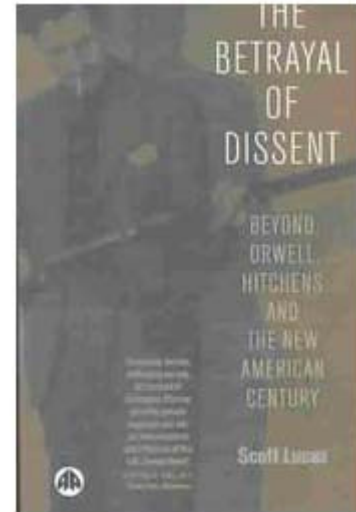


As Robert Fisk has written, 'The real and frightening story starts now.'^[li] It may be the only occasion where he is in accord with neo-conservatives like William Kristol: 'The mission begins in Baghdad, but it does not end there.'^[lii]

'The new caliphs' are putting out their proclamations.^[liii] Donald Rumsfeld cannot meet the Iraqi public because of security considerations --- unbeknownst to the Secretary of Defense, his convoy is fired on three times as he enters Baghdad. He does declare on US-run radio and television, 'Iraq belongs to you....We will stay as long as necessary to help you [take control] and not a day longer,' although he adds testily to journalists, 'I don't know [how long US troops will remain in Iraq] --- and it's not knowable.'^[liv] Richard Perle commands the benevolent authority of the occupier, 'What we have won on the battlefield is the right to establish consistent policies that are for the benefit of the people of Iraq....It is not as if we are looking for anything for ourselves.'^[lv]



[Click here for the link to Pluto's site.](#)

Tony Blair, his promises that Britain and the US 'don't touch' oil supplies and that the UN would have 'a key role' in post-war Iraq long discarded, tags along as Washington bludgeons the Security Council into sanctioning an 'Iraq Inc.' under a Coalition Provisional Authority.^[lvi] 'Freedom is messy,' an American official aide tells a reporter, 'Everything's going according to plan.'^[lvii] Facing recurrent Iraqi demonstrations, Jay Garner reminds the press, 'We ought

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to look in a mirror and get proud, and stick out our chests and suck in our bellies and say, “Damn, we’re Americans!”; days later, he and five top aides are replaced in a ‘bloodless coup’ by L. Paul ‘Jerry’ Bremer, the State Department’s head of counter-terrorism in the 1980s. Barbara Bodine, the ‘coordinator’ for central Iraq, is abruptly recalled.^[viii]

The Americans prepare to abandon Ahmed Chalabi,^[ix] but they have no alternative candidate. So the US Government declares it will name nine Iraqis to form a ‘provisional government’ by the end of May, only to scrap the plan two weeks later.^[x] Bremer imposes stringent rules on the Iraqi media, as the US military seizes ‘editorial control’ of local television stations with ‘predominantly non-factual/unbalanced news coverage’ such as re-broadcasting of Al-Jazeera. The list of ‘Prohibited Activities’ include items ‘calculated to provoke opposition to the CPA or undermine legitimate processes towards self-government’.^[xi]

There are token advances, such as the naming by the CPA of local councils in Najaf and parts of Baghdad as well as Mosul, where an American general presides throne-like from his chair on the platform,^[xii] but even British ‘success’ in Basra is tempered by continuing problems with water, medicine, and other public services.^[xiii] As Ayatollah al-Hakim, the Tehran-supported leader of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, returns from exile to a rapturous welcome from hundreds of thousands of Shia supporters, a State Department official exposes Washington’s vision of ‘self-government’: ‘The bottom line is we control the purse strings, the appointments, and anything else of political value [in postwar Iraq]. Not just anyone is going to get access to this.’ Other White House staff explain that the Shia majority will be checked because ‘prior to any referendum, a constitution must be drawn up, an assembly convened, judicial reform enacted—all under the auspices of liberal Iraqis with close ties to the United States’.^[xiv]

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The US and British Governments maintain the pretence that they will find weapons of mass destructions, feeding 'exclusives' to reporters such as Judith Miller of the *New York Times*, but the elite search unit, the 75th Expeditionary Task Force, has given up and gone home.^[xvi] President Bush, almost pathetically, insists that two 'mobile labs' are vindication,^[xvii] while the story unfolds of how his Administration, notably the specialist 'intelligence' unit created by Donald Rumsfeld, and the Government fabricated and distorted evidence for their just cause.^[xviii] The CIA becomes the scapegoat for any misleading information, even as Paul Wolfowitz finally exposes to *Vanity Fair* how the Administration manufactured war, 'For bureaucratic reasons we settled on one issue, weapons of mass destruction, because it was the one reason everyone could agree on.'^[xviii] Bush finally resorts to a bizarre revision of history, claiming war only occurred after he 'gave Saddam Hussein a chance to allow the inspectors in and he wouldn't let them'.^[xix]

The Associated Press finally reports, after a partial search of partial records, that at least 3240 civilians died in the official 'war'; the complete total is far higher, possibly 10,000.^[xx] And more are dying every day in 'peace', from violence amongst Iraqis, from shootings by American forces, from the degraded conditions for nutrition, health, sanitation, and habitation.^[xxi]

The 'quagmire' looms. Far from demobilising in victory, the homecomings of US forces who have been in the region since September 2002 are postponed indefinitely.^[xxii] The cost of maintaining the 150,000 military personnel is up to \$3.9 billion per month,^[xxiii] as they progress from shooting looters^[xxiv] to mobilising in their thousands in search-and-destroy efforts against 'terrorist training camps'. In the three months after the supposed end of the war, more than 50 US servicemen die and hundreds are injured from shootings, suicide bombings, and rocket-propelled grenades. The GIs compare their

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experiences with the dystopian film 'Escape from New York', complaining, 'The whole place is bad,'^[xxv] as their commanders, maintaining that the cause of the resistance is a shadowy Ba'ath network which has yet to be eliminated, do not dare to admit, or possibly even consider, that the opposition may be widespread.

Partly out of the broader 'vision' that contributed to the showdown with Iraq, partly from the need to ascribe the troubles of occupation to external 'influence' rather than its own failings, the US Government sets up the next showdown using the same pretexts as the previous one. William Kristol sounds the bugle:

We are in a death struggle with Iran over the future of Iraq....We must...take the fight to Iran, with measures ranging from public diplomacy to covert operations. Iran is the tipping point in the war on proliferation, the war on terror, and the effort to reshape the Middle East. If Iran goes pro-Western and anti-terror, positive changes in Syria and Saudi Arabia will follow much more easily. And the chances for an Israeli-Palestinian settlement will greatly improve.^[xxvii]

Meanwhile, the war before the last war lingers in Afghanistan. There was a symbolic 'offensive', launched minutes after the opening salvo against Baghdad, of 1,000 troops hunting in the mountains for opponents of the Afghan Government,^[xxviii] then the conflict disappeared once more, even though US bombs killed 11 civilians in a single strike,^[xxix] even though the Taliban regrouped to murder a Red Cross worker, assassinate a close ally of President Hamid Karzai, and shoot American soldiers,^[xxix] even though the country was effectively divided into a number of zones under the control of different factions,

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even though 600 clerics called and many villages responded for renewed war against the Americans,^[xxx] even though the US Government sets up yet another showdown with Iran by targeting the Tehran-backed governor of Herat as the chief threat to stability.^[xxxi] Karzai begs for assistance and receives little; local leaders take most of Afghanistan's revenue from customs charges.^[xxxii] Poppy production is now more than 800 percent higher than cultivation, under the Taliban, in 2001.^[xxxiii]

Meanwhile, the vaunted 'road map' for an Israeli-Palestinian settlement has stuttered into publication, with subsequent high-profile deliberations that are long on American publicity and short of results. Meanwhile, Al Qa'eda is, according to US officials, 'stronger than ever';^[xxxiv] its cells and local groups kill dozens in attacks in Casablanca and Riyadh. Meanwhile, North Korea declares once more that it will proceed with the development of nuclear weapons while Donald Rumsfeld presses the Bush Administration to 'team up with China to press for the ouster of North Korea's leadership'.^[xxxv] Meanwhile, the US Government moves beyond all of these irritants with its long-term vision of security with proposals to end 'restrictions on research of low-yield nuclear weapons', adds funds for development of 'a high-yield nuclear bomb for use against deeply buried targets', and reduces 'the preparation time required for resuming underground nuclear testing'.^[xxxvi]

Meanwhile, 12,117 prisoners (including juveniles as young as 13) remain in indefinite confinement, without any prospect of charge or trial, in small, brightly-lit cells for up to 24 hours each day, at Camp X-Ray, at the American bases in Bagram, Afghanistan and Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, in Belmarsh in Kent, in centres in Egypt, Jordan, Uzbekistan, Syria, and Saudi Arabia.^[xxxvii] The State Department issues a global report criticising other countries for 'torture and physical beatings', prohibition of visits by human rights groups, and

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'arbitrary arrests and detention' but failing to refer to Guantanamo Bay, US prison camps in Afghanistan, or internal 'security' measures.^[xxxviii] Those measures include the proposed Domestic Security Enhancement Act of 2003 which would permit, for the first time in history, secret arrests and the stripping of citizenship from any American who is 'a member of, or provided material support to, a group that the United States has designated as a "terrorist organization"'.^[xxxix] Between December 2002 and April 2003, nearly 140,000 immigrants to the US, almost all Muslims, are required to register with the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System. (A total of 11 are 'linked to terrorism'.)^[xl] Attorney General John Ashcroft rules that 'broad categories of foreigners who arrive in this country illegally can be detained indefinitely without consideration of their individual circumstances if immigration officials say their release would endanger national security'.^[xli]

Of course, in this new order at home and abroad, marvellous developments might defeat pessimism. The Iraqi 'council', finally named in mid-July, may prove to be more than 'advisory' fig leaf for the de facto authority of Paul Bremer and the US military (at this point, all but one of the nine rotating 'presidents' are either Kurds or former exiles; the council's 'members work in a largely empty office building, surrounded by American military cordons and coils of barbed wire').^[xlii] In a future year, elections may be held; they may be even be 'free', with the US accepting a Shia-led Government that may be closer to Tehran than Washington.^[xliii] With the deaths of Uday and Qusay Hussein, if not their father, the attacks against occupation forces may diminish. Restoration of electricity, water, and health services, as well as the establishment of an oil industry which brings long-promised revenue to the Iraqi people, may occur, convincing the population that US intentions are to liberate rather than control their nation.

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Perhaps officials in the State Department can overturn the dedication of the White House and the Pentagon, the Cheneys, Rumsfelds, and, yes, Wolfowitzes, to a 'preponderance of power'. Perhaps the series of unilateral or American-dominated interventions will not continue into Iran or Syria. Perhaps, rather than spurious domino theories for democracy, there will be a return to multilateral efforts from Africa to North Korea and back to Iraq. Perhaps the United Nations, as well as countries like France and Germany, will be treated as necessary partners rather than the all-or-nothing of pawns or adversaries. Perhaps that multilateralism will rethink a War on Terror which will either try, openly in a court of law, detainees or release them.

Or perhaps none of this may happen. For, whatever one's position, certainty of outcome is not the most secure of foundations.^[xliv]

We are beyond 'Right' and 'Left'. In this 21st-century configuration of strategy, politics, military forces, economics, and 'culture', we are beyond the obsolete labels slapped on capitalism v. socialism, the Cold War of 'Free World' v. Soviet bloc. We are beyond the equation, imposed not by a radical fringe but contrived by a 'mainstream' supporting the US Government, of Right for America, Left against it. A 'Left' embracing Saddam, just like a 'Left' assisting 'Islamic fascism'. was always a conjurer's illusion to divert the 'sensible' from interrogations of wider American policies and objectives.

No, dissent never meant wishing dictators well, endorsing oppression, accepting torture, and sticking two fingers up at 'America'. Dissent was the recognition, long before the first shots were fired, that 'victory in Iraq won't end the world's distrust of the United States because the Bush administration has made it clear, over and over again, that it doesn't play by the rules'. Dissent was the sentiment that 'tyranny or empire should not be the only two choices offered

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Iraqis, or the rest of the world'. Dissent was the question, 'Who will [the guns of March] frighten into submission and who will they inspire to hatred of America and its friends?'^[xlv]

We are beyond a devious, deceitful 'Left'. We long ago left behind pun-ridden rants such as Mark Steyn's snipe at Robert Fisk as a 'Saddamite buffoon', hysterical denunciations such as the call of Cal Thomas for a 'Cultural War Crimes Tribunal', spurious equations such as Stephen Pollard's 'Opponents of Military Trials Are Friends of Al-Qaeda'.^[xlvi] But we are also beyond the reduction of our opinions and concerns to a 'soft spot for certain tyrants' and a sheepish march behind evil leaders, as in Johann Hari's jeremiad over the alleged treachery of George Galloway:

If you are one of the mostly decent people who cheered Galloway at the anti-war rally, now is the time to pause and ask yourself, 'What did I do?'The day when the left might not even have to be paid by a tyrant --- when it might be offering him comfort for *free* -- -is a day from hell. We are living in that long, sulphur-scented day.^[xlvii]

We are even beyond the supposed it's-for-own-good advice of Todd Gitlin, as he takes up Andrew Sullivan's claim of our 'rage at reality', adding, 'Helplessness is the main note. Where right-wing resentment is the resentment of the entitled and disappointed, left-wing resentment is the resentment of the forlorn.'^[xlviii]

We are beyond a contrived honourable Left which, declaiming the deficiencies and depravities of erstwhile comrades, wraps itself in the Flag. Martin Amis long ago broke any supposed pro-Yank ranks, fearing that the

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'unprecedented preponderance of a single power' with a President 'more religious, more theological' to 'feel easier about being intellectually null' leads to 'a kaleidoscope of terrifying eventualities', even if John Lloyd, always a step behind Christopher Hitchens, stomped out of the *New Statesman* (albeit after ensuring he had lined up an editor's chair at the *Financial Times*) with his resignation missive about an anti-war 'left' which 'has shown itself incapable of thinking through not only the nature of the world as it is today, but also its own claims to be the leading force in making the world better'.^[xlix] RUSHDIE?

We are beyond the cry of 'anti-Americanism' by learned authorities who, unable or unwilling to grapple with the specifics of politics, economics, and military prowess that might provoke criticism, invoke 'a broader hostility to modernity, to the 20th-century achievement of humanity that America symbolised', hand down quack diagnoses of 'self-loathing' and 'political resistance...grounded in pure snobbery'.^[li] We are beyond the riposte that those who question US foreign policy are 'infantile', 'idiots or scoundrels' who are 'really against liberal democracy', 'nervous nellies' with the 'inability to see the American nation as vulnerable and human'.^[lii] We are beyond the arrogance of dismissal:

What explains the anti-American fury, particularly in Europe? Simple. It makes people feel good. It gives them a sense of moral superiority. It doesn't cost them anything. It diverts attention from domestic discontents. It doesn't require hard decisions or hard thinking. It's a convenient moral exhibitionism that, on inspection, is full of delusion, shortsightedness and moral hypocrisy.^[liii]

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We are beyond a 'liberal' simplicity of 'Americans have feelings too' which confuses the desires of other peoples beyond America with the objectives of the US Government: 'I don't like George Bush, but we both believe that the future of freedom in the world depends on US power.'^[liii]

We are beyond Nick Cohen who, having forgotten that he once wrote, 'The last thing the US wants is democracy in Iraq,'^[liv] now reduces the anti-war movement to Tony Benn, George Galloway, Andrew Murray of the Stop the War Coalition (and, Cohen warns us, the Communist Party of Britain), the Socialist Workers Party, and 'the same old scowling faces from the fragments of splinter groups'.^[lv] We are beyond a Cohen who funnels all history and politics into the supposed betrayal by the 'Left' of US-supported Iraqi freedom. (On the 50th anniversary of Stalin's death: 'Just as the greater cause of anti-fascism led decent people to turn a blind eye to Stalin's crimes in the 1930s, so the often silly cause of anti-Americanism leads decent people to turn a blind eye to the plight of the Iraqis.'^[lvi]) We beyond a Cohen whose consideration of Western Muslims is of 'adolescents panting for an answer to their angst'.^[lvii] We are beyond a Cohen who rails that we are 'defeated' because we are not 'on the same side as Bush and Blair'.^[lviii]

We are beyond David Aaronovitch who is caught between a visceral hatred of a France seeking to lead the European Union as 'a second, better Soviet Union' and a Richard Perle 'masturbating over what he hoped was the grave of the United Nations', who is now reducing the anti-war movement to anti-semitism, 'post-September 11 insecurity', a fear of America born from 'some kind of folk/race memory of the time when GIs came courting our girlfriends with nylons and oral sex, neither of which our boys could offer', and suburban middle classes in 'a state of political priapism, frustrated but up for just about any movement going'.^[lix] We are beyond an Aaronovitch who wobbles in his

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certainty, 'Whatever the amount of death and mayhem, it could be years before anyone on either side of the argument can credibly claim vindication,' and belatedly warns 'our government', 'Those weapons had better be there somewhere,' but continues to pillory 'Lies and the Left' as embodied by (yet again) George Galloway and John Pilger.^[lx]

We are beyond Johann Hari when he commands, 'Anti-war movements must never again assume they speak for the people who are about to be bombed,' but then, speaking for those people and the rest of us, he pronounces, 'The lesson of this conflict: America can be a force for good in the world.'^[lxi] There is no time for our quibbles: 'The looting is ugly, but it's better than torture,' he chastises, before advocating liberation's march with the invasion of North Korea.^[lxii] There is no need for any complication of his certainty: 'Forget the Weapons of Mass Destruction; We Were Still Right to Invade Iraq.'^[lxiii]

We are beyond Michael Ignatieff, who has joined the chorus of the new American empire, even as he agonises, 'The choice is not about the company you keep, but between alienating old, but essentially pacifist, friends and appeasing a tyrant.' We are beyond an Ignatieff who dismisses any thoughts, by his friends or any others, about what 'America is or should be' for the simple mantras of 'our safety' and 'the freedom of 25 million people'.^[lxiv]

We are beyond Paul Berman, the new champion of 'liberal intervention', the darling of neo-conservatives such as Andrew Sullivan who call for a 'move away...[from] reactionary anti-Americanism towards the true liberal faith'.^[lxv] We are beyond a Berman who throws together Marxism and Islamism, Nazism and Baathism,^[lxvi] who uses his profiles of Islamic philosophers to wail, 'Who will defend liberal ideas against the enemies of liberal ideas against the enemies of liberal ideas? Who will defend liberal principles in spite of liberal society's

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every failure?’ We are beyond a Berman who sees the evil ‘people of God’ abroad but does not recognise them at home.^[lxviii]

We are beyond Thomas Friedman who, amidst the continuing instability and turmoil in Iraq, fantasises that Iraqis will use ‘real resentment for the other Arab regimes, and even towards the Palestinians’ to renounce ‘Arabism’ and provide the breakthrough in the Israeli-Palestinian crisis. We are beyond a Friedman who then exposes the heart of the fantasy as the desire for an American show of force almost anywhere in the Middle East or Central Asia: ‘Saudi Arabia would have been fine; Pakistan would have been fine. We did Iraq because we could.’^[lxviiii]

We are far beyond Christopher Hitchens. Now he makes headlines with reminiscences not only that he and Bill Clinton shared a girlfriend at Oxford who become ‘a very famous radical lesbian’ but also that the former President was probably an informant for the CIA.^[lxix] His *Vanity Fair* column becomes an homage to alcohol’s contribution to his life and his writing, comparing himself to Hemingway in the process.^[lxx] There is a reprise of his Clinton-era cameo when Sidney Blumenthal refers in his memoir to Hitchens’ 1999 ‘betrayal’.^[lxxi] He does a star turn at the Hay Literary Festival, but his contributions to a panel which includes George Monbiot and Ahdaf Soueif are bypassed for his late-night stand-up of ‘Lenny Bruce meets Wodehouse’ with risqué jokes and the nostalgia of karaoke in North Korea.^[lxxii] *The Onion*, the satirical on-line magazine, captures the essence of our moral guide: ‘Christopher Hitchens Forcibly Removed From Trailer Park After Drunken Confrontation With Common-Law Wife’.^[lxxiii]

For Hitchens’ pronouncements on the wars against Iraq and the ‘Left’ have long ago been reduced to taunts --- the ‘silly led by the sinister’ --- to be recycled by the likes of Julie Burchill.^[lxxiv] The jibes are on a repeating loop: the

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Left are un-American 'because they know they couldn't make it in America'; 'their prediction and deepest hope was that the black shirts of the [Iraqi] fedayeen were going to win or force a stalemate'.^[lxxv] No charge is too grandiose, 'SADDAM: He's Hitler, He is Stalin: Why did we tolerate him for so long?', no dissenting opponent beyond vituperation, 'Each day they dig up dead bodies in personal death camps run by a Caligula dictator and I'm being asked to worry about these fucking fat slags [the Dixie Chicks]!'^[lxxvi]

Hitchens' analysis has been reduced to a blind faith, despite all evidence to the contrary on the course of US strategy from the end of the Cold War to the present, in Paul Wolfowitz as a crusader for democracy, 'a revolutionary' who is 'making war on the status quo' in the Middle East even if this means 'quarrelling with the Saudis, the Turks, a chunk of the oil lobby here, and part of the American right'.^[lxxvii] For the contrarian who has converted to this 'revolution', the certainties must remain irrespective of all contrary indications. Hitchens wrote as early as 25 March, 'The population of Baghdad was making a secret holiday in its heart as those horrible palaces went up in smoke, and this holiday will soon be a public holiday, and if we all keep our nerve we can join the festivities with a fairly clear conscience.'^[lxxviii] He added a week later, 'You can still meet people who say that there is no "proven" connection between Baghdad and the nexus of international terrorism. You can still meet people, too, who don't think that Iraq has any genocidal weapons.'^[lxxix]

And, though the party proved short-lived for the American forces of occupation, though the international terrorists and genocidal weapons did not materialise, there would be no retraction. The future was bright; the future was the Iraqi National Congress: 'Lay Off Chalabi'.^[lxxx] The future was yet another contrarian endorsement of the American grand strategy as it moved beyond Iraq to other enemies:

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The overwhelming consensus among inspectors and monitors, including Hans Blix's sidekick Mohammed El Baradei, is now to the effect that Iran's mullahs have indeed been concealing an enriched-uranium program. For good measure, it is a sure thing that they are harboring al-Qaida activists on their territory. Will the “peace” camp ever admit that Bush was right about this?^[lxxxii]

Then belatedly, very belatedly, there is a doubt. At the end of May, Hitchens suddenly notices ‘that control freaks have taken power’ in Iraq. But, because he cannot admit that this was the long-held concern of those he had gleefully maligned, he cannot approach their coherence. He can only stumble and flail, ‘It might even be a defense of a kind to say that control-freakery is preferable to factionalism and communal or intercommunal strife. But it's not a very persuasive defense, because there will never be an Iraq that is composed of docile citizens who all see the same things in the same way, and because the dispelling of that very fantasy was part of the point to begin with.’^[lxxxiii]

And so we are beyond ‘Orwell’. Or course, tribute is still paid to the national saint. In his centenary year, there are the bookend biographies, the BBC drama posing as a documentary, the sweeping eulogies to Orwell and ‘his genius...his importance for our world, which fails to match his standards of justice and decency in almost every conceivable way’.^[lxxxiii] George is our ‘moral force’ against unnamed ‘orthodoxies...wearing yet more elaborate disguises’, our saviour from the ‘great threats’ of ‘religious totalitarianism and the rise of global plutocracy’, ‘the most direct and democratic British writer of the twentieth century’.^[lxxxiv]

There is the celebration of mimicry, with the *Independent's* Paul Vallely retracing Orwell's steps in Wigan, which now has a pier for the tourists, as the

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BBC asks artist Rachel Whitehead to re-create the 'real' Room 101 in Broadcasting House.^[lxxxv] There is the celebration of language, as 'Orwellian' is used to label phenomena from London's traffic congestion charge to the operatic production of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*.^[lxxxvi] There is even the celebration which veers towards melodrama or farce: the *Daily Telegraph's* 'Cure for TB was Too Late to Save Orwell' and the *Times's* publication of one of the few 'revelations' from the new biographies, 'Orwell Attacked by Jealous Fiancé'.^[lxxxvii]

Inevitably, this is all tied to the mantra of 'What Would George Do?' Geoffrey Wheatcroft verges on pantomime: 'What would Orwell have said about the latest recipient of the Orwell Prize for journalism,...idiosyncratically reactionary columnist and art critic Brian Sewell?...The only thing we can be sure of is that he would have been as quirky and unpredictable as ever.'^[lxxxviii] Bernard Crick is a grandfatherly confidant: 'E Blair on T Blair's Call to Arms... Bush and Blair adopting Churchillian poses would have turned his tummy.'^[lxxxix] Thomas Pynchon gives us the sentimental photograph of Orwell and his adopted son, overcoming the obstacle of George the acerbic, bomb-fearing pessimist, and:warbles:

It is the boy's smile, in any case, that we return to, direct and radiant, proceeding out of an unhesitating faith that the world, at the end of the day, is good, and that human decency, like parental love, can always be taken for granted --- a faith so honourable that we can almost imagine Orwell, and perhaps even ourselves, for a moment anyway, swearing to do whatever must be done to keep it from ever being betrayed.^[lxc]

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All well and good, but Michael Sheldon, in grandiloquent homage to the 'genius...dedicated contrarian...hero', inadvertently exposes the devaluation of perpetual reclamation and exaltation: 'In Blair, we have the person whose life belonged only to himself. It is the author who now belongs to the world.'^[xcii] For, if anyone in the world can take hold of 'Orwell', then he is a universal guide not in clarity or consistency but in his political utility.

St George has become the club to beat one's opponents. At his most belligerent, 'Orwell' is used via his 1942 essay on the 'fascifists' to render the Left unworthy of an opinion. Days after the first bombs fell on Baghdad, the Daily Telegraph pronounced, on what 'George Orwell once called...“the peculiar masochism of the English Left”': a readiness to side with all manner of villains --- the IRA, the Soviet Union, Saddam --- provided they are anti-British'.^[xciii] Joann Barkan used the pages of *Dissent* to stifle that concept, twisting those who criticised American foreign policy into Orwell's 'negative nationalists':

The distinction Orwell makes between nationalism and patriotism might be useful in thinking about the "blame-America-first" part of the American left. These leftists see only one major problem in the world: the United States with its unlimited power and imperial arrogance....Coming across the notion of "negative nationalism" again has been useful for thinking about the blame-America-first leftists with their obsessiveness, resentments, and ability to shut out inconvenient realities.^[xciii]

From here, it is only a short step to subtler summonings of 'Orwell' in the service of the US or British Governments. Tony Blair invoked in February 2003, a 'foreign policy, robust on defence and committed to global justice. [This idea

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enables] us to espouse positions that in the past the left had regarded as impossible to reconcile: patriotism and internationalism.^[xciv]

Of course, 'Orwell' is still up for grabs for the old 'Left'. Both in his recent essays and in his *New Rulers of the World*, John Pilger has portrayed an Orwellian present, with Governments in Washington, London, and Canberra deploying a system of control and suppression of other peoples and even some of their own, behind the propaganda of 'freedom'.^[xcv] Yet even this use of the icon risks confusion and self-destruction. George Sciabba wrote confidently in the *Washington Post* that 'Orwell would associate himself with the unsexy democratic left, notably *Dissent* and the *American Prospect*,' never pondering that the editor of the former journal, Michael Walzer, had led the call for the 'Left' to support America's 'little wars' in Afghanistan and Iraq.^[xcvi] Paul Foot entered 2003 with a warning about the 'doublethink going on now as Oceania (the US and Britain) prepares for war against Iraq' but set limits on fellow dissenters: those who dare criticise George 'hail back to the good old days under comrade Stalin'.^[xcvii]

'Bring on the spanners.' --- Arundhati Roy^[xcviii]

There is no need to bury Orwell. That was done more than 50 years ago, in a small country churchyard in Oxfordshire. Instead, it is 'Orwell' that needs to be given the final rites. Despite the inconsistencies, contradictions, and outright pettiness of his character assassinations, Orwell can be admired for the power of his writing, for the tenacity with which he held his changing opinions, and for certain prescriptions for the social and political issues of his time.

But his time was then, and this is now. Now, with an 'Orwell' not to challenge the State but to support it, to contrive and exalt, in Orwellian fashion,

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the contrarian who happens to promote the rhetorical and political agenda of that State. Now, with an 'Orwell' to justify, in the guise of 'independent' thought, the suppression of dissent.

When Julian Barnes writes, 'This war was not worth a child's finger,'^[xcix] the Orwell of the 1930s, of World War II, of the early Cold War cannot respond, except with false or incomplete analogies extracted by others. When Deborah Orr queries, 'If everyone falls into line, who will ask the questions that need asking?,'^[cl] 'Orwell' can be wielded to endorse or dismiss her but 'he' cannot ask those questions, which should be put to Washington's strategists as well as Baghdad's tyrants, to a prospective 'American' as well as 'Islamic' fundamentalism.^[cii]

We are beyond 'right' and 'wrong'. Our concerns, objections, alternatives are posed not because not we are 'poor fools', 'an auxiliary to dictators and aggressors in trouble' who fear that our opponents are 'smarter and nicer' than us,^[ciii] but because if we do not pose them, resolution occurs by default. We do not know, irrespective of the claims of Christopher Hitchens, Bernard Crick, Michael Walzer, Michael Kelly, the *Daily Telegraph*, or anyone else, what Orwell would 'say' about our current dilemmas. Instead, we have the words of a Susan Sontag, who persists despite the attempted use of 'Orwell' to silence her after 11 September 2001:

It is hard to defy the wisdom of the tribe, the wisdom that values the lives of its members above all others. It will always be unpopular --- it will always be deemed unpatriotic --- to say that the lives of the members of the other tribe are as valuable as one's own. It is easier to give one's allegiance to those we know, to those

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we see, to those with whom we are embedded, to those with whom
we share --- as we may --- a community of fear.^[ciii]

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* Conclusion to [Betrayal of Dissent](#) (London: Pluto Books, 2004)

^{li} Robert Fisk, 'For the People on the Streets, This is not Liberation but Colonial Oppression', *Independent* (17 April 2003)

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The Kaplan article continues: 'That constitution will include clauses designed to impede the rise of illiberal

forces – among these, the diffusion of national power along federal lines, detailed arrangements for sharing that

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elections, moreover, will be held on a "rolling" basis, beginning at the municipal level and proceeding only slowly

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toward the Iraqi center. In the meantime, American officials hope an influx of financial and humanitarian

assistance will diminish Shia resentments in Iraq's south. And, when elections do come, administration officials

predict that a more discrete and narrowly tailored influx of aid will give liberal forces an advantage. Indeed, as

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[[lxxv](#)] David Rohde, 'Green Berets Fight Chaos and Callousness in a City Gone Bad', *New York Times* (14 April 2003)



[xxvii] William Kristol, 'The End of the Beginning', *Weekly Standard* (12 May 2003)

[xxviii] Phil Reeves, 'US Launches Fresh Afghan Offensive to Bolster Karzai',
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[xxxii] Lucy Morgan-Edwards, 'Old Warlord Proves Thorn in the Side of Afghan Government', *Sunday Telegraph* (13

April 2003)

[xxxiii] The hypocrisy of American policy is vividly demonstrated when Assistant Secretary of State Richard Armitage

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Government never materialise. [Luke Harding, 'US Pledges to Rebuild Afghanistan', *Guardian* (10 May 2003)]

^[xxxiii] Patrick Wintour, 'Britain Losing New Afghan Opium War', *Guardian* (7 August 2003)

^[xxxiv] Richard Norton-Taylor, 'Al-Qaida is Back and Stronger Than Ever', *Guardian* (19 May 2003)

^[xxxv] Rupert Cornwell, 'North Korea Warns US: We Can Produce Six Atom Bombs', *Independent* (16 July 2003);

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^[xxxvii] Walter Pincus, 'Future of U.S. Nuclear Arsenal Debated', *Washington Post* (4 May 2003)

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[xxxviii] Andrew Gumbel, 'US Accused of Hypocrisy on Human Rights', *Independent on Sunday* (6 April 2003)

[xxxix] Nat Hentoff, 'Ashcroft Out of Control', *Village Voice* (5-11 March 2003)

[xli] Rachel L. Swarns and Christopher Drew, 'Fearful, Angry or Confused, Muslim Immigrants Register', *New York Times* (25 April 2003); Christine Pelisek, 'The List', *LA Weekly* (4-10 July 2003)

[xlii] George Lardner, Jr., 'More Illegal Immigrants Can Be Held', *Washington Post* (25 April 2003)

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^[xliv] Michael Howard, 'Ruling Council in Symbolic First Step', *Guardian* (14 July 2003); Jamie Wilson, 'Iraqi

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^[xlv] As this book goes to print, the *New York Times* reports, 'In a turbulent 12-hour stretch, a pipeline supplying much

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sabotage.' [John Tierney and Robert F. Worth, 'Attacks in Iraq May Be Signals of New Tactics' (18 August

2003)] The *Washington Post* headlines, 'U.S. Forces Kill Cameraman', 'Long Road to Recovery for Baghdad

Hospitals', 'Afghan Rebels Attack Police; 22 Killed', and 'Iraqi Clerics Unite in Rare Alliance: U.S. Fears Sunni,

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^[xlv] Paul Krugman, 'Victory Won't End Distrust of Bush', *International Herald Tribune* (19 March 2003); Mark

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<http://www.alternet.org/story.html?StoryID=15379>; Fergal Keane, 'What Mr Bush has in Mind is Nothing Less

than the Shaping of the World,' *Independent* (1 February 2003)

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^[xlvi] Mark Steyn, 'The War? That was All Over Two Weeks Ago', *Daily Telegraph* (5 April 2003); Cal Thomas,

'False Media Prophets', *Jewish World Review* (15 April 2003); Stephen Pollard, Opponents of Military Trials

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^[xlvii] Richard Cohen, 'Hollywood's Darling, Liberals' Blind Spot', *Washington Post* (8 April 2003); Johann Hari, 'I'd

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See the response to Hari from Francesca Cryer in *Independent* (25 April 2003): 'Labelling the movement

"deranged" because a politician who was part of it might turn out to be crooked is ridiculous.' An equally telling

indictment of Hari's definition of the 'Left' is its similarity to the told-you-so chanting of the *Daily Telegraph*: 'It

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is hard to think of a graver setback to the British anti-war movement. How would you feel if you were one of the

many well-meaning peace protesters who had followed Mr Galloway's lead?...[You] may be reluctant to march in

support of this kingdom's enemies in future.' ['Saddam's Little Helper', (22 April 2003)]

^[xlvi] Todd Gitlin, 'The War's Over, but the Fighting's Getting Worse', *Washington Post* (4 May 2003)

Gitlin's advice concluded with an affront to those who not only opposed military conflict with heavy hearts

but sought some alternative to the destruction of the Wars on Terror and Iraq: 'It is not part of the left's frame of

mind to offer smart domestic security programs to counter Attorney General John Ashcroft's heavy hand. And

perhaps most damaging, the left is not in the habit of proposing a constructive foreign policy.'

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[xlix] John Lloyd, 'Why I Can No Longer Write for the *NS*', *New Statesman* (14 April 2003)

Lloyd's argument, sneakily, consisted of acceptance of the anti-UN line of the US Government: 'The left's

programme now should be to argue in favour of committing resources to those multilateral agencies that work.'

[l] Mick Hume, 'And the Oscar for Self Loathing Goes to...America', *Times* (24 March 2003); Janet Daley, 'Why the

Left Will Never Put Its Hands Up', *Daily Telegraph* (9 April 2003)

[li] Gavin Esler, 'The Danger of This Infantile Anti-Americanism', *Independent* (15 May 2003); Barbara Amiel,

'Anti-Americans Are Really Against Liberal Democracy', *Daily Telegraph* (12 May 2003); Matthew Hoffman,

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'American have Feelings Too', *Independent* (2 May 2003). See also George Will, 'Europe's Decline', *Washington Post* (11 April 2003).

^[iii] Robert Samuelson, 'The Gulf of World Opinion', *New York Times* (27 March 2003)

^[iiii] Matthew Hoffman, 'American have Feelings Too', *Independent* (2 May 2003)

See also the telling lament of David Ignatius: 'None of [these problems in post-war Iraq] changes the fact

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benefit us as much as it has the Iraqis, but I wouldn't count on it.' ['A Good Deed', *Washington Post* (25 April 2003)]

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^[lv] Nick Cohen, 'Strange Bedfellows', *New Statesman* (7 April 2003) and 'The Lesson the Left Has Never Learnt',

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^[lvi] Nick Cohen, 'Left in Stalin's Shadow', *Observer* (9 March 2003)

^[lvii] Nick Cohen, "'A Kind, Really Nice Boy'", *Observer* (4 May 2003)

^[lviii] Nick Cohen, 'The Defeat of the Left', *New Statesman* (5 May 2003)

^[lix] David Aaronovitch, 'United Notions', *Observer* (23 March 2003), 'The Real Reasons So Many Are Marching',

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Guardian (25 March 2003)

^[xi] David Aaronovitch, 'What Would Change My Mind on Iraq?', *Guardian* (1 April 2003), 'Those Weapons had

Better Be There...', *Guardian* (29 April 2003), and 'Lies and the Left', *Observer* (27 April 2003)

See also the response of *Observer* reader Mike Roberts to Aaronovitch in the *Observer* of 4 May 2003.

^[xii] Johann Hari, 'The Lesson of This Conflict: America Can Be a Force for Good in the World', *Independent* (11 April 2003)

^[xiii] Johann Hari, 'The Looting is Ugly, but It's Better than Torture', *Independent* (15 April 2003), and 'Now North



Korea Must Be Invaded and Liberated, for the Sake of Its People', *Independent*

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[\[lxiii\]](#) Johann Hari, 'Forget the Weapons of Mass Destruction, We were Still Right to Invade Iraq', *Independent* (11 July

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[\[lxiv\]](#) Michael Ignatieff, 'I am Iraq', *New York Times Magazine* (23 March 2003)

[\[lxv\]](#) Andrew Sullivan, 'Hitler? He's Not Half as Bad as Bush', *Sunday Times* (6 April 2003)

[\[lxvi\]](#) See the review by Martin Bright, 'From Left Bank to West Bank', *Observer* (20 April 2003)

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[[lxviii](#)] Paul Berman, 'The Philosopher of Islamic Terror', *New York Times Magazine*
(23 March 2003)

[[lxviii](#)] Thomas Friedman, 'Telling the Truth in Iraq', *New York Times* (17 August
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Sunday Times (9 February 2003)]

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[lxxii] Sidney Blumenthal, 'With Friends Like These...', *Guardian* (21 May 2003);

Christopher Hitchens, 'Thinking

Like an Apparatchik', *Atlantic* (July/August 2003)

[lxxiii] 'Pass Notes No. 2236: Hay-on-Wye', *Guardian* (26 May 2003)

[lxxiiii] 'Christopher Hitchens Forcibly Removed From Trailer Park After Drunken

Confrontation With Common-Law

Wife', *The Onion* (23 April 2003),

[lxxiv] Julie Burchill, 'The Thrill of the Killer', *Guardian Weekend* (5 April 2003)

[lxxv] Hitchens lecture, Hay-on-Wye (25 May 2003),

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Christopher Hitchens, 'Giving Peace a Chance', *Slate* (9 April 2003),

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Hitchens and others such as Johann Hari misrepresent Wolfowitz as opposing the regime of Saddam

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opposition stemmed from the same notion of US strategic interests and 'preponderance of power' that he promoted

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['Bush's Brainiest Hawk', *Time*

(20 January 2003), reprinted at

<http://www.cnn.com/2003/ALLPOLITICS/01/20/timep.hawk.tm/>]

[[lxxviii](#)] Christopher Hitchens, 'We Must Keep Our Nerve', *Mirror* (25 March 2003)

[[lxxix](#)] Christopher Hitchens, 'Our Troops Must Stay Strong', *Mirror* (2 April 2003)

[[lxxx](#)] Christopher Hitchens, 'Lay Off Chalabi', *Slate* (24 April 2003),

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[[lxxxii](#)] Christopher Hitchens, 'The Gullible Mr. Kerry', *Slate* (24 June 2003),

<http://slate.msn.com/id/2084753/>

[[lxxxiii](#)] Christopher Hitchens, 'Provisional Government', *Slate* (28 May 2003),

<http://slate.msn.com/id/2083643/>

[[lxxxiiii](#)] John Carey, 'The Invisible Man', *Sunday Times* (18 May 2003)

[[lxxxv](#)] D.J. Taylor, *Orwell* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2003); Gordon Bowker, *George Orwell* (London: Little, Brown,

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[[lxxxviii](#)] Geoffrey Wheatcroft, 'Is Sewell an Orwellian Nightmare?', *Guardian* (10
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[[lxxxix](#)] Bernard Crick, 'E Blair on T Blair's Call to Arms', *Observer* (23 March 2003)

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^[xcl] Thomas Pynchon, 'The Road to 1984', *Guardian* (3 May 2003)

^[xcii] Michael Sheldon, 'George the Hero, Eric the Contrary', *Daily Telegraph* (29 April 2003)

^[xciii] 'War on the Home Front', *Daily Telegraph* (10 March 2003)

^[xciiii] Joann Barkan, "'My Mother, Drunk or Sober": George Orwell on Nationalism and Patriotism', *Dissent* (Winter 2003)

^[xcv] Tony Blair, 'The Left Should Not Weep if Saddam is Toppled', *Guardian* (10 February 2003)

^[xcvi] John Pilger, *The New Rulers of the World* (London: Verso, 2003)

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