

is part of the vehemence of the stated beliefs, the terminal point of the perpetuation of the act of officialization. This is how we should understand the popularity of the comment attributed to Bin Laden: "We love death as you love life." This motif is not a defense of death for its own sake. Rather, what it says is that no fears or limits will hold back the drive toward the realization of a collective project (the "Caliphate"), however vague that project may be. "Being modern" can be understood as sharing monotheistic beliefs (colonialism, anarchism, fascism, communism, liberalism, nationalism, Islamism, etc.) by solidifying ever-larger imaginary communities.³¹ But when repeated experiences of injustice and the emptiness of politics discredit the vertical relationships that are supposed to give form to such beliefs, a breach is opened, into which armed jihad worms its way. As Scott Atran has shown, terrorists are above all moralists: "Global political cultures arise horizontally among peers with different histories [...]. The attraction [of jihad], to youth especially, lies in its promise of moral simplicity and of a harmonious and egalitarian community whose extent is limitless, and in its call to passion and action on humanity's behalf."³² Going to Syria exalts a physical opportunity, a geopolitical option, and a chosen form of sociability. It represents a projection into the future, combining rebellion against absurdity, an attempt to escape forward, and a desire to be led. As Montasser Alde'Emeh notes: "Before I went to Syria, I had formed a picture of these fighters. [...] I thought that they went in order to fight. That is not the case. They leave above all to build a new life. They have emigrated."³³ Rarely unhinged or incoherent, what terrorists seek is a solution to the human equation of cooperation and trust. Radouane passionately expressed this view, six months before his departure for the *haji*. As we hadn't seen each other in a few months, we were looking back on previous episodes. That's when he confided to me that he'd secretly thought about "leaving."

It was a feeling of rebellion and injustice, you know? I was furious. It got worse with what France is doing in the Middle East. It's enraging! I'm not ungrateful: I was educated well thanks to my parents, I went off to school, I learned a lot of things, I have a good job – thank God. I'm not complaining. But what the government is doing outside this country is frankly disgusting and there's nothing you can do about it, you're powerless! Nowadays, if you open your mouth you go to prison. Frankly, it's sad: they say "freedom of speech" but when you're Muslim, you shut up. You look at what happens in France, in Belgium, it's tragic for the families. But look at what's going on on the other side! Open your eyes! The government we have now is a zero. I'm not for the

Republic. Their government is rotten. Hollande is a clown. His prime minister is a buffoon. They're crap. They just piss off the whole planet.

At the heart of this desire to leave is a certain disgust for political hypocrisy. It speaks in the name of a fundamental value within Western societies, one which jihadists are often said to spurn: freedom. Radouane had no trouble brandishing the slogan of the French Republic – liberty, equality, fraternity – to justify his leaving. According to Pierre-Jean Luizard, the Syrian conflict offers nothing less than the promise of a conjunction between "a universality transcending all narrow particularisms" and "being rooted in the construction of a concrete 'utopia' on the ground."³⁴ And as Scott Atran notes, there is always something pornographic about an imaginary affiliation: it rests on a manipulation of passionate inclinations capable of generating a spectacle ("Open your eyes!"). This is where the spectacle of rupture becomes addictive, to the point of believing that simply coming to religion is enough to change everything from top to bottom. In departures for Syria, something resembling a fantasy – enjoying the immediate benefits of conversion without enduring the inevitable costs of reconversion – finds a seductive possibility of fulfillment.

"Raindrops" in the dead of night

The "recruiters" who try to foment departures thrive off this hope for a magical exit from the impasse. The tokens of "street cred" are well known: older boys, belonging to the second zone, equipped with minimal theological baggage, dressed in traditional garb. There aren't many of them. Indeed, an outside observer would have trouble encountering any in a *cit *. Generally reviled by parents and educators, they merely "stop by." Their technique is well practiced: strike up a one-on-one conversation during evening or Friday prayers (the most important of the week); such moments of solitude are propitious for introspection. In the dead of night, crewmembers can be bored and a bit lonely, caught up in identical contradictions. For the most vulnerable, it's always the same process: seeking protection from crewmates and from themselves by frequenting the mosque; returning home to their parents with a soothed conscience; then scorning them, turning the stigma around on them – all at a moment when critical re-intellectualization feels both welcome (rekindling the taste for learning) and troublesome (the difficulty of learning). They stop hanging around with crewmates, instead accompanying the "recruiters," who