the “American Monarchy,” which fumbles, staging (fascist) coup after coup all over the world, failing always and 3) the “transnational aristocracy” of (banking) capital: viz., the “Davos elite,” so dear to the hearts of the “conspiracy nuts” fixated on the existence of a worldwide, supra-national brethren of satanical bankers bent on vampirizing the planet. Negri, for his part, says to believe in it too —seeing it as “the symbol of the supersession of capitalism, as the dream of the capitalist project on a global scale,”— and what is even more exhilarating is that (in 2005 or so) the Davos group itself did solicit a “reflection” from Negri (what on earth for?), who obliged at once replying deferentially: “You are an aristocracy with a clear awareness of your interests.”

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Possibly alluding to the post-9/11 mayhem in Iraq, “The Americans,” he went on to pontificate, “have attempted a coup d’état on the global market, which you have, de facto, thwarted.” And in the finale comes a rather droll joint call-to-arms —vampire-bankers and multitudes of computer nerds, banded together: “At this time we must acknowledge that we share the common exigency to make the American project fail.” Terrific.

Ours, says the postmodern Negri, is a changed world: the “multitudinous” workers (of the Internet) possess no class-consciousness whatsoever but they are “powerful,” so powerful, in fact, that, in a funny reversal of the old power ratios, it is no longer the worker who is an appendage of “capital,” but the “polycentrism of capital” itself that is now in tow of the “multitude’s polycentrism.” “Polycentrism”: the familiar postmodern suggestion that there is no nation of bossmen lording it over on a continuous basis: just clusters of “theocons” and “priests” seeking to subjugate a labor-force that is sufficient unto itself in producing wealth and establishing order —the latter being another tenet of classical anarchism, which Negri immediately defiles by humming an improbable

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

ode to “poverty,” to its “power” (*la potenza della povertà*): poverty which he construes as “a great machine in terms of productive capacity” (?). Negri wants “communication and ‘alter-modernity’”(?), compounded by inflows of immigrants to increase population (as if the “indigenous” of the West had forgotten how to procreate): i.e., desperadoes that will come to cohabit in “the metropolis” with the cohorts of a “precariat” (all those workers suffering from job insecurity) on its way to becoming a “cognitariat” (techies barely making ends meet in a gig-economy)— all of it to the beat of “rap,” which, coos Negri, “is the soundtrack of the mestizo multitudes.” Geopolitically, in fine, considering what a “damning blow, what a major impediment” the Euro has been to American “unilateralism,” the only hope “for a truly revolutionary project,” Negri concludes, is *Europe*.⁷⁷

A more perfect summation of mystifying, unctuous nonsense is hard to find. To maintain, with a straight face, that the Euro has been a severe hindrance to American (financial) domination and that only Europe can “create polycentrism” is either the mark of hopeless incompetence in all things economic (yet another trait he shares with Foucault) or, more simply, a sign of willingness to play

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the game of geo-babble, whereby the “makers of reality”^{*} manufacture the (political) events, and the academics and pundits engage to their hearts’ delight in weaving all sorts of cockamamie interpretations thereof. And the talk never ends. (Postwar) Europe, we know it, is a technocratic construct assembled under strict American supervision, and the Euro, managed in proconsular fashion via the German colonial central has been a means to constrict via a general rationing of credit Europe’s peripheral economies into anemic rates of growth: the Euro has streamlined the process, proving to be an efficient buttress to America’s imperial policy of unrestricted acquisition of choice European assets via the dollar, which remains the unchallenged world reserve currency.

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

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

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

But push never comes to shove, because Negri’s “theocons” are as immaterial as “the White Suprematists” we hear so much about these days: they are all phantasms, different costumes, shifting holograms of the same evanescent villain created by the same minds in the same game of political deceit, of which Negri, besides, has been a fairly successful player. There is no supra-national aristocracy of capital, and Negri must have known this well enough: there certainly exists an aristocracy, whose imperial purview runs along the London-New York axis: everything else is an emanation of this main center of power: the rest of the world is but a congeries of vassal States inhabited by hapless, ever more confused masses of middle-class guns for hire, for whom an offspring is ever less affordable, and hordes of destitute nobodies (the hallowed “Poor”) that are, thematically speaking, perfect subjects for impassioned Leftist orations, entities whose

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existential lot *everyone* contemplates with the deepest abhorrence, entities *nobody* cares for, least of all academic mercenaries like Foucault, Negri and all the post-Marxian upper-class rabble that made a career out of the avenues cleverly opened by the System to sing the praise of “the people,” of “the Poor” with an obvious view to reinforcing the State’s stranglehold (viz., by *flattering* Society’s losers and slaves so that they remain exactly where they are, at the bottom, forever). We know it, it is too easy to (be faking to) root for rap & poverty from the height of one’s fancy pad in the “metropolis’s” poshest *arrondissement*.

Such, then, is the rancid marmalade Negri came to extract from the mish-mash of *Empire*, marmalade he thereafter learned to can into a multitude of formats to fit the occasion. Allegedly, in doing research for the book, he had gone knocking on the door of good ole’ Kossiga himself (!) to pick the politician’s brain and discuss “the theories” he would later “collect in that beautiful book, *Empire*,” said the DC statesman in another book-interview, his last, entitled *Fotti il potere* (“Fuck Power”). “*Il mio amico Toni Negri, uomo coltissimo*” (“My good friend Toni Negri, a man of superlative erudition...”), gloated Kossiga, had been sharing with him in these preparatory discussions loads of insights, including a sensational discovery —to wit, that “the social class bound

to serve as the new vector for ‘the Revolution’ is no longer the working class but the [community of] engineers and physicists and all those endowed with specialized knowledge.” What a revelation! Wasn’t this always the case? Hadn’t Thorstein Veblen made it crystal-clear in the early 1900s that business enterprise drew its usurpative power from the illegitimate appropriation of technical knowledge for commercial profit? And had he not suggested in his late Utopian memorandum “A Soviet of Technicians,” that a better future lay in a society entrusted to “councils of engineers,” who would base production-management on the disallowance of corporate (“absentee”) exploitation?⁷⁸ Cultivated though he was, Negri was clearly not *colto* enough, or sufficiently interested in truth to know where to dig. But what do these people care about truth? Parroting the “bad teacher,” as if wholly seduced by the suggestiveness of Negri’s arguments (was he really?), the former Secretary of the Interior in the *Anni di Piombo* went on to regurgitate before his interviewer that “Globalization had wiped out the power of [national] States and, therefore, that of Empires [so thoroughly, that] in the absence of a superior authority, of a regulating principle, politics is no longer capable of managing the complexity of world affairs.”⁷⁹ Power? No such thing, nobody’s in charge — ‘tis so obvious.

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

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

Those are big words, worthy of the highest, verily: notwithstanding his disobliging and rather inopportune remarks about “coups,” “unilateralism,” and the like, the “American Monarchy” seems to have been quite fond of Negri. Go figure. So fond, in fact, as to have made “an instant hit” of his unpalatable manuscript. The Italian should have been grateful for the exciting coda his career got to enjoy by grace of the Monarchy’s reviewing bureaus & publicity agencies —what with the imprint of Harvard University Press, the multiple foreign editions, including two Chinese ones, and sold-out book-tours the world over. All of it “at the perfect moment,” indeed: right

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

in conjunction with 9/11, and this is significant. That day marks an epochal divide in our recent history: it connotes a great turn of the screw the “US Monarchy” imparted first of all to America herself via an ultra-fascist coup (which perdures) —a real one that did not fail— and to the rest of its *Imperium* with the successful instillation of a “culture” of fearful anxiety for whatever specter America sees fit to agitate in turn (The Muslim suicide-bomber, killer viruses, Right-wing Suprematism, “the evil Russians” etc.). That Negri’s tome is possibly the most memorable bestseller from that critical juncture gives pause: it’s an odd pairing. It has now been nearly a quarter-of-a century since this book came out; strikingly ugly, void, unshapely, and already withered to begin with, it has not aged well either, but so it goes; such is our world.