Appearing on the first anniversary of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, these three books from Verso present analyses of the United States, the media, and the events surrounding September 11 by Europe's most stimulating and provocative philosophers. Probing beneath the level of TV commentary, political and cultural orthodoxies, and 'rent-a-quote' punditry, Jean Baudrillard, Paul Virilio and Slavoj Žižek offer three highly original and readable accounts that serve as both fascinating introductions to the direction of their respective projects and insightful critiques of the unfolding events. This series seeks to comprehend the philosophical meaning of September 11 and will leave untouched none of the prevailing views currently propagated.

**THE SPIRIT OF TERRORISM**

Jean Baudrillard

**GROUND ZERO**

Paul Virilio

**WELCOME TO THE DESERT OF THE REAL**

Slavoj Žižek
Better to expect the foreseeable
than to be surprised by the unexpected.

André Isaac (Pierre Doc)
automatically, to the advantage of a global information system freed of any concern for verisimilitude . . . of anything elementarily human.

As we were to observe two years later in New York, this lesson would rapidly be assimilated by the new strategists of world terrorism. There would no longer be any heroes, star performers, demands or military operators, and the actions undertaken would be perceived, like any natural catastrophe, as ‘manifestations of divine anger’.

The great technological events may change our lives but they will not create a new form of art. They may create a generation of art critics who will tell us, ‘This is art!’

OSWALD WELLES

‘The world [is going] to ruin,’ warned Karl Kraus, and ‘man’s feeling of superiority triumphs in the expectation of a spectacle to which only contemporaries are admitted.’\(^{61}\) Like Stockhausen, the grand old master of electronic music, flying into raptures over the spectacle of the New York attacks which killed four thousand people in September 2001: ‘What we have witnessed is the greatest work of art there has ever been!’\(^{62}\)

61 Kraus, \textit{In These Great Times}, p. 57.
62 In translating this passage, I have followed contemporary German newspaper reports of Stockhausen’s comments (‘das größte Kunstwerk, das es je gegeben hat’). These do, however, seem to represent a somewhat questionable account both of the composer’s actual words and of the context [Trans].
Why not four million dead next time? Deterring art from being the manifestation of bodies can lead us a long way – to the era of the atom, of biological fiction, of avatars and televisual terrorism.

And this is indeed the paradox of a ‘culture mill’ which has, since the nineteenth century, hitched itself to the invention of that contiguity of man and instrument (Gabriele d’Annunzio) that will dictate what is or is not modern or revolutionary.

When Lenin writes that ‘Communism is the power of the Soviets plus the electrification of the country’, one may go beyond the hackneyed formula to think either of the Italian Futurists announcing the advent of the ‘multiple man who gets tangled up in iron and feeds on electricity’, or of the Islamist suicide hijackers hurling their planes into the towers of the World Trade Center.

Similarly, the clear-sighted art lover will wonder how Van Gogh (whom Signac called a ‘mad phenomenon’) and, after him, the originators of Fauvism, would have painted without the illumination of industrial lighting, whether by gas or electricity, rivalling the brilliance of the regal star of the Mediterranean.

What would the Realist or Naturalist schools of the nineteenth century have been without the objective accident of the photographic pose, or the Bauhaus and Moholy-Nagy without the aerialization of human vision and the cinema? Or German Expressionists without the industrial production of corpses by military-scientific progress – with the ‘ghosts’63 that were to invade the radar screens of the Battle of Britain in 1940 yet to come, supplanting as they did all other audiovisual warning systems, and hence all other systems for representing coming dangers.

And one will also wonder about the paradoxical logic of Mies van der Rohe asserting that ‘less is more’, and the fanaticism of Adolf Loos judging ornament a crime against modernity – half a century before Andy Warhol declared: ‘If you want to know about Andy Warhol, just look at the surfaces of my paintings... There’s nothing behind it’, and – talking about himself as though, in principle, he did not exist – ‘It’s all there. There’s nothing missing. I am everything my press album says I am.’

There are many ways of being iconoclastic. You can burn pictures and those who painted them, erase or tamper with the cartouches of monuments, break religious statues or blow up those of political idols, as at the end of the Communist era.

But how is it when the iconoclast is the plastician himself? After the fall of their traditional patrons (divine-right monarchy, princes, the Church of Rome), artists, in an attempt to survive, to be famous for at least fifteen minutes, had at their disposal neither the panoply of the warrior, the tools of the politician, nor the irrefutability of the scientist.

By contrast with a literature which, by its technical calling, had involved itself at a very early stage in current events, thanks to the talent of its writers of serialized fiction and its journalist-novelists (from Rabelais to Stendhal, Balzac, Dickens, London, Zola and Cendrars), the rest of the culture mill stood aloof, bogged down in an official academic staidness, shamefully conservative.

63 In War and Cinema, Virilio writes of ‘the deregulation of a battle in which ghosts played an ever greater role – screen ghosts of enemy pilots served to confirm that they had been shot down, and ghostly radar images, voices and echoes came through on the screens, radios and sonars’ (London: Verse, 1989), p. 76 [Trans.].
Yet in 1818, *The Raft of the Medusa*, that great manifesto-painting by Géricault, a man with a liking for the stray news item, penetrated the world of political and judicial affairs to make headlines in the French and Anglo-Saxon press. At the Salon of 1857, in a feverish social context, it would be the turn of Courbet and the *naturalist* scandal. And in 1874, 'Impressionism', invented by a mercenary criticism...64

Cheered by this entry into the grand manoeuvres of the world of news technologies, many plasticians saw here a practical source of substitute activity and renewal, both in terms of profit and aesthetically.

'Slow news, no news!' The artists of the twentieth century, like the anarchist with his home-made bombs, the revolutionary suicide bomber or the mass killers celebrated by the mass-circulation press, would themselves become wielders of plastic explosives, visual mischief-makers, anarchists of colour, form and sound, before coming to occupy the gutter press's gallery of horrors.

Soon, as René Gimpel was to remark — or, later, Orson Welles — contemporary art could no longer do without the connivance of these art critics who would 'tell us: "This is art"; simply because art had become *unrecognizable*.

And, like the statues of the great Buddhas of Bamiyan after the Taliban had gone by, it would be impossible to identify it unless its authenticity were duly certified by some specialist or appraiser.

As when paper money replaced gold at the beginning of

64 The term was coined by the critic Louis Leroy as a derogatory description of Monet's approach in the painting 'Sunrise: Impression' [Trans.].

the last century, it would now be necessary to check out the market prices to learn that in June 2001, for example, a Picasso was worth more than a Monet, or a Warhol more than a Rembrandt — though this is of little consequence on the *global disappearance* market, where telepresence is supplanting the real presence of the art object, and also of its buyer and seller.

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What are we talking about today when we speak of art? This is a question it has become increasingly difficult to answer.

*Art is like a currency which must remain in circulation,* claimed a perceptive August Wilhelm Schlegel.

But in a world that is resolutely accidental — that is to say, an enemy to its own substance — one wonders what bonds of authenticity can still unite the market value of our art objects to their plastic presence and, above all, what can still bind us to them?

If, according to the time-honoured formula 'art is long and life is short', the uproarious entry of contemporary and 'current' works into the all-powerful news market — where, as we know, merchandise is valueless after twenty-four hours or twenty-four seconds — has destroyed the notion of *durée,* which had until then been involved in the assessment of the object, at the same time as it has destroyed that other tangible quality that was its *rarity* — the fact that the work is considered unique from its conception or has become so over the centuries.

What, at first glance, distinguishes the true work is, as Rainer Maria Rilke wrote, its 'infinite solitude', the enigmatic attraction of a *uniqueness* which, paradoxically, offers
the multitude of its sensory adequations to those who, in looking at them, produce half the pictures (Paul Klee), and often more than that — like that nostalgic emperor of China who complained to their creator, Li Suu-Hsueh, about the noise made by the waterfalls he had painted, which were preventing him from sleeping.65

The true work of art is not, then, one of those arrangements of mirrors in which the magicians of Ancient Greece claimed to re-create the universe for the naive Athenian onlookers, any more than it is, for the creator or the spectator, a narcissistic reflection or the product of some 'real-time' dramaturgy.

The work of art is not academic; it conforms to no pre-conceived plan and expresses only the extreme reverence of receptiveness or, more trivially, of the extreme vigilance of the living body that seers, hears, intuits, moves, breathes and changes.

'Life's emotions are basically merely steps', confided the great dancer Sylvie Guillem. 'I regard my body as an instrument of discovery. . . . You have to astonish yourself each time, to discover yourself.'66

Unlike that modern Olympic champion who declared that his body was his worst enemy, Sylvie, when she is dancing, makes an ally of hers. 'One day,' she adds, 'I danced without being there, with only the memory of my technique. I have regretted it ever since.'

Similarly when, at the beginning of the twentieth century — that century of machines', as Picabia called it — Sergei Diaghilev commanded his dancers to 'astonish' him,67 one might understand him to be saying: 'Don't do it like machines, do it the way you would in real life when you do everything for the first and last time, for if, in real life, time never ends, nothing is repeated either, nothing is exactly banal for us, every moment that arrives is a new moment — the ordinary course of life is the extraordinary, the permanent feature of existence is astonishment.'

'You make a choice every second — that is the magic of life!' confided one beautiful actress, alluding to the old philosopher's forgotten remark, or the words of that lover of nonsense, André Isaac: 'I am always on the brink, on the brink of something.'68

And I myself have written: 'Here is no longer, all is now.' All the arts — and particularly the arts of re-presentation were, then, to be fatally damaged, then destroyed, by the constant acceleration of technologies of presentation and reproduction both dromological and dromoscopic which, by reducing the space and time between subject and object to zero, were to eliminate, as a matter of course, not just the concepts of rarity and durée, but the nodal points of the potentiality and the 'becoming' of the work of art — its phenomenology.69

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65 François Cheng, *Vide et plenum. Le langage pictural chinois* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1979). One thinks, too, of the open systems of Platonic thought and the expression coined by the Greeks, kalestaggathia, which refers to the beauty and goodness of a consoling art.

66 Sylvie Guillem, 'Mon corps et moi', Le Nouvel Observateur, 3 January 1996. 'Avoid over-dancing', she says.

67 He also famously asked Cocteau to do the same [Trans.].

68 André Isaac, alias Pierre Dac (1893—1975), the great mid-twentieth-century French humorist and parodist [Trans.].

The total eclipse of consciousness of the Trinity Site physicists was, then, culturally avant-garde. It would, in effect, be followed by the eclipse of consciousness on the part of the worldly, joining without too many complaints in the countdown of the balance of nuclear terror.

As a continuation of total war by other means, nuclear deterrence marked the end of the distinction between wartime and peacetime, and cleared the way for a worldwide state of undeclared war between the Western and Soviet blocs — of which, quite logically, terrorism and gangsterism would be the main beneficiaries.

Similarly, techno-scientific retro-progress having exhausted the interest the inhabitants of the biosphere could still take in their future, it was normal that they should turn away from it to the wasteland of origins. At the beginning of the Cold War, a start was made in the United States on digging trenches in suburban gardens, and storing away in prefabricated shelters all that seemed essential to survive the end of the world in the best of conditions . . . .

The authorities in the big cities had even organized a few evacuation exercises in urban centres, but facts had to be faced: in the event of a general nuclear alert, millions of drivers, fleeing together on overcrowded exit routes, would be caught in inextricable traffic jams, and perish before they reached their suburban bunkers.

The inhabitants of the old European bastion, for their part, adapted as best they could to the Welfare State’s mutation into a suicidal one.

The reversed perspective of a planetary life entering its terminal phase would give rise to a conservatism of a kind previously almost unknown, a museomania which would far exceed the old academy of the Muses, and would merely reveal the dreadful poverty of Western techno-culture.

There would be museums for everything — in a kind of cult of trash or ‘unrecognized pop art’, the fetishistic infatuation of ageing populations with all that had been rejected, forgotten, outdated, all that had previously been found wearisome or repellent.

At the point when we were condemned to leave for ever, we would set about collecting, in no particular order, the old mechanical toys, the products and sentimental flotsam of a failed modernity.

Arctophiles and philumaniasts, collectors of breweriana and even dachshundiana — we would give names to all these devotees, and to their collecting passions. And they would have their various museums to go to: museums of photography, nougat, coffee-pots, the cinematograph, Camembert, marriage, posters, peasant and working-class life, railways, household electrical goods . . .

Little by little, the differences between the contemporary living-space and the sites of the archaeological past would fade. Modern Europe would take on a discreetly funereal character.

Lost amid their contemporary suburbs, the historic towns and cities — with their palaces, cathedrals and museums — would become like those dead cities of Antiquity, with their tombs and mausoleums, where the weapons, vehicles, treasure, familiar objects and images of the pleasures they had enjoyed would be laid out before the unseeing eyes of the dead.

Before ultimately handing them over to an exotic young crowd, some municipal officials are now proposing to parody the libations and funeral orgies of ancient times there. Like Christophe Girard of the Paris city authority, who announced
to the press in April 2001: 'I want to get away from the usual ways of using cultural sites. A museum doesn't have to be a temple. You can dance in the Louvre in front of the Rembrandts, as they have done at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam . . . I have set myself the task of restoring the capital's festive character.'

Yet vast tracts were reduced to no-go areas, refugee camps or conservation areas, nature reserves with their moribund fauna and flora.

The mountains, the coast, disused military or industrial sites, worked-out mines, closed-down blast furnaces, the back-to-back housing and tenements of a disappeared proletariat would be listed as historic monuments.

With techno-culture — as flashback or feedback — continuing on its retreat towards the void of origins, the mass media would soon lead with a story of 'Mayan sculpture and Zulu masks to stand alongside the Mona Lisa'.

The time of primal arts was the childhood of art, if not indeed its prenatal state.

A museum would be built for it not far from the Eiffel Tower, and the 'scientific adviser' to the enterprise — at the inauguration of the new galleries of primal arts at the Louvre — would be able to tell us: 'There are no longer any grounds for the old quarrel between the so-called aesthetic and the so-called ethnographic approaches.'

Doubtless because, long before playing host to what were called primal arts, the Louvre was no longer anything but a miroir des lames, a huge ethnographic warehouse living on beyond its own end, as André Malraux had predicted, thanks to a considerable pedagogical/commercial effort directed towards the new mass tourism, and also towards a native population for whom its own culture had become, in a few short decades, as alien as that of distant civilizations which disappeared thousands of years ago.

There was, then, really no basis for the quarrel, since 'those who, in looking at them, do half the work of the pictures' (Paul Klee) and those who, by reading them, do half the work of books (Voltaire) had long been marked out for decimation.

Ethnographic museums — above all, musées des Invalides.

Here again, we have kept tally of our accursed artists, of the suicide-artists of modernity — the failures, the suicides, the halt and the lame, the alcoholics, the obsessives, the addicts, the insane or the devotees of mutilation or gratuitous crimes — but we have said nothing about the constant aggravation of the ill-treatment inflicted on an equally accursed public — blinded, deafened, despised and, finally, declared the enemy by arts of sheer terror.

Yet, in the middle of the fateful 1930s, the author of Brave New World, Aldous Huxley, was already concerned at the decline of a European culture in which the stimulation of the senses was coming to mean the organization of ever more violent orgies (sex/blood/race . . .), with the risk that societies in crisis would be pushed into new massacres. He even took the view that these aesthetic problems justified international conferences as urgent as those called to deal with disarmament or the world economy.

70 'Green, gay and a specialist in the luxury industries, this is the unprecedented profile of the new culture spokesman in the Paris Mairie' (Interview with Sylvie Santini in Match), and 'On peut danser devant les Rembrandt', Le Journal du dimanche, 22 April 2001.

71 'The orgies of nationalism are not Platonic orgies for orgies' sake.'
And we may well wonder today what poisoned chalice is being offered to a demeured public when the decision comes down from on high that no distinction is now to be made between the aesthetic and ethnographic approaches to exhibited works; that the field of immediate consciousness will be treated in the same way as things that are necessarily of the order of an instrumentalized knowledge — disembodied and, indeed, far removed from the body.

A bit like Andy Warhol putting his faith, like so many before him, in the inequality created between artists and spectators by the techniques of the advertisers' high-speed art and the global public's predisposition to obey the orders and signals of operative images . . . .

With *The Mystery of Picasso*, a film made in 1956 by Henri-Georges Clouzot, spectators had already been treated to the unveiling of the genesis of the master's works by the camera.

Readers will remember seeing Picasso behind a great translucent panel where he stood to paint — the panel serving as interface between himself and the lens. As in a children's cartoon, the works that were forming appeared in transparency on this medium, thus giving the viewers the illusion of watching the various phases of their gestation 'live', and ultimately, after the usual rethinking and retouching, of watching these images brought painfully into the world by an exhausted but satisfied creative artist.

They lead to practical results — to the piling up of armaments, to senseless economic competition . . . and ultimately to war.' Huxley, *Beyond the Menique Bay* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1974), p. 85.

Huxley went on to advocate new 'emotional cultures' (ibid., p. 86).

Shortly afterwards, taking advantage of the remarkable progress of echographic techniques, obstetricians would provide the mass media with a bulk supply of the successive images of a foetal life which had until then remained invisible to ordinary mortals.

In *Le Monde des Débats* (September 2000), Jean-Pierre Mohen, the director of the Centre de recherche et de restauration des musées de France, regaled us with the following announcement: 'Radiographic and other studies are providing new and original information on what painters have done, consciously or otherwise.'

With this final puzzle, the fusion/confusion of arts and techno-sciences could be said to have reached its end — that long deconstruction begun, consciously or otherwise, by artists themselves some one hundred and fifty years ago.

After the biological parent, the 'creative artist' would, in his turn, be declared suspect, and would have to bow out before the scientist and the infallible 'know-how' of his instruments — before those who now call themselves 'art geneticists' and direct their efforts, using the chemical, physical and electronic arsenals at their disposal, 'to making visible and available to everyone what artists had concealed beneath the surface of their works', whereas before genetics (in the sense of the genesis of works of art), 'all we had to go on' in literature, painting and music, they claim, 'was the end result'.

72 'Painting belongs essentially to the field of the senses. This is a fact, and all the knowledge in the world will not prevail against the experience of a painter's eye,' declared Jean Bazaine in February 1992, prefacing these remarks the irreplaceable work of Nuances, the journal of the Association pour le respect de l'intégrité du patrimoine artistique (ARIPA).
Once the painting is finished, I have nothing to say," explained Balthus not so very long ago. But no matter; the scientist will make him speak, will get the information out of him. It is as though, running Clouzot's film backwards, the prenatal sequences of the work were to resurface in succession.

After the Cartesian animal-machine or the man-machine, here is the automatic work of art dreamt of by Hugo or by Dada, art reduced to the criteria of the optimal play of self-adapting machines by 'scientific experts' ignorant of what the cyberneticist knows: namely, that the machine can become 'more intelligent', but it 'does not learn' and, ultimately, soon ceases to interest or astonish the general public. 73

It is, perhaps, to soften the blow of this probable disaffection that the new cultural promoters are now trying to substitute the advertising displays of high-speed art for technoscientific explication.

We learn, for example, that a powerful cosmetics multinational recently formed partnerships with the Palazzo Pitti and the Barberini to co-produce art shows and participate in the 'restoration' of old works of art which, we are told, be *readapted to current tastes*. 

Exhibited in this way, after a clean-up and a makeover, the magisterial works of Tintoretto or Titian will be able to convey to the general public and to the students in the schools 'a delightfully effective advertising message, enabling us to divine the pop potential of the masterworks of past art', as was announced by Antonio Paolucci, the superintendent of the artistic treasures and historical monuments of the city of Florence.

The works of Raphael and Velasquez have suffered the same *post mortem* attentions at the Prado.

And Jean-Pierre Cuzin, head curator of the department of painting at the Louvre, announced to the press that 'the Mona Lisa which, like Marilyn, *draws in the crowds* will soon have its own separate room donated by the Japanese private television channel NTV which, as we know, has already funded in full the 'restoration' of the ceilings of the Sistine Chapel.

'Drawing copies the residue of a vision,' observed Alberto Giacometti. 'It is my belief, whether we are dealing with painting or sculpture, that only the drawing counts. If one more or less mastered drawing, all the rest would be possible . . . *Drawing is the beginning of everything.*' 74

This undisputed master of the aesthetics of disappearance seemed not to know that, from now on, no *beginning would be guaranteed*. 75 For some fifty years, in fact, drawing has been banished from the walls of art galleries, and now it is painting's turn to be considered the technical vestige of another era.

The museomania of the poor was not, then, to spare the privileged, and this would be another meaning of *big optics*: multinational powers aiming for a monopoly of the market in appearances; capitalists no longer rushing for gold, but for the totality of the world's images.

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73 'Orson Welles on TV', *De Vier*, no. 4.

74 From the catalogue of the exhibition to mark Giacometti's centenary, Centre Pompidou, Winter 2001.

After Ted Turner of CNN, Bill Gates would get in on the act and declare: ‘It’s possible, you can never know, that the universe exists only for me. If so, it’s sure going well for me, I must admit.’76

As consenting victims of contemporary solipsism, the Guggenheims, for their part, are expecting to reign supreme over a global museum. Similarly, we were to learn that, in the Berlusconi government’s Finance Bill for 2002, the management of museums, archives, libraries and archaeological sites would be handed over in its entirety to the Italian private sector for a five-year rental of 160 million euros.

All this gives an unexpected meaning to a recent text in which the art critic commented on a new way of consuming art thanks to the Internet, and, secondarily, a new way of ensuring the economic survival of authors who would not really be authors since, as in the way the rights to electronic games are tied up, they would no longer be the exclusive owners of their works.

In keeping with the criteria prevailing in the electro-optical economy, this new art could in future be regarded as a ‘service to society’ and these artists, by being admitted to the status of researchers, could be sponsored by multinationals for two or three years with an obligation to publish — exactly, we are told, as happens in the scientific world.77

Another prominent example of this palace revolution, the Paris School of Political Sciences, has announced that its students will in future be trained in ‘the management of cultural enterprises’, while the great hall of the École des hautes études commerciales at Jouy-en-Josas, traditionally reserved for the end-of-year ball, has been rechristened ‘Contemporary Art Space’.

This arrangement, which will involve the staging of two exhibitions a year, will be rounded off with artists in residence — a further indication of the replacement of true art lovers and the old gallery owners by transnational managers.

As wedding presents in these unnatural marriages of a kind that have long been solemnized in the United States — Yale, Austin or Berkeley possessing important contemporary collections — our artists would no doubt be required urgently to provide for their new sponsors their power of terroristic change, their meta-design.

This privatization — or, if you prefer, takeover — of the world’s appearances had begun in the nineteenth century when, on the Romantic pretext of saving cathedrals from demolition, medieval art and architecture had been disfigured, adapting them to the machinistic taste of the engineers. Today it is the turn of the restorers, makeover artists and scientific experts of all kinds to get their hands on the biodiversity of a European art in which the gods assumed a human face, in which the museums were simply the temples of a Graeco-Latin and Judeo-Christian anthropocentrism.78

To enter the race of economic globalism is then also, for

77 Michel Nuridsany, ‘Internet, la grande rupture’, Le Figaro, 8 September 2000.
78 Compare also the attitude of the Roman Church in the ‘iconoclastic crisis’ and at the Second Council of Nicaea (787), where the legitimacy of images and their worship was decided, ‘the Christ of the Incarnation having built a bridge between the visible and the invisible’.
the *compradores* of the Old World, to throw off the cumbersome burden of their own culture. To be convinced of this, we need only listen once again to Christophe Girard of the Paris city authority announcing that there will be dancing in the Louvre where the Rembrandts hang, and — why not, after that? — in churches kept open at night for the purpose.

Apart from obvious economic and strategic considerations, one might also see this as one of the causes of the recent moral abandonment of the state of Israel by its traditional allies and systems of information whose traditional task it is to invent every new enemy, every possible accident or crime.

But let us listen to Joseph Roth observing, on the eve of the first total war in contemporary history: 'In the eyes of the Hitlerian pagans, it is not just the Jews, but the Christians too who are the children of Israel, and it is clear to anyone who has eyes to see that anti-Semitism is a pretext and what we have here is, in reality, an anti-Christianism. During the Third Reich they started with the boycotting of Jewish shops and went on to boycott Christian churches. They spat on the star of David in order to attack the Cross.'

Let us also look clear-sightedly at what is currently going on: Jewish and Christian graves profaned by 'calculated satanic acts', corpses desecrated, synagogues and churches set on fire in our suburbs... the new routine of a local terrorism, systematically ignored by the mass media.

And the manoeuvres of the French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, also spring to mind, calling up as he did the President of the European Convention, Roman Herzog, to declare the reference to the religious heritage of Europe in the Charter of Fundamental Rights 'unacceptable' (European Agency press release, 14 September 2000).

Yet, on the eve of the Christian festival of All Saints, Halloween is celebrated in our schools, with its cortege of ghosts, witches and satanacs... some even going so far as to propose the cancellation of the Christmas festival and its seasonal rejoicing in favour of that commercial masquerade of which 'Satan is the only God!'

So, when our cultural spokesmen, such as Jean-Pierre Mohen, announce that they have, in their field, to make *political choices*, we shall understand them to mean *transpolitical choices*.

As we saw in the laborious negotiations of the 1995 GATT round, the conversion to planetary economy required the absolute conformity of all goods *without any cultural exception*.

The *nothing but the Earth* of globalism, showing itself gradually for what it is: a return to sender of the old *colonial slave code* which laid down that *no durable civilization must be allowed to constitute itself in the colonies.*

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80 Satanac is the name given to Lucifer in Manichaean mythology. In Hans-Jürgen Heinrich's interview with Cioran, which the author quotes above, Cioran also says: 'I have always found the idea attractive that it wasn't God, but Satan, a little Satan, Satanac, who created the world.' [Trans.]

81 This is an allusion to Paul Morand's book *Rien que la terre* (Paris: Grasset, 1926) [Trans.].
'Tomorrow you will all be Negroes!' prophesied James Baldwin, turning American racism round against its perpetrators.82

In the early years of the twentieth century, art lovers and gallery owners should have been on their guard against what the Cubists, the Expressionists and the mass media crudely dubbed 'art nègre' or 'art nègro-africain'. This was predominately an airport art, a commodity from nowhere and no one, to be consumed by anyone at all.

The art nègre art object — and its masks which no longer had any actual faces behind them — was a warning to the artists of a Europe which was then still colonial. It heralded their imminent identification with the artists of voiceless peoples, who are no longer permitted to be conscious of, and take any pride in, themselves.83

From the 1950s onwards, with the coming of decolonization, we were to discover the transcultural and transpolitical power of the new global markets.

Nuclear power, for example, where it was difficult to distinguish what was commercial (power stations) from what was military (the bomb), despite the risk of the technology spreading to terrorists, which was to be reckoned with even then.

Similarly, the future of the vital markets of energy, information and the biotechnologies was already mapped out: it would accompany the drift towards the wholesale disappearance of nation d'État and its replacement by a multitude of transnational networks. The politico-economic scandals of the late twentieth century have reminded us once again — democracies die, sooner or later, from the secret duplication of state services.

But what is concealed today behind the cracked façade of our republican constitutions?

The tragic events in New York in September 2001 showed us the alarming situation of an overpowerful state suddenly brought up short against its own consciousness — or, rather, against its techno-scientific unconsciousness: in other words, against the Gnosticist faith on which it is founded.

Let us not forget that, since the inopportune pursuit of the Manhattan Project by American physicists,84 the scientific 'sorcerer's spirit' had found itself virtually released from the authority of its former patrons and, particularly, of their axiomatics — the ideological, social, economic and cultural criteria — on which the authority of the State was founded. And that had led to Hiroshima.

A purified dystopia, a watertight system in which, after the collapse of the old epistemological ambitions, the scientist,

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82 In The Fire Next Time (London: Penguin Books in association with Michael Joseph, 1964), Baldwin writes: 'The white man's unadmitted — and apparently, to him, unspeakable — private fears and longings are projected on to the Negro. The only way he can be released from the Negro's tyrannical power over him is to consent, in effect, to become black himself' (p. 82). And in his last essay, 'Whose Harlem is this anyway?' he writes: 'The profit motive makes everyone a nigger or a nigger's overseer' [Trans.].

83 Caspar David Friedrich.

84 'There was a moment in the history of humanity when mankind could have taken a quite other path and no atomic arsenal would ever have seen the light of day. That moment very much depended on the behaviour of a handful of scientists who were, for the most part, left-wing humanists . . . . But all of them, without exception, continued their work imperturbably' (Charles Mopsik).
stripped of his civilizational attributes, would work only for the
scientist, each discovery grafting itself on to the previous one and sci-
ence finding the sources and ends of its existence on its own ground,
like the Jehovah of Genesis.85

This lends another meaning, for example, to the remarks of
the Franco-Iranian philosopher Daryush Shayegan, who told a
journalist: ‘To speak of civilizations as blocs counterposed to
one other without interpenetration is an illusion.’ He went on
to say: ‘We are all Westerners.’ And he analysed the subtle rela-
tions between Islamism and an omnipresent Marxism in the
Third World in the postcolonial period — relations he referred
to as a Bolivarization of religion.

In fact, in general pan-Islamic terrorism one can see
straight away Arab (or other) multinationals exploiting the
beliefs or hatred of a global subproletariat, a lumpen class
produced by decolonization and mass immigration, but one
sees also an elite of rich Muslim students, military men and
technicians (pilots, programmers, scientists, etc.) who, as is
immediately noticeable, resemble in every particular the suici-
dal members of the American ‘Heaven’s Gate’ cybercult.

To speak, as Daryush Shayegan does, of the light which comes
from the West, and of a world which will not be able to escape
Progress, is to fall inadvertently into the biblical company of
Lucifer (the Bearer of Light), into the tragic irony of Dürer’s
Melancholia, and to forget that the Judaeo-Christian story
of Genesis is the story of a scientific suicide.

As I have written elsewhere, in emancipating itself from poli-
tics, faith in progress has entered the field of pure strategy —
the essence of war — the pure strategy of the nuclear status
quo.

Like the illusionism to which it owes a great debt, techno-
scientific development has become an art of the false in the
service of the art of the lie — a series of manipulations of
appearances, tricks and, in some cases, a tissue of absurdities.86

When, during the Cold War, the talk was of the society
of the spectacle, of politics-as-spectacle or alienation to
commercialism, what was mainly at issue was the spectacular
revolution of an informational complex moving, over a few
decades, from the old totalitarian threats to global threats,
from Leninist electrification to the global electronic field.

So, when Bill Joy, at the end of the last century, carried out
his informal survey among specialists in the most powerful
technologies, he introduced us to a curious melting-pot, run-
ned from the inevitable superman to Isaac Asimov’s robot
Dog, Michelangelo or the paths of Buddhism . . . but, first
and foremost, to fiction, mainly through productions made
for TV, the aesthetic aberrations of the current techno-science
futurologists presenting frequent similarities with Star Trek
or Alien.87

We had moved, then, from the realism and the rationalist
logic of the printed word, and the Jules Verne-type novel of
scientific prediction, to the teratological phantasmagorics of sci-
ence-fiction scenarios aimed at the industrial cinema, before
these latter were in their turn eliminated by the telescoping, in
the new popular cinema, of special effects, whose instantaneity

85 Here I have adapted a phrase of Schlegel’s.
86 Sun Tzu: ‘Strategy is the art of lying.’
87 Joy, ‘Why the future doesn’t need us’. In that article, Bill Joy
informs us of his immediate hopes of participating in a wider dis-
cussion with individuals from various different horizons in a cast of
mind free both from the fear and from the idolizing of technology.
and interactivity exclude any coherent narrative whatsoever, with the spectator no longer being provided with any kind of verisimilitude, but fed exclusively on the exhibition of accidents.

It will also be noticed that once this stage of the meaninglessness of the visible world was reached, the (American, Asian and other) dream factories rapidly laid off a large number of original authors and screenwriters who were regarded as unproductive. Shortly afterwards, we were to see the failure of 'Sillywood'. After being announced in 1992 as the 'new golden age of entertainment', the marriage between Silicon Valley and Hollywood was to end in failure after a few short months — partly for want of a common strategy, but mainly for want of content.

'When nothingness becomes reality, reality in its turn tips over into nothingness,' stated the old strategist.

It will be hard to grasp anything of the various expansionist comments currently being heard around the world if we do not keep firmly in mind the oft-neglected fact that every technology expresses itself in its time as a new field of force.

Here as elsewhere, what is troubling about the covert state of transnational terrorism — that unknown quantity — is its growing subordination to a techno-scientific progress which is, itself, unauthored and dependent on the development of its own audiovisual media and platforms.

The scientific imagination ultimately suffers the same fate as 'e-tainment'; it comes to resemble that of those TV viewers who thought the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11 was merely another disaster movie, or that of the Islamist suicide-attackers no doubt dying happy at becoming actors in a global super-production in which reality would tip over once and for all into electronic nothingness.

The intermittent, violent terror of exceptional epidemics had given way to the constant fear of ordinary endemics which had until then passed unnoticed.

LÉON BERNARD

The totalitarianisms of the twentieth century could not have been established if, as his minister Albert Speer noted of him, Hitler had not been a peerless psychologist who had known how to exploit the most modern technologies to the full.

Others claim that Hitler was the greatest ad man of his age, since his logo alone — the swastika — is still as effective as ever.

However, in one of his short stories, Isaac Asimov points out that, long before the arrival of the Nazis, the swastika was regarded in Germany as a lucky charm, like the four-leaved clover or the rabbit's foot. It might be said, then, that we are the skilful exploitation of superstitious fears that ultimately gave a sacred character to the grandiose liturgies of Nuremberg....