

The Decades of Deceit: Teleology by Simulacra under Western Postmodernism

by [Miguel Nunes Silva](#) (January 2025)



An Allegory of Truth and Deception (Crispin van den Broeck, 16th C)

In 2024, it is perhaps too soon to judge the 21st century.

Nonetheless, one must concede that a certain pattern seems to be forming. 20th century decades had different atmospheres to them, ranging from the confidence of the 50s and 80s to the disillusionment of the 70s, the accelerationism of the 20s or the naïve optimism of the 90s. Since then, a creeping uncertainty has set in, gradually driving the cosmic righteousness of the 1990s to a cosmetic reality today. The labels remain the same but the varnish is cracking and this is observable all around us, from politics to culture.

Nowadays, no motion picture seems to be more influential than 1999's *The Matrix* as we still find use for its mythology a generation well into the 21st century. Perhaps because both the 2000s and 2010s now feel like eras of emulation failed.

2001 opened with a bang, first by Osama Bin Laden's spectacular attacks on Washington DC and New York City, and then with the atlanticist crusades in the Middle East, lyrically exalted by Michael Gerson's biblical rhetoric. However, something did not feel quite right: 9/11 was certainly a day of infamy but it was not Pearl Harbor and the War on Terror was not a World War. Worse still, the call for crusade was denounced as having been made under false pretenses. Indeed, a stream of films denounced the thin motivations and methodology for the invasion of Iraq such as *W.*, *War Dogs*, *Fair Game*, *Green Zone*, *Shock and Awe*, and *Vice*.

On TV also, spy fiction was full of implications of intelligence gathering compromised by political meddling, and the character of the political appointee locking horns with the rebellious career spy, became commonplace.

Indeed, if cinema enjoyed its golden age in the second half of the 20th century and radio the first half, TV unquestionably rules supreme in the 21st century. The advent of cable television, the internet, delivery economy and most recently the pandemic, have made domestic isolation a fertile ground for a renaissance of television fiction. Suddenly, the best

talent of Hollywood and Broadway moved to the small screen and it was the big screen that was left as a second-rate entertainment for shoppers and families seeking safe and escapist amusement.

The 2000s may have begun in a blaze of glory but by the end of the decade, the mood was very much inglorious. The Bush administration had burnt through their inherited budget surplus and dug a hole of trillions in the US treasury. The war had become a dirty guerrilla conflict with counterinsurgency experts such as General Petraeus forced to make deals with former Baathist and tribal lords in order to, ironically, fight off an actual al-Qaeda cell which did not exist in Iraq before the war—but had taken over the Sunni resistance after the invasion. The conflicts in the Middle East had exacerbated the price of oil, inflation and eventually accelerated a collapse of the housing market, causing the Great Recession. Once again, the historical labels could no longer live up to their reputations for whereas once the great banks had been family affairs relying on serious bean-counting reputations, they were now revealed to be run by interloping opportunists more concerned with their short-term bonuses than the future of the dynasty or the fate of the customers.

The 2010s consisted of yet another decade full of deception. Far from dealing head on with the financial crisis, the Obama administration's Dodd-Frank Act and Europe's Basel III, failed to hold the big banks accountable for their failures. Not least because Quantitative Easing simultaneously contributed to explode foreign debts even further and many governments used it to save their banking institutions. The Great Recession produced no reckoning, the recession was merely escaped forward.

Television mirrored much of the current zeitgeist in its productions with 'fraud drama' an increasing component of the roster on offer. If the 1980s glorified financial yuppies and

grunge hackers, the 2010s were the decade of the disillusionment with Wall Street and Silicon Valley.

Madoff and Wizard of Lies reflected on the giant ponzi scheme which victimised East Coast Jewish families. The Dropout featured the Theranos debacle led by Elizabeth Holmes, a Steve Jobs wannabe seeking to replicate Apple's explosive success but more focused on appearances than substance. Adam McKay's documentary *The Big Short* seeking to explain the out of control derivatives market and subprime bubble to the average person, was released in cinemas but its cultural influence has been mostly felt online with young investors often borrowing jargon from the film. *Inventing Anna* focused on elusive socialite Anna Delvey, a fraudulent creation of a young and cunning European who was clearly inspired by Paris Hilton and Kim Kardashian, minus the sex tape. *The Tinder Swindler* was produced by Netflix and looked into the dangers of dating apps in an era of cosmopolitan anonymity, serving as a social warning but still weakened by Netflix's typical feminist bias. Yet another of Adam McKay's brilliant creations was the TV show *Succession*, receiving raving reviews for the story of a fictional media dynasty in which, try as they might, the spoiled fragile offspring of a TV mogul, fail to live up to expectations and take over the leadership of the company, from their father. More recently, *WeCrashed* narrated the foundation and venture of WeWork by Adam and Rebekah Neumann, a co-working space company that far outgrew its potential in a megalomania fed by irresponsible investors looking to associate with the next tech wunderkind.

Geopolitically, the decade started with yet another Middle East crisis.

Stressed by the democratising pressures of the West and its NGOs, by the resentment caused by the excesses of the War on Terror and by the retrenchment of Western direct investments subsequent to the financial crisis, the Middle East was ripe for a wave of revolutions which would be realised in the Arab

Spring. Once again, atlanticists misinterpreted the overthrowing of dictators as a call for individualist freedoms. The mirror-imaging that had led Western liberals to believe Eastern Europe would adhere to internationalist progressivism, once more led the West astray into believing that tribal Arab societies longed for Western liberal democracy. In Libya NATO violated its UN mandate and intervened secretly in support of the rebels only for chaos to ensue, in Cairo Mohamed ElBaradei and Egyptian liberals became the darlings of the cable media up to the election of the Muslim Brotherhood into power, and in Syria the 'moderate rebels' became the fable of the decade until evidently only the barbarian al-Qaeda and the Islamic State were left, fighting Bashar al-Assad.

Another aspect of the Decades of Deceit has been the progressive discredit of historically reputable learning institutions. In part led by the democratisation of education and the lowering of standards but also stemming from the infusing of western culture with cultural marxism, more and more academia and the Ivy League are regarded with derision and mockery for their snobbery and detachment from reality. As with the Rosenhan experiment of the 1970s, which exposed the scientific fragility of psychology, the Grievance Studies Affair exposed the epistemological and methodological vacuity of Critical Theory. In 2017/18 A team of three authors—Peter Boghossian, James A. Lindsay, and Helen Pluckrose—submitted a number of quasi parody academic essays to peer reviewed journals specialising in Critical Theory, several of which being accepted and published. In a normal sane era, this would have caused the bankruptcy of the school of thought in question but in the end, no one was fired and no institution or journal was closed because critical theory is as much prevalent as it is lacking in credibility already—outside elitist circles.

The tragicomic aspect of progressivism is its thirst for new

barriers to overcome, even when no actual need exists for dramatic change. The bizarre rehashing of racism or sexism long after the Left's victory in the Culture War, demonstrates that when no problems exist, they must be created. In a recurrent example of the paradigm of emulation, the demand for social causes far outstripped the supply of social problems requiring heroic conflict to solve. Generations after MLK and Rosa Parks, the available martyrs were, they too, of much lower quality.

Invariably, the Left perverted the legacy of true icons of social change by elevating to secular sainthood such common criminals as George Floyd or Michael Brown. In the US, Mattress Girl, Jussie Smollett and other hate crime hoaxes, even led to the creation of a [database](#) documenting them.

In Europe, it was Islamophobia, anti-immigration intolerance and far-right extremism that were all the rage with dead women and children such as Jo Cox and the baby Alan Kurdi plastered on mainstream media screens while the far more common victims of Muslim terrorists and migrant rapists always concealed from the screens and the statistics—no grand labels such as 'structural racism' or 'rape culture' for those.

Who remembers the dead children of Manchester, Nice or Stockholm terrorist attacks? Here, once again, the phenomenon repeats: in a world run by the rebels of old, those in power cannot conceive of their own causes and power as oppressive, or their opponents as liberators. Here too the media present themselves as reliable brands but are populated by vacuous fraudsters serving corrupt political or corporate interests. The personal ethics of the old liberal professionals long gone, replaced by indoctrinated youngsters precariously employed, seeking to mirror to elderly civil rights contemporaries in the audience, their own prejudices back to them; infotainment as baby-boomer photo album nostalgia.

One particular piece of fiction which was left out of the

initial list was the 2002 remake of Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*, first adapted into cinema in 1958. The most striking difference between the two is the morality of the two main characters: the British Thomas Fowler and the American Alden Pyle. The '58 version depicted Fowler as a cynical European who was complicit in the death of the idealistic American working with the Vietnamese to overcome colonialism and communism. The more nihilistic 2002 version, however, made Pyle into a fool who gets himself killed, in over his head as he was, in a throng of political machinations. While not directly related to the War on Terror, it is not subtle that anti-war Hollywood was putting out pacifist messaging in the era of interventions in the Middle East; back when George W. Bush was the one being compared to Hitler. During the Obama years, Hollywood had a change of heart and either did not pay attention to the genre or it focused on more triumphalist narratives such as *Zero Dark Thirty*, historical ones such as *Lincoln* or Second World War themes featuring Churchill—neoconservatives everywhere must have wondered where those projects had been a decade prior.

In fact, the 'Good War' has marked the Western psyche now for almost a century. Far from an inspiration, it has become an unhealthy obsession.

The invasion of Iraq was not the first time that the Atlantic powers have tried to recreate that moral ethos. Anthony Eden's Suez intervention and the Vietnam War were flawed attempts at garnering an international coalition to fight a good war. Just like Iraq, both floundered in a pretense of international consensus as well as in misdiagnosing the enemy by mistaking local nationalism for global totalitarianism. In Libya we tried again and still cling to that dream today, in the battlefields of Ukraine. Self-delusions to mobilise public opinion which ring hollower and hollower, as they are rebooted ad nauseam. The allied righteousness in the beaches of Normandy belongs in its own historical moment. Most wars are

not manichean moral affairs.

A German poet once described Nazis as having transformed Germany into a caricature of itself. Those who cannot differentiate politics from religion, do the same today.

In the 21st century's bizarro world, the SPLC attacks dissenters rather than defending them, left-wing parties defend the elites while right-wing forces stand for the people, keyboard warriors seek to restrict liberties rather than enhancing them, the counterculture is now traditionalist, statesmen degrade sovereignty, desert the border and campaign on how best to favour non-citizens, clergymen try to justify sin and atheists defend morality. It is in such a world that reality show hosts make for good leaders and learned academics make for bad.

This is not the most auspicious start for the new century and one can only hope and pray that it is not too late to reverse course. The West must find its purpose quickly, it must honour its legacy but not seek to relive it at all costs, lest we end up lying to ourselves to avoid dealing with a challenging reality.

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