



Jan Gondek
Grzegorz Tutak

The conception of the “silent majority” against the backdrop of digital aspects of political transformations

Contemporary voters live in a world dominated by broadly conceived media coverage. Politicians governing people do not so much concentrate on manipulating facts but rather on creating spectacular information, subjected to the determinants of a precisely directed spectacle. Man, constantly impacted by such information, is guided by emotionally experienced impressions. In the consumer society, in which digitally created information has gotten a hold of man’s choices, the process of functioning of political power is taking on the form of simulation.¹ The French thinker Jean Baudrillard, whose analyses we refer

Jan Gondek, The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland
e-mail: jan.gondek@kul.pl • ORCID: 0000-0001-6444-699

Grzegorz Tutak, The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland
e-mail: grzegorz.tutak@kul.pl • ORCID: 0000-0003-4705-0446

¹ A simulation in Baudrillard’s approach consists in detaching meanings from their original sources of reference and in creating, on the basis of these signs, artificial copies which will be more attractive in their message for the audience than the real phenomenon/object. Simulation which occurs in the sphere of the impact of government has many functional dimensions. On the one hand, it may be perceived as a symptom of manipulating voters by properly formed media information. On the other hand, howev-



to in the paper, treated simulation processes as the starting point for analyzing society. He perceived society as a collectivity functioning in a special relationship to political power, which acts under specific media conditions. Thus, in the paper, attention will be drawn to how the simulatory nature of contemporary political power correlates with the functioning of a society.

In this context, we will draw upon Baudrillard's conception of the 'silent majority,'² introducing the diagnosis of the functioning of a society in relation to power. The conception of the "silent majority" was utilized by Baudrillard to analyze the behavior of contemporary people receiving media messages addressed to them by political powers. In a world in which an excessive amount of digital information is created, it is hard to say that model relationships function between a society and politicians. The question is not only about one man's contacts with another one or simple interactions connecting one group with another one. Attention needs to be drawn to the relationship between the citizens perceiving the media messages and the media themselves, and the power (the authorities) creating spectacular media messages. The all-encompassing and still rapidly increasing number of digital messages addressed to people leads to a lack of response on the part of the community and results in a significant silence in the sphere of opinion, comments or voices in the public debate. At this juncture, there occurs a serious problem of legitimizing or rejecting power by voters. Therefore, there arises the question whether the category of the "silent majority" is

er, it is an attempt to constantly improve the social reality (artificially creating a politician's image and actions) following marketing products and services. See Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 1–3.

² Jean Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities or the End of the Social and Other Essays*, trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton and John Johnston (New York: Semiotext(e), Inc., 1983), 19–21.

becoming the only tool which might still be indicative of the autonomy of society or of the possibility of opposition against the conduct of power? In this context, it is worth posing a more fundamental question against the background of the reflections undertaken in the paper. It concerns the cause of such actions: for what purpose does political power inundate voters with media messages and what is it intended to serve? Does such information serve power solely to create its image or does it involve a more fundamental task, that is part of the simulation processes involved in exercising power over society?

The simulative nature of modern political power

Seeking an answer to the question of what power is and what the impact of political power on contemporary society consists in requires a reference to the context in which consumer society functions. In such a collectivity, the consumption of signs plays an essential role. Signs are very broadly conceived; however, they generally concern the phenomenon of artificial modification of real objects. Let us note that in the contemporary market, the only product/service that gains attractiveness is marked by a number of additional properties, which are, importantly, largely unconnected with its real existence. However, the most important thing from the standpoint of consumerism is that only such a product carries the potential of satisfying previously properly aroused human desires. Therefore, the huge effort of people dealing with marketing and the new media does not concentrate on indicating the actual usefulness of the product/service itself.³ It assumes in turn

³ Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures* (London: Sage Publications, 1998), 26–27, 31–32.

the form of creating consumer needs, not only by introducing attractive packaging or presenting new functions in relation to the previous edition, but also by promoting lifestyles or even shaping political trends. Thus, targeted consumption is becoming a determinant of voter acquisition by contemporary political power.

Thereby, these days power has become a certain type of game or reality show. This is not caused by the fact that politicians want to live in such a world, but it is conditioned functionally: by seeking an efficient mode of reaching out to people. For contacts with voters are established in times which are dominated by the model of creating and instantly satisfying the (created) consumer needs. There is an overlap of a political viewpoint with the play of signs surrounding a politician. This is how political events are most frequently created by the media. They occur for the sake of a given situation such as an election campaign or a visit by a foreign leader. Power uses tools from the marketing of products/services to influence society and convey information about itself.⁴ The model of consumer society, based on artificial labelling compounded by incessant media transmission and accepted and utilized in the political sphere, has led to the denial of the idea of representativeness and has brought about a complete blurring of the traditional (and by now completely historical) relation between ruler and subject.

In a world of consumption, everything is dynamic because consumers themselves have unlimited capacity to constantly take in information. For this reason, ultimate satisfaction of their needs is not possible. The customer cannot achieve complete satisfaction since the system of contemporary economics inscribes him in ongoing active buying and participation in the entire production process. For this reason, power cannot show its truthfulness. It is only a product of a combined system of sign consumption and media messages based on a specta-

⁴ Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 23–24.

cle.⁵ In this context, it is important to recall Erving Goffman’s dramaturgical approach to the conception of power.⁶ According to him, a politician is supposed not so much to convey contents by means of verbal or non-verbal symbols, but their main aim is to cause (create) impressions. Thus, an election campaign becomes a theater in which interactions between individuals are created in advance for a specific communication situation (the Goffmanian ‘stage’ or ‘backstage’). The aim of political messages is to maintain the persuasive credibility, fundamental in this context, which is created by the politician himself as an ‘actor’ for the purposes of conforming to the needs of specific groups of audiences.⁷ This is why modern governments strive to maintain their credibility by means of exerting impressions on their audience (voters). If the created impressions are well-received by the audience, then it will consequently lead to outlining the direction of activity and making decisions according to their thoughts.

According to Baudrillard, the so-called “true power” no longer exists and one cannot talk of a true representation of voters or of the real choice made by them. These are illusory statements which are an expression of people’s futile hope in the domain of politics. All representations in the sense of exercised power, even at the lowest levels, no longer have anything in common with their former function. This is why power finds it so difficult to win over people. For they sense its

⁵ Przemysław Żukiewicz, “Kondycja władzy w świecie postmodernistycznym: refleksje inspirowane myślą Jeana Baudrillarda” [The Condition of Power in the Postmodernist World. Reflections inspired by Jean Baudrillard’s Philosophy], *Świat Idei i Polityki* vol. 8 (2008): 171–172.

⁶ Barbara Szacka, *Wprowadzenie do socjologii* [An Introduction to Sociology] (Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa, 2008), 132–133.

⁷ Agnieszka Ogonowska, *Między reprezentacją a symulacją. Szkice z socjologii mediów* [Between Representation and Simulation. Sketches from media sociology] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Edukacyjne, 2007), 15–16, 136–138.

fickleness and insincerity.⁸ The implication is that a consumer who, in the market for the sale of objects/services, is accustomed to the constant exchange of companies in the purchasing process (depending, among other things, on the price or quality of the products offered), is unable to function in the political sphere. Since this is more constant, it is enough to note that elections take place, for example, every four years, and the model of governance is conditioned by the political system adopted in a given community.

At this juncture, imminent change in the desires of voters is not possible, and a dissatisfied public may rebel by failing to respond to the calls of authority. Such a phenomenon causes the greatest fear in politicians exercising power. This is why politicians must inspire their voters' fascination by their actions and become actors of a spectacle embedded in the communication channels of the new media. They must arouse emotions which at a given moment satisfy human desires in terms of comprehending the actions of authorities.⁹ Jean Baudrillard argues that all intervention actions of Western states in various parts of the world concerning dictatorship governments play the function of reinforcing and legitimizing the authorities of Western powers. Carrying out armed interventions, supporting the 'aggrieved,' and fomenting revolutions ultimately serves to make the tools available to political power more realistic, in order to become, at least for a while, an entity independent of the media, the entertainment market or corporations. Authorities operating in highly developed societies have found a way to show real governance in humanitarian action. Presenting such humanitarian efforts as their own success makes it necessary to put the message in media and consumer signs.¹⁰ These

⁸ Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 23–24.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 17, 151–153.

¹⁰ Żukiewicz, "Kondycja władzy w świecie postmodernistycznym: refleksje inspirowane myślą Jeana Baudrillarda" [The Condition of Power in the Postmodernist World. Reflections inspired by Jean Baudrillard's Philosophy], 172.

types of measures very often turn against power itself, because it enters into a message detached from reality. In addition, in its functional powerlessness and sign closure, it is unable to deal with and combat these phenomena. Power only works through technologies amplifying signs, which consequently reinforces totalitarian systems.

According to Jean Baudrillard, power is not respected in the contemporary world since people react to objective demands (e.g., civic duties) with rebellion and disobedience. In turn, they respond to subjective expectations (e.g., the granting of rights) with their own alienation and passivity. It is therefore very difficult for political power to exist in the form desired by it. The exemplary American slogan: "Ask not what the state can do for you, ask what you can do for the state" carries the message that citizens who suffer and make losses must place the blame on themselves.¹¹ The mistakes of the authorities are shifted onto the people, rather than onto the politicians responsible for such a state of affairs and the communication channels through which they direct information to the electorate.

It needs to be emphasized that Baudrillard's conception of power stands in opposition to Michel Foucault's dispersed authority, which consists in understanding authority as an omnipresent dynamic factor which voluntarily permeates all spheres of human life. Authority does not take on a coercive character but is based on the voluntary acceptance of its recommendations and subjective control by individuals.¹² According to Baudrillard, such a postulate is not achievable, as modern power, mastered by processes of simulation, has itself become an unreal entity that only uses artificial signs to rescue its image and subjectivity.

¹¹ Żukiewicz, "Kondycja władzy," [The Condition of Power], 173.

¹² Agnieszka Ziętek, *Jean Baudrillard wobec współczesności: polityka, media, społeczeństwo* [Jean Baudrillard's Vision of Contemporary World: Politics, Media and Society] (Kraków: UNIVERSITAS, 2013), 80–83.

A very pertinent example, cited by Baudrillard, illustrating the actions of power in today's world are the events which took place in 1991, called the Gulf War. Jean Baudrillard observed the conflict as it broke out and came up with a number of very interesting theses revealing the way in which contemporary power operates, including its methods of controlling information. According to Baudrillard, the war never really happened, as it took place only in the virtual sphere, i.e., in the media. Of course, Baudrillard is using a certain allegory in making such statements.¹³ However, the conclusions he reaches become the basis for reflecting on the meaning of this conflict. Jean Baudrillard believes that military commanders and politicians do not know how to behave in the face of power, so they have to kill people and carry out destruction. The Gulf War was one example of such a situation. In fact, the conflict, which played out in 1991, became one big publicity campaign. This war was controlled by the combined centers of power and media.

Most interestingly, the conflict was not conducted with the view to conquering some new territories or to dominating a country, rather the focus was to preserve their power status and to legitimize it. The war was supposed to show that power still existed.¹⁴ The very context of power is not directly invoked by Baudrillard, it appears against the backdrop of the reflections. Modern media, innovative technologies and information became the objects of this war. It was another phase, after the Cold War, in which the focus was more on the aspect of the game being played than on the conflict itself. The war was played in the media, not on the battlefield. The real coverage of the events which took place during this conflict was not a reliable message, but 'empty information' aimed at filling television screens and

¹³ Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, trans. Paul Patton (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 23–28.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

satisfying viewers' expectations. It should be stressed, following Baudrillard, that political power can steer conflict in many ways.¹⁵ One of them, for example, is live broadcasting, most often selective and manipulated. The conflict also demonstrated the extraordinary speed of the transmission of information. However, this was combined with a loss of the meaning of the message and a distortion of the possibility of reliably conveying the content.

In his book *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* (which exposes the media aspects of the Gulf War), the author cites some figures. The 500,000 soldiers who fought at the front for seven months were three times more likely to die in a car or traffic accident while remaining at home than while at the front. Thus, the war, according to Baudrillard, pursued a specific objective, since the authorities wanted to show their power by engaging in this conflict. The war ultimately exhibited the great powerlessness of power. It did not overthrow Saddam Hussein's power, but it was carried out as a kind of performance, show and spectacle.¹⁶ The example of the Gulf War functionally puts contemporary armed conflicts in a new light.

An analysis of the conflicts that have taken place in the last decade or so leads to the conclusion that it is impossible to disagree with Baudrillard's vision. It is information itself, controlled by power, that has become the object of wars. Filling the media with sign messages generates the way that contemporary politicians act. One should pay attention to the influence that information (even false information) has on the quotation of companies on the stock exchanges or the establishment of international relations. Therefore, confrontational struggle has given way to wars played out in a symbolic form on media chan-

¹⁵ Ziętek, *Jean Baudrillard wobec współczesności: polityka, media, społeczeństwo* [Jean Baudrillard's Vision of the Contemporary World: Politics, Media and Society], 135.

¹⁶ Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, 68–71.

nels. Today, leaders, as Baudrillard points out, play out armed conflicts in the realm of virtual technology.¹⁷ Their chief aim is to legitimize the power they exercise.

The “silent majority” society as a reaction to the simulative nature of power

Against the backdrop of our considerations so far, there is a need to define contemporary society, which functions as a target at which political power addresses its actions. Baudrillard’s attempt to define society is not a matter of course; it has not taken the form of previously familiar terms such as consumer society, digital society, or spectacle society. It should be noted that Baudrillard refers to contemporary voters, consumers, and recipients of media messages as the “mass.”¹⁸ However, it should be noted that this term has no sociological meaning. It is not even a category or a designation belonging to the social or demographic sciences. Jean Baudrillard argues that sociology would like to categorize the concept of the “mass” using professional vocabulary. However, according to him, this constitutes a mistake, because the “mass” is an undefinable concept, difficult to put into specific categories.

Such a conception seems to be valid in the context of the impact of the digital sphere. Observing the impact of digital technologies on various fields of human activity, we see a vision of the functioning of technology distributed and subject to modifications, depending on the

¹⁷ Żukiewicz, Żukiewicz, “Kondycja władzy,” [The Condition of Power],] 176; Gary Genosko, *Baudrillard and Signs: Signification Ablaze* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), 98–99.

¹⁸ Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities or the End of the Social and Other Essays*, 4–5.

context of the targeting of the message.¹⁹ Meanwhile, the concepts produced in this area by the social sciences, as well as the humanities, are too obvious, and thus may lose the deeper meaning references needed in this case. The mass, according to Jean Baudrillard, “is constituted by those who are free of their symbolic commitments, have been ‘released’ (caught in infinite ‘nets’) and condemned to be one of the countless terminals of the same models.”²⁰ This understanding of the mass uncovers its essential characteristics, particularly useful when analyzing the political impact of power on voters.

It is worth noting that José Ortega y Gasset, the creator of the conception of “the rebellion of the masses,” who also utilizes the term of the “mass” in a political context, perceives it in a different way. He portrays the mass, characterized by a lack of a superior purpose of action and primitiveness of views, as numerically capable of taking the helm in the sphere of imposing views. The mass may dominate over this part of society which thanks to education (as well as abilities) and an active participation in social life wishes to set new development trends. The mass in this sense dictates (even by force) the more ambitious part of society to follow its models. It takes control over culture, which begins to be dominated by principles of the simple reception of content, uniformity of message and facilitation of standards of reading symbols.²¹ In Baudrillard’s conception, the masses do not express aspirations for the introduction of their standards of communication, but actually need to be encouraged to be active and express their opinions.

¹⁹ Alina Betlej, “Power Relations in the Network Society. A Sociological Approach,” *Studia Gilsoniana* 11, No. 3 (July–September 2022): 427–430.

²⁰ Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities or the End of the Social and Other Essays*, 5–6.

²¹ Ziętek, *Jean Baudrillard wobec współczesności: polityka, media, społeczeństwo* [Jean Baudrillard’s Vision of Contemporary World: Politics, Media and Society], 199–204.

Comprehending the mass assumes a particular meaning in relation to the way the media, entertainment, and consumer systems function. These systems are very helpful in setting up political campaigns or promoting politicians for a particular office. The mass, according to Baudrillard, is the result of an overflow and saturation of information exchange. It functions as one-way flow, for messages flow in one direction. They pass from the new media to the people perceiving a particular image, often not comprehending the overall sense of the transmission. Political power, using the sphere of visual messages manipulatively, creates its image by means of signs.²² The aim of this is to artificially perfect and idealize the surrounding socio-political reality.

Baudrillard's diagnosis of the origin of the mass is important in this context. The cause of the emergence of the masses is the disconnection of society from the symbolic conditions. Social change is caused by a lack of valuing, and the masses themselves do not put themselves in the perspective of superiority or inferiority. Hence, they do not have the aspirations that should guide real communities. The question arises as to what developmental potential is to be found in the masses. In Baudrillard's terms, this potential is understood in an extremely negative context, as the masses have the characteristic ability to lose all energy, and to neutralize any views and information addressed to them. It is precisely these functions of the masses: to absorb everything and not to draw any consequences for themselves from this absorption, that stand in opposition to the development of a true society.²³ Therefore, the mass, in addition to its characteristic indifference to action, absorbs

²² Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities or the End of the Social and Other Essays*, 30–41.

²³ Agnieszka Smrokowska-Reichmann, "Nieme "neutrum": Baudrillard – antysocjolog i jego diagnoza społeczeństwa," [The Silent "Neutrum": Baudrillard—Anti-sociologist and His Diagnosis of Society] *Principia* LIV–LV (2011): 293–295.

higher culture and nullifies knowledge. Not reflecting the ideals previously guiding society, the mass functions as a chaotic collectivity, devoid of higher values and subject to constant destruction.

Thus, the masses, as understood by Baudrillard, are a creation opposite to Hanna Arendt's take. She argued that the masses have totalitarian inclinations and are easily carried away by using simple slogans. But the masses, according to her, are made up of weak individuals, cut off from their traditions.²⁴ According to Jean Baudrillard, this characterization is not accurate, as the masses have no desire to take any action, be it revolutionary or in favor of any defense of historical values.

Today's consumers (voters), affected by an enormous amount of information, are able to resist the system of consumption, entertainment and media. This is because they are unable to "process" such a huge amount of stimuli. A deeper analysis of Baudrillard's conception reveals a whole new dimension of the masses, which is the so-called "silent protest" and the phenomenon of the "silent majority." An analysis of the meaning of "silent protest" leads to the conclusion that it can be identified with the passivity of the masses. According to Baudrillard, apathy is the great threat to political power. For political structures, expressions of silent protest are unacceptable, so those in power want to stimulate their voters at all costs. An example of voter activation are various types of surveys or opinion polls, which nowadays have many functions.²⁵ The most important of these is to maintain the impression that the masses are not passive, but actively interested in political action. In addition, polls have an activating effect in such a way that the public has the impression that they are constantly

²⁴ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Cleveland; New York: Meridian Books: The World Publishing, 1968), 377.

²⁵ Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities or the End of the Social and Other Essays*, 19–21.

being questioned, which in turn means that politicians are interested in the opinions of the people.

However, in this case, a double manipulation effect may occur, for the authority wants to fit in with the crowd and the masses want to fulfill their expectations through the authority. A reciprocal game develops, however, the power gains in a further context, because the masses are not capable of any systemically directed action. At the same time, all methods of information stimulation of the people lead to even more production of further masses.²⁶ With regard to uncovering the real meaning of surveys, it is still worth recalling the views of Pierre Bourdieu. He does not so much level accusations of a technical nature against surveys (e.g., an inadequately constructed sample or suggestive questions) as he exposes their use for political purposes. He points out that there is an artificial creation of the belief that every participant in the community has an opinion on current political activities and can adequately define themselves on a scale produced for the purposes of the survey. By its polling activities, the authorities want to unnaturally create a unanimous public opinion, unanimous in particular with regard to the binding public laws and the assessment of its activities. The public sphere is created on the basis of political interests, for which the poll becomes a legitimization of the policies pursued. If a topic is polled, it means that the public supports a particular political direction. Unaware of this fact, the public is used through participation in the poll to consolidate power.²⁷ The topic of the poll or the issue it

²⁶ Barbara Markowska, "Społeczeństwo a media: dwugłos: Baudrillard – McLuhan," [Society and the Media. Dialogue: Baudrillard-McLuhan] *Kultura Popularna* No. 1 (2004): 60–61; Paweł Ciołkiewicz, „Bunt milczącej większości,” [Rebellion of the Silent Majority] *Media, Kultura, Społeczeństwo* No. 1 (2007): 134–135.

²⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, "Public Opinion Does Not Exist," in *Communication and Class Struggle*, 1, eds. Armand Mattelart, Seth Siegelaub (New York: International General, 1979), 124–130.

addresses is constructed in such a way that the opinion expressed in the individual questions (even if very diverse) does not contradict the validity of the introduction of a particular political issue. Power is created not by favorable or unfavorable answers; what is most significant is the very action taken in favor of a given event in the political arena.

Baudrillard points to an important functional factor belonging to the masses, and clearly escaping the mechanism of political rule, which is silence. Political power obviously does not want to lose control over the masses. Silence as a response to the information provided frightens power the most. Therefore, the media artificially control silence, sometimes by means of creating the power of the subjective background, which is done in very simple sentences, for example: "The Polish nation opposes..." or "All of Germany is happy," etc. The main reason for such actions by the authorities is precisely the problem of the silent reaction of the masses to events. The authority stimulates the feelings of the crowd by directing a pre-imposed message towards them in order to suitably tune the reactions of the masses, who do not support certain political beliefs.²⁸ Nowadays, power, according to Baudrillard, has to be concerned not so much with getting re-elected, but with more fundamental issues, i.e. winning the faith of the electorate in the very motive and purpose of exercising power.

An important factor shaping the significance of the mass and its relationship to power is also granting the masses various rights, aimed at artificially raising their status. The masses are treated objectively; this is the level they have been reduced to by politicians and the media. This is why the masses are persuaded they have the right to vote, that there is freedom of speech, that women's rights, freedom of expression or self-determination function efficiently. However, all of this only

²⁸ Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 23–27; Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities or the End of the Social and Other Essays*, 23–30.

works by artificially creating and granting particular rights to people. One only has to look at the developed European countries or the United States and one gets the impression that it functions on the basis of a myth. Why is such a myth being perpetuated? Well, in order to create the impression that modern societies are subjects, that they decide for themselves. However, this is a utopia, for the masses are now being deliberately reduced to the level of objects so that the authorities and the media can pursue their interests through simulation. The message must be created in such a way that it is as information-filled as possible (saturated with images, content, sound). Although the masses are able to defend themselves, their “resistance consists in a refusal to make sense and a refusal to speak.”²⁹ It is the only struggle with the system of power and the over-information in the modern media. This can be called the “strategy of the masses,” seen as the only line of defense in the whole system of simulation. The masses actually treated in an objective manner are thus only artificially made subjects in order to build up the impression of their decisiveness, which is particularly evident in the process of artificial communication between power and voters.³⁰ What causes the masses to allow themselves to be reduced to the level of an object? Certainly, a large role is played by artificially constructed media information, but it is worth noting another aspect that delights the masses. It is performance, expressed through spectacularity. Baudrillard conceives of spectacularity as a kind of singularity and uniqueness. It is about the creation of spectacles, aimed at arousing the delight of the masses. Baudrillard thus refers to the category of *delectare*, familiar from persuasive rhetoric, displaying an impact on the feelings of the audience. Of course, there is also a great deal of hidden information, artificially created, in such events. At the same time, it is a very effective impact. It is enough to cite the exam-

²⁹ Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 86.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 85–86.

ples of the organization of sporting events, which are constantly popular with the masses. However, they do not remain a spectacle at the sporting level alone, but conceal a huge amount of political or marketing messages.³¹ This is why politicians in election campaigns try to create their conventions on the basis of sporting events and television programs and televisions shows.

Conclusion

Nowadays, it is becoming increasingly obvious that politicians and voters are involved in a certain game in which voters are merely an audience while politicians are actors performing on a stage. While concluding the reflections relating to Baudrillard’s conception of the correlation of the new power and societies, one needs to emphasize that it is best to compare the way authorities function to a puppet show. Power itself is no longer real, and yet it still influences people through the spectacle it plays. Power’s manipulative strategy of digital creation and refinement of information on themselves and their actions has led voters to reject this content because of its questionable credibility. In Baudrillard’s conception, it is very important to point out the existential factor that gives credibility to the functioning of society. Therefore, the last possibility he indicates for the existence of an independent society that has acquired the characteristics of the masses is rebellion, which is accomplished through collective silence and passivity.

It is worth noting that Baudrillard’s model of a relationship between power and society assuming the function of the “silent majority” indicated in the paper may be regarded as a factor of an accurate diagnosis of a majority of contemporary political events. Donald Trump’s vic-

³¹ Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities or the End of the Social and Other Essays*, 9–11.

tory in presidential elections or the exit of Great Britain from the European Union may be analyzed with the use of the category of the “silent majority” introduced by Baudrillard.

A hidden dream of social masses is such a moment in which all power would fall, and at the same time it would be possible to observe the manner in which it falls and what consequences it has for those in power. The voter mostly wants to point something out to the authorities in some way, to reproach them, to correct them and usually secretly expects them to fall. Politicians have become so detached from reality that the media messages they create no longer inspire trust and a sense of security in citizens.³² In this context, the described phenomenon of the “silent majority” demonstrates the inevitable movement of power towards its end (twilight). The lack of anchoring of power in the real world has far-reaching consequences. Subordinated to media conditions and trapped in the digital world, power has lost its representativeness and credibility. Therefore, its legitimacy is being upset and there is no stopping the very most destructive process of its derealization, taking place as an outcome of digital conditioning.



The conception of the “silent majority”
against the backdrop of digital aspects of political transformations

SUMMARY

The paper examines Jean Baudrillard’s conception of society as the silent majority. Thus conceived society has been shaped against the background of digital media transformations. Paying attention to the relationship between citizens perceiving media messages, and the media themselves and the power cre-

³² Jean Baudrillard, *The Intelligence of Evil or the Lucidity Pact*, trans. Chris Turner (New York: Berg, 2005), 165–172.

ating spectacular media messages, became the basis for Jean Baudrillard’s model of the relationship between power and society. This relationship takes on the function of the silent majority. A society with these characteristics emerged as a reaction to the simulative nature of power. For Baudrillard, simulation processes are the starting point of his analysis of the political sphere. Understanding society as the silent majority introduces a diagnosis of the functioning of the politician-voter relationship.

Keywords: silent majority, mass, digital media, political power, simulation, Jean Baudrillard

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